

Report to St. Paul Congregation
Of The
102nd Michigan District Convention

Submitted by Pastoral Delegate Rev. James Bruner and Lay Delegate Steven Kern

“IMAGINE Living as God’s Saved and Sent Servants” was the theme of this convention. We were reminded throughout the convention that all Christians are a priesthood of believers and as such are responsible for fulfilling the Great Commission of our Lord. “Therefore go and make disciples of ALL nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Matt. 28:19.

We received the blessings of God’s Word and Sacrament in the Sunday evening Divine Service as we heard Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, President of the LCMS preach. Each morning we began the day with a chapel service. Monday, we heard Rev. Brennan A. Woell, St. Luke, Nunica preach, and Tuesday morning we heard Rev. Donald O. Neuendorf, St. Paul Ann Arbor preach. The convention was closed with a Service of Sending and Installation, and preaching was Rev. Dr. David P. E. Maier, Michigan District President.

President David Maier talked in his opening address pointing out how we are horrified by the senseless deaths of school children in school shootings, but are not as horrified of the eternal deaths of our friends and neighbors who do not know Jesus but are going to hell. We must show boldness as Christians and speak the Gospel message to them.

Michigan District Elections

President of the District	Dr. David P.E. Maier
1 st Vice President	Rev. Mark Brandt
2 nd Vice President	Rev. Dean Davenport
3 rd Vice President	Rev. John Duerr
4 th Vice President	Rev. David Davis
District Secretary	Rev. Justin P. Rossow
Church Extension Board of Trustees	Rev. Erik K. Cloeter David Eberhard Tim Haberling Jeffrey Roscoe

Nominating Committee North and East Region

Ordained Minister	Rev. Derek Riddle, Rogers City
Commissioned Minister	Stephanie Baarck, Frankenmuth
Layperson	John Nutzmann, Clio

LCMS Committee for Convention Nominations

Rev. Mark Brandt, Frankenmuth
Rev. Stephen Starke, Bay City

We received greetings from President Larry Rast of Fort Wayne Seminary and Dr. Kent Burreson Associate Professor of St. Louis Seminary. They both thrilled the convention with the announcement that due to support from LCMS congregations and members, the seminaries of the LCMS would be paying for all the tuition of all their seminarians and deaconesses for next year.

Rev. Michael Newman, President-Elect of the Texas District and former CUAA grad spoke about the Five Markers of a Flourishing Church, and said that we can learn from our past when the laymen of the LCMS took the Gospel message to the community as an active group of Lutheran Laymen who sponsored the Lutheran Hour and local evangelism efforts. They had a heart for the eternal salvation of the PEOPLE of this nation. They were intent on starting new churches, developing new leaders, sending new workers and creating new partnerships to MULTIPLY the reach of the Gospel message. They kept the TRUTH of Biblical doctrine and confession which propelled the message forward. While strongly resisting compromise of doctrine, they embraced ADAPTABILITY in order to accomplish the mission of God which needed to prevail over human desires and preferences. The Holy Spirit moved men and women of the LCMS to SACRIFICE their personal welfare in order to bring the Gospel to people who didn't know Jesus.

Rev. Bill Woolsey of the FiveTwo Network challenged us to find ways to serve the community in order to witness our love for them and create opportunities for witness. Later we will report more about a number of FiveTwo sponsored ministries found in the Michigan District.

Chaplain Steve Hokana of the LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces expressed a need for more LCMS chaplains to serve our military.

Mr. James Sanft, President and CEO of Concordia Plans Services said that Concordia Plans is in great shape, providing benefits for over 50,000 church workers and professional laymen.

We heard from Mr. Gary Thies of Mission Central of the LCMS World Mission. Mission Central is the largest mission supporting agency as a part of LCMS World Mission global Gospel outreach. It has been blessed by God to be the conduit helping to raise millions of dollars every year to send and keep missionaries in the mission field. Gary is NOT NORMAL, and he encourages all of us to NOT be NORMAL. You see, when a missionary comes to speak to your congregation, many members will say, "Yep, someone ought to help them out to do their mission work." That person is NORMAL. A person who is NOT NORMAL will say, "Where can I help," or they will take it upon themselves to be the missionary God calls us all to be in order to spread the Gospel message. Are you NORMAL or NOT NORMAL?

