



The Beacon Online

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The Beacon Online is the communication source for the SELC District.

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Submit Your District Mission Goal Today

Your offerings support the advancement of the Kingdom of Christ here and throughout the world

As your congregation sets its mission goal to support the work of the district and Synod, please be sure to let us know as soon as possible, but before January 15, 2024. Here are three easy ways to do so:

- Online at [this link](#).
- Email Stewardship Committee member Rev. Bill Hale at william.e.hale@gmail.com with the amount per month or year.
- If you can find it, *mail* the form sent to your congregation in October to the address indicated.

If you have any questions, please contact Rev. Bill Hale at the above email or Rev. Dr. Mark Larson, Stewardship Chair at markclarson0341@gmail.com. We value your partnership in the Gospel and look forward to another year of proclaiming the saving message of Christ to a lost and hurting world.



Pentecost Lutheran Church Racine Wisconsin

Rev. Brady Retzlaff has accepted the call to Pentecost Lutheran Church in Racine, Wisconsin. He will be installed on February 4, 2024 at 2 PM Central time. We welcome Pastor Retzlaff, his wife Marissa, and his daughters Maya and Alaila to the SELC!



Saint John the Baptist Lutheran Church in Emporia, VA, Responding to God's Love by Loving Those in Need

The small congregation at St. John Lutheran church in Emporia, Virginia continues to be busy! they filled 100 shoe boxes for Christmas (photo below left). They also have a Prison Ministry Angel Tree ministry that they raised funds to buy gifts for 14 children whose parent(s) are incarcerated. The gifts for the children are pictured below on the right. This small in number congregation is large on energy to help others less fortunate. They average 40 people at their weekly worship service, but as you can see, they are a very active small congregation!





Vicarage and Seminary Student Call Documents deadline is Set

Deadline to submit to the District Office is February 23, 2024

The deadline for all **vicarage and call docs for Spring 2024** placements must be sent to the District Office no later than **February 23, 2024** so we can be sure to meet the Synod deadlines. If you need assistance or access to complete the call documents for a Vicar or Seminary graduate, please contact the District Office at selc.lcms@gmail.com or 610-965-3265, press 6.



National Lutheran Schools Week January 21 - 27, 2024

The theme for this year's week is connected. National Lutheran Schools Week provides more than 1,800 preschools, elementary schools and high schools with the public opportunity to proclaim and celebrate God's work among us in schools of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. The schools in the Synod touch over 180,000 students, families and their communities and share the message of Jesus' love with them.

The Bible verse for this year's Lutheran Schools Week is John 15:1 - 5. I am the vine

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing".

Please send us write-ups and pictures about how your schools celebrated National Lutheran Schools Week! Please email them to selc.lcms@gmail.com.



Family Bible Journey Daily Podcasts

Pastor Lepley, who serves the SELC as LCEF District Vice President, is releasing a daily devotional podcast for those who would like to listen or journal through the Bible over the next two years. Are you interested in journaling through the Bible, either for yourself or to leave the legacy of faith for a loved-one? If so, check out the Family Bible Journey podcast. New episodes drop daily as we work our way through the Bible over the next two years. If you'd like to listen to the podcast, check out familybiblejourney.com. Thanks for listening!



SELC LWML Monthly Bible Study

January 18, 2024

The January Bible Study for the SELC LWML is scheduled for Thursday, January 18th at 10:30 AM Eastern time. The topic is "Sent, Go, Proclaim" in the Fall LWQ.

The link to the Zoom session is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84746607019?pwd=V2t5a1BPQjFnUzJGRzRiS1ZVVVJsQT09>



Three Worship and Music Events Offered During Symposia Week

January 16 - 19, 2024

Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (CTSFW), will host three late-afternoon worship and music events during its annual Symposia Week January 16–19. (Congregations, please share the information below with your members as you see fit.)

Evening Prayer with the CTSFW Kantorei will be held Tuesday, January 16, at 5 p.m. in Kramer Chapel. Evening Prayer brings together the people of God at the end of the day to laud and magnify His glorious name.

On Wednesday, January 17, at 5 p.m., come your hearts and voices raising for a special **Hymn Festival with the Schola Cantorum** in Kramer Chapel. The Schola Cantorum and local LCMS church choirs, directed by Jonathan Busarow and accompanied by Kantor Kevin Hildebrand, organist, and professional instrumentalists, will reprise highlights of the Good Shepherd Hymn Festival of November 2023.

The final special worship and music event is **Vespers and a short organ recital**, which will be held in Kramer Chapel Thursday, January 18, at 5 p.m.

