Michigan District **Annual Ministry Report 2024**

The mission of the Michigan District, LCMS is vigorously to make known the love of Christ by word and deed within our churches (congregations), communities, and world.

The District has been working diligently to streamline its processes and build efficiency. We have met all of our goals for 2024 by

- 1) Developing a number of mission networks, encouraging the development of homeschool coops and microhigh schools, and building a robust system of conferences targeted at particular groups such as younger pastors, pastors of larger congregations, and non-teacher commissioned workers;
- 2) Revising our grants to include smaller and more easily accessible grants;
- 3) Completing congregation vitality assessments;
- 4) Moving towards local management of missions;
- 5) Contacting nearly 100% of all pastors or congregations;
- 6) Fine-tuning processes such as calling of workers, communications, etc; and
- 7) Beginning to build a District-wide list of people with different capabilities who could provide assistance beyond their congregations.

In the following pages are some events and stories that our Lord brought about in 2024. We hope you will be as encouraged and inspired as we are when we see God's hand at work in our District.



President's Office

The District staff meets for a devotion and prayers every weekday morning at 8:30 a.m. We lift up **one** congregation and its workers each day, as well as **four** additional workers in our District. This daily priority is a highlight as we focus on who we are serving and how we can lift them up to the Lord that day.

- President Davis met with 14 pre-seminary applicants and 4 pastoral colloquy applicants in 2024. This offers him the opportunity to greet them and encourage them in their desire to serve the Lord in our District.
- 65 congregations requested a Call list for a pastor in 2024. Call lists were usually provided within four weeks of the request. Throughout the entire process, the congregation and the pastors on the list are covered in prayer.
 - Pastors that are appointed as Circuit Visitors have a great responsibility to the
 congregations and workers in their circuit. They walk alongside congregations that have
 a vacancy in the pastoral office by securing pulpit supply, attending church council and
 voter's meetings, and providing support throughout the congregational vacancy through
 the installation of a new pastor. Circuit Visitors also meet 11 times a year with the
 District President, Vice-Presidents, and various staff members either via Zoom or during
 an in-person conference.
- 14 pastors retired from full or part-time ministry in 2024. The President's Office as well as the Circuit Visitor provide resources to these pastors as they retire. Most continue to serve by helping with pulpit supply or vacancy work and/or Transitional Interim Ministry.
 - The Michigan District welcomed **21** pastors into our District in 2024 through transfers from another district or colloquy. We welcomed **6** new pastors into our District through seminary placement.

Thirteen is the number of times that President Davis preached at congregations during their "regular" worship services in 2024. He makes himself available for preaching engagements as he is able to do so. If your congregation would like to request him, please reach out to the President's Office to schedule a future date.

The District Staff had 1,242 connections with our 346 congregations and 1,781 church workers in the District. The connections include those that were logged in our database. President Davis usually sends about 4–6 hand-written notes to workers in our District weekly.

Circuit Convocations

2024 was the year of the Circuit Convocations—larger gatherings of members from circuit congregations during a year in which there is no national or district convention. Sometime during the year, each circuit was to have an event that brings people together—church workers and laity—from all the circuit congregations for a time of encouragement, worship, training, and mission strategy. To encourage circuits to plan a great event, the District partnered with Church Extension Fund to provide up to \$5,000 to each circuit for its convocation (circuits could work together and combine grants). The grants were directed to convocations that focused clearly on mission outreach.





Twenty-four Convocations took place in 2024 (some were multi-part) and two in early 2025. Of those 26, twelve included serving in the form of ingatherings, service projects, or raising funds. Eight of the events centered on celebration: joint worship services, Oktoberfests, family outings (Lugnuts game and rollerskating), festivals (including a hymn fest and a mission fest with representatives of MOST, LAMP, and others), or a combination thereof. Eighteen events were centered around a theme and brought in one or more speakers. Nine of these dealt with current issues in society; the other nine focused on mission, spiritual disciplines, and leadership forums.





Leadership Development

The Leadership Development department strives to support and develop church workers in the District through a variety of initiatives. These include conferences for continuing education, gatherings that build up community, development of lay workers through the Michigan School of Missional Formation, mental health and wellness support, and scholarships for church work students. The Director of Leadership Development also oversees Transitional Interim Ministry in the district. Below are specific reports from areas that fall under Leadership Development.

