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IN TOUCH

A publication of the Michigan District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
The Lutheran Witness Michigan District, LCMS Supplement



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Should Be Us

by Rev. David A. Davis

This month marks the Super Bowl. At the time of this writing the author and the rest of the State of Michigan have high hopes for the Detroit Lions. One of the great mantras of any championship team is teamwork. The team works together. The team wins together. The team loses together. Dissension in the team spells disaster.

continued on page 2

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Table of Contents

- 1** From the President
- 3** Healthy Workers
- 4** Great Commission
- 6** Great Compassion
- 8** Healthy Congregations
- 12** LLL
- 13** News and Events
- 14** Special Recognition
- 16** Calls and Roster Update
- 16** Calendar of Events



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continued from page 1

What is stock and trade of any championship team should be us, the Church. Unity is paramount for people of the Kingdom. You don't have to dig too deep into the Scripture to find the importance accent on unity for the people of God. Check out John 13 or 17. Jesus prays for it. Paul writes about it. See 1 Corinthians 1 and 12. Contemplate the very nature of God: Father, Son, Holy Spirit.

It is no news, but sad news nonetheless, that the Church and her congregations struggle with maintaining unity. Satan bangs at the doors of our hearts to separate us one from another. Our personal agendas and failings chip away at it.

In the light of whoever is winning—whatever championship in whatever sport—with excellent unity, let's recommit ourselves as the people of God to unity: in our congregations, in our church body, and in our relationships with the entire Communion of Saints.

You don't have to think hard or search long to find biblical tools for maintaining and building unity. Here's a quick list. (You can search out appropriate Bible citations.)

- Put the best construction on everything.
- Focus on serving, not being served.
- Talk *to* the person, not *about* the person.
- Seek *what's* right, not *who's* right.
- Walk humbly; eliminate pride.
- Think in terms of being part of a body, not a Lone Ranger.

Admittedly, the list above took almost no time to construct. I bet you could add another six items without thinking too long. The difficult aspect of unity is not what it takes to live in it, but the living in it.

That's where being united in purpose, or goal, comes in. Unity ultimately grows not from personal action but from a shared commitment. Or a shared hope. Or a shared end.

As the Church we have all those things in one thing. It is the confession, faith, hope, promise that Jesus is Lord. Unity is found in the person of Jesus.

- He, true God and true man, has rescued us from sin, death, and the devil.
- He wants to seek and to save the lost, and He has invited us to be part of that mission.
- He is good and works all things together for our good together with the Heavenly Father.
- He is wise and has revealed His wisdom to us through the Scripture and the power of the Holy Spirit.

The writer of Hebrews sums it up well: “... *let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart*” (Hebrews 12:1–3 NIV).

Books could be written about the attractiveness of sports. Why do people invest so much in something that is ultimately ephemeral? The champion this year is an “also-ran” next year. What is it that is so attractive?

At least part of it is watching the beauty of people working together, in sync, in harmony to do great things that none of the participants could do alone. Indeed, the unity of a team can be a beautiful thing.

It should be us, the Church.

Pray for it. ■



Rev. David A. Davis serves the Michigan District, LCMS as its president.

“... *let's recommit ourselves as the people of God to unity: in our congregations, in our church body, and in our relationships with the entire Communion of Saints.*”



A Lifesaving Award

by William R. Wangelin

Coming upon an unconscious man in a store would be a shock to anyone. But would you know how to help? CPR stands for cardiopulmonary resuscitation. It can help save a life during cardiac arrest, when the heart stops beating or beats ineffectively. All Lutheran school and early childhood teachers and staff undergo CPR training on a regular basis.

Courtney Mateer is an early childhood teacher at Our Savior Lutheran School, Lansing. She has attended regular CPR training sessions with fellow staff members, led by Pastor Lang Yang, a certified CPR instructor and Hmong Pastor at Our Savior. Recently, when Courtney and early childhood co-worker Carly Coomes were at Target, they came upon a man who was unconscious. They remembered their training and sprang into action. While Carly notified emergency and Target employees, Courtney began performing CPR until paramedics arrived. The man, who was in his late-20's or early 30's, received medical attention and survived.

Courtney was recently recognized with a Lifesaving Award and medal from the American National Red Cross for her selfless and humane action using lifesaving skills. In addition, Pastor Lang Yang was also recognized with an Instructor Lifesaving Award and pin.

