



The Beacon Online

January 31, 2025/ Vol. 6 / No. 4

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

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Thank you Lutheran Haven for Saturday's Dinner and Reception at the Convention



We want to thank Lutheran Haven for hosting the Saturday evening dinner and the President's reception at the Haven! It was a great event, and many convention attendees got tours of the facilities. At the dessert reception, many attendees were able to interact with the residents of the Haven and find out first-hand about life at the Haven!

We also want to thank LCEF for sponsoring the President's Reception at the Haven and for St. Luke's Lutheran Church who sponsored the transportation to and from the Haven.





Pictured above left the attendees watched a video prepared about the Lutheran Haven. On the right is President Vinovskis with the Lutheran Haven's Board of Trustees President Susan Hanas.

Below left is the bus that took attendees on tours around the Lutheran Haven campus. Below right the kitchen staff are prepared to serve dinner to the convention attendees.



A message from Our Hosts at Lutheran Haven

"Overwhelmingly loving and the genuine fellowship of friends, both old and new" is how one delegate described the SELC's President's Reception that was held at Lutheran Haven on the evening of January 18, 2025. The warmth and joy of this event was palatable as people laughed together, told stories, and greeted one another with numerous hugs. It was truly an honor to witness this outpouring of love for each other which was poured out onto our residents and staff of the Haven as well.

The evening's festivities included a bus tour of the Harbor, which is our newly renovated Assisted Living Center, the Landings, our 2-story Congregate Independent Living Center, along with a tour through the winding, tree-lined streets of our

numerous Independent Living Cottages. Following the tour, the convention attendees gathered for a formal dinner in our Fellowship Hall.

District President, Rev. Waldemar Vinovskis addressed the crowd of nearly 150 with a brief history of the long and special relationship of the SELC and Lutheran Haven. Susan Hanas, President of the Lutheran Haven Board of Trustees echoed his message and recognized the years of service of the retired Haven trustees who were in attendance. CEO, Jerry Griffing introduced a special video presentation showing a pictorial history of the Haven, which was produced by retired Lutheran Haven CEO, Linda Kirk and narrated by resident, Gordon Naruta.

Following the delicious dinner prepared by our Haven's own chef and crew, the gathering was then invited to return to the Harbor for a dessert reception where the delegates were able to meet our wonderful residents. Once again, the atmosphere was electric with Christian fellowship and jovial conversation.

It was truly our joy to welcome the SELC delegates to our beautiful campus and host this very special event!

Below is the group Convention photo.



SELC Youth Gathering Update

Rachel Larson, Youth Chair

Greetings and blessings as we ENDURE the excitement of preparing for the 2025 LCMS Youth Gathering!

I am excited to share with you some numbers and plans that are developing. First, the SELC District has 5 congregations, and 94 people have already registered for the Gathering. If you know of people or a congregation still thinking about attending the Youth Gathering, please reach out to them. Let me know so I can encourage them too.

We can still add to your group numbers until March.

The other news is about our SELC District Event. We will be serving together at an offsite location again this year. We will be partnering with the English District for this event. The location and type of work is still being worked out with the Gathering planners. I will share any details as soon as I get them. The cost for this event will be \$35.00 and will include the event, transportation to and from the event, lunch, and a SELC District T-shirt. I am thankful to the SELC District Board of Directors for including support of the Gathering in the 2025 spending plan to help keep our costs low. Look for a Google form to register your group and provide T-shirt sizes. If you have any questions about the event, please let me know. My email address is rachel.larson@stlucascms.org



Assistance Requested for a Research Project

Dear Congregational Leader,

As a doctoral candidate in the Liberty Theological Seminary at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education in Christian Leadership degree. The purpose of my research is to explore the potential connection between relational connections in a congregation and practices of spiritual formation.

I am writing to ask for you to provide my study information to members of your congregation. Participants will be asked to take an anonymous, online survey. It should take 15-20 minutes to complete the survey. Participants will be presented with consent information prior to participating. Taking part in the study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission or to allow your congregants to participate, please send an email to jleborious@hope-lutheran.org.

You will then receive an email to forward to survey respondents you have identified in your congregation. Please forward the email without editing its contents. In addition, if you would like to receive a copy of the aggregate data analysis and conclusions at the end of the study, a copy will be made available for all participating congregations. Thank you for your time and for the ministry you do in your congregation.

