



McCarthy receives 2009 Volunteer Excellence Award

Daniel McCarthy, Mount Olive, Ill., recently received a Volunteer Excellence Award (youth/young adult category) from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans. McCarthy was one

of just 12 individuals nationwide to be selected for this award from



McCarthy

among Thrivent Financial's 2.6 million members. Thrivent Financial selected McCarthy based on his dedication to helping others through volunteerism and service using Thrivent Financial programs and resources in 2008.

"Daniel embodies Thrivent Financial's mission of compassion and caring," said Brad Hewitt, senior executive vice president and chief operating officer for Thrivent Financial. "We applaud his generosity, commitment, and dedication to the mission of Thrivent Financial. He is most deserving of this recognition."

McCarthy has always been open to trying new things to help his Thrivent chapter multiply the good done by Thrivent Financial for Lutherans. And it shows.

As a graduate student, McCarthy has already served four years as a chapter leader and is likely one of the youngest to have reached the end of his term. He served as the chapter's financial director the past two years. Previously, he was communications director and congregational service team director.

McCarthy participates in a wide variety of activities and programs with his church and in his community of Mount Olive, Ill.—many utilizing his technical skills. He volunteers as a technician at Immanuel Lutheran Church, where he installed and maintained computer software and hardware and now serves as the church's Web site administrator. He also volunteers at the local library, serving as technology and security administrator and consultant.

As a graduate student pursuing a master's degree in accountancy at the University of Illinois at Springfield, McCarthy also serves his collegiate community. McCarthy helps at the Fifth Street Renaissance/SARA Center, volunteering as an accounting and IT consultant. The center helps people get back on their feet emotionally, mentally, and financially.

He is a council member for the Women's Center at



Jerusalem Lutheran Church, Collinsville, held vacation Bible school July 20-23. Pictured are, from left, front row, Jakob Fiudo, Tommy Fulford, Alexis Cook, Rachel Daniels; back row, Nancy Garcia, Logan Richardson, Katie Pendergraft, Jordan Richardson, and Kay McNeill.

the University of Illinois at Springfield, helping to educate the campus community about gender-related issues and address issues of concern to women. McCarthy also serves on the Business College Curriculum Committee as a volunteer student representative.

The spectrum of McCarthy's interests is wide. His concern for the well-being of others is equally as encompassing.

The Macoupin County Thrivent chapter manages the organization's Care Abounds in Communities program, which supports service projects and fundraising activities to benefit families in need and qualified nonprofit organizations.

In addition to receiving a 2009 Volunteer Excellence Award plaque, McCarthy was given \$2,000 to donate to the nonprofit organizations of his choice. McCarthy elected to donate \$1,000 to Mount Olive Public Library and \$1,000 to Mount Olive Immanuel Lutheran Church.

EDITOR

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Sept. 15

NEWS

Calls in the district

Calls Extended

Timothy Mueller, St. John, New Minden, and St. Luke, Covington, to Good Shepherd, Midwest City, Okla.

Steven Sommerer, Messiah, Carlyle, to Mount Olive Lutheran Church, Loveland, Colo.

Celebrate 150 years with Zion, Bethalto

Join Zion, Bethalto, members Oct. 3-4 as they celebrate the congregation's 150th year. Guest speaker for all services will be Rev. William Hemenway, emeritus.

For worship times or more information, call 618-377-8314 or visit www.zionbethalto.org.



On July 12, Trinity Lutheran Church and Trinity-St. John Lutheran School at Nashville, Ill., installed Rev. Russell Johnson as associate pastor of Trinity and principal of Trinity-St. John Lutheran School. Participants in the service included, front, kneeling, Pastor Timothy Scharr, senior pastor of Trinity, Nashville; Pastor Rich Futrell, Shepherd of the City, Kimberling City, Mo. (former vicar at Trinity); back row, from left, Pastor Stephen Krenz, Trinity, Hoffman; Vicar Dr. John Eyer, Trinity, Nashville; Pastor Timothy Mueller, St. John and St. Luke, New Minden and Covington (preacher for the service); Rev. Johnson; Pastor Darwin Schrader, interim pastor at Immanuel, Okawville; President Herbert Mueller; and Pastor Arthur Eichhorn, St. Salvator and St. Peter, Venedy and New Memphis, Ill. A reception was held after the service.



