

# The VOICE

July 2021

Missouri District Newsletter



**In This Issue:  
Additional District Resources for You**



# From the President's Desk

## In Many and Various Ways...

Our staff frequently gets posed with the question, "What exactly does the District do?" We have tried to answer that question with a series of short videos from the staff that you can check out on the District website (<https://mo.lcms.org/meet-the-missouri-district/>). The quick summary is that the primary ways that the District serves the congregations, schools, and church workers of the District are through ecclesiastical supervision, professional conferences, support for church worker health, and mission grants. However, there are a host of other ways that the District serves that we are highlighting in this issue.

Like our congregations and schools, the District had to adapt during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Zoom meetings were being held nearly every week and often drawing more than 100 pastors to talk about how the congregations could continue to provide ministry and care for the flock. Webinars were held that focused on how congregations could use technology to continue to support and reach families and young people. White papers were provided on a variety of topics. Finally, the District offered a respite program during the Epiphany and Easter seasons so that pastors could take a Sunday off. Many of these were new forms of service or offered in new formats.

Many congregations are looking for assistance as they look to the future and resume most of their in-person activities. This issue of *The VOICE* will note some of the lesser known ways that the Missouri District can provide support and assistance to your congregations, schools and church workers. From demographics to disasters, the Missouri District "serves and encourages congregations" (taken from the Missouri District mission statement). Our office and resources exist to support the 290 congregations, 110 educational ministries, and 1600 rostered church workers.

We look forward to our fall educators and pastors conferences this year, especially after so much time apart. Please encourage your pastor, church workers, and school teachers to attend these conferences. These will be important times for the District to provide encouragement and support for one another.

There is still more work to be done though. As we prepare for next summer's District convention, we are working to provide coaches to assist congregations in equipping families in faith formation. We hope that the Missouri District can continue to be a great source of service and encouragement to your congregation.

Fraternally in Christ,



President Lee Hagan



May God bless our life together here in Missouri!



# Demographic Studies Aid in Outreach

To love your neighbor, a great place to start is by asking, “How well you know your neighbor?” The challenge is to resist assumptions and ask if you really know the communities where God has called you to serve. How many families are living near or below the poverty line? What age groups of the population are growing or declining? How many of your neighbors are first generation Americans? What concerns are they harboring about their neighborhood that might open the opportunity to share the Gospel with them?

It isn’t always easy to discover the answers to questions like these. However, with LCEF demographic studies, you can quickly learn about your community. Looking at expanding your ministry by creating an early childhood center? Feel confident in your decision by confirming the need for such an organization with the help of a population growth Demographic study. Curious what the religious beliefs and preferences are in your community? Maybe you want to learn about the life concerns of those around you: what keeps them from walking into a church, and what ministries or programs are they seeking that you could target to meet their needs? Request a ReligiousInsite and MinistryInsite report to go along with a Demographic report to help answer these questions.

The suite of reports of an LCEF Demographic study can provide data and support to help leaders and ministries move thoughts and ideas into action! However, these studies are only valuable when you use them.

LCEF has partnered with the Missouri District to provide congregations not only with these reports and data, but through LCEF District Vice President Casey Carlson and the support of trained Plus One coaches, we can help you discover opportunities and meaningful actions for serving your community with the Gospel.

To connect with LCEF or to request a Demographic study, contact Casey Carlson at 314-590-6207 or [casey.carlson@mo.lcms.org](mailto:casey.carlson@mo.lcms.org).



# Early Childhood Consulting

Congregations and Christian day schools of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod operate more than 1,100 early childhood centers and preschools, and they serve more than 81,000 children ranging from infants and toddlers to five-year-olds. Early childhood education is provided in the Missouri District for infants and toddlers through our early childhood centers that are connected to elementary schools as well as many free-standing early childhood programs. The Missouri District is blessed to have 51 early childhood education centers serving over 3,000 students.

To assist the early childhood education centers, their programs, as well as their directors and teachers, the Missouri District offers the services of Education Executive Alan Freeman, as well as two Early Childhood Consultants, Lee Wagner and Cheryl Haun.

