



*A glimpse into some of the LCMC Church Plants around our association.  
Proof of God's meeting people where they are.  
Photos courtesy of Erica Varcoe.*

## Church Planting in LCMC: A New Normal

By ERICA VARCOE, *Pastor, The Table Ministry, Sioux Falls, SD*

During the COVID pandemic, the key phrase used for the tug-of-war between discomfort and comfort was the “New Normal”, which could be used as a verb, a noun – or even a descriptive if you tried hard enough. Solving problems. Bridging gaps. Showing up in out-of-the-box ways. Navigating life creatively. Trying our best (to do life – and then some!). To avoid any doubts, have the strength to do things differently, the world would slap on the label, **New Normal**. Remember those days?

Hindsight being 20/20, it was really beautiful (albeit crazy!). The freedom. The courage. Breaking down barriers. Facing hard truths. Doing life – right where you were. Stepping into **New Normals** as a way of life.

### 4 years post pandemic.

But ... what if this “buzz word, this COVID cliché” is really the unlocking of God’s plan for something even more beautiful? Today. Ingenious. His reaching people – in different ways? Faithfully. Solving problems. Bridging gaps. Showing up, doing ministry in out-of-the-box ways. Navigating life creatively. Church planting – is this the LCMC’s New Normal? Earlier this year, a group of LCMC

## Mark Your Calendars:

2024 Youth Leader Webinars  
August 15    November 21

District & Fellowship  
Leaders Gathering  
June 26-28, 2024

Heartland District Annual  
Gathering    July 19-20, 2024

Texas District Annual Gathering  
July 26-27, 2024

Seminarian Connection Zoom  
Meeting    July 30, 2024

Retreat for Retired LCMC  
Pastors & Spouses  
August 26-29, 2024

Augustana District  
2024 WOW Fall Gathering  
September 21, 2024

LCMC Annual Gathering  
September 29-October 2, 2024

Heartland District WOW  
Fall Gathering  
October 26, 2024

# THIS ISSUE:

This newsletter is a publication of LCMC, an association of churches and individuals. Inclusion of articles is intended to provide information and does not imply official endorsement. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect an official position of the association or its Board of Trustees. We welcome comments, suggestions for stories and submissions from our members.

## EDITOR: Joy Minion. CONTRIBUTORS:

William Beck, Renae Behrends, Mike Bradley, Nancy Erdmann, Linda Fangmeyer, David Fisher, Bryce Formwalt, Randy Freund, Cindy Glessner, Kurt Hoover, Chuck Hunsaker, Christian Huntley, Jan Gluth King, Robert Knutson, Jan Kreie, Mark Marxhausen, Cathy Nichol, Robert Knutson, Kristy Thomas, and Erica Varcoe.

# NEXT ISSUE:

To submit an article for this publication, please contact Joy Minion at [joyminion@gmail.com](mailto:joyminion@gmail.com). The deadline to submit articles for our next edition of BY THE WORD is:

**August 6, 2024**

# ABOUT US:

We are an association of congregations and individuals, free in Christ, accountable to one another, rooted in Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, and working to fulfill Christ's Great Commission and go make disciples of all nations.



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# 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Texas District Gathering — July 26-27

BY BRYCE FORMWALT

*Director of Mission Growth, LCMC Texas District*

The Texas District will hold its 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Gathering July 26-27 at Zion Lutheran Church in Kerrville, Texas. Over 300 attendees are expected to participate in this year's event, which always features great worship, food, fellowship, education, inspiration, and a free t-shirt!

This year's theme is **LOVE WORKS**, based on Luke 10:27: "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.*"

Pastor Greg Finke and his wife, Susan, authors of the *Joining Jesus* book series, will deliver the keynote addresses and lead a 3-hour optional pre-gathering seminar on Friday afternoon. Approximately two dozen mission organizations and ministry partners are also expected to attend as exhibitors with display tables.

Friday evening features a benefit BBQ dinner to raise funds for Zion Cares, an outreach mission of the host congregation. Following dinner, Pastor Beverly Kelling and the praise team from St. Paul, Hondo, Texas, will lead

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# FROM THE BOARD...

By RANDY FREUND

*Chair, LCMC Board of Trustees*

## Holy Chaos

What would happen if all fellowship and district leaders, LCMC staff, Ministry Board and Board of Trustees gathered in the same spot for three days of meetings? For years, some of us have wondered about and hoped for this. It is finally going to happen this summer in Marion, IA, June 26-28. This could be quite exciting and productive. It will be interesting, for sure. It may be a bit crazy, but certainly fun. And even with all our good intentions, plans, and agendas, it could be a bit chaotic. In fact, to be honest, I'm hoping for some chaos, but "holy chaos."

Any student of church history knows there is inherent messiness in every age. Whether you are talking

opening worship, with Pastor Ryan Meyer of Trinity, Stonewall, Texas, delivering the sermon. The evening will conclude with the first keynote presentation from Greg Finke.

