

# The VOICE

March 2019



Missouri District

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD



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## From the President's Desk: Empty Hands, But Not Empty Hearts

When the Lord called to Moses from the Burning Bush, He did not give him mighty armies and weapons to lead the children of Israel out of slavery in Egypt. He only gave Moses His Word to speak.

Likewise, the Lord calls to Isaiah, He sends the one whom He has forgiven out only with His Word to proclaim. The Lord God similarly calls Ezekiel and gives Him a scroll to eat and then commands the one who has feasted on His Word to go and speak His Word to the house of Israel. From Abram to Samuel, Jeremiah to Matthew, Peter to Paul, the Scriptures are filled with examples of people whom the Lord calls and who He sends forth with only His Word.

Jesus traveled to Capernaum when He was approached by the elders of the Jews who were pleading for a Roman centurion whose servant was ill. As Jesus was nearing the house, friends came saying that centurion had said that He need not come because the man was not worthy to have Him enter his house. "Just say the word," was the message they brought to Jesus. When they returned, they found the servant had been healed.

Jesus, the Master Teacher, sent out His disciples on a mission of mercy. What is fascinating about the missionary journey is that He specifically tells them all the things that they should not bring: no bread, no bag, no money in their belts. But these humble servants are sent forth by the Lord to speak His Word.

While much has changed through the centuries, God's mercy to those whom He calls has not changed. Through every time and age, when God calls someone, it is a gracious that it is more about the character of the One who calls, then the one who is called. Whether it is the child brought to the baptismal font days after birth or the eighty-two year old who hears the Gospel for the first time at a nursing home service, the Holy Spirit mercifully brings us to faith. God continues to create faith in the hearts of people as children in early childhood centers learn about Jesus and as the recent divorcee comes to a Christian support group and learns about real hope.

Thanks be to God that the Holy Spirit still calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth through the Means of Grace.

But one of the wondrous things about those whom the Lord calls is what He gives to them. God most certainly gives us all that we need to support this body and life. But ultimately, the unique gift that God gives to His disciples of every age is His Word. From the time we are called to faith, God sends us forth with His Word. We may face cancer, battle depression, endure financial hardships or even struggle with addiction, but you do so with God's Word.

You may be a parent charged with teaching your own children, a teacher with a classroom of students or a pastor with a flock for which you are supposed to care. God sends you forth to carry out your vocation with His Word. Like the disciples, we do not need bread, bag or money in our belts. When the Lord gives to us His Word, He has given us everything we need.

For it was by the Word that God brought all things into being. It was by the Word that Jesus healed the sick and stilled the storm. And it is by the Word that God brought you to faith, forgives you of all of your sins and sustains you in the faith. While we may journey through this life with empty hands, we never have empty hearts. For His Word gives us joy and peace knowing that through Christ Jesus we are His forgiven and redeemed children. Dear friends, whatever you face this day, please know that God has given you Jesus, the Word made flesh, to strengthen you. And that's all that you need.

Fraternally in Christ,

President Lee Hagan

### PRESIDENT'S PRAYER LIST: PLEASE JOIN ME IN PRAYER THIS MONTH

- Please pray that Christ would be the center of our homes and that parents would be faithful in bringing their children up in the Lord.
- Pray that our congregations would support parents and families in faith formation in the home.
- Finally, give thanks to God for the blessing of His Word and the opportunities for us to read, hear and study it.



# Missouri District Hosts Tell the Next Generation: A Family Ministry Conference

What fortifies a parent's resolve to take their kids to church before they can sit still? What empowers those same parents to take the lead on teaching the faith, to ensure their kids feel comfortable praying, reading scripture and asking questions? The answers will vary as greatly as every family in every community.

When you see (and hear) a family with small children in church, it probably brings you more joy than the parents realize. As they struggle through loud noises, escape attempts and other awkward moments, it might not be obvious that what the people around them hear is the sound of the congregation growing. Most families simply don't realize is how deeply most people want families with young children to tough it out and bring their little ones to church, even with all the challenges that entails. More alarmingly, many parents underestimate their role in helping their children learn the faith and know Jesus. The ones who want to take that leadership don't always feel equipped to take that on.

What fortifies a parent's resolve to take their kids to church before they can sit still? What empowers those same parents to take the lead on teaching the faith, to ensure their kids feel comfortable praying, reading scripture and asking questions? The answers will vary as greatly as every family in every community.

To tackle these issues, the Missouri District hosted Tell the Next Generation: A Family Ministry Conference on March 9, 2019 in St. Charles. The conference brought together DCEs, Sunday School teachers, volunteers, pastors, parents and more to share best practices, ideas and tools to implement in their family ministries.

Approximately 150 attendees came from 50 Missouri District congregations, as well as one attendee who traveled from Ft. Smith, AR.



Missouri District President, Rev. Dr. Lee Hagan says, "The theme, 'Tell the Next Generation,' comes from Psalm 78 where God describes how the faith is passed down from one generation to the next, even to children yet to be born."

President Hagan says, "Family ministry is vitally important because parents are the primary influences in the lives of their children. Churches of any size can help parents teach the faith to their children. I hope that can assisting parents in that task can be one of the things for which congregations across Missouri District are known. The Bible and the Small Catechism both clearly describe the role of parents in faith formation."

