

Summer 2026

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IN TOUCH

A publication of the Michigan District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
and Church Extension Fund

FROM THE PRESIDENT

On Meeting the Needs of the Community

by Rev. David A. Davis

Years ago, I led a sectional at a pastors' conference. The committee asked me to talk about *meeting the needs of our communities in these difficult times*. (This was years ago—the times are always difficult.)

While ministries like coat distribution, food pantries, an after-school youth center, and so on meet some of the needs, there is another way to look at *what the community needs from the Church*.

Maybe the following will give you something to think about.

The COMMUNITY needs US to read our Bible.

While I have emphasized the importance of Bible reading for personal spiritual growth previously (and there is no surer pathway), the *community* needs us to read our Bible. If

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Christians are going to be witnesses of a living hope in the community, then we need to be *sure witnesses of truth*—and that comes from knowing the Word.

The COMMUNITY needs US to pray—a lot.

One of the greatest powers that the Church has is its direct access to the throne of Grace. The Church should regularly and aggressively be praying for its community:

- Public safety and health workers
- Educators
- The poor and needy
- Government officials
- The unemployed and the underemployed

All of these have special challenges which we can take straight to the God of all creation. Prayer is a work that we can do for our community.

The COMMUNITY needs US to tithe plus.

Generally, people think that tithing is to meet the “needs” of the Church. Not so.

Tithing forces Christians to rely on God instead of being money oriented. The *community* needs to see Christians trusting in God instead of money. That will give them hope in troubled economic times. They will see there is another way.

Tithing will keep the Church from acting like merchandisers, non-profits, and beggars. Instead of being receivers, we will have resources to give to the community.

The COMMUNITY needs US to quit talking like political pundits from the right or left.

The political conversation and tone in our land is cynical, sarcastic, caustic, and bombastic. It doesn't help the community if the Church speaks with the same kind of voice.

The COMMUNITY needs US to quit expecting non-Christian people to behave biblically.

Certainly, the Church grieves at the coarse, immoral, and unhealthy behavior of so many in our society. But we have to be careful about how we react.

Imagine coming across a terrible automobile accident. If you react with shock and horror at what you see, you will be of little help to the people in need.

The Church should calm down, take a breath, and then gently share with individuals who may be far from Christ, that there is a God who loves them in spite of their behavior (just as He does us). Our goal is not behavior modification for the community; it is to win an opportunity to introduce the Savior.

And while we are at it, let's make sure that we turn off all scorn or mockery. It is not funny for Christians to make fun of others. It makes it hard for the community to hear our message of love and hope.

The COMMUNITY needs US to behave biblically.

While we should not expect non-Christians to live like

Christians, they need to see Christians living as Christians. Jesus saved His harshest words for those who knew better!

As you know, non-Christians in the community have a hard time hearing our message when they see our words not matching our actions. Early Christians drew others into the Church because they were distinctively different people.

The COMMUNITY needs US to love its children.

The government can't. Too many parents are unable or won't. Jesus does. So should we.

The COMMUNITY needs US to quit selling Jesus.

Sharing Jesus is more than talking people into a few religious talking points. Studies indicate that most people know the story of Jesus, but they're not buying it.

Instead of introducing Jesus as if He is a product to buy, let's share Him as a dear friend of ours who is a friend of sinners. We want, by the power of the Spirit, to win people, not sell them.

Which leads us to the next point.

The COMMUNITY needs US to be in proximity.

Make sure that you are engaged with neighbors and fellow workers. Walk in your neighborhood. Coach little league. Participate in a community endeavor. Hang out with friends at a coffee shop. Engage strangers.

Practice *unchurchmanship*: connecting with people *outside of the Church community* to share through words and deeds the love of Jesus.

The COMMUNITY needs US to love each other in the Church.

Christian congregations always need to have reputations of being havens of peace and joy. Unbelievers get confused about discord between believers. Within the Church, we must work at getting along with the others.

Do you know the word from Jesus about not casting pearls before swine? This does not mean don't waste your breath on people who do not appreciate what you have to offer. Commonly people understand it that way. Biblically, “pearls” are a reference to the people of God. What Jesus meant about not casting pearls before swine was that Christians should not rip on other Christians in front of unbelievers. A modern phrase would be “don't throw fellow Christians under the bus.” Jesus said, “*All people will know that you are my disciples if you love one another*” (John 13:35).

This world and your community have many needs. Chief among them is the need for the Christ-centered, hope-filled ministry of Christians and their congregations. ■



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

The article, *On Meeting the Needs of the Community*, first appeared on the blog *Toward Significance* on February 16, 2021.



The Blind Beggar

by Scott E. Yakimow

“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” (Luke 18:38).

These are the words of a blind beggar sitting by the side of the road right after he is told that Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. Immediately, without any hesitation, he cries out only to be rebuked by those in front, nearest to Jesus, who, in their annoyance, told him to be silent. Refusing, he screams, *“Son of David, have mercy on me!”* even louder than before. Hearing him, Jesus stops, commands that the beggar be brought before him, and asks the blind man what he wants to be done for him. He answers, *“Lord, let me recover my sight.”* And Jesus’ simple response? It is: *“Recover your sight; your faith has made you well.”* And the man followed Jesus and glorified God (Luke 18:35–43).

There are many things to note in this short story, but perhaps it is most fruitful to consider it from different points of view by putting ourselves in each person’s shoes.

First, and most obviously, consider the blind beggar. Who or what do we turn to when we need help in our everyday lives? Who or what do we trust to fix our problems, heal our bodies, restore our relationships, or do any of the myriad things that we need for our daily lives? Note that the beggar is not being metaphysical here—he’s being very concrete. He is asking for sight, nothing more. Does he need more than physical sight? Of course. He needs the forgiveness of sins and to live in the Kingdom of God. But it is in the reception of physical sight, a physical blessing, that he perceives his even greater need for God as he now follows Jesus, glorifying God for what He has done.