Lee Wagner is an experienced early childhood educator who is ready to share her expertise with directors and staff of any early childhood program. Lee frequently works with the LCMS National Office of School Ministry consulting during national formal and informal meetings of Early Childhood Directors and is a frequent presenter at early childhood conferences. Cheryl Haun often writes for the National Office of School Ministry's monthly Early Childhood Education newsletter, serves as an Adjunct Professor at Concordia University Nebraska in their Early Childhood Department, and frequently presents nationally and regionally on early childhood related topics. Both Lee and Cheryl have served many years as Early Childhood Directors and have a passion for Lutheran Early Childhood Education. Lee, Cheryl, and Alan are available to answer questions about curriculum, staffing, budgeting, accreditation, parenting classes, and more. In addition, the Missouri District provides an annual Conference for Early Childhood Directors, an annual Conference for Early Childhood Educators, and an opportunity for Early Childhood Directors to meet monthly via Zoom.

Al, Lee, and Cheryl are available to consult with congregations regarding start-up of a preschool or problem solving for existing early childhood programs. Please contact Alan Freeman at [alan.freeman@mo.lcms](mailto:alan.freeman@mo.lcms) or 314-590-6209 if there is anything that the District Early Childhood Consultants can provide to assist in your ministry to parents, teachers, and young children.





# Looking for Resources?

During the last eighteen months, the Missouri District provided webinars, white papers, and other resources to assist congregations in a number of key areas as they adapted to the unique circumstances. Now that our situation is once again changing, many congregations are looking for resources to assist them in key areas. The District website is a good place to start in looking for resources for your congregation.

In 2018, the District Convention created a new Council on Mission and Ministry to provide support for congregations of the district. The council has focused on two particular areas during since its creation: witnessing and stewardship.

The 2018 Convention also adopted a resolution to offer *Every One His Witness*, a Lutheran evangelism program, in every circuit. While COVID-19 presented challenges, the Council on Mission and Ministry, along with District staff, have worked to provide an abridged version of *Every One His Witness* that can be offered online, as well as in small groups in person. In May, members of the council, circuit visitors, and others from across the District participated in training so that they could help provide this needed resource in every circuit across the District. *Every One His Witness* can be a great help to support congregations equip members as they prepare to engage their communities with more in-person events.

Related to witnessing has been the District-wide “Plus One Initiative” that provides coaches and resources to assist congregations in reaching their communities through service and witness. More than 150 congregations have participated in Plus One. Bible studies and other resources related to community engagement are available to assist your congregation.

The council has also worked to provide resources related to stewardship. Last year, with the uncertainty related to congregational support, the District provided a stewardship program from our website to assist pastors and congregational leaders in teaching stewardship during those challenging times. The council has also linked congregations with other stewardship resources that are available, including those from the Synod’s stewardship department.

As your congregation looks to the future and identifies needs, but is unsure where to turn for resources, the Missouri District stands ready to assist you. Please contact Colleen Zaruba ([colleen.zaruba@mo.lcms.org](mailto:colleen.zaruba@mo.lcms.org) or 314-590-6200) and she will connect you with the right person to find the resources that your congregation needs.



# District Training How Can We Help?

Congregations regularly reach out to the District staff looking for help in a number of different areas. Our biennial Encourage and Equip (E2) Conferences are held in five locations throughout the District and cover a number of relevant topics for congregations. However, some of the areas below are types of training that District staff is able to offer at a more in-depth level for a single congregation or cluster of congregations.

Pastors Bill Geis and Marty Hasz, along with President Hagan, are available to lead elder training to assist them in their roles and to strengthen the relationship between elders and the pastor. This training can be offered in a weekend retreat or in other formats.

One of the types of training that is most requested is for school boards in understanding their roles as it pertains to the purpose of a school. Alan Freeman has led this training for early childhood centers, parish or association elementary schools, and high schools. This training is offered regularly with the annual inclusion of new board members and the need for ongoing board development.

