

# The VOICE

August 2021

Missouri District Newsletter



***In This Issue:* Raising The Next Generation of Church Workers**



# From the President's Desk

And [Jesus] said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." Luke 10:2

The Lord has richly blessed our congregations and schools with generations of faithful pastors and teachers. Many of us can look back and remember how God used a pastor or Director of Christian Education to encourage us during adolescence. Those of us who attended Lutheran schools can recall with great fondness beloved teachers who were blessings in our lives. It is always good for us to take time to give thank to God for such servants in the Church.

However, it is also good for us to pray that God would raise up the next generation of church workers. During the month of August, we want to highlight church vocations in the hopes that you will identify and encourage young people to consider service in a Lutheran church or school. This issue of The VOICE highlights those who are serving or preparing for service in a number of areas of church work. As you will see, many of them went into full-time church work in response to the encouragement of another church worker.

The other thing that we are doing during August is encouraging congregations, schools and donors to support our Missouri District Church Worker Scholarship Endowment Fund, which provides assistance for those studying at Concordia Universities and Seminaries in preparation for service as rostered workers in the Synod. In particular, we are inviting congregation to consider receiving a door-offering on Sunday, August 29 for the District Scholarship Endowment Fund. We invite you to join with us in praying for and supporting "Tomorrow's Teachers and Preachers."

Please join me in giving thanks to God for all of the servants whom our Lord has used to be a blessing to our congregations and schools and to pray that He would use us to encourage the next generation of servants.

Fraternally in Christ,



President Lee Hagan



*Rev. Craig Wehmeyer, pastor of Immanuel in Washington at a children's message. Rev. Wehmeyer is featured in an article below.*



# TOMORROW'S Teachers & Preachers

While the LCMS is experiencing a shortage of church workers, the Missouri District sees great opportunity in addressing this concern head on. "Tomorrow's Teachers & Preachers" is a campaign with two parts: build awareness of churchwork vocations and alleviate student debt.

This issue of The VOICE featuring men and women in various roles within the LCMS is an excellent resource that we hope will be readily shared. Please feel free to use it and other social media posts to encourage others when the opportunity arises to prayerfully consider these rewarding careers.

A common concern among those headed into church work is the cost associated with higher education. The Missouri District is pleased to provide scholarships for students from Missouri (see article on the endowment on the last page) but recognizes the potential to do even more.

All congregations throughout the state are being encouraged to hold a special offering on Sunday, August 29 that will be added to the scholarship endowment. Likewise, all Lutheran schools and early childhood centers have also been asked to include "Tomorrow's Teachers & Preachers" in their chapel offerings this fall. Individual households and donors are invited to join the campaign, too. Gifts may be made online (<https://mo.lcms.org/donate>) or sent to the District office:

Missouri District LCMS  
660 Mason Ridge Center Drive, Suite 100  
St. Louis, MO 63141

By God's grace, and with His guidance, we will take steps today so that the number of students entering church work will continue to rise. Thank you for your forward-thinking ways and caring for generations to come.

**If your church currently has a son or daughter of the congregation entering church work, thank you for the support you have provided to this student. Please continue to pray for and walk alongside these future leaders. Many congregations also have their own endowments for church worker scholarships. If these funds have gone unspent for years, consider reaching out to the Missouri District office to see how endowments can be pooled while honoring their original intent.**



# Pastor

The pastoral office has a number of responsibilities: from making visits to attending meetings, from eating lunch with quilters to making the coffee before Bible class. Ultimately, though, the calling of a pastor is to preach the Word of God and administer the Sacraments. The Scriptures describe the pastoral office as “a noble task,” so how do you know if the pastoral office is a calling for you?

Rev. Craig Wehmeyer, Associate Pastor at Immanuel, Washington, notes that for him the pastoral calling came over time while growing up and feeling convicted while in college. “When I was younger, my parents were very involved in the church,” notes Wehmeyer. “I grew up in a tiny church, and a lot of members encouraged me to consider going to be a pastor. And in school, teachers pushed me about pursuing that.” Rev. Wehmeyer is originally from Missouri, having grown up attending Grace Lutheran in Holts Summit. Rev. Wehmeyer was very involved in his campus ministry in college, and it was there that he realized being a pastor was something that he “felt at peace [with] and knew it was what I needed to do.”

Considering becoming a pastor? Rev. Wehmeyer notes, “In one of my last seminary classes before graduation, I was assigned to read Gregory of Nazianzus’s Oration 2. Gregory makes clear that the pastoral office is a sacred office. The task before the pastor is more challenging even than that of an ordinary physician, for we are entrusted by God to be a physician of souls. Caring for the soul is ‘more laborious and of more consequence’ because it ‘comes from God and is divine, and partakes of the heavenly nobility.’”