Second, consider Jesus. He heard the cry of the bereft, of the broken, of the outcast, of the one everyone scorned and told to just shut up. He ignored those in the front, those who

felt it their place to be first, those who had it all together. He went to the least of these. And He provided the blind beggar with dignity. While Jesus, being God, certainly knew what the man would say, He didn’t presume it. Instead, He asked what the man’s needs were. Upon learning those needs, He addressed them and added something more, something that points to the salvation He brings—*“your faith [in me] has made you well”* (Luke 18:42).

There are many lessons here which go beyond this short meditation, but consider these questions: How can we reach out with the hope of the Gospel to those whose physical needs are overwhelming? How can we see them with the eyes of Jesus, respecting who they are, and give them both help and hope in Christ? What might this look like in the communities in which we live? Are we, like those up front, hindering those who need help and are crying out for mercy from coming to Jesus, or are we going to them at Jesus’ command and bringing them to Christ by serving them where they are at?

It is true that we all are like the blind beggar, calling out, *“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”* Even so, as those baptized and called to serve Christ, don’t forget to make this concrete like Jesus made it concrete. We are God’s hands and God’s voice to those in our communities who need very concrete help. Be that help. Serve the neighbor. Speak the hope that is within you. Love as Jesus loved. And yes, cry out: *“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”* ■

Rev. Dr. Scott E. Yakimow is the Director of Mission Development for the Michigan District, LCMS.

One Campus Ministry, Three Friends, and Countless Blessings

by Elisa L. Schulz



It started with a small Bible study in a borrowed classroom at Miami University in Ohio. It wasn't anything extraordinary; just a pastor willing to drive twenty minutes to campus each week, a handful of college students asking questions, and evenings spent studying God's Word together.

Years later, three of those students would become pastors serving congregations across the Michigan District.

At the time, though, none of them could have imagined it.

Background

Joseph Polzin arrived at college already grounded in the faith. Raised in a faithful Lutheran home, he had moved often as a child because his father served in the Army. But wherever the family lived, church life remained constant. Faithfulness to God, His Word, and His people shaped his upbringing.

When he arrived at Miami University as a freshman, he immediately looked for a church connection. His older brother Lewis, already a graduate student there, introduced him to the campus Bible study led by Pastor Kevin Jud of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Hamilton, Ohio.

Each week, Pastor Jud came to campus for Bible study and invited students to worship with the congregation on Sundays. The gatherings were simple but meaningful. *"The weekly Bible study gave us a chance to get together and realize we weren't alone,"* Polzin remembered. *"At a large university, it's important to have your faith supported."*

At the time, he planned to become a high school teacher, not a pastor. But Pastor Jud noticed something in him: a love for Scripture and a thoughtful faith. One day, Jud simply encouraged Polzin to consider ministry. *"He didn't do anything out of the ordinary,"* said Polzin. *"Sometimes all it takes is planting that seed that maybe someone hadn't thought about before."*



Tyson and Jeff serving as college chaperones at a youth retreat hosted by Immanuel Lutheran Church, Hamilton, Ohio (2011).

Jeff Burgess had grown up in the church, but during his first year of college his father died from aggressive lung cancer. As he wrestled with grief and uncertainty, he struggled to find a church home near campus.

Eventually, he found Immanuel Lutheran Church and joined the campus Bible study. *"It was a small but mighty group,"* he said. *"Maybe ten or twelve people at most. But Pastor Jud showed up every week, and we did too."*

The discussions were substantial. They studied the Augsburg Confession and Lutheran theology deeply—topics he had never really explored before despite growing up Lutheran. *"You don't know what you don't know until someone teaches you,"* he said. *"Pastor Jud made theology approachable, meaningful, and relevant."*

Tyson Bentz came from an entirely different background. Raised in a Mennonite family, he became disconnected from church after his parents divorced when he was very young. By high school he described himself as a "religious mutt," bouncing between



“You plant the seeds, and see what the Holy Spirit does.”

churches and asking difficult questions. The answers he received often conflicted, and eventually he decided Christianity made little sense. *“Science is the way to go,”* he concluded.

Then he met a Lutheran girl.

When she arrived at Miami University, her father called Immanuel Lutheran Church looking for someone who could give his daughter rides to church because freshmen couldn’t have cars on campus. Burgess, a sophomore from the campus Bible study, volunteered.

Bentz got jealous, so he started coming too. At first, he came mostly because she did. But then something unexpected happened: Pastor Jud welcomed his questions. He would listen intently, then say, *“Interesting question. I don’t really know because Scripture doesn’t say. Let’s go back to the Bible.”*

That caught Tyson’s attention. *“For the first time,”* he said, *“I realized a pastor could just say, ‘I don’t know.’”* So he kept coming back. The Bible study became a place where questions were safe, conversations were real, and friendships were formed. Sometimes only three students showed up. Sometimes ten. They talked theology, life, doubt, vocation, and Scripture. They studied the Book of Concord. They lingered after Bible study just to spend time together.

A Faithful, Unassuming Campus Pastor

Pastor Jud never treated ministry like a program to

manage. He simply invested time in students. He invited them to help with youth groups and encouraged them to participate in the worship service as readers. He took them seriously and made himself available. Sometimes they met at church, sometimes at a restaurant or bar. Sometimes conversations happened when he was giving them a ride back to campus.

Looking back, the three friends all say the same thing: Pastor Jud made ministry seem possible. *“He made it less scary,”* Burgess said. Bentz put it this way: *“He told us we should be pastors. Then he prayed for us. Then he kept encouraging us until we became pastors.”* Polzin added: *“He simply was a person who invested*

in other people and encouraged them, and in this case encouraged young men who showed an aptitude for ministry to think about going into the ministry. And God worked through that.”

The friendships formed there would last long after graduation. All three men ended up marrying Miami University graduates, and eventually, all three attended Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. Their paths overlapped there just as they had at Miami. Years later, all three would receive calls to serve congregations in



Photos by Michigan District, LOMS



Photo courtesy of Rev. Jud

Call Day 2016. From left to right: Tyson, Heidi, Joe, Jennie, Jeff, Bailey, Lewis, and Pastor Jud.

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the Michigan District.

