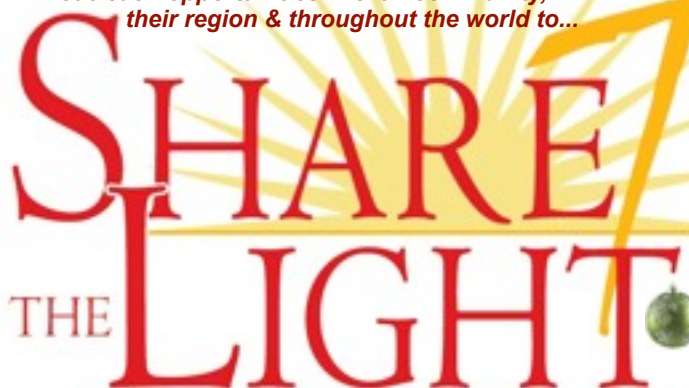


**The Eastern District helps train and equip missional leaders to discover and cultivate resources in order that**

**Congregations become spiritually stronger, better equipped, more outwardly focused, fiscally sound**

**Mission Outposts that identify and embrace outreach opportunities in their community, their region & throughout the world to...**



## *Servant Evangelism at Christmas*

### *“Small Things Done with Great Love Will Change the World”*

“*Servant Evangelism*” is a simple, straightforward approach to sharing God’s love in simple, practical ways. It is a vision to reach the people of your community by serving others with no strings attached, connecting people to people in a natural, easy, low-risk, high grace way.

The following are a variety of small ideas, from a variety of sources, that just might “change your world” for the better this Christmas – for the sake of Jesus!

***Tis’ the season to shop.*** You will most likely encounter specially designed impulse kiosks and end caps in stores that have inexpensive holiday items on them. Why not purchase one of those impulse items for that neighbor you don’t really know. Just knock on their door, wish them “Merry Christmas,” give them a gift and strike up a conversation.

***Holiday spice.*** Go to any Tim Hortons, Starbucks or Speedway Gas station. Make it a point to get in front of someone and pay for their hot beverage. This a wonderful conversation starter that may give you the opportunity to tell your story, THE story, when they ask you why you decided to buy them coffee or hot chocolate.

***Sweets for the sweet.*** Nearly every checkout line in America has a rack of candy or a cooler of drinks easily at hand. Why not buy a soft drink, designer gum/mints, or a candy bar for the cashier checking you out. People working cash registers around the Holidays are usually under a great deal of duress and could use a dose of Christian love. Remember, small things done with great love. . .

***Give your server the best gift ever.*** Ask your server at your favorite restaurant, “If you could ask Santa for anything this year what would it be?” Explain that it is really a prayer request, and that you would

be honored if you could include their request in your dinner prayer. Very few people that work in the service industry turn down prayer from people who genuinely notice them.

***A cookie for the teacher(s).*** If you and some church friends have the spiritual gift of baking (hospitality), why not bake a platter of cookies this month for your local public school teacher’s lounge? Leave a note that tells them that the people of your congregation really appreciate what they do for your children and community!

For more small things that you can do with great love, check out the following links:

Kindness Resources  
<http://www.kindnessresources.com>  
Servant Evangelism  
<http://www.servantevangelism.com>  
Outreach Magazine  
<http://www.outreachmagazine.com>  
Christmas Outreach Thoughts  
<http://lcmсед.org/a/whatsNew.php>

Across the District	December	January	February
<p>The following are dates of interest from congregations and organizations across the district. Telephone numbers or website information have been provided for further information.</p>	<p><b>Dec. 6</b>            Christmas Candlelight Vespers            First Trinity, Tonawanda            (<a href="http://firsttrinity.com">http://firsttrinity.com</a>)</p>	<p><b>Jan. 11</b>            Early Childhood Group            4:30 p.m.            St. Matthew, NT            (Igerlach49@yahoo.com)</p>	<p><b>Feb. 5-6</b>            Eastern District Board of Directors            First Trinity            (716.634.5111)</p>
	<p><b>Dec. 24-25</b>            Eastern District Office Closed</p>	<p><b>Jan. 22-23</b>            BRTFSSG Eastern Regional Gathering            Boston, MA</p>	<p><b>Feb. 9-10</b>            Circuit Counselor/VP Retreat, Notre Dame            (716.634.5111)</p>

## *Distinguished Principal Award to LCMS Educator, Gail Holzer*



Audrey Luciana's two children say their writing teacher at Redeemer Lutheran School is tough. That's just what she wants to hear. "All in all they like her. They truly do like her. They love her," Luciana said.

The writing teacher is Mrs. Gail Holzer. In addition to being the writing teacher, Gail Holzer also is principal of the 150-student Redeemer Lutheran School, Oakmont, PA. And according to the National Association of Elementary School Principals, she's one of the best elementary principals in the nation.

