



VOLUME 7 ISSUE 3

The Happenings

USA — Canada

SEPTEMBER 2023

23rd Annual Gathering & Convention Recap - Here's What You Need to Know



One question for us to continually consider is how can we, as an association of congregations, all work together to help fulfill Christ's Great Commission to go and make disciples of all nations?

According to the annual gathering recap, 617 people from across the association joined together in St. Charles, Missouri, October 1-4 for Lutheran Congregations in Mission

for Christ's 23rd Annual Gathering & Convention to figure out just that.

Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ's **Annual Gathering** is a four-day event featuring keynote speakers, worship and Bible study, breakout sessions, vendors, and plenty of opportunities for fellowship and networking. One such eagerly anticipated and well-attended opportunity is the LCMC NW District's Hospitality Night. There you will find all sorts of networking in seriousness with frivolity, happening. During this come-and-go event you are sure to find church representatives seeking pastors, prayer happening, music and ministry collaboration, along with good old-fashioned snacks and "Luther" inspired refreshments.

Whether you're new to LCMC, just checking us out for the first time, or a long-time member looking to make new friends and reunite with old ones, the Annual Gathering is the place to be, especially if you expect to get inspired, get informed, get trained and equipped for ministry and get connected with other LCMC-ers! I always leave feeling informed, refreshed, renewed, and spiritually reinvigorated for ministry.

I have an insatiable desire for note-taking. So here are a few of my takeaways from this year's gathering:

Monday's morning keynote presentation by LCMC Service Coordinator Mike Bradley was followed by a panel discussion with members of the LCMC Board of Trustees. Mike reminded us that "working together is essential if we are to keep moving forward. Every congregation, every 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 is why "All Hands on Deck" was chosen for the theme of the gathering."

On Monday afternoon, participants had the opportunity to take part in focus groups to weigh in on some of the challenges that we as an association are facing as we move forward into a new season of doing life and ministry together.

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continued next page

Ed Stetzer, Dean of Talbot School of Theology at Biola University and Scholar in Residence & Teaching Pastor at Mariners Church, served as keynote speaker on Tuesday morning. Stetzer, a missiologist, spoke about how Post-Covid Missiology cautions us to understand that “the moment we are in does not hinder the mission we are on.” He went on to say that the pandemic does not only apply to sickness and that there are three ongoing realities, all of which have impacted the North American church, that we should be attuned to. Stetzer is convinced there are six other pandemics present in our culture we should also be attuned to. See [“Six Other Pandemics We Need to Talk About.”](#)

Daily Bible studies were led by Jody Skogen (Pastor, Oasis Church). Pr. Jody spoke on **Vision:** How is the Body of Christ being called and *why*?

Based on 1 Corinthians chapter 12, the Functioning of the Body of Christ reminds us how the Apostle Paul was the biggest persecutor of Christ until the day he personally encountered the Living God face to face which challenged him to think differently.

Paul reminds his people to be focused on the “Why” of what they are being called to do. Paul reminds us that we are a team...called to function together and suffer together to fill the gap between the gospel call and what we are called to do in response to The Great Commission (Mt. 28:16-20... which is to do life together all for the sake of telling it ‘from the mountain’! The King is the adequate solution to our problem, to our sin, and to our humanness. We are not. When the Gospel is proclaimed, God gets the credit. It is clearly a “team sport.”



Julie Smith (Coordinator for Districts and Fellowships, LCMC) gave the closing keynote address reminding us that “The church has just one primary mission...to make Christ known. And that 1) the mission is clear, and 2) the process is really messy. This gospel we have been given and that we share is what makes the church the church. Our mission is to share it, it is clear.”

Julie further goes on to say, that “the work of being the church together can sometimes be slow, long, tedious, annoying, and

expensive...but with Christ at the center, it becomes beautiful.”

As you are able, check out videos from the Annual Gathering which are now available on the LCMC website under Events/[Annual Gathering](#)/Annual Gathering Videos.

How is it that we can all work together to help fulfill Christ’s Great Commission to go and make disciples of all nations in some new and creative ways?? Let’s commit as the great LCMC NW District, to keep weighing in together on some of the challenges that we face as an association, as we enter a new season of doing life and ministry together. We hope to see you for the **LCMC NW District Gathering on April 12-13 at Christ Community Lutheran Church** in beautiful Lebanon, Oregon!