Wehmeyer continues, “While holding such an office is of great challenge and consequence it is more importantly one that is filled with the beauty of Christ. Gregory writes:

...the scope of our art is to provide the soul with wings, to rescue it from the world and give it to God, and to watch over that which is in His image, if it abides, to take it by the hand, if it is in danger, or restore it, if ruined, to make Christ to dwell in the heart by the Spirit...

I daresay nothing brings me greater joy within this office than to be the vehicle through which Christ brings healings to souls.”

## ***The Next Generation: Noah Werts***



A student at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis for his Master of Divinity, Noah Werts is originally from Edgerton, Missouri. Noah

cites that he was blessed to have grown up in a Christian household and attended Christian schools his whole life. “I believe the Bible and believe what it says,” states Noah, “And I feel badly for people who don’t have that... I have seen God’s provision and I would like to see people get to know him.” Noah enjoys meeting new people and working with schools. Blessings on your studies!



# Deaconess

With a strong theological background and training combined with a compassion for helping people, the office of deaconess has three main areas of focus: missions, congregations, and institutions.

Kim Sherwin serves as deaconess at St. Stephen in Liberty. Sherwin notes that deaconesses serve in a variety of ways. "When your church says 'I have a pastor' you kind of know what they do, but with a 'I have a deaconess' it's a lot harder to define," says Sherwin, "Even me, everything changes from day to day." For Sherwin, like so many church workers in 2020, this even meant becoming familiar with video technology and posting many videos online during the pandemic shut-down. But, she notes, deaconesses work in many areas: end-of-life situations, some work with people in troubled circumstances, yet others help with confirmation and women's ministry or music ministry, pregnancy centers, emergency care...the list goes on.

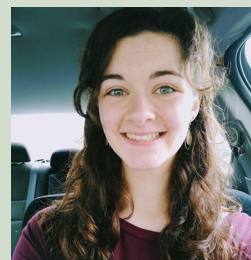
When reflecting on her journey to becoming a deaconess, Sherwin notes that it wasn't a direct path. "When I was younger, I sort of said, 'Hmm.. I'm not sure if I want to go into church work, they seem busy on Sundays,'" laughs Sherwin. But after serving on a mission trip in Japan, Sherwin wasn't quite sure what was next for her. "If someone would pay me to go on mission trips, that would be ideal," she clarifies, "which, of course, it's not the money, but about wanting to serve people." A member of her congregation, who had formerly served as a lay deacon, recommended the role of deaconess. "I didn't even know what a deaconess did," says Sherwin. "The more I looked at it, a deaconess uses her unique gifts and abilities to serve in a variety of different ways. It just seemed to click with me and be what I wanted to do."

"[Being a deaconess] can be incredibly fulfilling, because you can see so many different parts of people's lives. To be the hands and feet and voice of Jesus—it can be a very powerful thing. It gives you a different view of what the church looks like. So many are in church for an hour or two every week. But you can see the church from the inside out and upside down."

## ***The Next Generation: Anika Slayton***

This fall Anika will be entering Concordia: Chicago's unique program that allows for a deaconess degree in four years.

She notes that having theological conversations with her father was a major motivation to pursue church work, but it wasn't until she met a deaconess who was tabling a booth at an "Issues, Etc." conference that she first heard about this role. Anika learned more about church work by attending Christ's Academy (a summer church work study program). She's quite excited, "There are just so many different skill sets and ways to serve in church work!"







# Teacher

The Missouri District is blessed to have nine high schools, 50 elementary schools, and 49 early childhood centers. That's over 1,000 teachers and administrators! Teaching in a Lutheran school takes the standards of a public school educator, but with extensive theological training so that our Lutheran schools keep their unique perspective of teaching all areas through the lens of our good Creator.

Originally from a small farming community in Michigan, Marissa Engelhard grew up attending Lutheran schools. And as her mom is a teacher herself, Engelhard is quite familiar with a classroom setting. Engelhard said that another one of her biggest influences in becoming a teacher is from her high school Spanish teacher, who really led her into Spanish teaching. After high school, Engelhard attended Concordia: Mequon where she majored in Elementary Education with minors in Spanish and ESL.

Now teaching fourth grade and Spanish at The King's Academy in Lake Ozark, Engelhard is excited to watch her school grow. "[King's Academy] started as a kindergarten-third grade school, which expanded into fourth grade, then fifth grade...now there are over 100 students at a K-8 school. The level of commitment from the parents shows how excited they were to have a Christian school in the area."

Something that really struck Engelhard while teaching at her first Call at a school in Arizona, is that it's becoming quite commonplace for students in Lutheran schools to be unchurched. "I was teaching second grade at the time," remembers Engelhard, "And this girl asked, 'Why is the snake talking?' It allowed me to explain [the Bible story] about Adam and Eve and the snake in the garden... Many kids' first experiences with the Bible are at a Lutheran school. And then they are taking everything they learned home to their families."

