

The 55th Convention of the English District LCMS *Igniting Christ's Church in Mission*

The 55th Regular Convention of the English District—LCMS will be held June 17-20, 2015 on the campus of Concordia University in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The Opening Divine Worship Service will be Wednesday, June 17 at 7 p.m. in the Chapel of the Holy Trinity.

Conventions of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod represent the highest legislative bodies of both the Synod and its districts. During the Convention, elections will be held for all offices of the District, including the election of Bishop/President, Vice Presidents, the Board of Directors, the District Committee on Nominations for the next convention, Endowment Fund Board of Managers, and the College of Circuit Visitors.

The convention delegates and guests will hear reports on the mission and ministry of the English District and a report from the Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison, President of the Synod.

The Convention will include a theological presentation by the Rev. Ted Krey, Dominican Republic Lutheran Mission Lead Missionary & Latin America Caribbean Regional Director, and a discussion led by the Rev. Dr. Joel Lehenbauer, Executive Director of the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations.

The convention agenda will be available online in



the Convention Workbook in May.

Even if you are not attending the Convention, there are plenty of other great ways to mark this occasion at your home church:

* Pray for pastoral, lay and advisory delegates, District staff, the Board of Directors, and others in attendance.

* Consider being a convention prayer partner. Go to this link: <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/20f084da4a62ea7ff2-convention> to sign up for a prayer time slot or two during convention. Share this opportunity with your congregation members.

* Based on the convention theme, we are encouraging English District congregations to collect eyeglasses and create witness bracelets for MOST Ministries.

Send them with your delegates to the Convention. The “no-longer-used” eyeglasses, along with the bracelets, will provide both physical and spiritual sight to people around the world.

* Read the English Channels and visit the District website www.englishdistrict.org to learn more about District missions, and

* Be living stones in the Lord's House!

Thank you for supporting the mission and ministry of the English District!

May God bless you and also strengthen your congregations as we Ignite Christ's Church in Mission!



“Living Stones in the House of the Lord”

“...You yourselves, like living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ...” 1 Peter 2:5

Dear fellow living stones connected to Jesus Christ, the Living Stone and Cornerstone,

Many of you have heard me speak in your congregation on being branches connected to the Vine, Jesus Christ, and to be living stones, connected to Him, the Cornerstone. When we are truly connected to Christ, we then are disciples of the Lord Jesus and witnesses in word and deed to Him and His Body, the Church.

Let me share some added thoughts other than in a sermon or Bible class. Peter, an Apostle of our Lord, was speaking to fellow Christians, confused and discouraged by the persecution they were under because of their faith. Peter’s first letter is an *epistle of hope*. Read it as if you were a follower of Jesus Christ living in the A.D. mid-60’s. Hear his exhortation to stand strong in your faith and live in hope in Christ crucified, risen, ascended, and returning.

And then St. Peter goes on to say something really marvelous: **YOU ARE A LIVING STONE**. Living stones are living because they are connected to Jesus Christ and keep coming to Him. They pray; they put away malice, slander, and envy toward others, especially fellow Christians (1 Peter 2:1). Go ahead and read the rest of 1 Peter 2:1-10. We are not rolling stones, missing or dead bricks, but living stones.

As living stones, though, we are not only connected to Jesus, the Living Stone. We are also connected to one another. Beloved, I go into so many churches where there is conflict, envy, discord, and dysfunction. This must not be among the family of God. Sometimes it is pastor-congregation conflict.

Often it is division and party-spirit. Does this serve the cause of the saving Gospel? I think not. Only Satan and his “flock” are happy when Christians are divided and hostile.

It would be easy to say, “Stop fighting.” St. Paul once told a divided congregation in Philippi, “*I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree in the Lord. Yes, I ask you also, loyal Syzagus, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the Gospel...*” (Philippians 4:2-3). We do not know what the argument was about. Notice that Paul does not blast or shame them. Rather, he encourages them and the others!

What would happen if congregation and pastor and members would truly work toward agreement in faith, doctrine, and practice, would seek reconciliation, and would labor together in seeking the lost for Christ? My prayer is that, as living stones, we can be united and connected together.

Here are **12 characteristics** that I ask you to ponder and work through as connected living stones of (the name of your congregation).