Mental Health Case Manager / Parish Nurse Ministry

Deaconess Christie Hansard, who serves as Mental Health Case Manager for church workers in the district, has been active with speaking engagements, teaching and/or presenting some form of Christ-centered whole-person human care. These engagements have been instrumental in raising awareness about mental health challenges among church workers, reducing stigma, and encouraging a proactive well-being lifestyle. In the past year, over 75 one-on-one health connections have been established, ensuring that those in need receive the appropriate resources, referrals, and ongoing support. Additionally, more than 40 church workers have received financial assistance for mental health services.

Hansard also serves as Parish Nurse Ministry representative for the Michigan District, which remains committed to advancing congregational health ministries and parish nurses within its churches. To further this mission, **32** Parish Nurses and Health Ministers gathered in person on February 24, 2024 in Frankenmuth for a time of fellowship, learning, and collaboration. This meeting provided an opportunity for professional growth, networking, and the exchange of best practices to enhance health ministries across the district.



Student Aid

In the 2024 fiscal year, the District sent out a total of \$245,730 in scholarships to 80 students (40 in seminary and 40 in undergraduate programs). One of these scholarship recipients is Ron Zuccaro, a graduate of the Deacon Program at the Michigan School of Missional Formation (MSMF) who is now at the St. Louis Seminary preparing for ordination through the Alternate Route program. He is grateful for the District's student aid and sends enthusiastic newsletters to his supporters, telling of all he is learning.

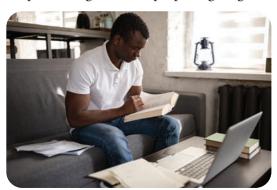






Michigan School of Missional Formation

The Michigan School of Missional Formation Lay Leadership Training (MSMF) was established by the Michigan District, LCMS to train Deacons, Ministry Assistants, those preparing to enter the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program, and those interested in furthering their abilities as laity, serving in their local congregations. MSMF enrollment post-Covid had dwindled but after the introduction of the hybrid Classic Plus program (with in-person classes), it rebounded and in 2024 there were **19 active students** (13 Classic Plus, 6 Kairos). Among Classic Plus Program students, **9** were preparing to become deacons and **4** were taking the courses for personal growth or preparing to go to the seminary; and of the



Kairos Program students, **5** were preparing to be deacons and **1** was in the Ministry Assistant program. The faculty is comprised of 6 ordained and 3 commissioned instructors, including one deaconess.



Stewardship

In 2024, **two** congregations participated in an intensive weekend introduction to *Stewards by God's Design (SBGD)* facilitated by the Director of Stewardship Ministries and a member of the District Stewardship Committee. SBGD aims to change the steward culture of a congregation through ongoing Bible studies.

Worship Arts and Community Engagement

Director of Worship Arts and Community Engagement Peter Prochnow engaged **79** Churches/Ministries through visits, calls, emails and texts in an initial contact, and additional follow-up contacts, to build relationships and assess their community engagement through service and love. Out of those, **27** started exploring, developing, and focusing on one or two needs of their community, specifically with the ALICE (Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, Employed) population and those in poverty and/or a crisis.



Prochnow also supported **28** congregations with various worship media, music, planning, and personnel needs through the district's community worship network. He also continued to develop and create worship resources for all the district's churches and schools through the district's Hymnal Project, with over **40** new resources created. The Hymnal Project website to date has has **456,000** visits, **932,000** page views, and **626,992** downloads on other streaming services. The Hymnal Project contains **340** recordings, **180** lead sheets and **35** different albums in **16** different styles, all public domain hymn adaptations.



Additionally, Prochnow directed and assisted with the planning, scheduling of musicians, recruiting and implementation of **16** conferences and gatherings, including **10** Beyond the Breakwater community engagement gatherings for church leaders.





Mission Strategy

Mission work is the Church's work. It can take place abroad or at home.

The primary goal of the District and of the local church is to lead people to Jesus. Healthy, revitalized congregations are the joyful outcome of individuals sharing the Gospel with community members.

Drawing on Great Commission and Great Compassion critical targets, The Michigan District, LCMS new Strategic Plan for Missions includes:

Development of an Outreach Ethos, so that the members and ministries of the District have a clear and compelling sense of their mission calling.

Revitalization of the Local Congregation, so that it is a vibrant expression of God's grace for renewal and community restoration.

Church Planting, utilizing both the traditional church plant model (sending a church planter to gather interested people) and an inverted model, focused on evangelism which would result in a community of converted people that form a new congregation.

