

# BY THE WORD

SUMMER 2025

**SUMMER  
READING**

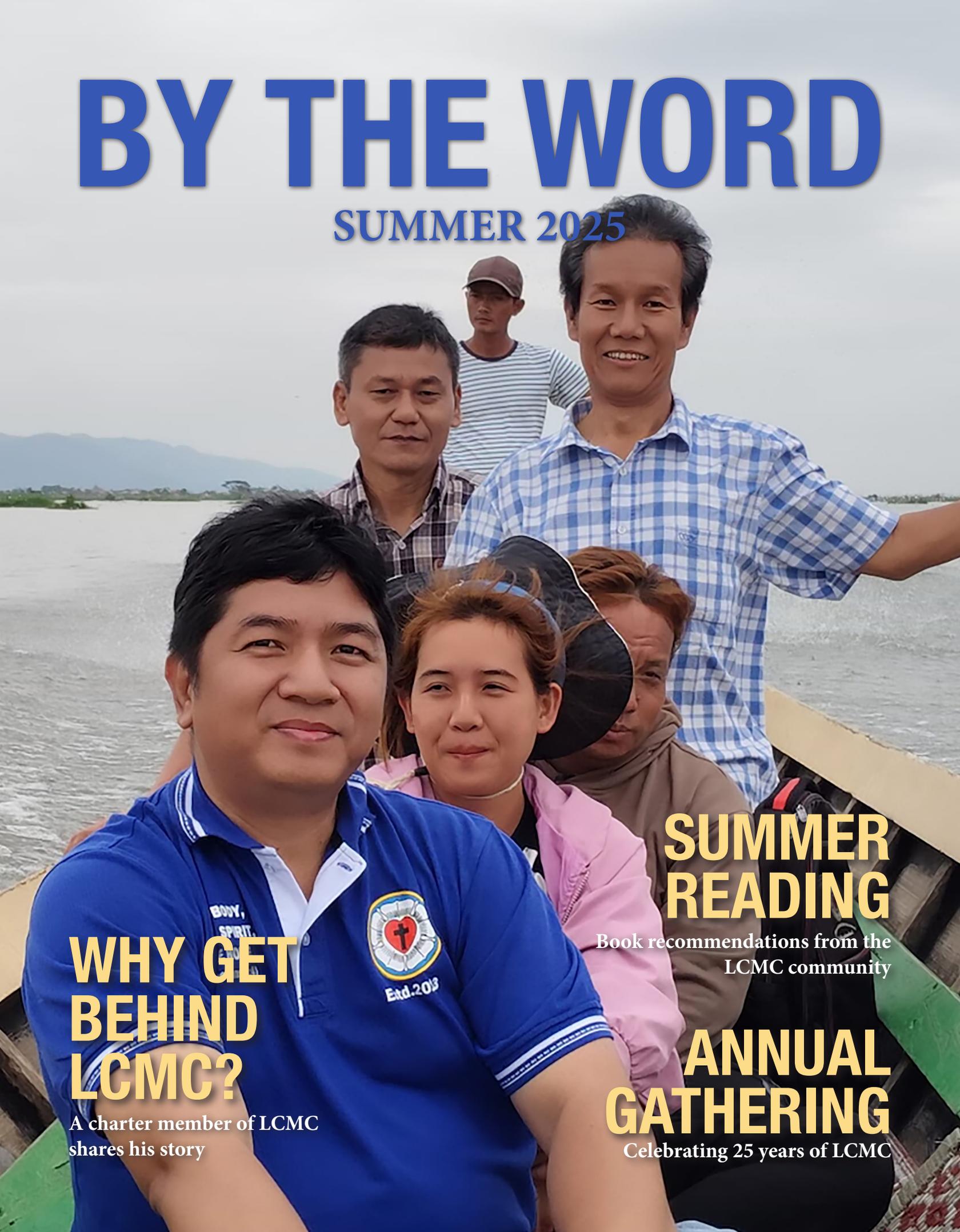
Book recommendations from the  
LCMC community

**ANNUAL  
GATHERING**

Celebrating 25 years of LCMC

**WHY GET  
BEHIND  
LCMC?**

A charter member of LCMC  
shares his story



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## Editor's Note:

Ever since the weather began to warm up here in the Midwest, I've been spending time working out in my garden. One afternoon, I was outside doing the tedious work of pulling weeds, amending the soil, and mulching, when it got me thinking about the theme of this year's Annual Gathering & Convention.

You see, my garden contains a weird hodgepodge of plants. There are roses, lilies, honeysuckles, and hostas left behind by the various families who have lived in this house over the past hundred years, irises and daffodils that were dug up and transplanted from my great grandparents' farm in northern Michigan, raspberries grown from runners that sprouted in my dad's garden, and a handful of random native plants my brother brought me from work. Finally, there are various species of roses and perennial herbs that I've added over the years, as well as some garlic bulbs and vegetable seedlings that I've either potted up or stuck into raised beds.

Maybe this is weird, but when I step outside, I don't see a random collection of plants. I see the flowers my great grandparents enjoyed by their log cabin each spring, an afternoon spent picking berries with my son, a quiet place to sip coffee and read, food and shelter for native wildlife, and a bit of the work left behind by the people who lived here before me. Each component of my garden has meaning behind it and a purpose for being there. Although I may call it my garden, it is a reflection of the work of many others, as well. It is a small piece of the Earth that I am simply tending to and building upon in an effort to help create a better place, much like the congregations of LCMC are doing for the Church.

As we step into summer, I hope this issue of *By the Word* helps you feel more connected to the greater LCMC community, and if you are able to, I hope you will begin making your travel arrangements to join us at our 25th Annual Gathering & Convention in October.

*Kristy*

**COVER PHOTO:** Martin Lalthingliana and the Helping Hands disaster response team visit Inle Lake in Myanmar.

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## *By the Word:*

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:** Kristy Thomas. **COPY EDITORS:** Cathy Nichol and Julie Smith. **ART DIRECTOR:** Kristy Thomas. **LCMC STAFF:** Mike Bradley, Christian Huntley, Sharon MacFadyen, Cathy Nichol, Julie Smith, and Kristy Thomas. **BOARD OF TRUSTEES:** Renae Behrends (Vice Chair), Randy Freund, Cindy Glessner (Treasurer), Kurt Hoover, Rob Horne, Paul Owens, Anna Tucker (Secretary), and Steve Turnbull (Chair).

# Mission Together

BY STEVE TURNBULL

On May 1, LCMC welcomed Julie Smith as our new service coordinator. In addition to owning a track record of fruitful leadership in different roles, Julie is steeped in the values that birthed LCMC and continue to give it strength. I'd like to take this opportunity to highlight two of those values, to celebrate them and to hopefully strengthen our commitment to them.

