



The Beacon Online

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

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Support Texas as They Deal with Flooding and Loss of Lives



We have been contacted by many asking how can we help our brothers and sisters in Texas. The Texas District of the LCMS has provided us with the information that follows.

Texas has more varied natural disasters than any other state in the union. In addition, with the population growth at such a high rate, man-made disasters are increasingly possible. When a disaster of any variety occurs there are people who want to bring relief to those who have been impacted. The question is: "What can I do to help?"

First of all, **PRAY**. Of course, there are many things for which you can pray but right now, you can pray on behalf of others to the Lord for preservation, protection and most of all for the realization of Christ's mercy. In your prayers, pray that God uses the event as a way of bringing people to a knowledge and to a faith relationship with Jesus.

In addition, pray for the pastors, church workers and congregational leaders, and members in the impacted areas. Specifically pray for:

- protection for them and their families,
- protection for the congregation's property (to be used in the community as a missional outpost), and
- that leadership discovers ways of serving the community and bringing God's merciful presence in word and deed.

GIVE



You can also donate by mailing a check to:

Texas District Relief
1221 Satellite View
Round Rock, TX 78665

100 percent of the funds Texas District receives from your donations will be used to assist the disaster relief efforts.

Donations qualify as donations to 501(c)3 non-profit organizations. All contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.



2025 Youth Gathering Begins Tomorrow

We ask for your prayers for all who are going to the 2025 Youth Gathering in New Orleans, Louisiana. It is being held from July 19 - 23, 2025. Rachel Larson, the SELC Youth Chair, is leading the SELC District group at the Gathering. We have several congregations and volunteers attending the Gathering totaling about 110 attendees from the SELC. For the District Event, the group will clean, prepare, and paint a flood wall as part of a mural project with the Faubourg Marigny Improvement Association.

Please pray for their safe travel to and from the Gathering and for a successful Servant event.

The theme of the Gathering is Hebrews 12:1 - 3.

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.” (Hebrews 12:1-3)



Guiding Principles

Youth Gatherings proclaim the Lordship of Jesus Christ and God's saving grace to His people through Christ. In this setting, young people grow in their personal relationship with God and grow in their fellowship of Word and Sacrament in Christ's Church.

Youth Gatherings are a vehicle by which the Church reaches out to, cares for, and affirms young people, both churched and unchurched.

Youth Gatherings equip youth and adults for ministry and vocational service in a variety of settings in their congregations, communities, and world.

Youth Gatherings affirm, equip, and support adults who work with young people.

Youth Gatherings celebrate the meaning of Christian joy in all of life's situations, including transitions and crisis.

Youth Gatherings recognize and affirm the diversity of God's people.

Youth Gatherings affirm, support, and promote the ministry of LCMS Districts and congregations.



Missionary Trip to Latvia

We ask for your prayers for the two teams of missionaries who began their travel to Latvia on July 17th. There are two teams from the SELC, one from Concordia in Macungie, PA and one from St. Luke's in Oviedo, Florida. They are returning to the US in late July. Please keep them in your prayers for safe travel as they spread the Word of Jesus Christ to those they serve in Latvia. They are also assisting with the Vacation Bible School camp at the host Church to help teach English to those who are attending the VBS program. Look for updates in future issues of the Beacon.



A Prayer from CCF

Rev. Dr. Todd Biermann

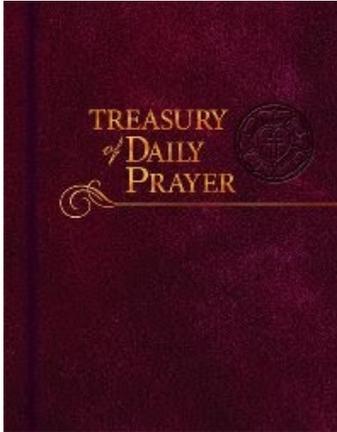
We ADORE You, Lord Who is at hand and always near. You are our God of peace; full of honor, justice, excellence, and worthy of praise. To You be glory forever and ever.