Every person, especially those

who work in churches and schools, should learn the basic lifesaving skills of First Aid/CPR/AED. You never know when you will encounter another person who needs lifesaving. This could be your children, parents, family members, students, friends, or strangers. Pastor Yang stated, “*You don't have to work in the medical field to save another person's life. Knowing the basic lifesaving skills will prepare you when the time comes.*”

We thank God for Courtney's effective use of CPR, and for the training that Pastor Yang and so many instructors provide. While we pray that it is seldom used, we are thankful to God for those who can respond with lifesaving skills.

The Red Cross offers CPR/AED training for individuals. For more information, visit redcross.org. ■

Rev. William R. Wangelin serves as pastor of Our Savior, Lansing.



Photos courtesy of Rev. William Wangelin

Listen for the *Lies*

by Alex W. Hoffmeyer



“If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31–32).

An alarming study from Gallup published in February 2023 showed that roughly half of all Americans believe the news is given to intentionally mislead or misinform the public.^[1] Given the state of our political system, I can only imagine that percentage has increased in the past two years. And, even though there aren’t any official polls to show it, this mistrust extends to all areas of our lives. It seems that, no matter who is speaking, we are primed to listen for lies.

It is an important skill because, like it or not, we have to confront many lies in our lives—from the news, from friends and family, from neighbors, etc. But we also must face the Father of Lies—Satan. Jesus warns the disciples in John’s gospel that “[Satan] is a liar and the father of lies” (8:44), and that he has nothing to do with the truth. And we are the target of his lies, for we are members of the Body of Christ whom Satan is seeking to destroy. He lies in order that God’s Creation would suffer, fall into sin, and die eternally. And his lies are enticing to sinners, for they invite us to seize power and control for ourselves that really belongs to God. Thus he is ever at work against God, which is why it is good for us as God’s people to be able to listen for his lies.

But how do we listen for the lies? We must identify the lie in order that it might be exposed. And, in order to do this, we must first know the truth—for, as Jesus Himself says, “the truth will set you free.” As a pastor, I find this is often what gets overlooked when dealing with the lies we face in the world. We are quick to cry “liar!” at news media and individuals, but we are slow to identify those lies with the bondage-breaking truth of God’s Word. Why is that? Perhaps we are worried about rejection. After all, the Word of God doesn’t carry too much weight in most areas of society. And many of us have likely been burned by sharing God’s Word in one situation or another, which makes us shy.

Yet, what other option is there? “If you abide in my word ... you will know the truth” (John 8:31). If our goal is to listen for lies—both for ourselves and those we love—we must use the Word of God. But how we use this Word is just as important as the Word itself. Too often we see the Word used as ammunition to engage our neighbor in battle. But this sees our neighbor as the enemy, rather than one

who is convinced by the lies of our true Enemy. The Word is not given for us to wound our neighbor but heal them. It is an invitation for sinners to turn away from their sin in order that they might receive the comfort that comes from listening to the One Who forgives sins and brings life everlasting. And this invitation is personal and intimate. It requires the sinner to sit and learn at the feet of Jesus so that He might heal them and raise them up to new life.

This is why our use of the Word is so important to keep in mind. If we simply cry out “liar” when someone repeats a lie of Satan, or if we seek only to cut down someone living in sin, then we miss the opportunity for invitation. Instead, we should see God’s Word as a source of encouragement—a light that shines in the darkness of our weary and sinful world. And we should allow this light, with its power, to banish the darkness of Satan’s lies.

And, fortunately for us, there is a new resource that can help us do just that. A few years ago, Rev. Andrew Jones published his first book, *10 Questions*, which helped us read the Word with inquisitive minds. His next book, *10 Lies Satan Loves to Tell*, is available now. In the introduction to his book, Rev. Jones writes, “Satan attacks and means evil against us, but God always intends such attacks to drive us back into conversation with Him in prayer and into further meditation on the sweet comfort of His Word.”^[2] As people of hope, we should take the attacks and lies we face in the world and allow them to drive us further into the Word of God, so that we will not only be bolstered against Satan’s attacks but also encouraged by our God and Father. May you be driven headlong into the Word of God together this year! ■

Rev. Alex Hoffmeyer serves Salem Lutheran Church in Coloma, Mich. He, his wife Leah, and their daughter Harper continue to enjoy Pure Michigan whenever they can, taking chances to explore God’s Creation on the trails, the bluffs, and the beaches.

[1] See the report at <https://knightfoundation.org/reports/american-views-2023-part-2/>

[2] Jones, *10 Lies Satan Loves to Tell*, 11.



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The Fumarole

by Paul M. Clark

There is a geological phenomenon known as a *fumarole*, found in areas of volcanic activity. A fumarole is a vent or an opening in the earth's surface that emits steam and volcanic gases. They can be quite dangerous, as they can emit suffocating levels of carbon dioxide, acidic sulfide, or chloride gas. After a snowstorm in 2009, three ski patrol members at a popular California ski resort were fencing off a volcanic fumarole when the snow around the vent collapsed. Two members slid into the deep hole and rapidly lost consciousness. Another one went down into the hole to help them and succumbed to the fumes. All three of them died.