The **2024 LCMC Annual Gathering & Convention**, will take place **September 29 - October 1, 2024** at **St. Mark’s Lutheran Church** in Marion, Iowa. Be sure to save the date!

As we near the season of Advent soon to embark on a new church year, on behalf of your LCMC Northwest District Council, we wish you the Peace and Blessings of our Lord Jesus Christ as you prepare your hearts for the beginning of the good news of Christ Jesus, the Son of God. (Mark 1:1).

Pastor Donna Zipp
LCMC NW District Vice Chair



LCMC
ANNUAL GATHERING
St. Charles 2023 Missouri



The Priesthood of Believers – Called to Serve! Lay Leadership Development Training Now Available

Lay worship leaders are encouraged to attend a 4-session course offered by St. Paul Lutheran Seminary which will look at the components of Lutheran Worship, how to plan and how to lead a worship service, while answering questions frequently on the lay leader's heart and mind regarding worship.

Lay leaders who provide occasional pulpit supply in their local congregations, as well as those who may be sensing a call to ministry and are interested in exploring a bit are encouraged to sign up for the Lay Worship Leading and Lay Preaching classes offered by St. Paul Lutheran Seminary and taught by Pr. Julie Smith.

The Lay Worship Leaders training is offered as an online course starting Tuesday, November 7 at 6:00 PM. The Lay Preaching training is offered online in two parts and the next class starts on Thursday evening, November 2nd at 6 PM CT. The fee for each class is \$50 per person or \$100 per congregation for each Part 1 and 2 course. To register, contact Jon Jensen at jjensen@semle.org

To encourage the development of lay pastoral worship leaders in the Northwest District, the District Council recently allocated up to \$1000 annually to be used for this purpose. To use this fund for reimbursement, please send a copy of the registration to Mot Hedges, Northwest District LCMC treasurer at: motleyhedges@charter.net

or via mail to:

Mot Hedges
Richland Lutheran Church
901 Van Giesen Street
Richland, WA 99354



HAVE YOU HEARD?

NEWS AROUND THE NORTHWEST

Transitions abound and God is doing great things across the Northwest! In this edition of The Happenings, we thank God for leading and guiding five new pastors to Northwest congregations with such wisdom and care. We pray God's blessing upon their ministries together. May the Lord's blessing be upon them, that their love for serving the Lord will become ever stronger and more joyful. In the coming days, reach out to these pastors, welcome them to the area and encourage them!



Pastor Patrick Jones who was installed as pastor at Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Longview, Washington on July 30th. He is pictured here with his wife Kathy, Pastor Nate Hanson and wife, as well as some of his friends from Idaho.

Patrick writes, "I preached my first sermon at Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Longview, WA on Sunday June 25. Pastor Nate Hanson presided at my installation service. One of my favorite songs, "Love them like Jesus" was sung by Dyonnis Christina, our Music Director, and the entire congregation was invited up to lay hands on me and Pastor Nate led us in a prayer. There were 165 people in attendance with ten coming in from my old church in Idaho. And of course, we had a wonderful lunch after the service.

God is doing good things at Emmanuel, or ELC as I like to call it. We are averaging about 140 on any given Sunday, we have re-started Children's Church during the services, and God willing, we will be recruiting a new Youth Director soon! The people at ELC and all over Longview have been especially kind to Kathy and I as we settle in to our new home on a hill in Rose Valley. We are thrilled to be part of the NW District of the LCMC!"



Pastor Eric Lundberg was installed as pastor at Living Word Lutheran Church in Graham, Washington on October 1st. He is pictured with Pastor Jay Thompson and Pastor Paul Braafladt, one of the founders of the Northwest District. Pastor Eric is new to our district and he has a beautiful story to share about how he has followed God's lead to Living Word Lutheran Church. Congratulations and welcome Pastor Eric!

Pastor Kelly Westlund was ordained as a minister of Word and Sacrament at Richland Lutheran Church in Richland, Washington on Oct. 1st. She has accepted a call to serve at Zion Lutheran Church in Kent, Washington. May the Lord fill Kelly with joy as she walks the path He has chosen for her!



