



The gift of a sewing machine enabled this tailor to better provide for her family. To learn more, read “Building Friendships that Ignite Hope” beginning on page 4. Photo courtesy of Jim & Marilyn Cords.

Three Days of Prayer: Let Us Pray

BY MIKE BRADLEY, LCMC Service Coordinator

As your service coordinator, two thoughts have caught my attention lately.

The first is a thought from Martin Luther. I’ve been reading his book, *A Simple Way to Pray*, and in it he writes: “We must see to it that we do not lose the habit of prayer and deceive ourselves into thinking that other kinds of things are more important, when they are not.”

The second thought is from Dr. Ed Stetzer as he spoke at our Annual Gathering in October. Ed reminded us that twice in the 20th century, a pandemic of some sort along with social upheaval has been followed by a spiritual awakening. The first time was when the Great Awakening followed the influenza pandemic and World War I in 1918-1920. The second was when the Hong Kong flu pandemic and the civil rights and Vietnam protests and riots in the late 1960s were followed by the Jesus People Revolution, which impacted millions for the kingdom of God. With these in mind, he encouraged us to be alert and to be ready to engage the cultural moment that lies before us as we navigate our own season of pandemic and social unrest. He exhorted us to view it as an opportunity to continue the mission of the Gospel to make Christ known.

Combining those two thoughts together is encouraging me to see that one of the ways we can engage the cultural moment before us, is to pray. And that is

Mark Your Calendars:

2024 Youth Leader Webinars
January 18 February 15
March 21 April 13

12th Annual Three Days of Prayer
January 2-4, 2024

LCMC Advanced Intentional Interim Pastors Training
January 22-25, 2024

Vine & Branches LCMC LeaderCare Winter Retreat
February 4-6 & 7-9, 2024

Augustana District Theological Conference
February 4-6, 2024

Confirmation Retreat
March 1-3, 2024

LCMC Pre-Retirement Retreat for Pastors & Spouses
April 22-25, 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:**

Renae Behrends, Jennifer Bietz, Mike Bradley, Jim Cords, Varinia Cuello, Bryce Formwalt, Brandon Foster, Randy Freund, Cindy Glessner, Nathan Hoff, Christian Huntley, John Nelson, Cathy Nichol, Miguel Nunez, Chip Reynolds, Andrea Taphorn and Kristy Thomas.

NEXT ISSUE:

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

February 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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www.lcmc.net | info@lcmc.net

Rich Resources: Training Our Congregational Leaders!

By CHRISTIAN HUNTLEY

Coordinator for Leadership & Pastoral Development

The more I interact with the congregations in our association, the more my heart is encouraged about the future of LCMC and the church. We have tremendous leaders! Lay and ordained. Paid and volunteer. There are countless stories of volunteer leaders becoming paid staff, and then, becoming ordained pastors. But a question I often get is, "Where can I continue my training and learning?"

The answer: LCMC partners with training programs and seminaries across the country to equip those preparing for pastoral ministry and those looking for a little extra theological or practical ministry training! And our leaders can get the training without moving to a new location. They stay in their congregation, with their support system, their mentors, and the congregation benefits!

Our partners are aware of the struggles we all face around theological education. In response, they are investing in new online tools and teaching techniques, using a wide variety of voices to make education/ training more accessible and affordable than ever!

FROM THE BOARD...

By RANDY FREUND

Chair, LCMC Board of Trustees

It All Comes Down to This

The goal was to write one of these articles and *not* mention "LCMC 3.0." That went out the window with the first line. In truth, it would be hard to do such a thing on the heels of an Annual Gathering in which this was the focus. Further, this is a board of trustees article. Our December agenda includes analyzing all the input we received from focus groups on LCMC 3.0.

We are an association of congregations. LCMC 3.0 is simply a way of thinking through being the church together. The church has one specific calling: to proclaim the crucified and risen Lord Jesus until He comes again. The ramifications of Ed Stetzer's analysis got me to thinking about this. How the church lives *in* and *as-over-against* the

In your congregation, who would benefit from more training? Who is God calling to step into a new level of leadership?

Below are a few resources, but make sure to check opportunities with all our training partners!

www.lcmc.net/seminaries

Saint Paul Seminary is hosting a Lay Preaching course as part of their CROSS Training program. Saint Paul's designs CROSS Training so that "individuals and congregations have access to a wide variety of courses and

seminars." This six-week series tackles the fundamentals of Law-Gospel preaching. Take it to build a lay leader's confidence or as a pastoral refresher!

Luther House of Study, part of Kairos University, has a video resource library covering topics such as chism, Galatians, and Lutheran theological topics. These short videos help leaders gain understanding in some of our Lutheran distinctives. They could be used by individuals or as a series for a pastor to lead discussion and training for leaders in their congregations.

