



LCMC LeaderCare Retreat on Relational Formation at Riverside Bible Camp in May, hosted by the Iowa District. Photos: Leaders gather for fellowship & prayer; Presenters Kelly & Chris Dahl, Nathan Anenson. Photos courtesy of Mike Bradley.

Pastor: A Life Well Lived

By MIKE BRADLEY
LCMC Service Coordinator

Pastor. What a wonderful word, a word that speaks of calling and direction, meaning and purpose for ones life. To be called “pastor” is to live a life filled with opportunity and blessing. After all, who else has the opportunity and the blessing to be called—outside of immediate family members—to come alongside people in some of the most intimate moments of their lives? Baptisms. Confirmations. Graduations. Weddings. Funerals. Sharing the rhythms and seasons of life together. Being witness to their journey of faith. Through it all, you are there. Sometimes even immediate family, for various reasons may not be there, but you are because you’ve been called by God to be their Pastor.

For forty-four years, I have been blessed to be called “Pastor” by young and old, Christian and not-yet Christian. Serving as a pastor has been the thing God has called me to in particular places, at particular times, with particular groups of people. Looking back over all these years, I can truly say that for me, living life as a pastor has been *a life well lived*.

Now, does that mean I’ve never experienced disappointment and discouragement? No. Does it mean I’ve never experienced frustration and hardship?

Mark Your Calendars:

2023 Youth Leader Webinars
June 15 August 17
September 21 October 19

LCMC District & Fellowship
Coordinators Gathering
June 20-22, 2023

Heartland District
Annual Gathering
July 14-15, 2023

Texas District
Annual Gathering
July 28-29, 2023

LCMC Retired Pastors
& Spouses Retreat
August 29-31, 2023

Augustana District Women of
the Word Annual Gathering
September 16, 2023

LCMC 23rd Annual Gathering
& Convention
October 1-4, 2023

THIS ISSUE:

This newsletter is a publication of LCMC, an association of churches and individuals. Inclusion of articles is intended to provide information and does not imply official endorsement. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect an official position of the association or its Board of Trustees. We welcome comments, suggestions for stories and submissions from our members.

EDITOR: Joy Minion. CONTRIBUTORS:

Jon Anderson, Tracie Berg, Mike Bradley, Randy Freund, Cindy Glessner, Christian Huntley, Patrick Jones, Jan Gluth King, Cathy Nichol, Andrew Potratz, Chip Reynolds, David Rispoli, Julie Smith and Kristy Thomas.

NEXT ISSUE:

To submit an article for this publication, please contact Joy Minion at joyminion@gmail.com. The deadline to submit articles for our next edition of BY THE WORD is:

May 8, 2023

ABOUT US:

We are an association of congregations and individuals, free in Christ, accountable to one another, rooted in Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, and working to fulfill Christ's Great Commission and go make disciples of all nations.



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Who's Next?

By CHRISTIAN HUNTLEY

LCMC Coordinator for Leadership & Pastoral Development

The last few months have been a joy! In my new role as Coordinator for Leadership and Pastoral Development, I have the privilege of talking with new candidates for pastoral certification with LCMC. That means I hear a lot of stories, which I love. These conversations led me to reflect on my own journey to pastoral ministry and to ask the question, "Who's next?" Who are the next leaders – pastoral, youth, worship, and more – that will lead our congregations? Where are they now? What do they need?

One key to my story and the story of many is the encouragement toward ministry they received from their pastor. For me, it was simple and brief. The pastor I grew up under told me upon my high school graduation that I would (or should) go to seminary. That small comment planted a seed that took a few years to grow and many more to bear fruit. His words stuck with me because he saw something in me that I had never considered. It helped open me up to the working of God in a whole new way.

I faced the question, "Who's next" in a new way recently as I prepared to leave my local call for ministry with LCMC. Who would lead "my" ministries? Who could

FROM THE BOARD...

By PASTOR RANDY FREUND

Chair, LCMC Board of Trustees

"Clean-up on Aisle 8!"

It happened before anyone could react. Splat! A large jar of Tostitos® salsa splattered all over the floor and nearby shelves. The curious child somehow reached beyond the confines of the grocery cart. The responsible parents were momentarily distracted by a focused discussion on what kind of chips they should buy. An observer asked where to find a broom, rag and mop. Not even the employee had a clue where to look. Everything was well-intentioned. Proper boundaries were all in place. Yet, the end result was heard throughout the store: "Clean-up on Aisle 8!"

I hand things off to? As I asked God for clarity, he had prepared the hearts, minds, and gifts of the community to steward and enhance the ministries that were never mine to start with.

I ask you, who is next in your ministry?

