/ JANUARY 2026

DISTRICT NEWS

INDIANA

Rev. Dr. D. Richard Stuckwisch
District President

January brings us from Christmas into Epiphanytide, the transition occurring with the Visit of the Magi (St. Matthew 2:1-12) on the Feast of the Epiphany (Jan. 6). Often described as "The Christmas of the Gentiles," this account already anticipates the Great Commission at the conclusion of St. Matthew's Gospel (28:18-20). That sending of the apostles to make disciples of all nations continues the ingathering that began with the coming of Magi from the East to worship the Christ child.

In many ways, the entire season of Epiphany echoes that calling of the Gentiles into the Kingdom of God, as it emphasizes the manifestation of divine glory in the person and work of the incarnate Son, Christ Jesus. "In Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily" (Colossians 2:9), even as He makes His way from the waters of the Jordan to the bloody "Baptism" of His sacrificial death upon the cross. And that "light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:9) is made known through the ministry of the Gospel in the church on earth, so that the Gentiles should thereby become heirs and partakers of the promise, members of the one Body of Christ (Ephesians 3:1-12).

So then, when all has been fulfilled by the once-for-all sacrifice of the beloved and well-pleasing Son of God — and by His bodily resurrection from the dead, which opened forever the Kingdom of God to all who believe and are baptized in His name — the same Lord Jesus Christ brings "life and immortality to light through the Gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10), even to the ends of the earth and the close of the age!

To be a disciple of Christ Jesus is to be a student of His Word, a hearer and believer of His preaching and a follower of His way of life, though it be the way of the cross before it enters into glory (St. Luke 24:26). And our Lord in His mercy indicates the way such disciples are made: Not by clever gimmicks, strategies or marketing ploys, nor by anyone's own choices, decisions, wisdom, reason or strength, but solely by the Word and Spirit of God, by the preaching of repentance for the forgiveness of sins in Jesus' name "to all nations" (St. Luke 24:47), by proclaiming "the Gospel to the whole creation" (St. Mark 16:15).

In St. Matthew, the Lord specifies two means of making disciples, namely, baptizing in the name of the Holy Trinity, and teaching the observance of all that He has commanded (St. Matthew 28:19-20). These two belong together and should not be separated, though each has its own unique role in the process. There is "one Baptism for the remission of sins," the divinely worked new birth of water, Word and Spirit (St. John 3:5, Ephesians 5:25-27), which is not to be

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Rev. Matthew Buse was installed as executive director of the Immigrant Mission Field Network on Nov. 16 at at Ascension, Fort Wayne. Immigrant Mission Field Network, an LCMS Recognized Service Organization, supports LCMS congregations in mission field engagement with diaspora communities.

Pictured are, from left, Revs. James Gier (Ascension, Fort Wayne), Dr. D. Richard Stuckwisch (district president), Rev. Matthew Buse, Dr. Don Wiley (Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne) and Dr. Gary Zieroth (Ascension, Fort Wayne).

Rev. Kevin McGladdery was installed as pastor of Immanuel, Decatur, on Nov. 9. Pastor McGladdery recently served in Orange, Conn. Pictured are, from left (bottom step) Revs. Dr. Geoffrey Boyle (Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne), Josemon Hoem (St. Paul's, Fort Wayne), Michael Blodgett (St. Paul, New Haven), Kevin McGladdery, Peter Brock (St. John, Decatur), Berett Steffen (St. John, Decatur), Samuel Wirgau (Bethlehem, Ossian), Leonard Tanksley (St. Peter, Decatur) Dr. Jeffrey Pulse (Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne); (top steps) Vicar Charlie McLain (Bethlehem, Ossian) and Revs. Shayne Jonker (Faith, Roanoke), Anthony Mandile (St. John, Strongsville, Ohio), Chad Hoover (Concordia Lutheran High School, Fort Wayne), Dr. Daniel Brege (St. Paul, Decatur, and district president emeritus), Dr. Arthur Just (Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne), Andrew Yeager (St. Paul, Decatur), Matthew Ulmer (Zion, Decatur), Zach Oedewaldt (Zion, Decatur) and Anthony Dodgers (Bethlehem, Ossian).

