

Opportunities



Christ Our Savior
Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod

"Each day is a gift. Make each and every day count"—as a local radio personality (Paul W. Smith)

reminds us! Each day is a gift to be used—a gift containing a bunch of other blessings—and those would be opportunities! Opportunities for what? Opportunities for service, for sharing the love of Christ with others! Just take a minute to think of all of the possibilities and opportunities that God will lay before us for service to His kingdom in the minutes and hours that will make up the days of the year 2021! Many of these opportunities and possibilities we will be familiar with, but some will be new. Can anyone say COVID 19? How is the Lord going to use us in this New Year during this new time? What new doors will be opened to us for ministry? What does God have in store for Christ Our Savior Lutheran Church? I believe that God has wonderful things in store for us! How are we going to accomplish those things?

Where is the money going to come from? How can we reach out to those with the love of Christ even if we don't know them? The list of questions could go on and on. Even though we may be unsure of all the answers to those questions, I know that He will abundantly bless us and our ministry as we hold high the cross of Christ!

In this Update

- ◆ February Pastoral Epistle
- ◆ Strategic Operations Workshop Update
- ◆ CHRISTmas Blessings
- ◆ A Christmas Poem
- ◆ Synod and District Conventions Update
- ◆ Featured Ministry: Journey of Faith
- ◆ Meet Our New Missionaries
- ◆ Lenten Service Times

"How do you know that?" you say. Because our God is an abundant God! Abundance is a characteristic of God. He gave His only Son Who declared to us, *"I have come that [you] may have life, and have it to the full"* (John 10:10). Through Him and because of the abundance of His love for us, we *"are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for [we] are receiving the goal of [our] faith, the salvation of [our] souls"* (1 Peter 1:8-9). While He is slow to anger, the Lord is *"abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion"* (Numbers 14:18).

He gives the gifts of His creation in abundance as well. Who can count the stars in the sky, the birds in the air, or the fish in the sea? In Romans 12:6-8, we read, *"We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully"*. Our God is an abundant God!

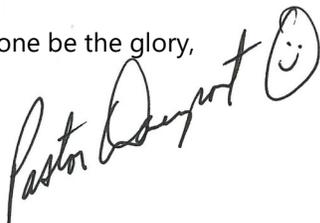
The question then might be why—why has God blessed us? Why has He challenged us now with the great task of looking beyond ourselves for the sake of Gospel and further generations? "Why us? Why me? Why now?"

[cont. on next page]

God has equipped and enabled us with His abundant gifts so that we would have what we need to seek out the lost. He has blessed you so that we can be a blessing to others by providing a place where they can come to hear the Word of God, a place where their children can be educated and instructed in the faith. He has blessed us so that you can lead and serve on committees and boards that do the work of ministry and so that we could provide financial support for ministries outside our "four walls" and for church workers at home and in mission. Why now? *"Because now is the time of God's favor. Now is the day of salvation"* (2 Corinthians 6:2).

Perhaps you don't know where you fit into this picture. Perhaps you have lots of questions. Perhaps this all seems too large for you to grasp. Perhaps you even think you're not part of the picture. Not so! The Apostle Peter wrote, *"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms"* (1 Peter 4:10). By this we know that each of us has at least one gift and that God holds each of us responsible for using that gift. Ask God to show you where He wants to use you. Come to me or Pastor Eden, go to your Elder and other church leaders and let them know that you're available, in this new year and new time, to discover and use the gifts God has given you for His service. I know that God has wonderful things in store for us as we selflessly seek to be used by Him. We will only be limited in our ministry opportunities by our unwillingness to serve Him. "How do you know that Pastor?" you say. Because our God is an abundant God! He has given us Himself, our talents and resources, time, the ministry of the Gospel and opportunities to bear witness to Him. What else do we need?!

To God alone be the glory,



Strategic Operations Workshop Update

By Arlo Wiltenburg

On January 21st, 22nd, and 23rd, members of Christ Our Savior's staff, Council representatives, Elder representatives, and a cross section of the congregation participated in a Strategic Operations Workshop led by Rev. Dr. Robert Kasper, Assistant to the President—Congregation Ministries/Ministry Support. The goal of the workshop was to come up with some action items that Christ Our Savior can implement in the coming 18 to 24 months to further our mission, "Making disciples who share the love of Christ in these communities and with people everywhere."

The facilitator requested that the participants not spend time taking detailed notes during the workshop but to focus on being involved in the discussions that would be occurring. The facilitator explained that a detailed report would be provided to Christ Our Savior by mid-February.

Each of the days explored a specific question. Day one explored, "Where are we now?" On day two we discussed, "Where are we going?" Day three explored "How do we get there?" There were some lively discussions as the group explored these three questions. Some of the discussions included: the major events, good or bad, that have occurred in the history of Christ Our Savior, the ministries conducted at Christ Our Savior, the qualities valued by the members of this congregation, our historic core values, and the strengths and weaknesses of Christ Our Savior.

Many processes were introduced to the group by the facilitator so each of the questions explored could be answered by the end of each session. At times, it was difficult to determine how an end product was going to be reached. To the amazement of everyone, the goal of the workshop all came together during the last couple of hours. A list of action items was identified that Christ Our Savior can implement. The facilitator also provided a detailed process to follow for implementing the action items.

Out of the list of action items identified, the participants prioritized five that could be started as we wait for the detailed report. These five items are:

- Governance/Staff Review: to provide clarity & focus for decision making. Led by Arlo Wiltenburg.
- Communication Plan: to let members know what's going on and how to plan. Led by Alyssa Anders.
- Member Update on Spiritual Gifts/Talents: to identify and educate for ministry purposes. Led by Linda Hollman.
- Community Needs Study: to learn about our community and how to serve them. Led by Gini Krenz.
- Gap Analysis and Review Inventories for Alignment: to move forward together. Led by Matt Fremder.

As these action items are worked on, members of the congregation may be approached to assist. Stay tuned for more detailed information as we receive the report from the District and start work on the action items.

CHRISTmas Blessings



Sharing Our Faith—with Food

Sometimes we share our faith when a friend asks why we go to church on Sunday. Or we have the opportunity when we travel to a foreign country on a missions trip. And sometimes, sharing our faith looks like giving a red bin full of food into needy hands.

Thanks to all COS members who shopped for groceries for CHRISTmas Blessings and for your efforts to share Jesus' love in a tangible way on Saturday, December 19th! What a whirlwind, starting with a crowded parking lot by 7:15am when the organizers got to church. We started distribution at 9:30 that morning with 175 bins to distribute and another 50 plus were given out by our members in-person. We had a great group of members who dressed warm and came to help. There were many guests who were emotional on receiving a bin and welcomed our prayers with them. They were very grateful for the groceries and the generosity of our congregation.

When we handed out the bins of food, we also gave postcards and encouraged the recipients to send them back to us with prayer requests. We got several back in the mail, with prayer requests as well as thank you messages. The thank you messages are written on the sticky notes on the side of this page.

When we give out food, we don't always see the impact we have on the community. This year, we got a small insight when a postal office worker stopped by to talk to our church staff in January. He shared that he personally knew a family who had received food from us and that it was exactly what they needed. He also wanted to participate in this ministry and gave us a check for \$100 for our food pantry ministry.

Although CHRISTmas Blessings only happens once a year, our food pantry is open all year round. Every Friday morning we set up tables with nonperishable items and Linda Hollman and volunteer members stand by the door to greet anyone who comes. There are regulars who drop by, but new people are finding us as well, guided in by a sign we put out on Farmington road. We welcome donations of non-perishable items.

These ministries are about more than feeding the hungry (although that is a worthy goal!) It's about sharing God's love with people who have a very tangible need. It's about living our faith in our actions.

By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth (1 John 3:16-18).

Contact Linda Hollman, lindah@choursavior.org for more info about our food pantry.

To all the wonderful people who prepared the food basket I received this Christmas, always something to look forward to every year. Thank you for all your help.

Thank you so much for the Christmas Bin, the Ham, the Rolls, cookies, crackers, soup, etc. May God Truly Bless each and everyone of you.

Pastor Davenport, to you and all the helpers,

Thank You!! This is so beautiful and appreciated. I am overwhelmed at the contents of this "basket." I thought 1 or 2 things to help out. What a wonderful gift!

Thank you so much! It really helps us!

Thank you folks for the Great Christmas Basket. We appreciate your help in these troubled times. Blessings to you, too.



A White Christmas

Psalm 51:7

Rev. Dean Davenport

Every year we hear the popular Christmas song "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas." The last stanza goes like this: "I'm dreaming, of a white Christmas with every Christmas card I write. May your days be merry and bright, and may all your Christmases be white."

There is another song about snow written by David some 1,000 years before Christmas—Psalm 51:7. This song, this prayer to God, says: "Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow."

With these two songs in mind, read this poem.

A White Christmas

by Rev. Lawrence L. Eatherton

It is the time of Christmas, and all over the earth
Christian people celebrate our dear Savior's birth.

With presents to open and some even tried,
We pause for a moment and set them aside.

And leaving the hustle and bustle and rush,
We sit here, just sit here, enjoying the hush.

Maybe we think of the month that is past,
And wonder about how it went by so fast.

So then we recall all the things we have done,
To judge the ones that were boring or fun,

And count up all of our trips to the mall,
The cookies, the candies, the wrappings, and all.

We wonder, oh, yes, if in all that is here
We've left something out of our Christmas this year.

[Use if there is no snow.]

Oh, we still must visit and buy more presents yet,
But still something's missing, some need that's unmet.

Ah! It's obvious, obvious that we don't have a trace;
It ought to be plain as the nose on our face.

That this Christmas, this year as you already know
Isn't white because, well, it just didn't snow!

Now maybe for some that's all just as well
That we don't have to shovel up snow for a spell.

But you have to admit that it all looks so right
When we look out the window, and Christmas is white.
[End of "no snow."]

[Use if there is snow.]

Oh, we still must visit and buy more presents yet,
But we know what's not missing, a need that's been met.

For now it is Christmas, and it all looks so right
When we look out the window, and Christmas is white!
[End of "snow."]

When the dark and the stark and the naked old trees
Glisten and sparkle in the wake of the freeze,

And the muddy old ground, once so barren and low
Becomes such a wonder in its blanket of snow.

And even the stalks of the untrimmed roses
Appear to be snowmen in various poses.

And all that was ugly, unseemly, or trite
Becomes clothed in beauty, all dressed up in white.

But this white picture's more than Currier and Ives;
This white picture touches more than our eyes.

And God in his wisdom would lead us to know
The message he gives in the white of the snow.

For each stark and dark and naked old tree
Is a description of all that is lacking in me.

And the muddy old ground looking barren and low
Is the stain of my sin and the guilt that I know.

And even the stalks of the untrimmed roses
Stand out as my life in its unholy poses.

And I long for a blanket to cover my sin,
Something to hide the deep stain that's within.

And I stumble and fumble and search through the night,
But I cannot begin to turn darkness to light.

In my helpless condition, though I strut and I brag,
I'm no closer to white than a filthy old rag.

Oh, I can holler and wail that enough is enough,
And could even try to be hateful and rough.

After all, it's not my fault. I'm morally lame.
It's the world! It's those others! It's the weather I'll blame!

But even as I clamor with self-will and with pride,
Looking for excuses behind which to hide,

God's Law is so perfect, and clear is the sign:
The sin; the transgression, the evil are mine.

And that's when I sit in the darkness of night,
I pray to God to send forth his light.

"Lord, take all within me that's rotten and mean,
Cleanse me with hyssop, and I shall be clean.

Where sin's ugly stain is all I can show
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

That washing, that cleansing from darkness and strife,
That freedom from bondage, that forgiveness and life,

Was the promise that God through his work would bring,
The promise he gave to each prophet and king:

Salvation would spring forth and put sin to flight,
And Christmas for all men would one day be white.

In so many ways our God spoke of old
And thus through the prophets his message was told.

And through signs and wonders and visions to man
He began to reveal his most wonderful plan.

But did walking with God in the garden in light
Secure man's salvation and make all things right?

No, Adam and Eve turned away in their pride.
And because of their sin, each one of us died.

And what about Noah, when the flood waters came,
Did life in the ark cleanse the guilt from his name?

No, the sin of the world was not washed in that flood.
Men continued to hate and to shed their warm blood.

[cont. on next page]

Did the rescue from slavery in Egypt by night
Free the world from its bondage to sin and its might?

Did giving the Law on Mount Sinai's height
Make people sinless and forgiven and right?

Did the Red Sea rescue? Did the wilderness plight?
Was that manna from heaven their holy delight?

Did it happen when God with his own hand
brought them into that Promised Land?

Was it there in the temple, where God chose to dwell?
Did Jerusalem's walls thwart the powers of hell?

Did the remnant from exile with praises to sing?
Did judges? Did prophets? Did priests? Did kings?

God used all these things only to make it clear,
His promise of ages was still drawing near.

And God in his wisdom, in each sign they could see
Was telling them always, "Hope and trust in me.

And soon when time in its fullness has run,
I will give you that gift of my own precious Son."

And I see what the prophets had promised for years,
What God's people longed for with prayers and tears

God brought to pass in the still of the night.
Jesus was born, and Christmas was white!

White because here was God's holy child.
White because tho' he was humble and mild,

He would carry our griefs and our sorrows and blame.
He would suffer indignity and insult and shame

And endure each temptation without giving in,
Then give up his life to cleanse us from sin.

White because over sin rank and obscene
He purged me with hyssop, and I became clean.

White because in his shed blood I know,
He washed me in love, I became whiter than snow!

It's the eve (time) of Christmas and all over the earth,
As Christians we celebrate our dear Savior's birth.

In spite of the season stuffed full of noise
We remember the reason for all of our joys.

You could cover the world in a blanket of snow,
And still every heart would deep down in it know

That it takes more than snow to turn darkness to light.
Yes, it takes more than snow to make Christmas white.

So where's the white Christmas that we're dreaming of?
Why, it's right in the manger, in God's gift of love.

No longer is Christmas dark, naked, and old.
No longer will sin leave us barren and cold.

Not the stain of my sin, nor the guilt that you know,
For our Savior has washed us much whiter than snow!

And now through our lives, every day, every hour,
We can know his forgiveness, his strength, and his power.

And then on that day when we see him in light,
We will stand with the multitude clothed in pure white

And give glory forever to God up above
For the gift of a Savior, the power of love.

I'm dreaming of a white Christmas
With Jesus' birth here on this night.

May your days always in him be bright
And may all your Christmases be white.

*Rev. Eatherton serves the congregation of Immanuel Lutheran
Church in Pilot Knob, Missouri.*

2021 District and 2022 Synod Conventions

Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, the hotel/convention industries across the nation are barely operating and State governments have placed restrictions on public meetings. These two things are making it difficult for the Districts to effectively hold their conventions this year. After consultation with the Synod's Board of Directors and with the unanimous approval of the Council of Presidents, President Harrison has asked the LCMS congregations to vote on a Convention Referendum to allow the Districts to hold their conventions in 2021 or 2022 and delay the Synod convention from 2022 to 2023. This referendum would add one additional year to the current triennial cycle. This referendum would not change the convention schedules to a four year cycle but the conventions would return to the triennial cycles. If approved, the next scheduled District conventions would be in 2025 and the Synodical convention in 2026. Adoption of the Convention Referendum requires 25 percent of the Synod's member congregations to register votes on the Convention Referendum. The referendum will be adopted with a simple majority of votes cast in favor.

Copy of
Referendum
text:

Shall the Synod add a year to the current 2019–2022 triennium, allowing districts to hold their conventions in either 2021 or 2022, and moving the upcoming national Synod Convention from 2022 to 2023? [Thereafter, the triennium cycle will continue forward from 2023 in three-year increments, as before (i.e., with district conventions held in 2025, 2028, etc., and Synod Conventions held in 2026, 2029, etc.)]

Vote: Yes or No.

At the January Council meeting, Council discussed the referendum after reviewing the letter from Pastor Harrison and the FAQ document that the Synod put together. Council voted to approve the Convention Referendum and has cast a Yes vote electronically. The complete tally of the votes on the Convention Referendum will be released by the end of February.

If you are interested in viewing a copy of the letter from President Harrison and the FAQ document, please contact Arlo Wiltenburg at: CouncilArloWiltenburg@christoursavior.org.

Featured Ministry

Family of God *Journey of Faith*



It has been more than ten years since our church started working with the mission at Family of God church in southwest Detroit. Chances are, you've heard about the work that happens there, and even enjoyed a sermon from Pastor Hill or Pastor Cronkright. Maybe you've traveled there to help with the meals for the homeless, participated in a Bible Study, or been involved with the other ministry that they do on a daily basis. For all the time, energy, effort and expenses you've given for the work at Family of God, thank you!

When we first started the journey alongside Family of God, the needs were real. And now, in the year 2021, the needs are still there. While much of our lives has been turned upside down by the COVID-19 pandemic, Family of God continues to bring light to people who live in darkness. There are physical needs—for food, shelter, friendship or comfort—and there are also spiritual needs—to hear God's Word and be nurtured in faith.

The Work

Even during these "unprecedented times" our congregation continues to serve on the front lines. Volunteers from our congregation travel down to southwest Detroit three times a month to assist with meals. The 1st and 4th Mondays of each month we help to serve a meal and the 2nd Tuesday we prepare the food in addition to serving it. We are so grateful to our faithful donors who make it possible for us to serve in this way!

As we serve, our congregation members are blessed by sharing Christ's compassion for others at Family of God. The people, staff, and other church volunteers we meet there are now dear friends to us. We are blessed to have them in our lives, blessed to serve, blessed to put into practice the spiritual gifts and fruits of the Spirit God has produced!

Your Role

There is a place for YOU in this ministry. First and foremost, 1) this work needs your prayers. Pray for Pastors Hill and Cronkright. Pray for the volunteers who give their time. Pray for the people who come to Family of God for a good meal and hear the Word of God. In addition, you can support by 2) donating supplies. There is always an on-going need for:

- Gordon's packages of disposable, cardboard plates (3-sectioned)
- Lidded take-home containers/boxes
- Silverware kits (plastic knife, spoon, fork wrapped in gingham paper napkin)

These items can be dropped off at the COS kitchen anytime, marked "FOG". If you are able, we would love to have you join us at Family of God: there is always room for 3) more volunteers to prepare the food or take it to Family of God. Your participation in our ongoing meal ministry is always **welcomed, encouraged, needed!**

Serving at, then later partnering with Family of God has been a stepping-out-in-faith experience for COS. We have matured in faith as a congregation by trusting and obeying God's directives of loving and serving our neighbors. God provided an opportunity for us to be a blessing and we have grown in compassion and service because of it. Over our long tenure of service at Family of God, we have come to a much deeper understanding of Christian discipleship.

Call Linda Waara, (734) 525-0191 for more info about the work at Family of God.





PUERTO RICO

Capital: San Juan
Population: 3,193,694
Languages: Spanish/
English
Dominant Religion:
Roman Catholicism

Meet our new missionaries: Rev. James and Deaconess Christel Neuendorf

Christ Our Savior has adopted a new missionary couple to support and encourage. The Neuendorfs are located in Puerto Rico, and they have been serving in the Latin America region since 2008. Their missionary prayer card gives a detailed overview of the work they are doing:

“James serves as a church planter and pastor in the city of Ponce, Puerto Rico. His focus is to establish a strong Lutheran presence in this city which will boldly proclaim the Gospel and meet the physical and spiritual needs of a community that is hungry for the Gospel and for hope. As pastor, James engages daily with Ponce community members to share in their lives and to bring them into the life-giving presence of Jesus in Word and Sacrament. He is also working to create a generation of local leaders and well-grounded laity and future pastors who will be able to continue to spread the Gospel throughout Puerto Rico, around the Latin America region, and the world.

As a deaconess, Christel is involved in the long-term disaster relief efforts at the mission's various Casa de Amparo y Respuesta al Desastre (House of Refuge and Disaster Response) mercy houses. From these places, LCMS missionaries and Puerto Rican Lutherans offer food, water and other basic necessities to community members affected by the hurricane. She is also engaged in assessing needs in the community and coordinating efforts to meet those needs as a congregation and mission.”

You can learn more about them and download their prayer card at lcms.org/Neuendorf. Keep the Neuendorfs in your prayers as they serve in Puerto Rico and we look forward to when they will be able to visit us here at Christ Our Savior!



Let Us Know Your Preferred Method of Communication

If you would like to receive an electronic version of the Disciplegram, email Alyssa Anders at alyssaa@christoursavior.org. Include your preferred email address and the current mailing address where you receive the Disciplegram.

Lenten Services

2/17/21 Ash Wednesday

Midday 12:00pm Evening 7:00pm

Wednesday Services

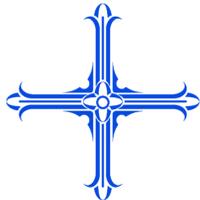
From 2/24/21 through 3/24/21

Midday 12:00pm Evening 7:00pm



Midday Services will be held at Christ Our Savior.

There be no lunch provided at the services.



Christ Our Savior
Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod
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