## *Gospel Witness*

The world needs the Savior we know and the witness we bear. And by "the world," I mean us too, of course! We need Jesus. Within the larger Body of Christ, Lutheran Christians have strengths and weaknesses. One of our gifts in telling the Gospel story is that we know who the hero of the story is and how he's saving us. It's easy for us to identify with the grief and despair of our beloved neighbors. People are trying anything and everything to escape the vortex of modern life. And it's not working. We are collectively out of ideas. We are grasping at straws and gasping for breath.

But Jesus is not. For one thing, he's not an idea! And he is most certainly neither

desperate nor done. He has entered the seeming inevitability of a sin-sick world, followed its trajectory all the way to the tomb, and risen again to shine the light of his hope where all other lights have gone out. We are convinced that the Crucified One specializes in hopeless causes. We have learned to look for him in the valley of the shadow of death. And we know not to trade his Gospel story for any lesser goods.

The sharpness of this Gospel knowledge frees us from infatuation with other games. And it empowers us to keep in step with the Spirit, to follow where the Spirit leads, to love whom and as the Spirit directs, and to bear the fruit the Spirit waters. And Hallelujah for the Spirit's work. Who doesn't think that our world is dying for a credible experience of love? Who doesn't see that our world needs joy for mourning? Isn't it obvious how much we need the peace that passes all human understanding? And together with love, joy, and peace, we get patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control thrown in.

Friends, all this and more is ours in Christ Jesus, who forgives our wandering and sinful hearts, and sends us out to share the riches of his grace with the world he loves so much. May

God empower a clear, bold, and fruitful witness among us.

## *Neighbors in Mission*

In LCMC, we have an unreasonable confidence in the work of God in and through local congregations, gathered around Word and Sacrament and sent on mission to the communities. We have been very resistant to building up central hierarchies to do for congregations what they can do themselves.

But that confidence requires a commitment. As I've heard Julie say, "If we don't want to develop hierarchies, we'd better develop neighbors." We may believe that the era of top-down denominationalism is over, but it's also true that individualism is death for congregations just as for people.

You probably know the New Testament's "one-another" vision for Christian life. Beloved, let us love one another. Let us forgive one another as God has forgiven us. Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ. You may also know that most of the "you's" in the New Testament are "y'all's." Together, we are a temple of the Spirit. Together, we are the Body

of Christ. Together in Christ, we are the light of the world.

In recent years, we have taken ground in this one-another, neighboring commitment. You can see it in the formation of new districts in Southern California and the Northern Plains, with more on the way. You can see it in the formation of fellowships serving Global Mission and congregations needing intentional interim ministry. You can see it in congregations that partner together in relationship, prayer, and mission in many informal ways.

This commitment is no accident. It was envisioned, planned for, and pursued – both in our founding and more recently in Julie's collaboration with Mike, our incoming and outgoing Service Coordinators. It is no accident, and it is nowhere near done. We have miles to go. May I ask you to ask God in prayer, "Who are my neighbors in mission? And how can we one-another one another and get stronger together?" We need one another because we need what God is doing in each part of the Body.

God is, always and now, raising up his church for mission together. Thanks be to God.



LCMC Service Coordinator Julie Smith with LCMC's outgoing service coordinator, Mike Bradley.



## *Texas District Gathering & Youth Event*

This summer, the LCMC Texas District will host its annual gathering and youth gathering simultaneously, and all are welcome to attend. Trevor Sutton, Steve Turnbull, and Christian Huntley will keynote the main event, which also includes breakout sessions, worship, food, and fellowship. The youth gathering and lock-in is open to all students in grades 6-12 and features games, service projects, learning, and fellowship. Meals, program, and a t-shirt are included in the cost of registration. It all takes place July 25-26, 2025 at First English Lutheran Church in Victoria, Texas. For more information and to register, go to their website at [www.lcmctexas.org/annual-gathering](http://www.lcmctexas.org/annual-gathering). For more district and fellowship events, check out the LCMC calendar at [www.lcmc.net/calendar](http://www.lcmc.net/calendar). New events are being added regularly! (Photo courtesy of LCMC Texas District.)

## *2025 Photo Contest*

In an effort to help share the mission and ministry work of LCMC congregations around the world, our photo contest will be returning for 2025! The contest opens in July and runs through December 8. We will make an announcement via e-newsletter when the contest opens, so if you're not already subscribed, visit us at [www.lcmc.net/enewsletter](http://www.lcmc.net/enewsletter) to sign up.

## *New District*

On May 10, 2025, LCMC's newest district held its constituting convention at Charity Lutheran Church in Bismarck, North Dakota. The Northern Plains District connects LCMC congregations from North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Wyoming, and Montana, offering better opportunities for collaboration and resource sharing on a regional basis.

**31**  
Aug

### **Church Planting Grant Deadline**

Learn more and download an application at [www.lcmc.net/church-planting-grant](http://www.lcmc.net/church-planting-grant).

**15**  
Sep

### **Annual Gathering Registration Deadline**

For more information and to register online, go to [www.lcmc.net/annual-gathering](http://www.lcmc.net/annual-gathering).



## *Earthquake Relief in Myanmar*

The Lutheran Church of Myanmar, an LCMC mission partner, is working to provide relief to people who have been affected by the earthquake that struck the region on March 28, killing thousands and damaging critical infrastructure throughout the region. If you would like to help, donations can be made through Awakening Lives to World Mission (ALWM) at [www.alwm.org/donatenow](http://www.alwm.org/donatenow) or mailed to ALWM, PO Box 67432, Albuquerque, NM 87193-7432. Please designate “Myanmar Emergency Family Relief” in the second step of the online donation process, or in the memo line of checks. Your support is critical in providing emergency relief packages including food, hygiene kits, water, shelter, medical supplies, and psychosocial support to church members as well as the people who are in need of help in the community. (Photo by Martin Lalthangliana, president of the Lutheran Church of Myanmar.)

## *Interim Ministry*

The Intentional Interim Ministry Fellowship’s Intro to Intentional Interim Ministry course previously scheduled for May 5-8, 2025 has been postponed. The event has been rescheduled for June 30 - July 3, 2025. For more information on this event, visit [lcmciif.org](http://lcmciif.org). For questions, contact Dawn Spies at [pastordawnspies@gmail.com](mailto:pastordawnspies@gmail.com) or call (760) 208-0986.

## *Write for LCMC*

If your congregation, district, or fellowship is interested in submitting a story that may be of interest to the LCMC community, please go to [www.lcmc.net/write-for-our-newsletter](http://www.lcmc.net/write-for-our-newsletter) to submit a query to our communications team. If we feel your idea may be a good fit for one of our publications, a member of our team will reach out to you with further details.

**8**

Dec

### **2025 Photo Contest Deadline**

Details and an entry form will be available in July at [www.lcmc.net/blog/summaries](http://www.lcmc.net/blog/summaries).