Pastor Corey Smith was installed as the new pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church in Hemiston, Oregon on Sunday, October 8th. Also pictured are Pastor Kelly Westlund, Pastor Carol Ann Buelow and Pastor Ian Wolfe (NALC). May the Lord continue to sustain you by His grace.

Pastor Travis Powers was installed as the new pastor at Christ Lutheran Church in Odessa, WA on October 15. Back Row (left to right): Mot Hedges, Pastor Carol Ann Buelow, Pastor Travis Powers and Maureen (Moe) Bessey. Front row (left to right): Pastor Donna Zipp and Shelley Hauge. May the Lord bless and keep you as you continue to serve Him.



Community of Faith Church “Bar Talks”

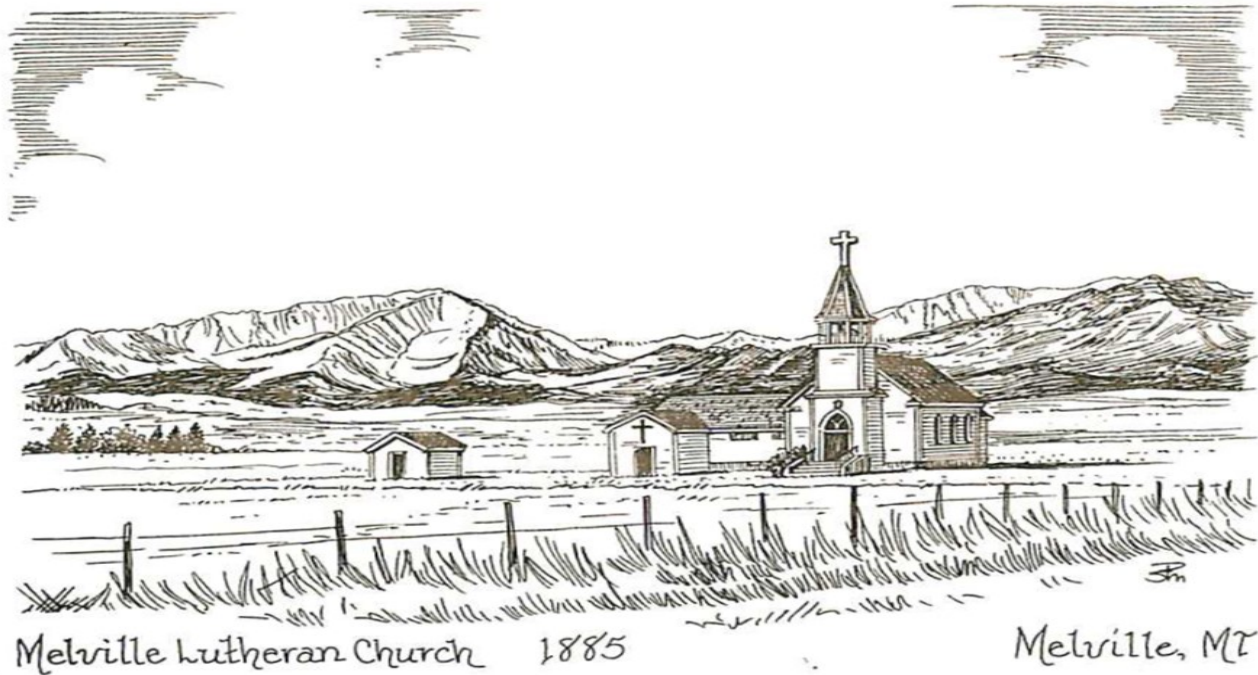
Community of Faith Church in West Linn, Oregon is taking a page right out of Martin Luther’s “Table Talk” playbook. The church is taking the conversation directly to their community through monthly “Bar Talks.” Situated amid a small, but thriving, main street, Community of Faith is intentional about reaching out to their neighbors and utilizing their services. Nineteen33 Taproom is just three doors down and has graciously opened their doors on the last Tuesday of every month from 6 – 8 pm. The church purchases the first drink for all who attend, and food is available for purchase.

