



The Beacon Online

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

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The Way Church Launches "A Place to Belong" Ministry for Adults with Special Needs

This fall, The Way Church in Columbia, Illinois, expanded its ministry reach with the launch of *A Place to Belong*, a welcoming group specifically designed for adults with special needs to gather, grow, and connect. Grounded in the belief that everyone deserves a community where they are seen, valued, and loved, the ministry ensures there is a seat at the table for every individual, regardless of where they are on their spiritual journey.



Meeting on the first and third Sundays of each month, the group explores the Bible through engaging lessons, builds lasting friendships, and discovers how God's Word provides practical support and encouragement for daily life. The ministry is led by Dave Franke, who brings heart and experience to the leadership team through his work discipling his son, Luke, who has special needs.



The broader congregation has eagerly supported the new initiative as well, with church members signing up to provide snacks and fellowship support for every gathering.



Peace Lutheran Church Celebrates the One-Year Mark as a New Church Re-Plant

Peace Lutheran Church in Galloway, New Jersey marked its one-year anniversary as a church plant in the SELC District. Pastor Renato Hoerlle states that so much has happened during these twelve months! We have faced challenges, difficulties, important decisions, and moments of uncertainty. But we have also seen doors opening, new people coming, relationships growing, and new opportunities appearing. There is still much work ahead of us. But as we look back on this first year, we can recognize, with humility and joy, that the Lord has been taking care of us."

**October 11,
2025**



**October 12,
2026**





Ethiopian Coffee Ceremony and Blessing of the Food

Two local women led the coffee ceremony at the PCWC. They are from Ethiopia and own Nile Ethiopian Restaurant in Orlando, Florida. The Ethiopian coffee ceremony was incorporated into Orion Netsanet's presentation on *Rethinking Global Partnership* as a way to honor the SELC gathering and highlight the importance of relationships, hospitality, and partnership. Ethiopia is the birthplace of coffee, and the traditional coffee ceremony is an important cultural practice centered on welcoming people, building relationships, and sharing time together.

We also shared a traditional Ethiopian celebratory bread called *Himbasha*. It is customary in Ethiopian traditions to invite a respected leader or religious figure to bless the bread. We had the honor of inviting President Wally to bless the bread, our time of conversation, and the SELC conference as a whole. It was a meaningful way to honor the gathering and reinforce the themes of connection and shared purpose.



Orion Netsanet and SELC Churches will be traveling to Uganda from **July 21–28, 2027** for a vision trip. The invitation is for SELC Churches to unite with one shared care point community in Uganda.

If you would like additional details about the trip or would like to connect with Orion directly, you can reach him at onetsanet@hopechest.org or by phone at [616-633-4157](tel:616-633-4157).



Nominate Students for Lutheran Summer Music

You're invited to [nominate a student](#) for LSM 2027! Lutheran Summer Music (LSM) is a faith-based residential music academy for high school students in grades 8-12. Students come together from across the country to pursue musical excellence and build an intentional, supportive, and fun community.



LSM 2027 takes place at St. Olaf College in Northfield, MN, from June 27-July 25. Priority Enrollment is open through December 1, offering a \$100 tuition discount and first access to financial aid. Nominate students at LSMacademy.org/nominate, and watch and share the [LSM Experience Video](#) to learn more!



Concordia Preschool Holds Safety Awareness Week During Fire Prevention Month

Concordia preschool in Macungie, PA held its safety week. All the classes were able to view and explore a fire truck and ambulance. We thank the firemen and EMTs who volunteered to show all the students around both vehicles.





Annual School Statistics are Due November 1, 2026

LCMS Rosters and Statistics and LCMS School Ministry request that you submit your statistics for the new school year (2026–2027).

To submit your statistics, log into the LCMS Information Support Network (LISN) for Schools website at: lisn.lcms.org.



Online Life Ministries Conference Scheduled February 26 - 27, 2027



Join the 2027 LCMS Life Ministry Conference, which will be held online from Feb. 26–27, 2027. The conference will feature video presentations on life issues for the strengthening and support of lay members and church workers as they advocate, educate and share the truth of God’s Word, the sanctity of life at all ages, and Christ’s mercy for all people.

Registration for the conference is free, although attendees may choose to purchase extended access to the library of presentations for on-demand viewing. Several sessions conducted in Spanish will be included. Congregations are encouraged to host watch parties during the conference to facilitate further discussion of the presentations.

Please [consider joining us online in February](#) to be strengthened and supported in our shared confession of God’s creation and value of all human life. More information will be shared in the coming months, including a lineup of presenters. With any questions, email lifeministry@lcms.org.



Mark Your Calendars

November 1, 2026 - Annual School Statistics are due

November 12 - 14, 2026 - Concordia Center for the Family Training at Faith *Viera* in Rockledge, FL

February 26 - 27, 2027 - Online Life Ministries conference



- Independent Living
- Assisted Living (*new apartments*)
- Memory Care

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LCEF Loves Church Workers

It's Church Worker Appreciation Month, and we're celebrating those who keep LCMS ministries running. Our financial and wellness resources equip church workers to navigate the realities of life in ministry work through every season.

See how LCEF supports church workers year-round at lcef.org/resources.





Prayer Requests

Rev. Kevin Bergmann and Laura Bergmann, Munster, IN. Pastor Bergmann is regaining his strength at home after a hospitalization. His wife Laura is hospitalized. Please pray for the Bergmanns.

Rev. and Mrs. George Dolak, Cabot, PA. They are 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, is home and working to regain his strength.