Clergy participating in the installation service for Rev. Jon Smithley (formerly of Zion, Pinckneyville, and Trinity, Conant) as a full-time chaplain in the U.S. Air Force, called by the Armed Forces Commission of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, included, from left, Pastor James Leistico, St. John, Ruma and St. Peter, Evansville; Pastor Ralph Laufer, Holy Cross, Renault; Air Force Chaplain Jon Smithley; President Herbert Mueller; and Pastor Tim Zechiel, Immanuel, West Point, and St. Paul, Wine Hill (rural Steepleville). The service of installation took place on Sunday, July 5, at Zion, Pinckneyville, with President Mueller presiding.

SID youth leaders

Planning has begun for the 2010 National Youth Gathering on July 17-21, 2010, in New Orleans!

Contact information was recently sent to ALL congregations. If you are a youth leader and have not received information regarding upcoming meeting dates, contact Roger Sprengel at the Southern Illinois District office (sidage@sidlcms.org).

Online registration opens Sept. 14.

Check out the Web site (www.lcmsgathering.com) or the SID Facebook site "Southern Illinois District HS Youth."



Suffering and the cross

by **Herbert C. Mueller**

We believe that God is both almighty and that He is good. He created all things, and we look to Him for every blessing. It all comes from God and God alone. That's what we confess in the Apostles' Creed when we say, "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth."

Well, if God is both all-powerful and completely good, goes the atheist's objection, why is the world He created full of suffering? Yes, we know that suffering comes from our sinful condition and is part of this fallen world, but our answer needs to say more.

Could not God have created a world in which evil and suffering were impossible?

Actually, speculating as to what God might have done, or what kind of universe He might have created, is just not fruitful. The universe God did create is the only one we have.

In the movie *Bruce Almighty*, God "allows" a man named Bruce to have all power. For a while Bruce enjoys walking on water, doing miracles, etc. But then the prayers start pouring in (all by e-mail!). At first, Bruce answers them all individually, but



Rev. Herbert C. Mueller Jr.
District President

after a while he gets tired and just starts answering them all with "yes." As a result, the world quickly breaks out in chaos, as I remember the movie. The laws of physics are collapsing, so God intervenes and takes back control—thankfully!

Why is there suffering? God is not the cause, but the world is full of conflicting wants, needs, and demands, all by people who are sinfully turned in on themselves. It's a condition from which we cannot free ourselves.

When we ask God, why am I suffering? we are usually protesting that we don't deserve the treatment we think we are receiving. We don't like to admit that we are part of the problem and that the evil we deplore runs right through each of us.

But what does God do about suffering? He comes. He does not give a three-part, logical, reasoned out answer. God comes Himself. That's what we believe when we confess with St. Paul:

"I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). There is no greater revelation of God in our suffering world than this: God Himself in Christ hanging dead on the cross.

There, God in Jesus went to the bottom of all that ails us, all that kills us. It killed Him, too, but not for long. He lived again, rose from the dead in wonderful, amazing victory. God's only answer to our question is the death and resurrection of Jesus.

So then, also for us, the way to life is through death and resurrection. When we believers in Jesus suffer, we can remember that the pain is only a reminder that one day we will turn in this present mortal body, corrupted by sin as it is, and receive from the Lord Jesus a brand new body. "This perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality ... thanks be to God who

gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:53, 57).

And when the Spirit of God working through God's Law reveals to us the depths of our sin, He calls us to repent, that is, to die to sin that God may forgive us and raise us to life. This daily dying begins with our Baptism into Christ's death and resurrection and continues lifelong until we die for the last time, and Jesus raises us to life forever (see Rom. 6:1-11).

Apart from the cross of Christ, suffering is an unrelenting evil. But in the hand of God, and remembering the cross of Jesus, can we see our suffering as a tool in God's hand to strip you and me of the things that don't matter, so that we concentrate all the more on what He has done for us? On what He has in store? On the things that do matter?

"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Rom. 8:18).

Yet we still cry out. It still hurts. The pain and grief, both physical and emotional, can seem unbearable. But when we

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SUFFERING AND THE CROSS

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cry, we cry to the One who knows our condition.

“We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:15-16).

We look to Him because He will give us His victory, whether now or later.

There's my answer, and I'm sticking to it! I'm going to hold on to His Word, receive His body and blood, remember His death and resurrection, and hear His promise: “Because I live, you will live also” (John 14:19).