“This has been a fantastic outreach to our community,” said Pastor David Sorensen, lead pastor of Community of Faith Church. “People are searching for something, but they don’t know what that is. We want to engage them where they’re at and show them the love of Jesus.”

The two most recent Bar Talks in May and June generated the largest crowds to date – standing room only! The topics, *Where is God in Pain, Loss and Suffering?* in which two church members shared their testimonies of loss and suffering but finding hope in Jesus, and “What Freedom Means” with an Afghan refugee and a U.S. Air Force Captain who talked about freedom in our nation and freedom in Christ. Both evenings touched many people as the discussion continued long after the formal event ended. The Holy Spirit was moving in the room and community members were curious to learn more.

Other topics that have been explored include, *Searching for Faith in a Cynical Age; Faith, Medicine and Ethics: On Human Dignity; Beyond Tolerance to Tenacious Love*, among others. Speakers have been seminary professors, authors, and church members. “We look forward to connecting with our community on many more topics in the months ahead,” Sorensen said.





Dear friends at NW District,

We are so grateful for the generous donation you blessed us with. Its magnitude has met many of our financial needs to complete our renovation.

Our goal is to finally, after 138 years, accommodate those who haven't had safe and comfortable access to our place of worship.

Your financial boost, as well as your prayers, have been a blessing to our congregation and are sincerely appreciated.

Peace be with you,

Melville Lutheran Church

We pray God's blessings upon Pastor Julie Gellert (Melville Lutheran Church, Melville, MT) as she retires and heads to Colorado to enjoy her brand-new grandbaby! Julie started her pastoral ministry at Faith Lutheran Church in Sequin, TX and has been a wonderful blessing to the church, and especially our NW District having also served the congregations of Pondera Valley Lutheran Church and Golden West Lutheran Church, Conrad, Montana; and St. Paul Lutheran Church in Kodiak, Alaska! May you look back over your ministry with satisfaction for a job well done! We are all going to miss you!



Preparing New Pastors for Ministry Pastor Steve Ernst, Richland Lutheran Church

There has been and continues to be a pastoral shortage in the Christian Church in America. Among the reasons for this include the increasing age of the average pastor, 57 compared to 50 in 2000, according to Lifeway Research; the ongoing labor shortage to include clergy, reported by the Wall Street Journal; and the continued decline of enrollment at seminaries, described by Ministry Watch. Anecdotally, we know this to be true as well. In our denomination, Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC), many congregations are without a pastor.

There, then, are several questions which arise. Is there anything being done about this? How will this shortage be overcome? Whose responsibility is it to train and deploy pastors in the LCMC? Or among other denominations? The answers to these questions are not difficult to find.

The LCMC operates more like an affiliation of congregations than it does a denomination, though a denomination it is. That is namely because the LCMC practices true autonomy of congregations with a very minimal organization/leadership structure. Hence, there is no “mother ship,” to train, teach, prepare, and send out pastors to its congregations. The onus of this work is on the congregations themselves.

The primary difficulty with this has been that most congregations in the LCMC came from church bodies, denominations, who did have a “mother ship” doing this work. That means, even if congregations know they are responsible for this work (which many don't), they are not themselves equipped to do it. This all means pastors are not being trained and deployed into churches, for the most part in the LCMC and especially our NW district.

If this isn't enough bad news, there's more. On top of not preparing enough pastors, those we do prepare often don't make it. The Center for Church Leadership's research shows “seventy percent of pastors in the Christian Church or Churches of Christ drop out of the ministry during the first ten years.” I'm confident other denomination's numbers are similar.

If these trends are to change, it is incumbent on congregations within the LCMC to do the work of training and deploying pastors to serve our congregations. If this work isn't done, well, you know what happens.

The good news is, Richland Lutheran Church (RLC) knows this is our work and has been doing this work for many years. Lead Pastors, leaders and members have been preparing and sending out pastors since the church's founding. For instance, two of my esteemed predecessors, Lead Pastors Palmer Gedde (1970-1991) and Bill Martens (1997-2011), in partnership with the congregation, did this important work. Some of those trained and sent out include, Pastors Torvik, Ulleland, Foss, L. Gedde, Berg, Eibel, Ray, Moody, Shen, Haugen, Nau, and Schumacher. That's quite the list! In my tenure, we've raised up and sent out Pastor Corey Smith, who has just been called to Trinity Lutheran Church in Hermiston, OR and last month we sent Pastor Kelly Westlund to Zion Lutheran in Kent, WA. Amanda Daniels is still finishing her education but is well under way in her preparation.