The problem with a toxic gas is that you cannot see it. But its effects, though silent, are deadly.

On January 22, 1973, when the Supreme Court decided in the case of *Roe v. Wade* that, quite apart from anything in the Constitution, there was a right for a woman to have an abortion. For over 48 years, those who believed in and valued the sanctity of human life have fought against this heavy shroud of evil that lay over our land from the horrendous genocide of abortion. On June 24, 2022, *Roe* was finally overturned by the Supreme Court's *Dobbs* decision. Justice Samuel Alito, writing for the majority, said, "*We hold that Roe and Casey must be overruled. The Constitution makes no reference to abortion, and no such right is implicitly protected by any constitutional provision, including the one on which the defenders of Roe and Casey now chiefly rely—the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.*"

But of course, that is not the end of the story.

The *Dobbs* decision gave the abortion issue back to the states. Some states used that freedom to protect the lives of the unborn. But we all know where our State of Michigan went, when on November 8, 2022—another day of infamy—after a great deal of propaganda and

misinformation on the issue, voters chose to enshrine abortion in Michigan for all nine months of pregnancy without restriction, passing what was called *Proposal 3*.

And here we are, in 2025, still fiercely battling for the precious lives of dear little babies, who just happen to have residence in the womb.

But we will never give up this fight.

Like those volcanic fumaroles, the toxic gas of abortion reaches into every crevice of society. It affects how we look at the value of life itself, the lives of others, and our lives as well. If an unborn child is not worth protecting, then perhaps there are other groups of people not worth our protection. It may be no coincidence that we are witnessing a rise in anti-semitism, for example. Or a terrorist-driven truck plowing through a crowd of innocent people in New Orleans. Or a national rise in suicide rates, including an increasing push for physician-assisted suicide. ***If human life is not sacred, what does it matter whether we live or die?***

But human life ***IS*** sacred, for ***GOD*** gives life as a gift. And God not only gives life but He so loved us that He gave us ***His own Son, Jesus Christ***, that whoever believes in Him would not perish, but have eternal life (John 3:16).

So, the battle for the right to life goes on.

We need to clearly cut through the smokescreen of lies and deceit that are used so well by abortion advocates to cover up the real issue. Abortion is *not* a reproductive right. It is *not* about health care, though that has been a successful label to disguise what at the heart of things is spiritually, emotionally, and often physically harmful to the mother, and always deadly to the child. There is nothing good that comes out of an abortion. The anticipated result of every single abortion is this: *A dead baby.*

When someone tells you, “*I don’t like abortion, but we need to maintain the right to abortion because women can die otherwise without proper medical help,*” then be ready to take that on with facts. The fact is that no state anywhere prohibits a doctor from doing what is necessary during a crisis pregnancy to save the life of the mother, and that includes ectopic pregnancies. We need to continue to push for the best medical care and use of technological advances to protect all people, adults, children, and the unborn. That is the mark of a *civilized* society. The current abortion culture—especially here in Michigan—is the mark of a *barbarian* society. Of this, we should be ashamed.

Moms and dads, pick up your child. Look into their eyes. **Grandparents**, or aunts and uncles, cuddle with that little boy or girl that is so dear to you. **THIS** is what the battle is about. **Churchgoers**, look at that baby or child in the pew next to you. They have a right to life. They *had* that right to life even when they were in the



Photo by Elisa Schulz/Michigan District, LCMS

womb. They are not just animals, evolutionary products of chance that have no value. They are *not disposable*. They are human beings, created in the image of God. Don’t let the advocates of abortion and the media lie to you and try to convince you that this is about health

continued on page 15

Hidden in Disability

by Daniel Hudeck

This essay was written by Daniel Hudeck, an 8th grade student at Trinity, Reese. It won first place in the Elementary Essay Contest of Lutherans for Life of Michigan.

When my sister was born at 23 weeks, the doctor did not want to resuscitate her, knowing she would have many disabilities in the unlikely event she survived. Disability can be a darkness for us both, [but] through God’s grace, light shines in the darkness. God can use disability to bless us by using it as an opportunity to draw us closer to Him, spread joy and enthusiasm, and show our true value in Christ.