**31**

Dec

### **Seminary Debt Relief Grant Deadline**

Learn more and download an application at [www.lcmc.net/seminary-debt-relief](http://www.lcmc.net/seminary-debt-relief).



# Financial Updates

BY CINDY GLESSNER, TREASURER

We look forward to celebrating 25 years of our association this year with over 1,000 congregations! We are where we are today due to the time, energy, prayers and financial support you have so generously provided. With a new service coordinator selected, we look forward to taking the initiatives of LCMC 3.0 to the next level. Please join me in supporting Julie as she leads us into this new season!

## First Quarter Financial Report

Our financial performance in the first quarter of 2025 was mixed. Giving is a bit under projection, but expenses are too. We granted \$35,000 in church plant funds last October and, due to your generosity, we already have a similar amount available

to use again this year. A number of new districts are set to launch and they will also need financial support to fulfill their missions. We suggest that all our member congregations consider aiming to give 10% of their benevolence proportionately to LCMC and the district in which you participate. If you are not participating in a district, please consider associating with the one closest to you or partnering with other local congregations to form a new one!

## Seminary Debt Relief Fund

As always, remember the seminary debt relief fund. For now, the funds are available to any graduated seminarian with student loan debt. The board is working on a new program that will benefit students attending

all of our affiliate seminaries regardless of their eligibility for federal student loans. We want this fund to benefit the greatest number of students possible and encourage students interested in getting a seminary education at one of our recognized seminary partners.

## Designate a Beneficiary on Your 403(b) Account

Please also verify that you have a beneficiary listed on the system for your LCMC retirement account. Without it, passing the funds to your heirs will be complicated and costly.

Thank you for your continued partnership!

# Able to Account

BY JIM CORDS, MINISTRY BOARD

In the association that is LCMC, are we able to account for one another? I know that one of our core values as an association is to be accountable to one another. I admit that my life is much better for having those people in it who are willing to hold my feet to the fire. But lately I have been thinking more about this value and the idea of accountability.

What I have experienced as a true blessing in life and ministry extends well beyond having my feet held to the fire.

To be honest, I don't get thrills when I think about either being held accountable nor holding others accountable. My first thoughts on accountability are often negative. It feels like confrontation and maybe even judgment. Upon reflection,

however, I recognize that I have been truly privileged to be in several groups with others that have blessed me so very deeply. Many of these gatherings were called accountability groups and a few continued for several years.

So what happened? How did this negative impression shift to deep gratitude? Well, first and foremost, I think it

was because of the love and commitment that these true friends invested in me and I in them. It also included a willingness as we shared life together to be real with each other and to share our struggles. Over the years, this time we spent together became a time to share life together, becoming a source of deep grace and encouragement.

# Board of Trustees Business Report

BY ANNA TUCKER, SECRETARY

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## The LCMC Board of Trustees met February 5-7, 2025 in Bloomington, MN. During that meeting:

- The Board reviewed and approved the treasurer's report. They also approved a grant from the Seminary Debt Relief Fund to one applicant.
- The Board received and discussed a report from Mike Bradley including updates from the AIP teams Mike leads and a proposal for a vetting process for conflict resources.
- The Board received a report from Julie Smith about the happenings of districts and fellowships and the theology AIP team. She shared that districts can have an important role in times of disaster relief.
- The Board approved the membership of five congregations in the U.S. and 3 in Uganda.
- The Board worked on planning for the 2025 Annual Gathering, including finalizing the theme and speakers.
- The Board reviewed items from the Ministry Board, appointed Andrew Potratz as vice chair of the Ministry Board, approved revisions to the

Ministry Board charter and discussed how inquiries are tracked.

- The Board held an executive session and the search committee met.

## The LCMC Board of Trustees also met April 23-25, 2025 in Bloomington, MN. During that meeting:

- The Board reviewed and approved the treasurer's report.
- The Board received and discussed a report from Mike Bradley including updates from the AIP teams Mike leads and a discussion of the inquiry workload.
- The Board received an update from Julie Smith about a change in a district.
- The Board approved the membership of six congregations in the U.S. and three in South Sudan.
- The Board worked on planning for the 2025 Annual Gathering and the July meeting with districts and fellowships.
- The Board met with the Ministry Board and received updates from them on inquiries, certifications, the intentional interim policy, record

keeping, seminarians, seminary partnerships and new board member recommendations. These updates were discussed and recommendations were given as needed.

- The Board acted upon the recommendations of the Ministry Board and decertified two pastors. They also discussed how that is communicated to the NALC based upon legal obligations.
- The Board had discussions about caring for a congregation after a difficult inquiry, expectations and requirements for international travel on behalf of the association, and a proposal to transition the Seminary Debt Relief Fund to a scholarship due to the changes in seminary costs and eligibility for loans.
- The Board received a report from Jeremy King about his travel to Brazil on behalf of the association.
- The search committee met and offered the position of service coordinator to Julie Smith, which she accepted. This was then announced to the association. The Board discussed plans for the transition with Julie.

So what if we start thinking about "accountable" in a new way. How about "able to account?"

I am not really a finance person, but when I think about accounting I think about being aware of the resources available and the cost of resources to accomplish what is coming. If we are to be "able to account" for one another, we will need to know the resources, gifts, abilities of one another. This requires a deep awareness. We

need to "see" one another and perhaps discern the gifts and abilities God has worked into us. While this certainly takes time, often more time than we think we have, I have found that it is more than worth it.

One of the things I am most grateful for from the friends in my accountability groups is the way they were able to affirm my gifts even while knowing my struggles and shortcomings. They truly spoke the truth in love to me, living out Ephesians

4:15: "Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ."

How might we find (or make) time together within our association so that we are able to know and be connected well enough to one another so as to truly appreciate the gift that each of us are to one another and the association? How can we take advantage of the blessing of being part of one

another within LCMC to affirm and be affirmed so that together our gifts build the body of Christ and bless our neighbors. I believe that this will be the true source and power to live out our "accountable to one another" value.

To those friends who, with no doubt at all, know who they are, I say again: "Thank you for the life you breathed into me. I am truly, deeply grateful." ■

# REMEMBERING WHAT WE'RE CALLED TO

BY MIKE BRADLEY

In my previous article, “Remembering Who We Are,” I stated that my hope and prayer for our association is for health and long-term sustainability. Long-term health and sustainability are essential for the ongoing life and ministry of LCMC, and they cannot be assumed or taken for granted. I wrote that three keys to health and long-term sustainability for LCMC will be: 1) remembering who we are, 2) remembering what we’re called to, and 3) remembering where we’re going. My focus in this article is on remembering what we are called to.

