

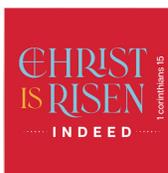


The Beacon Online

January 30, 2026/ Vol. 7 / No. 5

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

If you are a first time visitor to the Beacon Online, we invite you to subscribe by emailing the District Office at selc.lcms@gmail.com. Please feel free to share the Beacon Online and encourage others to subscribe. Please send your articles, announcements, news, and pictures to selc.lcms@gmail.com. Please submit your articles in Word format and by Thursdays for inclusion in the next Beacon Online. We look forward to sharing your submissions! A [printable version](#) of the newsletter is available on our website at selc.lcms.org/beacon Please use the printed version from our website to post and/or share the newsletter with others.



Make Sure Your Congregation is Registered to Vote for the Synod President Deadline is March 8, 2026

It is time to have a Voter's Meeting with your congregation to elect the two representatives from your congregation to vote for the Synod President. You need to elect one Pastoral Voter and one Lay Voter from your congregation to vote for the Synod President and Vice Presidents.

Once you have elected your Voters, please go to this website

<https://pvr.lcms.org/>

to verify/update your two attesting officers. Please make sure all this information is correct. If you need to add or change attesting officers, you can do that under **Manage Attesting Officers** and **Add Attesting Officers** on that website. Multiple officers can be listed, but you need to note the two Attesting Voters.

If your congregation expects to welcome a new Pastor after March 8th, please register the current Pastor and then a new Pastor can be registered if he has replaced the Pastor that was registered. It must be filed 7 days before **(May 29, 2026)** the President Election opens.

If you need help with accessing and using the registration site, please contact Rosters.Stats@lcms.org or by calling 314-996-1366.

The Voter Registration must be completed by **March 8, 2026**.



Pastor Matthew Fitzpatrick Installed New City Church in Orlando, Florida

Rev. Matthew Fitzpatrick was installed as the Pastor at New City Church on January 25, 2026. President Vinovskis installed Pastor Fitzpatrick following a congregational potluck meal.



Pictured above from left to right: Pastors Ron Meyr, Wally Arp, Troy Countryman, John Elliott, President Vinovskis, Pastor Fitzpatrick, Pastors Howe, Kress, Heinecke, and Rickenberg.

Pictured below on the left is Pastor Fitzpatrick with his wife Marie, and their daughter Mabel.



Nomination Period for Synod President and Vice Presidents Ends February 18, 2026

Each congregation should have received a Nomination mailer from Election-America/ Yes Elections to nominate candidates for the President of the LCMS and its Vice Presidents. This is a separate online nomination system and has its own unique credentials for logging in. If you did not receive this and wish to nominate for these Synod positions, please contact lcmspresidentvite@lcms.org



Dinner with SELC Members at Lutheran Haven

Following the SELC District Board meeting, Patti Smith, Assistant to President Vinovskis, had dinner with several residents at Lutheran Haven. Mary Ann McCunn, the Development Coordinator at the Lutheran Haven Foundation, coordinated the event. It was a pleasure to meet SELC members who I have been corresponding with but hadn't met face-to-face. I look forward to reconnecting with them the next time I am at St. Luke's and also meet more from the SELC! Pictured below a picture painted at the 75th anniversary of Lutheran Haven from left to right; Mary Ann McCunn, Patti Smith, Roger Whitney, former teacher at St. Luke's, Sylvia Marcis, wife of former District President Al Marcis, and Rev. David Thierfelder and his wife Jean.





Chili Cook-off at Hope Lutheran Melbourne, Florida

Last Sunday, Hope Lutheran Church in Melbourne Florida held their Annual Chili Cook off!! The event was a wonderful time of fellowship, fun and great food!! There were 11 amazing chefs serving anything from chicken to pork and our champion Art Miller, on the left with his Venison Bison Chili! Way to go Art! Our second-place winner was Ernie Diebel, on the right, and third-place was Cindy Livingston in the center. Each of our winners received their very own Chili Superbowl ring and can claim fame... until next year! Hope raised a total of \$763 for Pastor James's Sabbatical Fund. A very gracious Thank You to Mr. Hoover (below on the right with Pastor Fernandez, from LCEF for donating \$200 of our grand total on behalf of LCEF.



Called to LEAD Application Period is Open Deadline is this Sunday

Called to LEAD is taking applications for its second cohort.

LCEF, in partnership with CUW, is pleased to provide this unique experience in developing leaders and allowing the development of a hands-on-project. You can find all the details about the program here:

<https://onlineinfo.cuw.edu/called-to-lead>

L-Lift Others Up E-Empower with Faith A-Act with Integrity D-Demonstrate Compassion

Called to LEAD - Faith-Filled Leadership is an immersive program designed to equip emerging church leaders with the essential skills necessary for transformational ministry. This comprehensive program spans one year, offering a blend of foundational leadership courses, expert speakers, and hands-on project development. Participants will be guided through a journey, from vision setting to practical implementation of a faith-based leadership project, supported by ongoing mentorship from their designated Cultivator. At the end of this program, participants will present their Leading and Growing project and, if chosen, will have six additional months to work with their Cultivator. Seed money will be provided to execute their plan for leading and growing their communities with purpose and passion.

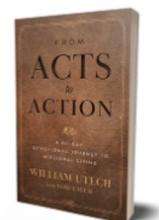
Only 15 seats are available. **Application deadline is February 1.** The cohort begins May 1.

This is a unique program that blends the best of leadership development and mentoring with launching a new ministry opportunity.



Acts to Action by Rev. Dr. William Utech

When I served as a Mission Executive in Minnesota, we did a year-long study of our congregations to find out how they were doing. We learned that they were very concerned about their future viability. When we asked them what their greatest challenges were, they consistently identified three issues/problems...



- 1) Aging membership;
- 2) Declining worship attendance;
- 3) The financial stresses that come with the first two challenges.

As I traveled around the district and listened to the concerns of my brothers and sisters in Christ as they grappled with these three hard realities, it eventually dawned on me that the only thing that could promote and empower a change in the direction of their congregations was the Word of God. It was from this non-debatable truth that my book, "From Acts To Action" was born.

God's people are concerned about their local congregations and their surrounding communities, and they want to know: "Are my faith and my local church still relevant?" The answer is a resounding "YES!" But only the Word of God, and especially that Word as it comes to us in the Acts of the Apostles, can make it so. "From Acts To Action" (A2A) is a 90-Day devotional journey that leads readers on a guided tour of the entire Book of Acts to see and learn anew how God is always working through His people, His leaders, and His local congregations to make His kingdom grow.

Your brother in Christ,

William

William Utech, M.Div., S.T.M., D.Min.

utechw@gofast.am

314-703-8071

- Missiologist
- Author of ***From Acts To Action***

If you would like to see yourself and the brothers and sisters in your local church becoming more intentionally engaged in the mission of God, then A2A can greatly bless you in that effort and outcome. The first century church changed the world for the better. The Lord of the church wants to use you and your 21st century congregation to do the same. A2A can help you get there! You can get a copy of it here — > <https://a.co/d/8I4UV2i>

Or here...



FL-GA Lutheran Early Response Receives \$10,000 Grant from Barge Design Solutions

Florida-Georgia Lutheran Early Response has received a **\$10,000 grant from Barge Design Solutions** to purchase disaster response equipment that will support recovery efforts across Florida and Georgia. We give thanks for this gift, which helps equip volunteers to bring comfort and care to those affected by disaster, remembering that "*God... comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble*" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

The grant will help FL-GA Lutheran Early Response continue its mission of bringing hope, healing, and practical assistance to communities affected by natural disasters. Through trained volunteers, equipment, and coordinated response, FGLER serves

alongside Lutheran congregations and partners to provide compassionate care in times of crisis.