Dr. Kim Marxhausen served as the keynote speaker, as well as leading a sectional entitled "Faith Development." Dr. Marxhausen is a renowned expert in Lutheran education, with more than 30 years of experience. While teaching early childhood, she earned a



Masters in Literacy Instruction and then a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology. She currently teaches and designs classes for graduate programs and presents for teachers all over the country. Kim has published two books through Concordia Publishing House. She writes Parent Pages for LCMS School Ministry and her third book, *Weary Joy: God's Blessings for Caregivers* should be available later this year. You are welcome to check out her parenting blog, devotional blog, and ministry resources at [kim.marxhausen.net](http://kim.marxhausen.net).

**Dr. Marxhausen found the diversity of people and topics at *Tell the Next Generation* unique.**

She said, "I spoke with lay leaders, pastors, DCEs teachers, counselors, and health practitioners. We were all united in our understanding that child and family ministry is not only essential but requires workers from every corner of the Church. I am confident that this variety made for an excellent participant experience as it created better discussions and sharing of ideas from people with different perspectives."



**Other topics explored in the 18 sectionals included techniques for rural and small-town congregations, music as a tool, equipping parents, alternatives to Sunday school, post-baptism engagement, family ministry options for a tight budget and more.**

DCE Andrew Nelson, the Youth and Family Life Director for Chapel of the Cross Lutheran Church, first heard about the event on Facebook. He then attended a Partners in Ministry event at the Missouri District office, where President Hagan spoke about the conference. Even though he has two young children at home and it's not necessarily easy to get away for a Saturday, he says this event "hit all the marks of what we're trying to accomplish as a church."

DCE Nelson said one of his biggest takeaways came from Dr. Marxhausen. He says her message about centering the Gospel as a method of helping children learn and explore—of seeing the Gospel as important to a child's entire learning process—really resonated with him. He was also quite pleased with "the amount of resources and people and other things available in the Missouri District. It's astounding to have this in our backyard and to have access to it."





DCE Nelson led a sectional with DCE Jolene Siebarth (Immanuel Lutheran in St. Charles) about kids in worship services. Afterwards, a pastor from another part of the state came over and said that his congregation was on a five-to-seven-year plan to hire a staff person for family ministry. This pastor was excited, because until he attended the conference, he thought they would have to wait until then to start working on family ministry. DCE Nelson noticed a similar sense of momentum and energy throughout the building as the conference unfolded.

Dr. Marxhausen also noticed how eager people were to jump start or ramp up their work in family ministry. She said, "The comment [from attendees] that stuck out for me was 'I never thought of it that way before.' That is the comment of a person ready to learn! It also suggests that people were not only exposed to new ideas but to new models for viewing ministry possibilities."

The Missouri District hosts several key events on a rotating basis. The current plan is to host another family ministry conference in early 2021. There will also be presentations about family ministry in the E2 (Equip and Encourage) conferences this fall and winter.



Photo by Aliza Carlson

## Tell the Next Generation: A Family Ministry Conference

Presented in partnership with  
the Lutheran Church Extension Fund



Lutheran Church Extension Fund

> where investments build ministry



The Religious Support Office's new DRE, Mrs. Martha Strong, was installed by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Ministry to the Armed Forces, as the Fort Leonard Wood Director of Religious Education (DRE). We are very happy she is onboard with the RSO!



Send us your  
installation  
photos!  
Please send them to  
[sharon.gutowski@  
mo.lcms.org](mailto:sharon.gutowski@mo.lcms.org)



**Installation of Rev. Andrew Dinger at St. Timothy in St. Louis**

1<sup>st</sup> Row: Ron Rall, Art Eichhorn, President Hagan, Andrew Dinger, Timothy Dinger, Michael Tanney, Michael Okine, Del Crockett

2<sup>nd</sup> Row: Rick Marrs, Stanish Stanley, Walt Winters, Chris Agne, David Lewis, Matt Clark

3<sup>rd</sup> Row: Bruce Cameron, David Dittmar, Josh Hatcher, Erik Herrmann, Max Biesenthal, Andy Nelson, Bill Wilson, Steve Albers, Tim Saleska, Tim Dost, Chris Sommer

# Jessy the Comfort Dog Leads Saint Paul Lutheran Church into Lives of New People

News of an impending blizzard seemed to hit everyone's phones at once. While the storm had been predicted, it had gathered speed and was barreling down on Concordia, MO earlier than expected. Some of the mourners who had been attending a funeral at Saint Paul Lutheran Church chose to leave town instead of attending the luncheon after the service. Rev. Michael Pottschmidt stayed with other people after the funeral.



During the lunch, news of devastating accidents spread on social media: Interstate 70 had been closed due to a significant accident. As the afternoon wore on, a second pile up involving many cars and trucks shut down Interstate again, this time right at the Concordia exit.

Rev. Pottschmidt heard through Facebook that the local commu-

nity center announced it was opening its doors to shelter stranded motorists. He decided to go there and see if there was anything he and his congregation could do to help. When he arrived, he found Renee Ravanelli, who leads the congregation's comfort dog ministry, starring Jessy a golden retriever.

## Members Brave the Snow to Bring Jessy to People in a Moment of Need

Comfort dogs are trained to respond to people in distress. Ravanelli says, "It's a ministry of presence. The dogs aren't judgmental. They don't even talk." After speaking with the community center, it was clear that Jessy, would be welcome at the shelter. However, she was staying with her caregivers out in the country. Given the dangerous roads and the bad traffic, she didn't think it would work out.

She posted on Facebook that she was disappointed they couldn't bring Jessy in. Within minutes she had volunteers who felt comfortable navigating the snow in their truck to bring the comfort dog to the shelter.