Saturday morning begins with devotions and a brief business meeting before the second keynote from Greg and Susan Finke. The day continues with three sessions of breakouts interspersed with times of fellowship and lunch. This year, over 39 breakout ideas were submitted and 18 were selected to be presented. One breakout at each session will be geared toward youth and young adults.

Saturday concludes with Pastor Caleb Williams and the host congregation leading the closing worship service, with Pastor Julie Smith, LCMC's coordinator for districts and fellowships, preaching the message. Throughout the gathering,

To learn more and register, go to: [www.lcmctexas.org/annual-gathering](http://www.lcmctexas.org/annual-gathering)

Early Bird tickets are on sale through June 30 for \$75.

Youth and young adults up to age 21 can attend for half price.

Got questions? Call **512-942-7776** or email [info@lcmctexas.org](mailto:info@lcmctexas.org)

Pastors Bryce Formwalt and Kari Malinak will serve as emcees to keep things moving and entertaining.

The Texas District invites you to come to the beautiful Texas hill country and receive education and inspiration for loving God and neighbor, rekindling your love for the good works that you were created for, and recognizing how love actually works to effectively share the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

This event would not be possible without the generous support of sponsors. At press time, American Church Group of Texas, representing Brotherhood Mutual, Concordia University Texas, and Harvest Workers online ministry training program, have given their support as premier sponsors. Sponsorships will continue to be accepted through June 30.



BRYCE FORMWALT

## Celebrating an Ordination Milestone?

Ordination pins are available to commemorate the special milestone in increments of 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, 55, 60, 65.



Contact Cathy Nichol,  
LCMC Administrative Coordinator:

[cathy@lcmc.net](mailto:cathy@lcmc.net)  
**734.788.7476**

about “salvation history,” Christian history, denominational history, etc., there is not some romantic or golden time devoid of this. Why would it be any different now in LCMC’s history, and as we look to the future? At the same time, it is true that God is actively involved in that messy history. This changes everything. We can even use the word “holy” (which can mean “to be set apart in some distinctive or special way”). God makes common, ordinary, messy things become holy, by setting them apart for His purposes. This is why one can hope for “holy chaos” when we meet in June. Your prayers, of course, are still needed and necessary!

Fresh from a recent Board of Trustees meeting, I can tell you that we are all hopeful for helpful outcomes from this event that will better serve the association. But while we are making plans, we know these must always yield to the bigger and holy plans that take hold of our best efforts, plans, and even chaotic moments, to make them indeed, holy. These plans are perhaps best expressed through the familiar words of the prophet Jeremiah: *“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for wholeness and not for evil, to give you a future with hope”* (Jeremiah 29:11). With *these* plans, we are assured that our time in June will be a holy (set



RANDY FREUND

apart) time, directed by the same Lord who has ordered chaos since the beginning of time.

— Pastor Randy Freund  
Chair, LCMC Board of Trustees



# Home Maintenance: The Joy of Sharing the Load

By MICHAEL BRADLEY  
*LCMC Service Coordinator*

If you are a homeowner, have you ever had one of these conversations with your spouse, a roommate, or a repair person? “Well, the washing machine broke down today.” “The dishwasher and microwave both quit working this week and have to be replaced.” How about: “The air conditioning system is beyond repair. You need a new one and you need new duct work.” Or: “There’s water in the basement. We’re going to have to drain it, pull up the carpeting, and put in new flooring.” Then there’s the dreaded: “It’s time to bite the bullet and put a new roof on the house.”

Perhaps you’ve experienced the joy of moving into a home, only to have it followed by all that can be involved in maintaining that home as the conversations above so aptly illustrate. This can be the shared experience we have had in moving into the home we know as Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC). We’ve moved in and now want to maintain the home in a responsible manner rather than taking it for granted.

During my time as service coordinator, I have had numerous congregations who have been longtime members, as well as others who have recently joined LCMC, tell me that they “feel like they’ve come home.” Other times, they tell me what a blessing it is to have a home for their congregation in which they feel at peace, and can feel proud of (in the best sense of that word).

We all know that moving into a house requires ongoing upkeep

and maintenance, and this is also true for LCMC, which almost 1,000 congregations now call home. Just a few examples of our ongoing upkeep and maintenance include:

- Providing financial support for our association staff, Board of Trustees, and Ministry Board who all work to provide various services for member congregations and leaders;
- Creating and implementing a strategic plan for the association that enables us to live out our mission, vision, and values as an association;
- Providing support services, training, and resources for call committees, church councils and lay leadership, as well as conflict management, pastoral certification, and more;
- Providing guidance, encouragement, training and support for district and fellowship coordinators and leadership teams, who in turn are caring for congregations and connecting leaders with one another;
- Providing a contact for the hundreds of phone calls, emails, and texts we receive each week;
- Providing media resources that help keep us connected and encouraged, such as our website, e-newsletter, blog, and *By the Word* magazine;
- Planning and implementing events such as our Annual Gathering,



MICHAEL BRADLEY

- national leadership conferences, and LeaderCare retreats. Each of these events network people together for relationship, vision casting, and equipping for life and ministry;
- Providing oversight of all the details necessary to offer pension and insurance benefits to pastors and leaders;
- Providing all the administrative services necessary to create and sustain an organization of soon to be 1,000+ churches in 16 countries; and
- Coordinating work with teams in the areas of church planting, and youth, young adult, and children’s ministries.