Which middle or high school student in your community has the gifts for ministry? Which teacher has the gifts to preach? Which parent is now an empty-nester and ready for a new challenge? Like Jesus calling the disciples or Paul identifying Timothy, we all have a call to be on the lookout for the next group of leaders.

I'm grateful to my pastor for planting the seed of ministry in me. I trusted him. I knew him and he knew me. He found ways to engage me in ministry long before he pointed me toward seminary.

I am also thankful for all of you who are encouraging students of all ages and career stages toward ministry. The stories I hear from our

certification candidates are a source of hope and joy. Not only are you seeing their gifts and calling them to ministry, but so often you are creating space for them to learn and train in your church. You're creating internship opportunities so they can study online and remain a part of the congregation. You are mentoring and modeling in ways that share a life of ministry and leadership with them. In turn, you are strengthening your congregation by allowing more people to use their gifts.

I invite you to look around your congregation and ask God, who's next?



CHRISTIAN HUNTLEY

Celebrating an Ordination Milestone?



Ordination pins are available to commemorate the special milestone in increments of 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, 55, 60, 65.

Contact Cathy Nichol, LCMC Administrative Coordinator:

cathy@lcmc.net 734.788.7476

All analogies break down at some point, but it strikes me that there is a connection to the work of the Board of Trustees. We assume our proper role within LCMC by doing the necessary and responsible things we are tasked to do by the association. Yet, we are curious. We want to be risk-takers, rather than cautious followers. We can even be tempted to reach beyond our boundaries. Regardless, the request still comes: "Clean-up on Aisle 8!" By this, I mean a congregational request comes where someone asks for some help, assistance, advice, support or an urgent need. Who responds? To whom do we turn? Who do we ask for a "mop or broom" to help the congregation?

As we try to figure out the way and timing for necessary changes in the association, two things make us hopeful. First, the St. Louis Annual Gathering is a wonderful opportunity to figure out some "LCMC 3.0 matters" together. Second, and more importantly, the reason for hope is the promise of God. We often think of God before and God with us. But God is also behind us, "cleaning up the salsa." As the disciples discovered on Ascension Day, it remains.

"Is this the time?" we ask.

"It is not for you to know," our Lord responds.

But the promise is sure.

"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you"



RANDY FREUND

(Acts 1:6-8). That promise has always been enough for Christ's church.

In Christ,
Pastor Randy Freund
Chair, LCMC Board of Trustees

A Sacred Calling

By JULIE SMITH

LCMC Coordinator for Districts & Fellowships

I've spent some time doing admissions work for a couple of seminaries. At first, all I was trying to do was fill classes. I figured a good theological education and thoughtful mentoring could turn anyone into a pastor. So just get them in the door and everything will work out. Chasing prospective students, getting them to apply, offering generous transfer policies, making tuition as cheap as possible, eliminating some of the traditional barriers to entry – like having to move and to learn Greek – all of these strategies and many others were put into service to get candidates into seminary.

And then I started paying attention to how things actually unfolded. Students who had to be enticed into seminary also had to be enticed to stay. And then they had to be enticed into serving the church in the office of pastor. If it didn't quite fit their schedule or their family situation or their financial needs, there were plenty of better jobs out there. Jobs that didn't require working weekends and holidays.

It was in this that I was reminded that the aims of an admissions director could, at times,

be at cross-purposes with the actual needs of the church. The notion that seminary could turn anyone into a pastor ran into the reality that pastoral ministry is a calling.

It's not a higher calling than all others. At times the call to be a pastor will come into conflict with the call to be a parent or a spouse or a son or daughter or a good citizen or a community volunteer or a good neighbor.

Can you take the afternoon off to go to a t-ball game? Can meetings be scheduled at times that don't conflict with bedtime? Do spouses just need to understand that every member of the church takes priority over them? Can you be available to care for aging parents in the way they may need? Does that need to factor into your next move? Do you need to be reachable on vacation "just in case"? Is there any moment when it is acceptable not to answer your phone? Do you need to find a part-time job to supplement your income?

In those times, the call to ministry doesn't automatically get prioritized over all others.

But if that sense of calling is absent, or if that call can be easily



JULIE SMITH

put on the shelf in favor of all other callings, trouble is sure to follow.

The call to pastoral ministry is nothing less than the charge to speak on behalf of the Living God to those He is calling to Himself. It comes with all sorts of joy and all sorts of sorrow. It is a tremendous privilege, and it also can feel like a tremendous burden and responsibility.

But first and foremost, **it is a calling**. When we remember that, when we keep that in front of us, the instinct to look for the nearest exit anytime trouble comes our way starts to fade.

It fades because those whom He has called, the Lord is also equipping, day after day, year after year. And when our lives and our callings are in His hands, we can be confident in His faithfulness.