Rev. Brian Roberts, Orlando, FL, please continue to pray for him for continued strength.

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 and Holly Duff, and their children Leo and Oliver, as they battle cancer. Please pray for Pastor Duff as he has entered hospice care.

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

Rev. and Mrs. Otto Baker, Brodheadsville, PA for God's healing and care.

Andrew DeMario, Galloway, NJ, son of Deaconess Helen DeMario, who had successful surgery on September 1st. He is gaining back his strength and goes for his follow up appointment in early October.

Megan Skelton in Oviedo, FL Please continue to pray for her and her doctors as they find pain relief solutions for her jaw pain and severe headaches.

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 - Part 1

Gospel Comfort During Times of Transition in the Lord's Church

"The Lord is my Shepherd . . .
Your rod and Your staff, they *comfort* me!"

Rev. Kenneth Ballas, EM

Relatively recent SELC District family news included announcement of the formal closing of two more venerable households of faith, St. Mark, Steubenville, OH and Zion, Norridge, IL as well as "retirement" of yet another faithful multi-talented under-shepherd of our supremely Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, long-time St. John Massillon, OH Pastor John Telloni.

With obvious exceptions, the average lifespan of North American churches is 75-100 years. By the grace of God, a majority of district parishes matches or *exceeds* those projected estimates. This mildly comforting fact, however, pales in comparison with the number of blood-bought souls who will thankfully be joining us in eternity from *every family of faith* in which the written Word of God is effectively preached or taught as "wherever two or three are gathered together" **in Jesus' Name**, our blessed Brother-Savior promises to be with us.

Thus there are no compelling reasons beyond real, yet untrustworthy emotional attachments, for feeling lastingly *spiritually homeless* even if separated from beloved buildings of hallowed comfort. Contrary to so many of our "churchly" historic priorities and actions, creedal confession of one holy catholic and apostolic church whose loving Head is our Lord Jesus Christ is about *people* not buildings. Moreover, we so easily forget that not a single one of us was born as a Christian but rather received a needed new birth of water and of the Holy Spirit in Holy Baptism likely but not exclusively in a church building where we were taught everything else in Luther's Small Catechism (Matthew 28:19; John 3:3, 5; Romans 6:3-4; Titus 3:5-7).

This month marks the 509th anniversary of what has been variously called *the rediscovery of the Gospel* or Lutheran Protestant Reformation. Any "transition" this side of heaven is accompanied by *mixed feelings* ranging from somber sadness to exuberant joy as peaks and valleys of this mortal life may be subjected to what Martin Luther called **Anfechtungen** or *onslaughts of the devil*. Disguised as an "angel of light" also in today's seemingly increasingly *me-centered* secular society, the self-appointed ruler of this world remains the primary enemy of Christ's Church (John 8:44; 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 1 Corinthians 15:28; 2 Corinthians 11:17; 12:7ff.; Ephesians 6:10-17; 1 John 3:8b).

What this still relatively young monk become priest did on October 31, 1517, after being led by the Spirit of God to the unswerving conviction that the pan-biblical concept of the "righteousness of God" on which he was called upon to lecture from the Old Testament Psalms and St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans at Saxony Germany's University of Wittenberg concerned something *we could never accomplish* to merit God's favor by saving ourselves. Rather our forgiveness and eternal salvation is a free yet most costly gift of grace through faith by a just and merciful God in the sinless life of His uniquely qualified incarnate Son. Born of a virgin human mother that first Christmas and though severely tempted, Jesus of Nazareth alone vicariously kept all God's expected commandments with which we daily struggle culminating in His all-

atoning voluntary self-giving death and glorious resurrection and ascension at the right hand of God (Romans **5:19**; 6:23; 8:3; Galatians 2:16-21; 4:4-7; **Philippians 2:8**; Hebrews 2:9-18; 4:15; 9:22b; 10:18; 12:1ff.).

Thus, in posting of 95 Latin Theses for printed distribution and scholarly debate against the growing practice of purchasing worthless man-ordained **indulgences for sins already forgiven** by our gracious God and after having learned both positive and negative lessons at Erfurt's Augustinian monastery and later revelatory winter visit to Rome and prayerful time months teaching, preaching and, yes, singing the inspired written Word of God (as with good reason Dr. Luther declared the Lord's gift of *music* as being second only to biblical theology with the Lutheran Church also being known as "The Singing Church")

Not the least of which was the importance of God's gift of music which the reformer (known as a sweet singer already in his youth) considered second only to biblical theology for whom our Triune God was not like some flimsy wind-blown pup tent presence but "A **Mighty** Fortress" ("Ein **feste** Burg"). Since the 16th century Lutheran Christian congregations have been noted for their robust, full-throated singing God's praises.

Were Satan merely some impish Halloween-costumed red tights pitchfork-wielding rogue, the Tempter would be far less difficult to take seriously. Knowing his days on earth are numbered, the old Evil Foe remains a miserably deceptive purveyor of "*half-truths*" as indicated by our Lord Jesus as well as His formerly mercurial yet mercifully forgiven and *reinstated* disciple Simon Peter whose later written description of spiritual warfare is more formidably demanding foe than MGM's onomatopoetic *roaring lion* (instead of metaphorically be simply described as *devouring* us could rather inelegantly be literally translated as "*drinking us down with lots of juice!*" (Luke 22:31-32; 1 Peter 5:8-11))

Please read next week's Beacon for the conclusion of this article.



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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