Teachers play a pivotal role in making Lutheran education so unique. "There is truly nothing like impacting a child's faith walk five days a week... Not just religion class, which is 30 minutes to an hour a day, but also learning [faith] at lunch time, and other content areas... We are producing Christian leaders in this world and that is a very important mission."

## *The Next Generation:* **Emily Wanner**



Emily has always seen herself working for the church. Both of her parents teach for Redeemer Lutheran School in Springfield and she's already worked in their summer camp, after school care program, and as an office aid. But, it was after taking some college classes that really solidified teaching as her calling. Emily transfers into Concordia: Seward this fall. "I just fell in love with the community feel," says Emily of Seward. "And I'm super thankful for the District grant."



# Director of Christian Education

A Director of Christian Education, or DCE, serves to help a congregation and the church's community through education and assistance for people of all ages and backgrounds.

Hannah Hayden serves as DCE at Redeemer in Springfield and Nixa. She graduated from Concordia: River Forest (Chicago) with a DCE degree and a theology minor, though church work wasn't always her first choice for a career. "My dad is a pastor, so like many 'PKs' (pastor's kids) I was maybe thinking that I wouldn't go into church work," says Hayden. But, Hayden grew up attending the Lutheran camp, Okoboji in Iowa. It was there that a DCE approached Hayden and asked if she was interested about becoming a DCE.

Hayden notes that she didn't really understand everything a DCE did, but because her dad worked in Iowa District West as their youth executive, she learned about the many different types of DCEs. "From that point on," recalls Hayden, "I really felt that's where God is calling me."

DCEs do more than run youth groups (though Hayden notes that's a very fun part of the job!), and there are a variety of ways to serve. "It's from the cradle to the grave," says Hayden. She also writes curriculum, does administration, creates mentoring opportunities for kids, and more.

"The role of a DCE is as challenging as you think it is," reflects Hayden, "but it is incredibly rewarding in ways that you can never expect... DCE ministry is being called into places where you are way over your head and watching God pull it all together and work through people to do miracles right in front of you."

Hayden's advice to those considering becoming a DCE? "Pray diligently and trust in the Holy Spirit."

**For more information on church work careers go to [Church Vocation Resources CUS](#)**

## *The Next Generation:* **Emma Deines**

Emma is an Elementary Education and DCE major at Concordia: Seward. From Immanuel, St. Charles, Emma participated in their SURGE leadership team (high school leaders are selected to help with middle school programs). Emma notes that she spent a year at another school with a field hockey scholarship, but she really felt called to teach, so made the switch. "Always be ready," advises Emma, "you never know where the Lord is going to take you. If you would have told me a year ago where I'd be – I'd never would have believed you!"



# Endowment Offers Student Aid

In March of 1982, members of the Missouri District Board of Directors voted to establish an endowment for the purpose of providing scholarships for men and women preparing for careers in church work. It was a forward-thinking decision with an impact that is still felt today.

Over the years, God has blessed the Missouri District Student Aid Endowment Fund with additional gifts, some even through wills and bequests. In the last three years, \$266,855 has been awarded to students from Missouri attending schools within the Concordia University System and at both seminaries. This upcoming academic year alone, 48 individuals will be receiving aid from the Missouri District.

While their vocations have taken them all over the world, many of those who have received scholarships are now serving in their home state. Rev. Jesse Kueker, pastor of Trinity Lutheran in Clinton, received a District scholarship throughout his years at seminary and knows what a blessing this type of assistance is—not only for future church workers, but also for God’s Kingdom.

“There is no greater need in our world than the need for the Gospel of Jesus Christ and Him crucified in Word and Sacrament. Thanks be to God for the generous saints within the Missouri District who have eyes to see that need and the hearts and the hands to help,” Pastor Kueker shares.

If you are or know of a student preparing for full-time church work, consider reaching out to the Missouri District for more information on how the endowment could help. For those with the eyes, hearts, and hands to help like Pastor Kueker describes, the District welcomes your participation in this endeavor started some 40 years ago. Your generosity is a blessing!

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## Upcoming Events

For registration and more information about these events, visit <https://mo.lcms.org/upcoming-events> or call 314-590-6200

### **Pastors’ Conference “Joy in Ministry”**

Oct 17-19, 2021 | Margaritaville Lake Resort, Lake of the Ozarks

Featuring: Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler, Rev. Dr. Lawrence Rast, Rev. Dr. Thomas Egger

### **Lutheran Older Adult Retreat**

Oct 20-21, 2021 | Pere Marquette Lodge, Grafton, IL

Featuring: Dr. Rich Bimler, Rev. Dr. Jeff Gibbs

### **Educators’ Conference “Remember What Hasn’t Changed”**

Nov 22-23, 2021 | Lodge of Four Seasons, Lake of the Ozarks

Featuring: Andrew McPeak



Missouri District

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD