



VOLUME 9 ISSUE 1

The Happenings

USA — Canada

JANUARY 2025



New Year's Resolutions

Some 31 days ago we shouted “Happy New Year!” For many people, New Year’s Eve is both a time of celebration and a time of sober reflection. Many reflect on the past year and look ahead to the new year. Reflection on the past year often reveals our weaknesses. Behaviors which we want to eliminate bubble to the surface of our consciousness. Good positive behaviors we want to incorporate in our lives also arise. We want to eliminate the junk food we crave and replace that poison with healthy fruit and vegetables. We want to spend less time on screens (phone, computer and 64-inch plasma TV screen we got at Costco). We want to spend more time exercising and with family. We resolve to improve our diet and improve our time management, so we spend time on positive healthy interactions.

While everyone is different, a 2023 poll conducted by Forbes Health found most people give up resolutions after less than four months. According to the Forbes’ survey, just under 1 in 10 people (8%) said their resolutions lasted a month, 21.9% reported two months, 22.2% reported three months and 13.1% said their resolutions lasted four months. Only 1% said they lasted for 11 or 12 months.

It seems that keeping new year’s resolutions is about grit and willpower. If you are like me, grit and willpower often fail me. I vow to eat healthy. However, as soon as I am alone in a convenience store, a strategically placed bag of Cheetos and a pepperoni stick jump into my hands and force me to buy them and eat them. The words of the Apostle Paul come to mind. *“I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.”* (Romans 7:15 NIV) What’s a person to do?

There is an answer. If you look at page 41 of the Lutheran Book of Worship (LBW) you will see a prayer of the day and texts for a worship service for New Year’s Eve. The Gospel lesson for the day is Luke 13:6-9:

“Then he told this parable: ‘A man had a fig tree growing in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it but did not find any. So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, ‘For three years now I’ve been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?’ ‘‘Sir,’ the man replied, ‘leave it alone for one more year, and I’ll dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.’”

Lutheran Theologian Paul E. Kretzmann reflected on this text in his popular commentary. He saw the fig tree as Israel and the three years the vineyard’s owner referred to as all the grace and love that God lavished upon them over the centuries. Despite all God’s ministrations, the nation bore no fruit. Kretzmann continued: “The fourth year, for which the love of the vinedresser, Jesus, pleaded, was the time of mercy which had dawned with the ministry of John, had burst into full brightness with the preaching of Jesus, and would continue thus during the ministry of the apostles. Here the vinedresser wanted to dig about and dung the fig-tree with the evidences of His most searching love, of His holiest zeal, and finally, through His servants, by the preaching of His suffering and death, of His resurrection and sitting at the right hand of Power.”

LCMC

Northwest District Council

Executive Committee

Pr. Edward Skutshek, Chair
Pr. Dave Hall, Vice Chair
Pr. Carol Ann Buelow, Secretary
Karla Kaleva, Treasurer

Council Members

Jonathan Davis
Pr. Marney Fritts
Pr. Eric Lundberg
Pr. Donna Zipp
Pr. Fred Westerhold
Pr. Greg Wightman