Sincerely,
Rev. Joshua Michael LeBorious
Doctoral Candidate



Spring 2025 Vicarage and Call documents Deadline Announced

The deadline for all **vicarage and call docs for Spring 2025** placements must be received in the District Office no later than **February 28, 2025** to ensure that they are ready for submission to the Synod in time. Please contact Patti at the District office with any questions at selc.lcms@gmail.com or 610-965-3265, press 6.



Peace Lutheran Preschool Update

Hello from a very chilly Galloway, NJ. The children were very sad not to be able to go outside and enjoy the Adventure Zone, the playground or the snow but temperatures were below freezing every day this week.

Our teachers added large sensory peanut shape rolling balls and an obstacle course to get all those wiggles out. We also used this time to assess the children's gross motor skills. Parent conferences began for some teachers this week and other teachers are just finishing up their assessments. We also introduced a transportation theme that will take us into next week for PLP's Lutheran Schools week! Transportation is always so much fun especially our pretend garage as the children fix our little Tykes cars. The children also loved our chapel lesson about being fishers of men. Playing with Miss Kelly's fishing kit was so much fun, but they really felt proud finding a friend and telling them about Jesus.





Nominate Young Musicians for Lutheran Summer Music



Enrollment is filling up fast for the LSM 2025! Students come together in an immersive musical community that connects the pursuit of musical growth with the joy of Lutheran church music traditions. LSM welcomes musicians of all kinds: brass, woodwinds, strings, percussion, piano, organ, voice, harp, guitar, handbells, and more. Know a young person (grades 8-12) who would benefit from this life-giving and joyful musical community? Nominate them for LSM today at LSMacademy.org/nominate. LSM 2025 takes place at Valparaiso University from June 22-July 20 (Half Session through July 6). Standard Enrollment is open now through **March 1**.



LCEF, Lutheran Church Extension Fund, Has a New Brand!

Please see the ad below and scan the QR code for more information! Our LCEF representative is John Hoover, the DVP for the SELC District. His contact information is below.

John Hoover (o)-314-885-6512 (m)-314-276-3370 john.hoover@lcef.org

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Concordia Lutheran Preschool Hosts their Annual Spaghetti Dinner

Concordia Lutheran Church and Preschool held their annual spaghetti dinner on Saturday, January 25th. Over 200 people ate the delicious meal and enjoyed fellowship time with preschool and church families.

Pictured below on the left are the preschool staff and volunteers, led by Preschool Director Crystal Meck and the Preschool Board Chair Jen Tillinghast, who worked tirelessly to make the dinner a success.



As you can see from all the smiling faces, a good time was had by all! Thank you to the cooks in the picture below on the right.





Prayer Requests

Rev. Brian Roberts, Orlando, FL. Please pray for him to regain the weight he has lost and to regain his strength as he faces continued health struggles.

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. Tom Soltis, Parma, OH for God's loving care.

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

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

Rev. Kevin Duff, Hilton Head, SC, formerly a Pastor at Faith *Viera*, who is recovering from brain surgery. Please pray for his wife, his young family, and his caregivers.

Megan Skelton in Oviedo, FL Please continue to pray for her and her doctors to find pain relief solutions for her jaw pain and severe headaches following her surgery.

Laura Bergmann, Munster, IN, please pray for her as she injured her knee and is receiving inpatient treatment to help with her recovery.

Nita Huffines, St. Louis, MO, wife of Rev. Warren Huffines who is five-year survivor of colon cancer, has begun a new round of treatments. Please pray for her as she receives her treatment.

Daniel McLean, Oviedo, FL, who has stage 4 cancer and is receiving treatment. Please keep him his wife Emily, Deaconess at St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Oviedo, and their children in your prayers.

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.



Sending Hope. Sharing Christ. One Care Package at a Time

A cancer diagnosis was the last thing Concordia University student Phil Zielke expected to receive at the age of 22. But he did. Stage 4 Hodgkin's Lymphoma. And not just once, but twice.

By God's grace, Phil survived and, now at age 43, is cancer free, married to his

lovely wife Carrie, and is the father of two young sons, Hudson and Graham.

Phil founded Phil's Friends in 2006, inspired by a thoughtfully curated care package he'd received during his cancer treatments. That care package meant the world to Phil, and he wanted to pay it forward.

The nonprofit began in the basement of Phil and Carrie's townhome, with three mom-volunteers assembling the care packages. Each care package contained items a cancer patient could use during their hospital stays and treatments: lotion, a toothbrush and toothpaste, playing cards, a puzzle book, a water bottle, a journal, a fleece blanket, a knitted hat, socks, a stuffed animal (for children).

Most importantly, though, Phil was uncompromising in that each care packages must contain a spiritual element above all else, and so each recipient got a Gospel letter and a Bible, the only true source of hope and salvation.

That first year, the tiny ministry sent 100 care packages.

Eighteen years later, Phil's Friends sends on average 250 care packages and 8,000-plus Cards of Hope *a month*, totally close to 60,000 care packages and more than one million Cards of Hope sent to cancer patients across the United States, including Alaska and Hawaii.

These small gestures of Christ-like love and hope cannot be underestimated. Their impact has been tremendous in the lives of the recipients. Almost daily, we receive messages of gratitude about how much a care package or Card of Hope meant to them.

"Thank you so much for the care package that was sent to me. Your kindness, thoughtfulness, and prayers are much appreciated. May God bless you all," wrote one recipient.

Our care packages and Cards of Hope are sent free of charge. It is our way of serving those who are sick and suffering, and of bringing the love, compassion, and hope of Jesus Christ into their lives.

For more information, go to philsfriends.org

Closing Thoughts

Do You Have Trouble Sleeping? Read This (twice, if necessary!)

Rev. Kenneth Ballas, EM

With good reason the Conversion of St. Paul (January 25 on our Christian calendar is worthy of commemoration any time of the year. This is so in part because this side of heaven Saul of Tarsus, former fearsome first century persecutor of his later fellow-Jewish (as well as Gentile) believing brothers and sisters continues to use the present tense with reference to his ultimately far greater privileged status as exemplary Spirit-guided missionary-apostle of our innocently crucified and ascended living Lord Jesus Christ never says, "I *was* or *used to be* the chief of sinners!" but only "I **still am** the foremost of forgiven sinners!" (1Timothy 1:15)

Most likely we have all lived with, assisted or worked side-by-side with people with

whom we no longer have a particularly close relationship. Are those former associations only *mistakes* to be regretted or cause for blaming others perhaps even to the point as reasons for seeking revenge? Truth be told, people of all ages including those who think of themselves as life-long Christians may experience sleepless moments of nagging guilt-ridden thoughts (Luther referred to the basis for such spiritual struggles as diabolical *Anfechtungen*).

The New Testament Letter of James is quick to remind us that our God tempts no one to evil and that even though the demonic world has remarkable "head knowledge" of our sovereign Creator, such knowledge without total obedience only causes demons to "shudder" in their now eternally lost and fallen condition (James 1:13; 2:19). Thankfully James also assures us that because of God's perfect Gift of the incarnate Christ or "Wisdom from above," baptized believing "born again Christians" can resist the old evil Foe with the result that he will flee from us at very mention of the Name of Jesus Christ (James 1:17-18; 2:1; 3:17; 4:7; the devil not even liking it when God's children of all have a "Jesus pillow" to help them get a good night's sleep as long as it helps us rely solely on our infinitely stronger Protector, Jesus, perhaps as equally effective a bed-time prayer thought as leaving our recurring deepest worries or "adult garbage" at the foot of Calvary's Cross of our sinless Brother-Savior in whose Name we were baptized and whose Father never slumbers nor sleeps as we have been assured in the 121st Psalm!).

Sorting through some papers recently, I was mildly surprised to find a funeral service bulletin of a dear church family friend and former military veteran, fire-fighter and pigeon fancier whose chosen Gospel lesson for that bitter-sweet occasion happened to be Matthew 11:28-30. Beginning with the word "**Come!**" this Scripture reading is applicable to the earthly pilgrimage of every faithfully obedient follower of our sinless Brother-Savior Jesus Christ.

"Come unto Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." (Also see Isaiah 1:18; 55:1ff.; Matthew 25:34, 41; Revelation 22:17).



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