



The Beacon Online

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

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St. Mark Lutheran Church Holds Its Last Service

St. Mark Lutheran Church in Steubenville, Ohio held its last service on May 24, 2026. St. Mark was officially founded on August 5, 1923 as St. John the Baptist Lutheran Church. It began with 100 people from surrounding areas, including Steubenville, Mingo Junction, Weirton, Colliers, and Plum Run. The Church building was dedicated on October 17, 1926. In 1955, the Church became St. Mark Lutheran Church. The building in Steubenville was dedicated in May 1966.



Pictured above left is St. Mark Lutheran Church and on the right are the last two Pastors on the wall of Pastors who have who faithfully served the congregation - Rev. David McCloskey and Rev. Scott Kuntz. Rev. Kevin McLeod and Rev. John Telloni also had served the congregation in the past.

SELC President Vinovskis, 2nd Vice President Pastor Chris Cahill, and Circuit Visitor Rev. George Hansell were all present for the service. Rev. Scott Kuntz has faithfully served St. Mark for the last few years and the congregation is so grateful for his spiritual leadership and guidance as they made the decision to close.

Pictured below on the left is a table prayer and on the right is the congregation on May 24th in front of the Church.





Spreading the love of Jesus through the "Neighbor 2 Neighbor" program at Lutheran Haven

As believers in Jesus, most of us have asked ourselves how we might serve others as Jesus modeled for us to do. Lutheran Haven's "Neighbor 2 Neighbor" program truly exemplifies what Christ has asked of all of us, and that is to be His hands and feet to carry out His work, His love, and His compassion and grace to others.



Simply put, He calls us to serve and that is foundational to the "Neighbor to Neighbor" program. Led by Rev. Paul Wiegert, along with his army of volunteers, they meet practical needs by asking simple but important questions:

- Do you need a prescription picked up?
- Are you feeling lonely?
- Do you need a ride to the store?
- Can I go to the grocery store for you?

These are just a few of the many ways the program offers support from one neighbor to another. Pastor Paul and his group willingly step into many roles that not only meet needs but also help others to attend worship services, attend activities on campus, etc. They check-in by phone and regularly visit their neighbors. They are even called upon for technical assistance with phones, computers and TV's.

Pastor Paul states, "We are Jesus' representatives... As an extension of our Pastoral Care Ministry, the volunteers of "Neighbor 2 Neighbor" perform what may seem like small acts of kindness but these can echo with eternal significance. Having a conversation while driving someone to the store or sitting at a person's bedside can be such an act of comfort and healing, and a practical way of loving our neighbor who Christ entrusted us to care for."

All you have to do is sit with Pastor Paul for a moment to see his heart for this ministry. Just as he was called to become a pastor, it is obvious he has been called to "Neighbor 2 Neighbor." This is a relatively new program at the Haven, but it has flourished under his leadership. He admittedly loves small churches because his heart is to get to know every person – their needs, struggles, challenges and triumphs. "It's all about relationship." He says he is "just a humble tool of the Lord." He loves to share devotions and is such a comfort to our sweet residents who have lost their spouses. He lost his beloved wife, Linda not long ago so he knows how to share Christian love while sitting with another in their grief.

"More than anything, it's the ministry of the 'one-on-one' and that's what 'Neighbor 2 Neighbor' is all about. It can be ministering over a cup of coffee or picking up stamps at the post office. ALL of it is the Lord's business!"

Pastor Paul says, "This is the purpose of the church and we *are* the church. We are not just receivers of the Gospel but participants in it. By being the hands and feet of our

living Christ, one small act of service can lead to Him. We may not know in this life how these things can reverberate in eternity.”

Rev. Paul Wiegert is a graduate of Concordia Theological Seminary in St. Louis and has served churches in Wisconsin, Iowa, Tennessee and Florida. As you can imagine, we at the Haven are so incredibly blessed by Pastor Paul. He has served so many of our residents and staff since he and Linda moved to the Haven in 2018. His love for people just oozes out of him. All you have to do is sit with him for a moment or two and you can feel God’s love. Thank you Pastor Paul. You are such a gift to us and not just for your leadership through “Neighbor 2 Neighbor” but for your love for the Lord and all of us. It is evident every day.

Then the righteous shall answer him, saying, 'Lord when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and gave you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothed you? And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these, my brothers, you did it to me.'
Matthew 25: 37-40

Pictured below on the left is Pastor Allen Freudenburg and on the right is Pastor Paul Wiegert.





