

The Happenings – Advent 2025

The Official Publication of the Northwest District of LCMC



Volume 9 - Issue 4 - Published - November 30, 2025

From the Chairman's Desk



“What are you waiting for?” This question can touch the innermost part of a person. It asks a person to reveal a dream that he or she is holding onto. Responses to that question could be: “I am waiting for a big break in my career that will take me to the next level. I am waiting to pay off the mortgage so I can apply those funds to a project I have dreaming of. I am waiting to finish my degree, diploma or certificate so that I can launch a new career. I am waiting to retire so I can have time for myself.” The hopes and dreams we wait for are endless in number.

The question “What are you waiting for?” looms very large during the season of Advent. The scriptures we listen to during Advent speak of waiting. If you asked Simeon what he was waiting for, his answer would be: “The Holy Spirit revealed to me that I would not die before I saw Lord’s Messiah - and I am waiting for that to come true!” (Luke 2:26).

Simeon is described only as “righteous and devout and waiting for the consolation of Israel.” (Luke 2:25). These words refer to the condition of Simeon’s heart and mind. He was one of the “true Israelites.” He had practiced, as he had professed, the faith handed down to him by his forefathers. He was well versed in the prophecies concerning the Messiah. He had the proper understanding of the work of the Messiah/Redeemer. He looked for a spiritual kingdom to be revealed. The Holy Spirit was upon him, resting upon him, influencing his whole life and conduct.

The same passage from Luke’s Gospel reveals that one day the Holy Spirit urged Simeon to go to the courts of the Temple in Jerusalem. When he got there, he encountered the infant Jesus. Simeon took the child in his arms and the Holy Spirit revealed that this baby was the Messiah that he and all the devout in Israel waited for. The same Spirit moved Simeon to speak prophetically, to announce to all who were present that this was the Lord’s Messiah who came to save Israel and the Gentile people (you and me). The infant he was holding would grow up to be a man who would comfort, forgive and heal those afflicted by sin, death and the Devil and afflict those who comfortable, the religious and political elite who believed they were in control and completely confident of their righteousness.

The child he held was a human baby like all the other babies in the Temple that day and ever born or to be born. However, the infant Jesus was much more, in him was the divine. In him all were of the promises associated with the

descendent of Abraham through whom all the tribes of the world would be blessed. (Genesis 22:18) Here was the bud that would bloom and change our world and one day the entire universe. He held the resurrection and the life. Simeon declared: "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation." (Luke 2:29-30) Now at last, the hope long cherished by him was revealed and would be fulfilled. From that moment he could be content and could live and to die in peace.

During Advent the fulfillment of those Old Testament promises by Jesus looms very large. What Simeon hoped for came to pass in the life, ministry, innocent suffering, death by crucifixion and miraculous resurrection of Jesus. Simeon saw the promise of the fulfillment of these promises in the face of an infant that he cradled in his arms. Through the eyes of faith we see the fulfillment of these same promises by Jesus as we gaze into the pages of the Scriptures. In the pages of scripture, we hear Jesus say: "Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:20) He will not leave us or abandon us on this earthly pilgrimage. We hear him say: "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26). He takes away the victory and sting of death. He promises one day to make all things new. (Revelation 21:5) The same Holy Spirit that created this faith in Simeon is active in the pages of the books of the Old and New Testaments. When we are baptized we receive that same Holy Spirit.

Like Simeon, we can live in sure and certain hope that the Messiah has come and saved us from sin, death and the Devil. We need not live life in fear. We believe that Jesus is the resurrection and the life; therefore we need not fear death. We can live in the confident expectation of the second coming of Jesus to make all things new.

What am I waiting for? The Holy Spirit's direction as I hear the Word and receive the sacraments. Opportunities to share my faith with others through word and deed, to be a conduit through whom the Holy Spirit works. To experience Jesus as the resurrection and the life in the Kingdom of Heaven. I long for my faith in him to be transformed into sight. I long for the real presence of Jesus in word and sacrament to be transformed into really being present with Jesus, seeing my reflection in his eyes. What about you? What are you waiting for?

May God bless you, may Jesus inspire you, and may the Holy Spirit move you during this Advent and Christmas season.