May God help and guide us as we undertake the important work of assuring the NW District continues to have shepherds for God's sheep.

| 2024 | | APRIL | | | | |
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Back to Lebanon! 2024 LCMC Northwest Annual Gathering!

Howdy, folks! As pastor of the great people of Christ Community Lutheran Church, I'm inviting every Northwest District congregation to join us in April, 2024, for our annual Northwest District Gathering. Mark your calendars now for April 12th and 13th, 2024.

Under the theme of "I Love To Tell The Story" (theme verse: Isaiah 55.10-11), it's going to be a jam-packed weekend of Bible study, worship, just a little business and fellowship. Our keynote speaker is Rev. Doctor Ebassa Berhanu and Christian Huntley, the LCMC Coordinator for Leadership and Pastoral Development, has promised to join us! The menus are planned already and the worship and interlude music is in the process of being selected with help from our member congregations.

Our folks are ready and waiting to welcome you with the same joy and enthusiasm as when we first hosted the annual gathering in 2018. Plan now to attend – "we'll leave the light on for ya!"

Pastor Fred Westerhold, Christ Community Lutheran, Lebanon, Oregon

News for "The Happenings"

We would love to hear what you are up to! If you or your congregation would like to include information in the next LCMC Northwest District newsletter, The Happenings, please submit to Carol Ann Buelow. Her email address is: buelow@aol.com



Pastor Paul Braafladt went home to be with Jesus on Oct. 12, 2023. Paul was one of the founders of the NW District. He remained active in ministry throughout his life, installing Pastor Eric Lundberg on Oct. 1st. We thank God for his life and witness, and his many contributions to the LCMC, while asking that God grant Paul's family and friends comfort and strength during this difficult time.

"I assure you that whoever hears my word and believes in the one who sent me has eternal life and won't come under judgment but has passed from death into life." ~ John 5.24



Estonian Pastor visits Northwest Churches

Pastor Siimon Haamer, a 3rd generation Estonian Lutheran pastor, is the Director of the Tartu Academy of Theology. He visited Christ Lutheran Church in Odessa, Washington and Richland Lutheran Church in Richland, Washington. He was joined by his nephew Matteus Haamer.

Under the control of the Soviet Union, Christianity was persecuted and most pastor in Estonia were killed or sent to prison. The legacy of living under communism still has a significant impact on the people of Estonia. 30 years later, many of the remaining Christians have difficulty in talking about their faith.

The Haamer family was directly impacted by this persecution. In 1947, Siimon's grandfather (Harri Haamer) was sent to a Siberian prison for 7 years for continuing to preach. His grandmother and father (Eenok Haamer, then a teenager) had to go into hiding from the KGB and spent 4 years living in an underground bunker.

In 2019 Pastor Siimon spearheaded an effort to expand the Christian outreach to the Estonian people through construction of the Home of Hope. In addition to housing the Tartu Academy of theology, it provides the following services/outreach: Christian radio station, Bible study classes for the lay person, 24/7 pastoral care hotline, youth bible camps, assist in resettlement of Ukrainian refugees, and more. Siimon is in America on a fund-raising trip to help pay of the mortgage of the Home of Hope.



From January 2-4, every congregation is invited to join together in prayer in celebration of the association's 12th Annual Three Days of Prayer. All congregations are invited to structure this intentional time in a way that makes sense for your congregational context. Some congregations choose to host special prayer vigils, services, walks or Zoom meetings. Others simply invite people in their congregation to set aside some time to pray during these three days.

For more resources, see: <https://www.lcmc.net/three-days-of-prayer/537.html>



Almighty God,

All thoughts of truth and peace come from you. Kindle in the hearts of all your children the love of peace, and guide with your wisdom the leaders of the nations, so that your kingdom will go forward in peace and the earth will be filled with the knowledge of your love; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Based upon Psalm 85.