



The Beacon Online

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

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Not of This World: Why the Church Does Not Involve Itself in Contemporary Political Issues

Rev. Waldemar R. Vinovskis,
SELC District President

After recent tragic events around our country and around the world, people have reached out and asked why the church, or why don't I, more publicly engage these topics, people and events. While we do regularly address the consequences of sin and the perils of living as the descendants of Adam and Eve, as fallen people in a fallen world. And, while we do pray for victims and all those who suffer at the hands of evil people and senseless violence, we do not often engage in specific political issues or immerse ourselves in the politics of the day. The message we preach, the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ, addresses the troubles of our world which flare up day-to-day, but speaks to the deeper issues which underlie the evils of our world. In our day, political fervor runs hot, cultural battles flare and fade, but the Gospel remains eternal. To confuse the political issues of the day with the core message of the Church is to risk losing the one thing that gives life.

Recently, Synod President Matthew Harrison wrote: "It is ever perilous for a church leader to speak publicly into highly contentious cultural and political issues. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) does not politicize the Gospel, nor do we redefine the Gospel as the liberation of oppressed peoples. The Gospel is God's saving act in Christ. Love for all is our sacred response. We confess with the sacred Scriptures, "The blood of Jesus [the man] His [God's] Son [God in the flesh] cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). Our sacred task is calling all to repentance and proclaiming the one eternal remedy for sin, the blessed life, death and resurrection of Jesus. As the church per se we are not finally about saving the state, engaging in political activity or even Christianizing the state. Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). Our forefathers came to America seeking religious freedom from

tyrannical states. We treasure a well-run and ordered state because the Gospel does not prosper where chaos reigns (Rom. 13).” (LCMS Reporter, September 17, 2025)

This is a correct expression of our Lutheran theology, beyond that we wander off into error. Let us clarify: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) is committed to proclaiming Christ crucified, not politicizing the Gospel. The Gospel is not a political platform or a program of social liberation; it is the good news that Christ died for the sins of the world. The mission of the Church is to preach the message of God’s love in Christ, Good Friday and Easter, Law and Gospel, sin and forgiveness, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations.” (Luke 24:46-47) When Jesus stood before Pilate, accused of insurrection, He declared: “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). With those words, He drew a sharp boundary between the kingdoms of earth and the reign of God. Earthly kingdoms rise and fall, shaped by laws and maintained by the sword. But the kingdom of Christ comes hidden in weakness, in mercy, in the preaching of forgiveness and the breaking of bread.

Our Lutheran Confessions speak with the same clarity. The Augsburg Confession reminds us that the Gospel does not mandate one form of government or another. “Neither does the Gospel offer new laws about the public state” (Apology XVI, 55). The church, as church, has no commission to legislate, to save the state, to reshape culture, or to “Christianize” society. It is sent instead to proclaim Christ crucified and risen. This is not to despise the state. Quite the opposite. Luther called civil authority a mask of God’s goodness, through which He orders the world and protects His creatures. In Romans 13, St. Paul speaks of the governing authority as “God’s servant for your good.” Without order, the weak are devoured and the Gospel is hindered. The Lutheran church recognizes that God maintains order in the world in both separate realms, but does not “mix church and state.”

For this reason, Christians give thanks for good government. We participate in civic life, serve our neighbors as soldiers, teachers, officials, and citizens. Such vocations are not beneath the Christian calling but flow directly from the command to love one’s neighbor. But the church itself—gathered around Word and Sacrament—remains something other. Its weapons are not the sword or the ballot box but the Word of God. Its victories are not measured in cultural dominance but in sinners forgiven, consciences comforted, and the dead raised to new life in Christ.

The Church’s commission from Christ is not to reform society through the political sphere. The Church’s mandate is to preach Christ crucified and risen. Martin Luther put it this way in *Temporal Authority* (1523): “For this reason God has ordained two governments: the spiritual, by which the Holy Spirit produces Christians and righteous people under Christ; and the temporal, which restrains the un-Christian and wicked... For this reason, one must carefully distinguish between these two governments. Both must be permitted to remain; the one to produce righteousness, the other to bring about external peace and prevent evil deeds...No one can become righteous in the sight of God by means of the temporal government, without Christ's spiritual government.” The Gospel does not concern itself with outward matters but creates a people who are inwardly new. Earthly kingdoms are necessary, Luther admitted, “because the world is full of evil men, and not all are true Christians.” But the reign of Christ is altogether different—hidden, spiritual, and eternal. This distinction does not mean despising government. Quite the opposite. Civil authority is God’s good gift. Again, Romans 13 calls the magistrate “God’s servant for your good.”

The Augsburg Confession commends civic service: “Our churches teach that lawful civil regulations are good works of God. They teach that it is right for Christians to hold political office, to serve as judges, to judge matters by imperial and other laws, to

impose just punishments, to engage in just wars, to serve as soldiers..." (AC XVI). Thus, Christians are free—indeed, encouraged—to participate in public life. To serve as officials, judges, soldiers, and citizens is not beneath the Christian calling but flows from the command to love the neighbor.

The danger comes when the Two Kingdoms are collapsed into one. When the church dresses itself in political banners, whether of the right or the left, it ceases to bear clear witness to Christ. When the church becomes the mouthpiece of ideology, it ceases to be the church and becomes merely a sect. Luther warned of this repeatedly. In *Temporal Authority* he lamented: "For my ungracious lords, the pope and the bishops, should be bishops and preach God's Word; but this they leave undone, and have become temporal princes, and govern with laws which concern only life and property. How thoroughly they have turned things upside down! Inwardly they ought to be ruling souls by God's Word..." When the preachers try to rule with the sword, and princes try to preach the Gospel, nothing but disaster follows. His concern was not theoretical but pastoral: the mixing of church and state obscures the cross, replacing Christ's mercy with human laws and coercion.

The church's mission is not cultural conquest. It is not to make the world "more Christian" by political means or moral legislation. This is the theology of post-tribulation millennialism; we are NOT millennialists. As Luther wrote in the *Large Catechism*: "The Gospel is the true treasure that makes people righteous and holy before God" (LC V, 28). The church is not God's tool for national renovation but His household of grace. Here sinners are gathered, the broken are bound up, the hungry are fed, the grieving are comforted. Here the news rings out that God has acted once and for all in Christ: "For God so loved the world that He gave His Only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). The preaching of the Gospel creates engaged citizens who: vote, petition, speak out for justice, protest, feed, love, serve. It is not the Church as an institution that is called to reform society. Rather, through prophetic preaching and faithful, Biblical teaching the Church transforms individual lives and, through them, communities and even the world.

One pastor says it this way, "Jesus didn't send his disciples into the world to Christianize empires or legislate virtue. He sent them to announce forgiveness, to proclaim good news, to baptize sinners, to feed the hungry, to comfort the grieving, to bear one another's burdens. The church is not a factory producing "better people"; it's a recovery place announcing that, in Christ, the sick are healed, the guilty are pardoned, and the dead are raised. When we confuse the church with a culture-war movement or a moral majority, we trade the scandal of grace for the seduction of power. And in doing so, we lose the very thing the world most desperately needs: a community that doesn't point to its own goodness, but to Christ's finished work for sinners like us. The church doesn't exist to make America more Christian. The church exists to make Christ known. That's a far more beautiful—and far more liberating—calling." (X post, September 25, 2025)

In a time when many voices clamor for the church to take sides, perhaps the clearest witness we can give is to refuse—to proclaim instead a kingdom not of this world. As Luther declared: "The church is not to be ruled by the sword, nor the state governed by the Gospel" (*Temporal Authority*). Each has its task. When they are confused, both are corrupted. But when the church keeps its witness clear, the world hears what it most desperately needs—not another secular partisan diatribe, but the saving message of the Cross. This is why Lutherans insist on keeping the Two Kingdoms distinct: so that the voice of the church does not echo the voice of the political ideology, but the voice of Christ.

This is why the church must remain free from political captivity—so that it may be bound entirely to Christ. The church exists to make Christ known. That is our confession. That is our freedom. That is our hope. A hope that God in his grace gives for the life and the freedom of the world.

Rev. Waldemar R. Vinovskis, President
September 30, 2025
Tuesday of Pentecost 16



Sloka Lutheran Church Choir Concert October 25, 2025

THE SLOKA Lutheran Church Choir

Concert

Saturday

OCT
25

Time: 3p

Where: St. Luke's Lutheran Church



Experience the Soul of Latvia in Song!

Join us for an unforgettable evening as the passionate voices of the singing nation of Latvia rise in powerful worship.

Let their harmonies move your spirit and uplift your heart.

The concert will be available on St. Luke's YouTube channel at this link - [St. Luke's You Tube Channel](#)



Pastor Appreciation Day is This Sunday, October 12th

We begin our year of church worker appreciation by thanking God for our Pastors, who stand in the stead of Christ as they bring us His gifts of Word and Sacrament. Please join your brothers and sisters in Christ around the SELC District and across the LCMS in letting our Pastors know how much we appreciate them.

"Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and in teaching."

Pastors who excel in their leadership and teaching deserve double honor. This verse encourages us to acknowledge and reward their dedication and hard work. By doing so, we motivate and affirm our leaders, ensuring they feel valued and supported in their ministry.



Convenient Care – These Two Words Really Do Go Together at Lutheran Haven’s “Bee Well” Clinic!

Convenient care... Often those two words don't go together in today's complex healthcare environment. None of us can predict when we might get sick or be injured in some way but finding care can be a maze of choices. It's not unusual not to know what is needed following an injury or hospitalization regarding not only one's care, but also possible rehabilitation or home health needs. To add to an already complex situation, receiving care becomes even more difficult for those who are homebound or no longer drive a car. This is not the case, however, for the residents of Lutheran Haven who can access the Bee Well Haven on campus. Even our most independent folks love utilizing our clinic for the wide-ranging services they provide.



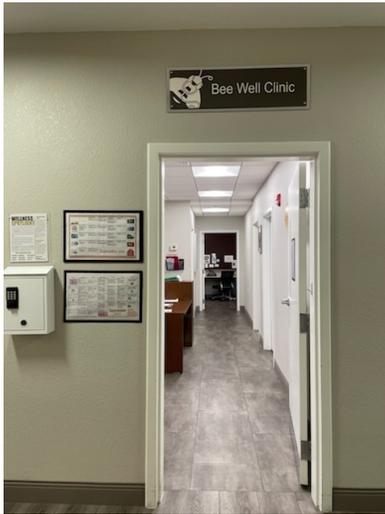
As the Administrator for both Home Health Care and the Bee Well Clinic at the Haven, Julie Iseman (photo top right) has put together an ever-expanding range of healthcare options on campus to better serve our ever-growing population of senior adults at Lutheran Haven, as well as our local community.

Several physician specialties have regular office hours at the Bee Well Clinic and if you don't live in the Haven, you can still schedule your appointment at our Clinic with these physician specialties:

- Cardiology
- Internal Medicine
- Dermatology
- Podiatry
- Chiropractic
- Hearing
- Alternative Medicine

For our residents who live at the Haven, the Bee Well Clinic conducts numerous wellness checks for those who may not actively seek health services but may need them. The staff can provide counseling and clinical assessment services for both acute situations as well as first aid. This includes arranging lab work, EKG's, X-rays and various diagnostic services without our residents ever having to leave home. This includes making sure they get the necessary physical therapy and occupational therapy which they can also access on campus.





“What is the most gratifying is we get to know our residents very well so there aren’t any gaps in their care” says Julie. “This includes communicating with their physician, so their follow-up care is seamless. We do a lot of phone calling and visiting to check on people whether it’s for post-surgery care or they’re just not feeling well.” In addition, the Bee Well Clinic makes it easy for prescription medication to be delivered directly to our residents’ homes along with various supplies.

The Bee Well Clinic proves it’s the best place to “bee” for clinical and wellness needs and their goal is to always go above and beyond in making healthcare convenient and clinically sound. They provide:

- Clinical testing for various ailments such as COVID, the flu and strep throat
- Over-the-counter medicine & supplies
- Vaccines & Immunizations
- Tele-Health virtual appointments
- Pre-planning and post-planning services for medical procedures
- Patient advocacy when hospitalized
- Escort services to medical appointments
- Companion & homemaking services
- Guest speakers from the medical community

Many of these services are available not only to our residents but to our community as well. “The best part is getting know our residents and the relationships we build with them. We see their ups and downs and it’s wonderful for us to see them go from sick to well and enjoy their independence again.”

Julie’s heart and soul is the foundation of the clinic, and her dream is to keep expanding their services by adding additional physician specialties so more people can utilize this bright spot in our Oviedo community! Thank you, Julie, for your heart and vision along with your exceptional staff who truly make care both comprehensive and convenient! Clinic hours are Monday through Friday from 8am to 4pm. For more information, please call 407-706-1273 and “Bee Well!”



Concordia Preschool Celebrates Safety Week

Concordia Lutheran Preschool had a visit from their local fire and ambulance companies during fire safety week. The students had an opportunity to sit in the ambulance and fire truck as well as learn about fire safety and when to dial 911.



Reminder

Financial Secretary Mailing Address Has Changed

The current Financial Secretary of the SELC District is Irene Bray. Her mailing address is below. Please be sure to mail your checks to her or the District Office, not to the former Financial Secretary Larry Schultz. Your help in getting the checks to the correct person is appreciated!

**Irene Bray
P.O. Box 292
Westfield Center, OH 44251**



Monthly LWML Bible Study Please Join Us

Women's Bible Study meets in person at Christ the King in Lodi, Ohio and virtually at 10:30 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada) every month on the Third Thursday of the month. It will be the first one in the fall "Lutheran Woman's Quarterly".

Join Zoom Meeting

**[https://us04web.zoom.us/j/72432487731?](https://us04web.zoom.us/j/72432487731?pwd=icwzj2020cUyBV1e2Uj4e8t0Onf4b2.1)
pwd=icwzj2020cUyBV1e2Uj4e8t0Onf4b2.1**

Meeting ID: 724 3248 7731

Passcode: 587538



Call for Nominations to Serve on Synod Boards and a Commission Nominations Due October 18th

Call for Nominations: National Synod Officer, Board, and Commission Positions

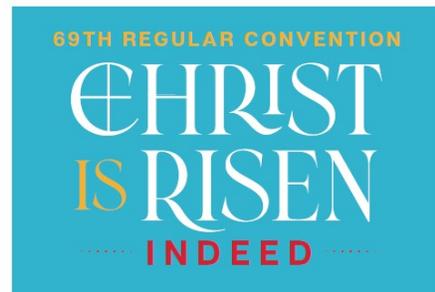
The **Committee for Convention Nominations** requests nominations of qualified members of Synod member congregations for the following positions to be filled by the Synod convention meeting July 18–23, 2026. Officers, agencies, ordained and commissioned ministers, and member congregations of the Synod 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**. 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. Any member of a member congregation with a valid email address will be able to establish an account and submit a nomination.

Please distribute this call widely and urge participation.

John W. Sias, LCMS Secretary



Call for Nominations: National Synod Officer, Board, and Commission Positions

OFFICIAL BUSINESS
2026 LCMS CONVENTION
CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES



For general information on the upcoming convention, see lcms.org/convention/timeline. Congregation administrators, please make sure your leader emails are up to date at lcms.org so that important convention-related announcements will be received. Congregations will receive nomination ballots for the President and regional vice-presidents of the Synod in the fall of 2025.



St. Luke's Concert Series Florida Symphony Youth Orchestra is Tomorrow!

You're Invited!