12 Characteristics of faithful Christian congregations in the 21st century

- * Worshiping the Triune God, proclaiming Jesus Christ
- * Faith and doctrine grounded in Word and Sacraments
- * Providing quality Christian education
- * Strong prayer and care life in the congregation
- * Christ-centered leadership
- * Visitation of members and guests
- * Intentionally serving in human care
- * Discipleship that is evangelistically focused
- * Living a joy-filled stewardship life
- * Genuinely welcoming of visitors

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Channel Markers (continuation)

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Don't focus on the wrong things. A pastor-friend of mine, engaging his congregation, quoted: *"As long as we are frantically busy, we must be doing the Lord's business."* To that he and I say, **NOT SO.** We overcome spiritual apathy (numbness) by taking to heart the Word of God and finding forgiveness of our sins and refreshment in the Holy Supper.

As a congregation that wants to work together as connected, living stones, all eyes and hearts are on Jesus. We then experience that blessed tension of balancing "waiting on the Lord" and "stepping out in faith." The above 12 characteristics of faithful

evangelical Lutheran congregations is a tool to help your pastor and lay leaders. They are characteristics that I am sharing to help you evaluate and celebrate what God has done, what we have in Christ, and what the Lord God can accomplish in your church now and in the future.

The past is passed. Don't mope like so many members, congregations, and pastors. The best (heaven) is yet to come. By God's grace, even now in the 21st century and in a difficult North American culture, the best may be yet to come. Be living stones in the Lord's House, joyfully focused together on Christ, the Living Stone.

St. John's Lutheran hosts charitable Christmas Pageant

By Heather Wilson

St. John's Lutheran Church, Pembroke, Ontario, Canada

St. John's Lutheran Church presented a Christmas Pageant the evening of Sunday, Dec. 14, 2014, which illustrated the true Christmas story in words and song.

The cast consisted of adult members as well as the Sunday school children. The play, "Gilbert's Christmas," was written by Sarah Biggs and dedicated to her grandparents, Gilbert and Rita Schroeder, whom she credits with raising their family in a Christian home where the love of God and Christian values were taught and lived every day.

This poignant tale tells the story of an old man who is hospitalized and nearing the end of his life. When he sees the cavalier way in which his caregivers talk about their Christmas plans and that none of them have anything to do with celebrating the birth of Christ, he decides to write each of them a letter



explaining what Christmas is all about.

The letter is found after his death and is addressed to each member of the team, which includes the doctor, the nurse, the physio-therapist, and the cleaning lady.

As each member reads their letter, the Christmas story from St. Luke's gospel unfolds: Mary and Joseph's trip to Bethlehem; the virgin birth in the stable; the angels' message to the shepherds in the fields; and their trip to see the incarnation of God's love in a manger. This message,

old, but new every year, is what we at St. John's, and all Christian churches celebrate every year. It is after all, the reason for the season.

A large crowd attended this Christmas concert and generously supported a free-will offering. A donation of \$500 dollars will be presented to "The Grind Youth Centre," a non-profit Christian Organization, and \$220 in food donations will be presented to St. Joseph's Food Bank.

Around the District

Beautiful Savior, Lee's Summit, MO youth grades 5-8 will participate in FIRE Duct Wars where they will take part in duct tape challenges and learn about sticking to Jesus throughout life during the ups and downs.

Bethany, Ft. Wayne, IN women have many projects throughout the year to support missions, fellowship and service opportunities. Together with congregation members they send cards to church members; join together in Bible study; prepare and deliver meals to ill and shut-in members; prepare and serve funeral lunches and refreshments for events; organize a rummage sale, bake sale, and craft sale; sponsor the seminarian Christmas gift program and Christmas shut-in baskets; collect or recycle Campbell labels for education, cancelled postage stamps, eyeglasses, ink cartridges and Portals of Prayer; support Lutheran World Relief and Lutheran Social Services; collect for missions kits; provide refreshments for church events and manage a prayer chain.

Calvary, Mechanicsburg, PA has an Operation Barnabas Committee involved in a program to assemble and distribute comfort bags for homeless female veterans in Greater Harrisburg. Drawstring backpacks were donated and through funds from Thrivent and the Military order of the Purple Heart, comfort and hygiene items were purchased to be put in the bags along with Gideon donated pocket New Testaments.

Faith, Tucson, AZ school children attend a class called Extra Mile where they are learning that, by practicing generosity, everyone benefits. They are taught in a fun environment how to demonstrate the love of Jesus Christ in little deeds they can perform each day to help their siblings and parents, their church and school, their neighborhood and community. The children are growing in the light of the Lord.