For more information
or to register:

**[lcmctexas.org/
annual-gathering](http://lcmctexas.org/annual-gathering)**

SECRETARY'S REPORT.

By REV. JONATHAN ANDERSON
Secretary, LCMC Board of Trustees

The LCMC Board of Trustees met April 12, 2023, in Minneapolis, MN.

- The board continued planning for the 2023 Annual Gathering in St. Louis: breakouts, focus groups, and raising the visibility of young adult leaders.
- The board affirmed membership of the following congregations: Resurrection Lutheran Church, Scottsdale, AZ; Zion Lutheran Church, WaKeeney, KS; and Midway Lutheran Church, Flandreau, SD.
- Mike Bradley, Service Coordinator, gave reports on: the Small Church Survey and plans for leadership and pastoral development; vetting resources and ministries; and LCMC's relationship with NALC. He also asked the Board of Trustees to discuss a pathway for conflict management requests.
- Julie Smith's report on her work with Districts & Fellowships included: bi-monthly District & Fellowships Coordinator meetings; Augustana First Call Retreat; theology task force working on a piece to include in the call packets; and lay preaching courses.
- The board heard updates on: changes to the employee handbook; the LCMC 25th anniversary book project; and church plant funding and guideline proposals.
- The board met jointly with the Ministry Board and discussed: potential changes to the inquiry process; and Intentional Interim Fellowship.
- Other board business included: support of international partnerships; certification requirements; and contract call expectations.

— Respectfully, Jon Anderson



JON ANDERSON

TREASURER'S REPORT.

By CINDY GLESNER
Treasurer, LCMC Board of Trustees

I'm pleased to report that LCMC continues to operate with fiscal integrity while seeking to offer congregations meaningful and necessary support. We, on the Board of Trustees, are excited for the future and the opportunity to serve our member congregations more fully.

As we pursue the realization of the vision of "LCMC 3.0", we hope you will become involved and include LCMC in your congregational and personal giving. We receive no other support than from your gifts. Thank you! I look forward to meeting many of you at the Annual Gathering in October in St Louis where it's "All Hands on Deck"!

Remember, we have the seminary debt relief fund available for your pastors with student debt. Please remind eligible pastors that these funds are available upon application.

— Respectfully, Cindy Glesner



CINDY GLESSNER

Up Next:

2023 Zoom Youth Leaders Meetings
3rd Thursday each month starting at 11:00am CDT
June 15 August 17 Sept. 21 Oct. 19
Cathy Nichol: cathy@lcmc.net 734.788.7476

**LCMC District & Fellowship
Coordinators' Gathering**
June 20-22, 2023

Hosanna! Lutheran Church, St. Charles, IL
Julie Smith: julie@lcmc.net 734.404.4535

Heartland District Annual Gathering
July 14-15, 2023

Living Word Lutheran Church, Seward, NE
Jan Gluth King: pastorjan0312@gmail.com
563.419.3441

Texas District Annual Gathering
July 28-29, 2023

St. Paul Lutheran Church, New Braunfels, TX
Bryce Formwalt: Bryce@lcmctexas.org
701.789.7064
Alyssa Moore: alyssa@lcmctexas.org
512.942.7776

Retired Pastors & Spouses Retreat
August 28-31, 2023

Okoboji Lutheran Bible Camp, Okoboji, IA
John Nelson: pastorjohn@hosannachurch.com
630.584.6434

**Augustana District Women of the Word
Annual Gathering**
September 16, 2023

St. John's Lutheran Church, Springfield, MN
St. John's: sjlcspringfieldmn@gmail.com
507.723.5397
Jodi Dalsgaard: dwdj4@newulmtel.net
507.766.2323

**LCMC 23rd Annual Gathering
& Convention**
October 1-4, 2023

St. Charles Convention Center, St. Charles, IL
Cathy Nichol: cathy@lcmc.net 734.788.7476



Do you know of a youth leader, volunteer, or member in your congregation who is passionate about youth ministry?

Join us the third Thursday of each month (except July and December) at 11:00am CDT.

Sign up for the emails:

<https://mailchi.mp/75a65006d3ae/youth-leader-webinars>

Like the LCMC Youth Ministry Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/LCMCYouthMinistry>

LCMC District & Fellowship Coordinators' Gathering

June 20-22, 2023

Hosanna! Lutheran Church
St. Charles, IL

For more information, please contact:

Julie Smith

julie@lcmc.net 734.404.4535

or

Cathy Nichol

cathy@lcmc.net 734.788.7476

23rd Annual Gathering & Convention

October 1-4, 2023

**St. Charles Convention Center
St. Charles, Illinois**

To register or for more info: Cathy Nichol

cathy@lcmc.net 734.788.7476

<https://www.lcmc.net/23-ag/registration>

Early Registration Deadline:

August 15, 2023



Prepare for a Gathering Like Never Before as LCMC 3.0 Takes Us Into New Waters!