The greatest thing our almighty creating Father ever did was to send—in eternal love—His one and only Son for us. Jesus is God's answer to our suffering.

Come back next month as we consider how God continues through us His work of creation.

Being content in all circumstances

by Roger Sprengel

Many congregations, schools, and organizations have developed “themes” to help focus topics and activities throughout a period of time—usually a calendar year. (*Examples:* Congregations planning an anniversary celebration; schools developing a theme for the school year; organizations choosing a theme for the upcoming year.)

Schools are back in session, congregational activities are increasing, and many of our district organizations soon will be in full swing. I suggest we take a look at the “theme” verse from Philippians below and model it as our theme for the upcoming year.

Theme for the 2009-10 Year

“I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:12b-13).

Being Content

Are you content with the material blessings you have? Are you content with the gifts and abilities God has given you? Are you content with who you



**Roger Sprengel
Schools and Executive
Assistant**

really are? What does it mean to “be content”?

In our world and church today, we are surrounded by many individuals who are experiencing difficult times due to the economic situation. The economic recession is entering its second year. Many individuals have lost jobs, taken pay cuts, filed bankruptcy, and possibly lost their home or other possessions.

Ripple Effect

Other individuals, businesses, and communities are affected in this economic downturn as unemployment increases, buying power decreases, and overall spending is limited. Our congregations and schools also are affected as tuition payments become discretionary, salaries are frozen, and budgets become leaner. It's pretty easy to become frustrat-

ed, apathetic, worried, or even angry—maybe even angry at God!

What's the Secret?

Paul indicates in the theme text that he has “learned the secret” of being content. Paul—who was bound, imprisoned, and held captive—was able to carry such an even disposition because of his relationship with Jesus Christ! Paul was able to do anything, no matter the circumstances, because he was connected to Christ—who strengthened him (v. 13)!

Jesus Christ—who through the gift of His grace and mercy, gives us forgiveness and salvation—will He not also strengthen our faith and help us to overcome difficult and unfortunate circumstances in our life?

FROG

Remember the acronym of a couple of years ago—FROG—Fully Rely On God. As human beings, we sometimes lose our focus on what we really need, yet mostly want, in our lives. I encourage Christians to prioritize the necessities of life and focus on what really is essential.

At the top of the list has to be our relationship with God—our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. As the Philippians text says, “we can do everything

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BEING CONTENT IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES

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through Him who strengthens us.” In a land of plenty, maybe we even have to be hungry once in a while, but we know that God will provide! It’s a given! We learn to be content because we are assured of the promises of God through Jesus Christ.

How About You?

Do you need to tighten your financial belt? Can you get by with a little less luxury around the house? Will we eat out less or take “stay-cations” this year to cut expenses? Be careful of your priorities! Society bombards us with self-help ideas and suggestions through instant messaging, tweets, Internet, e-mails, or social networks.

Let Phil. 4:12b-13 be your theme for the coming year! Connect, or re-connect, your relationship with Jesus Christ by focusing on His Word on a daily basis. This connection from God to us through our hearts allows us to be content in any and all circumstances and depends on no other source!

Wait and see how God blesses you, how He blesses our churches and schools, and how He blesses those who are content and put their



The newly elected Southern Illinois District Board of Directors includes, from left, Matt Bertels, Jon Giordano, John Eggerding, Lee Suedmeyer, and Neil Neunaber.



The newly elected Southern Illinois District Board of Directors includes from left, Leslie Sramek, Rev. Kirk Clayton, and Gary Hemmer.

faith and hope in Him to be the author and perfecter of every good and perfect gift!

Things won’t be perfect! There will still be individuals living in plenty and want! Christ will

give us the strength to do ALL things—maybe even sharing a portion of our plenty with those in want.

NEWS

LCEF Update

by **Daniel Roth**

Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) is a ministry-through-investment organization that offers LCMS members the opportunity to invest their money, earn interest, and help build churches and schools at the same time.

Investments in LCEF serve a dual purpose: to earn a fair rate of return for investors and to provide low-cost loans and services to LCMS ministries, helping them spread the Good News of Jesus. Your dollars also earn the "ministry dividend," the return you receive knowing that your dollars are helping ministries support the Great Commission.

In a previous article, I provided you with information about investments that individuals can make in term notes (similar to CDs) which can be fixed or a floating rate, dedicated certificates (similar to a passbook account), the StewardAccount and Family Emergency StewardAccount which are similar to a money market that you can invest in at a bank or credit union. This month, I provide you with information about how organizations within a congregation also can invest in LCEF.

StewardAccount (comparable to a money market account with many additional benefits and features):

1. Tiered interest rates as your balance grows, rate adjusted monthly. (In July, the interest rate was a minimum of 2.125 percent for an organization as compared to 0.625 percent for an individual.)

2. Interest compounded and paid monthly.

3. Monthly account statements.

4. No annual membership or monthly fees.

5. Minimum opening deposit of only \$100.

6. Check-writing privileges.

Cemetery Perpetual Care StewardAccount

About 30 percent of our congregations in the district have cemeteries.

1. Tiered interest rates as your balance grows, rates adjusted monthly. (In July the interest rate was 2.125 percent for a minimum initial investment of \$1,000, 2.250 percent for a minimum initial investment of \$25,000, 2.375 percent interest on \$50,000, and 2.625 percent for a minimum investment of \$100,000.)

2. Interest compounded and paid monthly.

3. Monthly account statements.

4. No annual membership or monthly fees.

5. Minimum opening deposit of only \$100.

6. Check-writing privileges.

Endowment

A few of our congregations have set up endowment funds. The money in



On June 28, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Collinsville, celebrated the 25th anniversary of the ordination to the Holy Ministry for its senior pastor, Rev. Michael P. Walther. Ordained on July 1, 1984, at St. John's Lutheran Church, Beemer, Neb., Walther has served since 1991 at Good Shepherd. Pictured are, from left, Southern Illinois District President Herbert Mueller, Mrs. Carol Walther, Pastor Michael Walther, and Pastor Paul Hemenway, associate pastor at Good Shepherd. President Mueller preached for the celebration services on the theme, "Reflecting the Lord's Faithfulness," and the congregation presented the Walthers with a special gift and a reception after the services. God be praised for faithful pastors!

these accounts usually comes from estate plans that have been set up by congregation members. When the member dies, a specific amount of money has been left to the church for a specific cause or the money may be undesignated and placed in the Endowment Fund.

1. LCEF has a five-year fixed rate of 2.695 percent interest for a minimum investment of \$1,000, or 2.820 percent interest for a minimum investment of \$10,000, and 2.945 percent interest on a minimum investment of \$100,000.

2. LCEF also has a 60-month floating rate of 2.695 for a minimum investment of \$1,000, or

2.820 percent interest for a minimum investment of \$10,000, and 2.945 percent on a minimum investment of \$100,000.

LCEF's mission statement is to support the Church in fulfilling its mission of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ by being a Christ-centered servant partner of the LCMS, ensuring that funds and services are available now and in the future.

Contact Dan Roth, the Southern Illinois District LCEF promotion director, for more information about these investment opportunities. Call 618-234-4767 or send an e-mail to Dan Roth at lcefpromo@sidlcms.org.



A new sign is in front of the new Unity Lutheran Christian Elementary School in East St. Louis (the old Hawthorne School). For information about the school, call 618-874-6605.



Principal Paul Miller meets with a family regarding enrollment at Unity Lutheran Christian Elementary School in East St. Louis.



Youth from the Southern Illinois District made a great demolition team, clearing out old picnic tables that have outlived their usefulness in a courtyard that will serve as a playground at Unity Lutheran Christian Elementary School in East St. Louis.

Calendar of events

September

- 3—S.A.M.T.F. meeting, 7 p.m.
- 10—Mission Staff meeting, 9:30 a.m.
- 10—Youth Gathering Informational meeting, 6:30 p.m., Trinity, Edwardsville.
- 11—Central Illinois District/Southern Illinois District Staff meeting, 9:30 a.m.

- 17—Board of Congregational Support, 5:30 p.m.
- 19—Board of Missions, 9 a.m.
- 24—Youth Advisory Committee meeting, 6:30 p.m., district office.
- 26—Youth Gathering informational meeting, 9:30 a.m., Zion, Belleville.

October

- 1—S.A.M.T.F. meeting, 7 p.m.
- 1-2—Southern Illinois District/Central Illinois District Teachers Conference, Belleville/O'Fallon, Ill.
- 5-7—Pastors Fall Conference, Rend Lake Resort, Ina, Ill.
- 8—Finance Committee meeting, 5:15 p.m.
- 10-12—Junior High School Youth Gathering—Camp Wartburg
- 15—LWML District Board of Directors, 9:30 a.m.
- 22—Youth Advisory Committee meeting, 6:30 p.m., district office.
- 24—SID Board of Directors, 9 a.m.

