

The VOICE

July 2019



Missouri District

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD

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Faith Lutheran Church in Knob Noster served up 80 meals to active duty military and their families as a district-supported mission. In addition, they sent 85 meals for people serving on base. A small way to say to our men and women in uniform, "Thanks for serving!"



From the President's Desk: Making Children and Youth a Priority

Many of our congregations have seen an increased median age among members and fewer children and youth. Some congregations send youth to the LCMS National Youth Gathering, while others send groups on servant events or to a Higher Things Conference. Other congregations simply do not have enough young people involved to undertake such efforts. But

our congregations are all greatly concerned about reaching and retaining children, youth and families. While there are a myriad of ways to teach and equip children, youth and families, this is one of the top concerns identified in congregational surveys.

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In some cases, congregations are banding together with others in the circuit to be able to attend a youth gathering or to build community among youth. Some small congregations are taking an inter-generational approach to Sunday morning Bible Study/Sunday School. In other cases, youth are encouraged to attend Lutheran camps such as Heits' Point or Camp Trinity. The key is that congregations recognize the importance of intentionally reaching children, youth and families today. It may look different from one congregation to the next, but the need is common to all.

If your congregation needs assistance in youth or family ministry, the Missouri District can provide support. From our Encourage and Equip Conferences that will be held this fall and winter to family ministry coaches, the district can walk alongside your congregation as you seek to strengthen your efforts in these key

PRESIDENT'S PRAYER LIST:

- Please pray for our congregations' work among children, youth and families.
- Give thanks to God for those who volunteer as Sunday School teachers and youth leaders.
- Pray that God would defend our young people from all evil and keep them in the faith.



areas. This fall, we will begin working with Ben Freudenburg and the Concordia Center for the Family in training coaches to work with congregations. But if your congregation wants help in enhancing your youth program, contact us and we will connect you with someone who can help.

You do not need to be young and hip to help your congregation serve young people. One of the ways that this was reinforced for me at the 2019 LCMS National Youth Gathering was seeing the number of retirement age adults who were serving as adult leaders to groups because of their commitment to their congregation serving young people. While their feet were hurting and they weren't getting their normal sleep schedule, they were overjoyed in being involved in some small way in young people growing in their faith. One couple I know in particular have attended ten and nine youth gatherings respectively. They have taken vacations just to attend youth gatherings and servant events up until they have finally reached retirement. Their faithful service over the years has been blessed by God as generations of young people have known that they have caring support through the trials of high school. That couple is just one example of how people serve children, youth and families in so many ways across our district and Synod.

The first president of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Dr. C.F.W. Walther once said, "You cannot use your time to better advantage than serving well the young people of the congregation." My prayer is that conversations about how this is done regularly occur among Boards of Elders and Church Councils, in addition to Youth Boards. May God bless our collaboration and efforts to teach and train, serve and support, reach and retain children and youth in our congregations and communities.

Fraternally in Christ,



President Lee Hagan

District Begins Search Process for Church Worker and Congregational Health Position

Rev. Gene Wyssmann will retire from the Missouri District staff at the end of 2019. A search process has begun to fill his role as Assistant to the President for Church Worker and Congregational Health. Nominations (including self-nominations) are open until August 15, 2019. Nominees must be rostered members of the Synod with at least five years of parish ministry experience and willingness to travel extensively within Missouri.

Desired competencies include training in Christian reconciliation and understanding of issues related to church worker health. The position reports directly to the district president.

Please contact Michelle Christ (michelle.christ@mo.lcms.org) for further information, a nomination form and the full position description.



Healthy Servants:

Managing Expectations in the Call Process

A young pastor was new at his congregation and preparing for the service when an elder approached him. “I’ve been taking a poll,” the elder informed him. “It’s about the new guy. Word is he’s not as good as the old guy, but he’s not bad.” The elder then left the pastor, who had to lead the service with this unsettling conversation weighing on him.

In their work with congregations calling pastors, President Hagan, Rev. Bill Geis and Rev. Gene Wyssmann have seen many situations lead to people feeling dissatisfied with their pastor. Many times, it has nothing to do with the quality or dedication of the new pastor, but unrealistic expectations that have crept into the hearts and minds of the call committee members, sometimes without their even realizing it.