By KRISTY THOMAS

LCMC Communications & Public Relations Specialist

We're about to set forth on a new adventure, and we would love for you to come along!

It's no secret that we've grown quite a bit since we held our first Annual Gathering & Convention in 2001, but with that growth comes many new challenges, questions, and opportunities. Consequently, it is time for us to join together and intentionally take a look at who we are and where we need to go from here. Our nickname for this new season of doing life and ministry together? **LCMC 3.0**.

As an association of congregations, LCMC is focused on four main principles:

- We're free in Christ
- We're accountable to one another
- We're rooted in the Scriptures and in the Lutheran Confessions
- We're all working together to fulfill Christ's Great Commission to go and make disciples of all nations

Working together is essential if we're going to keep moving forward. Every congregation, leader, and member of our association is important and has something to offer in order to fulfill the call that God has given us. That's why we chose "All Hands on Deck" as the theme of our 23rd Annual Gathering & Convention.

If there's one thing we know about ships, it's that they are not made for the harbor. In order for us to be able to take on the challenge of navigating new waters, we need a strong and functioning crew. That's where **YOU** come in!

We hope you will consider joining us on October 1-4, 2023 at the Saint Charles Convention Center in St. Charles, Missouri, for our upcoming Annual Gathering & Convention. You'll have a chance to connect with other people in LCMC, explore what God is doing in us and through us as we enter this new season of LCMC 3.0, and weigh in on some ways in which we can all work together to make that happen!

Kids Are Different These Days

By REV. CHIP REYNOLDS

Senior Pastor, First English Lutheran Church, Victoria, TX

I have heard that as long as I can remember and I never gave it much thought. I taught high school for 12 years before going into full-time ministry. I had seen students come and go and they never seemed much different from year to year.

Then we experienced COVID and I truly think it altered a generation.

Learning loss happened globally and students have been in catch-up mode as the standards haven't moved. The stress imposed on them because of isolation, educational recovery, and the changing landscape of the world because of COVID have had several impacts on our youth, and a few of them we specifically see in the church.

One of the impacts that has changed youth ministry is a rise in mental health issues in our students. Studies consistently show a rise in student stress, anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideations. Some polls

showed that as many as 1 in 3 students experienced a significant rise in mental health issues.

Because of the rising numbers, we are faced with the fallout and the struggle that these students have, and they are searching for help and answers. Our ministries have gone from simply programming to programming *and* first-line care. We are not trained professionals in mental health, but we must have an awareness of what these issues look like, as well as a list of good resources for students and parents to address these issues. It is an imperative in this new world.

The other impact that we must address is helping students learn to reconnect in a fractured society. That happens through commonality.

This past summer at the National Youth Gathering in Des Moines, we saw what that looked like. Putting students in situations where the walls can come down, issues can be addressed, and healing can happen was



CHIP REYNOLDS

amazing. Our commonality comes in John 14:6. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. That is what draws us together.

We have to focus our students on their shared faith experience and build relationships out of that.

No easy task...I know. But, it is one that we will see the fruit from in years to come as we build strong leaders for the next generation who have overcome.

Point them to Jesus. Teach them to trust. Remind them that they are strong in Christ. Help them heal. That is our ministry.

We're On It: An Update on the Small Church Survey

By MIKE BRADLEY, LCMC Service Coordinator

Recently, we took a survey of ordained and lay leaders in our small churches in LCMC. Thank you for your responses. Your feedback has not only been received, but is being followed up on by the LCMC Board of Trustees, Ministry Board, and staff.

One example comes from our Board of Trustees and Ministry

Board meetings held April 12-14 in Minneapolis. The boards affirmed a proposal to create a comprehensive plan for leadership and pastoral development. This plan will certainly impact our smaller congregations, but it will also impact our larger congregations in the association. Furthermore, it will create

opportunities to network small, mid-size, and larger congregations with one another.

The point person for the development and implementation of this plan will be our Coordinator for Leadership and Pastoral Development, Pastor Christian Huntley. Christian will work with leaders from around the

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Welcome!

Please take a moment to welcome the new congregations and the new pastors that have joined LCMC since the last newsletter!

