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The Lutheran Beacon

Let your light shine . . .



Published by the SELC District of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod

MARCH 2017

Concerning the Season of Lent

submitted by Pastor Ron Meyr



Lent is an Anglo-Saxon word meaning "Spring." It is also a derivative of the old English word "lencten," which also means "spring." Since the 4th century this season has been devoted to Christian growth through discipline and penitence. Some people resent Lent's coming. But most people every year look forward to Lent as a time of spiritual discipline and growth.

Lent is the season of the church year devoted to the special consideration of our Savior's Passion and the events which brought about His crucifixion and death. Originally the 40 hours between the death and the resurrection of our Lord were observed as a period of fasting and mourning. Later the hours were lengthened to days and their number set at 40 days in length.

The 40 days of Lent correspond to Christ's 40 days in the wilderness. The date of Lent is determined by the date of Easter. In A.D. 325, the Council of Nicaea said that "Easter should be observed on the first Sunday following the 14th day of the Paschal (New) moon." The latest that Lent can begin is March 10th and that will happen again in 2038. The earliest Lent can begin is February 5th and that happened last in 1818 and will not occur again until after the 20th century.

Shrove Tuesday is the day before Ash Wednesday and is observed by many as a day of feasting and merry-making. The French call it "Mardi Gras," the Germans call it "Fasching." The wearing of sackcloth and ashes is a custom going back to the Old Testament. Many Christians observe the custom on Ash Wednesday, using ashes of the previous year's Palm Sunday palms.

The dominant purpose of the Lenten Season is to direct the heart and the minds of the worshipers to Christ, who was lifted up so that He might draw all mankind unto Himself. We begin Lent with Ash Wednesday, but we close it with Easter. In the beginning God made man out of the dust of the earth. In Christ, He makes us New creatures, resurrects us from our dust and ashes. We have hope because we trust Him who thought so highly of us that He sent His Son to save us. Christ came to share His life with all people. That's our purpose too. We can bring beauty out of ashes, life out of earth... In Christ Jesus!

Lovingly stolen from St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Boca Raton, FL "proud to be a member of the LC--MS".

FINANCES & STATISTICS

by Rev. Thomas Soltis, SELC Stewardship Director

2017 GOALS (1/31/17)

2 above suggested increase
 9 +3%
 7 same
 1 new (The Cross, Mt. Dora. FL)
 4 decreased
 23 reported
 30 unreported
 53 congregations

SUGGESTED GOAL INCREASE

+3% (inflation 2% plus 1% growth)
 2017 - \$542,079
 2016 - 532,162
 \$ 9,917 (+1.8%)

GOAL PERFORMANCE

Decrease	\$21,628
Increase	<u>19,671</u>
Net Decrease	\$ 1,957

AVERAGE PER COMMUNICANT CONTRIBUTION

2014 - \$39.46 2015 - \$40.03 2016 - \$40.34

COMMUNICANTS

2014 - 12,452 (-66) 2015 - 12,262 (-190) 2016 - 12,393 (+131)

2017 BUDGET

SELC Missions	\$162,000
LCMS Missions & Ministries	150,000
Two Seminaries	15,000
Lutheran Haven	50,000
SELC Programs	66,500
SELC Services	<u>163,200</u>
	\$606,700

2017 RECEIPTS

Congregational Contributions	\$522,930
Non-budgetary Receipts	9,000
Lutheran Church Extension Fund	38,249
Interest Income	<u>5,500</u>
	\$575,679

BUDGET DEFICIT - (\$31,021)

DISTRICT ASSETS - \$775,327.38 (12/31/16)

REMITTANCE DELINQUENCY - In December, 2016, nineteen congregations, considerably behind in their district budget goal remittances, were contacted. \$50,546 was solicited. Such backlogs hinder a smooth district cash flow. Congregations are strongly urged to remit on a monthly basis as a priority. By January 31, 2017, only 23 congregations (43%) submitted goals. The suggested submission date is Jan. 15th. Timely submissions are encouraged for SELC budget setting purposes.