LERT Basic Training Available

Family of Christ Lutheran Church in Tampa FL is sponsoring a Lutheran Early Response Team (LERT) BASIC CHAINSAW TRAINING on Saturday, June 27, 2026. This training is intended to increase LERT volunteer's skills, knowledge and safety in chainsaw operation so they can provide a critical service to those who do not have the skills or means to perform this dangerous work following a disaster. The training is for those who want to operate a chainsaw on a LERT event. It is being held at:

Family of Christ Lutheran Church, 16190 Bruce B Downs Blvd, Tampa, FL
33647 (Building 3)

Participants may arrive at the site at 7:30 a.m. to register. Class will begin promptly at 8:00 a.m. and conclude at 4:30 p.m. Your LERT Trainer will distribute all material for, and after, the class.

You must have previously completed the LERT Basic Training Class to participate in this class.

During the morning classroom training, participants will learn:

- Safe operation of a chainsaw
- Personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Injury prevention
- How to buck and limb storm-damaged trees
- How to properly clear debris in a safe and beneficial manner and
- Proper saw maintenance

The afternoon session is hands-on training in field chainsaw operation, where participants will learn and demonstrate chainsaw skills. This training is limited to 10 participants. To be an authorized LCMS LERT Chainsaw Operator and use a chainsaw on LERT disaster response sites, you must attend BOTH the morning classroom and afternoon "hands-on" sessions.

Class registration must be made at www.lcms-lert.org

Cost of Training:

- Registration (includes training, lunch and snacks) -- \$50. (Couples: \$85)
- Pay at the time of training; Checks payable to "Family of Christ Lutheran Church – LERT" or [pay online at FGLER.org](http://payonlineatfgler.org)

Participants should bring (if you have them):

- Chainsaw, bar oil, gas/oil or synthetic fuel mix.
- Chaps and other Personal Protective Equipment (helmet, eye protection, ear protectors, gloves, and steel-toe boots).
- Participants must wear steel-toed boots. Tennis shoes or sandals/flip-flops are not allowed in the afternoon field session.
- Outdoor work clothes and boots appropriate for the weather at the time. Shorts are not allowed.

LCMS LERT Chainsaw Trainer Joel Mathews will lead the training event.

If more information is needed, contact the site coordinator,
Donnie Moore, dmoore@familyofchrist.org, 615-981-1162 (Cell / Text)



St. Luke's Lutheran Church Confirms 34 Students

St. Luke's Lutheran Church, in Oviedo, Florida, had 34 students confirmed on May 3rd. They were taught confirmation alongside their parents by their pastoral staff, Deaconess and DCE. In the two year program they do hands-on experiential learning, have a retreat, and practice making faith central at home. We are so excited for our students and their families!

Pastor Tige Culbertson delivered a powerful sermon on the stoning of Stephen and the severe consequences of following God. Consequences as dark as death, but as inspiring as eternal life. Then we heard 34 young men and women proclaim that they would suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from this faith. Praise God that the Holy Spirit continues to grow the church!



SELC—LCMS STUDENT AID COMMITTEE POLICY The Application Deadline is August 15

Dear Friends in Christ:

The SELC Student Aid Committee is dedicated to provide financial assistance to students from our district congregations who are preparing for full-time church work at our synod's colleges, universities, and seminaries. The members of the Student Aid Committee are appointed by the President and Board of Directors and are currently

served by Chairman John Glanzer (St. Luke's, Oviedo, FL) and Secretary Rev. Kevin McLeod (Resurrection, Malvern, OH).

Students planning to attend or are currently attending our synod's colleges, university, and seminaries (and are enrolled in full-time church work programs) should complete the accompanying application in order to apply for the SELC scholarship assistance.

Students receive the grants once per year, typically for the academic year that begins in September and ends in May or June of the following year. The SELC District Application for Financial Aid must be filled out and returned each year that the student is enrolled in the institution. This form is separate from the District Financial Aid Form which the university or seminary uses; although, this form is also sent to the Student Aid Committee.

It is the student's responsibility to apply for aid. In addition to any scholarship aid granted by the district, we also hope you have inquired if your congregation provides financial assistance as well. Many of our congregations have scholarship funds for students preparing for full-time church work.

We are grateful to the Lord that the SELC Board of Directors and our congregations have demonstrated their concern for future church workers by allocating generous funds for financial assistance in the district's budget. If you have any questions or concerns about any aspect of our district's financial aid program, please do not hesitate to contact me or Rev. Kevin McLeod.

Sincerely,

John Glanzer, Chairman
SELC District Student Aid Committee
jglanzer@slcs.org

Rev. Kevin McLeod, Secretary
SELC District Student Aid Committee
kamcleod99@yahoo.com

[Click here](#) for the overview and application.