Ray Zavada, Assistant to the President for Development and chair of the Here We Stand campaign gave a report on the status of the campaign. The Here We Stand campaign is seeking to receive \$3 million for Professional Church Workers Scholarships, \$3 Million for Innovative Missional Ministry, \$3 million for Michigan District Endowment, and \$1 Million for International Ministries. Currently, the International Ministries has met its goal and beyond with \$1,275,833 given and pledged. Professional Church Workers is at \$1,095,409.74, Innovative

Missional Ministry at \$2,050,950.49, and Michigan District Endowment at \$800,847.24. This represents 35% of our MI District LCMS congregations involved in the campaign. The campaign hopes to attain its goals by the end of 2018.

Church Extension Fund CEO, Mr. Jim Saalfeld commented on the success of the Fund, not only in helping congregations build facilities, but also in helping church workers obtain housing and other financial goals.

Rev. Dr. Pat Ferry, President of CUW and CUAA told of the “Uncommon Experience” that students at these two Concordia’s are receiving. Walking with Christ and sharing their faith with other students while getting a first class education. He told of how CUAA which was near bankruptcy just a few years ago is the fastest growing university in the state of Michigan. This has been a true success story.

President Rev. Dr. Matt Harrison’s title for his address to the convention was titled, “Joy: Fully Lutheran” following 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 which says, “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” The Gospel is a joyful message that takes sin away and produces joyful saints. This blessed Gospel of Christ’s free forgiveness enlivens every teaching and every aspect of being Lutheran. He gave us two challenges.

- 1) Study the Scriptures. Become Psalm 1 Christians, “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.” There is no challenge the LCMS faces for which the Word of God does not have the answer! There is no trial you face in life for which the Word of God does not offer counsel, encouragement and hope. There is no tribulation that the joy of Christ cannot penetrate.
- 2) Read the Book of Concord. This book contains the confessions of faith and doctrine that all Missouri Synod Lutherans believe. They are the confessions that teach what the Bible teaches on conversion, Baptism, Holy Absolution, the Lord’s Supper, Christ as God and man, good works, Christian vocations, the priesthood of all believers, the Church, pastors, limits and freedom in matters of worship, Communion practice and many other things—all with the Gospel clearly in view.

He shared some answers for the declines that all denominations have seen over the past decades. Interestingly, the rates of decline in membership seem to follow declining birth rates. The South Dakota District is down only 4%, the New Jersey District is down 31%, and the Michigan District is down 18%. However, declines cannot be stopped by more births, despite the fact that LCMS child-bearing couples are having more children than most other denominations, except the Mormons and the Assemblies of God. (We have a higher birth-rate than the Catholics!)

In order for us to stop the decline, we must share the Joy! It is assumed that Lutherans are not any good at evangelism, yet 35% of LCMS adults today came into the LCMS as adult converts. This is significant when compared to other denominations. We are doing better than most church bodies. Only about 15% of Roman Catholic adults came in as converts. But, WE CAN DO BETTER! Outreach is vital. We now have a comprehensive evangelism training

program for LCMS Christians: “Every One His Witness.” This printed training module provides a wonderful method for deliberate and prayerful outreach to those around us. “Restore to me the JOY of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.” (Ps. 51:12) “O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise!” (Ps. 51:15).

We must partner with others to plant new churches like we did in our past. We must focus more on retention of our youth. Young people who feel that their congregation cares about them and is open to their struggles tend to stay in the Church. Also, make room for young people to participate in leadership in some way in the church. This is a crucial positive factor for retention. Encouraging parents to pray with their children and have home devotions, invite youth to participate in service to others, mission trips, ushering, and VBS will pay dividends in retention. Increased catechesis (teaching the faith) for both families and youth is significant.

President Harrison also shared that the LCMS has reduced its debt by 42% and is on the verge of a complete elimination of its debt within the next few years.