All of this and more are part of the upkeep and maintenance of our LCMC home. It is a load, but it is easier when it is a shared load across the association. There can be a joy in sharing the responsibility for maintaining our home with one another, rather than relying on only a select few to do so.

Last year fewer than 1/2 of our almost 1,000 congregations made a financial contribution toward home maintenance in LCMC, and we are so

# SECRETARY'S REPORT.

By RENAE BEHREND

*Secretary, LCMC Board of Trustees*



The LCMC Board of Trustees met April 17-19, 2023, in Minneapolis, MN.

- Each day the meeting opened with prayer and devotions.
- Michael Faust led the trustees through training on board governance; Bill Bojan provided training on integrated governance solutions and best practices for vital boards.
- The board approved the treasurer's report and December minutes.
- Mike Bradley gave updates on LCMC 3.0 Strat-OP and plans for the 2024 Annual Gathering, and reported on conflict management, generosity and stewardship, communication, and board structure and training.
- The board approved the following congregations for membership: St. Paul Lutheran Church, Stewart, MN; Bisharah Christian Church, India; and Hope Lutheran Church, Big Lake, MN.
- Julie Smith reported on districts and fellowships.
- Randy Freund shared plans for the next board meeting in June, which will be combined with both the Ministry Board and the district and fellowship leadership.
- The trustees discussed dual rostering, Church Planting Fellowship and church planting fund.
- The Ministry Board gave updates on board development diagnostics and progress on communication with the Intentional Interim Fellowship. Jim Cords indicated he plans to resign as chair of the ministry board in October.
- The board reappointed Michael Faust and Wendy Poch for a second term on the Ministry Board, and appointed Wendy as successor to Jim Cords as chair.
- The board finalized the church plant funding/distribution guidelines, to be presented at the Annual Gathering.
- The board adjourned the meeting and closed in prayer.

— United in Christ, Renae Behrends

# TREASURER'S REPORT.

By CINDY GLESSNER

*Treasurer, LCMC Board of Trustees*



My report this quarter is short and to the point:

1. Expenses are well controlled by our great staff;
2. Giving is strong and we appreciate all our association members' generosity;
3. Remember to check to see if your pension beneficiary is designated as you wish (without it, your heirs will struggle); and
4. Remember the seminary debt relief program. Pastors with seminary debt may apply for funds annually.

Thanks, in part, to all of you, our association is financially healthy and stable.  
We are poised to continue realizing the vision of LCMC 3.0!

Thank you!

— Respectfully, Cindy Glessner

# Up Next:

## 2024 Zoom Youth Leaders Webinars

August 15 November 21 11:00am CST  
Cathy Nichol: cathy@lcmc.net 734.788.7476

## 2024 Zoom Church Planting Fellowship Monthly Conversation

1<sup>st</sup> Thursday each month starting at 10:00am CST  
August 1 September 5 October 3  
Erica Varcoe: erica@thetableministry.org  
605.929.2065

## 2024 Zoom Support Group for Church Support Staff

2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday each month starting at 12:00pm CST  
July 9 August 13 September 10 October 8  
Wendy Magruder: office@augustanadistrict.org  
320.234.8403

## District & Fellowship Leaders Gathering

June 26-28, 2024  
St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Marion, IA  
Julie Smith: julie@lcmc.net 734.404.4535

## Heartland District Annual Gathering

July 19-20, 2024  
First St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Hastings, NE  
Jan Gluth King: pastorjan0312@gmail.com  
308.995.5361 or 563.419.3441 (mobile)

## Texas District Annual Gathering

July 26-27, 2024  
Zion Lutheran Church, Kerrville, TX  
Bryce Formwalt: bryce@lcmctexas.org  
512.996.2468

## Seminarian Connection Zoom Meeting

July 30, 2024 starting at 7:00pm CST  
Christian Huntley: christian@lcmc.net  
515.209.7180

## Retreat for Retired LCMC Pastors & Spouses

August 26-29, 2024  
Okoboji Lutheran Bible Camp, Milford, IA  
John Nelson: pastorjohn@hosannachurch.com  
630.650.0905

## 24<sup>th</sup> LCMC Annual Gathering

September 29-October 2, 2024  
St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Marion, IA  
Cathy Nichol: cathy@lcmc.net 734.788.7476



Do you know of a youth leader, volunteer, or member in your congregation who is passionate about youth ministry?

2024 Webinar dates: August 15 & November 21 at 11:00am CST. Join us!

Sign up for the emails:

<https://mailchi.mp/75a65006d3ae/youth-leader-webinars>

Like the LCMC Youth Ministry Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/LCMCYouthMinistry>

LCMC Texas District  
2024 Annual Gathering



**LOVE WORKS**

LUKE 10:27

**July 26 - 27, 2024**

Zion Lutheran Church  
Kerrville, Texas

## Retired LCMC Pastors & Spouses Retreat

**August 26-29, 2024**

Okoboji Lutheran Bible Camp, Milbank, IA

**Early Registration Deadline: July 31, 2024**

Space is limited - register early!

For more information, please contact:

**Pr. John Nelson: 630.650.0905**  
[pastorjohn@hosannachurch.com](mailto:pastorjohn@hosannachurch.com)

**Pr. Sue Gunderson: 920.421.1944**  
[Sue.Gunderson61@gmail.com](mailto:Sue.Gunderson61@gmail.com)





# engaging your CULTURAL MOMENT

➤ 24th LCMC Annual Gathering & Convention ◀

SEPTEMBER 29 - OCTOBER 2, 2024 \* MARION, IOWA \* [WWW.LCMC.NET/ANNUAL-GATHERING](http://WWW.LCMC.NET/ANNUAL-GATHERING)

## 2024 LCMC Annual Gathering

By KRISTY THOMAS

*LCMC Communications and Public Relations Specialist*

Our association is made up of many types of congregations: large and small, rural and urban, younger and older, traditional and contemporary, U.S. and international. Although we may have differences in where we're located and how we do things, we all have one thing in common: we each have the ability to engage the unique cultural moments before us when God presents us with an opportunity to do so. The challenge is being prepared to act on it!

The theme of our 24th Annual Gathering & Convention is "Engaging Your Cultural Moment". Together, we will explore how the cultural moments happening all around us can be seen not as something negative, but as

potential opportunities for carrying out the Great Commission.

We'll cover topics such as:

- How can we embrace our Lutheran theology and use it to positively impact the lives of the people around us?
- How do we empower the people in our churches to be ready to share the gospel with others, and to recognize a propitious moment to do so?
- How can we reach people who are living in smaller, less populated, or less accessible areas?
- What resources are available to help congregations carry out this mission in their communities?



KRISTY THOMAS

The LCMC Annual Gathering & Convention serves as an opportunity for pastors, leaders, and church members from all types of congregations to join together for an intentional time of worship, prayer, fellowship, networking, learning, and inspiration. We look forward to seeing you there!

**To register: [www.lcmc.net/24-ag/registration](http://www.lcmc.net/24-ag/registration)**

**Registration deadline: September 26, 2024**

**For more information, contact Cathy Nichol: [cathy@lcmc.net](mailto:cathy@lcmc.net) 734.788.7476**

# Encouraging People to Become Pastors

By David Fisher

*Retired LCMC Pastor, Greenwood Village, CO*

With the shortage of pastors for congregations now plainly upon us in North America, what can current pastors look for in a person whom God may potentially call to pastoral ministry? In the past, current pastors were not necessarily encouraged to watch for people who might have the gifts and calling to become future pastors.

In fact, a common opinion was expressed that if one could do anything **but** be a pastor, he or she should pursue that alternative path. If one could not do anything but be a pastor, **only then** should pastoral ministry be pursued.

The structure of our LCMC association, combined with the current shortage of incoming pastors, means we need to adopt a more proactive approach to identifying and encouraging people to consider God's call to pastoral ministry. All calls to ministry ultimately come down to God and the person being called within the context of the community of the church. God can use current pastors in the process of calling future pastors.

In this article, I share how God called Rev. Wendy Poch to become a pastor and succeed me as pastor at Spirit of Hope Lutheran Church (SOH) in Parker, Colorado.

The pastoral succession at SOH really began several years prior to the formation of the plan, though we didn't realize it at the time. In the fall of 2015, Wendy and I were the SOH delegates to the LCMC Annual Gathering in Texas. Wendy was soon

to finish homeschooling her children and wondered what God had in mind for her next. During a break in the schedule, she shared with me the struggle she was having.

I asked her, "Have you ever thought about being a pastor?" Wendy's service and the qualities I had noticed in the years she had been a part of our congregation led me to that question.

Wendy had run our youth program, served on our governing board, sang in choir, as well as served in other areas of congregational ministry. After prayer, conversation with family and friends, further conversations with me and working through some theological issues, Wendy discerned that the Lord was calling her to pursue pastoral ministry. Her journey began and was supported all the way through by SOH.

So, what can current pastors look for to encourage those whom God may be calling to pastoral ministry?

1. A relationship of love with the Lord that moves in the direction of obedience and spiritual health.
2. A love for God's people in the community of the church.
3. A godly character exemplified by commitment, selflessness and humility.
4. A curiosity and interest in theology.
5. Affirmation from brothers and sisters in the church ("You would make a good pastor!").



DAVID R. FISHER

I saw all these qualities in Wendy. As pastors are made aware by God of people whom He may be calling into the office of pastor, sharing those insights with potential pastors can reveal to them what they may not realize or have ever considered.

What can current pastors do? We are not recruiters in the sense of secular employers.

Pastors are called by God, not hired by congregations.

The best approach for current pastors might be found in 1 Samuel 16. While in the home of Jesse when looking for the replacement for King Saul, the prophet Samuel was in constant prayer with God. The Lord kept guiding Samuel until he came to a young boy named David.