SYNODICAL STATISTICAL INFORMATION (year 2015) – Sunday congregational offerings were about \$1.4 billion, a healthy upward trend. 77% of synodical receipts are “restricted” for specific missions/ministries and cannot be used for synodical operational budget purposes. 23% received from districts (the SELC budgeted \$150,000 for 2107) and other sources are “unrestricted” and used for synod’s operational needs. Synod may have to further reduce already reduced expenditures. There are 6,101 LCMS congregations with 5,524 parish pastors. Average Sunday attendance is 141. The average age of members is 47. Millennials (age 18-34) currently are more reachable with evangelistic outreach than their predecessors, Generation X and the Baby Boomers. They enjoy conversations.

THE LUTHERAN BEACON is a tremendous asset for bonding SELC congregations in our common endeavor to walk the talk of Jesus as Christian stewards. It should be downloaded and shared within our congregations via monthly newsletters, Sunday bulletins or usher distributions after worship. Gail Peterson is to be commended for her dedicated, admirable work as editor.



THE LUTHERAN FEDERAL CREDIT UNION (LFCU) began serving LCMS members in October, 2015, offering the best in online banking, 5,000 shared branches and 30,000 ATM’s nationwide for free use. Any profits earned are given to LCMS congregations, schools and districts. The credit union offers a wonderful opportunity to connect LCMS members in the stewardship of personal money management. Services offered include checking and savings accounts, credit and ATM cards as well as loan opportunities. On January 11, 2017, a significant milestone was achieved as the LFCU reached 2,000 members! Learn more by visiting www.LutheranFCU.org or calling **1-314-394-2790**. Join the movement! Then, satisfied with the service, encourage others to join.

Lasting Legacy of the Life of Martin Luther

(First in a series of articles.)

By Rev. Ken Ballas

In this 500th year of the anniversary of Martin Luther's posting the 95 Theses or sentences on indulgences for public debate, Lutheran Christians easily find themselves inundated with written articles and a wide assortment activities (some of which could conceivably prove embarrassing to the venerable Dr.), I add my own possibly overly simplistic written thoughts to the mix in the hope and with the prayer that at least one person find them helpful.

Nearly a decade before Columbus' first voyage to the New World, Martin Luther was born on November 10, 1483, in Eisleben, Germany. Long before the advent of modern antibiotics and at a time when the infant mortality rate was over 50%, Hans and Margareta Luder (as the family name was then pronounced) wisely made it a priority to bring their son to God's gracious washing of regeneration (and official naming) in conjunction with Christ's Sacrament of Holy Baptism when he was but one day old on November 11 (the Feast of St. Martin of Tours on the Roman calendar of saints' days).

When Martin was not yet a year old, his family moved to Mansfeld where his father labored in local copper mines. Hans Luther, who for the longest time wanted his son to become a lawyer, eventually had young Martin enrolled at a Latin Schools in Mansfeld and Magdeburg as well as spending three years at Eisenach where, blessed with a fine singing voice, he found free lodging at the home of a wealthy family and further developed his musical talents to the point of teaching neighboring children before enrolling at the University of Erfurt, a city of many spires also known as "Little Rome."

God, however, had a different plan in mind as by a seemingly circuitous route involving a number of life-changing events one of which often mentioned (but not well-documented) involving the sudden death of a dear friend which conceivably caused young Martin to

obsess with his sinfulness and own mortality and the frightening prospect of having to appear before an angry judgmental God.

The story of his being caught in a violent thunderstorm and knocked to the ground by lightning is true and had much to do with his entering the monastic order as, terrified for his very life, he prayed, "Save me, St. Anna, and I will become a monk!" God, not St. Anne, obviously heard his prayer; and, much to the disappointment of his increasingly prosperous father, remained true to his word by pursuing a monastic life that took him to seek admittance to the Augustinian cloister also in Erfurt.

Young Luther was not only terrified by lightning. His keen sense of being a sinner in the eyes of what he then perceived to be a primarily judgmental God increasingly afflicted him to the core as he labored endlessly at the Augustinian cloister in a futile effort to appease his Righteous Judge. Lying in his tiny cell uncovered during the coldest northern European winters was but one way he sadly abused his body torturing himself to no avail. It was a miracle of our merciful and loving God that Luther did not die of exposure at an early age.