Missouri District Supports Congregations in the Call Process

The call process is initiated by President Hagan, with Rev. Geis and Rev. Wyssmann also supporting congregations as they take an objective look at their congregation and where they hope to take their ministries in the future. The district uses tools, including a robust survey to learn about the needs of the congregation and compare their answers to those of other committee members. This experience allows people to get on the same page about critical topics such as goals, leadership styles, priorities of different ministries, as well as the congregation’s strengths and weaknesses.

The survey also asks respondents to specify a limited number of responses, which gets people in the mindset of making choices and deciding that some aspects of pastoral care are going to be prioritized over others. Meanwhile, district staff walks alongside the call committee members, using the survey results as a springboard into dialogue, strategy, and of course, prayer and God’s Word.

The Dangers of Expecting Too Much from One Person

It often happens that unwritten expectations can be just as important as the ones that go into the written ministry description. Rev. Wyssmann says, “They want a pastor, and they want one fast, but they also have this idea in their head of what it means to be a pastor and it doesn’t always match up with reality.”

For example, congregations that focus heavily on education sometimes expect their new pastor to be good with kids of all ages. This isn’t true of educators, so why would it be true of a new pastor? However, people sometimes don’t realize they’re making these assumptions. This can take effect in all types of congregations, but it’s especially common in smaller ones, because they feel more pressure to get more out of the one position they can afford (which is understandable).

Expressing disappointment in a new pastor can manifest itself in small comments, like, “Pastor, I don’t know, I just thought you’d be more inspirational than you are,” to more extreme situations. Whether it’s expecting a new pastor to be just like the old one or thinking people can do more in a work week than is really possible, managing expectations is critical to a successful call process.

If you’re embarking on the call process and want to know more about these services, contact Michelle Christ at michelle.christ@mo.lcms.org or (314) 590-6210.

Healthy Congregations: Do You Dread Church Meetings?

A closer look at the challenges and opportunities for governance in churches

by Rev. Bill Geis



My unscientific poll of churches suggests the vast majority of us—church workers and volunteers alike—consider church meetings more obligation than joy. There are many reasons to blame, but frequently I field concerns over the need to address two issues: volunteer commitment and simplified church governance. You can read more about developing volunteers [here](#). Now, let's look at governance.

Governance is a man-made tool to serve us. Perhaps a better metaphor might be a carpenter's workbench. Governance provides an orderly way to hang your tools. These are the gifts of God in the Gospel and His people. It is the "work area" and boundaries from which churches creatively fashion expressions of the Gospel. Below are three simple steps inspired by Ephesians 4 that can help any church address governance issues without a constitutional convention.

1. Love meeting together, not meetings.

"Walk in a manner worthy of the calling...bearing with one another in love..." —Eph 4:2

Build loving relationships in governing groups. Prepare simple agendas. Always refresh one another with the Word of God. Do more than read written reports out loud—respect each other's time. Identify a limited number of tasks you can accomplish together in a timely way. Extend trust to the participants by delegating responsibilities without micromanaging. Don't leave without a timeline for your tasks. Provide an environment that sets people up for success. Avoid long discussions over problems you can't solve. Pray for one another. Let love govern!

2. Dust off your workbench and organize your tools.

"When each part is working properly, [Christ] makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. —Eph 4:16

I find that frustration with church meetings and governance often isn't a governance problem at all. It's a cluttered workbench that needs attention. When churches ask me to help them rewrite their Constitution and Bylaws, I first suggest they dust off those old documents and evaluate what they are doing. Generally, church constitutions offer more flexibility to arrange the tools on the workbench than perceived. Rather than a complete overhaul of governance that will take many months and a lot of dreaded meetings, dust off the documents. Look for the "unwritten rules" that have become burdensome in your church. Identify places where written policies can support the existing governing structures. Address and humbly confess to one another the places where temptations—such as power struggles, apathy, idols of achievement or property—have hurt the Body. Repent. Forgive. Recommit to a consistent study of God's Word. Govern with a Spirit which builds build one another up in love.

3. Propose changes that simplify

"[Let talk be] such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear." –Eph 4:29

After you tidied up your workbench, undoubtedly you will see some tools that don't fit well. When love prevails and your workbench is organized, talk about change can be a breath of fresh air and grace. Most often, structural changes that will simplify your governance can be addressed through your church Bylaws rather than the Constitution. Examine sections that create and define program boards and committees of the congregation. These may be places for you to have a congregational conversation that fits the occasion.

You don't need to dread church meetings. The Missouri District desires to support congregations and bring joy and effectiveness into your ministry. You can contact Bill Geis at bill.geis@mo.lcms.org or (314) 590-6205 for assistance with your unique ministry needs.

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Strengthening Families:

Teens and Social Media Anxiety: What You Need to Know



Teens and adults use social media very differently. Where adults tend to see social media as a place to keep in touch and share funny memes, many teenagers see it as a way to figure out how they fit in the world. The concern is that they're interacting with kids on these channels who may have poor judgment, raging insecurities or be using the channels to bully their peers.

This means that social media can be a place where all the negative parts of teenage life converge. It's normal for teenagers (and adults if we're being honest) to compare themselves to other people. However, with social media, it's easy to assume everyone else's life is more exciting, more interesting or more meaningful.

Rev. Jon Schweigert of Faith Lutheran Church in Knob Noster works with many college students. By his estimation "Seventy percent of pastors don't realize the extent of the problem [with social media]." Statistically, depression and anxiety are on the rise in American teenagers.

Teen's Perceptions Shape their Use of Social Media (and their Sense of Self)

For example, SnapChat's story feature has a way of making young people feel like they should have something interesting to say or film. On this channel, in addition to sending photos with cartoonish filters, users can string photos and videos throughout their day to fill their "story." If there's nothing exciting going on, Rev. Schweigert says kids feel like they have to make something up. Because SnapChat famously deletes everything after 24 hours, it creates an almost constant burden, a never-ending string of your internal critic challenging if you're good enough.

And yet the problem is larger than anyone one social media platform. Rather than focusing on whether something is happening on Instagram or Facebook, it's critical to understand the types of behaviors that can lead to problems for teenagers. For example, some of the local middle school kids have a "smack talk" channel, where they post memes about each other. It's pretty easy to imagine how this behavior could get out of hand.

There's also no denying social media is a fact of life for today's teenagers. Rev. Schweigert says, "The most often given—and least useful—advice is 'Just don't use social media.' But the kids know that if they don't use it at all, they will miss out on things."

Finding a Healthy Balance for Social Media and “Real Life”

Like so many other things in life, not all social media use is created equal. Social media tends to create problems when teenagers overdo it. The desire to constantly be checking their profiles can lead to other problems, including an overall sense of anxiousness.

Even when teenagers turn to social media to feel more connected, it can have the opposite effect. If you notice that the teenagers around you are becoming more withdrawn, missing out on time with friends or activities, this will make them feel even more alone. The teen can then fall into a destructive cycle, where they retreat further from their real life relationships, seeking acceptance and camaraderie on social media even more, while not finding the fulfillment they seek.

The Value and Perspectives of Caring Adults Can Help Guide Teens

As adults, we know that such a strong focus on yourself is in direct conflict with our understanding of our self in terms of being created in God’s own image, redeemed by Jesus’ death and resurrection and re-created as God’s child in baptism.

With our congregational programming and relational ministries, we can teach our children from baptism to adulthood not to turn to likes, followers and posts, for their identity, but to know they are God’s children, precious and valuable to him.

DCE Dan Kreienkamp say, “Youth ministries are effective when adults take the time to be a part of the lives of our youth, and more specifically, to affirm that your identity is in a God who loves you more than you could ever know. No amount of anxiety, likes, dislikes, mistaken posts, distorted images—nothing—can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Savior.”

DCE Kreienkamp saw many reasons for hope recently at the National Youth Gathering in Minneapolis. Approximately 22,000 LCMS youth converged for fellowship, bible study and worship. How many of them would have attended without the influence of the adults in their life?