God uses disability as an opportunity to draw families closer to Him. Often the challenges are so overwhelming that it drives us to a very important truth. We realize that we cannot do this on our own. We need God’s help. We also gain perspective when we realize there is much more to look forward to than this short life here on earth. For all who believe in Jesus as their Savior, we have an eternity in heaven to look forward to. Because of the effects of sin, there are hardships and disabilities. But “*In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it*” (John 1:4–5).

Often, those with disabilities spread joy and enthusiasm

in unique ways. They can share Christ with the boldness and excitement of a child, not waiting for the perfect time or place. Their positive attitude is contagious. Beyond a joyful attitude, there is something far more important that gives us value.

Where does our value come from? Our true value comes from being a child of God. You are loved not for what you can do but for who you are. As it says in 1 Samuel, “*The Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart*” (1 Samuel 16:7). Our value is not based on our abilities but on the fact that we are loved children of God. God’s love for us is the most important place to find value.

Disabilities can be blessings used as an opportunity to draw us closer to Him, filling our lives with joy and enthusiasm, and reminding us of our true value in Him. My sister was very fortunate and, although she has faced many difficulties, she is now in college studying to be a nurse. Thanks be to God! What huge blessings could have been missed had her life not been valued. Life shines in the darkness!



District 101 – A Healthy Exercise for Your Congregation

by Laura L. Thomas

A new year inspires our personal resolve and effort to “get healthy.” We see an abundance of commercials and articles about renewing diet and exercise plans and finding food, equipment, and advisors to help. Determination is at its highest to make a lasting difference in our health habits.

It’s a great time to do the same with our congregations! “District 101” is the Michigan District’s “commercial” for resources that are available to pastors, all professional and volunteer church workers, and laity serving in their congregations. Taking time to refresh this knowledge may open new opportunities for ministry and shake up old ideas that have been stuck on the “to do” list.

A District 101 presentation introduces a brief history of the Michigan District and explains structure and governance within the LCMS. As we enter 2025 and prepare for the Michigan District Convention, understanding the importance of a congregation’s role in this triennial event is vital as we walk together (the meaning of “synod”).

Our annual District theme in 2025 is *We are Not Alone*. Are you aware of each member of the District staff and the ways that each can help you with ministry? Have you looked at the District website and navigated its pages with hundreds of resources from lectionaries

to Bible studies to templates? From video trainings to podcasts to sample policies and more?

Discover the joy of “walking together” by reading current and archived issues of *Michigan in Touch* and sharing your ministry and event news with us. Subscribe to the District’s E-newsletter. Watch and share District social media posts and let us share when your congregation has exciting news or events. Better yet, make plans to attend one another’s events. You can find all of these connections at michigandistrict.org.

We want to hear from you, too. Your questions, concerns, and feedback are needed for development of resources that are most relevant to Michigan District congregations and its church workers. The body is made up of many parts and each part is precious to God for the advancement of Christ’s Kingdom. Our goal is to connect you as People of Hope, vigorously making known the love of Christ to one another and to your communities. Together, let’s explore what that means for your congregation’s health goals. ■

Mrs. Laura L. Thomas is the Director of Development for the Michigan District, LCMS. Contact her at 734.213.4264 or laura.thomas@michigandistrict.org.



My God Can!

by Mindy Bierlein

The St. Lorenz Girls of Grace Dance Ministry is excited to announce their annual worship concert entitled *My God Can!* to be held at the St. Lorenz Worship and Event Center on April 12 and 13. Inspired by Philippians 4:13, “*I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength,*” we are reminded that, no matter what life throws our way, we have a God who is more than able. *My God Can!* reminds us that nothing is too big for Him—not our fears, not our doubts, not our struggles. He is more than capable of working in and through each of us and, through His strength, we can do all things.

The stage will come alive with over 200 participants. Worshipful dance, drama, vocalists and personal testimonies will bring this inspirational message of this foundational truth: We all need a Savior, and that Savior is Jesus Christ. We first will reflect on three key moments in Christ’s life: His birth, death, and resurrection. These moments are amazing reminders of the great lengths God went to rescue and redeem every one of us—the ultimate sacrifice of love.

But His amazing love continues, as we are reminded of what God continues to do in our lives today, how He is present with us in both the good times and the bad. Whether we are celebrating victories or enduring challenges, His hand is always guiding us. His love sustains us, and His power helps us navigate the world around us. He is not a distant God; He is actively at work in our lives right now.

Finally, we’ll look ahead to how God will continue to work in us and through us, equipping us to share His love with others. His grace isn’t just for us. It’s meant to be shared with those around us, especially in a world that is desperate for hope, peace, and love.