Pastor Ed Skutshek, Kelowna, BC, Canada

Ordinations and Installations

Judy Manweiler Ordained to Ministry of Word and Sacrament

Sunday September 21, 2025, Judy Manweiler was ordained to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Absarokee, Montana. Her path to pastoral ministry began in 2018 when she became a Certified Lay Pastoral Assistant in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Soon thereafter she began studying for her Master of Divinity at Luther House of Study, Sioux Fall, South Dakota. She finished her studies early in 2025. She completed her internship at Immanuel Lutheran under the direction of Luther House of Study and the supervision of Pastor Steve Lien. She now serves as Immanuel's pastor.

Judy was born and raised in Livingston, Montana and is a proud Montana State University graduate. Judy's career background is diverse. She was a High School English and art teacher, a credit reporter and clerk and recorder for the Forest Service. While working for the Forest Service, she had the good fortune of meeting iconic actor Robert Redford, who visited the office many times.

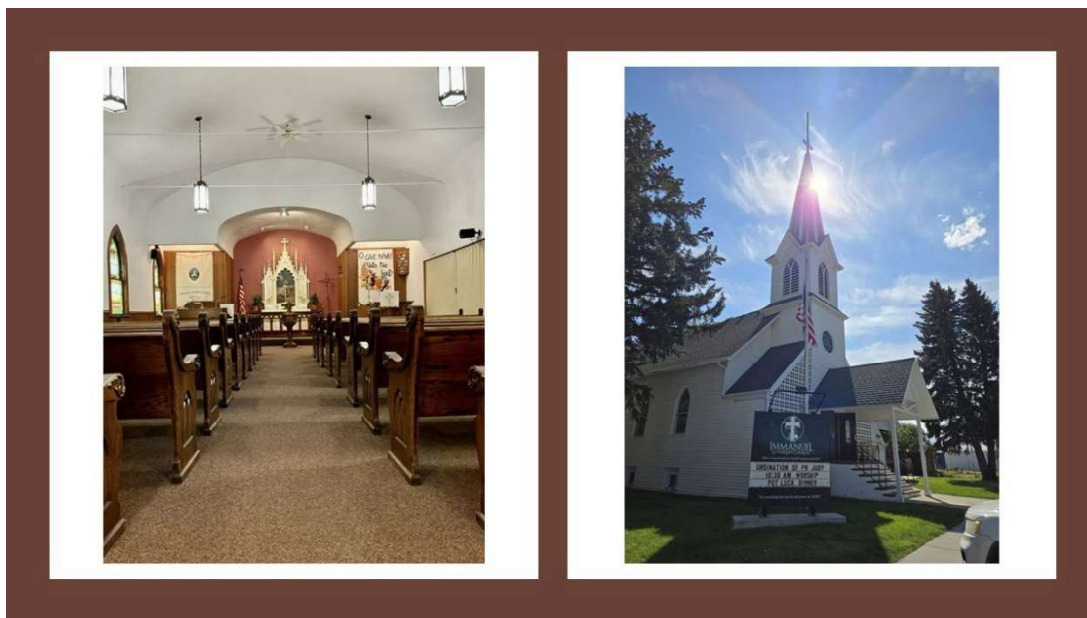
Judy has also been very involved with the youth. She was a Boy Scout leader and has served as Assistant Scout Master at Boy Scout camps. She has also been a 4-H leader and a Sunday School teacher at Joliet Lutheran Church. Judy also has a passion for music, serving as music teacher and chaplain for the preschool daycare at Joliet Childcare Ministries.