Two options for tracks of study include **Harvest Workers' Church Leader Track** and **The Master's Institute's Micro MDiv. Program**. These offer well-rounded introductions to theology, Bible, and practical ministry for those seeking theological education without earning a M Div degree.

The training and seminary partners of LCMC have a variety of great tools available to support the growth and development of the lay and ordained leaders across the association. Are you or a leader in your congregation ready to get started?

Upcoming List Changes

By CHRISTIAN HUNTLEY

Early in 2024, staff and Ministry Board will be updating the way our pastoral lists are categorized on the website. In preparation, we ask all pastors to confirm their current status and update their pastoral profile.

Please update your Pastoral Profile on the LCMC website: <https://www.lcmc.net/pastors-directory>. Type your name in the search box to review your profile. To update information, click on the red Update Info link in the top right and complete all of the fields.

Questions? Contact: christian@lcmc.net

Current categories are:

- ◆ Active ◆ Available for Call
- ◆ Available for Call and Ordination ◆ Contract
- ◆ Retired ◆ Emeritus ◆ Deployed
- ◆ Deployed as Chaplains ◆ Inactive

Thank you for your assistance
as we support our congregations!

This article has been condensed to fit the available space.
To read the complete article, go to: www.lcmc.net/blog

culture has been before us since the beginning. *"Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's."*

While the cultural moment the church faces is unique to our time, the nature of the challenge goes back to the 1st century. Pilate asked the famous question, "What is truth?" And with that, John 14:6 echoes in our ears. With Pilate's question, "what is the way and the life?" is added. Throughout history, the source of the way, truth and life are typically described in one of three ways. One source is the "self." Only *you* determine what is truth and life and the way.

The second alternative is to rise above the self and follow a

particular set of beliefs, values, and standards. But the third is far more radical. It is boldly and exclusively offered by the One who says there is no greater truth, no other life, and no higher way than Jesus Christ Himself. What if the only way to face the cultural moment before us is Christ alone? And what if the deeper miracle is that Christ Himself faces this moment by entering empty vessels like us?

What if it all comes down to the fact that our lives are as radical as Paul indicated? *"To live is Christ."* *"You have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God."* *"It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me."*



RANDY FREUND

We are an association of congregations with one specific calling: to proclaim the crucified and risen Lord Jesus until He comes again. Perhaps LCMC 3.0 and facing

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Building Friendships that Ignite Hope

BY JIM CORDS

Pastor, St. Timothy Lutheran Church,
San Jose, California

St. Timothy's connection to the mission in Ethiopia began with our mission team studying the book *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor . . . and Yourself*. This was a challenging journey with our team, but led us to seek a partner in mission who had adopted a developmental approach rather than a relief philosophy. We discovered **Children's Hope Chest** (CHC) and then learned of their work in Ethiopia – a great match for us!

This partnership is what led my wife Marilyn and I on a vision trip last summer where we met several leaders and saw the work of Children's Hope Chest firsthand. One of the excellent things happening in Ethiopia is the partnership of CHC with both the government of Ethiopia and the local churches.

In Chapa, that partnership is a congregation of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus. The deep rooting in faith and the faith community being done with these young people is both essential and life

giving. We are always filled with great joy as we worship with our brothers and sisters throughout the world! I was honored to be asked to preach while there, with the leader of CHC Ethiopia as my interpreter.

We observed a consistent commitment and work to empower people in so many facets of community life, while always rooting each step and prayer and training in discipleship. It was so impressive to see the way they took advantage of each opportunity to allow young people to speak for themselves, telling their stories and giving glory to God in their witness. There was a consistent pursuit to strengthen young adults and their families to grow into a sustaining lifestyle for them and the community of which they were a part.

Training is a significant element in this work, but it is consistently followed by the opportunity to put that training into practice. Those opportunities happen within the support of the community so that all learn and grow together. The community always has a voice in the work being done, which forms both

a partnership and a sense of independence from CHC. It



MARILYN & JIM CORDS

was especially inspiring to see the programming that enabled young adults to serve in places of leadership while also caring for their fellow youth.

We launched this ministry earlier this year with over 80 members of our church becoming friends with a young adult in our Chapa Carepoint. We have the opportunity to write letters back and forth to get to know our new friends, sharing photos and encouraging them with our love and prayers, and providing a financial stipend each month through CHC. This Friendship Model is building bridges of hope!