Increasing Ethnic Immigrant Partnerships by promoting and empowering collaborative partnerships with ethnic immigrant populations.

Some additional key ways we will accomplish these strategies are through: Compassion Ministry | Urban Ministry | Campus Ministry | International Missions



Mission Grants

The following congregations received grants to help carry out special ministry initiatives:

- Cross and Resurrection Returnable Funding Grant – Diaper Ministry
- Messiah, Midland Returnable Funding Grant – Auto Parts Ministry
- FiveTwo Gathering in Frankenmuth Circuit to encourage mission plants and revitalizations
- Open Arms, Bellville –
 Explorer Grant Team Tigers
 (providing backpacks of food for low-income school kids to take home for the weekend).

Hispanic Mission & Ministry

The Michigan District supports Hispanic ministry in Detroit. Rev. Ricardo Granado is called by the District to serve as Missionary Pastor for Hispanic Ministries. He is based at Pan de Vida, Detroit, and under his leadership the congregation has been growing by leaps and bounds. They reach out to the community in several ways, including celebrations that are important in the Hispanic culture such as Father's Day, Kids' Day, Mother's Day, Hispanic Heritage Festival (which had **536** people in attendance in 2024),

and Christmas *Posadas*. They also offer tutoring for the community, blood drives, trunk or treat, VBS, and provide meals at Family of God, Detroit. In 2024, Rev. Granado received an award from the City of Detroit for his involvement with the community.







A2E

Acts 2 Enterprise partnered with several entities to serve the Detroit community. Among those are: Detroit Public Schools Faith-Based Partnership (student mentoring); Hope Care Beyond (working with the ALICE population); POBLO and Wayne County Community College (offering 12 weeks of sewing classes); and, in another partnership with POBLO, facilitated ESL classes for new immigrants. The 2024 Summer Sports Camp had 98 participants.

98 Participants A2E Summer Sports/VBS Camp



International Missions

During 2024, the Michigan District continued to support international mission work through the international component of the *Here We Stand* initiative. A total of \$75,000 was sent to support four missionaries overseas. We thank and praise God for the men and women from Michigan who share Jesus with people around the world.



Other ministries supported through the generous giving of Michigan District congregations and individuals in 2024:

Christian Outreach for Africa* – South Africa (\$40,000) – Part of this grant was for a new technology/robotics building that will provide STEM programming for school kids at Saint Peter Christian College and provide space for community outreach robotics programs and for a Remedial Education Facility at the Saint Peter Christian College campus.

Other South Africa support (\$7,523) – Travel assistance for teaching faculty

Concordia Center for the Family – Ethiopia (\$77,000) - For family discipleship training with church and congregation leaders.

Congregation-Driven International Support (Michigan Igniter Grants) – \$71,224

Our Savior, Lansing - South Africa

St. Peters, Big Rapids - Guatemala

St. Matthew, Grand Rapids - India & Bhutan

St. Luke, Haslett - South Korea

St. John's, Midland - Vietnam, Hmong

Hope for Haiti, Troy - Haiti St. Paul, Trenton - Guatemala Valley Lutheran High, Saginaw - Mexico Christ Our Savior, Livonia - South Africa

*The Michigan District continued its support of the Confessional Lutheran Church of South Africa (CLCSA), through Christian Outreach for Africa, under the knowledge and encouragement of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod International Center. CLCSA was admitted into altar and pulpit fellowship with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod at the 2019 Synodical Convention.

Community Engagement Survey

Prompted by the interest of several pastors in the district, the Development Department sent out a survey to all congregations with regards to community engagement. 118 congregations of various sizes responded (see map).

Community partnerships are strong among those that responded, with many congregations partnering with more than one organization. A large majority (88%) partners with nonprofit organizations and/or charities. Food banks/pantries are a close second (83%), followed by partnerships with other LCMS congregations (76%), schools or educational institutions (51%), health care organizations (30%), homeless shelters (28%) and local government (24%).

These partnerships materialize primarily through the donation of goods such as food and clothing (94%), financial support (83%), volunteer hours (75%), and use of congregational facilities (58%). Advocacy or promotion of the organization's mission ties in at 58%.

North & East Region

- **St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth** adjusted its Christmas gift giveaway to an affordable gift purchase event so that people can shop with their dignity intact.
- **Nativity, St. Charles** holds a food bank every Wednesday and has a pantry available on three other days of the week. They have become known as a place where people can go for help.

Metro West Region

- Living Water, Whitmore Lake developed a ministry to serve and love first responders and their families. They connect with their community by offering space and help with a variety of regular community events.
- St. Paul's, New Boston / Feed My Sheep volunteers cook and deliver 300 meals a month to veterans, homebound, and people in need in Huron Twp., Belleville, and Romulus. They also serve community dinners on Veterans Day and Thanksgiving.

West Region

- **St. John, Saint Johns** offers weekly meals to its community through its Good News Kitchen. They also developed a pet food ministry kiosk, and are directing a basic needs center downtown Saint Johns, offering food, clothing, and other needed items.
- **St. Paul, Centreville** has a pizza night every Monday night that is open to the community. They serve between 75-100 pizzas weekly, made from scratch on site (they bought pizza ovens). The congregation has an average of 37 in worship, and 8-10 of those people volunteer to make and serve pizzas.

Metro East Region

- **First, Algonac** has a clothing closet and diaper bank (including adult briefs) that is open weekly to the community. They also serve a community dinner once a month.
- **Trinity, Utica** has a large food bank and serves as a food distribution center to a number of other food banks in the area. They also provide a free Sunday meal for the hungry and open their building to provide showers and phone charging service. Additionally, they assist people who need wheelchair ramps built.





Education and Commissioned Workers



The Education Department serves 125 early childhood centers, 66 K-8 schools, and 5 high schools, with a total of **16,142 students**.

Meetings with our high school and elementary school administrators are held several times throughout the year in the many regions throughout the state. The Superintendent of Schools did **124 school visits** during the year, which included leading chapels, National Lutheran School Accreditation visits, educator celebrations, Board trainings, principal meetings, consultations, and other activities.

There were two large education conferences in 2024. The Early Childhood Conference in Frankenmuth had **over 625 attendees**. The Connections Conference in Fort Wayne, Ind. had **almost 1,500 attendees from Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio**. **Three** other conferences were hosted for principals and early childhood directors.

The Education Department helped schools fill **137 vacancies** (13 of which were for principals) and participated in the **accreditation process of 9 schools**. They also completed **15 call lists** for special ministry positions.





Commissioned Ministers (Non-Teaching)

The first Ministry Specialist Conference took place in October with 55 in attendance. During the 2024 fiscal year, the Commissioned Worker Advocate connected with 96 commissioned ministers and lay workers in the District, emphasizing their value, hearing about their passion in ministry, and being someone they can relate to and connect with in the District Office.

Youth Gathering

The District understands the importance of wholesome, faith-building experiences for youth, and strives to keep costs low so that students can participate in the District gatherings for each age group. In last year's Jr. High Gathering, **340 youth** participated in activities and fun under the theme "Messy Mercy." They also took part in **23 servant events** at a nursing home, homeless shelters, children's museum, parks and rec, churches, and clothing banks. Activities consisted of painting, cleaning, sorting, playing games, singing, making pretzels, mobile food pantry/food distribution, mulching, weeding, quilt tying, and washing windows. The participants also did an ingathering of items to benefit Franklin Ave. Mission in Flint. They brought new clothes, toiletries, detergent, diapers, wipes, and cleaning supplies, amounting to a minivan full of donations.

340 Youth



District Facilitators

In the 2024 fiscal year, the District Facilitators had a total of **1,092 interactions** with pastors and congregations via phone, email, zoom, or physical visits to the churches. These interactions were for Call process, strategic planning, assisting in vacancy, grant applications, staffing issues, conflict resolution, demographic studies, and finding resources to assist congregations and pastors in their mission and ministry.

The facilitators worked with circuit visitors, congregations, and pastors to assist in the forming of many partnerships for various types of interactions. Some examples of these partnerships are multi-church Bible studies, multi-church youth activities, and multi-church youth confirmation classes. Several congregations are looking to form dual parishes in the near future.

1,092 Interactions with pastors and congregations

Communications

Besides providing materials, marketing, and support for all conferences held by the District, the Communications Department produced **96 videos** in the 2024 fiscal year. It also published over **100 blogs and podcasts**. The main themes that transpired in the publications are illustrated in the image below. Additionally, **415 emails** were sent out from Feb 1, 2024–Jan 31, 2025 to a total of **13,466 contacts** (765,997 sends). The e-newsletter reached over **5,500** people every week.