Pastor Jud insists he never had a master strategy for recruiting church workers. He simply cared about students and paid attention to the people God placed in front of him. *“You plant the seeds,”* he said, *“and see what the Holy Spirit does.”*

Campus Ministry Can Change Lives

Campus ministry doesn't have to be a big operation to be effective. In fact, it rarely looks impressive from the outside. The groups are often small. Students graduate and move away. There is little measurable return for congregations investing time, money, and energy into it.

But campus ministry happens during one of the most formative seasons of life. Young adults are asking big questions for the first time. They are deciding who they are, what they believe, and where God may be calling them. A faithful presence during those years can change lives.

Today, the influence continues.

Bentz now leads a growing campus ministry near Ferris State University. What began with only a handful of students has grown into a thriving young adult ministry. Several students are already considering going into ministry.

And when he encourages them, he hears echoes of Pastor Jud in his own voice. *“You can be a church worker,”* he tells them. *“You can serve Jesus with your life.”*

The story that began in a small classroom Bible study continues to grow through friendships, through faithful pastors, and through ordinary acts of encouragement that God continues to use in extraordinary ways.

Campus Ministry in Michigan

Rev. Dr. Randy Duncan, Pastor of Campus Mission at University Lutheran Chapel, Ann Arbor, coordinates the Michigan District Campus Ministry Network. Learn more at micampusministry.net.

For a list of active campus ministries in Michigan, visit michigandistrict.org/campusministry. ■

Elisa L. Schulz serves as staff writer, copy editor, and photographer for the Michigan District, LCMS.

Observations from Pastor Jud:

What stands out in a possible pastor:

- Desire to learn Scripture and theology
- Servant heart
- Not taking oneself too seriously

Challenges for campus ministry:

- Competing for the students' time (they have lots of other things pulling at them)

Characteristics of a successful Campus Ministry:

- Being able to spend time with students and be there for them. Jud would sometimes drive students home and they would have long conversations.
- A traditional church appeals to kids because it's different from the culture.

Suggestions for someone who's considering pouring into Campus Ministry:

- Connect to other campus ministries around the country to get ideas (LCMS U)
- Connect with students
- Be aware that this is not something that brings immediate return to a congregation (financial or otherwise). It demands time.

“You can be a
church worker,
you can serve
Jesus with your life.”



More Than Enough: Why Foster Care Work *Matters* in Michigan

by Jason Sroufe

Every morning, 9,961 children in Michigan wake up in foster care—many in homes they’ve only just entered, hoping someone will show up for them.

The invitation is always open to do exactly that. When you step into foster care—in any role—you change a child’s life. And often, it changes yours too.

The Need Is Growing

Across every Michigan region Wellspring serves—Northern, Central, Western, Southeastern, and the Great Lakes Bay area—more children are entering care, and families are stretched thin. Behind every number is a real child:

1. A teen who needs someone to teach them to drive
2. A sibling group hoping to stay together
3. A toddler who needs safety and stability

How You Can Make a Difference

Whether you have two hours or twenty, there’s a place for you:

- Become a foster parent – explore the process with Wellspring’s support
- Provide respite care – give foster families the rest they need
- Support a foster family – meals, childcare,

transportation, encouragement

- Mentor a young person – especially youth aging out of care
- Encourage birth families – help parents working toward reunification
- Give and pray – fund emergency needs and lift up families and workers

Say Yes to Something

You don’t have to do everything. Just one thing. Donate a backpack. Host a meal train. Sponsor training. Share the need with a friend.

Ask your local Wellspring office: What’s most needed in my community right now?

Then say yes to whatever fits your time and gifts—because Michigan’s kids are waiting, and together, we can create more than enough.

Take your first step at wellspringfostercare.com. ■

Jason Sroufe is the Vice President of Operations and Chief Operating Officer for Child & Family Division at Wellspring Lutheran Services.

Around the District

Connecting With the Community Through Acts of Service

Here are just a few accounts of how Michigan District congregations served their communities this spring:

ANN ARBOR (1) – Over 100 volunteers from **St. Paul and Emmaus** helped pack 500 lunches for Hope Clinic. The next day, 10 volunteers took five carloads of sack lunches to Hope.

FRASER (2) – **St. John** hosted the annual Empty Bowls Soup Supper. For the past 17 years, the Ceramics classes of Lutheran High Northwest have hosted an Empty Bowls Dinner in the spring to raise money to help the homeless in their area. The students each create at least three bowls for the dinner. Students (and parents) pitch in to make soups and desserts which are served at the dinner. On the day of the dinner, students meet at St. John, cook the soups, set up for the event, serve the meal, bus the tables, and clean up afterward. The meal and bowls are paid for through free-will offerings, all of which are given directly to St. John's Homeless Missions program. It is a great way for students to use their God-given gifts to help serve and provide for those who are in need. Over the years, they've been able to raise nearly \$25,000 to help the homeless. This year, between in-person giving at St. John, online giving, and

gift-card giving, Mr. Davis and his students were able to donate \$2,700 to the Homeless Missions program at St. John PLUS 10 bags of potatoes and 20 loaves of bread that went to Motor City Mitten Mission.

BELLEVILLE (3) – Students and teachers from **Open Arms Childcare Center** went to Hampton Manor of Van Buren (Assisted Living facility) and spent time with the residents.

MACOMB (4) – **St. Peter's** school community (15 students and 3 adults) took part in the annual cut-a-thon benefiting Maggie's Wigs 4 Kids of Michigan. Through their generosity, 49 ponytails were donated—enough to create 4–5 wigs for children in need.

WARREN (5) – Members of **Hope** held a Postal Carrier Food Drive. Together, volunteers filled more than 40 boxes of food that will help support families in their community through their weekly food pantry ministry.

SHELBY TOWNSHIP (6) – Members of **Shepherd's Gate** partnered with **Camp Restore Detroit** to help repair and restore lawn equipment used to serve local neighborhoods throughout Detroit. ■





Greetings from Church Extension Fund!

My two favorite Michigan organizations trace their roots all the way back to the great year of 1901. It was that summer the Detroit Tigers started playing baseball at the corner of Michigan and Trumbull Avenues in Detroit, and when Michigan Lutherans came together in Frankenmuth to incorporate what we know today as Church Extension Fund.

While the Tigers have yet to win a World Series in my lifetime, the back of the CEF baseball card tells a different story. Over 125 years, CEF has provided more than \$1.2 billion in loans to congregations across Michigan. It has distributed more than \$30 million in grants. It has walked alongside churches through capital campaigns and unexpected repairs, through seasons of growth and seasons of hardship. Hundreds of ministries have been blessed by the thousands of investors who pool their resources with a common goal: seeing God advance His Kingdom around us.

Coming in as the new Chief Financial Officer, I am genuinely grateful for the wise leaders who have stewarded this organization across those 125 years. Their faithfulness is not abstract — it is visible in the church buildings where families worship today, in the schools where children have been educated in the faith, and in the ministries that exist because someone, at some point, chose to invest in something larger than themselves.

The story of CEF shows how good and pleasant it is when we walk together in unity. The committed Lutheran who made the first investment with CEF in 1901 could not have imagined the many congregations that would be built, the Lutheran schools that would be opened, or the lives of numerous families that would be shaped by those decisions. They were simply faithful stewards of what was in given to them.

That same spirit carries forward today. Every investment made with CEF — whether from an individual church member, an organization, or ministry — joins a long line of faithful stewardship that stretches back 125 years. We are confident God's faithfulness will continue for the generations to come.

Thank you for being a partner in our mission!

Zachary Werner
Vice President & Chief Financial Officer

JULY 2026

125 Years of Faithful Stewardship

How CEF walked alongside Michigan churches —
and why it matters for all of us.

Every congregation has a moment where they can see the magnitude of an upcoming decision. The roof that won't make it another winter. The sanctuary that's not big enough. The unexpected gift of an empty lot next door when the church is finally ready to expand.

Those moments don't resolve themselves. They require resources — and a partner that understands the unique life of a congregation, and what's at stake.

For 125 years, Church Extension Fund has been this partner for Lutheran churches across Michigan. Not a traditional lender. Not a financial firm with a perfunctory "relations" page on its website. A partner in mission organized, funded, and operated by people who share the same purpose as the congregations they serve.



*Pastor Herman Speckhard
CEF's first Board Member.*

Where it started

When CEF was incorporated in 1901, Michigan had fewer than 100 Lutheran congregations. The denomination was still known by its full German name: the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States. Horse-drawn carriages were the standard mode of transport. And a group of church leaders had a straightforward idea: if Lutherans and their churches pooled their resources, they could help each other build and expand the Kingdom.

That idea has flourished. Today, the Michigan District has more than 300 congregations, and CEF has been part of nearly every chapter of that growth. CEF's mission has been supported and blessed by church members with the same idea as our founders: investing at CEF helps build ministries.

What that looks like in practice

Over the 125 years, CEF has provided more than \$1.2 billion in loans to congregations and ministries in Michigan. It has distributed more than \$30 million in grants over the last four decades alone. It helped launch Concordia Junior College. It created housing programs for church workers. And when tornadoes, floods, and fires hit congregations like Our Savior in Armada, St. Philip's in Detroit, and St. Paul in Bay City, CEF was there. When churches needed to relocate, expand, or in some cases close with dignity, CEF walked alongside them.

The list isn't meant to brag; it's meant to illustrate something that's easy to overlook. In the church buildings where Lutherans worship today, where children are baptized and marriages are performed, and where the Gospel goes out week after week, a partnership

with CEF was likely involved.. The investments made many generations ago are still bearing fruit. And the next generation of churches needs investment from Lutherans like you, so that the next harvest will be full.

Not just a finance story

What makes CEF different from a conventional lender? When a congregation hits a hard stretch – a capital campaign that fell short, an unexpected repair, a season of pastoral transition – CEF’s response looks different because its priorities are different. A bank’s obligation runs to its shareholders. CEF’s obligation runs to the mission of Kingdom expansion.

That’s not a tagline; it’s a structural reality. CEF exists to serve Lutheran ministries, which means when a congregation



St. Paul Ann Arbor’s groundbreaking in April 2026.

needs help, flexibility, or expertise, the conversation starts with a shared commitment to the mission and not an exit strategy.

What’s still ahead

Anniversaries are useful for showing gratitude and gaining perspective. CEF marks 125 years with plenty of both.

New congregations have been planted. Existing ones are aging into capital needs. Ministry contexts are shifting in ways nobody predicted. The practical needs that have always faced churches – the roof, the

sanctuary, the lot next door – aren’t going anywhere.

Here’s what else isn’t going anywhere – the proven results, the dedication to the mission, and the laser focus on Building the Kingdom. One loan. One grant. One congregation at a time.

CEF has been doing this work since 1901. The next 125 years of ministry in Michigan are already designed by God – in congregations not yet planted, in buildings not yet imagined, in people not yet reached. CEF intends to be part of every chapter.

The information provided here is not an offer to sell or a solicitation of an offer to buy CEF securities. The offering of CEF securities is made solely by our Offering Circular. CEF will offer and sell our securities only in states where authorized. The securities are subject to certain risk factors as described in our Offering Circular. CEF investments are not insured by the FDIC, SIPC, or any other governmental agency.

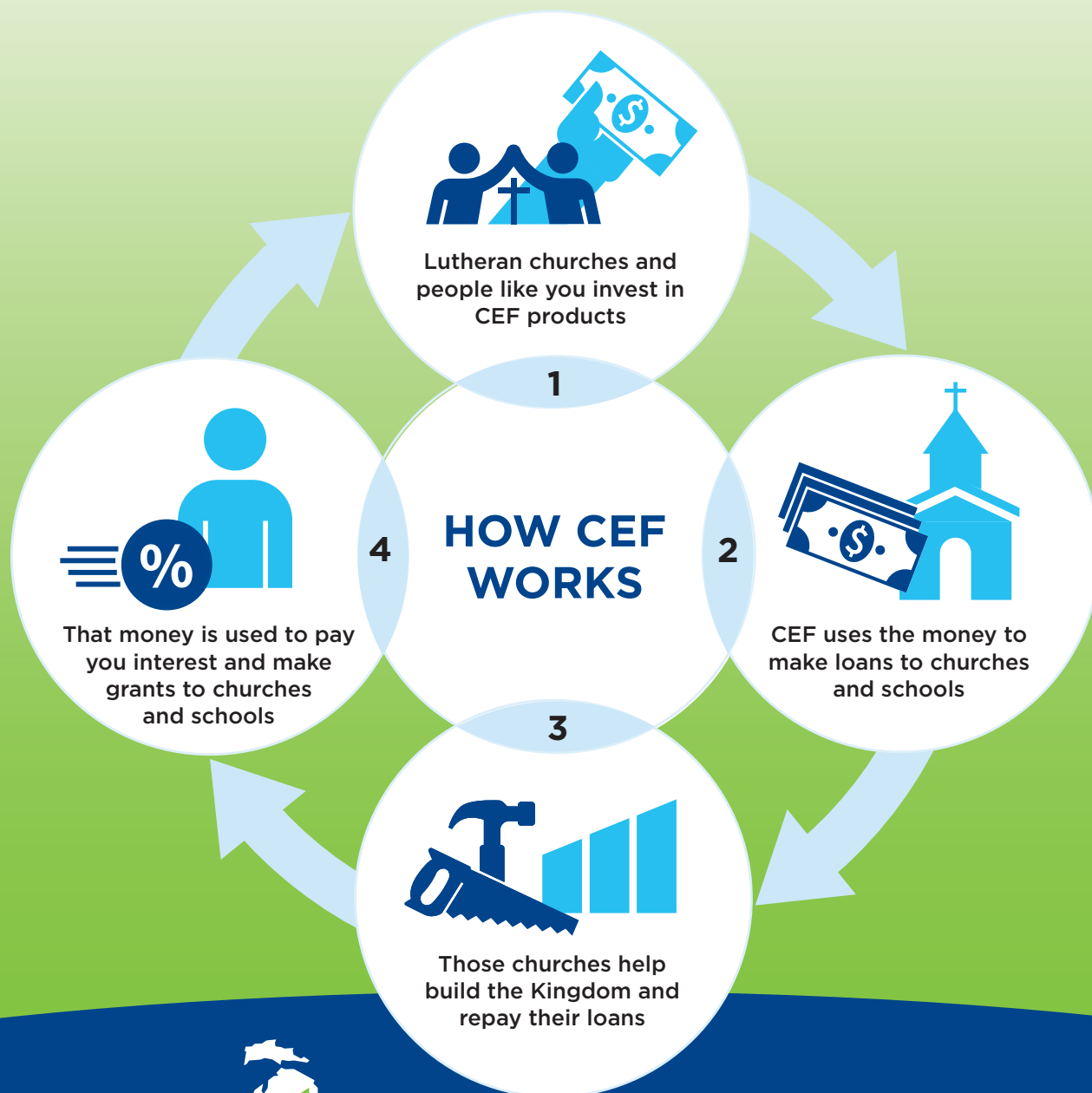


“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”

Galatians 6:9

Investing in the Future, Building the Kingdom

When you invest your money with Church Extension Fund, you are doing more than earning competitive returns on your money — you also are building and expanding Lutheran churches, schools and mission work. Your investments provide the resources needed to help build God's kingdom!



Church Extension Fund

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LUTHERAN LAYMEN'S LEAGUE

LHM Ambassadors Connect Congregations with Outreach Resources

As Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM) creates resources for individuals and congregations to use, getting the word out about their availability is essential. This is where LHM Ambassadors come in. Their on-the-ground work, visiting with churches, ministry leaders, and laypeople, is vital in this effort.

An Ambassador is a congregation member who nurtures a relationship between LHM and their congregation for the purpose of sharing resources and helping others use them. Ambassadors are integral to LHM's mission of energizing, equipping, and engaging laity for outreach. Currently, more than 500 Ambassadors serve congregations across the United States, including Alaska and Hawaii. Learn more and register to be an Ambassador at lhm.org/ambassador.

Ambassadors do this in several ways. They make teachers and school leaders aware of **Gospel Adventures**. They share books, research, and resources. They highlight Advent and Lent television and online specials, in addition to seasonal devotions in English and Spanish. And they promote LHM's Bible studies, **Project Connect** booklets, LHM's Spanish-language website, podcasts,

The Lutheran Hour, Daily Devotions, prison ministry resources, LHM Learn, Thred, and resources for veterans.

Ambassadors update congregations on LHM resources by hosting an LHM Sunday like the one recently held at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Sedalia, Mo. There, Ambassador Sharon Hutcheson highlighted LHM's outreach mission, shared resources, and answered questions. She also coordinates the Lutheran Laymen's League booth at the Missouri State Fair in Sedalia.

LHM has training modules for assisting Ambassadors. There's also a Reward Program on the Ambassador website. *"The training modules are very informative,"* Hutcheson says. *"Being an Ambassador is fulfilling as I see materials being shared and used by others."*

"Sharon is a perfect example of all that an Ambassador should be. She goes above and beyond to promote and share everything that LHM has to offer. I'm always excited to see what she is going to do next!" says Suzie Sallee, LHM's community facilitator for congregations.

If you are interested in being an LHM ambassador for your Michigan District, LCMS church, go to lhm.org for more details.

LUTHERAN WOMEN'S MISSIONARY LEAGUE

Thank you to
everyone in our host
zones for a
successful and
productive
convention!

Congratulations to
all new District
Officers!

Summer Blessings

Arise, my love, my beautiful one,
and come away, for behold, the winter is past;
the rain is over and gone.

The flowers appear on the earth, the time of
singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove
is heard in our land.

The fig tree ripens its figs, and the vines are in
blossom; they give forth fragrance.

Song of Solomon 2:10b-13

Have a safe & sun-filled
Summer!



Lutheran Women
in Mission
MICHIGAN DISTRICT

Michigan District Board of Directors Summary

The Michigan District Board of Directors (BOD) met at Zion, Auburn on Monday, May 18, 2026. The opening devotion was given by Rev. Andrew Menz, Senior Pastor at Zion. He encouraged the BOD to speak the way the Scripture speaks about Christ's return and the Christian hope we have in the resurrection and eternal life in heaven.