Registration Opens for 2026 Fall Online Greek Course

Registration is now open for **Online Greek: Part I** for the 2026 fall semester at **Concordia Seminary, St. Louis** (CSL). The dates for the fall semester are Aug. 24- Dec. 11. Tuition is \$1,200 and the registration deadline is Aug. 1. Class size is limited to 15 students.

This noncredit course primarily serves three groups of prospective students: Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) Program graduates continuing to the General Pastor Certification (GPC) track, applicants to the Master of Divinity (M.Div.) Program and applicants to the Residential Alternate Route (RAR) Program. The course prepares students for the Entry Level Competency Exam (ELCE) in Greek, a prerequisite for admission to these programs.

If space remains after SMP-GPC, M.Div. and RAR students have enrolled, others interested in learning Greek may register. While the course has no prerequisites and is not for credit, a solid understanding of English grammar is essential.

Dr. John Genter, who will join the faculty of CSL as an associate professor of Exegetical Theology beginning July 2026, will lead the course. Genter currently teaches Greek at Concordia University, Nebraska, Seward, Neb., and previously served as a visiting professor at CSL in 2021. He earned his Ph.D. from Baylor University in Waco, Texas, where he also taught and contributed to four volumes of the “Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament” series and a recent Bible translation project.

Genter will shepherd students through the course using the textbook and videos developed by former instructor **Dr. James Voelz**, professor emeritus of Exegetical Theology. Students will receive instruction, correction and insights as they prepare for the ELCE and build a foundation for reading the New Testament in Greek.

The course includes live online tutoring sessions from 4-5 p.m. (CT) Mondays and Thursdays, beginning Aug. 24. Students should expect to dedicate eight hours per week to study. Registration for Online Greek: Part II, offered in spring 2027, will open in October.

Required textbooks:

- **“Fundamental Greek Grammar”, 4th rev. ed.** (Concordia Publishing House, 2019)
- **“Novum Testamentum Graece”, 28th ed.** (German Bible Society, 2012)

In addition to this online course, CSL also offers residential Greek courses during the summer term.

For more information, contact Rev. Joel Heckmann, admissions officer, at 314-505-7224 or heckmannj@csl.edu. For registration inquiries, contact Gina Matzenbacher, assistant registrar, at 314-505-7107 or matzenbacherg@csl.edu.



Discover the 2026 Lutheran Summer Music Season

Lutheran Summer Music is thrilled to announce its 2026 season, featuring over 40 free concerts, recitals, and worship services open to the public. Hosted at St. Olaf College from June 21 to July 19, this season offers a vibrant lineup of musical experiences, also shared online via Live from LSM—bringing this summer’s transformational work to audiences around the world.

Highlights this season include a guest appearance by **Cantus**, a series of events dedicated to the music of J.S. Bach—including the **St. Matthew Passion**—the inaugural **LSM Choral Gathering**, the **Alumni Gathering**, and music celebrating the United States Semi-quincentennial. [Click here](#) to explore the catalog.





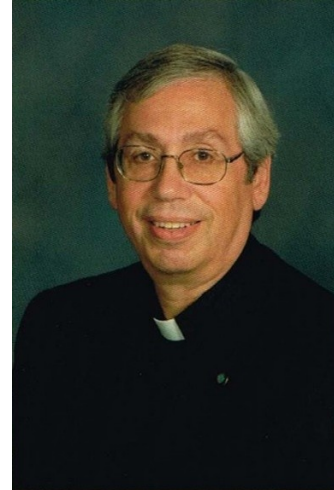
Rev. John L. Telsoni Retirement

On Sunday June 28, 2026, Rev. John L. Telsoni will preach his final sermon at St. John Lutheran Church Massillon.

You are invited to join us in celebrating his 39 years of service and bid him farewell! A special luncheon will be held following the 10am Divine Service at St John Lutheran Church 1900 Wales Road NE Massillon, Ohio 44646

Cards and expressions of memories, blessings, and well wishes may be sent C/O Pastor Telsoni to:

Mary Kay Pershing at 2717 Eaton Dr NW, Canton Ohio 44708.
or email at mkpikulik@sbcglobal.net



Honduras Mission Connection

The Honduras Lutheran Mission Network, which has partnered with Faith *Viera*, Rockledge, FL and St. Luke's, Oviedo, FL, establishes a formal support system for U.S. churches, equipping them with resources and training to engage in missions that strengthen both Honduran and American congregations. It seeks to connect God's people to His mission by using global partnerships to awaken believers to opportunities for discipleship both abroad and in their everyday lives. Rather than focusing solely on mission trips, the network emphasizes building relationships across borders that deepen faith and strengthen the Church on both sides. If you would like to learn more, please contact Pastor Micah Steiner at Msteiner@oflc.net.