One of my early concerns was for the families. How could they choose just one young person to support with education, healthcare and training, but leave out their brothers and sisters? What I saw was an amazing empowerment of each young person's family that enabled them to provide well for those brothers and sisters. The work of family empowerment was astonishing. It was equally encouraging to see the strength, confidence and joy in the parents who were now successfully providing for their children and developing a hope for the future all of their children.



left: Together with
our Chapa friends

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SECRETARY'S REPORT.

By RENAE BEHREND

Secretary, LCMC Board of Trustees

The LCMC Board of Trustees met October 4, 2023, at the Annual Gathering in St. Louis, MO.

- The board welcomed the new board members from Area 4, Rev. Kurt Hoover from Joliet, IL, and Area 2, Rev. Anna Turner from Colorado Springs, CO.
- The board spent time introducing themselves to our new members and discussed the rhythm of the meeting and expectations.
- Trustee elections were held. Chair: Randy Freund. Vice Chair: Jason Eliot. Secretary: Renae Behrends.
- The trustees set the board meeting schedule for 2024.
- The board discussed feedback from the Annual Gathering.
- Chair Randy Freund shared a few more thoughts regarding the Annual Gathering.
- The trustees adjourned the meeting and closed in prayer.

— Respectfully, Rev. Renae Behrends



RENAE BEHREND

TREASURER'S REPORT.

By CINDY GLESSNER

Treasurer, LCMC Board of Trustees

This is always my favorite treasurer's report article because it gets written right after the Annual Gathering. As usual, I was inspired and blessed. I loved getting to lead a breakout and participating in the focus groups. Together we can realize the "What can God do?" vision Mike described so beautifully!

Thanks to your gifts, LCMC is healthy financially and poised to create success in its 3rd decade. If your congregation is not sending a portion of your benevolence giving to LCMC, please consider doing so this year!

Another important activity I get to participate in each year is the review of the pension plan. This is a great plan and I encourage you to maintain it after retirement, because, unlike many other plans, there is a tax benefit for a housing allowance element that continues after retirement. I also encourage you (make that beg you) to verify that you have your desired beneficiary(ies) on file with the plan administrator. If you're not sure, find out! Without this designation, your beneficiaries will have great difficulty gaining access to your account in the event of your passing (and the state in which you live will be happy to dissipate the balance on fees and probate court costs!)

Also, remember we have the seminary debt relief fund available for your pastors with student debt. Remind eligible pastors that these funds are available upon application.

— Respectfully, Cindy Glessner



CINDY GLESSNER

Pastor: Is Your Contact Information Up to Date?

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.

Up Next:

2024 Zoom Youth Leaders Webinars

3rd Thursday each month starting at 11:00am CST
Jan. 18 Feb. 15 Mar. 21 Apr. 18 May 16
Cathy Nichol: cathy@lcmc.net 734.788.7476

2024 Zoom Support Group for Church Support Staff

2nd Tuesday each month starting at 12:00pm CST
Jan. 9 Feb. 13 Mar. 12 Apr. 9 May 14
Wendy Magruder: office@augustanadistrict.org
320.234.8403

12th Annual Three Days of Prayer

January 2-4, 2024

Advanced Intentional Interim Pastors Training

January 22-25, 2024
Victory Lutheran Church, Mesa AZ
Steven Abend: misea@outlook.com
989.202.5301

2024 LeaderCare Winter Retreat

February 4-6, 7-9, 2024 Concan, TX
Bryce Formwalt: Bryce@lcmctexas.org
512.942.7776

Augustana District Theological Conference

February 4-6, 2024 Bloomington, MN
Wendy Magruder: office@augustanadistrict.org
320.234.8403

Confirmation Retreat

March 1-3, 2024
Inspiration Point, Vining, MN
Wendy Magruder: office@augustanadistrict.org
320.234.8403

Retreat for Pastors in Their First Call

April 25-26, 2024
Mount Carmel Ministries, Alexandria, MN
Wendy Magruder: office@augustanadistrict.org
320.234.8403

Augustana District Annual Convention

April 27, 2024
Mount Carmel, Alexandria, MN
Wendy Magruder: office@augustanadistrict.org
320.234.8403



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

Join us the third Thursday of each month (except July and December) at 11:00am CST.

Sign up for the emails:

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

Like the LCMC Youth Ministry Facebook page:

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



**February
4-6 & 7-9
Concan, TX**

Choose the date that works best for you!
Retreat limited to 45 each date
and space is filling up fast!

Register at:

<https://www.lcmctexas.org/winter-retreat/>

For more info: Bryce Formwalt

Bryce@lcmctexas.org 512.942.7776

Pre-Retirement Retreat for Pastors & Spouses

April 22-25, 2024

Okoboji Lutheran Bible Camp, Milbank, IA

Early Registration Deadline: March 31, 2024

Space is limited - register early!