The LCMS is having an impact internationally. The Ethiopian Church which is approaching a membership of some 9 million solemnly broke fellowship with its mother churches (the ELCA and the Church of Sweden) over the sexuality issues. They wish to commence formal fellowship talks with the LCMS. The Lutheran Church in Tanzania is approaching 7 million members and we have put together a memorandum of understanding with them. The Malagasy Lutheran Church in Madagascar numbering some 4 million people are moving toward fellowship with the LCMS. The president of that body is a Fort Wayne Seminary Graduate. They all want what we have, a scripturally based confession of faith.

Things are looking up, and we the laypeople can make it better. We have the message, and we can be bold.

Michigan District Ministries

Our Michigan District has many ministries, some of which you likely have not even seen.

1. Luke 52 Project - The Luke Project 52 Clinic is a FiveTwo Network sponsored ministry and was founded to promote the health and well-being of the local population by providing accessible, high quality medical care for expectant mothers and infants under 12 months of age and to also provide a mobile asset to local congregations to help them reconnect with and begin to serve the communities they are in. The Luke Project 52 Clinic is committed to providing services that will exceed the expectations of our patients and their communities, resulting in effective Great Compassion and Great Commission ministry.
2. Wellspring Lutheran Services – Wellspring provides Senior Care in the areas of Independent Living, Assisted Living, Memory Support, Long Term Care, Affordable Housing, Rehabilitation and Wellness, Respite Care, Personal At-Home Assistance, Home Health, Hospice, and Grief Support. They provide Family Services in the areas of Foster Care, Family Services, Adoption Resources, Parenting Support, Camp Hope, Residential Care, and Supportive Housing.
3. Elli’s House - Their mission is to provide temporary shelter for runaway girls and/or young women caught in human trafficking, in the city of Detroit, with family reunification as our primary goal, if possible. They eventually reach out to these young girls with the Gospel message of Jesus’ love and forgiveness for them.

4. MOST Ministries (Mission Opportunities Short Term) - MOST Ministries is committed to impacting the world for Jesus Christ through short term missions by empowering the found in reaching the lost.
5. Lutheran Heritage Foundation - Through the mission gifts of people like you, LHF translates, publishes, distributes and introduces books that are Bible-based, Christ-centered and Reformation-driven.
6. LAMP Ministries (Lutheran Association of Missionary Pilots) - LAMP is a cross-cultural ministry sharing Jesus Christ with God's people in remote areas of Canada where many are living in places only accessible by plane.
7. Ephphatha Mission Society - Serve the Deaf and Hard of Hearing with the Gospel through Word and Sacrament ministry in ASL.
8. Michigan Campus Ministries – We support campus ministries on the campuses of Concordia Ann Arbor, Central Michigan University, Eastern Michigan University, Ferris State University, Michigan State University, Oakland University, and the University of Michigan.
9. Orphan Grain Train - Orphan Grain Train is a 501c3 Nonprofit Christian volunteer network that shares personal and material resources with needy people in America and around the world. Grain Train volunteers gather donations of clothing, medical supplies, food, Christian literature, and other aid to meet real needs. The Orphan Grain Train movement is a loving response to Jesus Christ's example as a servant and His love for us. Rev. David Reed, formerly at Auburn, MI is heading up the Michigan Orphan Grain Train at a donated empty store in downtown Sebawaing, MI.
10. Franklin Avenue Mission - In the summer of 2014, Flint LCMS Tri-Circuit pastors took a prayerful look at transforming one of its member churches on Flint's east side into an urban mission center to meet the needs of a neighborhood in disrepair. The Michigan District LCMS agreed to support an attainable plan to preserve a meaningful presence in the community. A Flint Eastside Mission task force of LCMS pastors set goals and strategies to recruit congregational support. The plan required a 5-year financial and servanthood commitment from interested individuals and congregations. By April of 2015, members from nine congregations committed to perform Operation Clean Up in cooperation with the Genesee County Land Bank. This "clean and green" effort resulted in mowing and clearing debris from more than 175 vacant lots on numerous weekends throughout the summer by more than 500 faithful servants. Today, Franklin Avenue Mission is a hub of activity—operated entirely by an army of missionaries.
11. LWML - The official women's auxiliary of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. For 75 years, the LWML has focused on affirming each woman's relationship with Christ, encouraging and equipping women to live out their Christian lives in active mission ministries and to support global missions.
12. Lutheran Layman's League - A dedicated group of supporters and volunteers who are active in ministry domestically and around the world. The ministry of the organization is currently expressed through a wide range of Christ-centered outreach efforts under the name of Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM).
13. Camp Arcadia and Camp Concordia.
14. Latino Mission Society
15. Lutheran City Ministries, Inc.
16. Lutheran High School Association
17. Lutheran Special Education Ministry

18. Lutherans for Life
19. Project Compassion Ministries
20. People of the Book Ministries (Poblo)

Approved Resolutions

RESOLUTION 1-01 To Affirm the Priesthood of All Believers in Christ and Therefore Their Call as Missionaries Approved

RESOLUTION 1-02 To Encourage Modeling of Personal Evangelism Approved

RESOLUTION 1-03A To Affirm the Validity of the Word and Sacraments (when administered by a Licensed Lay Deacon under the supervision of an Ordained Pastor) Approved

RESOLUTION 1-05A To Affirm the Relationship between Unity in Theology and Mission and Diversity in Practice (Basically sent to Synodical Convention in 2019 for discussion) Approved

RESOLUTION 1-07 To Encourage Reading of the Bible Approved

RESOLUTION 1-09 To Commend the Lutheran Heritage Foundation on its 25th Anniversary Approved

RESOLUTION 1-10 To Commend Wellspring Lutheran Services on its 125th Anniversary Approved

RESOLUTION 2-01 To Affirm the Renaming and Encourage the Continued Work of the Commission on Ministerial Growth and Support Approved

RESOLUTION 2-02 To Memorialize Synod (send to) to Revoke Bylaw 2.14.5 on Ecclesiastical Supervision (Basically asking the Synodical Convention of 2019 to rescind this bylaw to eliminate appeals to the Synodical President on matters of church discipline leaving the final decision in the hands of District Presidents.) Approved

RESOLUTION 2-03 To Memorialize Synod to Revoke the Requirement that District Presidents Acquire Approval of the Council of Presidents to License new Licensed Lay Deacons. (Basically asking the 2019 Synodical Convention to change this requirement allowing individual District Presidents to License Lay Deacons.) Approved

RESOLUTION 2-04 To Amend the Church Extension Fund Bylaws to Clarify Commencement of Board Member's Terms to Reduce the Required Number of Board Meetings, and to Allow Use of Remote Communication at Meetings. Approved.

RESOLUTION 2-05 To Amend the Michigan District Bylaws to Clarify Commencement of Board Member's Terms. Approved

RESOLUTION 2-06 To Amend the Church Extension Fund Bylaws to Clarify the Purpose and Scope of Entities that CEF May Serve, and to Afford Standard Indemnification to All Persons Serving CEF Approved

RESOLUTION 2-07 To Amend the Michigan District Bylaws to Afford Standard Indemnification to all Persons Serving the Michigan District Approved

RESOLUTION 2-08 To Amend the Church Extension Fund Bylaws to Confirm CEF's Continued and Uninterrupted Operations in the Event that the Michigan District No Longer Exists Approved

RESOLUTION 2-09 To Amend the Bylaws of the Michigan District Regarding Nominations for District Board of Directors Approved

RESOLUTION 2-11 To Affirm Visitation Circuit Alignment. After much discussion and an attempt to introduce a substitute resolution to do the realignment as originally proposed by the Board of Directors, the Substitute resolution was tabled indefinitely and the 2-11 resolution was amended to include that the Board of Directors come up with a process for realignment of circuits that stays in compliance with Synod's Bylaws. Approved

RESOLUTION 2-12 To Consider Voting Privilege for Commissioned Minister Delegates. (Basically to pass this on to the 2019 Synodical Convention for discussion) Approved

RESOLUTION 2-13A To Memorialize Synod (send to) to Amend Synodical Bylaw 3.2.4.1 Regarding Term Limits (for Synodical Officers) This is being passed on to the 2019 Synodical Convention for discussion. Barely Approved by a 52% majority

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. James Bruner

Steven Kern