By CATHY NICHOL
LCMC Administrative Coordinator

New Congregations

- **Zion Lutheran Church**, WaKeeney, KS
Vacant 785.743.6629
ziontrego283@outlook.com
- **Resurrection Lutheran Church**, Scottsdale, AZ
Pr. Matt Wiswall; Pr. Matt Robards 602.971.7979
lawrence@rlc-scottsdale.org
- **Midway Lutheran Church**, Flandreau, SD
Pr. Paul Johansen 605.690.6480
tgulbran@itctel.com
- **St. John's Lutheran Church**, Deanville, TX
Pr. Terry Moon 979.535.4125
terry.moon@stjohnsdeanville.com
- **Vision of Glory Lutheran Church**, Plymouth, MN
Vacant 763.559.4222
mhill@vogchurch.com

New Pastors

Phillip Whitener, Melbourne, FL philwhitener@yahoo.com 321.609.0106
Tsena Dinssa, Fate, TX manassaeh2011@gmail.com 218.200.9430
Jay Welshonse, Mass City, MI jay.welshonse@outlook.com 906.287.5138
Andrew Dvorak, Coon Rapids, MN ajdvorak93@gmail.com
Trevor Hughes, Mount Airy, MD trevorkhughes@gmail.com 301.448.5855
W. Carl Fulmor, Cascade, MD crfulmor@comcast.net 301.241.3437
Jay Johnson, Royal, IL penguinpartyhq@yahoo.com 217.552.0011
Cassandra Langr, Roscoe, IL casslangr@gmail.com 406.580.8799

country and with ministries already in existence at the grassroots, regional, and district levels. He will be helping to network these leaders and ministries with one another. This will include an effort to make our congregations aware of resources that are already available for them to access, and of resources that may be created in the coming months.

An opportunity to speak with us personally will be at our Annual Gathering in October. There will be a focus group you can attend to share feedback on issues such as clergy shortage, next-gen leaders, and creative staffing. These issues affect our

churches across the board, not just our smaller congregations. We will receive and process your feedback, using it to help us create and implement strategic initiatives at the grassroots, district, and national levels.

Thanks for the feedback we've already received from so many of you. And please know, it is being processed and acted on. You will see this in action. May God continue to bless, encourage, empower, and make provision for your call to carry out the mission of the gospel that millions might be impacted by God's love and God's power!

LCMC Clothing Items Available Now!



To purchase, contact
cathy@lcmc.net

Joy Community Church

O'Fallon, Missouri

By DAVID RISPOLI
Senior Pastor, Joy Community Church



Joy Community Church has been part of LCMC since November 2012. Located 30 miles west of St. Louis, Joy was initially an ELCA mission congregation; the church officially started in 1994, but the mission developer left in 1996. I was called by the ELCA as a mission developer to relaunch Joy in 1997. Our staff is 100% bi-vocational. This has less to do with finances (the staff is paid well) and more to do with our commitment to the church's mission: "Connecting our Community to Christ." Every staff person is a missionary in the marketplace. We are all full-time disciples of Jesus.

For over a decade, we have hosted Church at the Bar, an actual worship experience in the middle of a bar where patrons are eating, drinking and worshipping. The goal is to introduce people to Jesus. We do not have any members or official membership process. We only have partners; partnership implies benefits and responsibilities. We have over 100 partner families who support the ministry of Joy Community Church with their time and talents. For the past 17 years, our financial support has grown every year and giving has outpaced each previous year. We attribute this to our commitment to tithe as a congregation, our minimal use of fundraisers (only two a year), and our biblical teaching on tithing. Subsequently, the congregation is and has been 100% debt free for a very long time.

Worship leader Scott Bowles and senior pastor David Rispoli have served together for the past 26 years. The synergy between them has led to a continual emphasis on the mission, and also to a great deal of fun.

Programs include: a process to equip those who feel called to ministry that involves courses through Harvest Workers, mentoring with current and retired pastors, and training in pastoral care, Lutheran theology and leadership; Uno Mas, a sister congregation in the poorest barrio of Grenada, was started after a 2015 mission trip to Niagara—this ministry has been changing lives in Nicaragua with the Gospel for the past seven years; Alpha Omega, a "by invite only" men's fraternity—these men make a huge commitment to steward their health, wealth, families and spiritual lives in a God-honoring way; Young Warriors, a program encouraging middle school boys to grow up to become great men of God—last month they baptized three formerly unchurched boys who have now brought their parents to Joy. We are willing to try anything to connect our community to Christ!

Joy Community Church is the host congregation for the 2023 LCMC Annual Gathering & Convention.



GETTING TO KNOW

Pastor...continued from page 1

Nope. Does it mean that it's been a life void of emotional and relational pain and brokenness? Nah. Does it mean that I've never had days when I felt like giving up and wished God would let me do something else? I wish. Well then, how can it have been a life well lived?

It's been a life well-lived because it has been a life lived out of the call of God upon my life, a calling affirmed by my spouse as well as the community of faith. And because both Debi and I have recognized it as a call from God, we have always told the Lord: "You are Lord, and we are not. So, we will live wherever You want us to live. We will serve in whatever way you call us to serve. And we will deal with whatever circumstances this brings our way. All we need to know, Lord, is that it is You who is calling us to live in that place and to serve in that way."