All concerts are FREE and OPEN to the public — no tickets needed!
Come enjoy the music and bring your family and friends — everyone's welcome!

WATCH ONLINE: [youtube.com/@stlukesconcertseries](https://www.youtube.com/@stlukesconcertseries)

For further information about the Concert Series,
visit [sllcs.org/concert-series](https://www.sllcs.org/concert-series)

Florida Symphony Youth Orchestra

Join us for an unforgettable afternoon as the talented musicians of FSYO's Symphonic Orchestra take the stage to perform a powerful and inspiring selection of works.

Come celebrate the passion and dedication of the next generation of performers—we'd love to see you there!



Saturday,
Oct 11th | 2p | Sanctuary



2025 Treasurer Manual Available

The Synod has issued the 2025 Treasurer Manual. They have not provided a downloadable link for the manual. If you would like the District to email you a file with the manual or send it to you on a flash drive, please contact the District Office at selc.lcms@gmail.com.



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Family Bible Journey Podcast

Did you know that Psalm 88 gives us a window into the mind of Jesus on Maundy **Thursday** when He was locked in a dungeon? Want to hear how crystal clear this psalm of prophecy, penned 900 years before Jesus' arrest and imprisonment really is? Listen to our episode, "Darkness of Death," on the Family Bible Journey podcast!

<https://www.podbean.com/eas/pb-takfc-197afe3>



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lcef.org/cwsa

LCEF is a nonprofit religious organization; therefore, LCEF Investments are not FDIC insured, are not a federally insured savings or deposit account or insured by any state or federal agency. 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. StewardAccount products are not available to investors in South Carolina. StewardAccount access features are offered through UMB Bank n.a. Rates as of March 2025. Balance restrictions apply. Rates subject to change. Visit lcef.org for details.





Prayer Requests

Please pray for all the congregations in the Southern Circuit of the SELC District.

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 for their health challenges.

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

Rev. Kevin Duff, Hilton Head, SC, who continues his recovery from surgery. Please keep him and his family in your prayers as from this surgery.

Rev. Edward Kucera, and his wife Irene, St. Louis, MO.

Bev Cahill, wife of Rev. Chris Cahill. Lodi, OH, received good news from her doctor. The CT scan showed no cancer and that she will be monitored every three months. The Cahills are grateful for all the prayers for Bev. 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 in physical therapy and will return to work in October.

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.

Laura Bergmann, Munster, IN, please pray for her to continue to build strength in her injured knee.

Nita Huffines, St. Louis, MO, wife of Rev. Warren Huffines, praising God for a year of scans clear of tumors, we ask for strength during immunotherapy maintenance; may the Lord complete His healing, adding joy and thanks to each of Nita's days.

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 A Word About Biblical Eulogies

Rev. Ken Ballas, EM

As commonly understood the word "**eulogy**" connotes high praise accorded one who has *died*. The biblical Greek family of words beginning with "**eulog**," however, implies a spoken or written blessing of the **living Jesus of Nazareth** who, having breathed His last while vicariously offering His sinless life on Calvary's cross also victoriously *rose again* not from a chair or sick-bed but "from the dead" as the "*first-fruits*" of all who ever died and who today is forever very much alive! (1 Corinthians 15:23; 2 Corinthians 1:3ff.; Ephesians 1:3ff. and beautifully comforting Trinitarian Easter doxology in 1 Peter 1:3ff.).

"Blessed is He who is God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who according to His great mercy has begotten us to a **living hope** through (the bodily) resurrection of Jesus Christ from (the) dead to an (undeserved) inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading kept on permanent deposit in heaven **for you** who by the power of God are safeguarded through faith for a salvation firmly set to be revealed at the end time.

Small wonder, is it not, that we sing:

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below.
Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host;
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. **Amen.***

Deserved praise indeed endlessly worth repeating!



SELC District - A District Without Borders

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

SELC District of LCMS

2623 Brookside Road
Macungie, PA 18062
610-965-3265

Contact Us
selc.lcms@gmail.
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