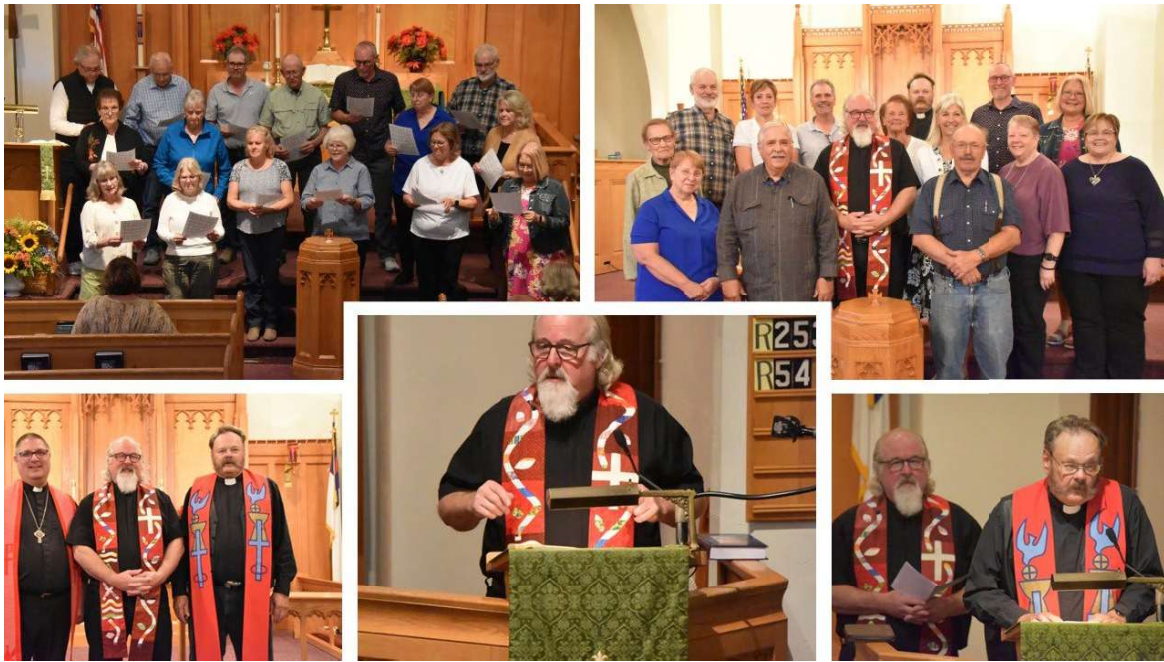
Judy and her husband Mike (Mic) own M & M Sales and Service in Joliet, Montana. They have three grown children, five grandchildren, and three cats. Immanuel's website declares: "Serving the Lord and proclaiming the Good News of the Gospel is the culmination, says Pastor Judy, of a lifetime of living, listening, and learning."



Pictured from left to right. Front row: Rev. Julie Smith, Service Coordinator of LCMC; Rev. Jim Johnson; Rev. Judy Manweiler; and Rev. Dave Hall. Back row: Rev. Dr. Christopher Croghan, Luther House of Study; Steve Aadland, Lay Pastoral Associate; Rev. Dr. Tom Schlotterback; and Rev. Robert Leverton.

The people of Immanuel Lutheran have been serving God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in Absarokee, Montana, since 1897. They celebrated 120 years of ministry in 2017. May God bless Pastor Judy and the flock that gathers at Immanuel Lutheran as they continue to follow their Good Shepherd into the 21st Century.

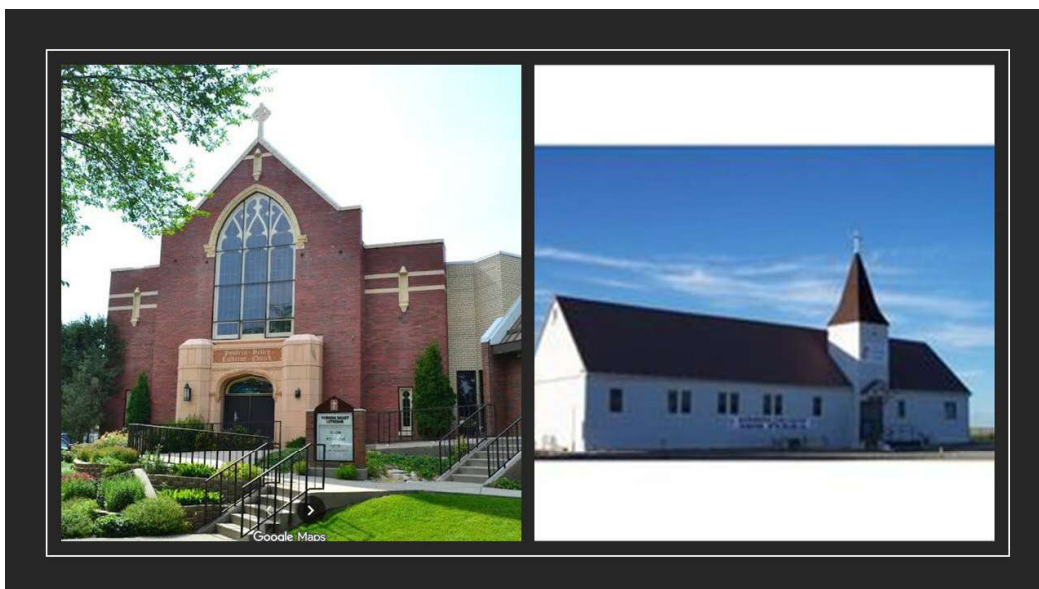




Pastor Jeff Driscoll Installed at Conrad Parish, Montana

Sunday, September 28, 2025, at 6:00 PM (MDT), Rev. Jeffrey M. Driscoll (center picture above) was installed as the Pastor of Pondera Valley Lutheran Church (city) and Golden West Lutheran Church (country) of Conrad, Montana. The two congregations have formed the Conrad Lutheran Parish. Their website can be accessed by [clicking here](#).

