



# The Beacon Online

June 20, 2025/ Vol. 6 / No. 24

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

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## **Vicarage: A Place of Growth** Vicar Biruk Chiksa St. Lucas Lutheran Church, St. Louis, MO

When I first thought about vicarage, I had two main feelings: fear and excitement. Having moved to the US in 2018 and then decided to serve the Lord, I feared how I would manage to serve in a culture and language different from my own. I wasn't sure if I could do it. On the hand, I was excited for the opportunity to finally put into practice what I had learned after two years of seminary.

When I arrived at St. Lucas, those fears quickly left. From the beginning, the congregation's pastor and the church leaders made me feel welcome and comfortable. Their openness and encouragement reflected the spirit of the entire congregation, supportive, and not held back by differences in color or accent. I knew that it was not only a congregation I will serve but a community of grace who teaches!

So, vicarage became more than a place to serve; it is a place to learn and grow. I came thinking I would teach and bring what I had learned in seminary. Instead, I received even more than I gave. This year showed me what the pastoral ministry really looks like. I grew personally and spiritually. I now understand how essential the vicarage year is in shaping a future pastor. It's one thing to learn theology in the classroom, but quite another to live it in the life of the church.

At St. Lucas, I was involved in many areas: preaching and leading worship, confirmation classes, visitations, youth ministry, and administrative tasks. Each area became a training field. One highlight was learning to plan and lead events, especially with the youth and weekly service productions. I realized that pastors are not only preachers and teachers, but also planners, counselors, administrators, and servant-leaders. These experiences brought great improvement to my leadership, time management, and teamwork skills.

Preaching stood out as a powerful learning journey. Throughout the 16 sermons I preached so far, I learned not just how to structure a sermon or apply Law and Gospel, but how to grow as a preacher through prayer, preparation, and personal connection with God's Word.

Perhaps one of the greatest blessings of this year was the people I met in St. Lucas. All are welcoming and encouraging, not only me but my family also. I also enjoyed their comments that were needed, especially from one of the retired pastors. I had an amazing supervisor who modeled faithful pastoral ministry. He trusted me, gave me space to learn, and encouraged me every step of the way. His simple yet powerful words— *"You can do it!"*—became my motivation. Watching how he communicates with people, plans ahead, maintains a heart for mission, and attends carefully to the life of the congregation has helped shape my own pastoral identity.



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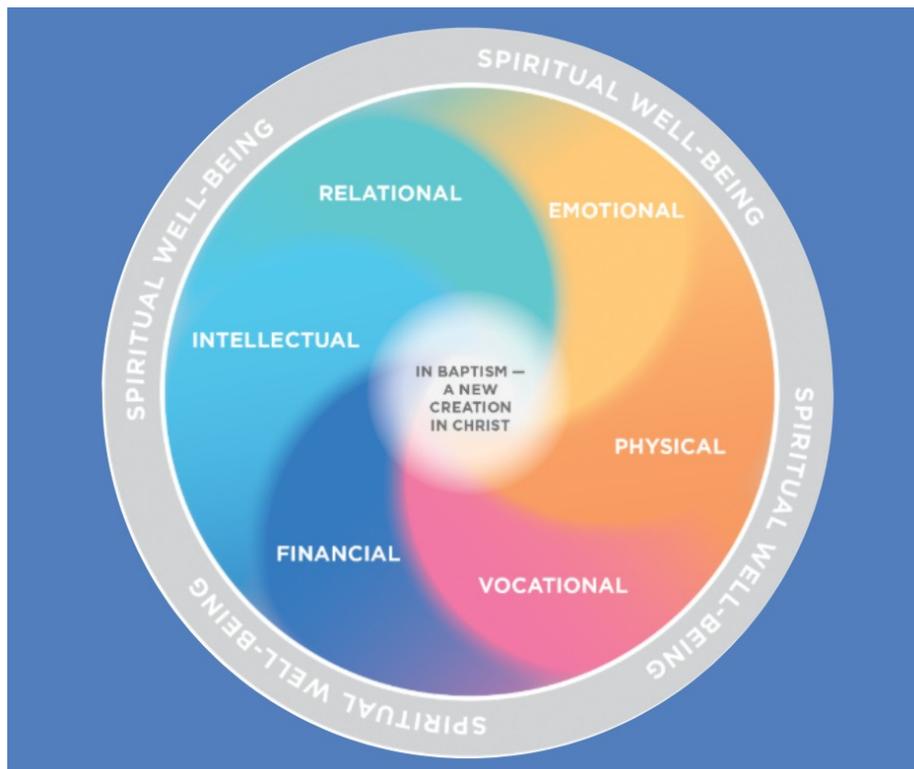