All events are free and open to the public, regardless of whether or not you are attending Symposia. If you can't make it in person, catch the livestream at ctsfw.edu/daily-chapel



Prayer Requests

Rev. Brian Roberts, St. Luke's in Oviedo, FL is continuing to gain weight (over 25 pounds) and his energy level continues to increase. He has returned to work at St. Luke's in October. He and his family are grateful for your prayers.

Rev. John Telloni, St. John in Massillon, OH as he is working and continuing to regain his strength as he has returned to work.

Rev. and Mrs. Panzigrau, John Huss in Arnold, PA

Rev. and Mrs. Edgar Anthony, Sts. Peter and Paul in Lorain, OH

Rev. Tom Soltis, Parma, OH

Rev. and Mrs. Kenneth Ballas, Parma, OH. Please keep them in your prayers.

Rev. and Mrs. Edgar Anthony and son George for their health needs, Lorain, OH. They give thanks for all the prayers as their son George met with his doctor who discussed healing options for his medical issue.

Rev. Alan Mercer in Galloway, NJ for his ongoing health struggles.

Megan Skelton in Oviedo, FL Please continue to pray for her healing, pain relief, and recovery.

Rev. Dennis Rhoads in Virginia who is serving as the Vacancy Pastor for St. John Lutheran Church in Emporia, VA. He is recovering from surgery and cannot put weight on his leg yet. Please pray for his continued healing and recovery.

Amanda Baumann in Mount Dora, FL, is Pastor Jacob Baumann's wife. She is pregnant with their fourth child. Please pray for a healthy and safe pregnancy.

Ardyne Kirn, in Crown Point, IN, please pray for her healing. Ardyne is a member of our District and serves on the Lutheran haven Board of Directors.

If you have people you would like to be included in the prayer list, please send the information to selc.lcms@gmail.com or call the District Office at 610-965-3265 and press 6.

READ THE LATEST ISSUES OF

Interest Time

Interest Time is a **FREE MAGAZINE** that celebrates our Lutheran faith and the great things our Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod church workers are accomplishing in the name of Christ. Read and subscribe today at no cost!

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Mark Your Calendars

January 18, 2024 at 10:30 AM Eastern - LWML Monthly Bible Study

February 16-17, 2024 - Higher Things Conference for Youth Pittsburgh, PA

May 3 - 5, 2024 - LWML Convention - Concordia Lutheran Church in Macungie, PA



Symposia 2024 - Digital Access Available January 16 - 19, 2024

Concordia theological Seminary Fort Wayne is hosting its annual Symposia Series January 16–19. If you can't join in person, you are invited to join us online with a ticket to Symposia Live. With a Symposia Live pass, you can watch all the sessions live and/or view recorded sessions at your convenience.

Key details for online participation:

- **Symposia Live Link:** **Visit Symposia 2024 Live for access.**
- **Cost:** The fee for online access is \$25 per person, which includes both live and recorded sessions
- **Device Accessibility:** Registration permits streaming on two devices simultaneously.

When you register, **be sure to keep the email you receive after your purchase**, as it will include your unique viewing code/link. All listed times are Eastern time; please adjust for your time zone. If you experience any technical issues, email helpdesk@ctsfw.edu.

For a full schedule and other details about this year's Symposia Series, visit ctsfw.edu/Symposia.

[Click here to register](#)



Higher Things Conference February 16 and 17, 2024

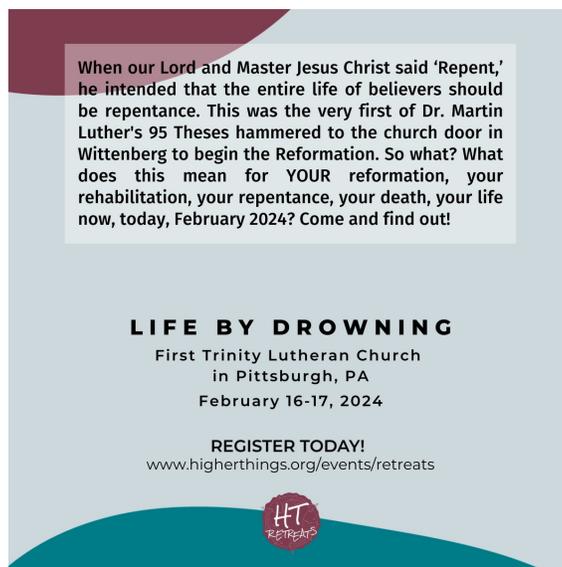
The upcoming Higher Things retreat is co-hosted by First Trinity Evangelical-Lutheran Church and the Pittsburgh Area Lutheran Ministries. This retreat will take place on February 16th and 17th at First Trinity located at 531 N. Neville St. Pittsburgh, PA 15213.

This retreat is intended for communicate members of our LCMS congregations in youth group and/ or high school and will include plenary lectures on Baptism by Rev. Eric Andrae and different breakout sessions by laity from the Pittsburgh region and LCMS clergy.

Regular Registration ends Monday, January 15th and is \$50 per attendee. This includes two meals and a t-shirt. All registrations received after January 15th will cost \$60 and will not include a t-shirt.

All aspects of the retreat (including sleeping) will take place at First Trinity. Students will need to bring sleeping bags, pillows, toiletries, one change of clothing, etc. Boys and Girls will not be allowed to sleep together, and the building will remain locked and secured by chaperones during the event.

Registration for the event can be accessed here: [Retreats – Higher Things](#)



When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said 'Repent,' he intended that the entire life of believers should be repentance. This was the very first of Dr. Martin Luther's 95 Theses hammered to the church door in Wittenberg to begin the Reformation. So what? What does this mean for YOUR reformation, your rehabilitation, your repentance, your death, your life now, today, February 2024? Come and find out!

LIFE BY DROWNING
First Trinity Lutheran Church
in Pittsburgh, PA
February 16-17, 2024

REGISTER TODAY!
www.higherthings.org/events/retreats

HT
RETREATS



It's Time to Nominate Students for Lutheran Summer Music

Each year, the primary way that music students find their way to LSM is through the encouragement of their church musician! LSM offers opportunities for musicians of all kinds: brass, winds, strings, percussion, piano, organ, voice, harp, guitar, handbells, and more! Students receive advanced musical instruction through large ensembles (Festival Choir, Band and Orchestra), chamber music, private lessons with collegiate-level faculty, and elective classes (such as conducting, composition, church music, intro to the pipe organ, jazz band, musical theatre, music therapy). In the evenings, students attend recitals and Evening Prayer services, and social events with their friends.

LSM 2024 takes place at Valparaiso University in Indiana from June 30-July 28 (Full Session) or June 30-July 14 (Half Session) and is open to students who have completed grades 8-12. **Know a musical young person who would thrive at LSM? Nominate them today at LSMacademy.org/nominate.**



Closing Thoughts

Resolutions and Our Being More Like Jesus (Luke 6:40)

Rev. Ken Ballas, EM

Except for what our Creator-Redeemer **God resolved to do** to *rescue* an otherwise dying world, our own turn-of-the-year frequently failed resolutions may leave us frustrated at best. The Bible is the story of our faithful covenant God's dealing with humanity's shamelessly rebellious sin problem and the sobering fact that, this side of heaven, Christians, too, have ways of "tweaking," (even "improving upon") His Holy Ten Commandments and their original protectively loving intent with often repeated largely self-centered aspirations of personal improvement or achievement.

Despite knowing we have already been saved eternally **by** the gracious substitution of life, death and resurrection of our Brother-Savior, Jesus Christ **for** good works (Ephesians 2:8-10), we nevertheless find ourselves yielding to recurring temptations to disregard almost completely serious intentions of living an even **more** God-pleasing, people-serving sanctified life.

Recalling what our ascended Lord's apostle Paul says in Romans 14:5-9 about the relative importance of certain calendar days, consciously striving to do our Heavenly Father's will on earth at *any time of the year* need not detract from His Spirit's comforting Gospel of forgiveness that we have been saved solely by His grace. We Christians should never do good works that others notice *us* or, God forbid, that we "score points" with God to get to heaven (hopefully, we all know better than that!).

At the same time, who among us inconsistent yet forgiven penitent blood-bought believers has not periodically checked his or her "spiritual pulse" as if to ask, "How am I doing, Lord?" He already knows. Thus we should no longer have the slightest need to measure our worth apart from Him who thankfully no longer holds us accountable for our countless misdeeds (see Psalm 130:3-4).

Precisely because we have a God who because of His perfectly obedient Son continues to love us, warts and all, we have been liberated from any curse of living "under the Law" or just judgment of our righteous but thankfully even more merciful God each and every day of our sometimes "bumpy" earthly pilgrimage. "**For if anyone is in Christ, he (or she) is a new creation!**" (2 Corinthians 5:17; also check out John 8:31-32; Galatians 5:1).

So, then, let's continue to allow the powerful indwelling Spirit of our sinless Brother-Savior, Jesus, to control your daily walk because of whom every baptized believing Christian can truly do amazing **Christ-like deeds of agapee love** in His Name in today's world. That reminds me. Though my singing voice of late resembles that of a hoarse frog, God helping me, I resolve to **sing His praises** on a daily basis (also with my dear Lois) **more**, not less, **in 2024!**



SELC District - A District Without Borders
***Showing Everyone Life in Christ, by Showing
Everyone Love in Christ***

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