When she arrived, Jessy sat in front of a little boy, who somehow had slept through the terrifying accident. "He lit up when he saw her," Rev. Pottschmidt says. "Both the mother and little boy were delighted to see Jessy." Ravanelli also had a stuffed animal version of Jessy that she gave to the little boy.

Although not seriously injured, people were stuck and worried about how they were going to deal with the aftermath of the accident. For example, people didn't know what was going to happen to their cars, and also faced an unexpected night away from home. These are the kinds of things you never think about until you find yourself both thankful and unable to move forward.

## A Ministry for Young, Old, Natural Disasters and Much More

Ravanelli first learned about comfort dog ministry after their congregation sent volunteers down to Joplin in 2011, after an infamous tornado ravaged the town. Comfort dogs served the Joplin community and St. Paul's volunteers told the congregation about them. As an avid dog lover, she started to research.

At the time, the cost of acquiring a comfort dog (which is a purebred golden retriever) was approximately ten thousand dollars. Lutheran Church Charities works only with trusted breeders and provides the required and extensive training before the dogs go to congregations that apply for them.

In addition, the dog's handlers are also trained to be able to speak about the comfort and hope we have in Christ. As this ministry has become more popular and demand has increased, the cost has increased. However, if your congregation is considering getting a comfort dog, Ravanelli has this advice: do it.

## A Ministry that Takes You Across the Community

"It's an awesome ministry," Ravanelli says. "Jessy gets us into places we wouldn't otherwise [have access to]." In addition to being available for things like natural disasters, comfort dogs provide value in a variety of settings. Jessy regularly goes to the local nursing home, where many residents miss the dogs they had to leave behind. She also has regular appointments with the local elementary school. Kids feeling stressed or dealing with any sort of challenge can enjoy the calming effect of petting a dog.

Saint Paul High School also opened its doors, creating a space for people to stay overnight. Everyone worked with the state police to help transfer people safely. Rev. Potts Schmidt notes, "This wasn't planned. It was just paying attention as the need arose and saying, 'I don't know what's going on exactly, but I'll certainly go over there and see what's going on and what the needs are.'"

## Growing in Christ XVIII - "From Age to Age the Same"

Loving, Forgiving and Serving in a World of Change – On May 1-2, 2019 the Lutheran Older Adult Retreat, sponsored by the Southern Ill District and Lutheran Senior Services will focus on our unchangeable God and what a comfort that is in today's world of constant change. Held in the beautiful surroundings of Pere Marquette Lodge in Grafton, IL, the retreat features keynote presenter Jan Struck (Struck with Laughter) and Bible Study leader Rev. Mark Femmel and 16 excellent workshops. Notable workshop leaders include Dr. Robert Weise, Dr. David Lewis, Sarah Bernhardt, and missionary Gary Wolff just to name a few. Based on Hebrews 13:8, as loved and forgiven Christians you will experience how God's unchanging and all-encompassing love enables you to live out God's calling in your everyday life. For information and registration information please contact Margo Wolf at 618-622-0264 or [dmwvette74@gmail.com](mailto:dmwvette74@gmail.com) or go to [www.sidlcms.org](http://www.sidlcms.org) and click on Forms/Registrations

## Mission Advancement Snapshot

Through your generous support of the Missouri District, you walk alongside church workers who find themselves in times of hurt and despair. Thank you!

"At first I was ashamed to admit that I needed a break for burnout, but the district came in and stepped up when I needed it most...I will always be grateful!"

-Anonymous church worker





# Healthy Servants: Personal Finance and Careers in Church Work

It's not easy to juggle a church work career, family obligations, and unexpected life events. That means if finances are a source of stress, you're hardly alone.

Most people learn how to manage their personal finance through old-fashioned life experience. It's deceptively easy to slip into bad habits or to find yourself wondering how to pay for that sudden, unpredictable expense.

Eustolio Gomez has advised church workers in matters of finance for more than forty years, both as the owner of a financial advising firm and as the Director of Education at Concordia Plan Services. He's found that when it comes to personal finance, church workers have the same challenges as everyone else.

A common issue across the board is easy access to credit, which can entice people to live above their means. According to Gomez, the average American household has 14 credit cards. So, if you have two or three at your house, imagine the numbers that would lead to an average of 14. Gomez points to the many store-specific credit cards that bump up the average. People open store credit cards to save on a big purchase, and then forget to close them later. Even if the card is never used, it can have a negative impact on your credit score.

## Know Yourself

While Gomez doesn't necessarily think credit cards are automatically a bad thing, this trend illustrates his number one piece of advice for church workers (or anyone really): pay close attention to your finances. It all starts with self-awareness.

"Everyone is different," he explains. There's no secret formula that will work for everyone. This can be challenging for church workers, when they see their friends or members of their congregations living a different lifestyle. But it's impossible to know what exactly makes it possible for them to afford their car or home.

This can contribute to pressure to "upgrade" your lifestyle, often with the support of credit.

The flipside of this is actually good news. Since every family requires a different plan, you can decide what's most important to you and prioritize accordingly.