## **Is Your Congregation Interested in Participating in a Worker Wellness Program? Deadline is July 15th**

In September, the LCMS will launch a program designed to help congregational lay leaders create a supportive and caring environment that will improve the well-being of those who serve the church. LCMS Worker Wellness is asking for congregations that are interested in participating in this pilot project to fill out the questions by July 15. More information will be provided in August.

Healthy church workers carry out their vocations with more energy and joy. When the church supports its workers, the whole Body of Christ is blessed. As Christ has promised: "As you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me" (Matt. 25:40).

Click [here](#) to complete the questionnaire by **July 15th**. [Email](#) for more information or if you have any questions.





## Calls Accepted to the SELC District

The SELC District had three new SELC District calls accepted from the Rocky Mountain District. **Mrs. Tekla Coerber** has accepted a call to St. Luke's Lutheran School in Oviedo, FL. **Korey Danley** has accepted the call to be a DCE at Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Lake Mary, Florida. **Marcus Howard** has accepted the call to be the Director of Discipleship at Family of Christ Lutheran Church and School in Tampa, Florida.



## President Vinovskis Attends the Florida Georgia District Convention

President Vinovskis was invited to attend and speak at the Florida Georgia District Convention in Orlando, Florida earlier this month. The SELC District and the FL-GA District work closely together to serve the churches that are in the state of Florida.

Pictured below from left to right: District Presidents Bill Harmon, Southeastern District, and James Rockey, FL-GA District, Rev. Charles I. Bameka, the Bishop of Uganda, Rev. Greg Walton, former FL-GA District President and current Vice President, Grace Place Wellness and President Vinovskis.





## Get Ready for Lutheran Summer Music 2025!

Join us at Valparaiso University from June 22 to July 20 for our 43rd season, featuring over 30 free concerts, recitals, and worship services. Can't make it in person? Watch the season of music online via Live from LSM!

Highlights include the beloved Bach Cantata Eucharist, Festival of Hymns, and the debut Faculty Organ Recital. Don't miss Festival Week with powerful performances from the Festival Band, Orchestra, and Choir.

Read more in our new season brochure: [bit.ly/2025season](https://bit.ly/2025season)  
Visitor details and online access: [LSMacademy.org/2025](https://LSMacademy.org/2025)



## Getting Healthy at Lutheran Haven

On the 2nd Monday of each month, several of our residents gather to host a Whole Foods Plant-Based luncheon with a wide variety of delicious dishes made by each person who attends. Everyone brings something that's healthy to share. It can be simple, like a bowl of grapes or a favorite plant-based recipe. Recently one of our members brought a vegan white lasagna that was so delicious!



At the end of 2023, resident Ellie Musgrave sought out a few people who she knew ate a plant-based diet and together they were excited to start these potluck lunches. In January of 2024 they held their first meeting. This has now grown to year-round monthly gatherings and attendance is continually increasing. Each meeting begins with a buffet style potluck lunch followed by a program meant to encourage and enlighten those in attendance.

Ellie reports, "Each meeting we have a program given by a medical professional and often it's one of our Lutheran Haven staff such as Julie Iseman, RN, our Home Health Administrator. Whether our speakers are in the medical field or not, they are passionate about healthy food and nutrition. Most recently, we had a presentation on the benefits of herbs and tea that was very enlightening."

One of the couples who regularly attend this group even took a vegan cruise and what a pleasure it was to hear about their fabulous experience, which included not only the delicious food but also the great speakers on the ship. With thankfulness, Ellie says, "The Lord continues to bless us with great speakers and new members. It's a valuable social event along with a great learning experience to think about eating healthy. It's a win-win for everyone!"



One of the original members, Susan Arnall admits, "I wanted to lower my risk of heart disease by lowering my cholesterol and plant-based whole food helped me achieve that goal. I happily lowered my cholesterol 40 points just by changing the foods I ate!" Susan is very active and attends regular exercise classes at the Haven, but states, "eating a plant-based diet has made the biggest change for my health, plus, it's easier than you think!"

After the attendee's 3rd visit, they receive a beautiful 3 ring notebook which contains the recipes received each month. That was the idea of resident, Terry Steinke and everyone loves receiving the book which now holds quite a great selection! Every meeting she collects the recipe cards that are brought, types and then distributes them for the next meeting.



In this new lifestyle path, everyone is encouraged to read labels on the foods they buy in the grocery store. Ellie is happy to say, "attendees are inspired and energized and now look forward to taking steps to achieve their own personal goals for health. We have a great time and feel God is teaching and challenging us to live a healthy, happy life. That's great motivation for us all!"

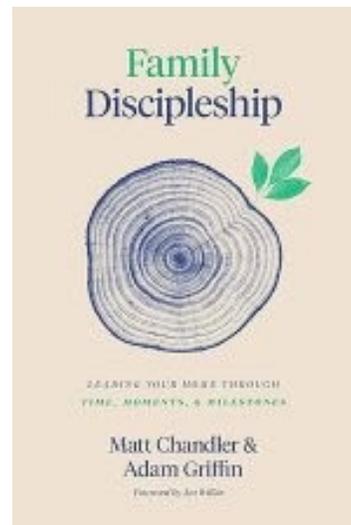
We are so thankful for this inspired group at Lutheran Haven and look forward to all the ways you help us become healthier and better educated on this topic! Hmmm, it makes us wonder if there might be a cookbook in their future...?

*Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well.  
3 John 2 NIV*



## **Resource of the Week - Family Discipleship: Leading Your Home Through Time, Moments, and Milestones**

If you are in need of some books for your Summer reading, we are sharing some here. Take a look at this one by Pastors Matt Chandler and Adam Griffin. They have made it their mission to help readers develop a sustainable rhythm of gospel-centered discipleship in their families: including suggestions, sample plans, and Scripture references. Click [here](#) for this book recommendation and others!





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## Rev. Dr. Christopher Cahill Retirement Celebration

You are invited to help us to honor the ministry and observe the retirement of Pastor Chris Cahill on the weekend of June 28-29, 2025. Weekend events at Christ the King include an Open House, 11 am - 5 pm on Saturday, June 28th, including light refreshments, conversations, along with some fun and games.

**AND**

Pastor Cahill's final worship service as Pastor of Christ the King at 9:30 am on Sunday, June 29 Holy Communion included!

PLEASE NOTE - ONLY ONE WORSHIP SERVICE ON JUNE 29th at 9:30 AM.

RSVP your intention to attend either or both of these to [ctklutheranlodi@gmail.com](mailto:ctklutheranlodi@gmail.com) by Sunday June 15 (please tell us how many others will come with you).



## Concordia Seminary Shares Update on Land Use Plans Regents Authorize Housing Development Proposal

At their May 15–16, 2025, meeting, **Concordia Seminary's** Board of Regents devoted substantial time to a discussion of the westernmost 28 acres of the Clayton, Mo., campus. With the understanding that the framework for an agreement with Washington University still exists, the Board resolved to pursue opportunities that are more closely aligned with the existing underlying zoning and that can be acted upon within a reasonable period of time. To that end, the Board authorized the Seminary to partner with Real Estate Solutions, a division of Lutheran Church Extension Fund, to develop the westernmost acres of the Seminary property into a subdivision of single-family homes.

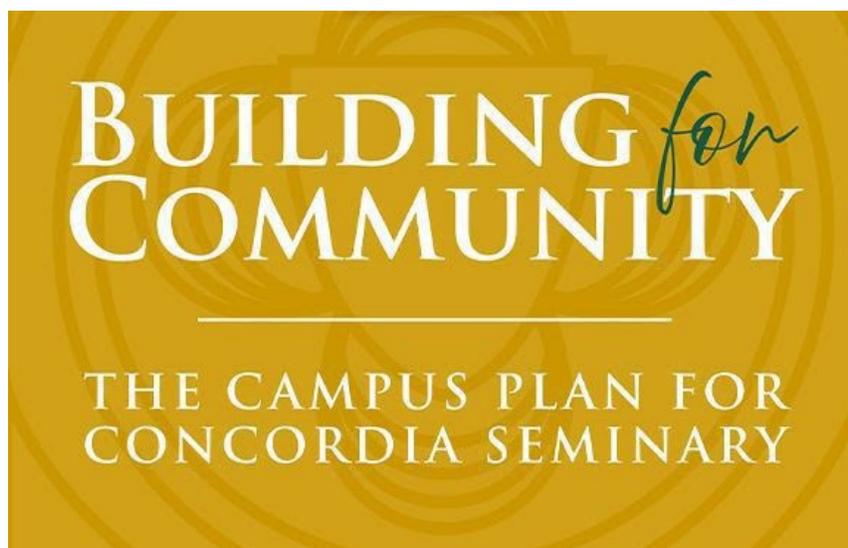
This decision was not made lightly, and it was made with the understanding that final