What You Can You Do?

Start by talking to teens and truly listening. Rev. Schweigert observes, “[As adults], we often think we have the solution before we’ve truly understood the problem.” He suggests hearing them out once fully before making any suggestions. He points out, when teens talk to adults, “They’re testing the waters with the small stuff before they’re willing to share the big stuff.”

When it comes to starting the conversation, Rev. Schweigert recommends simply saying, “I want to talk to you about this issue, but I don’t know how.” This means that you’re asking the teenager for their help and being genuine. Rev. Gene Wyssmann, the Assistant to the President for Church Worker and Congregational Health suggests starting with the phrase, “Can you help me understand...” So instead of telling a student they’re not sleeping enough, you could say, “Can you please help me understand how SnapChat is affecting you? Like when you’re trying to sleep?”

When you see teenagers engrossed in their phone screens and almost constantly bathed in the gentle glow of their screens, they may actually be staring at themselves. They’re looking at their life, self-image and sometimes their self-worth through the lens of social media.

The Missouri District is working on a free guide outlining for information about this critical issue.

To sign up to receive the free resource upon publication, go to mo.lcms.org/social-media-youth/



Healthy Schools

Leading Schools, Reaching Families: 2019 Administrators' Conference

The isolation that comes with being an administrator isn't a challenge everyone knows about, but it means administrators can't easily compare ideas and experiences freely with people in similar roles. There's no sitting with a colleague at lunch or after a long day. It begs the question, who leads the leaders?

Leading a school isn't easy. There's enrollment, fundraising, recruiting and retaining teachers, curriculum and much more—all while working towards the goal of sharing Christ with children and families. Alan Freeman, Assistant to the President for Schools, says, "Studies tell us that leadership is second only to the classroom teacher in impacting student learning and growth. Not only are school leaders impactful on student learning, but they are also the key element to the sustainability of Lutheran schools. School leaders set the vision, goals, and direction of the school through strategic planning and ensure its longevity by financial planning."

"Our theology doesn't change. Christ doesn't change. But in previous times, most of our students came from our congregations and that's not necessarily the case anymore. Many of our students are unchurched and their parents enroll them for the arts, music, technology—for the programming. Once we get them in the door, then we can preach Jesus to them."

**—Diana Meers
Principal of Immanuel Lutheran School
St. Charles**

To support administrators, the Missouri District organized a two-day conference for school administrators, hosted by Campus Lutheran Church. Beverly Gruenwald, Director of St. Pauls Early Childhood Center in Des Peres, says she really appreciates the Missouri District's emphasis on supporting administrators. At events like this, "the people you meet are from all over the state, but we still will bump into them throughout the year. We really can build relationships with other directors and treasure these professional relationships."

To learn more about how the Missouri District can support educational ministries, contact Alan Freeman at alan.freeman@mo.lcms.org or (314) 590-6209.

Go to mo.lcms.org/leading-schools-reaching-families/
to read more about this important event.

District-Supported Missions:

Hope and Hunger: Hispanic Ministry Feeds Community in Kansas City

Just off of Southwest Boulevard, in the shadow of downtown Kansas City, Jesus El Buen Pastor (JEBP) Lutheran Church serves up the love Christ with weekly community dinners, bible study and prayer. Hundreds of people flock to the church each week for the comfort of a home-cooked meal, lovingly prepared by volunteers. Though everyone comes together for dinner, this ministry is folded into a larger food pantry that helps families from a 30 mile radius across both Kansas and Missouri get through the week.

One volunteer shared, "We served 88 families today and fed more than a hundred and thirty at the dinner." Over half of JEBP current members came through the door of the food pantry in the past five years.

Jesus El Buen Pastor translates into Jesus the Good Shepherd and serves primarily Spanish speaking members. With two pastors, JEBP shows how both the Gospel and Christian community remain unchanged across different languages. Rev. Eberhart started learning Spanish after retirement. Rev. Benito is an immigrant from Cuba and attended the Center for Hispanic Studies at Concordia Seminary. He was ordained and installed in 2017.