For more information, please contact:

Pr. Sue Gunderson: 920.421.1944
Sue.Gunderson61@gmail.com

Pr. John Nelson: 630.650.0905
pastorjohn@hosannachurch.com





Youth Leader Webinars

By BRANDON FOSTER

Pastor, Abounding Joy Lutheran Church, St. Cloud, MN

One of the best, and most difficult, roles to have in the church is that of the youth leader. Being called by God to share the faith with the next generation is such a great privilege, and yet, you also find yourself trying to get (and then maintain) their attention for a few minutes.

Connecting with and compelling the hearts of our middle and high school students can be such a blessing and a challenge. Needless to say, if we want to see impact in our youth ministry in these years, it is pertinent that our leaders gather, inspire one another, learn together, and pray for one another to strengthen and encourage the body of young believers across LCMC.

Here's the cool thing – we're already doing that!

Every third Thursday of the month, a team of LCMC leaders (lead pastors, LCMC staff, youth directors) open a free webinar with the invitation to all youth ministry leaders and pastors to join in conversation.

On these webinars, we share with one another and address some of the most complicated parts of youth ministry. Leaders from all over the nation, and from all sizes of congregations, join to develop and grow as a leader in their context.

If you are a youth leader, please join us and be encouraged! If you are a lead pastor and have a volunteer team or paid staff that oversees 6th-12th grade ministry, please invite them to these webinars. We desire to encourage our brothers and sisters in Christ for God's Kingdom!



BRANDON FOSTER

To sign up for the webinars, visit:

**[https://mailchi.
mp/75a65006d3ae/youth-
leader-webinars](https://mailchi.mp/75a65006d3ae/youth-leader-webinars)**

*Also, to connect with other leaders,
join the LCMC Youth Ministry*

Facebook page:

**[https://www.facebook.com/
LCMCYouthMinistry](https://www.facebook.com/LCMCYouthMinistry)**

Will the Church Have Pastors Tomorrow?

By NATHAN HOFF
Pastor, Trinity San Pedro

The irony doesn't escape me that it was the *Friendly Atheist* newsletter¹ that alerted me to some research that Barna² and others have done on the subject of pastoral succession and the question, "Will the church have pastors tomorrow?"

I'll cut to the chase.

1. The next generation is hesitant about identifying as Christian. Those who do identify as Christian are not going into vocational ministry at a rate that will even come close to replacing this generation of pastors.

2. The local church is not prioritizing identifying and equipping the next generation of church leaders. From the Barna research: "More than half of pastors (54%) disagree with the statement 'my church puts a significant priority on training and developing the next generation of leaders'—a 22 percent increase since 2015. Four in five pastors (79%) agree that 'churches aren't rising to their responsibilities to train up the next generation of Christian leaders.' In short, one reason the next generation of Christians is unprepared for the challenges of leading a church may be that so few churches are preparing them."

So, what shall we do?

1. Pray to the Lord of the harvest (Luke 10:2). Why would we start anywhere else? Actually join me in prayer: "Lord of the harvest. There is Gospel work to do, but the workers are few. Would you please raise up, grow up, and send out workers in to your harvest. Our town (or country) needs

them! Our kids need them! Our older adults need them. We need someone to plant the Gospel seed in our ear, so that we will keep on believing what you say. For Jesus' sake, Amen."

2. Plant a seed in ANYONE who might consider the ministry. You can't start too early. I talked to Scarlet a few weeks ago after I heard the commencement address she gave at her middle school. I told Gio (he was in elementary school) that he should pray, because he could maybe be Trinity's Spanish-language pastor, because we would need that soon! I keep pulling Mike aside. The guy can already preach! He has the character to be a shepherd. I told Edson (in 11th grade) the same after he shared one of the 7 Last Words at the Good Friday service. I think seven other people told him the same, "You could be a pastor!"

3. Baptize your imagination and embrace a mixed-ecology of solutions.

— **'Traditional' route.** Send qualified candidates through an M.Div. program. I put quotes around 'traditional,' because this is not how the church has always done it.

— **Hybrid route.** Keep qualified candidates embedded in their local community or find a healthy local community, and get theological education from a school that makes it available online or online/in-person hybrid. The candidates can receive rigorous theological education while serving in a congregation. At Trinity, we have had four seminarians begin in the



NATHAN HOFF

last three years. They have been given ample opportunity to preach, visit, teach catechism, lead small groups, lead the liturgy, make mistakes, grow, succeed, participate in evening and morning prayer, and help local congregations who don't have a pastor. By the way, I have someone right now who is 40 years old. He has the gifts, character, and competencies to be a terrific and faithful pastor. He also has a family, and can't pack up and move. He could have an M.Div. in three years if he started now and was able to give himself to the education and ministry in our local congregation. At the end of his education he would still have 25 years of future ordained ministry. I bet we would need an extra \$80-100K a year for three years to make this a reality. Besides the blessing he would be to a future church, he would be a three-year answer to prayer to me. Lord knows I need help and have been praying the Lord-of-the-harvest prayer regularly. Contact me directly if you have a funding idea.

nathan@trinitysanpedro.org

— **Local route.** There are probably good pastors already in most communities. They might also



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

- **Hegre Lutheran Church**, Kenyon, MN
Vacant 507.527.2353
thepatterns@frontier.com
- **Bethel Lutheran Church**, Superior, WI
Vacant 715.392.2033
bethellutheransuperior@gmail.com
- **Our Saviors Lutheran Church**, Lyle, MN
Pr. Scott Meyer 507.325.4684
oursaviorslyle@gmail.com
- **Iglesia Luterana Todos Santos**, Zapopan, Jalisco, Mexico
Pr. Juan Vazquez 52-3318624150
iglesiadossantosgdl@gmail.com
- **The Alternative**, Rock Hill, SC
Pr. Elisa Ashley 803.810.7661
pastorashley@findthealternative.org
- **St. Paul's Lutheran Church**, Karnes City, TX
Vacant 830.780.2251
office@saintpaulslutheranchurch.com
- **St. Stephen Lutheran Church**, Portland, TX
Pr. John Dinkins 361.643.2331
office@ststephenlutheranchurch.org
- **Zion Lutheran Church**, Scotland, SD
Vacant 605.583.2931
scotland@gwtc.net
- **Life Lutheran Church**, El Cerrito, CA
Pr. Owen Shu 510.282.8258
lifelutheranchurchca@gmail.com
- **Oromo Evangelical Church**, Houston, TX
Vacant 503.267.2428
kamiso@ymail.com
- **Salem Lutheran Church**, Ponca, NE
Vacant 402.755.2728
salemponca@gmail.com
- **Trinity Lutheran Church**, Otis, KS
Pr. Stan Ewy 785.387.2436
trinity.lutheran.otis@gmail.com

New Pastors

Rocky Allen, Garden Grove, CA rockyallen@gmail.com 714.719.4314
Emily Beltrame, Des Moines, IA emily.beltrame@hopeankenya.org 515.657.1193
Jonna Bohigian, San Jose, CA jonnabohigian@gmail.com 559.696.7888
Jeffrey Dorman, Centerville, MN jeff@breakthroughctc.com 651.324.8592
Peter Lurvey, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada peterlurvey@gmail.com 204.229.2278
Christian Meier, Le Mars, IA pastorchrismeier@gmail.com 712.541.4818
Michael Rueckert, Champlin, MN mvrueckert@gmail.com 952.836.5546
Daniel Spies, Woodbury, MN reconchaplain@gmail.com 760.208.0989
Elias Suddarth, Ankeny, IA esuddarth@gmail.com 515.333.3177
Andrea Taphorn, Chula Vista, CA andrea.taphorn@gmail.com 614.256.4318
Frank Wang, Temple City, CA Frank9065@gmail.com 626.239.5017

Zion Lutheran Church

Scotland, South Dakota

By JENNIFER BIETZ
Member, Zion Lutheran Church



Greetings from Zion Lutheran Church in Scotland, South Dakota!

We are a small-town congregation of 95 active members. Our community has businesses that provide all the essentials needed for daily living, but we are also within driving distance of three larger communities that provide employment and shopping. Some of our major businesses are the hospital/medical clinic, nursing home, ethanol plant, grocery store and public school district. We have a lake in our backyard with great fishing and no-wake water sports. We have a beautiful state park 30 miles away for water recreation, picnicking, hiking, biking, and camping. Our outdoor sports complex fills four city blocks with a beautiful park, baseball and softball fields, swimming pool, football and track field and tennis courts.

The church at Zion Lutheran is a beautiful brick building with a cathedral ceiling. As you walk into the sanctuary, your eyes are immediately drawn to the front of the church. Hanging from the ceiling above the granite altar is a 12-foot wrought iron cross, with grapes and wheat wrapped into the base of the cross. The railing encircling the granite altar is composed of wrought iron spindles shaped into wheat and grapes. We have an updated ranch-style parsonage, built in 2014, adjacent to the church with a small orchard and meditation area nearby.

We are a long-established Lutheran congregation, which recently joined the LCMC and NALC denominations. Our church is active within the community through quilting, women's group, Sunday School, Luther League (high school youth group), Vacation Bible School, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, choir, Meals on Wheels, Community Garden, and the local food pantry.