approval of the plan rests with the Board of Directors of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, which had previously approved the **proposed land transaction with Washington University** that included athletic facilities available for Seminary use. Given the determination to withdraw the pursuit of approval for zoning to accomplish these plans by Washington University, this action has been taken to accomplish a primary goal of the Seminary’s Master Plan, which is to leverage this acreage, investing the proceeds and having the income available to support Seminary operations in perpetuity.

This plan is in its initial stages and like any plan, is subject to adjustments and changes. The Board welcomes a productive conversation with City of Clayton officials as well as Seminary neighbors and partners. Such discussions would center on actions that provide both for increased value to the Seminary from this project and the desired outcomes as have been discussed in previous numerous public forums. Finally, as the School District of Clayton continues to pursue its Long-Range Facilities Master Plan, the Seminary will welcome an open conversation regarding the appropriateness and mutual benefits of use of a portion of this acreage by the school district.

The Board has directed that Real Estate Solutions, along with Seminary administrative leaders, take immediate actions to move this process forward and bring a final proposal for approval at the Regents’ August meeting.

For more information, please visit the Seminary’s **“Building for Community”** webpage.



## **Nominations Open for Election at the 2026 Synod Convention**

The Committee for Convention Nominations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) requests nominations of qualified members from Synod member congregations for officer, board, and commission positions to be elected by the Synod convention, which will meet July 18–23, 2026.

Officers, agencies, ordained and commissioned ministers, and member congregations of the Synod and their lay members are all invited to submit nominations, to be

received preferably before August 18, 2025, and no later than October 18, 2025. Please urge the members of your congregation to participate in the nomination process by identifying those individuals with the gifts and abilities to serve the Synod in one of the roles listed below. Download a bulletin insert to print and include in your worship folders and newsletters.

**Nominees are sought for:**

- Secretary of the Synod
- LCMS Board of Directors (at-large and regional)
- LCMS Boards for National and International Mission (regional)
- Commission on Theology and Church Relations
- Concordia Historical Institute Board of Governors
- Concordia Publishing House Board of Directors
- Lutheran Church Extension Fund Board of Directors
- LCMS Foundation Board of Trustees
- Concordia University System Board of Directors
- Synod University and Seminary Boards of Regents

Important information — including an explanatory memorandum, a detailed description of the offices to be filled (with present terms and incumbents), and instructions for use of the new online nomination system — is available at [lcms.org/nominate](https://lcms.org/nominate). Any member of a member congregation with a valid email address may establish an account and submit a nomination.

To complete a nomination, visit [forms.lcms.org](https://forms.lcms.org) and log in via a LISN ID (for rostered church workers and a few others) or an email address you control. If you need assistance logging into the system, please refer to the following documentation:

- [Instructions for logging in using an email address](#)
- [Instructions for logging in using a LISN ID](#)

If you have already created an account, you can follow this [direct link to the Nomination Form](#).

Please distribute this call widely and urge participation.

Sincerely in Christ's service,  
John W. Sias  
Secretary, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod





## Do You have a Church Member who is Preparing for Full-time Churchwork?

The Student Financial Aid Committee was organized by the SELC District to assist young men and women preparing for full-time professional ministry or church work within the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. This includes deaconess, lay ministry programs, as well as clergy preparation. Professional church workers who are working toward advanced degrees are not eligible for aid from the SELC District Student Aid Committee.