Different people will have different answers when asked, “what are we called to?” One place we can begin answering this question is by remembering our mission. In 2020, as part of our strategic planning, our Board of Trustees articulated what we believe to be our God-given mission as an association: To connect and encourage Lutheran congregations in the mission of the Gospel and to develop healthy leaders for that mission.

The “what” for us is remembering that we have been called to proclaim the gospel, the good news, not of what we can do for God, but what God has done for us in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We are called to give an answer for the hope that is within us (1 Peter 3:15), and to give witness to who God is, as well as His self-sacrificing love for the world (Acts 1:8; John 3:16).

Another place we can go in answering the question, “what are we called to?” is to remember our fourth core value as an association. That value states that “we’re all working together to fulfill Christ’s Great Commission to go and make disciples of all nations.” Or, as Jesus said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy

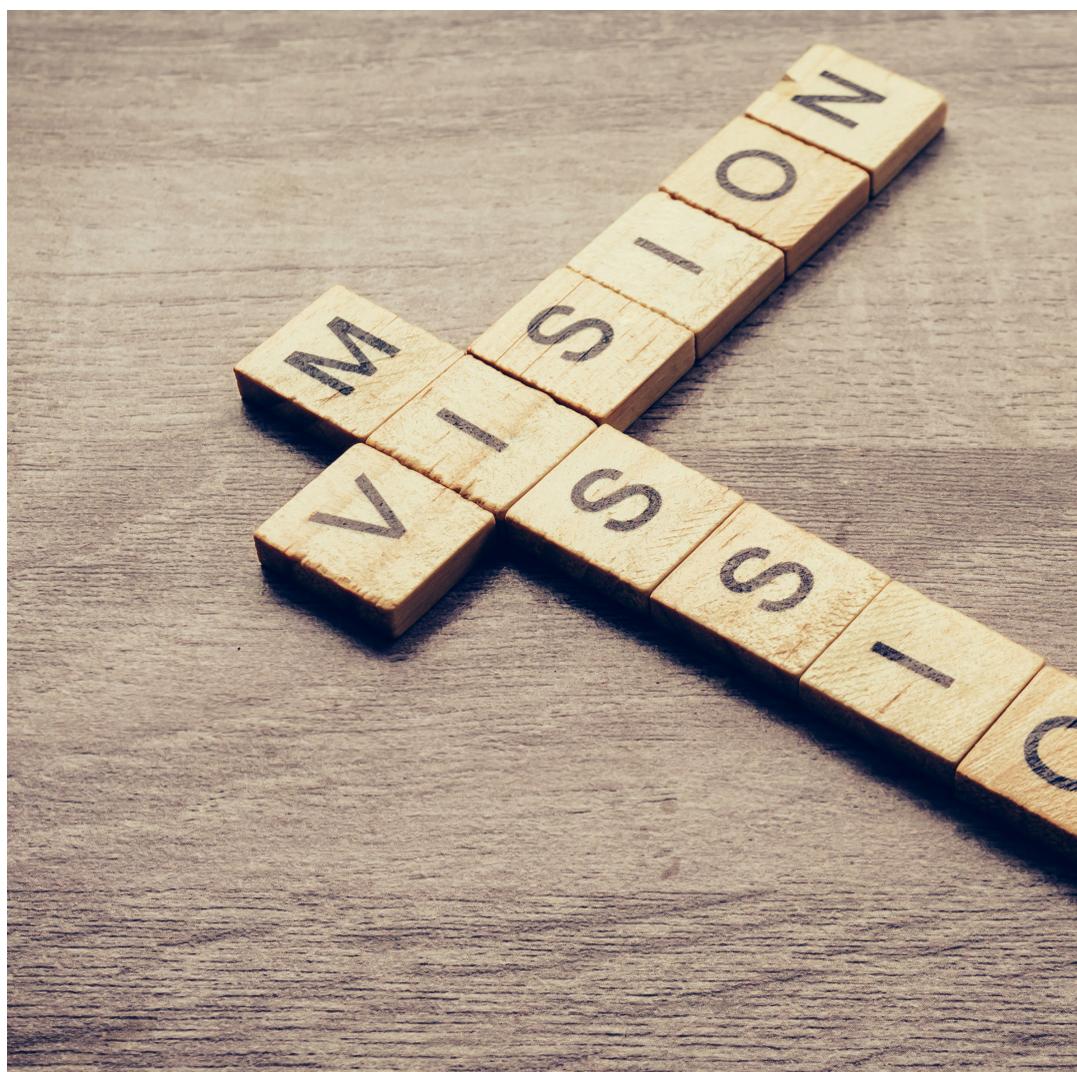
Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:18-20).

No matter your view on discipling and discipleship practices, this is something we must be intentional about. It is something we claim is one of our four core values, and without some intentionality on our part, it will simply be an aspirational rather than actual value.

That intentionality does not mean we will try to do God’s work for Him and create some kind of new works righteousness. It does mean that we will commit ourselves to not settling for theologizing about discipleship only. It means we will embrace both good praxis

and good theology as we seek to live out our fourth core value throughout our over 1,000 churches in 16 different countries.

Yet another place we can go to in answering the question, “what are we called to?” is to remember that we are not only people of the Great Commission, but also people of the Great Commandment. In Matthew 22 we are told that Jesus said, “You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: Love your neighbor as yourself. The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments” (Matthew 22:37-40). In the Gospel of John, He says: “So, now I am giving you a new



commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples” (John 13:34-35).

We will be more effective in our witness to the world, and in equipping and empowering women and men of all ages to live as followers of Jesus, when we commit ourselves to developing an atmosphere that is a safe place for authentic living. This kind of relational and emotional atmosphere will set people free to build authentic relationships and friendships, struggle without judgment, ask real questions, engage in real dialogue, and get to know the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit without fear of being rejected or discarded, lectured or shamed.

Remembering that we are people of both the Great Commission and the Great Commandment will be essential if we are to remember what we are called to as an association of congregations. And it will be an essential key to our health and long-term sustainability. ■

*“Remembering that we are people of both the Great Commission and the Great Commandment will be essential if we are to remember what we are called to as an association of congregations.”*

## LCMC EVENTS

### *District & Fellowship Leader Annual Meeting*

July 9-11 • Embassy Suites • Bloomington, MN

Contact: [julie@lcmc.net](mailto:julie@lcmc.net)

### *25th Annual Gathering & Convention*

October 5-8 • Hosanna Church • Lakeville, MN

Contact: [cathy@lcmc.net](mailto:cathy@lcmc.net)

## DISTRICTS & FELLOWSHIPS

### *Texas District Annual Gathering & Youth Event*

July 25-26 • First English Lutheran Church • Victoria, TX

Contact: [bryce@lcmctexas.org](mailto:bryce@lcmctexas.org) or 512-996-2468.

### *Heartland District Annual Gathering*

July 25-26 • Grace Lutheran Church • Walton, NE

Contact: [peacephillip@gmail.com](mailto:peacephillip@gmail.com) or (712) 579-2098

### *Retreat for Retired LCMC Pastors and Spouses*

August 25-28 • Ingham Okobojo Lutheran Bible Camp • Milford, IA

Registration: [sue.gunderson61@gmail.com](mailto:sue.gunderson61@gmail.com) or (920) 421-1944

Questions: [pastorjpn@gmail.com](mailto:pastorjpn@gmail.com) or (630) 650-0905

### *Augustana District Women of the Word Gathering*

September 20 • New Creation Lutheran Church • Perham, MN

Contact: [garden@newcreationperham.org](mailto:garden@newcreationperham.org) or (920) 421-1944

### *Iowa District Convention*

November 15 • Immanuel Lutheran Church • Waukee, IA

Contact: [joyceesschmidt@gmail.com](mailto:joyceesschmidt@gmail.com) or (641) 425-6335

## ONLINE EVENTS

### *Church Planting Conversation*

First Thursdays • 10:00 A.M. CT • Online

Contact: [erica@thetableministry.org](mailto:erica@thetableministry.org) or [bjorn@thewhychurch.org](mailto:bjorn@thewhychurch.org)

### *Support Group for Church Staff*

Second Tuesdays • 12:00 P.M. CT • Online

Contact: [office@augustanadistrict.org](mailto:office@augustanadistrict.org)

### *Intentional Interim Zoom*

Third Wednesdays • 1:00 P.M. CT • Online

Contact: [PastorDawnSpies@gmail.com](mailto:PastorDawnSpies@gmail.com)

### *Districts & Fellowship Leaders Zoom*

Fourth Tuesdays • 3:00 P.M. CT • Online

Contact: [julie@lcmc.net](mailto:julie@lcmc.net)

### *Seminarian Connection*

August 26 & November 25 • 7:30 P.M. • Online

Contact: [prbecky@faithfellowshipodessa.org](mailto:prbecky@faithfellowshipodessa.org) or [andrew.potratz123@gmail.com](mailto:andrew.potratz123@gmail.com)

\*\*\*New events are added regularly at [www.lcmc.net/calendar](http://www.lcmc.net/calendar).\*\*\*

# SUMMER READING

*Looking to stretch your mind, relax by the lake, or just enjoy reading? Leaders from across the association have recommended the following books from their recently read list. Check out the great selection of theology, memoirs, and practical ministry texts to add to your summer reading list. By Christian Huntley.*

## **THE NICENE CREED**

*By Philip Cary*

Meaty and accessible at the same time, this book offers a nice sense of Christian doctrine and why it matters as distinct from other kinds of beliefs.

## **A-TUMBLIN' DOWN**

*By Sarah Hinlicky Wilson*

This is a novel about a pastor's family written by Sarah, who grew up as a pastor's daughter, and became a pastor and theologian herself. This one would be especially appreciated by Lutheran audiences who know, love, and can laugh at the culture of typical Lutheran churches. If you prefer audiobooks, this one is read by Sarah herself.

## **MY ALL FOR HIM: FALLING IN LOVE WITH JESUS ALL OVER AGAIN**

*By Basilea Schlink*

This is a devotional book that can be read again and again. Basilea Schlink was a German Lutheran who lived through World War II and founded the Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary (a Lutheran-based ecumenical

monastery). Hers is a fascinating story, and I fell in love with it! Her writing is powerful and beautiful. This book also helped me to keep the main thing the main thing.

## **SECULOSITY: HOW CAREER, PARENTING, TECHNOLOGY, FOOD, POLITICS, AND ROMANCE BECAME OUR NEW RELIGION AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT**

*By David Zahl*

Participation in organized religion in the United States is on the decline, but what is filling the void? In his book, Zahl argues that career, parenting, technology, food, politics and romance have replaced organized religion as a source of identity and purpose, leading to burnout and mental health problems.

## **THE DEVIL IN PEW NUMBER SEVEN**

*By Rebecca Nichols Alonza  
and Bob Demoss*

This is a non-fiction story of a pastor and the guy in pew seven that wanted to control the church. My wife told me I had to read it.

## **THE FUTURE IS BIVOCATIONAL: SHAPING CHRISTIAN LEADERS FOR A POST- CHRISTIAN WORLD**

*By Andrew Hamilton*

This book explores the advantages and potential obstacles of serving in a bivocational ministry role through the author's personal experience and insight.

## **SURPRISED BY HOPE**

*By N.T. Wright*

As people look to the future, they are tempted to fear or despair. Wright helps ground followers of Jesus in a future that is full of hope and actually worth looking forward to!

## **WINGFEATHER SAGA**

*By Andrew Peterson*

A great series for the family to read together! In this epic battle between good and evil, the intrepid heroes must confront danger and cling to one another in order to fight back the looming shadows that threaten to overtake everything they love. Peterson weaves in a beautiful case for our true identity and a not-so-subtle gospel analogy. It's great!

## **THE ART OF DISAGREEING: HOW TO KEEP CALM AND STAY FRIENDS IN HARD CONVERSATIONS**

*By Gavin Ortlund*

When it comes to interacting with others, disagreements are inevitable. This book offers practical insight on how to approach disagreements in a way that can lead to better love and understanding in your relationships.

## **BEING A SAFE PLACE FOR THE DANGEROUS KIND**

*By Michael Bradley*

As LCMC's outgoing service coordinator, Mike wants to leave a legacy of healthier leaders and congregations. This book isn't about what we do, but how we can be the kind of leaders God designed us to be. We can, in turn, create safe places for broken people like us to find emotional, relational, and spiritual wholeness. Mike says, "At minimum, read the first 100 pages, then, let's dialogue on thoughts or questions." He wants to continue the conversation with leaders across the association.



## *LCMC Staff Picks:*

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*Summer is the perfect time to dive into a good book. Here, LCMC staff members Julie Smith, Christian Huntley, and Mike Bradley offer their summer reading picks.*



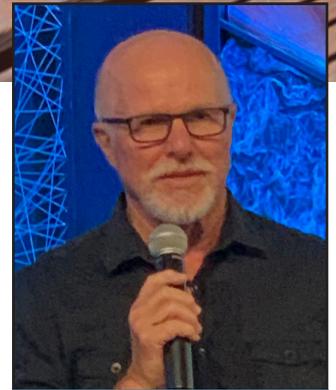
**JULIE SMITH**  
Service  
Coordinator

***Luther on Vocation*** by Gustaf Wingren. This book speaks to the perennial question of what it means to be a Christian in the world.