The parish's Interim Pastor Jeff Stoopes and Pastor Alsen Wenzel officiated at the installation (bottom left photo above) Before coming to the Conrad Parish, Pastor Jeff served at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, Cathlamet, Washington (LCMC).



North West District Council News

The NW District Council met via ZOOM Friday November 14th. It was called to order at 9:00 AM PST.

Quick recap: The board meeting began with a devotion and discussion of social media experiments before reviewing administrative matters including minutes approval and electronic newsletter implementation. Financial updates were shared, including positive donation trends and successful youth gatherings, followed by detailed discussions about the youth retreat's outcomes and future planning. The conversation ended with significant focus on district coordinator position challenges, including the resignation of our interim district coordinator, and the need to redefine the role's job description while establishing clearer district vision and mission statement.

Gathering Committee: Various aspects of the Districts annual 2026 Gathering were discussed. The council paved the way to online participation in the gathering. If sufficient bandwidth is available at Camp Lutherhaven, our gathering could be hybrid, with some participating in person and others by ZOOM call. The dates and other aspects of the 2026 Gathering are found in a separate article below.

Financials: The council reviewed the third quarter financial report presented by Karla Kaleva, our Treasurer, which showed positive donations despite a quiet quarter. The beginning account balance on July 1, 2025 was \$44,312.33. Income for the quarter was \$3,378.07. Expenses for the quarter totaled \$7,795.82 for a net operating loss of \$4,417.75. The closing balance September 30, 2025 was \$39,894.58. The Treasurer noted that the loss in this quarter is not unexpected as we are beginning to accumulate costs for the upcoming events and incurred other expenses, but had not collected significant registrations.

Impact Youth Retreat: The youth retreat was a successful event with 52 youth, 21 adults, and representation from 10 congregations, achieving its goal of keeping costs under \$100 per participant. Pastor Eric Lundberg reported that the administration and spiritual impact were better than previous years, with strong relational outcomes and potential for future leadership development. The committee discussed extending the event by a day to allow more spiritual and relational development, as well as considering investment in youth leaders. The council also discussed gathering testimonials from participants to share with the district and potentially expanding outreach to more congregations. The financial report for the Impact Youth retreat will be made available with the year end report.

LCMC 25th Gathering: Karla Kaleva reported on the national LCMC gathering held in Iowa, celebrating LCMC's 25th anniversary with a focus on the organization's history and future. Keynote speaker and Service Coordinator Julie Smith emphasized the importance of districts and fellowships. The gathering attracted many first-time attendees. Members of the District Council were encouraged to watch the keynote speeches for insights into LCMC's mission and structure. The development of new districts and fellowships, as well as the involvement of LCMC members in other districts' boards was also discussed.

Interim District Coordinator. Moe Bessey, interim district coordinator, reported that under an updated structure plan for LCMC, districts are being asked to take on more responsibilities. Districts currently lack paid positions to support these new efforts. LCMC's service coordinator, acknowledged these challenges and is working to provide training and support. The council discussed the need to balance national directives with the district's capacity to implement them, potentially requiring more volunteer committees and lay involvement.

Moe verbally tendered her resignation effective December 31, 2025. She expressed concerns about the current workload and time constraints, stating her inability to continue in the role while balancing other commitments, and expressed a willingness to remain involved in ad hoc committees. Moe suggested that council members could rotate responsibilities for attending district coordinator meetings until a new hire is made. Members of the council volunteered to attend these virtual monthly gatherings. We thank Moe for the exceptional and dedicated service she has rendered to the NW District in her role as district coordinator.

Based on comments from various sources received on our current job description for district coordinator, the council discussed revisions to said job description, focusing on recruitment from within the district and clarifying expectations

for the first year, which should primarily involve gathering facts and statistics, defining regions, and establishing the program.