District Coordination Team

Maureen “Moe” Bessey
Pr. Horacio Castillo

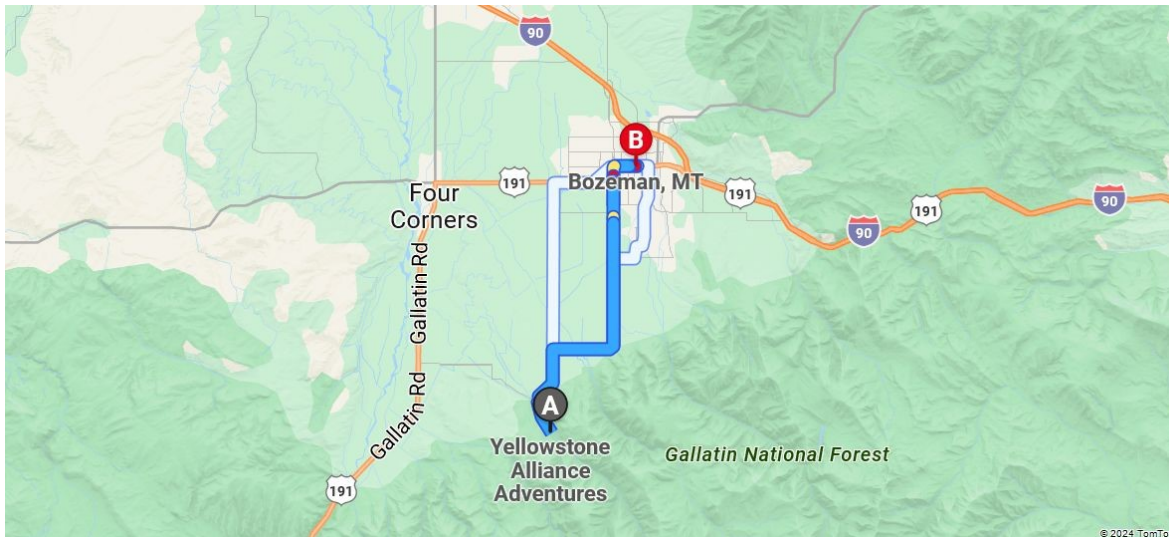
Webmaster

Steve Hruza

Dear NW District LCMC Family,

We are excited to host this year's district gathering. Can I just say that I thoroughly enjoy the district gatherings? Think about the amazing grace we receive at these fellowships. Communing at Christ's table, receiving His word, singing and praying together, recreating in beautiful places, and learning from each other. How wonderful it is that we get to do this in the Gallatin Valley this year! With that in mind, I wanted to give you some recreational tips about the Bozeman area so that you can prepare for a wonderful experience in God's favorite valley:).

*First, it's roughly a 20 min commute from the camp to Bozeman and vice-versa. *See the map below:*



Also, I listed some suggestions for your visit:

- In Downtown Bozeman, you will find plenty of tasty restaurants, breweries, and fun shops to check out. Parking options are Bridger Park Downtown Garage (26 East Mendenhall St) and other public parking spaces along E Main Street (two-hour parking limit).*
- If you are looking for a fun and easy hiking trail, you might check out Bozeman's Gallagator Trail. You can access this trail at the Bozeman Public Library on E. Main St./US 191 or at the Museum of the Rockies on W. Kagy Blvd. *Both entrances to this trail are easy to access and have convenient maps along the route. It's an easy 3.1-mile trip.*
- If you're wanting a fun, cultural experience, you might check out the Museum of the Rockies located at (W. Kagy Blvd).*
- If you're interested in touring the Montana State University Campus, I would advise you to park in The Parking Garage at W Grant St on campus. *The pizza at Bridger Brewing is excellent! There are a variety of statewide microbrews to choose from too!*
- If you're wanting to enjoy a leisurely stroll, you might also check out the Storymill Community Park. It's located at 698 Bridger Dr in Bozeman. If you're feeling adventurous, you can walk along a paved trail that leads you to the famous "M Trail". The "M Trail" is a steeper, switch-back hike that's about 2 miles each way. If you're interested in this option, I would encourage you to go with a small group and to take water--along with good hiking boots, jackets, hooded sweatshirts, etc.*

For other beautiful parks in Bozeman--you can Google "Bozeman City Parks" and find many to choose from.

Thank you all for making the commitment to coming here!

We're excited to host this year's gathering, and please join us for worship at Peace Lutheran Church on Sunday, May 4th at 9 am.

God bless,

Pr. Andrew Young

Peace Lutheran Church Belgrade, MT

Council Highlights: By Carol Ann Buelow, Secretary, NW District LCMC

The NW District Council met via Zoom on January 13, 2025.

The Youth IMPACT committee has made reservations at Shoshone Mountain Retreat and planning for the 2025 retreat is already underway. Board members offered various suggestions as to how event attendance could be funded while keeping the cost under \$100 per attendee.

Shelly Hauge joined the board to focus on working out the details of our upcoming NW District Gathering including finalization of registration forms, the agenda and offering designation.

Moe Bessey, Interim District Coordination Team Leader, presented a District Coordination report which recommends funding a part-time (1/4) District Coordination Leader consultancy position. Key responsibilities of this individual would include: NW District fund-raising; regional roll-out of a call process workshop and call committee assistance; education and referral. This individual's first steps would be to cast the vision and develop a 4-year District Coordination plan.

The LCMC-NW Board is in need of new members. Three board members will reach their 3-year term limit this May and there have also been several resignations. This means we will have six open positions to be voted upon at the upcoming gathering.

The board accepted the resignation of Pastor Travis Powers, and the disaffiliation of Victory Lutheran Church in Medicine Hat, AB with regret. Following a motion by the board, Pastor Eric Lundberg (Living Word Lutheran - Graham, WA) was appointed to serve on the NW District Council until the Annual Gathering in May.

Karla presented the financial reports for 2024 and board members worked together to develop the proposed budget for 2025.

Pastor Carol Ann Buelow

Secretary, NW District LCMC

A Note from the Treasurer:

Greetings to all! As I close out the books on 2024, I give thanks and praise to those congregations and individuals who supported the work and mission of the Northwest District throughout the year.

We are solely supported by you and receive no financial support from the National LCMC. I know my own congregation thought they were also supporting the district with their national donation, but this is not the case. Please consider either a yearly or a monthly contribution as you set your church budget for 2025.

As a district board, we are planning more specific ways to connect with and support our congregations and we are excited to share those plans with you at the upcoming District Gathering! We hope to see you all there!

Donations can be made by mailing a check to

Karla Kaleva, Treasurer

NW District – LCMC

400 Circle Drive

Cut Bank, MT 59427

Or by giving online on our website: www.lcmc-nw.com





LCMC 25th Annual Gathering and Convention

OCTOBER 5-8, 2025
HOSANNA LUTHERAN CHURCH
LAKEVILLE, MN



SAVED Youth Impact Event!

The LCMC NW District IMPACT youth committee put on a youth retreat for grades 7th to 12th on Oct 18th to 20th, 2024. It was at Shoshone Mountain Retreat in Wallace, ID. Our theme this year was SAVED. Our speakers Karen Robison and Julie Smith talked with the youth about what they are saved from and what they are saved for. We had a great worship team that led us in worship music before each lesson. The amazing staff at Shoshone provided us with great meals, service projects at the camp and fun activities like zip line and archery. There were kids from Montana, Washington, Idaho and Oregon that attended. There were 10 churches represented from our district with a total of 47 youth attending this retreat. It was such a fun weekend and we are excited to make this an annual fall retreat. Watch for details on the next retreat coming soon!



SHOUT OUT!

A Big Thank You to our LCMC Impact Youth team comprised of April Johnson, Pastor Travis Powers, Pastor Eric Lundberg, Pastor Donna Zipp and Karen Robison for loving and encouraging our NW District Youth to draw closer to Christ!



Immanuel Lutheran installs new pastor

On Sunday, October 27th, Immanuel Lutheran in Absarokee, MT extended a contract call to seminarian Judy Manweiler to serve as their pastor. Judy accepted and the congregation installed her on Sunday, November 3rd, in their morning service. Judy hopes to complete her M.Div. through Kairos by next May and then be ordained. Together we pray for Pastor Judy and for the future of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Absarokee, MT!



Ed Backell (Pastor) & George Simon (Council President)

Newly Installed Pastor at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church

Pastor Ed Backell was installed on October 27, 2024, in a joyful service at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Spokane Valley, Washington. It was a momentous occasion after almost three years that the call committee spent searching for a full-time pastor. Despite our earnest efforts, God sent Pastor Ed to us, proving that God's timing is perfect.

Our prayers are with Pastor Ed and wife Jami as they continue to be faithful to God's mission here at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church.

Chairman's letter continued from page 1.

In the Gospel for New Year's Eve, I saw myself as that fig tree that bore no fruit in the past year and the years that preceded it. Like King David I had to confess "*For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge.*" (Psalm 51:3-4 NIV). If I can't keep a resolution not to eat junk food, how can I possibly make myself acceptable to the living God?

Like the authors of the LBW, in the New Year's Gospel Lesson, I saw a resolution that Jesus made for me for 2025. He promised that through preaching which proclaims the law in each text, like a shovel it will break the hard shell of my sinful nature like the soil around the fig tree. This groundbreaking and the repentance it elicits, will open the way for the proclamation of the Gospel of grace and forgiveness. I hear God's words: *As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.* (Isaiah 55:10-11). The words of the Gospel, the lifegiving water, will cause something to bud and grow within me: faith in our Triune God strengthened, renewed and revitalized. Forgiven, God gives me a new start unhindered by my past. The Apostle Paul declares that God has done more for me: "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (Ephesians 2:10 NIV). God lays before me the prospect of bearing fruit.

Jesus has made this resolution for his Church. He has made this resolution for you. His only requirement is that we show up for worship, Bible study, and our place for private prayer and meditation ready to listen to him and his word. He will do the rest.

In Christ,

Pastor Ed Skutshek, Chair of the District Council

Is God calling you to do something new?

The LCMC Northwest District is asking members to prayerfully consider serving on the Northwest District Council. There are currently six openings for three-year terms on the District Council. If you wish to be considered, please fill out the form and e-mail it to Pastor Carol Ann Buelow, Secretary at: buelow@aol.com. The deadline to submit your nomination form is April 1, 2025. Elections to these positions will take place at our Annual Gathering May 1-3, 2025 at Yellowstone Alliance Adventures Camp, Belgrade MT. If you have any questions, please reach out to Pastor Ed Skutshek (Chair) at skutsheke@gmail.com.

LCMC Northwest District
Council Membership
Nomination Information Form

NAME: _____
Must be over the age of 17 years

Address: _____

City: _____ St. _____ Zip _____

Phone: _____ E-Mail _____

Congregation Name: _____

City: _____ St. _____

Skills & Strengths _____

The District Council is comprised of lay and clergy members. The District Council meets at various locations during the year; therefore, some travel may be needed.

Please be in attendance at the LCMC Northwest District’s annual gathering so the council can confirm your Nomination Request and desire to serve.



If you or your congregation would like to include information in our next LCMC Northwest District newsletter, please submit it to Carol Ann Buelow at: buelow@aol.com

News for “The Happenings”