We are yearning for a pastor who will lead us in Bible-centered teaching by providing growing opportunities to all age groups. We need a shepherd to encourage us with great spiritual leadership to challenge our congregation toward love, forgiveness and good deeds. Our congregation is ready for this new leader to preach within the walls of our church and to serve within the bounds of our community.

"Oh come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!" — Psalm 95:1-2

Let us do this all together as one.



GETTING TO KNOW

Let Us Pray

...continued from page 1

exactly how we will begin 2024 as an international association of churches. We are calling all of our members to participate in our annual LCMC Three Days of Prayer on January 2-4.

Each congregation or person can structure these days of prayer however seems best. In the past, some congregations put together a prayer vigil – people signed up to pray in 30-minute intervals – perhaps for all three days or a few hours each day. Others have offered a prayer service at a set hour on each of the three days. Some have encouraged their people simply to pray at work, home, or school, wherever they are, and whatever they are doing.

Like last year, I am encouraging us all to use the Lord's Prayer as Martin Luther did. Luther tells us in his book, *A Simple Way to Pray*, that he prayed the Lord's prayer, and then used it as an outline to pray for friends, congregations, and leaders. Praying the Lord's prayer as an outline can give form to our prayers while providing space for us to pray according to each petition for the churches or people we are focused on that day.

As Luther did, pray each petition one at a time, then pause and pay attention to what comes to mind. Then pray out of those thoughts or impressions. For instance, pray "*Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name,*" and pause. Then pray words and thoughts of thanks to God for

being your Father, for His love, and for His goodness toward you. Glorify His name in prayer.

Then pray the second petition, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," and pause. Think of how you would love to see God's love and power break in on those you are praying for, and then pray for them. Pray for relationships, emotions, or bodies to be healed.

Pray for someone to become aware of God's love for them. Pray for peace in someone's life or in a region. And so on. Continue to pray each petition one at a time, pausing to listen to thoughts, scriptures, and impressions that come to mind, and then pray for that church, or that person.

No matter how you structure this time of prayer, let's come together as an international association of congregations across the U.S. and around the world to pray.

Check out our **Three Days of Prayer Resources** page to download a sample guide and find out how to follow along with us on social media during each of the three days.

With that said, *let us pray.* Lord, give us eyes to see and a willingness to engage the cultural moment before us in prayer and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Lord, do whatever you need to do in us, so you can do whatever You want to do through us. Lord, through us, please impact others with Your love and Your



MIKE BRADLEY

power. Lord, make true, in our hearts, our minds, and our lives what is true in your word. Father, enable and equip us to engage the cultural moment before us, that we might continue to carry out the mission of the gospel to make Christ known. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

LCMC Clothing Items Available Now!



To purchase, contact
cathy@lcmc.net

Congregations: Is Your Contact Information Up to Date?

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-congregations>** and fill in the ALL of the fields.

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

Building Friendships...continued from page 4

Many new businesses and farming techniques have seen great success. The parent in one family had worked as a tailor for 11 years, earning not quite enough to provide for their needs. The gift of a sewing machine radically changed their ability to provide. Now husband and wife working together in their own business have dramatically increased their earnings. They even extended the business further by purchasing secondhand clothes in the city and then using their tailoring skills to make them better and reselling them at a profit. A simple gift with encouragement and support have lifted this family up. This is just one example of many. Seeing the provision of God elevating the gifts he gives to His people and then multiplied in the community of faith is an awesome thing and a life transforming work.

We were blessed by the welcome and hospitality of our new Ethiopian friends everywhere, often greeted with children singing and giving us each a fresh rose. The authentic smiles and delicious Ethiopian coffee with local treats will hold a special place in our hearts. It reinforced the high importance of the hospitality and welcome ministry in all of our churches – we have been remodeling space and have hired a Hospitality Coordinator at St. Timothy's to make this a part of each gathering at our campus. Joyful Christian hospitality and welcome are being

woven into every fabric of our church life!

Our friends from Africa have a lot to teach us. It was a joy to serve as ambassadors of Jesus and celebrate His love as members of the amazing family of God around the world.

For more information, contact:
jim.cords@stlcsj.org



"We love Ethiopia" with CHC leaders

2024 LCMC Youth Gathering

By CHIP REYNOLDS

Sr. Pastor, First English Ev. Lutheran Church, Victoria, TX

I know the youth ministry people in our association are working diligently on their plans for next summer. Schedules are easily falling into place and there are no conflicts whatsoever. That's the way youth ministry is. So easy and so much free time to fill, with no problems at all.

Never spoken by a youth director anywhere, at any time!

So, as you look ahead to next summer, let me put something on your radar that I have had the pleasure of being a part of in many different capacities over the last few years:

LCMC's National Youth Gathering. This is a four-day gathering of youth, **July 9-12, 2024, at Grandview University, Des Moines, Iowa**, that has had a major impact on my students every time that we have gone.

The opportunity for students to push deeper into their faith as a gathered group from the association is an amazing opportunity through LCMC. Our students spend time in worship, fellowship, study, and small groups, building relationships that connect them to other LCMC youth from all over the country. These



CHIP REYNOLDS

connections opened my students' eyes to the fact that they are not alone in this journey and that there are others out there just like them.

They have been challenged to Serve, Love, and to Know God in years past and this year we are looking at

➡ next page

Pastors

...continued from page 4

be farmers or teachers, but they are committed to Christ and His church. They love the flock. They eat up the Bible. People confide in them and seek them out for support. Let's recognize their Call to a local congregation—no matter the size. Then let's find ways to continue education for the rest of their lives. For that matter, let's do that with people who have an M.Div.

— **Resource Churches.** Like the church in Antioch (Acts 11 and 13), some congregations are called to be a kind of greenhouse that resources the broader church with helpful teaching, vital community, and healthy leaders. We used to think synod offices and academic institutions were responsible for this. I think it is more naturally done from a local congregation. Identify Resource Churches and support them!

— **Minster Model** of partnering parishes. This is an old model. Think York Minster and Westminster, etc. These are three-point parishes on purpose. We have to get rid of the competition or resignation mentality, "Oh, I guess we have to work with other communities to survive." Embrace the potential power of partnership! "We get to pool resources. Share one another's burdens. Share a variety of leaders—Ephesians 4:11-12—style. We don't have to rely on a solitary pastor, but recognize the various gifts that exist in our local partners!"

4. Give! Tell your pastor or church council that you will pay for all or a portion of the next seminarian's tuition and expenses. Find a "Resource Church" that is identifying and equipping next-gen leaders and give to them.

Support one of the Greenhouse Collective initiatives that are focusing attention on young adult residential discipleship communities, such as Canadian Lutheran Bible Institute, Faith Greenhouse (Faith in Hutchinson, MN), World Mission Prayer League Discipleship House, The Awaken Project, Trinity Greenhouse (that's ours!).

LCMC has a fund for seminary cost assistance—add to it!

Notes

1 <https://www.friendlyatheist.com/p/of-course-christian-pastors-are-struggling>

2 <https://www.barna.com/research/pastoral-succession/>

See Nathan's newsletter regularly at:
nathanhoff.substack.com

what it means to be led by God toward being Undivided. With a broken nature and in a broken world, how does God lead us toward having a heart that is solely focused on Him? Through keynote addresses and breakouts, students will dive deeper into their faith and strengthen their relationship with their Creator.

We know you have a lot of choices every summer, but we truly believe that this is a great event and you will be blessed. It is the perfect chance for fun, faith, fellowship and service for our LCMC youth and we hope you can be a part of our time together. Watch for more information at **[LCMC.net](https://www.lcmc.net)** to come soon as registration will be opening in the near future. Can't wait to see you in Des Moines!

From the Board ...continued from page 3

the cultural moment finally and only comes down to the same decision Paul once made: "*For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.*" Every generation and cultural moment must deal with

the Risen Christ before them. Living in the reality of that power must surely be tied to whatever LCMC 3.0 is, and what facing our cultural moment means.

In Christ,
Pastor Randy Freund

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.

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In Mission for Christ in Uruguay

By MIGUEL NUNEZ AND
VARINIA CUELLO



MIGUEL NUNEZ AND
VARINIA CUELLO

If someone had asked us at the 2022 LCMC Gathering if we were planning to go to Uruguay to plant an LCMC church, the answer would have been, “No.” However, it was in God’s plans that we were destined to go to this small South American country, “the little country” as the Uruguayans name it, to proclaim the Gospel as the power of God for the salvation of all who believe in Him.

Our first question was, “Why be in Mission for Christ in Montevideo, Uruguay?” The answer was not long in coming. Uruguay is the more secular country in Latin America, and more than 50% of the inhabitants of Montevideo, its capital, declare themselves with no religion.

With this in our hearts, our minds automatically went to the reading from Romans 10:14: “*How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?*” It became obvious to us that our next step was clear: to faithfully assume the name of our association, renounce our comfort space, and go on mission to reach them with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

How wonderful it is that we are not alone in this work! God in His infinite mercy not only put us in LCMC some years ago, but also blessed us this year by starting to work with an LCMC international partner, the “Movimento Encontro – Missao Zero” from Brazil.

Currently, we are in a time of preparation, studying, planning, and praying, so that the Holy Spirit shows God’s will for us in Uruguay. We dream that, in the future, this country will have congregations that proclaim the Word of God as Law and Gospel and spaces for theological education for future ministers from South America to the world.

If you want to support the mission that God has for Uruguay, we ask you to pray: for Uruguay and its people, for the new church planting project, for the missionaries, and for financial support.

You can find more information about this process at:

<https://mzuruguay.wordpress.com/>

If God is calling you to be involved more deeply with this church planting, please contact us at:

revmnunez@gmail.com or variniacuello@gmail.com

Varinia Cuello and Rev. Miguel Nunez: Rev. Miguel Nunez is an LCMC certified Chilean pastor and Varinia is an LCMC Chilean seminarian, currently studying in Luther House of Study. They developed their pastoral work in Chile and Mexico.



ANDREA TAPHORN, Associate Pastor
St. Timothy Lutheran Church
San Diego, CA

Devotional Series...

REAL-LIFE ADVENT

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given...”

— Isaiah 9:6a

I saw that you can now purchase an Advent calendar for everyone in your family, including your dog. It's like the people who design such things peered into my childhood and knew that there are dogs out there ruining Advent calendars for kids.

Growing up, we had a homemade Advent calendar that my mother would hang in our family room to count down the days until Christmas. My grandmother had gifted us this handmade Advent calendar. Each day had a different piece of the nativity for us kids to snap into place, one day at a time. The last piece was a small little Christ child, with a plastic head, and a body swaddled in white felt. And of course, us kids would fight over who would get to place baby Jesus into his rightful place in the manger.

Our dog, being as smart as he was, realized the great prize that this white felt Christ child was. One year, our dog decided he must partake in this beloved possession and pulled it off the wall while we were at school. He promptly chewed Jesus' plastic head up nicely.

Of course, this was a terrible tragedy, over which many tears were shed. But somehow, our dog didn't completely destroy the white felt-swaddled Jesus. His plastic head was quite misshapen, but we just decided to live with it. For years we continued to use that Advent calendar with pride, and somehow still fought over who would get to place the now chewed up, misshapen, white felt swaddled Jesus in his manger on Christmas Eve.

I've been thinking a lot about that chewed up baby Jesus this year. It feels like a great picture of our real-life Advent, not the shiny visioned ones we imagine, and then work on plans for implementation. Even the things designed

to help us prepare our hearts and lives around this Good News of Christ's birth can get misshapen and chewed up from self-possessed consumption. Our sweet dog did the thing that us kids wanted so desperately to do, which was to have this Jesus to ourselves.

It is a strange thing to admit that right alongside our good preparations to hear this Good News of Christ's birth, we have at work in us other desires that are bent inward and for our own glory. All of sudden we see at work within us the desire to possess something in these preparations over and against our neighbors.

Instead of chewed-up baby Jesus, it's a little more dressed up than that. Our egos show up in things like providing and possessing a new experience at our church for this Advent season. It shows up in our lingering fears around the tallying of the end-of-the-year giving. Honestly, there are far too many ways that our egos are at work in this season. It is difficult to admit that our sin is right there on the surface of our Advent preparations.

And yet again this year, this Good News of Jesus comes to us with grace and forgiveness. He has come with good news of great joy, *for you*, exactly in our preparations that end up with a chewed-up Jesus. He was born into a world full of misshaped and self-obsessed desires, even our most pious ones.

And the Good News is, He is here for you and for me again this season. And the joy is that this Jesus *gives* us Himself freely and wholly. This is the Christ child born for you.

— Andrea Taphorn



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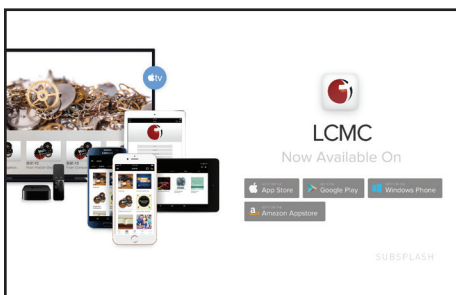
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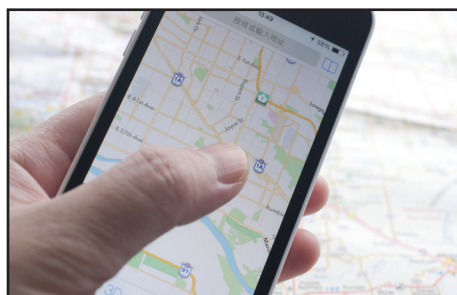


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