Conflict is always present for our congregations and schools. It is best to seek out training to address conflict in a biblical manner rather than waiting for the conflict to grow to the point that it becomes harmful to the ministry and the individuals. Pastor Marty Hasz has done extensive training with Ambassadors of Reconciliation and is available to offer workshops for congregations, schools, or in circuits to help guide back to the Word of God as we live together.

From Vacation Bible School to youth ministry, from community outreach to the sharing of staff members, there are growing numbers of examples of congregational collaboration across the District. Pastor Bill Geis has worked with mission leaders from across the Synod to develop "Shared Ministry Models," a workshop that lays out examples of how congregations work together that are applicable to every context. Pastor Geis and President Hagan will be leading a series of these workshops this fall.

These are just a few of the types of training that the District offers. We continue to offer Plus One coaches to assist in community engagement. And we are also working to develop coaches to equip faith formation in the home. If you are in need of training in any area of congregational life and you want to see how the District can help, please contact Colleen Zaruba ([colleen.zaruba@mo.lcms.org](mailto:colleen.zaruba@mo.lcms.org) or 314-590-6200) and she will connect you with our staff.



# Lutheran Early Response Team

Storms happen, but when there's a tree that falls or your house is damaged, who is ready to help? Our Missouri District LERT (Lutheran Early Response Team) is ready to respond with clean up crews and the loving care of the Gospel. LERT teams are made up of LCMS-trained volunteer church members who are ready to lend a hand in the early days of clean up after storms do damage.

How does it work? People can reach out to the Missouri District's Regional District Disaster Coordinators to alert them about storm damage in their area. Coordinators begin to contact and work along side a local congregations and LERT volunteer teams leaders who might be able to assemble and deploy for the needed clean up and ministry efforts.

Help is commonly offered due to downed trees and home damages from high winds, tornadoes, or flooding. Volunteers have a variety of tasks: removing debris, organizing supplies, or engaging with hospitality, but all team members are trained to share the love of God with comforting Gospel care and prayer. Home owners experience a greater sense of care when we serve together in organized teams alongside local and state authorities.

Safe and effective service requires training and support. The Missouri District partners with congregations to host these trainings, with some being planned for the fall. We encourage all congregation members to register to receive notifications on training events and deployment needs at [www.LCMS-LERT.org](http://www.LCMS-LERT.org). It's free to register with no obligations asked of registrants, and is an easy and central place for you to receive LERT updates on trainings and events.

Local LERT teams must stay prepared, meeting often to talk about areas in need, discuss team availability, register new volunteers, resupply outdated safety equipment, raise funds for deployment supplies such as flood buckets, do maintenance on tools/engines, discuss protocols/jobs (see list of descriptions in the manual) and encourage team members with prayer and a devotion. By meeting regularly, LERT team members remain excited to serve God's love near or far. To receive more information, follow us on [Facebook](#) and register today to receive Missouri District LERT updates at [www.LCMS-LERT.org](http://www.LCMS-LERT.org).





# Planning for “Tomorrow’s Teachers & Preachers”

This upcoming academic year, 48 men and women from our state will be receiving educational scholarships from the Missouri District to help defray tuition costs. These beneficiaries were selected because they have declared their intention to enter church work. Praise God for raising up this next generation of leaders!

We’ve already started praying for and making plans for the many students who will come after them. “Tomorrow’s Teachers & Preachers” is a campaign dedicated to building awareness of church work vocations and an effort to strengthen our scholarship endowment so that even more financial assistance can be provided to students on the path to ministry.

You and your congregation can easily get involved. Look for more information highlighting the various kinds of church work and make plans to participate in the special offering on August 29th. It is our prayer that even more men and women will hear God’s call for service in His Kingdom for years to come.

## Missouri District Pastors' Conference

### Joy in Ministry

Oct 17-19, 2021 Lake of the Ozarks

#### Featuring Speakers:

Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler *Lutheran Hour Ministries*

Rev. Dr. Lawrence Rast *Concordia Seminary–Fort Wayne*

Rev. Dr. Thomas Egger *Concordia Seminary–Saint Louis*

**Registration and schedule available soon!**



Missouri District

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