Rev. Bill Geis, Assistant to the President sees enormous potential in the work of JEBP. He says, "The Mercier building is walking distance from the state line. Kansas City is where a lot of growth is happening in the Hispanic population in Missouri. We have the opportunity as a district to grow in our love and mission for the people coming to our communities."

This year, the Missouri District supports JEBP's work through a \$12,000 grant to the Lutheran Urban Ministry Agency (LUMA) and earmarked for this ministry. The district has also provided coaching for the church and as well as covering the cost of Everyone His Witness training.

JEBP is the first congregation in the country to use this evangelism training in the Spanish language. The workshop was led in Spanish by pastor and Plus One coach, Donaldo Sontag. Over 42 lay leaders and 7 high school youth, gathered for worship, prayer, training, fellowship and good cooking.

Louisa, a member, shared how the workshop personally touched her, "I learned that we ought to be Witnesses of Christ and proclaim the word of Christ to all the world.

That World includes all people, but we start with family and friends," Another member, Rose, echoed her enthusiasm, "Pastor Sontag taught me to understand more about what the Bible means when it talks about my neighbor and also how to keep the command that Jesus Christ gave us to make disciples in all the Earth."

JEBP invited another Spanish speaking mission, Immanuel, Kansas City KS to join them in their efforts. The interaction between the two congregations was lively and their gifts affirmed and encouraged each other.

Another lay leader shared the importance of continuing in this process. "I enjoyed the conference immensely. I look forward learning more in the near future so that we grow in what it means to be Jesus' witnesses in today's Busy World." JEBP is following up the workshop continuing in the training and discussing strategies in their Bible classes. We look forward to seeing what other exciting developments will unfold in this ministry.



Engaging Communities

Plus One Helps Congregation Cook Up Food Truck Ministry

If you've ever had a bold idea, it may have been followed immediately by doubts, or at least wondering if this could really work. Rev. Jesse Kueker experienced this firsthand when he realized he could envision a barbecue-based ministry in his congregation, Trinity Lutheran Church in Clinton, MO.



Back at his installation and ordination in 2015, the congregation served barbecue by Brent Viebrock. Viebrock's barbecue had gained a bit of a following and was always served at large gatherings for the congregation. Many people had been asking Viebrock why he didn't cook for a living.

Meanwhile, the congregation had recently started Plus One, a process of the Missouri District that encourages congregations to take one new step into the community, and he thought there was a winning recipe in using the culinary skills of one member of his congregation. Now in its third year, the TLC Smokehouse food truck was born.

The truck serves Viebrock's coveted barbecue and has brought the congregation in contact with different community members. Ten percent of the proceeds go to one of three community causes, selected by the congregation at the start of the year.

Because all of the tips also go to the causes, people often

leave five dollar tips for ten dollar lunches. The supported causes supply volunteers to help run the food truck, which increases the reach of the church. Rev. Kueker recalls working alongside the Superintendent of the local school district recently.

With the food, people receive cards with the common table prayer and encouragement to go to the church of their choice, alongside a specific invitation to attend services at Trinity. Rev. Kueker says they want to talk about their reason for offering this service, but not to overload people with it.

In the past year, TLC Smokehouse became the vendor of choice for Heritage Days in Warsaw, MO, a festival celebrating pioneer times. This meant donning historic costumes and cooking the famed barbecue without any electricity. They met many more people in the community and brought in thousands of dollars for their ministry and supported causes.

Trinity Lutheran Church already has several vibrant minis-



tries. They're especially known for their maternity homes, which offer food, shelter and counseling to homeless pregnant young women. Rev. Kueker also leads bible studies there, which recently had five new moms and five babies in attendance. With four properties, this ministry has grown the past few years.

Rev. Kueker believes the Plus One process can benefit congregations like theirs, who already have many active ministries. He says, "There's always untapped potential and talents in the church." He recalls, "When I told Brent we could use barbecue to share the Gospel, his eyes lit up. How many people won't go to church? But those people will go to a food truck and get a plate of brisket, and that's a chance for us to plant a seed there. Having the encouragement of our Plus One coach, and the prayers and encouragement of the Missouri District helped decide to take this step."

Plus One helps congregations survey their membership and discover opportunities in the hearts and talents of their members. While the maternity home is a phenomenal ministry, taking on a new project with the barbecue truck is building new relationships and allowing Viebrock to serve in a whole new way. He says, "It's a matter of visiting people and finding out they're passionate about. He had the talent and the heart, but no one had encouraged him to go out and do it and that's where the church can be really effective."

The Plus One process is specifically designed to help congregations take advantage of the people ready and willing to serve in their ranks. Coaches are available for guidance, resources, encouragement and prayer, but it really is the congregations that take the lead. Rev. Kueker says, "If I could sum up

the District's efforts in one word, it would be this: encouragement. They have encouraged us, prayed for us, and spoke with us about this project, and their efforts have encouraged the saints here at Trinity to continue to meet our community in new ways."

In addition to reaching the untapped potential in a congregation and offering an encouraging coach, the Plus One process can help congregations:

- Raise up and resource volunteers
- Refine and align communications
- Identify ways to be intentional about forming personal relationships in community events
- Equip social ministries with opportunities to share the Gospel
- Connect members with tangible ways to be "inviters"

If you'd like to learn more about the Plus One process, please contact Rev. Bill Geis at bill.geis@mo.lcms.org or (314) 590-6205.

Readers can encourage others to be bold witnesses by supporting the Missouri District financially at mo.lcms.org/donate.

Mission Advancement Snapshot

The Missouri District rejoices with Faith Lutheran in Knob Noster as they prepare to partner with the chapel on Whiteman Air Force Base to help host VBS next month. Faith is a double district mission grant recipient—ministering to military personnel, as well as college students at the University of Central Missouri. Many thanks to our faithful supporters for walking with this congregation in their unique ministry setting!



Pastors Wives' Retreat

Chesterfield

Sat. Nov. 2, 2019

Blue Springs

Sat. Nov. 9, 2019

“It was great to meet other pastors’ wives
that are in the same type of situation.
They ‘get it’”
— Past attendee

Missions 10:02 Prayer

Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were
sojourners in the land of Egypt.

—Deuteronomy 10:19

One of the many joys I have in District service is listening and learning, encouraging and supporting, our many ministries to refugees and immigrants across the state. In the past week, I’ve prayed with Africans from tribes among the Kunama (Eritrea), the Kiswahili (Congo) and Oromo (Ethiopia). I have brought your support to people from Mexico and Cuba, Nepal, Syria and Egypt, China and Vietnam. Together, we are the Missouri District, loving the people God has sent to us with the Gospel in Word and deed.

Let your 10:02 a.m. each day (our Luke 10:2 call to prayer) be time to take on minute to pray for the immigrants and refugees among us. Pray for Lutheran Urban Ministries Agency in Kansas City and their congregational partners. Prayer for Christian Friends of New Americans and their St. Louis partners. Pray for Amigo de Cristo in Sedalia, Light of Christ Chinese in St. Louis and the Oromo at Christ Lutheran in Platte Woods. Pray for International Student Ministries in St. Louis and as well as other campuses across the state. Pray with love the sojourners among us and for the opportunities we have to bring Jesus, the Hope the World to new neighbors among us. And as you pray, look around for the sojourner the Lord has sent to you.

MO District Hosting Disaster Response Training Sessions

LERT certifies volunteers to FEMA standards, and makes them eligible for access to federal disaster sites. Across Missouri, these trained volunteers are ready to step in when the unthinkable happens. The district's goal is to have teams in every pocket of Missouri, so LERT volunteers can serve locally, without the need for travel or extensive lodging.

These 6 to 8 hour trainings are \$35 and include lunch and a LERT vest. These courses will cover:

1. An introduction to the LCMS Disaster Response program
2. Congregation preparedness
3. Lutheran Early Response Teams

Anyone can attend the training session but only LCMS members who are 18 years or older, however, receive certification as LCMS volunteers.

To sign up for anyone of these LERT training classes go to <https://form.jotform.com/81215292634959> to sign up. You will need to insert the four digit code number on the form corresponding to the class that you would like to attend. You will also be asked to upload a photo of yourself which will put on your badge.

9 a.m. to 3 p.m. August 24
Redeemer in Springfield (Code # 0018)

9 a.m. to 3 p.m. August 24
Trinity in Cape Girardeau (Code#0020)

Fall (dates TBD)
Heits Point - (Code# 0019)
Includes optional chain saw certification and first aid, to sign up for these, end your name, address, phone number, location of LERT training and which class you are signing up for by email to pastorschultz@att.net.



Prayer Request

Many communities dealing with flooding are still waiting for the flood waters to recede.

We will be staying in touch with congregations and church workers and sharing updates as we receive them. Please continue to pray for these families and communities. We've been able to provide material support, as well. Please consider a financial donation for people dealing with flooding across the district by going to mo.lcms.org/donate.



Partner News

When Financing Might be the Most Responsible Action to Expand Your Ministry

As a pastor, you have a lot of responsibility, including sermon preparation, funerals, marriage counseling and leadership—not to mention the financial management and security of the congregation. Although it probably isn't the highest profile part of your job, keeping a church financially healthy is no easy task. It's possible that to this end, you've avoided taking on debt, except as an absolute last resort.

However, refraining from all debt sometimes means waiting years or even decades before implementing ideas or expanding your congregation's reach. There are people in your community desperate for God's love and Christian community. Yet, most of them will not come to you. They are not going to ask why you haven't taken action on your outreach ideas. It's possible you may be in a situation where financing your new ministry space is not only financially responsible, but the best way to optimize your operations.

Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) has many options available for LCMS organizations, with an experienced staff eager to guide you through financing, to help your ministry thrive.

Here are some signs it may be time to consider financing for your ministry:

If lack of financing is the major barrier to operating or expanding your ministry.

If you have the ability to serve others and bring them the love of Christ in meaningful or tangible ways, ask yourself if you can afford to wait. If you have the capacity, people, know-how, and passion—but not the money—it might be time to learn about your lending options. "If financing that allows a ministry to move forward today brings just one new soul to Christ, then in my mind, that's interest well spent," said LCEF Vice President - Missouri District Casey Carlson.

If there is a unified and long-term vision for the project.

This is a sign that your leadership has truly thought through the project you're undertaking. A plan and a vision mean that people have considered the work from many angles and come up with best solutions to achieve it. You know who you want to reach and what will matter to them. "LCEF's ministry clarity can assist congregations and leadership in being confident in the path and purpose God as laid before a congregation and her people," said Carlson. Learn more at lcef.org/support/congregations/ministry-clarity/.

Thank you LCEF for hosting breakfast at the National Convention



If you've crunched the numbers and you can comfortably make payments.

Of course, every situation and congregation will be different. However, LCEF has recommended that debts not exceed approximately a third of annual contributions. Another rule of thumb is to aim for an average of debt between \$4,000-\$5,000 per communicate member in attendance on an average Sunday. "Keep in mind that other factors will influence what makes sense for your congregation," recommends Carlson. "The earlier you can bring LCEF alongside the project, the bigger impact they can have in providing valuable assistance along the way."

You have members willing to contribute to a campaign to reduce the scope of required financing.

If you have a congregation that's willing to put skin in the game, it's a sign people are dedicated to helping this project come to fruition. In addition to decreasing the scope of your financing, this shows you that your congregation and donors will support new ministry through volunteering, promoting and otherwise meeting its needs. "Campaigns are much more than just about the dollar, they are about expanding ministry and the future God has planned for your congregation. Considering a campaign or don't know where to start? LCEF can provide advice and guidance for your leaders" said Carlson. Learn more at <https://lcef.org/support/congregations/campaigns/>

LCEF is here to offer advice and guidance as you seek to find the best options for your ministries. Contact Casey Carlson to learn how your Missouri District ministries can benefit from this vibrant resource by emailing him at casey.carlson@mo.lcms.org or (314) 590-6207.

Calling Congregations and Personnel Changes Now Available Online!

Go to mo.lcms.org/personnel/ to see information about calling congregations and personnel changes (both ordained and commissioned ministers of religion).

Find this information under the congregations tab on our website: mo.lcms.org

