

# The VOICE

September 2021

Missouri District Newsletter



***In This Issue: Schools & Early Childhood Centers***

***Pictured here is a student from Immanuel Lutheran School in St. Charles.***



# From the President's Desk: *Is it Worth It?*

"Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows." Matthew 10:29-31

*The following was written by President Hagan for his weekly devotion, Encourage, for August 15, 2019. It is shared again here in The VOICE as we highlight Lutheran schools and the benefits they provide to our children, families, the Church, and the world.*

One of the first things that the Saxon immigrants did when they settled in Perry County was to build a school to educate their children. While much has changed since that first Lutheran school, the need for children to be instructed in God's Word has not changed. However, we live in a different era where the challenges facing the operation of Lutheran schools are great. Here are just a few examples:

*Recruitment and Retention of Qualified, Lutheran Teachers; Recruitment and Retention of Students; Recruitment of Qualified Board Members; Funding; Curriculum Development; Deferred Maintenance; Marketing; Utilization of Technology; Parental Support; Congregational Support*

These are just a few of the issues that school administrators and leaders are dealing with on a daily basis. While there are many challenges, the singular reason that we operate Lutheran schools is so that every student who walks through the door will learn who Jesus Christ and what He has done for us. A Christian education is not permission for a mediocre education. Our schools are striving for excellence in all aspects of their work. The support that is provided to our schools through National Lutheran School Accreditation and the assistance of our Missouri District Director of Schools is to help continue to provide an education that is both faithful to our Lutheran teaching, but also excellent in preparing young people for the future.

Some may wonder if Lutheran schools are "worth it". Lutheran schools can provide an education that public schools and mere private schools cannot. We are able to help every student understand who they are as a child created in God's image, one for whom Christ Jesus died, and what it means that the Holy Spirit calls us by name in baptism. Our Lutheran schools integrate the Christian faith into all subjects and the Gospel effects all of our relationships and discipline alike. While the financial pressures are real, we strive to practice good stewardship in light of the eternal mission of helping our students to know Jesus and that by believing in Him they may have everlasting life. Are Lutheran schools worth it? Each and every child was worth so much to God that He sent His only Son to die for them. The mission of our Lutheran schools is vital. My hope and prayer is that we will support our Lutheran schools as they begin a new school year and continue that work of making disciples for life and for eternity.

Fraternally in Christ,

*R. Lee Hagan*

President Lee Hagan



# Utilizing Resources



The Missouri District is blessed to have a wide variety of schools and early childhood programs. Some of these are larger programs affiliated with schools, however for many churches early childhood centers are just beginning or have under 100 students. Here are some facts about early childhood centers from Trinity Lutheran Child Learning Center in Columbia and Our Savior Christian Academy PreK in Platte City and Smithville and how they keep a successful program.

**A Mission Field—** Did you know that many Lutheran early childhood programs and preschools have very few students who have Lutheran church homes? Trinity says that about 15% of their 91 students in the 2021-2022 school year are Lutheran. And Our Savior has just two of their forty students who are Lutheran. Our Savior's Principal Lori Albright notes that some students attend other denominations, but many families do not attend a church at all, "we are clearly a mission field!"

**Community Impact—** Many Lutheran early childhood centers have programs can vary from half to full day. They can include before and after care options, service ages from 2-5, and even include pre-kindergarten (or PreK). An interesting balance is trying to find the right combination of program offerings for a church's area. Being affiliated with schools in Platte City and Smithville, it works out well for Our Savior to offer a PreK for three and four year olds. Even with two campuses, the local communities have responded so well that there is a waitlist for classes and are starting to look into building expansion.

Trinity has seen their program grow and change over time. Their early childhood used to serve more part time students, but now most of their students attend full day hours taking advantage of early morning drop offs and late afternoon pick ups. Trinity also offers "Extra Days" that parents can opt into. These days are usually around the holidays or breaks and are open for kids aged 5-12, which can be helpful for parents.

## **Use Your Unique Resources—**

Trinity is situated close to colleges, so works with education and occupational therapy students. This gives college students practical, hands-on experiences and contributes to Trinity's skilled workers. Schools

also frequently try and do outreach into the community. Our Savior hosted a St. Jude's "Trike-a-Thon" where staff, spouses, and volunteers created a "town" (complete with a Lutheran church, doctor's office, library and a grocery store with snacks.) The PreK kids then pedaled all around the "town" leaving donations at each spot. Last year's event brought in \$750!

***We are blessed that parents trust us with their most precious gift from God and we work daily to share the Good News and earn their trust.***

***- Annette Kiehne, Director Trinity Columbia***

# Being Unified in Mission

There are 49 Lutheran early childhood centers across Missouri! Here are three schools that have larger early childhood programs: Calvary Lutheran Early Education Center in Kansas City, St. Paul's Early Childhood Program in Concordia, and Christ Community Lutheran School Early Childhood Program in St. Louis.

**A Unique Student Body—** While each of these early childhood centers are directly associated with a Lutheran grade school (and are in close proximity to a Lutheran high school), they have their own unique identity. CCLS and Calvary serve children from infancy through Pre-K and St. Paul's serves students aged 3-6. Most offer options for half day, full day, and extended hours. Unlike many Lutheran early childhood centers, approximately 80% of St. Paul's students identify as Lutheran. Roughly two-thirds of CCLS's student body are non Lutheran or have no church home. And only about 1-2% of Calvary's students identify as Lutheran—most are Catholic.

**Multiple Early Childhood Campuses—** Calvary has 250 students across two locations (Oak and Wornall) and CCLS has just under 300 students over four locations (Crestwood, Glendale, Kirkwood, and Webster.) It takes quite a bit of coordination to ensure that each campus maintains the school's standards, but is also able to have a unique feel. Laura May, EEC Director of Calvary's Oak Campus explains, "We have the same policies and procedures, but the personalities of the staff and the creative differences between [the Wornall campus] keep us similar but with our own personalities and interactions." And Director of Early Childhood Education at CCLS Angela Shirley notes, "We are really intentional in mission, vision, core values, and being united in that. And also reminding us that we are part of a bigger whole, we are all CCLS." Staff at CCLS also have the opportunity to participate in mentoring and sponsorship programs as well as a book study for the whole early childhood staff. CCLS has additional resources shared across campuses like counselors from Lutheran Family and Children's Services and special education specialists.

**Specialized Programs—** Each of these early childhood centers have varied programs to offer which benefit their current students and also reach into the community. Before the impact of COVID-19, CCLS would have open gym times during the winter for young children to come and play in a warm space. These days were designed especially for community families to come and connect with CCLS moms and kids over fun time and a snack. St. Paul's has a unique focus on learning style. "We believe that children learn best through the power of play," states Sara Larsen, Lead Teacher at St. Paul's, "...Process over product is kind of our motto when planning learning experiences." St. Paul's is also working towards the creation of an early childhood outdoor classroom space. These early childhood programs that span across Missouri serve their unique communities in varied ways, but they all have one thing in common: raising children in the faith. "The ultimate goal is that children know that they are a loved child of God—loved and saved through Jesus," emphasizes Shirley (CCLS), "It's Paramount to everything we do here."



*Students at CCLS's Early Childhood Center*



# “In All Things”

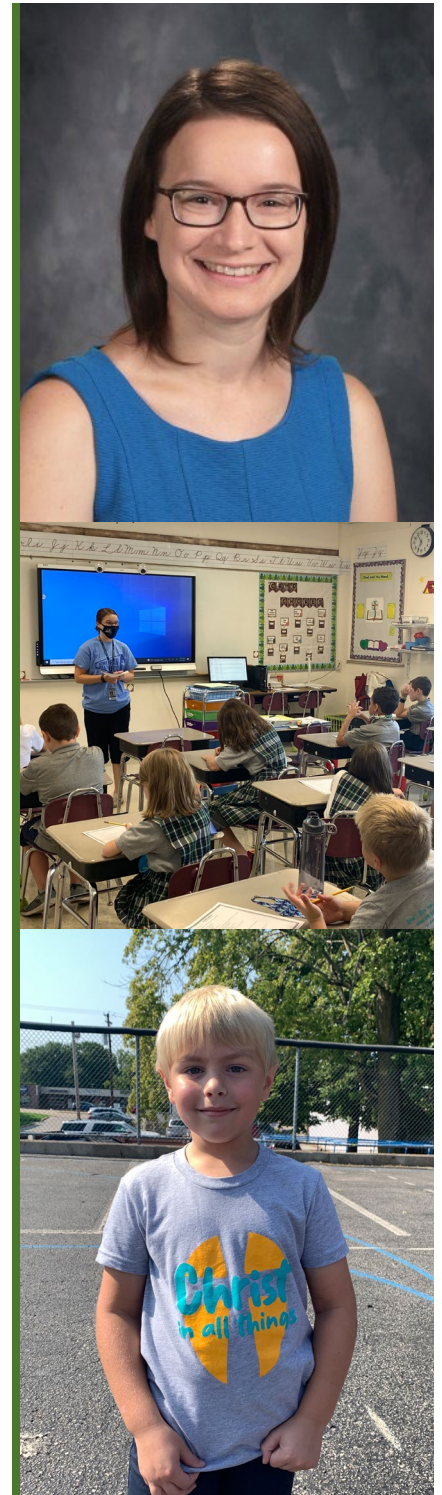
“In All Things” is the theme for many Lutheran schools across Missouri. Based on Colossians 1:15-20, this theme can be woven all through a school’s yearly plans. For Allyson Bohlmann of Immanuel Lutheran School in St. Charles, this theme provides many opportunities to teach children about Christ “In All Things”.