While keeping an eye out for the qualities that might make one a good pastor, we should always be praying and listening to God. "Lord, whom do you want to call?"





# Welcome!

Please take a moment to welcome the new congregations and the new pastors that have joined LCMC since the last newsletter!

By CATHY NICHOL  
LCMC Administrative Coordinator

## New Congregations

- **Mt. Hope Lutheran Church**, Shiloh, OH  
Pr. Jeremy Lambert 520.481.4382  
clarabillotte1953@gmail.com
- **First Evang. Lutheran Church**, Plymouth, OH  
Pr. Jeremy Lambert 419.687.7215  
martha\_rath@yahoo.com
- **St. John Evang. Lutheran Church**, West Alexandria, OH  
Vacant 937.839.5321  
stjohnningomar@swohio.twcbc.com
- **St. John Evang. Lutheran Church**, Cushing, IA  
Vacant 712.384.2545  
stjohnlutheran@schallertel.net
- **Bethesda Lutheran Church of Rossenburg**, Aitkin, MN  
Pr. Lorelie Robinson 218.839.0597  
tlroing@yahoo.com
- **Zion Lutheran Church**, Philo, IL  
Pr. Donna Hacker Smith 217.684.2814  
zionlutheranphilo@yahoo.com
- **Greater Love Community Church**, Jinja, Uganda  
Pr. Samuel Magumba 256772470302  
smagumba@yahoo.com
- **Peace Lutheran Church**, South Gate, CA  
Vacant 323.326.3034  
peacecomm2@yahoo.com
- **Hope Lutheran Church**, Big Lake, MN  
Pr. Mark Marxhausen 612.867.1359  
hopeintherefuge@yahoo.com
- **Bishara Christian Church**, Manjeri Kerala, India  
Pr. Abdul Messiah 919447844284  
drmessiah@gmail.com

## New Pastors

**Gabrielle Arland**, Shoreview, MN garland@sov.church 651.295.1679  
**Heath Brady**, Salem, OR smallville8013@gmail.com 425.773.2251  
**Stephen Jahn**, Wayzata, MN stephenjahn@gmail.com 612.456.0678  
**Jonathan Thompson**, Keizer, OR presjet@msn.com 503.580.1294  
**Scott Neumann**, Holstein, IA son\_follower@icloud.com 515.490.7020  
**Michael Giese**, Rockport, TX mrgiese1990@gmail.com 361.205.3317  
**Khrystle Sullivan**, Cedar Rapids, IA khrys1119@gmail.com 319.720.5846



# Hope Lutheran Church

## Big Lake, MN

By MARK MARXHAUSEN  
Pastor, Hope Lutheran Church



Nestled down a county road, surrounded by a National Wildlife Refuge in the township of Orrock, sits a well-established Lutheran church that many might overlook. The new town hall is also on that dead end road, as well as a cemetery.

The little church has an interesting history, dating back to over 150 years. At one time, another mile up the road, sat one Lutheran Church and this one. One was a Norwegian Lutheran Church and the other a Swedish Lutheran Church. Though they were close in proximity, they were separated by culture.

That is until 1967, when a bolt of lightning hit the one church and burned it to the ground. Then in 1968, a tornado wiped out the other church. It was then Hope Lutheran Church was formulated to band these two churches together. Even through those hardships, the light of the Gospel could not be put out.

Many things have transpired since that time. Pastors came and pastors left. Children grew up and moved away. The older folks went on to their eternal rest. Numbers dwindled, but through it all the lights stayed on. The synod they belonged to tried to help, but location... lack of members... and lack of finances prevented them from helping this little church find their next pastor. The shortage of pastors didn't help. Still, the tenacity of this small group persevered.

COVID came and COVID left. This church got a little smaller, but their love for Jesus... their love for each other... and their love for their community kept fighting to stay alive. They kept the lights on!

Today, they worship about 25. They just got a new pastor, who just so happened to move into the area. It started out as a pulpit fill, which turned into a part-time call. They cut ties with their former synod. It wasn't easy, but it was the best thing for them to do.

A number of new people have come as of late. Hope Lutheran Church was welcomed with loving arms into fellowship with LCMC in March 2024. After all these years, God's doing a new thing at Hope. A feeling of new life is springing up.

If you ever find yourself in beautiful Orrock, Minnesota, come find us at Hope Lutheran Church, where the Light of the Gospel is still shining.



# GETTING TO KNOW

# New Normal...continued from page 1

Church planters were introduced. A pastor leading a church in a local YMCA. A pastor whose humble church plant has grown into an established, large congregation. Leaders nurturing house churches. Community center congregations. A pastor leading a rebuilding after a fire. International planting – a Lutheran church in Uruguay. A pastor starting a church in a sports bar. Baptizing. Confirming. Worshiping. Surrounded by beer signs. A Zoom screen. Boxes holding stories. All woven with a common thread – answering God’s call to church plant.

What has grown out of this, and so many other similarities (and so, **SO** many differences!) has been a gift to our association and to one another! A group of pastors/leaders/congregations/seminarians – all leading church plants or coming from church planting roots from all over the world, gathering around God’s Word. His promise to meet us where we are.

This, paired with the desire to build up church planting in the LCMC, has created a fellowship: LCMC’s Church Planting Fellowship. A sounding board. Support. A fellowship of **networking, strategy, prayer**. A space to discern God’s call to plant a church. A place to come to learn more. Ask questions. Hear testimonies. A catalog of resources. Churches, people, congregations and small groups with

the desire and passion to support the mission of church plants. There’s a seat at this table for them too. This fellowship will offer support from the trenches. Battle wounds. Triumphs.

If you’re reading this, chances are you are not immune to the statistics surrounding the church. Words such as declining. Shortage. Numbers. Youth. Families. Generations. The worries around buildings and clergy. The reality can be terrifying. Paralyzing. And...freeing. Full of hope. Promise. Because...the pendulum swings the other direction as well. A changing world can open doors for opportunities. Dare I say...**New Normals?**

Church plants have bridged the gap between communities of church and unchurched people and built communities that preach solid Theology. Scripture alone. The Gospel. Freedom. Church plants have creatively navigated meeting people living on the fringes. Feeling lost. Even hurt by the church. Church plants have thrown away the rigidness that resides inside a building. The identity being found in a church building is replaced with the truth of the church. (*“For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”* Matthew 18:20). Traditional church buildings, heaven-reaching steeples, and breathtaking stained glass are being replaced by



ERICA VARCOE

sports bars and YMCAs. Unusual. Aesthetically contrasting. But still the same, unwavering, steadfast God. The Spirit at work. The One who calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. **Meeting us where we are.**

I recently taught a children’s lesson (around tables at Shenanigans Sports Bar!) about Paul’s letters to the Philippians – written from jail. *The Children’s Bible* summed up this story with a simple, yet profound sentence. *“Paul sent a letter to the Philippians from jail with some wonderful news. ‘Can you believe it?’ he wrote. ‘God is working. Even here!’”* Church planting in the LCMC. A verb. A noun. Even descriptive. Can you believe it? God is working. Even here!

The Church Planting Fellowship is new in its formation and leaders ➡ page 12

# Home Maintenance...continued from page 4

thankful that these congregations are continuing to contribute to the support of the association.

At the same time, I’d like to invite the over 500 congregations who did not contribute last year, to do so this year. Every amount will be

appreciated and given thanks for. Then, having made that initial contribution to LCMC’s home maintenance, I encourage you to officially add LCMC to your church budget in 2025.

Thanks everyone for helping to create and sustain a home for

congregations, a home in which you can have a sense of pride and peace, a home in which you can feel wanted and needed.

And thank you all for not taking this home for granted, and for sharing the load. God bless you all!



# Confessions of a Church Planter

By ROBERT KNUTSON, *Pastor, Hebrews 10:24 Community Church*

*NOTE: This article first appeared on the LCMC blog, posted April 26, 2024.*

A couple of months ago, I received a letter from LCMC Service Coordinator Mike Bradley requesting financial support. I confess, I did not receive it well. I lead a very small church plant and funding is an enormous challenge. I initially thought, "He doesn't even know me... I should be writing HIM a letter, asking HIM for support!"

I believe these thoughts may be common due to the autonomous nature of our association. We can feel alone in our mission for Christ.

I had also been invited to attend our Texas District Winter Retreat, which this year, featured the LCMC LeaderCare curriculum. I planned to skip it because I didn't see how it applied to a church planter like me. Yet, with encouragement from Texas District Director of Mission Growth Bryce Formwalt, and after seeing that my friend and colleague John Waak was speaking on spiritual formation, I agreed to attend.

I must admit that my initial thoughts about this retreat being of no value could not have been more wrong! The lessons I received were exactly what I needed. I was cared for, prayed for, and invested in. The presentations from Mike Bradley, Christian Huntley, Kyle Fever, and John Waak built us up and reminded me of the value of our association.

Another church association in San Antonio has adopted the mantra that "healthy churches need healthy pastors." It is important for pastors to come together for our physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.

I now see that our associations within LCMC are crucial in helping our congregations and their leaders be strong and healthy for our mission in the world. It is important for each of us to participate in and support the ministry of our districts and the whole of LCMC.

As is stated in Hebrews 10:24 (our church's namesake), this is how we "*stir up one another to love and good works.*"

## New Normal

...cont. from page 11

work tirelessly to be a source of integrity and consistency. We meet the 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday each month, at 10:00 a.m. CST, to network, answer questions, discuss "common" church planting topics, and close with intentional prayer time. These meetings are open to everyone. The work by the association staff and other leaders within the LCMC have set the groundwork for church planting to become part of conversations – around tables and in meetings across the map. As Church planting becomes

the New Normal, we invite you to be a part of God's outrageous and amazing handiwork!

*Erica's dream of doing ministry in a way that met people where they are + LCMC's Augustana District's 2020 Initiative = The Table Ministry, Sioux Falls, SD's, first church in a bar. Shenanigans Sports Bar is home to The Table Ministry, and is a reminder of God's goodness coming for His people in the most unexpected places. She's been overwhelmed by the support, mentorship and care from the LCMC community. Congregations from all across the United States (and beyond!) cover The Table in prayers, generous gifts, and valued friendships. Erica is married to Paul. They have three children, Noah (17), Mollie (14), and Elias (8). For more information, visit:*

[www.thetableministry.org](http://www.thetableministry.org)

## Installation: Rev. Joshua T. Ruiter

Submitted by William Beck



Rev. Joshua T. Ruiter was installed as pastor at Greenford Lutheran Church in Greenford, OH, on April 14, 2024. Pr. William Beck officiated. With an M.A. in Religion from Liberty University, he continues studies to be considered for LCMC certification. He previously served as a missionary in Jamaica. l-r: Pr. Michael Koch (NALC), Sister Sally Kerr, Pr. Ruiter, Sister Jane Roper, Pr. William Beck (LCMC), Pr. Dennis Whalen (LCMC), and Pr. William Wilkins (ELCA Retired).

For full article: [www.lcmc.net/blog](http://www.lcmc.net/blog)

## Women of the Word

It's time to start planning to attend these upcoming WOW events!

### Augustana District WOW Fall Gathering

September 21, 2024  
Faith Lutheran Church, Hutchinson, MN  
Jan Kreie [jkreie@mediacombb.net](mailto:jkreie@mediacombb.net)

### Heartland District WOW Fall Gathering

October 26, 2024  
Peace Lutheran Church, Deshler, NE  
Linda Fangmeyer [lindafang@gpcom.net](mailto:lindafang@gpcom.net)

To get your WOW event listed here,  
send info to:

[joyminion@gmail.com](mailto:joyminion@gmail.com)

# Pastor: Is Your Contact Information Up to Date?

By CATHY NICHOL, LCMC Administrative Coordinator

Have you moved? Do you have a new address? Or a new phone number? Perhaps you have changed congregations? Help US by keeping YOUR profile information up to date.

Go to <https://www.lcmc.net/pastor-update> and fill in the ALL of the fields, including Ministry Education/Credentials.

*If you have any questions,  
please contact*

**Cathy Nichol:**  
**cathy@lcmc.net** or  
**(734) 788-7476.**

## Pastors Directory Changes

By CHRISTIAN HUNTLEY

LCMC Coordinator for Leadership and Pastoral Development

*NOTE: This article first appeared on the LCMC blog, posted March 25, 2024.*

To better assist congregations, call committees, and others, the LCMC Ministry Board initiated changes to the pastoral list categories that will be reflected on the LCMC website in May 2024.

Current categories are not well defined and allowed pastors to be in more than one category. This unclarity was difficult to explain and created unrealistic expectations, especially among call committees. The updated categories will better reflect a pastor's current call status.

### The new categories will be:

- **Under LCMC Call:** Those with a current letter of call to a LCMC congregation
- **Not Under LCMC Call:** Those not currently under call or serving a non-LCMC congregation

- **Available for Call & Ordination:** Those not under LCMC call and have not been ordained.
- **Deployed as Chaplain** – Called by an LCMC congregation and serving as a chaplain in military, healthcare, and other organizations
- **Deployed** – Called by an LCMC congregation and serving a separate specialized ministry
- **Retired** – Certified pastors who retired from their congregation
- **Emeritus** – Certified pastors who received Emeritus status from their congregation
- **Inactive** – Those no longer seeking call or who have been without a call for more than 3 years

### Categories being removed:

- **Active**
- **Available for Call**



CHRISTIAN HUNTLEY

### LCMC Clothing Items Available Now!



To purchase, contact  
**cathy@lcmc.net**

Thank you to those who confirmed or updated their information already!  
If you have not already done so, please update your information accordingly.

**<https://www.lcmc.net/pastor-update>**

## LCMC Staff:

LCMC  
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[www.lcmc.net](http://www.lcmc.net)

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Director of Operations  
Sharon MacFadyen  
[sharon@lcmc.net](mailto:sharon@lcmc.net)

Administrative Coordinator  
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Communications & Public  
Relations Specialist  
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Fellowships  
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Coordinator for Leadership &  
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Military Endorser  
Charles Hunsaker  
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## Board of Trustees:

CHAIR: Rev. Randy Freund  
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Rev. Anna Tucker  
Rev. Steve Turnbull



## Key Men Needed!

By CHUCK HUNSAKER  
*President, LCMC Lutheran Men*



Does your congregation have a key man? Far too many do not.

What is a key man? It is simply a point of contact in a congregation for Lutheran Men.

When we discuss key men, we often hear a comment such as, "I don't have time to head up a men's organization." Another comment is, "I don't like to ask people for money." Neither of these is required.

That said, you can be as active as you want. Sure, you can head up a men's group...we can help you get one started. You can meet with each man in the congregation and ask them to donate to Lutheran Men...but you don't have to. You are simply our point of contact in the congregation.

We do ask that twice each year...March and September...you tell the men of the congregation that it is the campaign month for the **Buck-A-Month Club** or the **Committee of 100**. We can help here too. The Lutheran Men's section of the LCMC website contains bulletin inserts that you can print off. All you need to do is collect them at the end of the month and send them to LCMC.

At last count, we only had slightly fewer than 200 Key Men. We have nearly 800 congregations in the U.S., so we have a way to go.

If you would be interested in becoming a key man, simply send me an email at [pacific6@bellsouth.net](mailto:pacific6@bellsouth.net) and I will add you to our roster.

Think about it. Pray about it. Discuss it with your pastor.

**WE NEED YOU!**

**[LCMC.net/Lutheran Men](http://LCMC.net/LutheranMen)**

## Congregation: Is Your Contact Information Up to Date?

By CATHY NICHOL, *LCMC Administrative Coordinator*

Does your congregation have a new location or mailing address?  
Or a new phone number? An updated website address? Joined a new district?  
Help US by keeping the profile for your congregation up to date.

Go to **<https://www.lcmc.net/update-congregational-info>**  
and fill in the **ALL** of the fields.

*If you have any questions, please contact Cathy Nichol at*  
**[cathy@lcmc.net](mailto:cathy@lcmc.net) or (734) 788-7476.**





KURT HOOVER

Pastor, Messiah Lutheran Church  
Joliet, Illinois

## Devotional Series...

# THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

*“And Jesus said to them, ‘follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.’”*

— Mark 1:17

When I was 8 years old, my brother and I would try to catch 15-pound carp with tiny hooks and 8-pound test line. Needless to say, it did not work very well. We simply left the carp in our boat-dock-village with little brass hooks decorating their lips and a distaste for our best bait.

When Jesus promises to make disciples into “*fishers of men*,” they did not picture that they would be casting out a lure and hoping someone might bite.

Little did my brother and I know we needed to get a better hook and stronger line. We focused on the bait. The carp were just sitting there near the surface of the water. Turns out bread, balled up on the hook, worked the best of all our attempts. We just had to get the fish to bite before the bait fell apart.

Is this how the Gospel works? Is the bait the fragile part and the method needs more support?

Is that how the Gospel works? No! Much less the common misconception that in order to ‘catch’ a person there is a set thing to be said, or emotion to be felt, or expression of ‘true’ faith that will assure us of a person’s salvation. The power is not in the fishermen. It is not in us. And the Good News is not dependent on our notion of what faith must look like in those we love.

The Gospel is so much more powerful than that concept of fishing. And yet we find ourselves thinking – “If we can just teach our people to set the hook.”

Our village is filled with wounded men and women who have bitten down on this empty idea of religion.

The image for these professional fishermen was not a lure, but that of a net. The Gospel is not bait we must

get someone to bite down on from their own free will and logical understanding.

The Gospel is a net. An all-powerful, all-encompassing reality that sweeps over us and captures us in the wonder of God’s almighty presence. The Gospel is a direct proclamation of authority!

*“And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, ‘What is this? A new teaching with authority!’”* — Mark 1:27

God is not waiting for us to trust Him. He creates TRUST by His WORD as promised, given through broken preachers and common elements.

How powerful is the Gospel? With how much attention and care must we treat this fulfilled and at-hand energy? How much do we need to be aware of what God is doing through us in order for God to use us to repent another person’s faith?

It turns out the Gospel is much more powerful than we ever could imagine. It is more than a formula or a feeling. It is an assurance. The belief that God knows the words a person needs to hear to be set free from the empty promises currently tugging at their lips. God knows what creates trust in His promise.

And that power is not dependent on the preacher. Whether well-rehearsed or casual conversation, the Gospel is an all-encompassing **net** that sweeps over us and captures us in the presence of our Almighty God.



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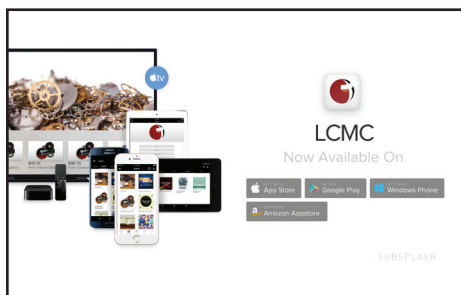
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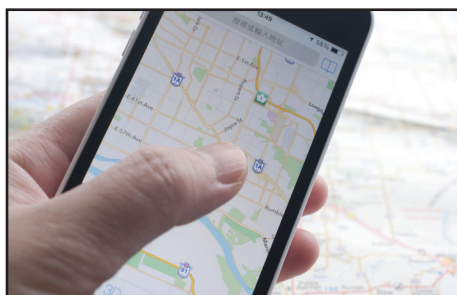


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## FIND A CHURCH

Search for an LCMC congregation near you (or the place where you're headed) with our Congregation Finder tool, available in our mobile app and on our website at [www.lcmc.net/congregation-finder](https://www.lcmc.net/congregation-finder).



## E-NEWSLETTER

Get recent announcements and a list of upcoming events delivered to your inbox once a month. To learn more and subscribe, visit [www.lcmc.net/enewsletter](https://www.lcmc.net/enewsletter).