Development

The Development Department implemented a plan called "District 101" to raise awareness of District history, structure, governance, staff, services, and resources. Director Laura Thomas visited **20 circuits** in 14 circuit meetings to speak with **152 pastors** from 109 congregations. Pastors were asked two questions: 1) How can we improve our stewardship of your congregation's commitment? 2) What content and method of sharing information is most helpful to you? The community engagement survey in this report is one of the results from feedback we received.



After circuit meetings, pastors received invitations to schedule a District Sunday, which includes brief speaking time at each service, a "District 101" presentation before/between/after services, and a display table. Twenty congregations hosted a traditional District Sunday, and three congregations hosted a Church Council "District 101" presentation (two of these by Zoom) to educate approximately **670 church members, leaders, and staff.** Post-visit inquiries ranged from web resources to sample policies, from location of archived baptismal certificates to Lutheran schools statistics, from adoption resources to grants available, and more.

670 Connections with church members, leaders, and staff

Colloquy Fund

A pastor and a member of his congregation invited the Director of Development to meet and discuss how the member could bless an area of ministry training. They talked about all routes to ordination and commissioning and discovered that the member's heart was closest to teachers. A large cohort of public school teachers had recently committed to taking non-rostered positions in local Lutheran schools. Superintendent of Lutheran Schools Travis Grulke and Laura Thomas worked together to create a proposal for a Colloquy Fund that would incentivize the completion of the program by paying for the last class in a teacher's colloquy training. **Two** students received scholarships and completed the training in 2024. One grateful student wrote, "The opportunities I have received through this program are invaluable, and I am truly grateful for your belief in my potential and in Lutheran education."

"The opportunities I have received through this program are invaluable, and I am truly grateful for your belief in my potential and in Lutheran education."

The Concordia University Ann Arbor Initiative - Summary

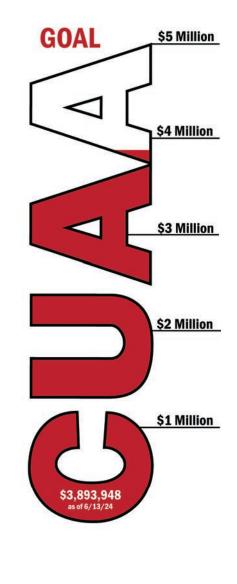
In February 2024, Concordia University Ann Arbor (CUAA) announced plans to reduce programs, property, and equipment. The Michigan District Board urged a "pause" on these actions and launched a fundraising campaign to address CUAA's \$5 million projected deficit for 2024–2025, contingent on keeping the campus "materially the same." District staff—especially the President's Office, Development, Business Office, and Communications—went above and beyond their regular workload to facilitate the campaign.

The campaign gained momentum rapidly, with nearly \$3.75 million raised from over 1,500 donors by February 29, ahead of a key CUWAA Board of Regents meeting. On March 1, the Board Chair confirmed CUAA would continue operations into 2024-2025 "and prayerfully beyond." Donations continued into June 2024, reaching nearly \$3.9 million.

However, at its August 6 meeting, the Michigan District Board determined CUWAA had not met agreed-upon standards and voted not to allocate the funds toward CUAA's operating expenses.

Donors were invited to redirect or rescind pledges, resulting in approximate allocations as follows:

- \$1.1M Scholarships for current CUAA students
- \$600K Michigan District Student Scholarships
- \$80K CUAA Operating Fund
- \$295K Local Congregations (as designated by donors)
- \$175K Other District Funds
- \$1.5M Rescinded pledges















Business Office

The Business Office handles payroll, disbursements, receipts, accounting, insurance/risk management, human resources, IT, and property management.

Human Resources: Three new workers were hired in the 2024 fiscal year: Stacy Furgerson (Assistant Business Manager – HR, who joined the staff July 8, 2024), Adele Werner (Video Journalist/Digital Media Manager, who joined January 6, 2025), and Don Neuendorf (Project Assistant to the President, starting January 27, 2025).

Property management: The District owns and manages 9 properties throughout the state: District Office, Ann Arbor; CMU for campus ministry; WMU for campus ministry; ULC for campus ministry; St. Paul, Pontiac; Atonement – Dearborn; Franklin Avenue Mission, Flint; Luckhard Museum The Indian Mission, Sebewaing; and Bethany Lutheran Indian Cemetery, St. Louis, Mich.





Bethany Lutheran Indian Cemetery

Solid Grounds - WMU Campus Ministry

Over 4,110 participants

Event Planning

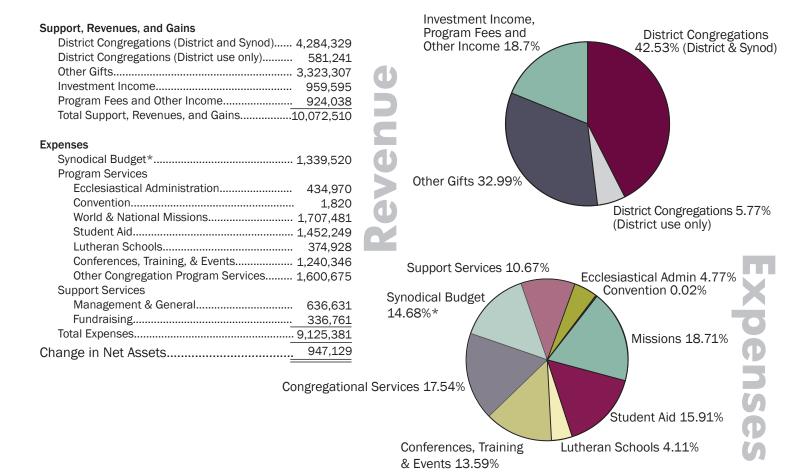
In 2024, the District organized **44** conferences and gatherings for training, continuing education, and edification of church workers and laypeople as well as many additional smaller meetings held both on and off site. The district also organizes and supports our Lutheran School State Cross Country, Volleyball, Basketball, and Track events with registration and printed materials. Over **4,110 people** participated in one or more of these events. Whether it is a small gathering of 20 people or a large conference with over 600 in attendance, the sheer volume of work generated by each of these conferences requires a dedicated Events Coordinator on staff, who keeps everything running smoothly by managing contracts, meeting with committees, coordinating marketing, registration, lodging, food, and beyond.

"The Katie" is a weekend set aside to honor and renew the hearts of the wives of pastors, vicars, and deacons. The conference provides opportunities for the women to worship, study God's Word, eat (meals that are prepared for them), enjoy fellowship, play games, and build relationships; it also provides free counseling and opportunities to exercise and do crafts. **105 women** participated in 2024.



Summary of Financial Activities

For the fiscal year ending January 31, 2025



Information is taken from the audited financial statements of the Michigan District, LCMS. Copies of the audit report, which include all integral parts of the financial statements, are available from the District Office.

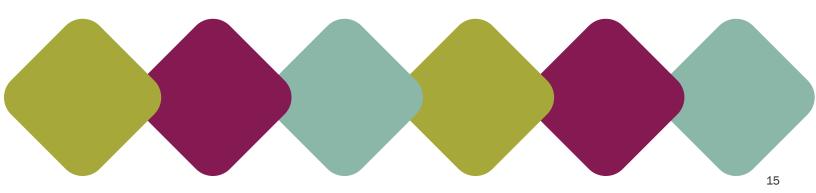
*The Michigan District sent 32.56% of its unrestricted cash receipts from congregations to national Synod during the fiscal year and 2.44% to Concordia University Ann Arbor and several Recognized Service Organizations. The numbers on the financial statements reflect adjustments based on pledges from congregations and to the Synod as required by Generally Accepted Accounting Principles.

Support for National and International Ministries

For the fiscal year ending January 31, 2025, the Michigan District remitted \$1,339,520 to Corporate (national) Synod, which represents 32.56% of the District's unrestricted gifts from congregations. The 35 districts of the Synod contribute approximately \$12.5 million of undesignated revenue to Corporate Synod annually in support of national and international mission and ministry.

The balance of the \$80.6 million 2024/25 budget of Corporate Synod was expected to come primarily from restricted gifts and sales of materials and services.

Additional information on Corporate Synod's budget and finances can be found at www.lcms.org/giving/transparency.



Looking Ahead

The District theme for 2025 is "You Are Not Alone," based on 1 Kings 19: Just as God assured Elijah, "I have reserved 7,000 in Israel who have not bowed down to Baal," He reminds us that we are never truly alone. There are countless brothers and sisters in Christ—many more than we realize—who are also committed to the work of the Gospel. All of the Districts' activities and conferences of 2025, including the Convention, will focus on this theme.

In 2025, the District President will work with the staff on the following goals:

- Beginning new ministries
- Increasing the total amount of money granted for new outreach ministries
- Connecting with church workers and congregations
- Taking next steps in establishing a Christian vocational school
- Building a system to identify potential candidates for ministry in Michigan.

The theme for 2026 will be "Live to Tell About It."