The Girls of Grace concert will occur on April 12 at 1 and 5 p.m. and April 13 at 3 p.m. General admission tickets are \$10 on the St. Lorenz website at stlorenz.org/ministries/girls-of-grace/ or by calling the St. Lorenz Church Office at 989.652.6141. The Girls of Grace Dance Ministry also offers free ticket vouchers for those in need. Social organizations or churches who have outreach ministries may call 989.652.0770 for more information. ■

Mindy Bierlein stepped in as Director of Girls of Grace dance ministry after the founder, Linda Nuechterlein retired. She has continued to teach each dancer what it means to praise the Lord with dancing and that they dance for an audience of one. She is supported by her husband Matthew Bierlein and three kids.

About Girls of Grace

Girls of Grace Dance Ministry is celebrating its 23rd year of service. Linda Nuechterlein founded this volunteer ministry that is now continuing through a core leadership team of instructors and many volunteers. Presently, Girls of Grace has 70+ dancers, ranging in age from grades 4-college age.



Cybersecurity Basics for Churches

by Bill Johnson

“... your end users are your greatest vulnerability in network security. But with some training and vigilance, they can become the best defense against attackers who would seek to compromise your congregation’s data.”

At first glance, churches might seem like unlikely targets for cybercrime. After all, why target churches or nonprofit organizations when there’s more money to make by exploiting the vulnerabilities of wealthier corporations?

Yet churches have a great deal of personal information about their members, including giving information and sometimes very private notes and information about pastoral care. With the rise of easier-to-use tools and specialized artificial intelligence agents, the skill level needed to execute sophisticated cyberattacks has dropped substantially in the last several years. Simply put, more attackers are using better tools to carry out these attacks, and churches aren’t immune to them. Fortunately, there are a few easy things you can do to help protect your church’s data and the privacy of God’s people.

Covering the Basics

We’ll start from the assumption that you’re doing the basics, meaning you have a good firewall/router in place, have a standard antivirus solution on every computer on the network, and are keeping up with software updates on a regular basis. None of those things are particularly difficult today, nor especially expensive. Your local computer geek probably has some solid recommendations for the antivirus software, and the core operating system updates are, frankly, just a matter of insisting on weekly reboots of all machines on the network. Chances are your internet provider set up a basic firewall/router combination. While the basic settings are usually pretty solid, a more custom configuration for maximum protection is best left to a trained network analyst.

What’s Left?

So what’s a church to do to help itself once the basics are covered? The single most hackable piece of any computer system is, unfortunately, the people. This has been

true for years, and it's the hardest part of the system to properly secure. Most cyberattacks start with individual users, and the attacks are growing more sophisticated with time. We'll take a look at a couple of different attack vectors that target naïve or inattentive users and how they can mark the beginning of an attacker's work to compromise your data.

Social Engineering

While most of us think of hackers as shady characters in dark rooms working by the light of their terminals, the truth is that many hackers are genuinely charismatic people who specialize in manipulating users to reveal information they shouldn't. Take, for example, the technician who calls from your internet provider and needs to look at your connection equipment. While this could very well be a legitimate request, it's also a common vector for gaining physical access to your network, or, at minimum, information about the structure of your organization/network. Let's consider several possible outcomes:

- The user allows the tech to schedule an on-site visit and access the equipment directly without supervision, or with supervision that doesn't understand threats from normal updates and operation. This is your worst-case scenario. Ideally, on-site visits should be scheduled with the network administrator and closely monitored to ensure the work being done is within the scope of the visit.
- The user tells the technician that he or she will have to schedule with the network admin and gives him or her contact information to reach out directly. This is better, but it still gives away a key advantage to the bad guys; they now know who your network admin is, and the next phishing email (more on those in a moment) will no doubt use their name and contact information to make it seem more genuine.
- The user takes down contact information for the technician and passes that direction to the network admin, who vets the credentials with the company to ensure this is legitimate work and to schedule time to supervise the implementation. This is ideal. We don't want to go without updates, but we also want to ensure that the people we're giving access to have been properly vetted and are adequately supervised as they work.

Phishing

Chances are you've at least heard the term *phishing* at some point in recent years. Phishing is when an attacker sends an email that pretends to be from a legitimate source

to deliver a payload (link or attachment) or to attempt to engage a user in conversation to earn trust and exploit that confidence in time. Most data theft incidents start with some form of phishing. Phishing attacks used to be easy to spot, as they'd often have mistakes in the template or layout of the email, but the advances in the tools available to even the least-skilled hackers have made those flaws harder to spot. So, what can you look for?

- An unexpected email that demands urgent action, often with dire consequences and a timetable, is a likely suspect for being a phishing attempt. Examples in the wild include threats of account suspension, fraud warnings for fake Amazon orders, or even urgent warnings from your system administrator (information they got from your website or via social engineering).
- A reply to an email that doesn't match the purported sender. The sender's emails are often spoofed, but they will include a reply-to that allows the hacker to convince the target that the sender is real if he or she replies. Watch out for lookalike domains, such as googl.com, gmail.com, or microsoftofficeManagement.somehackersdomain.com. If you don't recognize the domain, do not click the link or open any attachments. Instead, follow up with the company directly to verify the email before taking any action.
- Do not click on any links in any emails. The attacks are becoming more sophisticated. Often, simply looking at a link address is no longer enough to enable even skilled users to know what's safe and what isn't.

So, what's a church office to do? The safest policy is to simply not click links or open attachments in emails unless you expressly know they are coming and trust the source (and the source's security practices!). Some cybersecurity training firms will even send your users test phishing emails to help train them to spot these sorts of attacks and instill a culture of security first.

Ultimately, your end users are your greatest vulnerability in network security. But with some training and vigilance, they can become the best defense against attackers who would seek to compromise your congregation's data. ■

The article "Cyber Security Basics for Churches," written by Rev. Bill Johnson, first appeared on December 3, 2024 at concordiatechnology.org. Reprinted with permission.

LUTHERAN LAYMEN'S LEAGUE

Ministry to South Korea and Thailand

Since its reopening in 2003, the Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM) center in South Korea, known as Korea Lutheran Hour (KLH), has been working to spread the Gospel and to create a youthful vibrancy within the Church in South Korea. The Christian culture resources produced by KLH are valuable evangelistic tools, reflecting Korean traditions.

KLH carries out LHM's mission of proclaiming, equipping, and engaging through various outreach ministries such as radio, blogs, text messaging, Bible correspondence courses, Children's materials, etc. Theatre and music events sponsored by KLH provide opportunities for non-Christians to connect with Christians and local Lutheran congregations. Christian "Jazz & Vespers" performances attract attention from the public as well as local media. In addition, KLH ministers to the Korean people through its website, newsletter, and Korean language LHM videos and books. KLH is also taking steps to spread the Gospel in North Korea and China.

Journey into Light (JIL), the Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM) ministry center in Thailand, primarily

concentrates on using mass media technologies to proclaim the Gospel to the Thai people and to support evangelism efforts through local churches and LCMS missionaries. LHM's work is rapidly expanding out of Bangkok into the central, southern, and northeast portions of Thailand. Currently, the government and people are quite open-minded and receptive to the Gospel. LHM – Thailand broadcasts three different 25-minute programs each day that have been effective in touching people's hearts with the Gospel and the love of God. The ministry center uses radio drama to promote the use of tracts and Bible Correspondence Courses.

To learn more and/or support these ministries, visit lhm.org.



Save the date: The Michigan Lutheran Laymen's League (LLL) convention will take place on Saturday, April 26, at Faith, Grand Blanc.

Save the Date

Lutheran Adult Gathering
Mackinac Island, Mich.
October 9-11, 2026

www.michigandistrict.org

A New Chapter for Michigan In Touch: Coming April 2025

If you've been a subscriber to *Michigan In Touch*, you may have heard the news: big changes are on the way in 2025! For those who have enjoyed *Michigan In Touch* as a supplement to *The Lutheran Witness*, we're excited to share that starting in April 2025, *Michigan In Touch* will transition into a new stand-alone publication with Church Extension Fund (CEF).

Since its launch, *Michigan In Touch* has been a cherished resource for Lutherans across Michigan, offering faith-enriching content, inspiring stories, and practical resources tailored to our community. This new publication will be published quarterly and continue to provide the content you know and love, including ministry updates from the Michigan District and CEF, along with the ever-popular *CEF Spotlight*.

As a special bonus, all current *Lutheran Witness* subscribers, CEF investors, and Michigan District church workers will receive a complimentary inaugural issue of the new publication in April. Stay tuned for more details as we prepare to bring you this exciting new chapter of *Michigan In Touch*!



Photo courtesy of Trinity, Berrien Springs

Trinity, Berrien Springs celebrated Epiphany Sunday by receiving twelve new members, including six through baptism and three through adult confirmation.



Photo courtesy of St. Michael, Portage

Adult baptisms and new members at St. Michael, Portage

Building Up the Kingdom in South Africa

Christian Outreach for Africa (africaoutreach.org) is hosting the *Building Up the Kingdom in Joy* conference at St. Luke Haslett, on March 8. This is a unique opportunity for you to learn, share, and engage with the growing global mission, especially as many of our friends from South Africa will be in attendance to share their inspiring work and vision.

The focus of this conference is to highlight what God is doing in South Africa and how to come alongside brothers and sisters in Christ to support and build up the Kingdom of God. You will hear stories of transformation, growth, and the incredible impact of joy-driven ministry in the region. This is a day to connect, be inspired, and discover how you can get involved in this important mission.

You and your congregation are invited to be part of this transformative event. The cost is \$15/person for lunch. Register online at bit.ly/3DNj80F.

Phil's Friends

An LCMS Recognized Service Organization, Phil's Friends' mission is to provide Christ-centered support and hope to those affected by cancer by sending care packages free of charge, bringing the love, compassion, and hope of Jesus Christ into their lives.

To that end, congregations and schools are invited to join them in providing Christ-like support, hope, and love to cancer patients. You can participate by hosting a pack event, coloring cards of hope, tying fleece blankets, and collecting care package items.

If you wish to send a care package to someone you know that has cancer, volunteers will create and assemble, ship or deliver the packages in an anonymously decorated Phil's Friends box.

For more information, visit philsfriends.org.



Special Recognition

Conrad Retires

Donna Conrad is a quiet woman who likes to work behind the scenes. She served the Michigan District, LCMS for 28 years, most of that time as an administrative assistant in the Business Office.

Donna used to work at a dairy establishment in Adrian, but when that closed, she decided to stay home and raise her daughter. Since her family lived on a farm, Donna and her husband Mark decided to raise sheep as a hobby business—they would sell them for meat and would also sell lambs to the 4H kids.

Once her daughter grew up, Donna started working part-time as church secretary at Emmanuel, Britton. One day she saw that the District Office was looking for a receptionist and applied, and the rest is history. She always did some of the accounting part of the job, even while she was a receptionist, but, she says, *“I was glad when I stopped being the receptionist. I don’t think I was a good [one], because I’m not outgoing.”* She likes to stay busy, and her favorite part of the job is *“receipts and payables because they’re routine but also always different.”*

Her affinity with routine would become apparent during staff meetings, when employees would go around the table reporting what tasks they were up to. Invariably, Donna would shrug and say, *“The usual.”* This always brought chuckles, but also emphasized the constancy she provided



Photo by Elisa Schulz/Michigan District, LCMS

by performing the same tasks day in and day out.

When asked about the best times and the worst times, Donna says the Covid year was the worst. She held down the fort at the District Office, working in the building all by herself. She says there were advantages to it, but it was also very lonely. In contrast, her favorite memories are from being a part of conventions and all-church-worker conferences: *“That was fun,”* she said.

Reflecting on her 28 years at the District office, she remarks: *“It’s been a good job. I’m not outgoing or anything, so working here I feel that I have done something [for the Kingdom].”*

Described as an amazing friend and great listener, Donna (and her sense of humor) will be missed more than she knows. Congratulations, Donna, on your retirement!

Martinal Celebrates Anniversary

In December, Hope, Adrian recognized its Youth and Family Minister DCE, Rebekah Wrase Martinal, for 20 years of service. A cake reception was held and gifts were given. Hope members expressed their gratitude and thanked God for His direction and blessing through her vital work.



Photo courtesy of Hope Adrian

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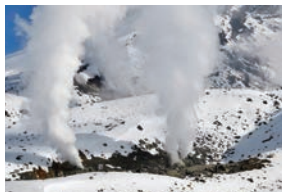
care or reproductive freedom. *It's not.* It's about **LIFE**.

And so, we will keep on keeping on. We will remain undaunted by the challenges ahead. We will step up to provide even more resources for our pregnancy centers to help young women choose life. We will do our part to encourage our family and friends to see the beauty and dignity in each life. We will look at each baby, born and unborn, as a gift from God, *with boundless value*. We will wisely use our resources, our monetary gifts, and our talents and abilities to support and engage in the battle for life. Most of all, we will continue to pray to the **LORD OF LIFE**, to work in the mind and heart of each person *to bring them to faith in Jesus*, that they may be saved, and that they may join us in beholding the value of every person under God's heaven.

Like a fumarole that emits toxic gasses, beware of *the fumarole of the abortion culture*, for that poison seeps out into every level of our society, and its effects are devastating. **Stand up and fight! Engage in the battle for the Right to Life!**

We have **One** who fights alongside us and is for us, as the great Epiphany hymn says:

continued from page 7



**“For Christ goes with us all the way—today, tomorrow, every day!
His love is never ending!
Sing out! Ring out! Jubilation! Exaltation! Tell the story!
Great is He, the King of Glory!”**

What YOU can do:

- Contact your representative and let him/her know you're not giving up.
- Participate in the Michigan March for Life on November 6 in Lansing.
- Subscribe to the quarterly Michigan Lutherans for Life newsletter, *Lifelines*. To be added to the e-mail distribution list, email president@gmail.com.
- Volunteer at a local pregnancy resource center.
- Pray. ■

Rev. Paul Clark has been the pastor of St. Paul, Fowler for over 30 years. He serves as President of Lutherans for Life of Michigan, as well as the Pastoral Counselor. He serves also as the District Life Coordinator for the Michigan District, LCMS. Rev. Clark and his wife Elizabeth have three children through the blessing of adoption.