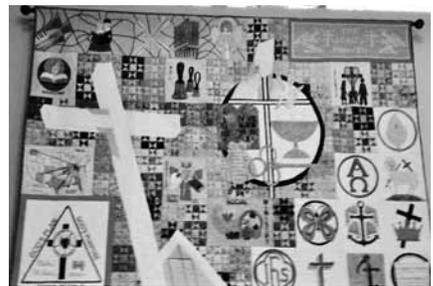
Hispanic Ministry of Holy Trinity, Tucson, AZ, also known as Santa Trinidad, reflects on the blessings of 2014 in which they celebrated the baptism of 15 children and young adults, prepared three youth

for First Holy Communion, and celebrated the confirmation of three young adults. There were two house blessings, two funerals, two weddings and seven *quinceaneras*. Fifty children were blessed with Christmas gifts from the members of Holy Trinity and Fountain of Life, Tucson.



At its "Congregational Workday" on January 11, 2015, 70 members and friends (pictured above) of **Prince of Peace, Hudson (Stroh), IN**, gathered after the worship service to remove all the contents of the Sanctuary (chancel furnishings, sacristy items, musical instruments, pews, and carpeting). The congregation is adding a "Music Alcove" and is updating the paint and carpeting. Re-dedication of the remodeled sanctuary is scheduled for Sunday, March 1. Until work is completed, the congregation is worshipping in the Multi-Purpose Room.

Prince of Peace, Medina, OH celebrated its first 50 years in mission and ministry on October 19, 2014. A celebration dinner was held after the worship service and dedication of a quilt banner made by a group of seven women of the congregation. The quilt includes images such as the LCMS cross,



the church's anniversary theme, "God's Plan, God's Purpose, God's People," and the logo from Living Water International with the goal to raise \$50,000 during 2014 to provide fresh water to a village in Kenya. Other images highlight the many ministries of the congregation, images from around the church

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Around the District (continuation)

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property, and Bible verses. Names of members who are in Heaven were embroidered onto the cross and all members were given the opportunity to sign the back of the quilt before it was dedicated and installed in the sanctuary.

Redeemer School, Oakmont, PA, Penn Hills Campus uses innovative, student-centered ways to concentrate on literacy. "Pete the Cat," was used for literacy night for preschool through third grade students and their families. Students listened intently to Pete the Cat's adventures, then they used the ideas to act out the plot through dance, tag races, scavenger hunts, and online games. Shurley English system enables upper elementary students to understand the parts of speech and how to apply them in writing. The system uses jingles to aid memory, lessons that build on one another, online textbooks, and writing skills in which the student practices proper grammar in their writing. Shakespeare Club has proven to very popular with the middle and high school students. The students memorize and perform famous monologues from Shakespeare's classic plays.



St. Michael, Ft. Wayne, IN, on November 16th, welcomed 88 new members (pictured above) who either completed adult instruction classes, reaffirmed their faith or were received by transfer. In addition, five people received the rite of holy baptism. A reception was held in Luther Hall by the Evangelism Board to celebrate this joyful event. Rejoice with those who rejoice!

West Portal, San Francisco, CA has established a Bridge Connection Committee to build relationships between school and church families. The committee sponsors events to connect, whether in conjunction with church services or in the classroom such as activities at the church picnic and a National Lutheran Schools Week Kickoff.

Bethesda Telugu celebrates two adult baptisms

By Pastor Shadrach Katari

Two adult Baptisms and Confirmations were held on Christmas Day 2014 at Bethesda Telugu Lutheran Church in Chicago.

One of the newly baptized is from a Hindu family. She learned Luther's Small Catechism and appreciated the message of Jesus. This young lady's name is Prasoona Yadama, and she came to the U.S. two years ago. While she was in Wisconsin, working in the IT field, Prasoona did a Google search for a Telugu church, where she found Bethesda. Prasoona attended one of our Sunday worship services and found a family who were neighbors of hers in India.

She told Pastor Katari that she used to go to church in India with her friend while she was in college, and that



she loved Jesus and believed Him as her personal savior. However she was unable to be baptized because of her Hindu family and traditions. She spoke to her parents back home, but they did not agree with her plans. With the help of our church family, Prasoona boldly decided to be baptized at Bethesda. She took part in the Sacrament, leaving her gods and parents. Prasoona also took Confirmation classes along with a young man named Suneel; and both took their first Sacrament of Holy Communion. She was so happy and very excited to take the Sacrament, as she had dreamed of this for a long time.

All of our Bethesda Telugu Lutheran Church family promised to support her in all her future plans. We praise God for her brave and bold witness to Jesus Christ.