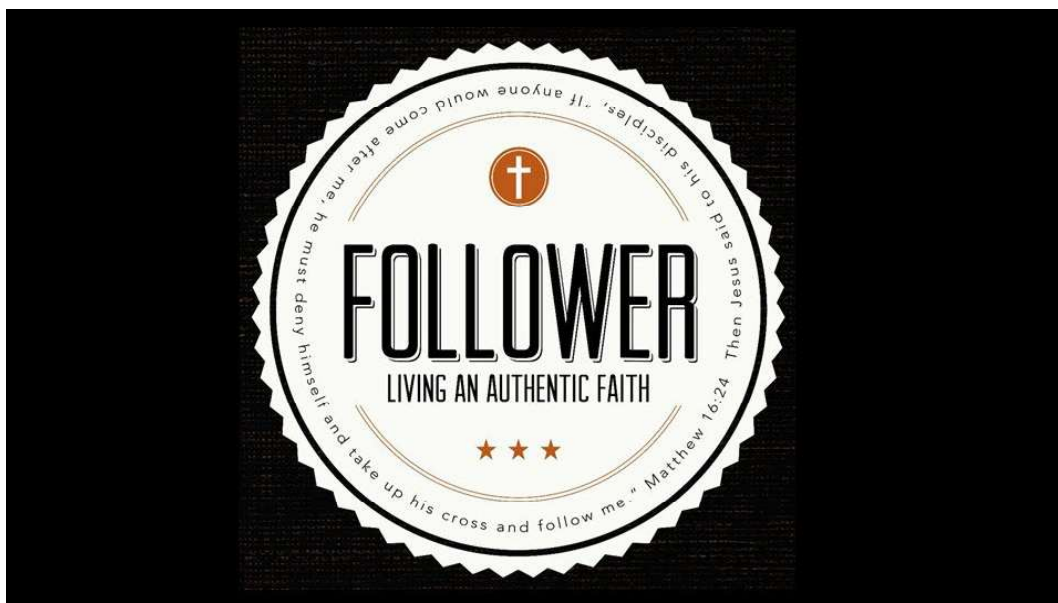
The council discussed the need to reevaluate the district coordinator job description and shift the focus from specific duties to carrying the heart of the district and its churches. It was suggested that the new coordinator should embody the district's vision and values, allowing those to guide the role's development. The discussion revealed the lack of a clear district vision beyond regular gatherings and events, emphasizing the need for the entire district council to collaboratively define the district's purpose.

The council discussed plans to gather feedback from congregations about district roles and LCMC's roles. It was agreed to create a list of questions to assess congregational understanding and engagement with the district and our national organization. The council agreed to develop and use an electronic survey to collect responses. The e-connector could be used to present the survey. The council emphasized the importance of understanding congregational needs and experiences to better define district missions and support.

Communications Committee: An official email account for the North West District has been established: nwdistrictlcmc@gmail.com. A Mailchimp account has been established for the District under the email lmcnwhappenings@gmail.com. Our quarterly Happenings and e-connector will be delivered through our Mailchimp account.

The meeting adjourned. The next meeting will be held in February on a date to be announced.

Impact Youth Committee Report



This years Youth Impact Retreat was held October 17-19, 2025. It was convened at the Lutherhaven's Shoshone Mountain Retreat at Wallace Idaho.

The theme for this year's October event was "follower – living an authentic faith" with the theme verse being Matt. 16:24. The cost was \$90 per attendee. The District offered \$50 scholarships and special consideration for families sending more than three youth to support youth attendance. A total of 21 adults and 52 youth attended the event.

Churches represented at the event were: Christ Lutheran (Odessa, WA), Living Word (Graham, WA), Richland Lutheran (Richland, WA), Peace Lutheran (Belgrade, MT), Faith Lutheran (Great Falls, MT), American Lutheran (Winifred, MT), Valier Lutheran (Valier, MT); St. Paul's Lutheran (St. Maries, ID); Zion Lutheran (Deary, ID); Peace Lutheran (Post Falls, ID).

Keynote speakers for this year's event were Travis Powers, Karen Robison and Eric Lundberg. Our speakers were all members of the North West District and are on the Impact Youth Committee!

All youth attendees received a T-shirt, Bible study booklet, lanyard with schedule. Shoshone camp staff played an invaluable role. They led prayers before meals, provided all meals, provided activities for the youth, and provided service projects for the youth. The staff is amazing and they really help the weekend go smoothly.

Activities this year included rock wall climbing, archery and giant swing. Along with free play which included volleyball, pickleball, gaga ball, and frisbee. Icebreaker games were great. The games got kids interacting more on the first day. A variety of board/card games was great to have out in the dining hall. This also helped kids interact more with people they didn't know.