## Do the Math

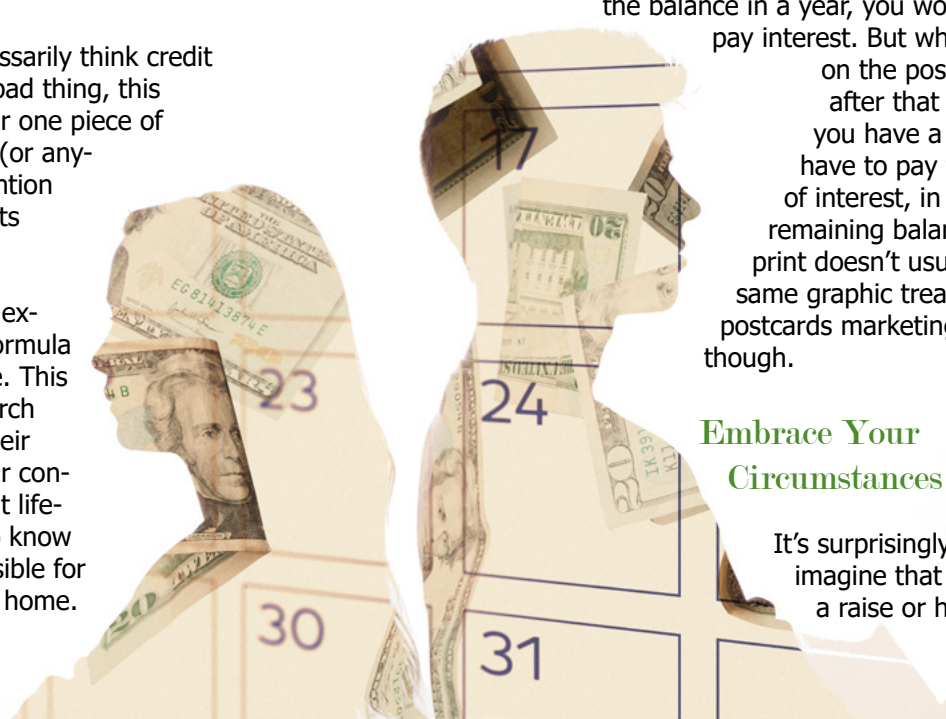
Gomez often hears church workers express regret that personal finance wasn't emphasized more heavily during their time at Seminary. However, during his tenure at Concordia Plan Services, he often taught seminars about personal finance and he says, "I had reluctant attendees."

He would also often hear people share the sentiment that the credit card companies were acting in a predatory manner. With some prodding though, participants would admit to opening credit cards without reading the fine print or doing the math.

For example, a credit card that advertises no interest for a year sounds like a good deal. And if you pay off the balance in a year, you won't have to pay interest. But what doesn't go on the post card is that after that first year, if you have a balance, you have to pay the first year of interest, in addition to the remaining balance. The fine print doesn't usually get the same graphic treatment on the postcards marketing these deals, though.

## Embrace Your Circumstances

It's surprisingly easy to imagine that simply getting a raise or having more



To learn how you can help support the Missouri District's work to care for church workers and their families, contact Leah Sieveking at (314) 590-6211 or [leah.sieveking@mo.lcms.org](mailto:leah.sieveking@mo.lcms.org).



money would make financial problems disappear. However, for the majority of people, they need to learn to better manage what they have. Until they do that, they tend to simply make the same mistakes on a bigger scale when they get a new job or pay bump. The good news is, there are simple steps you can take to better manage your personal finances that don't cost a lot of extra money.

Gomez suggests starting with a simple net worth statement. Add up all your assets (what you could sell your house for, the value of owned property, investments) and subtract your liabilities (credit card debt, your mortgage, car loans, etc.). If you have a positive number, that means you're solvent.

If you're not solvent yet, becoming solvent should become your first goal. If you find yourself in that situation, the good news is there are many ways you can work towards solvency. It starts with a monthly budget. Taking a Positive Approach to the Budget

Most of us don't have a positive connotation to the word "budget." However, it can be as simple as making a plan for your money each month, and then seeing how you did at the end of the month. If you're married, you can sit down with your spouse once a month and looking back at the past month and forward to the next month at the same time.

Padding the month's budget to save money for unexpected things like car and home repairs can make it easier to avoid going into debt. If you have to take out a loan or put something urgent on a credit card, he recommends altering your budget to pay it off as quickly as possible.

If you have debt, to get rid of it, throw as much disposable income at it as you can. Even paying 10 to 20 percent over the minimum payment can make a difference.

### Managing the Stress of Budgets and Personal Finance

Rev. Gene Wyssmann, Assistant to the President: Church Worker and Congregational Health, says, "Financial issues can also affect many other aspects of our wellbeing... It affects relationships that with have with a spouse or family members. It can affect our own emotional wellbeing. The stress can affect our physical wellbeing, and the list could go on."

Gomez also encourages people to take their financial burdens to the foot of the cross, just like other life challenges. Couples need to pray together and come to each other with support and encouragement, knowing that making mistakes doesn't mean giving up.



If financial stress is interfering with your ability to serve your ministry or your family, contact Gene Wyssman at [gene.wyssmann@mo.lcms.org](mailto:gene.wyssmann@mo.lcms.org) or (417) 766-2183.

# Healthy Congregations: Asking the Right Questions for Better Stewardship

Last month, we wrote about how pastors can embrace stewardship with their congregations. As a follow-up, we spoke with Rev. Nathan Meador, Senior Pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church in Plymouth, WI and the Assistant Coordinator of Stewardship for the Office of National Mission-LCMS.

Rev. Meador says the first step is getting into an appropriate mindset around stewardship, rooted in the biblical understanding of what it is. That means letting go of the common misconception that stewardship is about paying the bills and covering the cost of doing business. That's a goal, but that doesn't encompass all the spiritual ramifications of good stewardship.

He describes stewardship as, "the means through which the Gospel is proclaimed and people meet Jesus." It's hard to do that without paying the bills or keeping the lights on, but congregations can't stop there or even at a balance sheet.