Hear our CONFESSION: our anxious feelings often overtake us and instead of bringing our worries to You again and again, we let them grow and consume us. Forgive us when we don't bring our requests first to You.

THANK You for Your peace that passes understanding. Thank You for supplying what we need from day to day and beyond. We can't see far in the future, except for what You have promised, and that is enough.

Hear our SUPPLICATION: Guard our hearts and minds from anxiety and teach us to pray about everything. Shape our minds to focus on what is true and good. Be near to us, God of Peace, and strengthen us for this daily life! Amen.

These prayers were written while reflecting on Philippians 4.



Resource of the Week

Treasury of Daily Prayer

The Treasury of Daily Prayer will help you and your family focus on God with Scripture readings, prayers, psalms, hymns, and devotional readings from church fathers. Click [**here**](#) for this book recommendation and others.



LWML-SELC Events

Save the date for the LWML SELC district fall rally on Saturday September 27, at Redeemer Lutheran Church, Manchester, NJ. Details to follow.



Experience *Live from LSM* this July!

Tonight and tomorrow, July 18th and 19th, will be the conclusion of the Summer session - Festival Orchestra Concert and Evening Prayer at 7:00 PM each evening. It is being live-streamed when you click [**Live from LSM**](#). This link broadcasts the concerts in real time.



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Daily affirmations can be a powerful tool for supporting mental health by promoting positive thinking and self-empowerment. Here are some affirmations you might find helpful:

1. "I am worthy of love, happiness, and fulfillment."
2. "I choose to focus on the positive aspects of my life."
3. "I am in control of my thoughts and emotions."
4. "Every day, in every way, I am becoming better and better."
5. "I am strong, resilient, and capable of overcoming challenges."
6. "I deserve to take time for myself and prioritize my well-being."
7. "I am grateful for the small joys in my life."
8. "I trust myself to make the right decisions for my life."
9. "I am enough just as I am."
10. "I welcome peace and tranquility into my life today."

Repeating these affirmations can help cultivate a more compassionate and supportive mental environment, encouraging personal growth and emotional balance.

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Racine Youth Present Skit "The Ragman" on Pentecost Sunday

On Sunday, June 8th, the youth class of Pentecost Lutheran Church, Racine WI, presented the skit "The Ragman" during a youth-led service to celebrate the end of the Sunday School year. The Ragman (Cullen Lisowski) encountered many down-on-their luck people as he pushed his shopping cart throughout the city (photo top right). As he comes across a young woman crying on her porch (Autumn Madsen), surrounded by garbage, he exchanges her dirty handkerchief for a new linen (photo bottom right). The crying woman's demeanor changes, and she walks away cheerfully. As he happens upon a young woman with a head wound (Shyann Christensen), he swaps her bloody head-wrapping for a brand-new hat. The wound-free young woman skips away joyfully (Photo below).



As he runs into an out-of-work woman with one arm (Izzy Lisowski), he exchanges his new coat for her old one, and the woman marvels at her two healthy arms. Last, he stumbles upon a passed-out drunk man (Quinten Lisowski). He exchanges the drunk man's tattered blanket for a new, clean blanket. Upon waking, the man walks away, clean and refreshed.

But now the Ragman struggles to push his cart with one arm, as he weeps into the dirty handkerchief, head bleeding, and stumbling like a drunk. He lays down in the garbage dump and dies. (Photo below on the left).



Narrated by Nathaniel Lisowski, the skit dramatized what Martin Luther called the "Great Exchange", where we exchange our sin and hopelessness for God's righteousness and eternal life.

In the end, as the narrator stares at the scene in awe, the Ragman rises and clothes the narrator with a new white garment (above right).

The youth class selected all the songs and readings for the service. Several youth participated in other ways as lectors, ushers, musicians, making props, as "understudies", and helping to refine the skit.

We were honored to have Pastor Mark Walters from Racine Lutheran High School leading the combined worship service that morning, as Pastor and Marissa Retzlaff's third daughter was born earlier that week!