Blessings at ULu Purdue

University Lutheran Church, West Lafayette, joyfully celebrated its 80th anniversary in 2025. As a mission congregation of the Indiana District, University Lutheran (affectionately known as ULu Purdue) serves the Purdue University campus and surrounding community with Christ-centered ministry.

On Oct. 26, the congregation gathered for a festive evening. Vespers featured Rev. Jim Barton (emeritus) serving as guest preacher. Rev. Barton faithfully served as campus pastor for many years. The celebration welcomed alumni, circuit members and students in a joyful reunion of faith and fellowship.

ULu Purdue, under the leadership of Rev. Jared DeBlieck (senior pastor) and Rev. Daniel Harrison (associate pastor) continues to rejoice in the gracious provisions of Christ through His Word and Sacrament. The congregation gives thanks for the many volunteers and leaders whose faithful service continues to share Christ's love with the Purdue community.

Rev. Harrison was installed as associate pastor on Nov. 2

▲ Singing during the Oct. 26 Vespers service are, from left, Revs. Jared DeBlieck, Jim Barton and Daniel Harrison.

◀ Rev. Barton, who served as ULu Purdue pastor, looks at memorabilia displayed for the 80th anniversary celebration.

Pictured following the installation are, from left (front) Revs. Jim Barton (emeritus), Adam Barcott (St. James, Lafayette), Dr. John Bombaro (St. James, Lafayette), Dr. D. Richard Stuckwisch (district president), Daniel Harrison, Jared DeBlieck (University senior pastor), Andrew Keller (St. James, Reynolds), David Mueller (St. John's, Rensselaer, and Trinity, Goodland); (back row) Wayne Berkesch (emeritus), Paul Norris (St. Matthew's, Delphi) and Scott Woodhouse (St. James, Logansport).

The Lutheran Mission Federation (Jackson County) held a Reformation Rally at St. Peter's, Brownstown, on Oct. 26. The federation was thrilled to welcome Rev. Dr. Rich Rudowske, executive director and CEO of Lutheran Bible Translators, as preacher. It was a joy to celebrate the enduring truth of God's Word and the power of its translation to transform lives. Pictured are, from left (front), Rev. Zachary Huffman (Redeemer, Seymour), Rev. Andrew Currao (Redeemer, Seymour), Rev. Dr. Rich Rudowske, Rev. Jordan McKinley (Trinity, Vallonia), Rev. James Rodriguez (Immanuel, Seymour); (middle) Rev. Craig Muhlbach (St. John's, Seymour), Rev. Ryan Schneider (St. Peter's, Brownstown), Rev. Will Fredstrom (Immanuel, Seymour), Rev. Dr. Ralph Blomenberg (Immanuel, Seymour); (back) Rev. Joel Meyer (St. Paul, Brownstown), Rev. Adam Rodriguez (St. Peter's, Columbus), Rev. Janis Mikits (Faith, Salem), Vicar Max Johnston (Immanuel, Seymour), Rev. Alarik Morris (Peace, Seymour) and Rev. Philip Bloch (Immanuel, Seymour).

Messiah, Wolcottville, celebrated its 65th anniversary on Nov. 16. Rev. Dr. D. Richard Stuckwisch preached for Divine Service. From left, Rev. Tony Appel, Messiah pastor; Stuckwisch; and Caleb Zeckzer, Concordia Theological Seminary student who serves as a fieldworker at Messiah.

Share your news with us!