**CHRISTIAN HUNTLEY**  
Coordinator for Leadership  
and Pastoral Development

***Flourishing in Ministry: How To Cultivate Clergy Wellbeing*** by Matt Bloom. The pressures of pastoral ministry on individuals and families is changing. This book identifies key areas of self-care for pastors and ways that congregations can support their pastors. It is possible for pastors – and their families – to enjoy a lifetime in ministry!



**MIKE BRADLEY**  
Outgoing  
Service Coordinator

***The Farside Off The Wall Day To Day Calendar*** by Gary Larson. Who doesn't like a good laugh everyday?

Mike also recommends checking out his book, ***Being a Safe Place for the Dangerous Kind.***

# UGANDA'S LOVE OF GOD

*An LCMC mission team discovers contagious joy in an unexpected place.*

BY EBASSA BERHANU

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. As I reflect on my years in ministry, I'm in awe that I have now been serving full-time for 13 years—how quickly time passes! Over these years, my understanding of Acts 1:8 has evolved in profound ways.

As I write this article, we have just finished celebrating Reformation Sunday—a time to reflect on how Martin Luther's encounter with the risen Lord transformed his life and reshaped the course of Christian history. His deep study of Scripture not only sparked a movement for religious freedom, but also deepened our understanding of what it means to be children of God marked by grace.

Acts 1:8 has been a convicting passage for me, shaping my understanding of what it means to be a witness of the cross—locally (Jerusalem), regionally (Judea), nationally (Samaria), and globally (to the ends of the earth). I won't lie; this is a daunting task, yet it is a privilege to serve as God's conduit for sharing the life-changing message of Jesus Christ in every corner of the world. Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd strives to be a faithful witness in these areas, but there is still much work ahead.

Last summer, fifteen of us, including my teenage daughter, had the incredible opportunity to travel to Uganda. We visited our missionary partner, Michael De La Rocha, in Tororo, Uganda, in





collaboration with Smile Africa, an NGO dedicated to helping marginalized and vulnerable citizens—especially widows and children orphaned by AIDS. Our trip to Uganda was filled with memorable moments, but one thing truly stands out: the "Ugandan's love of God." Their exuberant praise and worship, marked by joyful dancing and shouts of celebration for our risen King, was so contagious that we, the "frozen chosen," couldn't help but join in our own awkward way. This experience is forever etched in our hearts. Everywhere we went, we met individuals grappling with poverty, where the Lord's prayer of "give us today our daily bread" took on a literal meaning—seeking nourishment for

their bodies. Yet, despite the hunger and the harsh challenges they faced each day, their joy in the Lord remained unshaken. Witnessing this profound joy in their lives was transformative for all of us.

If your congregation is seeking a meaningful opportunity to support a worthy NGO in Africa, I wholeheartedly recommend standing with Smile Africa. Likewise, if you are looking to sponsor a dedicated missionary, I encourage you to prayerfully consider supporting Michael De La Rocha. To learn more about Smile Africa or Michael's impactful work, please feel free to reach out to me via email at [pastorebassa@lcgs.net](mailto:pastorebassa@lcgs.net).

Let us be faithful witnesses right here in

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***"Yet, despite the hunger and the harsh challenges they faced each day, their joy in the Lord remained unshaken."***

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our own "Jerusalem" and then reach out to Judea, Samaria, and, yes, even to the ends of the earth, sharing God's love for us in Christ Jesus. May we be a church on mission for Jesus Christ, living out His call to share His love with all. ■

# WHY GET BEHIND LCMC?

*How a supreme court justice in Minnesota helped establish LCMC.*



I look forward to seeing many of my friends in the WordAlone/LCMC universe at the 25th LCMC Annual Gathering and Convention, October 5 through October 8, 2025, at Hosanna Church in Lakeville, Minnesota. As part of that event, I've been asked to provide some background on my involvement with LCMC.

For those who don't know—and there is absolutely no reason why you should know—I was a member of the original WordAlone board of directors, the chair of the drafting committee that produced the constitution that governs the affairs of the association and the first chair of the Board of Trustees of the association. I sought none of these positions and, unlike the leaders of nearly all Christian denominations throughout history in the United States, I have never had any formal theological education; more specifically, I was a trial and general practice lawyer in rural Minnesota with no connection to Lutheran or religious organizations (other than my local congregation, of course).

So how did all this happen? Perhaps apocryphally, Harold MacMillian, prime minister of the United Kingdom, when asked what the greatest influence on his administration was, responded, “Events, my dear boy, events.” So it is with my personal history with LCMC—events happened.

First, a little personal history will help with this story. My background is in law, not theology; I graduated from an ELCA college (Gustavus), the University of Minnesota Law School. I practiced law

in two smaller communities in Minnesota and then spent 25 years as a member of appellate courts, first as a judge on the Minnesota Court of Appeals and the last 19 years as an associate justice on the Minnesota Supreme Court.

I'm something of a nerd, both by natural inclination and experience. When my "home" congregation from Mankato, Minnesota, sent its youth group to the (then) ALC national youth convention in New York City in 1970, as one of the youngest members at the convention, I volunteered to be the "official" delegate from our church—a job nobody else wanted. I attended the business meeting, argued with the other delegates, pointed out parliamentary procedure errors, and voted on various pointless resolutions as my fellow Minnesota travelers had a good time touring the city. As I recall, our national convention was against the Vietnam war, for various social movements and legislation, and didn't much like President Nixon. But just as with public policy resolutions passed by denominational governing bodies today, absolutely nobody paid any attention to what we thought. I will return to the topic of those public policy resolutions a little later in this piece.

My personal relationship with what we today know as LCMC had three phases, and I stumbled into each phase seriatim—the Lutheran Commentator phase, the creation of and events surrounding the WordAlone organization, and finally, the authorization for, and launching of, the theological "lifeboat"

that we today call Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ.

One of those "events" was my attendance at a local ELCA synod convention. I was not impressed. Much time was spent on public policy issues, resolutions of various sorts, and relatively little time on the principal duty of any congregational member, supporting and advancing The Great Commission. And then, another event happened. At that convention, I bumped into some of the principals behind the Lutheran Commentator newsletter, and that began a two-decade writing and editing relationship about issues of concern to Lutherans.

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***“My personal relationship with what we today know as LCMC had three phases, and I stumbled into each phase seriatim—the Lutheran Commentator phase, the creation of and events surrounding the WordAlone organization, and finally, the authorization for, and launching of, the theological “lifeboat” that we today call Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ.”***

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Lutheran Commentator had a long and significant history, even though the "run" of each newsletter probably never exceeded more than a few thousand copies. Founded by Rev. Meg Madson, and with Jim Torgerson as the editor, Commentator took on both theological and organizational issues important to Lutherans and did so for almost two decades (from 1987 to 2005).