The retreat was more than just enjoying fabulous food and snack, climbing rock walls and playing games. Pastor Eric Lundberg committee member and keynote speaker made the following observation of the event: "There is something supernatural that happens when our great God gets the attention of His children for longer than an hour or so on Sunday. In the short, but powerful, retreat weekend we saw the Holy Spirit planted seeds of true discipleship and spiritual growth in every teenager present. From lively worship music to authentic conversation, exciting games and outdoor activities and fast friendships being formed and rekindled, this retreat made a lasting Impact on all who attended."

We look forward to next year's event.

District Gathering 2026



The Gathering Committee has been diligently discussing plans for the upcoming 2026 Annual NW District Gathering. It will be held at Camp Lutherhaven situated on shores of beautiful Lake Coeur d' Alene. The camp is located near the city of Coeur d' Alene, Idaho. It will be convened from April 23-26. Keynote speakers will include Molly Wilmington from ZoeCare and Duane Walker from Mid-Valley Fellowship.

The theme for the Gathering is "From Saul to Paul." The theme verse from scripture is 1 Peter 3:15-16. *But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.*

The group agreed to include information about the event in the upcoming e-connectors and the Spring Edition of the Happenings newsletter. We anticipate full registration details to follow by January.

Council wants to encourage pastors to attend the entire weekend as a retreat. To help congregations in this regard, our chair Pastor Ed Skutshek will post (on the District's website) a manuscript and a video of a sermon that can be used for Sunday April 26th.

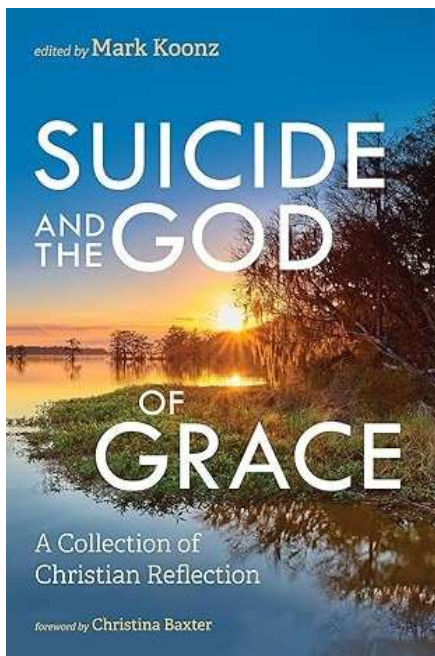
Publications and Resources



Verba Vitae: A Serious Christian Journal on the Sanctity of Life and its Significance.

To access the journal follow this link:

<https://verba-vitae.org/index.php/vvj>



Pastor Mark Koonz edits book on Suicide and the God of Grace

A suicide death is one of the hardest tragedies to encounter as a pastor, grief counselor, chaplain, or friend. “Suicide and the God of Grace,” edited by Mark Koonz, includes theological reflections from noted theologians and Christian writers, along with actual sermons given in tragic contexts.

This new release is specially discounted on Kindle at Amazon (\$9.99). Hard copies can also be accessed through Amazon and other providers.



Emmanuel Lutheran of Walla Walla, WA held their Blue Mountain “Theology Matters” Seminar. The featured speaker was Dr. Brant Himes, pastor and professor, who has written four books on Bonhoeffer. His presentation on Bonhoeffer is available online on Emmanuel’s website.

Follow this link to see the presentation: <http://www.wallawallalutheran.com/special-guest-messages.html>

We're going digital

Exciting News! We're Going Digital!

The Northwest District is pleased to announce the launch of our new digital newsletter, the e-connector! This will enable us to deliver more timely information in a convenient manner to your email inbox twice monthly providing a richer reader experience with high quality images that complement our Northwest District news. Moving to a digital format will also enable us to reach a far wider audience as the e-connector can easily be forwarded to others, and with increased postal rates will be saving money too.

This will be the last physical distribution of our quarterly newsletter, "The Happenings" but do not despair. We will continue to make it available in an electronic format and it can be found on the NW District LCMC website at: LCMC Northwest District - Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (<https://lcmc-nw.com>).

We're excited to expand our digital presence and make it easier for everyone to stay connected.

Subscribe to e-connector by following this link:

<https://lcmc-nw.us10.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=8d00f1bfa565d4103a022154f&id=66a65cf553>



The Happenings is the official publication of the Northwest District of LCMC.

District Communications Committee: Pastor Carol Ann Buelow; Pastor Robert Sinclair and Pastor Ed Skutshek.

If you have any questions, or information to share, please contact Pastor Ed Skutshek at: nwdistrictlcmc@gmail.com.