SEND TO:

LWeditor@in.lcms.org; or
Lutheran Witness Editor
LCMS Indiana District
1145 South Barr St.; Fort Wayne, IN 46802

CHRIST

The fabric of LUTHERAN EDUCATION

LCMS/Erik M. Lunsford

Nathan Wingfield
District Executive for Christian Education

A truly Lutheran education teaches that all truth belongs to the God who created and redeemed us. Therefore, the person and work of Jesus Christ must not be relegated to a separate class, but must be integrated across the entire curriculum. This is not mere religious window-dressing or a simple moral overlay; it is the essential, unifying lens through which we view and interpret reality, seeing Christ as the central theme of all knowledge.

In the sciences, we study the intricate mechanisms of life and the vastness of the universe. This exploration is not to demonstrate the leaps of mankind, but a profound opportunity to witness the awesome handiwork of the Creator (Psalm 19:1). The perfection and consistency of natural law reveal the wisdom of God the Father, and we marvel at the incarnate Son, Christ Jesus, through whom all things hold together (Colossians 1:17).

Likewise, this Christ-centered perspective transforms the study of history. We see not merely a sequence of political and social events driven by chance or human ambition, but the unmistakable unfolding of God's providential hand. The rise and fall of nations, the struggles for power and even the moments of human "goodness" are all steered toward the ultimate climax of history — the incarnation, atonement and resurrection of Christ, through whom all things are reconciled (Colossians 1:20).

The integration is particularly vital in the humanities. Engaging with great literature and art, students encounter universal themes of brokenness and redemption. The recurring motif of the Fall, the reality of sin and human tragedy, is laid bare. Yet these works also reflect the human yearning for restoration, constantly pointing to the only answer — the free forgiveness and new life provided by the promised Savior.

This intentional, daily integration proves that faith is not an "add-on" or a peripheral subject. Instead, the doctrine of Christ is woven into the very fabric of the curriculum. It ensures that students are equipped not just with facts, but with the eternal, life-giving context for all learning — the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

Stewardship

Ken Schilf
Holy Cross,
Fort Wayne

The following was written by Tim Hetzner, who retired as president and CEO of Lutheran Church Charities in 2022.

When you're controlled by materialism

The flawed philosophy behind materialism is "more, more, more!" And it's the result of "eye trouble." The Bible says "the eyes of man are never satisfied" (Proverbs 27:20). It's OK to want a nice home, a reliable car and financial security. But when you want more than you need or more than what's required to fulfill His will, the Bible calls it vanity. The word could be defined as being empty, hollow or without purpose.

Solomon writes:

> He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity.
> **Ecclesiastes 5:10**

So before you ask God for prosperity, ask Him to reveal your life's purpose because they're directly linked. Jesus said:

> "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."
> **Luke 12:15**

God uses a different measuring stick. His Word says:

> And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. ... He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. **2 Corinthians 9:8, 10-11**

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, help me remember daily that all I have is not mine, but Yours, and to use it as You will. In Jesus name, Amen.

CONFIRMATION RETREAT IS FEB. 13–16

Young people preparing for confirmation are invited and encouraged to attend Christ Academy Confirmation Retreat, to be held Feb. 13–16 at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (CTSFW).

The retreat includes catechetical sessions, time in worship and Christian fellowship. Rev. Michael Salemink, CTSFW assistant professor of Pastoral Ministry and Missions, will lead sessions on the Lord's Prayer to supplement students' confirmation instruction.

The retreat begins the evening of Friday, Feb. 13, with a full day of sessions and activities on Saturday. Groups have the option of attending Sunday morning church services at LCMS congregations in Fort Wayne before they head home.

"The Confirmation Retreat exposed the youth of my congregation to more of our church body, gave them an opportunity to get an in-depth look at one aspect of their lives as Christians, and allowed them to hear more about serving our Lord's church," said Rev. Daniel Burfiend, CTSFW advancement officer who previously served as pastor of New Hope, Ossian. "Pastors, here is a retreat you don't have to set up and organize. The speaker, the food, even the activities are taken care of by an institution committed to confessional Lutheran catechesis."

For more information and registration, visit **ctsfw.edu**. Click the "Events" link at the top of the page and scroll down.