It's been a life well lived because in the midst of the disappointment and discouragement, the frustration and pain, we've never been alone. We have always been aware of the everywhere, already presence of our good, good Father in Heaven. And our Father in Heaven has even used—not caused—the disappointment and discouragement, the frustration and pain for good in our lives. He's that great. He's that good.

Pastor. Just think of both the opportunity and blessing God has given to we who are called "Pastor." The opportunities to responsibly proclaim God's Word in the power of the Holy Spirit. The blessing of coming alongside someone in need and praying with them. The purpose in equipping and encouraging God's people for the ministries He has gifted them for and is calling them to. The great joy of seeing God impact people with His love and His power, and through them, impacting others in the same way. The blessing of helping people realize that they do not have to go in search of an identity, but can live out of the settled sense of identity that God has already given them; an identity based on knowing that God already loves and forgives them, that God already welcomes them into the family of Christ followers, that God already sees them as people of great value and worth, and that God has already created them on purpose for a purpose that is significant. All of this and more can be part of the life well lived by the one called, "Pastor."

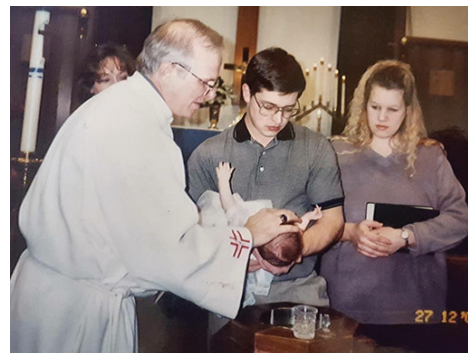
I give thanks to the Lord for the gift of calling me to be a pastor. I thank Him for surrounding me with brothers and sisters who have been there to help me navigate the really hard moments of life and ministry in healthy and effective ways, and



MIKE BRADLEY

have been there to help me celebrate the good ones. I thank the Lord for empowering me for what He called me to—to live and to serve others as "Pastor."

May God bless and empower you to live out the calling of being "Pastor" in the particular place at the particular time with the particular group of people He has called you to love and to serve. And may the Lord give you all that you need so that yours also can be *a life well lived*.



A young Pastor Mike baptizing the child of one of his former youth group kids."

Pastor: Is Your Contact Information Up to Date?

By CATHY NICHOL, LCMC Administrative Coordinator

Have you moved? Do you have a new address? Or a new phone number? Perhaps you have changed congregations? Help US by keeping YOUR profile information up to date.

Go to <https://www.lcmc.net/pastor-update> and fill in the *all* of the fields, including **Ministry Education/Credentials**.

If you have any questions, please contact Cathy Nichol at cathy@lcmc.net or (734) 788-7476.

A Perfect Match

By RANDY FREUND, *Chair, LCMC Board of Trustees*

The idea to host a “First Call Retreat” came easily enough. It seemed to be something important and necessary as an LCMC way of being “accountable to one another.” We had no clue who might come. We had no idea how we might fund such an event.

Moments after I announced the event at our annual theological convocation, three pastors came up to me to offer funding from their congregations. Soon after this, seminarians and people in their *second* calls wondered if they could come.

We seemed to have a perfect match. It was clear that there are dedicated **congregations** and **pastors** who support and care for one another. It is a clear example of the “accountable to one another” LCMC desire for effective and faithful pastors.

By the time of the event, there were five organizations and a number of individuals who stepped up to assure that this event would only cost \$25.00. We had 25 participants, which included first call pastors, second call pastors, seminarians, mentors and even one individual who was **thinking** about seminary. We met our funding goal, with seed money for next year.

What did we learn? We learned more about the following things we

know to be true, but don’t say often enough.

Pastoral Ministry Is a Challenge: Regardless of years of service, pastoral ministry brings challenges that can’t be anticipated.

Because life is unpredictable, ministry is unpredictable. Though years of experience can help one navigate uncharted waters, all pastoral challenges are unique to their contexts and communities. Conversation and consultation with one another helps with pastoral judgment and discernment.

The Pastoral Call Is Unique:

Because pastors are attentive to people of all ages and family dynamics are as diverse as the population, this is a unique calling. It places us in people’s lives at critical, tender, awkward and joyful times. This includes moments of agonizing grief as well as uncontained joy. We walk with people through uncertain and confusing situations. And this is why we hope and pray more people sense the call to pastoral ministry.

Pastors Need Each Other: For this great calling to be treasured and



First Call Pastors & Mentors at First Call Retreat

nurtured as the blessing it is, we need the body of Christ. We need each other for support, advice, and encouragement. While the encouragement of our respective congregations is a key form of support, the encouragement of colleagues who understand the demands, challenges and joys of parish life is vital!