"God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." 2 Corinthians 5:21



Do You have a Church Member who is Preparing for Full-time Churchwork? Deadline is August 15th

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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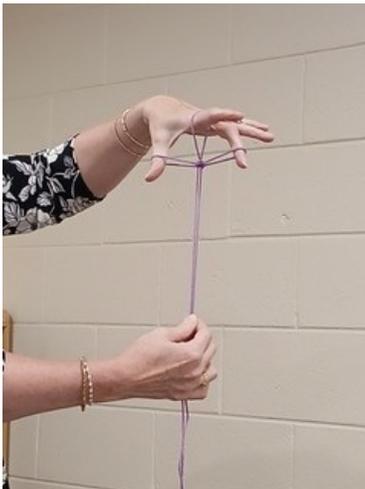
Concordia LWML Meets and Makes Prayer Fobs



Carol Jenkins began her presentation for teaching us about the prayer fobs that she makes with a devotion correlating The Lord's Prayer and prayer fobs.

Carol spoke about the Lord's Prayer is scripture, it is the whole gospel in and of itself. Each component of the prayer helps us pray with Adoration, consecration, supplication, intercession, Protection and praise. Carol then guided the group on how to make the Paracord Prayer Fob, where she also talked about its history and Websites to go to learn more about it.

Carol told us about the prayer fob that takes 33 steps (33 years of Jesus' life) to complete and showed us a sample. She also showed us a sample of an Orthodox prayer rope. The group learned a Solomon's knot and finished a fob that could be for themselves or someone else.



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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 the Ballas' 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 as he rebuilds his strength following his treatments. Please keep him and his family in your prayers.

Rev. Edward Kucera, and his wife Irene, who have moved to St. Louis, MO.

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 preparing for her second knee replacement next week.

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 continues to build up strength in her injured knee.

Nita Huffines, St. Louis, MO, wife of Rev. Warren Huffines, let's praise God for bringing stage four cancer under control; then ask for more grace during a maintenance phase of treatments, that the Lord complete the healing while increasing Nita's energy and joy for each day.

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.



Closing Thoughts **One More Time: Jesus and the Ten Commandments** (Why this, too, is a key element of our Triune God's eternal blueprint of salvation) Rev. Ken Ballas, EM

Depending on one's choice of modern Bible translations, often overlooked is the fact that the inspired *Old Testament Scriptures* contain a surprising number of explicit references to Christ's messianic promised coming as the prophetic "Just" or "Righteous Shepherd-Servant-King or Holy One of Israel" (cf. Deuteronomy 18:15; Isaiah 48: Ezekiel 34; Zechariah 9; Acts 3:14, 23). Yahweh, almighty merciful covenant God of Israel, waited centuries before one of its citizens finally obeyed completely the precepts of the written Mosaic Law which had earlier also been inscribed in every human mind and heart. Returning to parish ministry after nearly a decade of privileged seminary teaching a half century ago, one of many lessons I continued to learn also from more than two dozen vicar-interns from both LC-MS seminaries concerns the *essential nature of our sinless Brother-Savior's seamless total obedience* to His and our Heavenly Father for our eternal salvation (Romans 5:19; 2 Corinthians 5:21; **Philippians 2:8**; Hebrews 4:15; 2;18; 1 Peter 1 all).

In teaching youth the Ten Commandments, one of our dear congregation's many exemplary vicars routinely used a simple repeatable *four-part* lesson plan in instructing future confirmands God's unified decalogy: **1.** With some preliminary understanding, students willingly memorized each commandment as being related to the very first with **2.** Luther's catechetical "What does this mean?" explanations before **3.** added illustrations of how our Creator-Redeemer God rightfully expected His covenant people not only to avoid "breaking" the commandments but also practical examples of "keeping" them by positively obeying these godly protective, reflective intended curb and mirror-like divine rules for holy living; and, finally, **4.** though seldom fully considered, what Jesus Himself necessarily had to do with the Law of our just and merciful God.

Only several years later did I begin to grasp more deeply the fuller implications of our Brother-Savior's *flawless obedience* in light of other likely more obvious biblical truths. Sadly, children of this world do indeed at times put us Christians to shame regarding our seeming reluctance in "taking the next step" by allowing the Spirit of God to motivate us ever more intentionally to joyful people-loving living by the predominately Gospel-centered written and preached Word of God and scriptural sacraments. (**Luke 16:8**; Ecclesiastes 9:10; Lamentations 1:12; Acts 13:38ff.; Romans 14:17; Philippians 2:8; Hebrews 13:14; 1 John 3:3). Without in the least wishing to detract from the unique centrality of our sinless Savior's innocent substitutionary sacrificial death by crucifixion, glorious resurrection and ascension, the sobering fact remains that Christ Jesus was the only person seemingly *passively yet voluntarily* to allow Himself to be stretched out on a cross and die – the point being that *our* far from perfect life or conceivably ever dying on a cross could in no way begin to atone for one's own transgressions let alone the sins or misdeeds of the whole world.

Thus, despite any amount of "good deeds" we may manage to accomplish (which God still has every right to expect of us on a daily basis), there now remains a sense in which His *humiliatingly* redemptive death became the most "**active work**" **God ever did in our behalf!** Visibly *sending* to planet earth His uniquely incarnate Son that first Christmas as the *needed innocently spotless Lamb of God* whose obedience as St. Paul wrote to the Philippian makes abundantly clear as indeed ultimately "seamless" even to the point of His self-giving death on a cross (John 1:29, 35; 3:16-17; 10:17-18). Ever instructive is the carefully taught distinction between Christ's "state of humiliation and **exaltation**" as the integral Gospel core of the Spirit's kindling His gift of saving faith in the human heart. That our supremely Good Shepherd would also become the needed sacrificial Lamb of God continues to boggle the mind concerning which we have also graciously been given the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16).

In a fallen world frightening, terrible things can and likely do happen to us all. Just ask a man like the Old Testament character named Job. As you can read for yourself, that ancient biblical story had a happy ending. So can your real-life stories. Especially or *only* because of Jesus, you, too can resist all misleading ideas to the contrary that leave you making Him your *last* resort! Rather our Heavenly Father wants us to find great comfort in the fact that we and many other walking wounded family and friends have been led to discover something far better even than an ultimate cure for every medical condition *without, however, telling anyone else about this amazing find*. Otherwise, how foolish would we and a host of others be to be "beating that Gospel drum" at every turn by actually believing all that "Bible stuff!" The Old Evil Foe knows better than most that our now exalted ever-living Brother-Savior Jesus Christ is infinitely stronger than is he with the result that he (not we!) is powerless against the powerful NAME OF **JESUS** (see James 4:7).

Moreover we also can and should confidently continue to pray for and with one another: Forgive us, Lord Jesus, for knowingly or unknowingly, perhaps even rebelliously dishonoring You without whom we or our precious family friends or loved ones would not be here at times perhaps having even blatantly turned our back on ("*moon*ed?") or defamed Your person as the Source of our seeming natural existence and undeserved loving-kindness. For You were sent here in human flesh not "only" to die for us and rise again before Your final promised return; living for us You also necessarily patiently waited for to be born in the confidence that we mortals need never die without the hope of living again forevermore! (Romans 8:3; 14:7-9; 2 Peter 3:9, 15a).

Our Heavenly Father, who also lost His only beloved Son in His own immediate family, has accomplished something infinitely even more wonderful than the best human

science has to offer in the person of His only-begotten Son! Dare we keep such wonderful news only to ourselves leaving those we claim to love to themselves without recalling (or “actually hearing” for the first time!) the Gospel truth? By the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit may we all still be open-minded to consider restructuring our priorities to the possibility of thinking and believing even now that this time-honored message is true after all as we join a harried father in praying for his own seriously troubled beloved son, “Lord, I believe! Help Thou, my *unbelief!*” (Mark 9:24) For Jesus' sake! **Amen!**



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