104th Michigan District Convention
June 22–24, 2025 | Concordia University Ann Arbor

Important Dates/Deadlines

February 22, 2025 - Nominations Deadline

February 22, 2025 - Overtures Deadline

April 5, 2025 - Regional Pre-Convention Meetings

May 3, 2025 - Floor Committee Meeting

For forms and additional information visit:
michigandistrict.org/convention

Calendar of Events

For more information about these and other events visit:
michigandistrict.org/events

FEBRUARY 2025

- 1 We Are Not Alone Conference
Our Savior, Lansing
- 6–7 Snow Tire Conference
Bavarian Inn, Frankenmuth
- 21 LCMS Board of Dir./MI District Board of Dir.
Ann Arbor

MARCH 2025

- 5 Ash Wednesday
- 8 Building Up the Kingdom in Joy Conference
St. Luke, Haslett
- 8–9 State Basketball Tournament
Concordia University & St. Paul, Ann Arbor
- 15 Immigrant/Ethnic Festival
St. Luke, Haslett
- 18 Board of Directors
First, Charlotte
- 28 Online Parish Nurse Zoom Meeting
Zoom

APRIL 2025

- 5 Regional Pre-Convention Meetings
Detroit, Livonia, Pinconning, Grand Rapids
- 13 Palm Sunday
- 17 Maundy Thursday
- 18 Good Friday
District Office Closed
- 20 Easter Sunday
- 25–27 The Katie
DoubleTree by Hilton, Bay City
- 26 LLL Michigan District Convention
Grand Blanc

MAY 2025

- 3 Convention Floor Committee Meetings
District Office, Ann Arbor
- 6–7 West Pastors Conference
Great Wolf Lodge, Traverse City
- 13–14 South & East Pastors Conference
Bavarian Inn Lodge, Frankenmuth
- 14–15 Circuit Visitors Conference
St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth
- 17 Regional Track Meets
Locations TBD
- 19 Board of Directors Meeting
St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth
- 20–21 North & East Pastors Conference
Bavarian Inn Lodge, Frankenmuth
- 31 State Track Meet
Concordia University Ann Arbor

Calls and Roster Update

ORDAINED

Calls Accepted

Rev. A. Peter Engblade (Ludington, MI) to SMP, Our Savior, Scottville
Rev. Kurt Lambart (Garden City, MI) to Vacancy, Peace, Ann Arbor
Rev. Andrew Pronsati (Chelsea, MI) to Associate, Redeemer, Rochester, MN
Rev. Robert Riggs (Carson City, MI) to IIM, Sole, St. Martin, Birch Run
Rev. Matthew Schuler (Oxford, MI) to Associate, Faith, Troy
Rev. Robert Wurst (Wildwood, MO) to Sole, Good Shepherd, Middleville

Status & Title Changes

Rev. Dr. Charles Webb (Traverse City, MI) to Emeritus

Transferred Into District

Rev. Philip Rittner, II (Columbia City, IN) from Indiana District
Rev. James Weist (Adrian, MI) from Montana District
Rev. Robert Wurst (Wildwood, MO) from Missouri District

Transferred Out of District

Rev. Jonathan Moyer (Highland, MI) to SELC District
Rev. Andrew Pronsati (Chelsea, MI) to Minnesota South District
Rev. Dr. Steven Schave (Wentzville, MO) to Missouri District

*Correction

*Rev. Mark Hannemann (Raymond, NE) to Nebraska District

Called Home

Rev. Dr. Richard Shuta

COMMISSIONED

Calls Accepted

Arrick, Mary (Candidate) to St. Paul, Northville
Kutch, Michael (Candidate) to Hope, DeWitt
Schultz, Josiah (Christ, Yuma, AZ) to Our Savior, Gladwin
Schwark, Sadie (Cq., Concordia, Mequon, WI) to St. John, Fraser

Transferred Into District

Kutch, Michael (Minnesota South District) as Candidate

Resigned From the Roster

Prisby, Kelly

Called Home

Difatta, David

A complete up-to-date listing of Calls and
Vacancies can be found at michigandistrict.org.



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