November

- 2—Board of Spiritual Care and Supervision, 9 a.m.
- 4—Mission Staff meeting, 9:30 a.m.
- 5—Southern Illinois District Prison Ministry Workshop, 8:45 a.m.-2:45 p.m., Camp Wartburg.
- 5—S.A.M.T.F. meeting, 7 p.m.
- 14—Board of Missions, 9 a.m.

CHURCH/PEOPLE

Church/People News in Southern Illinois

A group of 41 members from **Trinity, Centralia**, and some friends traveled by bus to Litchfield on March 22, to see the 18th annual production of "The Promise" performed by 114 men, women, and children at **Zion Lutheran School, Litchfield**. This two-hour drama is based on the biblical account of the birth, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ in a contemporary musical setting.

The members began planning for the trip at the Trinity Spirited Seniors meeting in January. Information was shared in Trinity's church bulletin with a good response. Thrivent Financial Care in Congregation of Trinity provided \$600 of the \$750 cost for the bus.

On the trip, all enjoyed the fellowship and challenging thinking games. There were drawings for prizes, and a gift was presented to the person celebrating a birthday between March 1-22, closest to March 22.

At the Ponderosa Restaurant in Litchfield, the group presented a potted mum to Jane Girardin's parents, who were celebrating their 62nd wedding anniversary. **Pastor Mark Girardin** shared a meditation, and all received a palm cross, made in Africa.



Forty-one members at Trinity, Centralia, and some of their friends saw the 18th annual production of "The Promise" on March 22 at Zion Lutheran School, Litchfield.

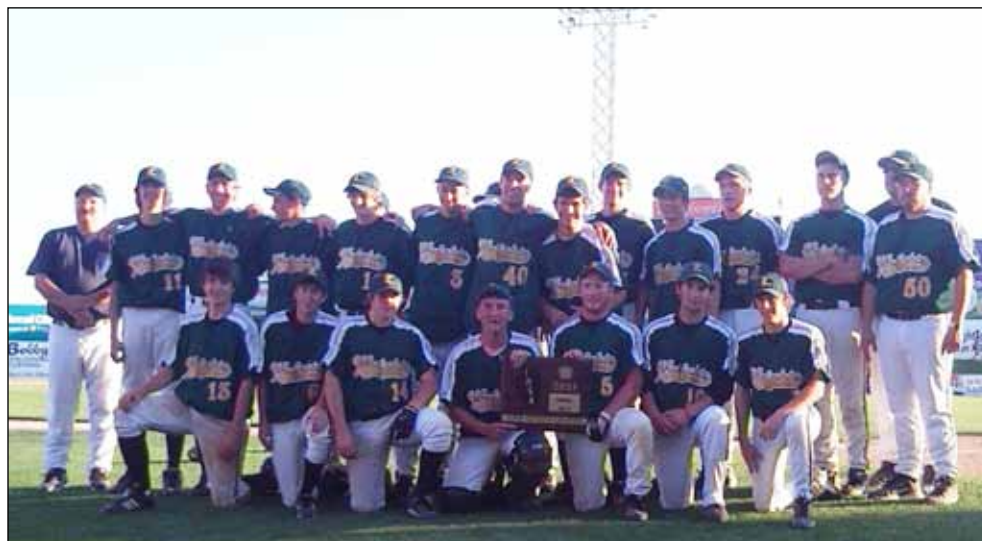
Send in your news

The Southern Illinois District Edition of *The Lutheran Witness* is designed for you—the

pastor, teacher, layperson.

Send news about your congregation, school, or an individual's achievements to Lois Engfehr,

2408 Lebanon Ave., Belleville, IL 62221; or e-mail at sidlw@earthlink.net. Photos must be 300 dpi and e-mailed separately.



Metro-East Lutheran High School, Edwardsville, captured second at state. Congratulations to the Metro-East Lutheran High School Knight's baseball team as they fell just short of a state title in the Class 2A Championship game on June 6 at Joliet, Ill. The Knights followed-up their regional title with their first-ever sectional and super-sectional championships and State Class 2A appearance.