## What's Holding You Back?

To get started with stewardship take a deep, honest and objective assessment of both yourself and the congregation. If you find yourself reluctant to address stewardship, ask yourself why. Sometimes, pastors with significant financial issues (feeling the pressure from educational debt, for example), may have mixed feelings discussing stewardship at the congregational level.

Rev. Meador says pastors in this situation need to get their own house in order.

Or, conversely, pastors may feel ill-equipped to tackle stewardship. If that's the case, Rev. Meador points to many resources available from Synod, as well as through the Missouri District.

## Signs of Trouble

Rev. Meador once went to advise a congregation that was struggling with stewardship. After going through many different aspects of administration and speaking with individuals, the pastor asked him what he thought. He said, "I think you should have called me five years ago." Here are some signs your congregation may need some assistance with faithful stewardship:

- The congregation is maxing out their line of credit regularly
- The congregation is living off the principal of the endowment
- The congregation is consistently using designated funds for day-to-day expenses
- Donors have stopped giving (this is also a pastoral care issue)
- Budget meetings used to take an hour and now they take four or five

While it may seem like people aren't paying close attention to these matters, people who take their personal stewardship responsibly get frustrated when they see the congregation being run on a credit card.

A few years ago, Rev. Meador buried an oncology nurse. Her death was especially tragic, because she died from cancer that had a success rate above 80 percent when her symptoms initially showed up. However, she was so terrified of a cancer diagnosis, she couldn't bring herself to go to the doctor until it was later and the prognosis wasn't nearly as good. Rev. Meador sees a parallel between this woman's death and the reluctance many congregations feel about getting help managing stewardship.



## An Outside Perspective to Assist with Difficult Questions

While not impossible, it's hard for congregations and pastors to assess their stewardship without an outside perspective. This is because if resources are not available long-term to support current ministry, the congregation must consider if there are different ways to operate that ministry, if it's time to partner with another organization or even if this is the Lord's way of telling them that the time for that ministry has passed. A fresh perspective can help people be more honest and objective with these kinds of questions.

Rev. Meador says, "Things change. Nothing is really done the way it was 20 or 50 years ago, but sometimes we continue to operate ministry in a way that's outdated. We like to take ownership of ministries. We talk about 'our congregation, our school,' but they belong to Jesus. We should be talking about Jesus' church and school."

## The Role of Culture and the Danger of Comfort Zones

When it comes to stewardship, assessing the role of culture is quite important. Rev. Meador says, "Culture' is just a fancy word for how things get done. Cultures develop organically and like water it takes the path of least resistance." But he cautions that a comfortable steward isn't as likely to be a faithful steward.

Rev. Meador works with congregations to assess what about their stewardship culture should be strengthened and celebrated and what about it should be absolved or avoided. Then people have to ask themselves if their answers mean reinventing or repurposing a ministry, or finding a new partnership or even a new approach. Staying with what's familiar and uncomfortable is like managing stewardship on autopilot, which won't work.

This kind of thinking leads to congregations that can't pivot and react to the needs of the community, which can culminate in a downward spiral of institutional survival.

## Trust and Transparency Build Solid Stewardship

According to Rev. Meador, "Nothing kills stewardship more than secrecy." He recommends having the books externally audited every year and taking any discussions of financial problems to the congregation in an open manner to show them there's a plan.

Each year, when you report about the finances, include a balance sheet for the few people who know how to read one. But Rev. Meador also suggests including an executive summary in the form of a narrative. His preferred format includes an easy-to-digest story that covers where the congregation is, what the data says about how they got there and where they intend to go in the future.



# Healthy Schools: Welcoming and Supporting Military Families through their Children's Education

Growing up in a military family means many things, including getting familiar with the unfamiliar. When kids from military families enroll in Our Savior Christian Academy, some of them have moved as many as 13 times already.

Lavonne Pappert, the Superintendent of Our Savior, estimates that 65 percent of the families they serve are in the military. Many times, they're new to the Midwest, though they may have lived on military bases overseas. They receive a full orientation, to help them get settled in the community as soon as possible.

Everyone on staff works hard to make the school a place where these kids—and their families—can feel at home. It also means finding practical, meaningful ways to support the families who have made great sacrifices serving our country. As a result, the families enjoy a school that doesn't feel like somewhere they have to explain their way of life. They can enjoy sending their children to a school that "gets it."

For example, the entire school administration understands that the military isn't likely to grant the parents leave right on Easter weekend or over spring break. Our Savior has made flexibility in helping families get time together a big priority for how they run their school. That also means that if a student has the opportunity to Skype with a deployed parent, that student is excused from class and in a room with a reliable internet connection, regardless of what's going on in the classroom. Sometimes it means working to supplement a student's homeschool education.

Inside the classrooms, kids start with the pledge of allegiance as early as pre-school. Instead of simply going through the motions, students learn what the words mean and internalize it. Children also sing a patriotic song every day and the social studies curriculum includes an in-depth history of the flag of the United States, as well as the

Christian identity of the founding fathers. It's easy to know when the school is singing the national anthem or saying the pledge of allegiance—everyone stops and stands at attention.