“Lutheran schools have the privilege to view the world through the lens of Christ existing in all things,” explains Bohlmann. “God the Father created the world that we live in, Christ our Savior saved us from the sin that surrounds us on Earth, and the Holy Spirit sustains our faith as we continue to live out our callings in His creation. Christ can be seen in the beautiful sunrise each morning, the encouraging word from a classmate, or the science class where students discover how intricately God designed everything.”

At Immanuel, the school year starts with a “In All Things” chapel service. A special way to join together in remembering the theme is through special, themed t-shirts. Students and staff can order these t-shirts based on the year’s theme and wear them on the first Wednesdays of the month and every Friday. A big highlight of the year is celebrating National Lutheran Schools Week. “We always start off the week with an all school devotion,” says Bohlmann. “Each day there is a different way to dress up, such as Pajama Day or School Spirit Day. Students write to senior members in the congregation to thank them for their support of Immanuel and to share the school theme and Bible verse with them. ...It is a very fun-filled week and students are very excited about the events each year.”

Immanuel also realizes that “In All Things” is a theme applied not just in neat t-shirts and fun activities, but also in service to others. Their school staff recognize when students are demonstrating Christ-like behavior and give out “Soaring Servant” cards to kids. There are also multiple opportunities for service projects, giving back to the community, and partnering with Immanuel Lutheran Church.

“Lutheran schools are important because it is a Christian environment combined with rigorous academics where students can strengthen their faith in Jesus, their Savior,” states Bohlmann. “Teachers model how we are to be Christ’s followers in today’s society. It is my belief that the Lutheran school ministry involves not only teaching young minds but also encouraging children to be disciples so that they can spread the Gospel message to others.”



(Top) Mrs. Allyson Bohlmann  
(Middle) Mrs. Bohlmann leading a class at Immanuel.  
(Lower) A student at Immanuel wearing their “In All Things” t-shirt.

# School Partnerships

Anyone serving in an administrative role or on a leadership board knows—it takes a lot to run a school successfully. One way that schools and churches can share the load and walk together in ministry is through partnerships. Saxony Lutheran High in Jackson has joined together with other Lutheran schools in the southeast part of Missouri to provide the best education with a focus firmly centered on God.

Rev. Rod Benkendorf is pastor at Hanover Lutheran Church in Cape Girardeau. He is quite familiar with Saxony. Not only does he serve as a parish pastor in the greater area surrounding Saxony, but both of his daughters have graduated from Saxony and his wife, Sarah, teaches mathematics (amongst other subjects) there. He has seen firsthand how beneficial it is for people to come together in service to Christ. "The Lutheran community in this area wants to make sure that kids have access to hearing the Gospel everyday," says Benkendorf. "As a pastor in the area, I'm just really impressed with the Christ focus that Saxony has."

The seven schools in the partnership each operate independently and have their autonomy, but still join together for Lutheran education, professional development, and fellowship. Pastors from the Lutheran churches in the area will lead chapel services for Saxony. And Rev. Beckendorf notes that there are logistical items, like ensuring that curriculums between Lutheran grade schools and Saxony high school are aligned, but there are also fun things. For example, highschool drama students will come and perform songs from their musicals at surrounding schools. Saxony also hosts a "Future Freshman Day" where Jr. High students can visit for a day. "There is such a comradery amongst the administrations," notes Benkendorf.



Missy Adams serves as Assistant Principal at Saxony and sums up their partnership in this way, "[we build] relationships amongst the families and students through events at our school, but also professionally with the various staffs at least twice a year. In fact, the administrators of these schools also try and meet monthly to build these bounds but also work towards one common goal...providing a quality Christ-centered education for all our schools."



*(Right) Rev. Rod Benkendorf with his wife, Sarah, and two daughters who are Saxony Alumnus. (Left) Saxony's Exterior*



# District Resources

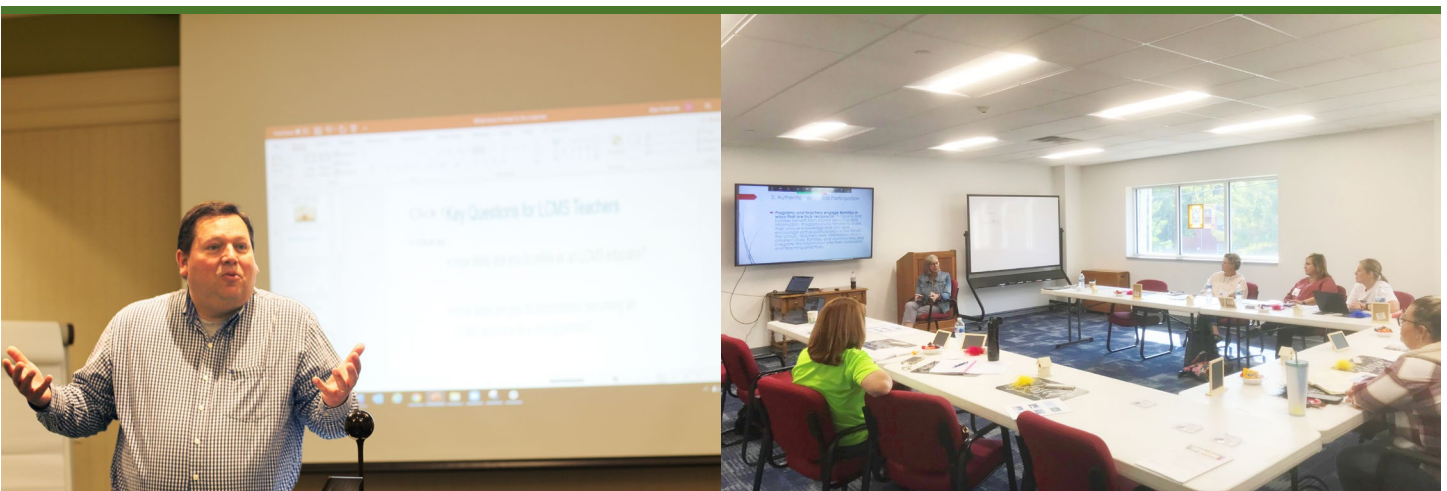


*(Right) Picture of a social activity at the School Administrators Conference 2021. (Left) Early Childhood Conference 2020*

One of the biggest resources that the District offers is professional development and guidance for church workers. In education, we are blessed not only to have Alan Freeman on staff at the District Office, but also to have District Early Childhood Co-Consultants Cheryl Haun and Lee Wagner to help with early childhood consulting.

This past July, the District hosted the School Administrators' Conference in Columbia. This was one of the first in-person gatherings since COVID-19 started. "We realized we all missed seeing each other, in person," says Haun. "In Columbia we could gather as administrators, and we needed time to talk and renew our relationships with each other." Haun notes that a big conference take away was realizing what worked well for the past year; lessons that were positive and valuable. One example is how many schools found the option for virtual parent-teacher conferences really useful. Haun notes, "We encouraged teachers to keep parent and teacher conferences in person and virtual—we'd never done that before and it can be convenient for parents."

Cheryl Haun and Lee Wagner are available for early childhood consulting through the District. It's work for which they are very qualified, as they are known nationally for their experience and wisdom. It's also their passion, Wagner notes, "The greatest joy for me in early childhood is seeing all the little blessings our loving Lord brings to our early childhood centers every day and the wonderful ministry of sharing the love of Jesus with them and their families!"



*(Right) Alan Freeman presents at a District education conference. (Left) Early Childhood Administrators 2021*

# 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

*Registration Deadline Oct 04, 2021*



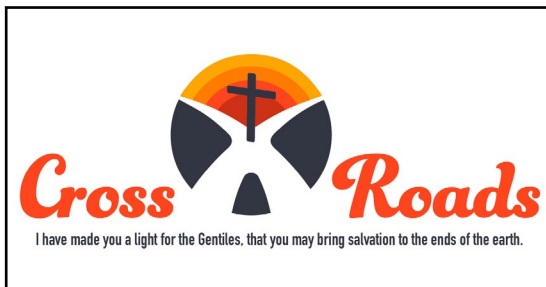
## **Lutheran Older Adult Retreat**

Oct 20-21, 2021

Pere Marquette Lodge, Grafton, IL

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

*Housing Registration Deadline Oct 06, 2021*



## **Sr. Youth Gathering**

Nov 05-07, 2021

Cross Pointe Retreat Center, Rocky Mount

Featuring: Rev. Dr. Peter Nafzger

*Registration Deadline Oct 25, 2021*



## **Educators' Conference**

## **"Remember What Hasn't Changed"**

Nov 22-23, 2021

Lodge of Four Seasons, Lake of the Ozarks

Featuring: Andrew McPeak

*Registration Deadline Nov 15, 2021*



**Missouri District**

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