One of the topics Lutheran

Commentator addressed, with increasing frequency, was the ELCA obsession with ecumenical agreements. In particular, two proposed agreements with the ECUSA (Episcopal Church) were, in our view, strikingly inconsistent with Lutheran theology, the Concordat (which failed at the Philadelphia ELCA assembly) and Called to Common Mission, which, unfortunately, was ratified at the 1999 Denver ELCA churchwide assembly.

As part of the resistance to those ecumenical agreements, along with other issues, the WordAlone movement was born. In turn, the WordAlone movement created a new Lutheran organization: Lutheran

at the very first WordAlone convention to create a "lifeboat" for Lutherans, and ultimately, that "lifeboat" became LCMC.

There was no master plan, there were only "events" that led to the need to make decisions about what came next.

It's important to understand that it was a group effort that underlies what LCMC has become today. There were three "original" LCMC representatives on the WordAlone Board: Debra Lingen from Nebraska, Robin Lake from Idaho, and Rev. William Sullivan from Michigan; Sullivan later became the first service coordinator of the association. Contributions were made by others who never formally affiliated with LCMC: the late Albert Quie, former governor of Minnesota, who was instrumental in the creation of WordAlone, Rev. Roger Eigenfeld, the first leader of WordAlone, members of the Board of Directors of WordAlone, and many others.

Planning is important. Preparation for the future is important. And we will be planning for, and preparing for, the future of Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ when we gather at Hosanna Church in October 2025. But whatever "events" are in our future as an association, we know that He is with us every step of the way. (Joshua 1:9). ■

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*You can catch Barry serving as a keynote speaker at this year's Annual Gathering & Convention. Visit our website for more information, including the event schedule.*

Barry Anderson retired from the Minnesota Supreme Court in May 2024. He is a member of Hosanna Church in Lakeville, Minnesota. In addition to serving on the governing boards of WordAlone and Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ, he was an early member of, and has returned to, the Board of Trustees of a Lutheran seminary, the Institute of Lutheran Theology.

# OUR HELP AND HOPE

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*Celebrating the past and looking forward to the future at our 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Gathering & Convention. By Julie Smith.*

Somewhere in a box that has moved from house to house over the last 27 years, there is a blue mug with the WordAlone logo and the slogan, “Together we can make a difference.” It was a sort of rallying cry for those who were trying to imagine a different future for the Lutheran church than the one we seemed to be headed toward. We imagined a church that was not defined with political labels, one in which diverse opinions on all sorts of issues could exist side by side, as long as we had agreement on the main thing.

That was the movement that gave birth to LCMC. Starting with a couple dozen churches building what we often referred to as a “lifeboat,” I’m not sure we really knew what we were getting into. Would we have called it a “lifeboat” if we thought we would still be in it 25 years later? Would we have called it that if we had imagined, not a couple dozen churches, but more than a thousand? Maybe not.

With all the idealism and excitement that comes with something new, even though we knew we weren’t creating the “perfect” church, we hoped to have learned some things from our experience and make new mistakes, rather than simply repeating the old ones. Twenty-five years into this experiment that is LCMC I think we can say we have succeeded at that. We have made our own mistakes, and, hopefully, learned some things from them.

The theme of our Annual Gathering this year is “Our Help and Hope.” It comes from the old hymn “O God, Our Help in Ages Past.” The first verse of that hymn speaks to the reality of life in the church:

*O God our help in ages past  
Our hope for years to come  
Our shelter from the stormy blast  
And our eternal home.*

At this 25th Annual Gathering of LCMC, we will spend some time reflecting on how God has been our help these past 25 years, seeing us through all that has come our way. He has been our help in the midst of difficulty. He has been our help when we have celebrated growth and new opportunities. He has been our help when new challenges have confronted us. He has been our help when we have had difficult decisions to make. He has been our help in ways seen and unseen. We give thanks for the Lord’s steadfast presence in our midst.

To remind us of where we’ve been, we will hear from some of the charter members of LCMC. They will refresh our memories on the issues that drove the

formation of LCMC and our hopes for what this association would be. They will bear witness to how God has been our help.

In addition to celebrating our 25th gathering, we also have an opportunity this year to hear from LCMC members around the globe. As of this writing, there are 19 countries with at least one LCMC congregation. Some of them have been with LCMC since the beginning! Many of these churches are delivering the hope of Christ among people who have never heard the name of Jesus before.

We look forward to hearing their stories in a variety of breakout sessions and meet and greets.

While we are excited to celebrate what God has begun among us, our time together will not be one of merely looking back. We will also have a variety of breakouts and a couple of keynotes that focus on the future of our congregations. What are the “stormy blasts” confronting the church today? What are the challenges, the opportunities, the hopes, the fears that impact our witness? And how is God preparing us to meet whatever the future brings?

As we look forward to the years ahead, we do so in the confidence that the one who has been our help in the past is also our hope for years to come. The Lord is faithful to his people, and where his Word is proclaimed, there are his people. Our confidence and hope are

passengers either.

The one who has been our help, the one who is our hope, this one, finally, is our eternal home. Whether we think of LCMC as a lifeboat or a fishing boat or an aircraft carrier or a cruise ship, one thing is certain. It is temporary. We cannot fall into the temptation of imagining that we are building Christ’s eternal kingdom. Perhaps that’s why the other image that grew out of our earliest days is more helpful – the big tent.

A tent, by its very nature, is a temporary home. We do not expect to live in a tent forever. When we speak of “our hope for years to come” we are not speaking of our hopes for LCMC. We are not speaking of our hope that we will grow bigger and stronger and more effective and more organized. We’re not even speaking of our hope that we will be better witnesses. We are not gathering

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*“Perhaps that’s why the other image that grew out of our earliest days is more helpful – the big tent. A tent, by its very nature, is a temporary home. We do not expect to live in a tent forever.”*

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not in the systems we build or the great vision we have. Our confidence is in the Lord’s enduring faithfulness.

For reasons that I don’t want to contemplate too much, my computer keeps showing me stories about people who live on cruise ships. They’re not going anywhere. They have just found that, somehow, it makes economic sense for them to live on a cruise ship. We can hardly call LCMC a lifeboat any longer. But hopefully we don’t start to think about it as a cruise ship on which we are permanent

to talk to ourselves about ourselves.

We are gathering to share the Gospel of Christ Jesus – the hope of the world. We are gathering to be renewed in that hope so that, for as long as we live in this big tent that is LCMC, we will be moved to invite others to find shelter from the stormy blasts of life in the arms of our Savior.

We hope to see you in Lakeville in October. If you’re on the fence about whether to attend, I leave you with this. There will be cake! ■

# ANNUAL GATHERING

*Get ready for this year's Annual Gathering & Convention with these planning and travel tips. More detailed information can be found on our website. By Kristy Thomas and Christian Huntley.*

## *Livestream:*

Each year, we livestream the main session of the Annual Gathering & Convention from our website. If you were ever curious how many people tune in online and from where, so were we! Last year, our friends at FaithLife Church in Marion, Iowa shared this viewer map with us. Each day, hundreds of viewers tuned in online. While most were located across the U.S., we also had viewers from Canada, Mexico, Uruguay, South Korea, and India.