The Board welcomed its newest member, Janet McLoughlin (Commissioned Minister, Metro East Region), to the meeting. The Board continued discussion on its Strategic Direction based on President Davis's Long-Range Outlook presented at the March meeting. The Board also discussed future long-range finance and budgeting, which included future Synod financial commitment.

The Board discussed the submission of a late overture written by Synod Secretary Rev. Dr. John Sias. This overture is in regard to Recognized Service Organizations, otherwise known as RSOs.

President Davis shared his President's report which included progress toward his BOD-approved Outcome Indicators for 2026. He highlighted new congregational ministries that have been started, as well as various campus ministries that have started or are in the process of starting at colleges and universities throughout the state. He also reported that Rev. Dr. Paul Biber has accepted the call to the District to be the Director of Leadership Development. The upcoming Synodical Convention and the placement of Candidates and Vicars within the District were also discussed. President Davis spoke about the email he received and forwarded onto the BOD, the morning of the

meeting, from a source outside of the LCMS, about the impending sale of the bulk of the Concordia University Ann Arbor Geddes Road campus to the University of Michigan for \$60 million. This was later confirmed during the meeting by an email sent to Alumni & Friends of CUAA by President Erik Ankerberg. The BOD also heard reports from its Governance Committee, Finance Committee, Circuit Visitors, Development Office, and Church Extension Fund.

Action items the BOD took:

- Approved the Constitution and the Application for Membership into the LCMS for Hope Lutheran, Marlette, Mich., a former ELCA congregation
- Accepted the annual Financial Audit and Investment Report from Yeo and Yeo
- Revised Policy 2.14 of the BOD Policy Manual by adding a reference to solicitation and review of input from the Moral Owners
- Approved submitting a late overture to the Synodical Convention referenced above
- Reappointed two members to the Endowment Advisory Council whose terms were expiring
- Thanked Rev. Michael Roth, who will be retiring later this year, for his service to the District as Chairman of the Circuit Visitors

The BOD next meets for its annual retreat August 2–4, 2026, at Immanuel, Saint Clair. Please pray for the BOD as they do the work of the LCMS here in Michigan.

Save the date Saturday, September 19, 2026 for
CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO's
signature fundraising gala

Maroon & Gold
10th ANNIVERSARY

Join the entire Concordia-Chicago community at Eaglewood Resort for a notable evening
to recognize outstanding individuals who stand tall for the University and their vocation.

The 2026 Distinguished Awardees include:
Mrs. Lois Stewart '83 - Distinguished Alumni, Undergraduate
Mr. Jeff Schwarz - One Heart Award
Dr. Manfred Boos '70 - Spiritus Christi

6:00 p.m. Reception, 7:00 p.m. Dinner and Award Ceremony
Tickets available online now at CUChicago.edu/alumni/maroon-gold
Early-birds save \$25 per ticket if purchased before July 1.



Fall Enrollment is Open for CrossPointe Center for the Trades

CrossPointe Center for the Trades is a vocational school developed by the Michigan District in partnership with the established Southeast Michigan Construction Academy (SEMCA).



Through this partnership, students receive hands-on training in a variety of construction trades—including carpentry, electrical, construction, and HVACR—to prepare for a career of skilled service.

CrossPointe integrates high-level technical training with Christ-centered character development. Through diverse regional retreats in the city and in the country, a capstone project, and a focus on essential soft skills such as teamwork, communication skills, and conflict resolution, we prepare students to lead with integrity and excellence in every community they serve. The program highlights faith formation, trade training, regional retreats, and dual enrollment. Classes begin in the fall.

For further information, visit michigandistrict.org/crosspointe.

St. Michael's, Richville Celebrates its 175th Anniversary

Founded in 1851, St. Michael's, Richville kicked off its 175th Anniversary in January, 2026 with guest preachers Rev. David A. Davis, president of the Michigan District, and son of St. Michael's Rev. Elmer Schiefer (January 21, 1926 – May 17, 2026). The congregation will continue its celebration with the following services with guest preachers:

- August 16, Rev. Steve Hess
- German Service, September 13, Rev. Mark Loest
- 175th Celebration Service, September 27, Rev. Rob Gadeken
- October 15 – Rev. Andrew Howe
- November 15 – Rev. Aaron Schian
- December 20 – Rev. Brad Hubbard

For more information, visit stmichaelsrichville.org/175-years.

100 Years of Radio Broadcasting Ministry by Immanuel, Bay City

In May, Immanuel Lutheran Church of Bay City's Radio Broadcast celebrated 100 Years of sharing the Gospel through their Radio Broadcast Ministry.

What began in May of 1926 as broadcasting once a month over Bay City's year-old radio station, WSKC, later renamed WBCM, became so popular that, since October 1928, they have broadcast every Sunday with the exception of one, at the beginning of World War II, when news preempted all other broadcasting.

Now available on both 1400 AM and 92.3 FM THE BAY radio stations, Immanuel's Radio Broadcast, one century strong, continues to be a blessing as it brings Christ to those unable to attend worship in person.

The church has over four decades of saved audio from the broadcasts, so as part of this year's celebration they started taking short clips of the voices from the past and including them on their weekly radio broadcast. On the weekend of May 3, they shared a portion of the June 15, 1986 worship service with Pastor Leslie Tyvela and Rev. Dr. Richard Schlecht, former president of the Michigan District, who was the guest preacher for the service celebrating the 60th Anniversary of the radio broadcast ministry. You can hear the service here: www.facebook.com/reel/1493919519040932.

For more information about the ministry, call 989.893.4088 or email ILC@ImmanuelBayCity.com.



Special Recognition

Educators of the Year 2026

We are grateful for the hundreds of educators serving our Lutheran schools across the Michigan District. Each spring we recognize some of them with our Educators of the Year Awards. These individuals were nominated by their colleagues as being outstanding and going above and beyond in serving students, families, and their congregations:



Principal of the Year – John Reincke (Lutheran High North, Macomb)

God has used Mr. Reincke in so many powerful ways throughout his ministry. We are grateful for his leadership and the blessing he has been to the Lutheran North community.

I appreciate Mr. Reincke for his open communication with parents and keeping us updated on the latest news and announcements.

Mr. Reincke was a wonderful principal. I've even seen him cutting the grass showing no job is beneath him.



K-8 Teacher of the Year – Karen Collins (Guardian, Dearborn)

Karen is going above and beyond to teach her first graders and keep them involved in her lessons. She cares deeply for their well-being and puts their education number one on her priority list.

Karen is a devoted teacher and a steady presence at Guardian Lutheran School... She gives generously of her time, not only in the classroom, but also in her role as co-athletic director at Guardian. Most importantly, Karen consistently shines Christ's light through her care, patience, and servant heart. She intentionally nurtures that same spirit in her students, equipping them to reflect the love and light of Jesus in their words and actions.



High School Teacher of the Year – Marianne Volkert (Lutheran High North West, Rochester Hills)

Marianne always goes far above and beyond to meet her students' needs. She is usually found after school with students, helping them

with their math lessons and offering corrections and reteaching. Marianne finds a way to be present at many extra-curricular events. She also is co-student council leader. Marianne is truly the hands and feet of Jesus to our students every day.

We are grateful for Marianne's dedication to Lutheran education and for all the ways God uses her to be a blessing to our students, staff, and families.



Early Childhood Director of the Year – Mary Huisinga (St. Mark, Battle Creek)

Mary cares for all the staff and treats everyone like family. She makes sure we are taken care of both in our personal lives and at work. She cares about every family and child that walks in the building.

Mary truly cares for each and every staff member, child, and parent who walks through those doors. She remembers every person's name despite 50+ staff and over 180 families, and makes time to ensure everyone feels acknowledged and heard... She treats every family as if they were her own and shares the love of Christ in every interaction.



Early Childhood Teacher of the Year – Melissa Susalla (St. Paul, Trenton)

Miss Melissa is one of the best early childhood teachers around. Her work ethic is unsurpassed. Her care for the students in her class is beyond compare. She works diligently with other staff and with

student families in a bright, focused way, being loving but firm. And she does all of this with a constant smile on her face!

Melissa is a teacher of deep faith and shows the grace of Jesus in everything. ANY child and family will be blessed by her!

Please join us in congratulating these outstanding educators.

Photos courtesy of Travis Grulke, Superintendent of Schools, Michigan District, LCMS

Scott Beam 2026 Lutheran Layman of the Year

This spring, the Lutheran Luncheon Club of Metro Detroit honored Mr. Scott Beam as its 2026 Lutheran Layman of the Year.

Beam earned a second engineering degree while working in consulting and at General Motors. He then spent 22 years at Faurecia. For the last several years of his career, he traveled extensively as an expert in automotive crash safety systems and also taught statistics at the university. He retired in 2022 after a 40-year automotive career.

Beam serves Christ, Milford as its church Treasurer and chair of the Properties Board, as well as serving as an elder. He and his wife, Jennifer, sing in the choir, deliver Meals on Wheels, and do handy-person jobs for members.

Beam has been a member of the Michigan District Board of Directors for the past 10 years, serving as Vice Chair for the last 4. He also heads the Governance Committee and is a member of the Finance Committee.

Julian Petzold Appointed to Michigan's School Safety and Mental Health Commission



Photo courtesy of Julian Petzold

Julian Petzold, Ph.D., president of Lion Safety Consulting, was appointed to serve on the State of Michigan's School Safety and Mental Health Commission.

Julian Petzold, of Harrison Charter Township, is the president and owner of Lion Safety Consulting. He was previously the principal of Trinity Lutheran School [Clinton Twp.] and executive director at Valley Lutheran High School [Saginaw]. Petzold holds a Bachelor of Arts in early childhood education and psychology from Concordia University, a master's degree in educational leadership from Oakland University, and a Doctor of Philosophy in educational leadership from Concordia University. Julian Petzold is appointed as a member who has experience with special education, submitted by the Speaker of the House of Representatives for a term commencing April 30, 2026, and expiring April 9, 2027.

Welcome the Michigan District's New Vicars, Pastors, and Deaconess Intern

The Michigan District welcomed four pastoral candidates, one deaconess intern, and two vicars to its roster this spring.

On Tuesday, April 28, Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Mo. (CSL) held two separate worship services for assignment of vicarage and internships and for call placements, respectively. Vicars assigned to the Michigan District are Ryan Kroonblawd (Our Savior, Lansing) and Ron Zuccaro (Zion, Hemlock). The candidate receiving his first placement in Michigan from CSL is Edward Krez (St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth).

On Tuesday, April 28 and Wednesday, April 29, two

separate worship services took place at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Ind. (CTSF) for assignment of vicarage and internships and for call placements, respectively. Deaconess intern Christine Kerster was assigned to Shepherd of the Lakes, Brighton. The following pastoral candidates received their first placement in the Michigan District: Zachary Benkert (Trinity, Conklin); Noah Dunsmore (Zion, Mt. Pleasant); and David Krueger (St. Paul, Flint).

Please keep these students and their families in your prayers as they transition from seminary life into vicarage, internship, and full-time ministry.

LCMS MICHIGAN DISTRICT

CALL DAY APRIL 28, 2026



EDWARD KREZ
(PASTOR ELECT)



RYAN KROONBLAWD
(VICAR)



RONALD ZUCCARO
(VICAR)

CONCORDIA SEMINARY, ST. LOUIS



LCMS MICHIGAN DISTRICT

CALL DAY APRIL 28-29, 2026



ZACHARY BENKERT
(PASTOR ELECT)



NOAH DUNSMORE
(PASTOR ELECT)



DAVID KRUEGER
(PASTOR ELECT)



CHRISTINE KERSTER
(DEACONESS INTERN)

CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, FT. WAYNE





CONCORDIA
UNIVERSITY
CHICAGO
Christ at the Center

Discover how
**CONCORDIA
UNIVERSITY
CHICAGO**
forms leaders who
STAND TALL in
the faith. Here,
God-given gifts
are strengthened
and His call is
embraced—for lives
rooted in Christ and
filled with purpose.