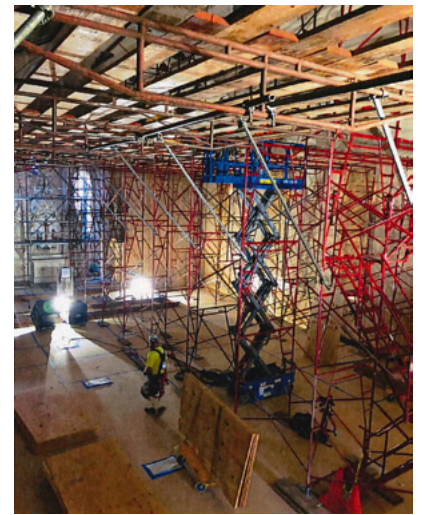
The school offers outdoor education, with all season camping in Army tents. They also have an advanced camp out that teaches even more skills. Students have the opportunity to learn gun safety and the rifle club uses live rounds.

The unpredictability of military life is something Our Savior has learned to roll with. They can't afford to make assumptions about their enrollment numbers without considering that some families will inevitably get assignments and have to move. With the help of an attorney, they crafted messaging on enrollment forms that ask about the parents' military situation, without invading privacy, violating laws or sending an unwelcoming or negative message.

Our Savior has been successful in supporting military families because they understand their values and reflect these values back to them at every opportunity. The students and families arrive with a specific moral compass and families appreciate their children's education being a part of that.

# Immanuel Lutheran Church Rebuilds Sanctuary after Crushing Accident

In the spring of 2018, a few people noticed a slight dip in the ceiling of the sanctuary of Immanuel Lutheran Church in St. Charles. The past year had marked the congregation's 150th anniversary, which coincided with the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. The spot on the ceiling was barely noticeable and they believed they might need a simple patch job. Shortly after that, in the middle of the night on May 29, 2018, the half of the sanctuary's ceiling fell to the ground, completely crushing the front pews and devastating the pipe organ.



The timing was both chilling and fortunate. In the midst of an incredibly busy season, the ceiling fell shortly after graduation and confirmation, with the kindergartners and first-graders sitting in the front pews. However, the event happened in the dead of night, with no one sitting in the path of debris. The simple miracle of no one getting hurt made it easy to feel thankful, despite the extensive damage.

Konnie Ohmes works in the office of the church and school. She was the one who discovered the ceiling had fallen. When she came to the door to the sanctuary, her first thought was, "Why is there white dirt on the floor?" After she opened the door and took in everything and her brain processed the scene, people told her she was speaking in monotonous all day, from the shock.

Rev. Schmieding recalls, "When we first came in and witnessed the devastation, our hearts sank, and we just shook our heads. And we turned to God and we prayed, and we banded together, united, and we had faith and that God would turn a very negative event into a tremendous blessing." He says, that's exactly what's happened.

For Rev. Schmieding, the ordeal brings to mind Romans 8:28: "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."

Even though only half the ceiling fell, the congregation had to rebuild both sides of the sanctuary, to get a consistent look. The construction team took great care to reproduce the historic details of the sanctuary. A repair of this magnitude required significant investment in both money and time working through the process with the insurance company. The congregation had an attorney that helped them navigate that part of the process. In the end, everyone agreed the sanctuary looked even better than it had before.



For the eight and a half months of construction, worship services, weddings and other events were held in the nearby fellowship hall. This month, the sanctuary was officially rededicated. In the re-dedication sermon, Rev. Schmieding said, "The primary purpose of this building is to glorify God and magnify our Savior...No building lasts forever...We've never been about buildings, we've been about being the body of Christ. As much as we value this beautiful sanctuary, the true nature of the church is God's people gathered around Word and sacrament."



**"We've never been about buildings, we've been about being the body of Christ. As much as we value this beautiful sanctuary, the true nature of the church is God's people gathered around Word and sacrament."**  
— Rev. Schmieding



# Strengthening Families

## Sunday School for All Generations Gives Families Faith Experience

When you think of Sunday School programs, do you imagine classrooms filled with grandparents? At King of Kings Lutheran Church in Chesterfield, they host quarterly Sunday School classes designed for families to attend with all generations. Grandparents learn alongside teenagers, and parents learn alongside young children. The congregation designs these events specifically to encourage family members of all ages to learn together and talk about the faith together.

Each lesson has a general theme, an introduction and an activity followed by breakout sessions. Paul Nelson, King of King's DCE, says these services have been very well attended. The first one he participated in was about four years ago and coincided with the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. They taught lessons about Martin Luther and showed kids what music and history in that time. Another year, for the fourth of July, local veterans led a panel discussion, while the students also heard from an organization that serves veterans, cheering at airports when they come home from deployment, among other services.

Another time, youth led an activity with different stations that showed the meaning of Psalm 23. Nelson says, "This was great because they got to show the adults and kids they could lead and give everyone an experience about Psalm 23." Other lessons have included topics such as evangelism and introduction to the concept of apologetics.

DCE Nelson stresses that it's important for family members to learn from each other. When they dedicated one course to evangelism in the digital age, each generation had their own views and contributions about how to share their faith stories online and it was valuable for everyone to see how this topic crossed the age ranges.





# Engaging Communities

## Missions 10:02— Go and See: Engaging Our Communities in Shared Ministries

by Rev. Bill Geis

This past February, 65 people from 20 congregations and mission stations gathered in Springfield to discuss mission opportunities in the region through ministry partnerships. They represented rural and city, small and large churches, pastors and laity, all putting their hands together in prayer seeking ways to engage their communities.

The Gospel of Mark tells us something unique about Jesus' miracle of feeding 5,000 people. When the disciples confront Jesus, overwhelmed by their lack of money to buy food, He tells them to "Go and see..." what they have to work with. They return with five loaves and two fish.

Together on a chilly February day, people in Springfield looked over their region. We saw people with Jesus' eyes of compassion. There were so many sheep without a shepherd! Around Springfield, they are not 5,000, but 360,000 who have absolutely no connection to a church. We felt the enormity of the challenge. Our lack of resources to even take care of our own churches provoked fear. But we resolved to "Go and see..." what we have together.

We didn't scavenge for loaves and fishes. We looked at so much more through a process called "Asset Mapping." Plus One coaches in the Missouri District use this tool with congregations to help them, "Go and see..." We are tempted to look at what we lack. Jesus directs us to look at what we have. He calls us to bring our assets, our God-given gifts. He does the multiplying.

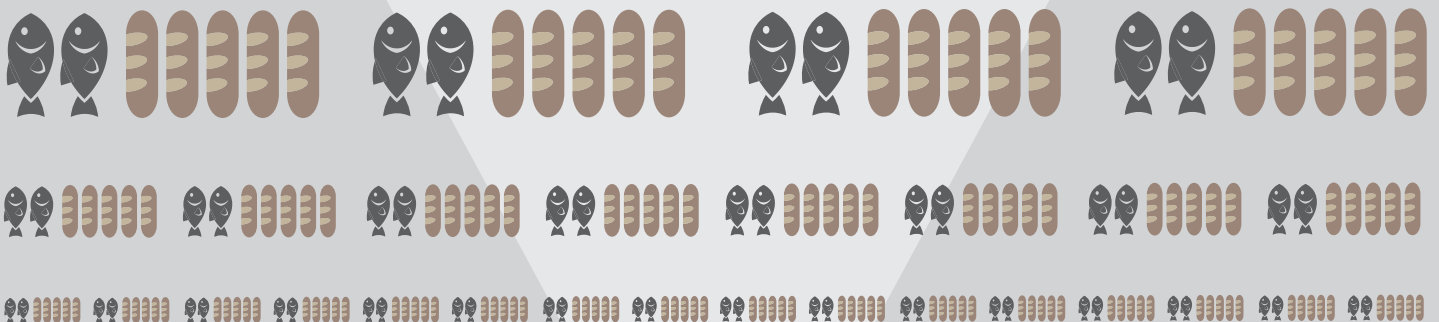
Luther taught us to pray an asset map every day with Jesus. In the Fourth Petition of the Lord's Prayer, Luther gets us started with a sample map of "daily bread." He says it's everything we need to support this body and life. It includes, "food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home... good friends, faithful neighbors." Then with three words, "...and the like," Luther essentially says, "Keep going!"

In Springfield, we uncovered more than a hundred assets among our congregations in just few minutes. If Jesus could feed 5,000 with so little, what could He do with our congregations working together? That day, we prayed a bold prayer. "Lord, use what we have together to reach the first 1 percent of those 360,000 unreached people."

The kind of mission-driven partnerships that President Hagan has been writing, preaching and talking about throughout our District isn't about consolidation in lean times. This is about multiplying God's daily bread in our communities through the partnerships of our congregations and schools—no matter their size. We bring everything we have together for Jesus to multiply our ministries to the needy in our communities.

Join me in praying 10:02 prayers this month. Pray with your "eyes open." Go and see what your church and area churches have. Go and see the people who are unreached by the Gospel. Bring them in your prayers to Jesus. Expect miracles!

If you'd like to learn more about ministry partnerships and asset mapping contact Bill Geis, ([bill.geis@mo.lcms.org](mailto:bill.geis@mo.lcms.org)).



# LCEF Kaleidoscope Grants Open April 1

The Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) will soon be accepting applications for Kaleidoscope Grants for the third consecutive year.

With funds between the amounts of \$15,000 and \$75,000, these grants are available to Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) K-8 elementary schools. LCEF Articles of Incorporation and Synod Bylaws prohibit LCEF from distributing net operating results to Auxiliaries, RSOs, seminaries, colleges, or universities of the Synod. The 2019 Kaleidoscope grants will focus on four areas of Lutheran elementary education: faculty enrichment, curriculum development, facility improvements and endowment creation.

**Faculty Enrichment:** grants in this category should encourage faculty growth both personally and professionally. Grants should support activities and services that improve the wellbeing of faculty and/or improve their engagement with students. Examples might include continuing education, professional development, wholistic care for workers that improve their wellness, sabbaticals, etc.

**Curriculum Development:** grants in this category should enhance academic offerings of schools through improvement to curriculum or development of new programs. Examples might include STEM, ESL, literacy, foreign language, gifted and talented, counseling, improved student climate, and/or the engagement of specialists or working with other schools to develop such programs.

Back in 2016, Messiah Lutheran Church in St. Louis received a Kaleidoscope grant for its community center, which the church was starting to plan. At that time, church members were in the community letting everyone know about their plans, which included art classes for area children. As community members volunteered to help, that started a relationship with the church.

The community center now hosts regular senior citizen fitness classes, martial arts and art programming for children, dance classes, neighborhood board meetings, a Pokemon club, a partnership that gives local residents access to a social worker, and much more.

**Facility Improvement:** grants in this category should improve or upgrade existing facilities or tools necessary to improve the learning environment (these would not be curriculum or faculty). Examples might include integrated technologies, STEMM/STEAM Labs, sensory upgrades, creative learning environments, playgrounds, etc.

For facility improvement projects, Kaleidoscope will fund up to a maximum of 50% of total improvement budget; the school must fund at least 50%.

**Endowment Creation:** The endowment creation aspect of the 2019 Kaleidoscope Fund is in partnership with the LCMS Foundation. This is a matching program of \$25,000. Schools selected must raise \$25,000 within 18 months of acceptance. Any amounts less than \$25,000 will not be matched. This is only for the creation of a new endowment, not for schools with an existing endowment.

## The Process

1. Eligible organizations submit proposals by the deadline of May 31, 2019. Visit [lcef.org/kaleidoscope/](http://lcef.org/kaleidoscope/) for details.
2. The Kaleidoscope Fund committee will review and select ministries to submit a full application.
3. Selections will be made and ministries notified in October 2019 and announced in November 2019.
4. Grant awards will be paid in one lump sum directly to the grant recipient based on the budget timeframe provided in the application.
5. Each recipient of The Kaleidoscope Fund grant will provide a written summary and photos of the grant outcome(s) in a designated and agreed upon timeframe with LCEF. These summaries and photos may be used in LCEF social media and for other promotional purposes. Additional promotional stories may be sought by the LCEF Marketing Department.

If you have questions, contact Casey Carlson at (314) 590-6207 or [casey.carlson@mo.lcms.org](mailto:casey.carlson@mo.lcms.org).

# Calling Congregations

## For Sole Pastors

Appleton City, Trinity (Calling Seminary Candidate)

Brunswick, St. John (Calling Seminary Candidate)

Carrollton, Immanuel

Conway (Rader), Zion

Ernestville, St. Matthew (Called Benjamin Holt – Girard, IL)

Frohna, Concordia

Independence, St. Paul's

Park Hills, Trinity – (Called Rev. Jeremy May – Ponca City, OK)

St. Clair, Holy Trinity

Sweet Springs, Immanuel (Calling Seminary Candidate)

Trenton, Immanuel

Warsaw, Faith (Calling Seminary Candidate)

## For Senior Pastor

Blue Springs, Timothy

Des Peres, St. Paul

Independence, Messiah

Weldon Spring, Messiah (Called Rev. James Mueller – Hurst, TX – Accepted)

**For Associate or Assistant Pastor**

Concordia, St. Paul (Calling Seminary Candidate)

Jefferson City, Trinity (Calling Seminary Candidate)

O'Fallon, Holy Cross

Perryville, Immanuel (Calling Seminary Candidate)

St. Charles, Immanuel (Called Rev. Daniel Potts – Monroe, MI)

## Served by Intentional Interim Pastor or Interim Pastor

Independence, St. Paul's (Rev. Steven Streufert)

Jefferson City (Honey Creek) (Rev. Dr. Richard Foss)

New Melle, St. Paul (Rev. Tom Schoech)

Slater, Peace & St. Paul (Called Rev. Walter Snyder – Accepted)

## Vacant (on hold, but being served)

Ashland, Family of Christ

Aurora, Grace

Barnhart, Immanuel

Bethany, Hope

Buffalo, Our Savior

Center, Trinity

Doniphan, Trinity

Elk Prairie (Rolla), Peace

Hermitage, Hope

Ironton, St. Paul

Isabella, Faith

Kansas City, Immanuel

Kennett, Redeemer

Malden, Grace

Memphis, St. Paul

Milan, Peace

Oak Grove, Shepherd of the Valley

St. James, St. John

St. Louis, Ebenezer

St. Louis, Emmaus

Sarcoxie, Trinity

Sedalia, Amigos de Cristo

Sweet Springs, Christ

Trenton, Immanuel

Valley Park, Zion

Vandalia, St. John

Washington, Faith

## Pastors Considering Calls

Gier, James (Mount Calvary – Excelsior Springs) to Ascension – Fort Wayne, IN (Accepted)

Hetzel, Brian (Pointe of Hope – Blue Springs) to St. Paul – Roseburg, OR

Kapels, Calvin (St. Stephen – Liberty) to Our Savior – Kansas City, KS (Declined)

Kollbaum, Todd (LCMS National Missions – St. Louis) to Trinity – Madison, NE (Accepted)

McBurney, David (Abiding Savior – St. Louis) to Trinity – Bloomington, IL (Declined)

## Personnel Changes – Ordained

### Transferred to Our District

Ross, Bernard (CI) to Trinity – Alma 3/3/19 by L. Hagan

### Transferred to Other Districts

Mehl, John (Saint Paul Lutheran High School – Concordia) to NEB 3/4/19

### Changes Within District

Hubbard, L. Alan (Emeritus) to St. John – Chillicothe 3/3/19 by K. Scharff  
Springer, Martin (Emeritus) to St. John – Beaufort 3/9/19 by K. Golden

### Retired

Smith, David (St. Paul – Des Peres) 10/1/18  
Zastrow, William (Ebenezer – Leslie) 10/1/18

### Deceased

Hilmer, Ronald (Emeritus) 3/3/19

### New Rostered Emeriti

Luley, William by Colloquy Committee 1/10/19, Emeritus Status 1/10/19

## Personnel Changes –

## Commissioned Ministers of Religion

### Graduates Installed

Ziegelbein, Samuel (S '18) to Calvary Lutheran – High School – Jefferson City 3/20/19 by M. Diener

### Transferred from Other Districts

Holt, Stacey (NEB) to Webster Gardens – Webster Groves 3/10/19 by J. Christiansen

Magness, Phillip (OK) to Candidate 2/26/19

### Changes Within District

Martens, Lisa (Candidate) to Martin Luther Academy – Kansas City 10/24/18 by C. Kapels

### Transferred to Other Districts

Herald, Elizabeth (Candidate) to KS 2/6/19

Morlock, Amie (Candidate) to KS 2/6/19  
Raddatz, Lauren (Candidate) to CI 3/5/19

## Missouri District Staff

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Missouri District

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