LFL SUNDAY IS JAN. 18

"Fearfully and Wonderfully Made" is Lutherans For Life's (LFL) theme for Sanctity of Human Life Sunday, which is set for Jan. 18. Your congregation can observe Sanctity of Human Life Sunday on that date or at any time during the year.

The LFL theme is based on Psalm 139:13-14:

> For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.

For resources for your congregation, visit **lutheransforlife.org**. Go to the "Resources" tab and select "Store: Life Sunday 2026" from the drop-down menu.

PRAYER LIST

WEEK OF JAN. 4

Circuit 15 – Columbus

- Faith, Bloomington
- Faith, Columbus
- Good Shepherd, Franklin
- Grace, Columbus
- Shepherd of the Hills, Morgantown
- St. John's-White Creek, Columbus
- St. Paul's, Jonesville
- St. Peter-Waymansville, Columbus
- St. Peter's, Columbus
- Trinity, Ellettsville
- University, Bloomington

RSO: Concordia Counseling, Seymour
LCMS DISTRICT: Rocky Mountain

WEEK OF JAN. 11

Circuit 16 – Seymour

- Emanuel, Seymour
- Holy Cross, Scottsburg
- Immanuel, Seymour
- Lord of Life, North Vernon
- Peace, Seymour
- Redeemer, Seymour
- Zion, Seymour
- Zion, Fort Wayne

MINISTRY: Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis
LCMS DISTRICT: SELC

WEEK OF JAN. 18

Circuit 17 – Brownstown

- Calvary, Bedford
- Emmanuel-Leesville, Bedford
- Faith, Salem
- Good Shepherd, Medora
- St. John-Sauers, Seymour
- St. Paul-Wegan, Brownstown
- St. Peter's, Brownstown
- Trinity, Vallonia

MINISTRY: Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne
LCMS DISTRICT: South Dakota

WEEK OF JAN. 25

Circuit 18 – Aurora

- Bethany, Connersville
- Faith, Madison
- Holy Trinity, Greensburg
- St. John, Aurora
- St. John-Farmers Retreat, Dillsboro
- St. Paul-Clifty, Columbus
- St. Paul's, Cross Plains
- Trinity, Dillsboro

MINISTRY: Concordia Seminary, St. Louis
LCMS DISTRICT: South Wisconsin

Anniversaries *(50 and over)*

Calvary, Indianapolis
Mike and Becky Trotta, 50, Jan. 10
Gene and Tess Redding, 52, Jan. 12

Concordia, Greenwood
Jim and Doris Roemer, 68, Jan. 25

Cornerstone, Carmel
Dave and Sharon Reed, 57, Jan. 4
Bob and Susan Christopher, 58, Jan. 10
Joe and Bonnie Shafer, 53, Jan. 12
Mike and Deb Strong, 50, Jan. 23
Doug and Sherry Bingham, 52, Jan. 26
Lyn and Trudy Grandt, 55, Jan. 30

Emmanuel, Tell City
Wayne and Donna Jennings, 52, Jan. 26

Grace, New Albany
Gwin and Judy Kahl, 59, Jan. 21
Ron and Edith Woodward, 63, Jan. 26

Immanuel, Seymour
Jerry and Sandra Waskom, 53, Jan. 12
Gene and Shirley Woodard, 69, Jan. 12
Benjamin and Mary Wheeler, 60, Jan. 15
Jerry and Betty Hall, 68, Jan. 18
Maurice and Anita Banister, 51, Jan. 25
Dale and Mary Lou Siefker, 60, Jan. 29
David and Elsie Brooks, 61, Jan. 30

Redeemer, Crown Point
Brenda and Eugene Fiegle, 63, Jan. 12
Letty and Woody Kasch, 56, Jan. 23
Linda and Richard Leimbach, 55, Jan. 30
Linda and Jud Salmon, 55, Jan. 30
Sharon and Frank Voyak, 66, Jan. 31

St. James, Marion
Bill and Suzel Morrow, 52, Jan. 26

St. John–Bingen, Decatur
Phil and Evie DeBolt, 67, Jan. 30

St. Michael, Fort Wayne
Paul and Jane Sieber, 51, Jan. 11
John and Carol Olry, 58, Jan. 13
Bill and Mary Davis, 59, Jan. 21
Jim and Pat Williams, 59, Jan. 21

St. Paul's, Munster
Joseph and Raynette Hybiak, 62, Jan. 11

St. Paul's, Preble, Decatur
Ron and Deb Wiegmann, 51, Jan. 5

St. Peter's, Brownstown
Bob and Ileen Nehrt, 71, Jan. 1
Mike and Jo Ross, 53, Jan. 6
Paul and Teresa Perry, 52, Jan. 12

St. Peter–Fuelling, Decatur
Kim and Teresa Cochran, 51, Jan. 11
Bruce and Brenda Scherer, 51, Jan. 24
Vern and Judy Witte, 63, Jan. 26

Trinity, Fort Wayne
Steve and Linda Ledbetter, 59, Jan. 22

Birthdays *(90 and over)*

Concordia, Greenwood
Norma Krall, 92, Jan. 9

Cornerstone, Carmel
Ernie Roehm, 96, Jan. 14
Shirley Yager, 97, Jan. 17

Grace, New Albany
Sammye Day, 90, Jan. 23

The Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Evansville
Marilyn May, 96, Jan. 3

Redeemer, Seymour
Puck Blevins, 91, Dec. 12
Audrey Hill, 90, Dec. 16
Shirley Florine, 93, Dec. 22

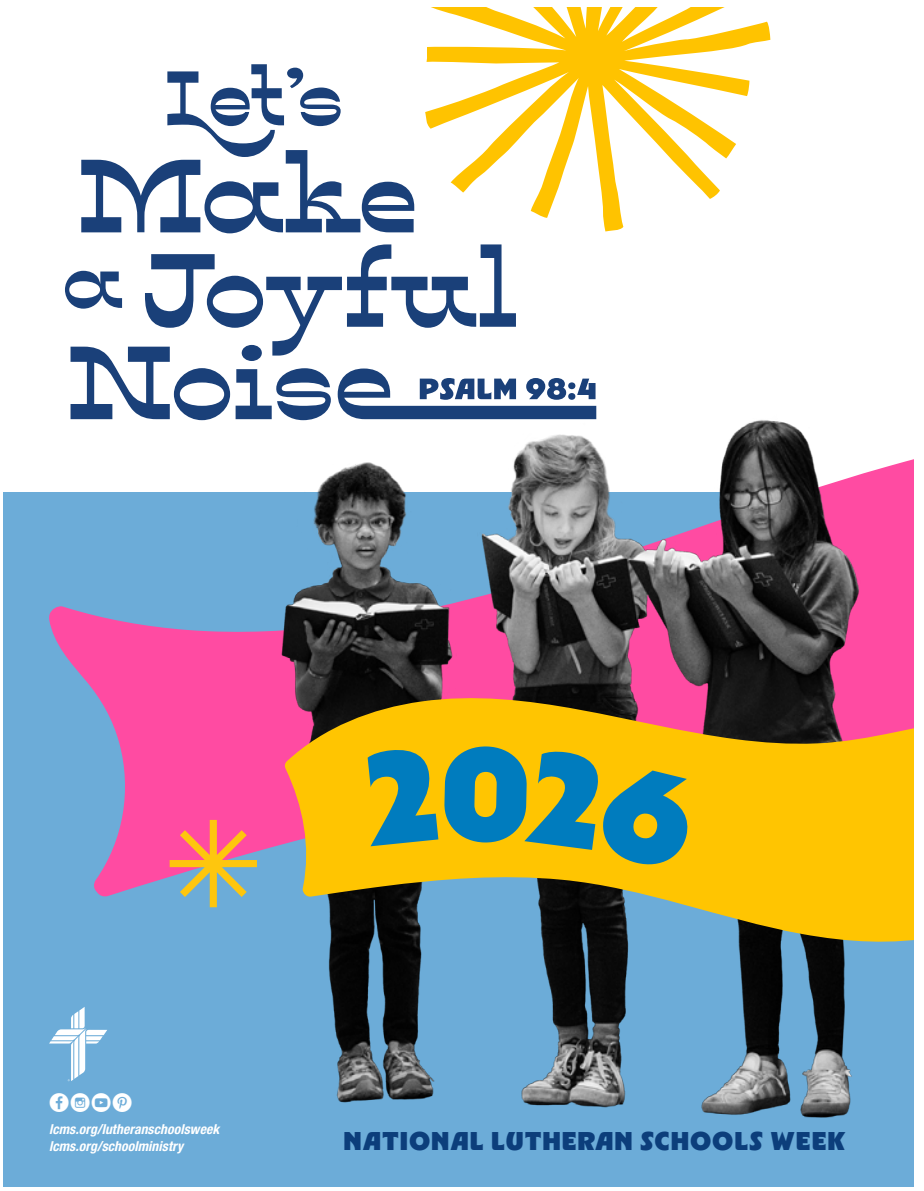
St. James, Marion
Betty Whitham, 98, Jan. 2
Ralph Pritchett, 92, Jan. 25