“We are deeply thankful for the generosity of Barge Design Solutions,” said Joel Mathews, Chairperson of FGLER. “This support strengthens our ability to respond quickly and effectively when disasters strike, ensuring we can continue serving our neighbors with Christ’s love and mercy in action.”

Barge Design Solutions is known for its commitment to community engagement and service, and this investment reflects a shared dedication to helping communities recover and rebuild after disaster.

Florida-Georgia Lutheran Early Response operates under the guiding principle of walking with survivors for the long haul—offering not only immediate relief, but sustained support throughout the recovery process.

For more information about FL-GA Lutheran Early Response or to learn how to support its mission, visit [FGLER.org](https://www.fgler.org).

About Florida-Georgia Lutheran Early Response

Florida-Georgia Lutheran Early Response is a Recognized Service Organization of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (Disaster Response), mobilizing trained volunteers to provide disaster response and recovery to Lutheran congregations and to affected communities.

About Barge Design Solutions

Barge Design Solutions is a multidisciplinary engineering and consulting firm committed to improving communities through thoughtful design, service, and strategic partnerships.



Mark Your Calendars

February 1, 2026 - Called to LEAD Application due

February 18, 2026 - Your Nominations for Synod President must be submitted by this date.

February 19, 2026 - LWML in person and zoom monthly Bible study. 10:30 AM EST.

March 8, 2026 - Your congregation's Voters, Pastoral and lay, must be registered.

May 1 - 3, 2026 - LWML District Convention in St. Louis, MO



Vicarage Applications due February 13, 2026

Vicarage applications are due to the SELC District office no later than February 13, 2026. If you are interested in applying for a Vicar, please contact the District Office at selc.lcms@gmail.com or 610-965-3265, press 6.



Setting Your 2026 SELC Budget Goal

"And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Acts 1:8

Christ calls us to be witnesses of the Gospel throughout the whole world. One way we do this together is through our partnership with district and Synod missions, supported by the offerings of our congregations.

Your congregation should have received a letter for you to indicate your plans to support district and Synod missions. As your congregation completes its budgeting process, please return this information by mail, email, or [online](#) (preferred) by January 15 to:

Rev. Bill Hale, Stewardship Committee
c/o St. John Lutheran Church
2001 St Clair Ave, Granite City, IL 62040
William.e.hale@gmail.com

Note that contributions should be sent directly to the District Financial Secretary:

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



The Book of Concord

Explore the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church

Concordia Publishing House is pleased to announce it is offering a free version of the Book of Concord on their new website. This easy-to-use resource allows you to navigate through all the major documents of the Book of Concord

The text for the Book of Concord is not a brand-new translation from the original

German and Latin texts. This reader's edition is a revised and updated version of the translation originally prepared by William H. T. Dau and G. Friedrich Bente for the Concordia Triglotta, published in 1921.

From About This Edition, Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions, Pocket Edition. © 2005, 2006 Concordia Publishing House. Source: <https://bookofconcord.cph.org/en/about/>



The Book of Concord
Available Online

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Let's discover your financial path together

Meet your LCEF representative

Your LCEF District Vice President (DVP) is

John Hoover

 314-276-3370
 john.hoover@lcef.org



I am here to help **start, sustain and strengthen** LCMS ministries through financial and strategic partnerships.

 LUTHERAN CHURCH EXTENSION FUND



Lutheran Summer Music Academy Applications Due March 1, 2026

Youth musicians from across the country are headed to St. Olaf College this year for the 2026 Lutheran Summer Music Academy & Festival (LSM). Students in grades 8-12 will be immersed in a supportive community that nurtures their musical growth and invites them to share their musical gifts in performance and in worship. The Standard Enrollment deadline is March 1, and spots are filling fast. Do you know young musicians who would thrive at LSM? Nominate them today at LSMacademy.org/nominate, or remind them to submit a free application by March 1 at LSMacademy.org/apply.



Prayer Requests

Rev. Brian Roberts, Orlando, FL. Please continue to pray for him as he continues his journey following cancer treatment.

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, please pray for Pastor Kevin and Holly Duff, asking Him for peace and courage in coming months as doctors figure out course of treatments for brain tumors and other issues.

Rev. Edward Kucera, and his wife Irene, St. Louis, MO, for God's loving care.

Rev. Stephen Bocklage, Bel Air, MD, for care and healing for health concerns for his left leg.

Rev. Arthur H. Baisch, Sharon, PA, dealing with an open wound on his left foot, near the ball of the little toe, which may, in the not-too-distant future, require surgery.

Bev Cahill, wife of Rev. Chris Cahill. Lodi, OH, recovering from an upper respiratory infection.

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. John, Granite City, IL. Praise God with us for 6 grace years (2019 colon surgery - 2024 remove metastasis to ovary); now we reach a pause in therapy. Pray for daily grace to live with Jesus among those in His dear Church, in worship and service and waiting and looking up – to see the full grace to come - for we all see Him face to face.

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 Bad News or Gospel Good News? Both Are Real!

Rev. Kenneth Ballas, EM

Among people of faith, who of us may have never thought or said, "I rarely care to watch or read Believing the Good News of Christ's Gospel as by the grace of God many of us do, sadly others persist in regarding such "Jesus stuff" as little more than a relatively mindless crutch.

Due in part perhaps to our tending to become what we habitually read most, a perceived diet of largely negative news thankfully also resulted in my own spending a few minutes perusing Eugene Peterson's Message Bible translation of the historically verifiable Old Testament story of Israel's King David's great-grandmother in the happy "feel good" Book of Ruth.

That brief reading, coupled with a growing arsenal of treasured equally upbeat Scripture verses gleaned over many years, from the Psalms has proven to be good medicine for the soul based on the timeless healing of Psalm 119:105, "Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

Back-tracking slightly to Psalm 118:22-24, despite a note of sadness regarding an initially rejected Messiah, there remains good reason for celebration of His coming as verse 24 may well be translated, "This (and every day) is the day the Lord has made; let us be glad and rejoice in HIM!"

Contextually, grammatically as well as being of liturgical and historical interest, Psalms 113-118 remain to this day a special family hymn of praise portions of which are completely sung during Hebrew Passover Seders such as also observed by our Brother-Savior Jesus and grief-stricken disciples in Jerusalem's upper room less than 24 hours before His innocent "self-giving arrest" and bloody sacrificial death and their short yet agonizingly solemn spiritual trek to the Mount of Olives Garden of Gethsemane.

Tucked away one chapter earlier in Psalm 112:7 are the easily overlooked words that "the righteous" will not fear receiving "bad news!" The thought here not necessarily being upsetting local or global reports as much as something deeply personal or much "closer to home" (a negative medical diagnosis perhaps or real or imagined rumor or being the victim of some malicious gossip.

Finally, note messianic Psalm 110:1. "The Lord says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool." This unusually oft-quoted and obviously "theologically loaded" messianic passage concerning Israel's King David's ancestral Son and Lord!

With Matthew again being the primary three year lectionary cycle Gospel reading (also see end of Matthew 22) this current Church Year, think (rather strangely perhaps) of his beautiful Gospel as being from beginning to end a spiritually nutritious "Emmanuel God-with-us Word made flesh sandwich" from his opening genealogy (and mention of Ruth and Joseph's angelic visit) to the closing promise of our ever-present risen and ascended Lord in Matthew 28).

Reminiscent of the ancient Litany Prayer in which we dare petition our Lord not only to put down Satan beneath Christ's feet but also under our feet with the result that nothing including death can hurt us in any lasting sort of way! Thank You, Jesus!



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

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selc.lcms@gmail.com

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