Please see the SELC website for an application and more information - <https://selc.lcms.org/mdocs-posts/financial-aid-form/>



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## Family Bible Journey Podcast



Podcast host Pastor Dan Lepley is leading a Journeys of Paul tour in Greece right now! Learn the significance of many Pauline sites as we continue through the Book of Acts in the Family Bible Journey. Find us on your favorite podcast player or at [familybiblejourney.com](http://familybiblejourney.com).





## Concordia Preschool Summer Camps

Concordia Preschool in Macungie, PA held three summer camps following the conclusion of the school year. The camps included Mad Science, Amazing Athletes, and Under the Sea.



# Together In Faith

God's blessings to all attending the LCMS Youth Gathering from the English & SELC Districts this July!

Lutheran Church Extension Fund is a proud sponsor of the 2025 LCMS Youth Gathering.



LUTHERAN CHURCH  
EXTENSION FUND  
FINANCIAL SOLUTIONS. TOGETHER IN FAITH.



## Prayer Requests

**Rev. Brian Roberts**, Orlando, FL. Please pray for him as he is gaining weight and strength.

**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, who has finished his low dose radiation treatments, and his healing is continuing from those treatments. Please keep him and his family in your prayers.

**Rev. Edward Kucera**, Hermitage, PA, who is receiving long-term healthcare at home. Please keep him and his wife Irene in your prayers.

**Bev Cahill**, wife of Rev. Chris Cahill. Lodi, OH, as she continues chemotherapy following cancer surgery. The Cahills are posting updates on "Caring Bridge" at <https://tinyurl.com/Bridge4Bev>.

**Anna Bocklage**, Bel Air, MD, wife of Rev. Steve Bocklage, who is recovering from knee replacement surgery. Please pray for her healing and recovery.

**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 wrote, Praise God for His healing graces: 5-year remission of colon cancer, then successful removal of a new tumor. Thank Him now for the improvement in blood tests. Pray boldly for complete healing from His mercy, yet desiring His will.

**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](mailto:selc.lcms@gmail.com) or call the District Office at 610-965-3265 and press 6.*



## Closing Thoughts Two Perspectives on Romans 12:15

Rev. Ken Ballas, EM

*"Continue to **rejoice** with those who rejoice; **weep** with those who weep!"*

Sadly, much of today's society has these two verbs used by our risen Lord's apostle Paul turned around or reversed. Thoughtless bullying as well as empathy less self-centeredness abounds. Picture the following scene. Management is carefully considering two equally valued workers to fill a job opening for advancement up the corporate ladder, the one a 20-year employee, the other 15 years. The *second* gets the coveted promotion.

Rather than grumbling beneath his breath (or aloud) about possibly being treated unfairly, the *first* man with a daughter in college is overheard warmly congratulating the other wisely leaving it to the Lord to have the final word on any or all actual injustices saying, "You're a good man, John; by the way, my wife and I would like to invite you and your dear family to join us for dinner in a nice restaurant!"

But what about those who have genuine cause for **weeping**? Dare we simply block out, say, the understandably lingering gnawing spiritual or emotionally devastating pain or grief associated with the loss of a precious child? Sleeplessly lying in bed recently, I was empathetically led to sense for several minutes in the pit of my stomach a fraction

of the agonizing pain *and* grief of the grieving loving parents, sisters and, yes, grandparents of a beloved 23-year old grandson, a recurring experience which further led one to appreciate what with good reason became the shortest yet one of the most powerfully instructive passages in the entire New Testament. Reflecting God's mind and heart for hurting people, "**JESUS WEPT!**" John 11:35

Though an eyewitness of said happening, the evangelist, John, doesn't tell us how long or how intently our sinless Brother-Savior wept in the presence of the two grieving sisters and close friends of a 4-day deceased Lazarus of Bethany, we have a grammatical "snapshot photo" of our Lord's facial expression at what was transpiring in the lives of many people -- the Greek verb "wept" may well also be translated Jesus "burst into tears" or "broke down and *began* to weep" that memorable day just outside of Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives and Garden of Gethsemane.

We leave it to skeptics of every age (among others) to ponder why we are also told that enemies of our Lord Jesus tried to *kill Lazarus* after He had that particular day chosen singly and miraculously to restored to life as flesh and blood compassionate Resurrector whose mission it remains to guarantee future physical and spiritual newness of life (see John 12:9-10).



## **SELC District - A District Without Borders**

***Showing Everyone Life in Christ, by Showing Everyone Love in Christ***

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