Pastoral Ministry Is a Blessing and Privilege:

If there was one theme the First Call Retreat leaders hoped was clear, it would be this: it is a great blessing and a high privilege to be called into pastoral service! Many of us who have been pastors for many years cannot think of anything we would rather do.

As a part of the LCMC Board of Trustees, I give thanks wherever this support is happening and pray that more opportunities to provide support and encouragement for pastors continues to grow.

Congregations: Is Your Contact Information Up to Date?

By CATHY NICHOL, *LCMC Administrative Coordinator*

Does your congregation have a new location or mailing address? Or a new phone number? An updated website address? Joined a new district? Help US by keeping the profile for **YOUR** congregation up to date!

Go to **<https://www.lcmc.net/update-congregational-info>** and fill in the ***all*** of the fields.

*If you have any questions, please contact Cathy Nichol at **cathy@lcmc.net** or (734) 788-7476.*

God Is a God of Details

By PATRICK JONES

Lead Pastor, Emmanuel Lutheran Church
Longview, Washington

“Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.”
— John 21:6

This past year, my wife and I have had my parents living with us in Idaho while they eagerly awaited the chance to move back to Minnesota where they were born. Dad is a 97-year-old WWII vet and mom is 92 struggling with Alzheimer's. Besides some time in Florida back in 1950 they have never lived anywhere else, so when their number one choice of assisted living facilities called and said they had space for them, we all got real excited and put plans in place for a move.

And then the roadblocks started showing up. You know, things like scheduling, vacations, snowstorms, missed wire transfers, and the one thing I was afraid of the most, a broken hip. That's right, ten days before they were to move, dad fell and broke his hip. Everything seemed to be spinning out of control.

And then as I was having coffee early one Tuesday morning I felt God nudging me, saying; *“Don't you think I care about the details? Read chapter one of Genesis again and just see how much I care about the details!”*

So I did, and oh my gosh, does He ever! We know the Big Story, but look again at all the things that had to be put in place in order that we could live on this rock and have a relationship with Him. Amazing! And so, every time a roadblock on my parents' move raised its ugly head, I was reminded that God is a God of details.

You see, by nudging me to look at this, God wasn't asking if I believed

in Him, He was asking if I trusted Him. It seemed that the more I leaned into trust, the more He showed up. The intake interview was not delayed, the finances worked out, the snow wasn't as bad as predicted, the hip is healing nicely, and as you read this they are enjoying life back in Duluth, Minnesota!

In a recent issue of By The Word, Pastor Randy Freund used a fishing story in Luke to illustrate his point of God using us simply because He chooses to. Today I am looking at another fishing story, this one at the end of John where Jesus tells the disciples to “Cast the net to the right side...”

You see, Jesus didn't tell the guys to just keep on fishing, to try harder, and then see what happens. No, He told them to put their nets on the right side of the boat. Now, I don't



PATRICK JONES

know why Jesus chose the right side of the boat for this particular catch; the fact is, it doesn't matter. What matters is that Jesus cares about the details. He said in effect; “Fish the spot on the right. The perfect spot. The spot where your belief, faith, and especially your trust in Me will grow.” And they did, they went right, and they were amazed!

My friends, like you I know the Big Story, and now, finally, at the tender age of 62, I'm starting to see that God is also a God of the details. Those details include my parents, myself, and you too. If you are reading this, I suspect you are a believer and that is great. Now join me in casting your net to the right side, to the side where belief transforms into trust, and be amazed!



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Start a Men's Group!

By CHUCK HUNSAKER
President, LCMC Lutheran Men



Does your congregation have a men's group? It could be any kind of a group, but one made up of men with a Bible focus. Are your men involved in activities? It could be helping with youth events, serving at a mother-daughter banquet, etc. As we look across congregations, we find many with a women's group, but we find far fewer with a men's group. People are busy...why have a men's group? By God's grace, it can be a life-changing ministry with men; it can strengthen men's faith in relationships for witness and service; and it can equip followers of Jesus Christ through events, resources and leadership development.

You've heard the Marine Corps recruitment spots on TV say, "We need a few good men." A men's group is no different. You don't need a cast of thousands...just a few good men who are willing. These men should establish a leadership team that will agree to make men's ministry – and this group – a high priority. Building a men's ministry is going to take time and effort, and will require a high level of commitment from each individual.

A principal focus of your leadership team in the first few months will be to build relationships with the men in your congregation and community. As you do this, you will hear about the issues and concerns with which men in your congregation and community are dealing. You may want to use a survey to see where men's interest lies. Do not use the survey as a stand-alone piece, expecting a written response to be sent back to you. This is about building relationships. The survey is meant to be a guide to one-on-one conversation. It might also be used in a small group setting. With the pastor's permission, you might distribute the survey to selected men (not those most active) before or after worship. Let the men know that you are looking for their honest responses, that they are not committing to anything at this time, and that someone will be at the door to pick up the surveys before they leave worship; when you collect them, ask if they would be willing to spend a few minutes informally over a cup of coffee to elaborate on their written comments.