**Tip:** A livestream link will be available on the "Annual Gathering" page of our website in October.



## *Register Early:*

All participants must register for the event in advance. A discounted rate is in effect through **July 31**. The deadline to sign up is **September 15**. Please plan ahead and register early! To register online, go to [www.lcmc.net/25-ag/registration](http://www.lcmc.net/25-ag/registration).

## *Book a Hotel:*

If you plan on booking a room under one of the LCMC hotel blocks, our staff recommends making your hotel arrangements as soon as you have registered for the event to guarantee your spot. For more info, go to [www.lcmc.net/ag-maps-hotels](http://www.lcmc.net/ag-maps-hotels).

## *Getting There:*

Minneapolis-Saint Paul Airport (MSP) is approximately 15-25 minutes away from Hosanna Church and the hotels in our block. The hotels listed on our website do not offer shuttle service to the airport or the church, so plan accordingly.

## *Upon Arrival:*

You may pick up your registration packet at Hosanna Church beginning at 4:00 P.M. on Sunday. Volunteers will be available on site to help direct you. Sunday's program will feature opening worship, dinner, dessert, and fellowship time.

# Things to Do in Lakeville

**T**ucked just south of the Twin Cities, Lakeville, Minnesota, is more than a bustling suburb—it offers all the names you want as well as quaint local shops and access to activities across the region. Whether you're landing at our number one rated airport right before the first session or spending extra-time in Minnesota, take time to relax at one of many sites not called Luther Seminary or the giant mall.

## ***DOWNTOWN LAKEVILLE: SMALL-TOWN CHARM, BIG-HEARTED SPOTS***

There's just something about a good cup of coffee—especially when paired with friendly faces and a peaceful atmosphere. Tapestry Coffee is a local favorite with warm hospitality, excellent lattes, and cozy nooks made for journaling or deep conversation. Just around the corner is Niche Bookstore, a charming indie shop stocked with thoughtfully selected titles—from classics to local authors. Ready for a refill? Another can't-miss spot is Idioma Coffee Roastery & Lighthouse Kitchen + Café, a mission-minded café where community, coffee, and cause come together. With ethically sourced beans and fresh bites, it's a beautiful reminder that everyday spaces can serve a purpose. (Make sure to check their hours.)

When hunger strikes, there's no shortage of comfort food

nearby. Baldy's BBQ serves up smoky, slow-cooked favorites like brisket, ribs, and pulled pork—simple and satisfying. Prefer something classic? Red Savoy Pizza offers the kind of Minnesota-style pie that keeps locals coming back: square-cut, loaded with toppings, and tangy with their signature “Sota-style” sauce.

## ***LAKEVILLE'S ARTS SCENE: WALK, WONDER, REFLECT***

Lakeville has a surprisingly vibrant art presence! Begin at the Lakeville Area Arts Center, housed in a beautifully restored former church. It hosts rotating exhibits, local performances, and hands-on workshops—all centered on building community through the arts. Then step outside for the Lakeville Art Walk, a self-guided walking tour featuring outdoor sculptures sprinkled throughout downtown. It's a meditative way to take in the town.

## ***REGIONAL GEMS BEYOND LAKEVILLE***

If you're looking to stretch your legs—and your imagination—there are powerful experiences just a short drive from town. For you music lovers, Paisley Park, Prince's former home and studio in Chanhassen, is more than a museum; it's a place where art, music, fashion, and culture are celebrated, energized, and inspired by the visionary creative spirit of

Prince.

Further north in Minneapolis, the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden offers an inspiring outdoor collection, including the iconic Spoonbridge and Cherry. It's a beautiful place to walk, pray, or just enjoy a bit of silence amid contemporary art.

For all you Swedish Lutherans coming to town, another Twin Cities highlight is the American Swedish Institute. This cultural center that blends Nordic history, architecture, and art. Set in a historic mansion, it's perfect for those drawn to stories of migration and resilience woven into everyday life.

If your soul is stirred most by the natural world, don't miss the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum in nearby Chaska. With more than 1,200 acres of gardens, prairies, and woodlands, it's a breathtaking place for simply soaking in God's creation. Nearby, the area offers a variety of hiking trails—from the rolling hills of Lebanon Hills Regional Park to the lakeside paths of Murphy-Hanrehan Park Reserve. Whether you're an early-morning hiker or a sunset stroller, these trails offer a deeply restorative way to connect with the land and your thoughts.

To fill in your schedule—or keep it beautifully empty—check out Visit Lakeville ([visitlakeville.org](http://visitlakeville.org)) for up-to-date info on parks, events, and hidden gems.

## **STRONGER TOGETHER**

The LCMC Annual Gathering & Convention is more than just speakers and a business meeting. It also serves as a way to facilitate better connection between pastors, church leaders, church members, and people who may be new to LCMC. Check out some of these opportunities for relationship building.

### ***MEET AND GREETES:***

We're organizing meet and greets to help connect people in LCMC who share an interest in the same areas of ministry.

### ***DISTRICT MEETINGS:***

Ministry doesn't need to happen in a vacuum. That's why in LCMC, we have brought forth an initiative to strengthen, revitalize, and grow our districts and fellowships and facilitate better collaboration between congregations. If you are interested in connecting with a district or fellowship, these meetings are the perfect opportunity to learn more and ask any questions you may have.

### ***EXHIBITOR AREA:***

Representatives from various mission and ministry organizations will have display tables set up during the event.

***FELLOWSHIP:*** Shared meals offer unstructured opportunities to get to know other people in LCMC.



7000 North Sheldon Road  
Canton, MI 48187

*Who We Are:* We are an association of congregations and individuals who are 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.



### Stay Connected

We offer monthly emails with upcoming events, current announcements, resources for congregations and church leaders, and more! To sign up, go to [www.lcmc.net/enewsletter](http://www.lcmc.net/enewsletter).



### Download Our App

Stay up to date on blog posts and announcements, find quick access to our calendar and directories, and stream videos. To learn more and watch a demo video, visit [www.lcmc.net/download-our-app](http://www.lcmc.net/download-our-app).



### Find a Church

Search for an LCMC congregation near you (or the place where you're headed) with our congregation finder tool, available in our mobile app and on our website at [www.lcmc.net/congregation-finder](http://www.lcmc.net/congregation-finder).

### *Contact Us:*

LCMC ● 7000 N Sheldon Rd ● Canton, MI 48187 ● [www.lcmc.net](http://www.lcmc.net)

**Write for Our Newsletter:** [www.lcmc.net/write-for-our-newsletter](http://www.lcmc.net/write-for-our-newsletter)