

**VALUABLE PARTNERS**  
**By Chris Byars**  
**Ideas From Churches, January 2024**

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**St. John's Lutheran Church**

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**Serving God, His  
Church, His People...  
Around the Clock!**

St. John's Lutheran Church – Gillett, Wisconsin  
(Photo by Carol Stanek)

***Editor:*** How do you fund your mission support? Do you set aside a portion of the offerings, for example 10%, to fund local and global outreach? What percentage is local and what is global? Do you also include designated giving toward global mission?

**Chris:** In our current context at St. John's, we have a Mission Team that puts together the monthly Mission of the Month. Each month we place a focus on raising funds and creating awareness of various missions. For that month we have talks about the mission of choice and all funds dedicated to Missions are directed to that Mission.

Our missions are a mixture of some local, some national, and some global. About 50% of our Missions are focused on various International Partners. We have an ongoing relationship with the Tartu Academy in Estonia, and we have a special annual gift that is directed to them.

We don't budget for the missions but give what is directed for each mission directly and have set goals, which are most often exceeded. Our Missions giving is usually more than 10% of our budget each year and we continue to keep our focus on being a Mission-minded congregation.



Tartu Academy, Estonia

**Editor:** Do you focus on collaboration in ongoing partnerships, or is the emphasis on simply dispensing benevolence?

**Chris:** We have some strong partnerships that we maintain in our giving each year. Most of the groups that we raise for are ones that we have had a long relationship with, but we are expanding our relationships and always evaluating where we feel it may be better to partner. There have been some that we have changed over time.

We are beginning a new partnership with a congregation in Uganda that arose with a focus on sustainable mission development that will make a greater impact for the people of that nation, as well as continuing to evaluate how we can partner in other parts of the globe.

We find that we do receive greater gifts for those who come and speak to the congregation. It does help create greater relationships and a sense of giving to something that they know. For instance, we enjoyed a day with Musicianary David Michael Carillo (below) as he shared the mission in Latvia with music and preaching. Relationships are very important in mission as



opposed to just dispensing benevolence. If people can see tangible work being done and a difference being made, they will support at a much higher level.

**Editor:** *How do you choose the missionaries and agencies you support? Do you look for long term relationships with the missionaries and agencies you support?*

**Chris:** We have a group of members that come together to review missions and determine which works well and who has offered us valuable partnerships. We also like to review how well the funds are utilized. The more that is used for doing the work as opposed to paying for overhead the better. As we get to know the mission agencies and the missionaries that work with them, we find that our support in the congregation increases significantly.

**Editor:** *Is short-term missions an important part of your global mission program? Do you encourage members to go and serve on mission trips?*

**Chris:** Short-term missions has not been a large part of our congregation, but it is something that I, as a pastor, would like to grow. We did send one member on a mission trip to Latvia and Estonia and it was a life-changing experience for her. This is something we hope to do again, but it is something that many in the congregation are not yet ready to partake in at this time.

Personally, I would like to do some short-term missions in the future as my family gets older, but financially it is not something we can afford nor do we have a lot of time to do. We are very involved with our Homeschool and in the mission field of our community, which we do feel is a great missions opportunity also.

**Editor:** *What are some of the things you have done that have most impacted your congregation and the mission field?*

**Chris:** Most recently, my family hosted a pastor from Jinja, Uganda. It was a blessing both for our family and the pastor who stayed with us. A great relationship was developed and a desire was created for my children to understand and get to know another culture. In this time, I was able to cultivate a strong relationship with the pastor and develop a mission plan that could expand our relationship in our congregation with a healthy partnership between our congregations. Eventually, it may create for us a short-term mission opportunity.



Pastor Sam Magumba from Jinja, Uganda, preaching at St. John's



Pastor Sam Magumba with Pastor Chris Byars family

**For more information, visit our website**

<https://clockchurch.org/>

**or contact Pastor Chris**

[pastorchris@clockchurch.org](mailto:pastorchris@clockchurch.org)



Pastor Chris Byars is a native of Grand Forks, ND. He and his wife, Dawn, have been married for 25 years and have 6 children, ages 15 to 7. They are a homeschool family and are very engaged in the local homeschool theater program. Graduated from Luther Seminary (2007) and ordained (2008), he has served congregations in Florida, Indiana and Wisconsin. Chris was ordained in the ELCA and has served in the LCMC since 2010. He has served at St. John's Lutheran Church in Gillett, Wisconsin, since October 2020. St. John's, known as "The Clock Church", is a small congregation located outside of Green Bay in Northeast Wisconsin. Chris is quite active in the community with an Acts 1:8 ministry model and considers that his mission field begins

outside his front door and extends to the ends of the Earth. Chris offers a daily devotional, which can also be found on Facebook, YouTube, and Rumble every morning.

**Links:**

St. John's Lutheran Church: <https://clockchurch.org/>

Tartu Academy: <https://tatest.org/>

Estonia: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Estonia>

Uganda: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Uganda>

Carillo: <https://www.gentlewindministries.org/about-david-michael-carrillo>

Latvia: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Latvia>

Jinja: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Jinja-Uganda>

LCMC: <https://www.lcmc.net/>

Devotional: [simuliustusetpeccatur.org](http://simuliustusetpeccatur.org)