St. John–Bingen, Decatur
William Yunk, 90, Jan. 7

St. Michael's, Fort Wayne
Dorothy Smith, 94, Jan. 20
John Ribar, 90, Jan. 27

St. Paul's, Munster
Lilly Biberdorf, 90, Jan. 6
Norman Karner, 90, Jan. 12
Marilyn Brandt, 92, Jan. 24

Trinity, Fort Wayne
Leota Brown, 98, Jan. 20



National Lutheran Schools Week — Jan. 25–31 — provides more than 1,800 preschools, elementary schools and high schools with the public opportunity to proclaim and celebrate God's work among us in schools of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

We thank God for the opportunity to provide excellent academic preparation for the children we serve. We are most grateful for the opportunity to share Jesus' amazing love with children and their families.

National Lutheran Schools Week gives us an opportunity to proclaim these great blessings within the communities we serve. Our schools are amazing incubators for faithful witness of God's love for us through Christ by teachers and students alike.

**MAKE A JOYFUL NOISE TO THE LORD, ALL THE EARTH;
BREAK FORTH INTO JOYOUS SONG AND SING PRAISES!**

Psalm 98:4

MESSAGE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

repeated (nor does it need to be). Just as the Lord Jesus died once for all, and having risen from the dead He is never to die again, so there is only one Holy Baptism. As often as we may wander from its saving significance in this body and life, the Word of the Lord calls us back to the ongoing blessing and benefit of that singular event, which still stands fast as the work of God. But the teaching of all that Jesus has commanded is itself an ongoing, lifelong matter. Indeed, to be a disciple requires by definition that there be such teaching to hear, learn and observe!

It is the Word and teaching of Christ Jesus that calls and brings us to the waters of Holy Baptism in the first place, even before we are capable of processing these mysteries intellectually or academically. It is the Word and teaching of Christ Jesus that has established this Holy Sacrament, and it is by and with His Word and teaching that it is administered in His name, for "Baptism is not just plain water, but it is the water included in God's command and combined with God's Word."

And so it is the Word and teaching of Christ Jesus that leads and guides the baptized Christian from the font throughout the whole of life, as surely as it is His Word that strengthens and sustains faith, daily and richly forgives sins and bestows the manifold gifts of the Holy Spirit upon each believer's mind and heart.

Accordingly, it is essential that both the baptizing and the teaching be undertaken and maintained in keeping with our Lord's "Great Commission," that from the rising of the sun to the place of its going down His name should be great among the nations (Malachi 1:11, Psalm 113:3). Thus, indeed, shall multitudes come from East and West to share in the Feast of Salvation (St. Matthew 8:11; *LSB* 510).