The Apostolic Fathers Educational Opportunity Dr. Joel Elowsky August 10 - 12, 2026 in Macungie, PA

Dr. Joel Elowsky will be in Macungie, PA to lead a study of the primary literature of the Apostolic Fathers with application to the life of the church today. The study will primarily focus on the texts themselves, with attention given to issues of authorship, dating, the integrity of the text and the occasion for the writing, as well as major theological, ecclesiological and social issues that the writings address, such as martyrdom, church order, orthodoxy and heresy, and early Christian rituals.

Dr. Elowsky is a member of the SELC District and is the professor of Historical Theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. He also is the director of the Seminary's Center for the Study of Early Christian Texts and is a researcher for the Center for Early African Christianity at the Oden House in New Haven, Conn. He has been a faculty member at Concordia Seminary since 2014. His interests and areas of expertise include early church studies, the history of exegesis, mission work and African Christianity.

The course will be held from August 10 - 12, 2026 at [Concordia Lutheran Church in Macungie, PA](#). The schedule is

August 10 - 1 PM - 4 PM August 11 - 9 AM - 4 PM August 12 - 9 AM - 12 noon

Registration is \$160 and you must register by July 27, 2026. Please contact [District President W.R. Vinovskis](#) with any questions.

[Click here to register](#)

PROF INSIGHTS
FACULTY-LED WORKSHOP SERIES

AUG 10-12
2026

The Apostolic
Fathers

Concordia Lutheran Church
2623 Brookside
Macungie, PA 18062

Dr. Joel Elowsky
Professor of Historical Theology,
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis



Family Bible Podcast

"I pray this podcast is a blessing to you! I've been blessed to journal through the Bible for each of my children, leaving notes throughout with prayers, words of wisdom (WOW), and encouragement.."
— Rev. Daniel Lepley



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of journaling through the Bible.

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Women's Monthly Bible Study

The monthly in-person and zoom Bible study will be held on June 18th at 10:30 AM ET. To access the zoom link, [click here](#). The **June 18th** session will be "Out of Sight but Not Out of Mine" on page 22.



Mark Your Calendars

June 8, 2026 - Memorial Service for Rev. Thomas Soltis at Holy Trinity, Parma, OH at 7 PM

June 18, 2026 - LWML monthly zoom Bible study at 10:30 AM

June 28, 2026 - Retirement service for Rev. John Telloni

August 10 - 12, 2026 - The Apostolic Fathers, Concordia Macungie, PA



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The advertisement graphic features a scenic illustration of a mountain range with evergreen trees in the foreground. The text is centered and reads: 'Want your church to grow?' followed by 'Watch this video to see how we helped a church raise over \$500,000 in four weeks!'. Below this is the Genysys Group logo and website address, and a QR code on the right side.

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Prayer Requests

Rev. and Mrs. George Dolak, Cabot, PA, both have recently suffered falls. Thankfully no bones were broken. They are now in Assisted Living at Concordia Lutheran Ministries in Cabot, PA. Please keep the Dolaks in your prayers as they heal from their falls and adjust to a new phase in their earthly journey with Christ.

Mrs. Joyce Ongstad, widow of Rev. Chris Ongstad, who cancer has metastasized. She will begin targeted chemotherapy. Please pray for her strength, patience, and healing

as she deals with a new treatment plan. She is thankful for her supportive family.

Rev. David Triplett, North Ridgeville, OH, had cervical fusion surgery on February 27th and is receiving rehab treatment provided by Cleveland Clinic with the goal of being discharged soon.

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. and Mrs. Kenneth Ballas, Parma, OH. Please keep the Ballas' in your prayers for their health challenges. Mrs. Ballas is recovering from a fall at home.

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, pleased to announce that as of May 24, Pastor Baisch, emeritus, of Sts. Peter & Paul, Sharon, PA continues his recovery from recent hospitalization for blood clots in lungs, and long-term treatment for healing of chronic left foot open wound. Thanks to all for thoughts and prayers!

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 the Lord for 7 years of healing, the name *Jesus* is greater than *Cancer*. We thank Him for His presence in daily victories, while we all watch and wait to see Jesus face-to-face.