At the same time, Luther generally excelled in his studies and remained a model student of which any good teacher would be rightfully proud. Thankfully, God places people in our lives who not only teach but mentor others pointing them to find the path that leads to a productive, God-pleasing life. Such was the case for young Martin, as, were we to "fast forward," find him becoming a devoted student of Scripture leading to his becoming not only ordained to the priesthood but with a deservedly earned degree as Doctor of Theology. Now a highly talented teacher in his own right, he excelled in particular in lecturing on the Old Testament at a new university in the Saxon town of Wittenberg on the Elbe River.

[CONTINUED IN FUTURE ISSUE]

LUTHERAN HAVEN...Behind the Scenes

by Diane Leining

Here at the Haven, there are several groups of residents that meet regularly to lend their time and talents for others. Here are just a few stories about these unsung heroes.

PIECEMAKERS

Christian fellowship and love overflows each Thursday morning as a group of about a dozen ladies gathers at the Lutheran Haven to piece together quilts for **Lutheran World Relief**. The Haven has graciously provided space for these ladies to work their magic with donated sewing machines, material and thread. While one group cuts squares into useable pieces, another group arranges these squares into unusual and beautiful designs. Then it's on to the sewing bees who sew the squares together into a quilt top. The next stop is the group who "sandwiches" and ties the quilt to batting and backing. Calling themselves the "piecemakers", they recently sent 83 quilts to the processing center for Lutheran World Relief Quilts for inclusion when a call is received as needs arise either due to political strife, natural or man-made disasters.



FLOWER GIRLS

These ladies get the flowers from church or sometimes funeral homes separate them all out and make small arrangements for **our nursing home residents**. Sometimes they don't receive any flowers, but they have their own silk flowers and greens for those occasions. And some of them have been known to "borrow" some fresh flowers from neighbor's gardens and their own. Once a week every nursing home resident gets a little sunshine in their rooms, thanks for these special flower girls.

BRIGHTER LIPSTICK – BIGGER EARRINGS

One of our Independent Living residents gathers a group of residents that make beautiful earrings twice a month. These earrings then go on a "tree" and **cancer patients** get to pick the earrings they would like to bring a bit of sparkle to their lives. A Thrivent Action Team was formed for this cause so that their supply of baubles never goes down.

CARPENTER SHOP

For many, many years our Carpenter Shop has been buzzing with residents making or repairing wood projects for themselves and others. If someone needs a chair or drawer fixed, they just take it down for one of the "boys" to fix it. When the offices need some new shelving, they just come over, take some measurements and a couple days later...new shelves appear. Their skills are second to none.

***Sharing and Giving is a huge part of the Haven's culture,
in our own neighborhood and to the area at large.***

AND DO NOT FORGET TO DO GOOD AND TO SHARE WITH OTHERS, FOR WITH SUCH SACRIFICES GOD IS PLEASED. Hebrews 13:16

LWML – News & Updates

by Sharon Roegge, LWML SELC District

There is still time to make plans to attend the LWML 75th Anniversary Celebration at the 37th Biennial Convention. Albuquerque and the districts of Montana, Rocky Mountain, Utah-Idaho, and Wyoming are gearing up for and awaiting our arrival. The many of you who helped at the Pittsburgh Convention know how they are feeling! THANKS for all you did! 'Jesus Christ above all' from Philippians 2:9 will be emphasized with the many speakers.

This celebration will dazzle you in many ways-from the Bible study, speakers, special luncheons to the 'bling' parade of the districts. More information is available at www.lwml.org and click on Convention Central under the heading of News and Events or check out the insert in the winter Quarterly.

The LWML Mission Grant for this month is 'Healthy Families' which is number eight for our 2015-2017 Biennium. The Lutheran Families Services of Nebraska, a Christ-based, not-for-profit, multi service organization, seeks to "express God's love for all people by providing quality human care services that build and strengthen individual, family and community life" for some of the most vulnerable and precious of human life – pregnant mothers, infants and children under the age of five. Early childhood development services have proven to aid in reversing the cycles that contribute to harm and destroy families and communities. Their grant is for \$60,000.

The Centers for Healthy Families offer free services designed to aid in breaking and reversing the damaging cycles of child abuse, neglect and poverty found in high risk families. Young parents, single parent families, substance abuse, social isolation, poor parent-child relationship, stress and hopelessness are some of the factors that contribute to the damaging cycles. By providing incentive programs, parenting classes, support groups and goal planning the center hopes to guide these families toward a healthier and hope-filled future. Parents who participate in the program receive exposure to communities of faith made up of volunteers sharing Christ's love through the congregation and Bible Study.

In 1892 founder Pastor Peter Graf stated "the most important job in our present day society is the job of a parent as they guide the child through the maze of childhood into maturity. Everything in our culture hinges upon the success of the parents in this task". This is still true today! For more information on this or the other 18 grants, go to www.lwml.org. You'll also see some of the stories from those who have used their grant money.

Three of the most recently paid LWML Mission Grants are: Hope and Healing to the Navajo People-partial payment of \$30,000, Redeeming Life Maternity Home-remaining \$50,000, and Opportunities in Uganda-Women of the Pearl-remaining \$15,000.

We are closer to being able to pay our second grant of \$2,500 for Family of Christ but not quite there. PLEASE TAKE NOTE THAT THE LWML BIENNIUM ENDS ON MARCH 31, 2017. YOUR MITES SHOULD BE INTO NONA SCHIPULL IN TIME FOR HER TO GET OUR CHECK INTO THE NATIONAL OFFICE BY THAT DATE. **IRS REGULATIONS SAY CHECKS NEED TO BE MADE PAYABLE TO LWML SELC DISTRICT.** Thank you in advance for doing your part!



*May spring come gently into your area and may the new growth around you
'spring' up in you a closer walk with God through His word.*





Rev. Kevin and Laura Bergmann, Kevin, Allison and the entire Bergmann/Navta family on the passing of Laura's mother, Mary Jane Navta on January 13th.

Please welcome David Thiele, our LCEF District Vice President, to the SELC District.

He is a dual district vice president covering district and congregational relations for both the SELC and English districts for LCEF.

For any assistance from LCEF, please contact David at 1381 Fox Haven Trail; Eaton Rapids, MI 48827-8238; 517-980-2857 (Office); or email him at david.thiele@lcef.org



Rev. Dr. James I Lamb will be speaking at the 500th Anniversary Celebration of the Reformation at Grace LC in Lakewood, OH on Oct. 22nd.

Prior to accepting the position of Executive Director of National Lutherans For Life (LFL), Rev. Lamb served as senior pastor at St. Paul, Garner, IA. After retiring from LFL in 2015, he went on to accept a part time position as the Life Advocate for Lutheran Family Service of Iowa. He has been published in *Portals of Prayer*, is a regular contributor to *Concordia Pulpit Resources*, and author of numerous brochures, articles, and essays connecting the Gospel of Life to life issues.

Reaching Rural America for Christ is a newsletter of LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission. Monthly webinars will be of interest to you! [March 9th subject: *Teaching the Faith: Confirmation.*]

Take a moment and check out their newsletter <http://www.lcms.org/page.aspx?pid=1308#rstmnewsletter>.

Dr. Doug's Disaster Corner

By Doug and Nona Schipull

SELC-DDRCs (District Disaster Response Coordinators)

One of the blessings that God bestows on us is a good name (Eccl. 7:1 and Prov. 22:1). It is our responsibility is to protect our good name with God's help. We here in the Schipull household make a special effort to shred everything with our names or any ID info on it. We check our bank accounts and charge card accounts two to three times a week. On Dec. 26, 2016, we got a call informing us that I was the victim of identity theft.

The following is the statement I made on the Identity Theft Report I filled with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), "Yesterday, Dec. 26, 2016, we were contacted by the Sears MasterCard fraud dept. checking on charges that were made on one of their credit cards. It was revealed that someone had used my name, birth date, telephone number, and social security number to obtain a credit card. They had charged \$4120.55 in purchases at two CVS stores in south Florida."

They also had hijacked our home phone number and one of my little used email accounts, allowing them to keep their activity from our detection. We are still perplexed as to how they were able to achieve this theft so effectively.

We are now in the throws of filing all the reports with the FTC, the police department, the three credit agencies, the Social Security Agency and the like. We have regained control of our home phone number and the email account. We are researching those credit monitoring programs. There are a lot of them out there with all kinds of benefits.

A lot of people may not consider this as a disaster like a weather related event but, it sure got our attention! We thank the Good Lord that we found out about it when we did because our credit rating was not damaged as much as it could have been. This event reminds us that our good name is gift and blessing from God.

Provisions, Protection and Providence
By Robin Paris, LCMS SELC Gift Planning Counselor



Robin Paris

During life, people who care and are conscientious provide for their lives and for their children. During life, people instinctually protect those whom they love and the values they hold true. During life, all people live under the providence of a God who creates and sustains life. For people of faith, this providence extends into eternity under the saving grace of Jesus, God's only Son.

God's Word speaks about this inheritance that we have been given. God informs us in 1 Peter 1:4-5 that we are given "an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power is being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

If we are to live in the provision, protection and providence of our faith, it is consistent with these values that we also prepare for the time when our earthly lives will transition to a new life in the presence of Christ.

Christian stewards will be intentional about making sure that their estate plans give the provisions that are appropriate to loved ones so that they will be blessed. Stewards will certainly want to protect not only the property they manage but also the people and charitable beneficiaries who will receive it. Our motivation for this planning is a recognition of the providence of God for the benefit of His children during life and beyond.

If you would like to review your own plan to make generous provision in a way that protects blessings and honors God's providence, let us know. We would be pleased to help you develop your own lifetime plan for giving to bless the people you love and the ministries you care about.

Robin Paris, our SELC Gift Planning Counselor, will happily sit with you at your kitchen table, speak with you on the phone, or promptly return your email to review your current Plan, or assist you in establishing one. Call her at 937-477-9713, or email her at Robin.Paris@lfn.org.

The Lutheran Beacon

This is your newsletter . . . Articles & Photos are welcome!

Send to: gailpete37@yahoo.com

Please *submit articles* as *separate attachments* in the program you write in. [e.g. Word Perfect, Word, etc.], NOT as part of your e-mail. *Photos* must be submitted as *separate attachments* [NOT as part of your article.]

You may send multiple photos in one email.

Gail Peterson, Ed.

DEADLINE FOR THE APRIL ISSUE IS MARCH 12TH

Celebrating our 23rd consecutive Season!

ST. LUKE'S CONCERT SERIES 2016-17



Consecrate Our Hearts

Lutheran Cantata Choir and Chamber Ensemble

Sunday – March 26, 2017 – Matinee – 3:00 PM

Free Admission to Concert and Reception to follow!

Program Highlights

*J.S. Bach: Cantata BWV34 (O Eternal Fire, O Source of Love)
and "O Lord, Let Your Dear Angels"

*John Rutter: "The Lord is My Shepherd"

*W.A. Mozart: "Veni Sancti Spiritus"

With a variety of other traditional and contemporary sacred works.

Claire

Hodge

Artistic

Director



A gift to the community from ST. LUKE'S LUTHERAN CHURCH 2021 W. SR 426 Oviedo, FL 32765

St. Luke's Concert Series 2016-17 is made possible by the generous donations of individuals and corporate sponsors, as well as support provided by Seminole Cultural Arts Council, Inc.

Visit: slucs.org/concert-series to request emailed program updates during the 2016-17 season. Info: 407/365-3408 x 3508

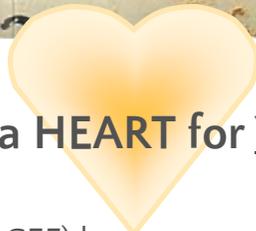




Lutheran Church Extension Fund

> the SELC district

Newsletter for LCEF Advocates and Congregations



LCEF Has a HEART for Your Ministry.

Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) knows your church has a future and has a HEART for your ministry to help reach its growth potential.

What better feeling to know that your ministry is playing a part in God's redemptive work—a dream you've always nurtured. But there's just one problem—your church is in desperate need of repair or upgrade. Perhaps it's a poorly-ventilated chapel, water-stained roof or broken-down bathroom. LCEF can help!

LCEF is introducing the NEW Church Improvement Loan. Church Improvement Loans are limited to congregations and include:

- Maximum 10-year term.
- Up to \$150,000.
- 24 months at Cost of Funds (COF) adjusted annually.
- LCEF COF plus up to 2.5% adjusted annually for remaining term.
- Payments fully amortized over term.

Church Improvement Loans can be used for:

- Critical repairs that can lead to substantial damage and cost if not fixed in a timely manner.
- Upgrades that enhance your church's appearance and comfort.
- Projects that improve energy efficiency and save money in the long term.

Contact David Thiele, English District LCEF Vice-President, at 517-980-2857 or david.thiele@lcef.org for a Church Improvement Loan application.

NEW LCEF Church Improvement Loan

The mission of Lutheran Church Extension Fund is to support the Church in fulfilling its mission of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ by being a Christ-centered servant partner of the LCMS, ensuring that funds and services are available now and in the future.



English District - LCEF
Rev. David L. Thiele
1381 Fox Haven Trail
Eaton Rapids MI 48827

david.thiele@lcef.org
517-980-2857

LCEF is a nonprofit religious organization; therefore, LCEF investments are not FDIC-insured bank deposit accounts. This is not an offer to sell investments, nor a solicitation to buy. LCEF will offer and sell its securities only in states where authorized. The offer is made solely by LCEF's Offering Circular. Investors should carefully read the Offering Circular, which more fully describes associated risks.

LCEF StewardAccount access features provided through UMB Bank n.a. The Demand/Dedicated Certificate and StewardAccount are not available to investors in South Carolina.

“Be FIT with LCEF”



Schedule an LCEF Sunday



Fueling kingdom growth, by
Investing with LCEF, while
Taking steps to personal financial fitness.

“Be FIT with LCEF” is our theme for our spring emphasis. As an LCEF Advocate, we ask you to take this opportunity to schedule a LCEF Sunday as an easy way to promote LCEF in your congregation. This is a great way to encourage members to learn more about LCEF, celebrate ministry and enjoy the benefits of a Christian healthy and “FIT” lifestyle of stewardship.

Please join us in support of this district-wide LCEF promotional by scheduling a LCEF Sunday, between April 23 and May 28 on your church calendar.

We will provide special bulletin inserts, posters, bulletin blurbs and talking points to help lift up the ministry of LCEF with our “Be FIT with LCEF” theme, featuring the Family Emergency StewardAccount[®] as an easy, all-around fitness investment plan.

Please sign up for LCEF Sunday by contacting David Thiele at (517) 980-2857 david.thiele@lcef.org.

Congregations without a LCEF Advocate must sign up an advocate. Contact David for a position description.

All Advocates hosting LCEF Sunday will have their names placed in a random drawing to win a Fitbit[®] fitness tracker.

Ready to Be FIT with LCEF?

What better way to begin financial fitness than by opening an LCEF Family Emergency StewardAccount, offering easy and electronic monthly savings, while growing stewardship and ministries!



Sign up to host LCEF Sunday at your church and have your name entered in a drawing to win a Fitbit fitness tracker.

but (wait), that's not all . . .

The congregation with the most new LCEF investments between May 1 - June 30 will be awarded with an LCEF Appreciation Event to celebrate its “all-around fitness.”

We will award one Appreciation Event for large congregations (150 members or more) and one for small congregations (less than 150 members.)

An Appreciation Event will be planned by the congregation and its LCEF Advocate. It needs to be schedule when LCEF VP David Thiele can attend. Up to \$500 will be dedicated for this activity.

“Be FIT with LCEF”