Newest English District Congregation

Welcome to Hope Community Lutheran Church!

By Rev. Raymond V. Kirk
Emeritus

Waterloo, Ontario

The people danced, clapped, and swayed to the sung music accompanied by only drums when Hope Community Lutheran Church became the English District's newest congregation at a festive and colourful service attended by 183 on Sunday November 30 in Syracuse, New York. The congregation respectfully listened to Jesus as he came to them in Word and Sacrament. President/Bishop David P. Stechholz preached and presided.

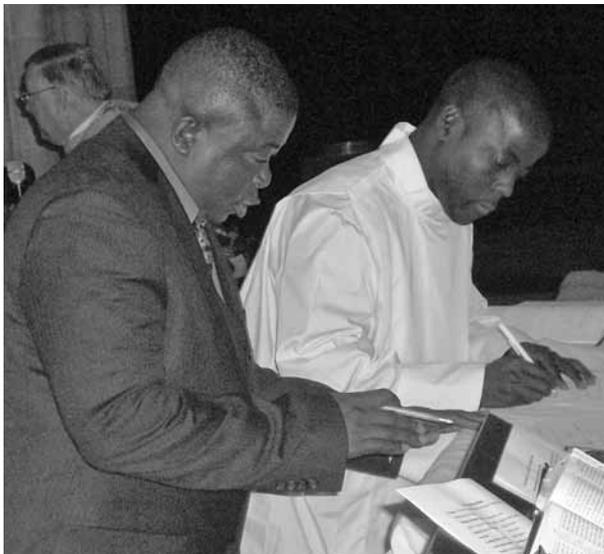
Both English and Liberian dialect choirs led the singing of many songs, all from memory. Ten percent of the offering was designated for Ebola relief efforts in Liberia. (Funds will be directed to the LCMS Disaster Relief Fund.)

Composed of mainly Liberian Americans who escaped from their war torn country and left refugee camps in neighbouring countries to settle in upstate New York, this congregation had her beginnings when Hope's people began to worship at Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Syracuse in 2008.

During the service Bishop Stechholz presented the congregation her charter which included an official certificate, signifying the new relationship with the District and Synod.

As well, he licensed Emmanuel Cholo Nyema Tambah and Caleb Gbarjolo as pastoral deacons to carry out Word and Sacrament ministry in the congregation.

As signs of their new office the two candidates were vested with blue deacon stoles. Assisting at the investiture was Pr. Raymond V. Kirk who had served



with the two deacons when they began the ministry at Trinity Church. He retired to Waterloo, Ontario in late 2010.

To celebrate the occasion, men and women alike wore their finest native dress, women in colourful floor length dresses with matching head dress. At the end of the service the congregation presented Bishop Stechholz and Pr. Kirk

with colourful ceremonial Liberian clothing, Bishop Stechholz with a "Grande Bubu" consisting of shirt, pants, robe and hat and Pr. Kirk with a Bubu.

This term describes loose clothing worn now over regular street attire by all Liberian men on special occasions including church services. Originally this clothing was worn by village chiefs. As well, Nancy Kirk, Pr. Kirk's wife, received a necklace and earrings with an inscribed message in a Liberian dialect, as a token of the people's gratitude for her support over the years.

Hope Church worships at the Missio Church in downtown Syracuse, a southern Baptist congregation with a strong emphasis on outreach. To emphasize this outlook the Missio Church gives Hope Church worship space in the main church and the usage of all equipment rent free.

Originally built as a Presbyterian Church in the early 20th century, the building has extensive stained glass windows and commemorative plaques and can seat over 300.

Following the service parishioners and guests from nearby Lutheran congregations enjoyed a typical west African meal together.

Human Trafficking = Modern Day Slavery

**By Deaconess Jeri Morrison
Risen Savior, Green Valley, AZ**

I recently attended a community forum called, “Stop Human Trafficking Now,” featuring two main speakers. The first speaker was Andy Hall, a lawyer working on his JD (focusing on promoting public policy to help people who are enslaved.) Andy and his wife, Chelsea, co-founded Southern Arizona Against Slavery. The second main speaker was Beth Jacobs: a victim, survivor and leader. She has founded Willow Way to assist those who have been forced into prostitution.

Prostitution is just one form of human trafficking. Many more people are gripped in labor trafficking (a

ratio of 9:1 over prostitution).

L a b o r trafficking can be just about anything. Some examples are f a r m i n g , m i n i n g , carnival work,

commercial fishing, etc. Regardless of the kind of work a person is forced to do, it always involved threats to the person and/or their loved ones; physical confinement, debt bondage, confiscation of their passport or ID, and threats of deportation if they are not U.S. citizens.

Human trafficking does not always involve human smuggling. We heard a story of a 15-year-old girl whose mom invited men to their home, and was paid by them to have sex with her daughter. The girl didn't even have to leave her home to be trafficked.

What can we do?

1. Enter the National Human Trafficking Resource Center hotline into your cell phone: 1-888-373-7888. Call the number anytime you see something that makes you suspicious that a person is being forced to work against their will. (Some sex slaves have tattoos of a bar code or their pimp's initials. However, current statistics show that 98% of prostitutes are forced against their will.)

2. Check out www.slaveryfootprint.org. How many slaves work for you? None? Think again. Anything you purchase may be harvested by slaves.

3. Buy fair trade products. (You can get information about your regular products on www.free2work.org.)

4. Obviously, you can donate to local organizations dedicated to assisting people who are enslaved. In Tucson, we have, “Sold No More,” for children who have been sold to the sex trade and Willow Way and Southern Arizona Against Slavery for adults.

5. Host a forum for your community to become aware and work together to improve public policy

and safe harbor options.

6.

Don't buy sex (including porn on the Internet).

A n o t h e r website where you can glean information on

this topic is www.polarisproject.org. They provide direct assistance to those in need and help create systemic changes to combat human trafficking. With the statistics we have (this crime is very much under reported), there is an estimated 35.8 million people currently enslaved worldwide. That is more people now than ever before.

This is just one of many issues that are included in Lifeline's effort regarding Sanctity of Life. We usually think of the topic of abortion, but LIFE means so much more. In the case of human trafficking, someone has decided to sell something that: 1) Is not meant to be sold; and 2) Is not theirs to sell. Please join me in praying about how we can become advocates for people who have no one looking out for them. Our loving Creator did not intend His humans to be sold, but rather to be nurtured and cared for.



English District Official Acts

Pastors – Installations

The Rev. James Prince, November 9, 2014, Assistant Pastor, Chapel of the Cross, Saint Peters, MO; *The Rev. Steven Sutterer*, November 16, 2014, Chaplain, Sparrow Hospital-LCMS Board for National Mission; *The Rev. Jonathan Sachs*, December 14, 2014, Sole Pastor, Angelica, Allen Park, MI; *The Rev. Jonathan Gruen*, December 17, 2014, Senior Pastor, Beautiful Savior, Lee's Summit, MO

Teachers – Installations

Michaelle Angerman, August 17, 2014, Teacher, West Portal, San Francisco, CA

Calls Accepted

The Rev. James Baumgartner, Strategic Mission Developer, LCMS Board for National Mission; *The Rev. Dr. Daniel Jastram*, Missionary, Japan - LCMS Board for National Mission; *The Rev. Dr. Christian Just*, Sole Pastor, St. Thomas, Streetsboro, OH; *Ms. Anna Hu*, Principal, West Portal, San Francisco, CA; *The Rev. James Mavis*, Sole Pastor, St. Mark, Butte and Zion, Whitehall, MT (Montana District); *The Rev. Ron Rieger*, Sole Pastor, Trinity, Scarsdale, NY

Change of Status

The Rev. Merlin Rehm, December 31, 2014, Active to Emeritus

Transfers In

Michaelle Angerman, August 1, 2014, California Nevada Hawaii District; *Harold Bacon*, November 17, 2014, Ohio District

Transfers Out

Jennifer Erhman, October 15, 2014, Pacific Southwest District; *The Rev. Harry Matelski*, November 10, 2014, Pacific Southwest District; *Kathryn Young*, November 24, 2014, Michigan District; *The Rev. Dr. Daniel Jastram*, December 1, 2014, Minnesota South District; *The Rev. Chad Potts*, December 15, 2014, Rocky Mountain District; *The Rev. James Baumgartner*, January 5, 2015, Northwest District; *The Rev. James Mavis*, January 16, 2015, Montana District

Chartered

Hope Community, November 30, 2014, Syracuse, NY

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On our Web site you will find resources, our blog, contact information and so much more: www.englishdistrict.org

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And join the English District Connect Group:

English District Connect

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If you would like to publish a blog post or share anything on our social media pages, contact Lynne Cobb, Communications Coordinator, at lcobb@englishdistrict.org.

About the Channels

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