Now...how do you begin? Set a date several months into the future for a special event for men. Many men's leaders find that fall retreats are a great starting event for men's ministry. Set the date early to secure the site. All your activities for the next several months should aim toward this event.

If you don't have a men's group, Lutheran Men can help. Pastor Wilson Metz is our pastoral advisor. He has many years of experience with men's organizations and a wealth of ideas on starting, building and maintaining a men's group. Feel free to reach out to him at any time...we are here to help. You can reach Wilson at **Pastor@LCMC-LM.net**.

Donations for the Mission Assistance Fund are always welcome. Please send to:
LCMC – LM, 7000 N. Sheldon Road, Canton, MI 48187



ANDREW POTRATZ

Pastor, Immanuel Lutheran Church
Story City, Iowa

Devotional Series...

THE RESURRECTED LIFE

On Good Friday, hope was lost. Jesus was crucified. The disciples scattered.

On Saturday, the world was dark. The tomb was sealed. The disciples were afraid. Their teacher and friend was dead.

But on Sunday... The light came! Hope dawned! Victory shook the earth! The tomb was empty, and Jesus was Alive!

Sunday changed everything, because the resurrection changed everything—and it changes us too!

When have you had a discovery or experience that changed everything? On a trivial level, I think of my first encounter with something called ranch dressing. I grew up in a “french dressing” family, so the idea that other salad enhancers were out there was not a topic that I lost sleep over. Then on that sunny day at cub scout summer camp, the kid from another pack sitting across from me urged me to try ranch dressing—and I can say that it changed things! Not a day goes by where I would not at least entertain having ranch in some form.

I could also write extensively about the first time I had a “real” cup of coffee. That is to say, the first experience with fresh-roasted single-origin Ethiopia Yirgacheffe coffee. Since that day in 2005, I have never felt the urge to settle for large amounts of cream and sugar—and I especially do not settle for the average church coffee! Hopefully your church coffee provides a better experience than what mine does...

Experiencing something powerful will change us. Like all, I have a limited set of church experiences. Given that, it seems to me in my experience and contextual setting that much is to be desired in our churches today in

this “resurrection area.” You could say that far too many “church people” are still functionally living as if it is Good Friday (sins not yet paid for) or Holy Saturday (with the sealed tomb). The culturally-ingrained false belief that often permeates the Christian experience is that we too will pay for our sins and mistakes, and that God is angry with us—thus believing that the cross was not enough. An accompanying false belief to go with this is that we won’t truly begin living until our physical death and eternal reuniting with Jesus, thus downplaying or skipping over the power of the resurrection today. Both of these ideas seem to have carved out some ideological and practical ground in church culture today.

I find that Romans 6 speaks greatly to this ideology. Paul writes, “*We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the father, we too might walk in newness of life.*” (Romans 6:14, ESV). This newness comes as a result of the resurrection. As Jesus has demonstrated power over death, we no longer need to live as a people shackled to death and the fear of death. We can embrace the freedom that comes with knowing Christ’s sacrifice as being sufficient, and we can embrace the freedom that comes with knowing that Jesus did not stay dead!

The call to follow Jesus is not simply an ideological or intellectual call, rather it is one that invites us to experience that which is only available in Christ: Grace, Resurrection, and Eternal Life. My prayer is that God’s Spirit would give us these experiences and a deeper appreciation for the Resurrection as we live today.

Christ is risen—He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

— Pastor Andrew Potratz



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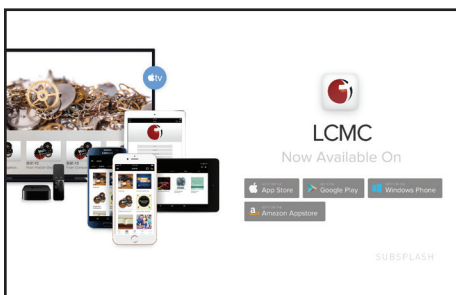
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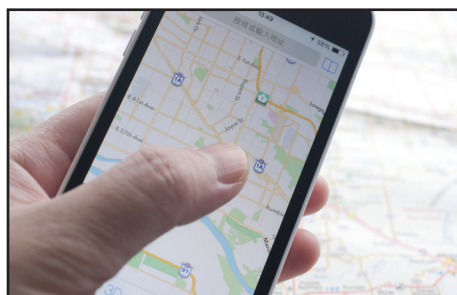


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