Holzer is one of 57 national and international educators recognized as a 2009 "National Distinguished Principal" by the National Association of Elementary School Principals and the U.S. Department of Education. She received her award Oct. 23 at a ceremony in Washington, D.C. (<http://www.lcms.org/pages/rpage.asp?NavID=16067>)

## *Young Adult Ministry*



Looking for a great resource for post-high school into the 30-somethings? The LCMS Youth Ministry Office has a new Young Adult Ministry Web site: <http://www.lcmsyam.org>. You'll find monthly article blogs written by young adults about their ministry, culture and faith, information about the LEAD LCMS Young Adult Servant Event, young adult ministry and culture book reviews, and twitter feeds on the activity of the Young Adult Ministry Advisory Committee. The goals of the Advisory Committee include enabling congregations to build a culture where young adults are able to fully participate in the life of the church and to enable young adults to become an integral part of the church community, living out their faith in a global context.

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## TOP STORIES from The Reporter Online

The Official Paper of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod

**New record: CUS enrollment climbs to 25,516** (<http://www.lcms.org/pages/rpage.asp?NavID=16003>)

Total enrollment at the Synod's 10 Concordia University System schools has hit a record high.

**Government offers two programs to reduce student debt** (<http://www.lcms.org/pages/rpage.asp?NavID=15946>)

If you're a pastor, teacher, or other professional church worker who is paying off federal student loans, you might benefit from two debt-reduction programs now offered by the U.S. Department of Education.

**On Web: Blue Ribbon Task Force report** ([www.lcms.org/lcmsfuture](http://www.lcms.org/lcmsfuture))

The Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synod Structure and Governance report is available on the LCMS website.

**Anytime is fine for 'Planned Acts of Christian Kindness'** (<http://www.lcms.org/pages/rpage.asp?NavID=16061>)

Anytime of the year is a good time to do a "Planned Act of Christian Kindness" (PACK), according to Jeff Van Beaver, president of Acts 1:8 Ministry of Green Bay, Wis.

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## Small is Beautiful

"People don't realize we've been doing 'small group ministry' for 150 years!" This comment from the leader of a small congregation got a laugh from the local ministerial association but any leader of a small congregation would recognize the truth in the comment.

Small congregations often feel isolated from bigger congregations in their communities and denominations, and even looked down upon by a culture that promotes the notion that bigger is better, but many of these congregations are thriving.

Statisticians tell us that while the majority of church members in the U.S. attend a large church, the majority of congregations are small. Many of these congregations provide an anchoring presence in the small town communities they call home, and some offer services and programs to benefit the community at large and not just "their own."

Most small congregations enjoy much higher percentages of their members in worship and ministry than do their larger counter-parts, and many make generous contributions to mission in the community and the wider world, especially in proportion to their size.



But small congregations are not without challenges. Some of them have part-time pastors stretched thin as bi-vocational ministers. Many have budget woes and building maintenance issues.

Still, small congregations can grow in their capacity to face their challenges when they intentionally chose to:

1. Identify one or more areas of strength and start small;
2. Look more at what they can do than at what they cannot; and
3. Resist traditional outside measures of success. By the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, they can prove that small is beautiful."

(Adapted from "Small is Beautiful" by Wendy McCormick © 2010 <http://www.alban.org>)

### Other Alban Resources for the Small Church are:

"Where 20 or 30 are Gathered: Leading Worship in the Small Church" by Bush and O'Reilly

"Inside the Small Church" by Anthony G. Pappas

"The Power of Asset Mapping: How Your Congregation Can Act on Its Gifts" by Luther Snow

## ***National Lutheran School's Week 2010***

It's time to begin preparing for celebrating National Lutheran School's Week in your community! "Securing Each Child's Future – For a Life of Service" (based on 1 Cor 12:5) is the theme for National Lutheran School's Week to be celebrated nationally from March 7-13, 2010.

Whether your congregation supports a Lutheran elementary school or a preschool or a child-care center, this is an opportunity to lift up that ministry in the eyes of parents, parishioners and the community. Resource ideas are available from the LCMS Department of School Ministry.



Don't be bound by the dates of March 7-13. If other dates are more appropriate to your congregation or community schedule, use those dates.

If earlier dates would be more appropriate to facilitate the marketing of your program or would fit in better with mandated testing times, use those dates! In fact, why not celebrate LSW for eight days this year - begin on the 7th and conclude on the 14th?

Sunday the 7th might be used to lift up the blessings of children and families and Sunday the 14th to honor the blessings of teachers and staff). The actual days that you chose are not as important as choosing seven (or eight) days to celebrate the unique ministry of your school and preschool!

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### ***For Reading and Giving this Christmas***

***The Very First Christmas***  
by Paul Maier (children)

***St. Nicholas: The Real Story of the Christmas Legend***  
by Julie Stiegemeyer (children)

***The Metropolitan Museum of Art: A Christmas Story*** from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke