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
Too Good To Be True?
Rev. Kenneth Ballas, EM

For the common good of all concerned, Holy Scripture as well as the Lord of His Church wisely affirm the principle that God-pleasing shared insights be supported by two or three like-minded witnesses rather than being the opinion of a solitary individual, I was doubly happy recently to have been reminded by a small print footnote of biblical

references for Good Friday pre-Easter LSB Hymn 456, that I am certainly not alone in believing the anonymous 19th century African American author this beloved spiritual realizing it or not) had composed an excellent *baptismal* hymn! Reminiscent of our risen and ascended Lord's apostle Paul's conceivably, initially somewhat enigmatic statement, in Romans 6:3-4. People of faith (especially new converts) need not feel ashamed over what they do not yet know about the whole counsel of God. Although in and of itself the sacrament of Holy Baptism is a powerfully wonderful gift of the Spirit of God, it is nevertheless to be followed by comprehensive life-long learning and teaching (Matthew 18:20; 28:19; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Oh, . . . Sometimes it causes me to *tremble, tremble, tremble*
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they nailed Him to the tree?
Were you there when they nailed Him to the tree?
Oh, . . . Sometimes it causes me to *tremble, tremble, tremble*.
Were you there when they nailed Him to the tree?

Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb?
Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb?
Oh, . . . Sometimes it causes me to *tremble, tremble, tremble*.
Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb?

Were you there when God **raised** Him from the tomb?
Were you there when God **raised** Him from the tomb?
Oh, . . . Sometimes it causes me to *tremble, tremble, tremble*.
Were you there when God **raised** Him from the tomb?
(LSB, #456)

Though ecclesiastical *churchy words* like "trinity," "Christmas," or "sacrament," are not to be found in our Bibles, the *meanings* of each are clearly scripturally based. The word "sacrament" has been attributed to the 4th and 5th century church father, St. Jerome's popular ageless Latin Bible translation known as the Vulgate's occasional translation of the New Testament Greek word fairly common NT Greek word **mysterion** (otherwise simply *transliterated* as the Latin **mysterium**). Rather than denoting something "spooky or scary," a biblical mystery requires needing the help of Almighty God for its proper interpretation.

Over the years the *number* of biblical sacraments has varied denominationally between two(or possibly three with confession and absolution) to as many as seven depending on one's definition ours being divine origin, visible signs, and conferral of the forgiveness of sins a key Lutheran metric being for sacraments being something wonderful the Spirit of God uses to strengthen us in our most holy baptismal faith. Rather than regarding the sacraments as something we are doing for God, we as though such were the case by thinking or even saying, "We had our child(ren) baptized." or "We went to Mass/Communion or even perhaps, "We made our confirmation." all of which may indeed been the case if only because we have traveled a few miles to a church building for a personal religious reason whereas "from heaven above" Jesus Christ entered this troubled world the blessed Virgin Mary's first born laying Him in Bethlehem's manger as God's messianic incarnate Son and sinless Brother-Savior.

As for this piece's featured hymn being understood as fine *baptismal* hymn (something I honestly did not fully appreciate until the middle years of my pastoral ministry),

prayerfully consider our ascended Lord's apostle Paul's Gospel words of comfort to the Roman Christians:

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that just as He was *raised* from the dead by the glory of the Father we too might walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3-4; also quoted in Luther's Small Catechism in our current pew *and home* hymnal on p. 325) cf. also the apostle Paul's obvious fondness for what may well be called "baptismal language" in such parallels as Galatians 2:20; 3:27 and 6:14).

In other words, when Christ died, we did too and will surely also be raised to life now at our ever-living Lord's promised return at the Great Day of Resurrection of all flesh the historical calendar interval of intervening centuries notwithstanding the result being that we can all join in answering "Were You There's'" rhetorical questions and *joyous hope-filled trembling* with a resounding **YES/AMEN!**"

Lest there be any earthly reason to fear or hesitate pondering the content of one or all of the following references: Matthew 18:20; 28:6,19; Luke 24:52; John 20:25; Romans 6:3-4; 8:32; 1 Corinthians 12:3b; 15 (all); Galatians 2:20; 3:27; 6:14; Revelation 21:1-5 each of which helped inform this acknowledged longer than usual piece – timeless words designed to sustain God's redeemed people not only in the 10-day "waiting period" between this year's Ascension Thursday and Pentecost Sunday but also through any personal period of doubt or unrest, self-pity, painful tears that none of us is totally immune from experiencing prior to the unimaginable blood-bought eternal liberation from universal rebellious sin in a still at times still beautiful once perfectly ordered universe and world in which each of us is but a tiny yet dearly cherished part of what is all too often a vale of tearful grief, With scriptural poetic hymns or like Pastor Jaroslav Vajda's upbeat ascension hymn "Up Through Endless Ranks of Angels" (LSB, #491) and the foregoing humble anonymous spiritual reminding us that as, incredible as it may seem, we have a loving God who *hates death* even more than we ever could or will! Ask Jesus about that!



SELC District - A District Without Borders

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

SELC District of LCMS

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