Our Christ-centered
university offers
more than 50 areas
of undergraduate
study. Be equipped
to serve with
conviction and
lead with courage
in Church, family,
and the world.



STAND
TALL!

[CUCCHICAGO.EDU/ADMISSION](https://cuchicago.edu/admission)

 [CUC_admission](https://www.instagram.com/CUC_admission)

 [@CUCChicago](https://twitter.com/CUCChicago)

 [ConcordiaUniversityChicago](https://www.facebook.com/ConcordiaUniversityChicago)

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CAMPUS!**



Tour our beautiful campus, explore the surrounding
neighborhood and experience our purpose-driven
community firsthand.

Learn more at CUCChicago.edu/visit



Michigan District

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

People of Hope ... Vigorously Making Known the Love of Christ



Connecting People to Jesus Across Campuses, Cultures, and Communities

It is widely reported that young people have an increased hunger for meaning and community. Recent books include *The Surprising Rebirth of Belief in God* and *Coming to Faith Through Dawkins*. To that end, the District is partnering with congregations and existing campus ministries to establish more and stronger campus ministries across the state.

But then such campus ministry is not a new idea.

Three young men's paths providentially crossed on the campus of Miami University in Ohio. Joe and Jeff were Lutherans; Tyson was skeptical of Christianity. They met at a campus ministry Bible study where Pastor Jud's Christ-like service left a deep impression on each of them. Their faith was encouraged, their journey through college was filled with scriptural guidance, and their questions were welcomed and answered by an approachable pastor. Tyson was baptized. Eventually, all three friends went to the seminary and now serve as pastors in the Michigan District (see related article, p. 4).

God has a unique calling for each student in the Michigan District's existing and emerging campus ministries. We believe it is an important time to walk with them and to help them know what Jesus says about their future. You can help us "Go" (Matthew 28:19) and reach these young men and women.

Will you help us create thriving ministry where people of all ages can hear about Jesus and his love?

Campus ministry is one of many missions of the Michigan District. You can also help us "Go" and reach others who are served by Gospel mission outposts in urban mission, ethnic and

language-based mission, and compassion ministry mission.

Pastor Joe Polzin, Pastor Jeff Burgess, and Pastor Tyson Bentz, the three friends from the story on page 4, will tell you that this generation needs the same encouragement they received in campus ministry. Across the District, there are new ethnic and language-based ministries to immigrants who are seeking answers that only come from God's Word. In local communities, congregations are forming ways to compassionately connect with people to fill human needs and make life-changing introductions to Jesus. Your financial gift will bring hope to God's people through these ministries.

We give thanks to God for your joy in the Gospel and the privilege of sharing His Word with others. We are *People of Hope ... Vigorously Making Known the Love of Christ!*

...eyes on Jesus...

Rev. David A. Davis, President
Michigan District, LCMS



Yes, President Davis, I would like to support the Michigan District, LCMS!

Enclosed is my tax deductible gift of : ☐ \$1,000 ☐ \$500 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$25 ☐ Other _____

Name _____ Phone Number _____

Address _____ Email _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Congregation/City _____

I would like my gift to support: ☐ Greatest Need (Unrestricted)

☐ General Endowment ☐ Mission & Ministry ☐ Campus Ministry
☐ Lutheran Education ☐ Mission Endowment ☐ A2E

☐ Prof. Church Worker Scholarship
☐ Other _____

☐ I'm considering including the Michigan District in my estate, please contact me.

To donate via credit card visit michigandistrict.org/summerappeal

For a listing of additional funds visit: michigandistrict.org/donate/ways-to-give

Return to:
Attn: Development Department
Michigan District, LCMS
3773 Geddes Road Ann Arbor, MI 48105





Michigan District

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

3773 Geddes Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48105-3098

People of Hope ... Vigorously Making Known the Love of Christ

Michigan In Touch Summer 2026 Issue

Enrollment Now Open

Course Offerings:

- ✓ Intro to Construction
- ✓ Carpentry
- ✓ HVAC/R
- ✓ Electrical

CROSS POINTE
Center for the Trades

Registration: May 4-August 14, 2026

michigandistrict.org/crosspointe

Calendar of Events

JULY 2026

- 3–4 Independence Day - District and CEF Offices Closed
- 6 CEF Office Closed
- 17 LCMS Pre-Convention Floor Committees
- 18–23 LCMS Synodical Convention - Phoenix, Arizona
- 27–29 Higgins Lake Principals Conference
Ralph A MacMullan Conf. Center, Roscommon
- 28–30 Junior High Gathering
Bavarian Inn, Frankenmuth

AUGUST 2026

- 2–4 Board of Directors Retreat
Immanuel, St. Clair
- 6 Early Childhood Directors Day
St. Lorenz Worship & Event Center, Frankenmuth
- 7 Early Childhood Educators Conference
St. Lorenz Worship & Event Center, Frankenmuth
- 9–12 Best Practices – Heartland
St. Lorenz Worship & Event Center, Frankenmuth
- 25 Beyond the Breakwater
Messiah, Midland
- 25 Ministry Leaders Network
Faith, Grand Blanc
- 29 The Habakkuk Project
Camp Restore Detroit

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

SEPTEMBER 2026

- 2 Large Church Network
Rochester, Mich.
- 4 District and CEF Offices Closed
- 7 Labor Day - District and CEF Offices Closed
- 9–10 Circuit Visitors Conference
Peace, Ann Arbor
- 13–15 Deacons Conference
Camp Arcadia
- 15 Beyond the Breakwater
Messiah, Midland
- 15 New Church Worker Conference
St. Peter, Hemlock
- 18 Synod Convention Installation of New Officers
St. Louis, Mo.
- 21–23 Transitional Interim Ministry Discernment Conf.
Michindoh, Hillsdale
- 23–24 Transitional Interim Ministry Continuing
Education Conf.
Michindoh, Hillsdale
- 25-26 CEF Fall Conference

Roster updates can be found at
www.michigandistrict.org/callsandvacancies