

The VOICE

June 2019



Missouri District

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD

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With the support of the Missouri District, Hodiament Identity Camp brings together children from one of the most diverse and dangerous neighborhoods in St. Louis, to learn about their identity in Christ.



From the President's Desk: Tales of Three Gatherings

Over the course of five weeks, more than 30,000 LCMS Lutherans will gather in three different places across the country. First, the Lutheran Women's Missionary League Biennial Convention kicks off on Thursday in Mobile, Alabama. Then the LCMS National Youth Gathering will take place in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Finally the LCMS Convention will be held in Tampa, Florida in late July. While they may seem to be very different gatherings, I would say that there are three chief similarities and lessons to be learned for after these events.

Here are a few details on each of the upcoming events. More than three thousand women from across the country and even across the world will assemble in Mobile "In Praise to the Lord" for worship, study, service and to conduct business. In addition to electing leaders, the LWML delegates will adopt a mission goal for the next biennium. Two year's ago, their goal exceeded \$2 million. LWML Missouri District President Sally Handrick and 25 other women from Missouri will be there in an official capacity, though many more will be there to be part of the celebration.

There will be 25,000 youth and adults in Minneapolis from across the Synod. Missouri District will have the largest group with nearly 2000 at the convention and more than 1600 attending the district event. The gathering, under the theme "Real.Present.God.," will provide opportunities to worship, grow in God's Word, hear speakers on a wide range of topics, participate in servant events and meet other Lutheran youth. There are many challenges that our young people are facing today and we are thankful for the time for them to be equipped and strengthened through God's Word for life in this changing world.

The last group to gather will be delegates to the Synod Convention in Tampa under the banner "Joy:Fully Lutheran." There will be resolutions to adopt and elections to conduct, but the convention is also an opportunity for worship and learning more about the work of our Synod and all its different agencies and institutions across the country and even around the world. While elections often lead to political machinations, what should not be lost is the importance and joy of declaring fellowship with other church bodies and setting direction and priorities for our Synod for the next three years.

While the ladies will be wearing lots of purple and the youth will be wearing t-shirts and shorts with bright colored backpacks and the delegates will be wearing Tampa convention casual, there are three great similarities between all of these events. The first is the emphasis on growing in the Word of God. 502 years since the Reformation was launched, Luther's emphasis on the Word

PRESIDENT'S PRAYER LIST:

- Please pray for the LWML Convention in Mobile, Alabama.
- Please pray for the LCMS National Youth Gathering in Minneapolis, Minnesota.
- Finally, pray for the upcoming election of Synod President and the LCMS Convention in Tampa, Florida.



of God still permeates everything that we do. Each day our groups will be gathered around the Word of God as they learn and grow together.

Secondly, each gathering will be a celebration of what Christ has done and the unity that we share. What binds together men and women, young and old(er), small town and big city, and people from diverse backgrounds is the One who died on the cross and rose again from the grave, who has made us One, in our shared confession.

Lastly, all three events have a focus on mission and service. From words to actions, each of these groups is part of a call to bear witness to Christ while there, but also in our daily lives.

The great lesson that we can learn from these three gatherings, whether we attend them or not, is that growing in the word, celebrating the unity that we share and focusing on mission and service should not be themes for conventions, but we are each week in our congregations and each day in the world. Let's be who God calls us to be. Loving, serving, confessing Lutheran Christians with a passion for God's Word, service, mission and young people.

This does not have to be just for three weeks. This is who God calls us to be and to work together to that end. May all of us be focused on these three things in our life together in the LCMS: growing in the Word, celebrating our unity and focusing on mission and service.

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 1, 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 Congregations:

Village Lutheran Church Offers Every One His Witness Evangelism Training



Last summer, Rev. Kevin Golden and then deaconess intern Laura Jostes led lay people in the Every One His Witness training at Village Lutheran Church in Ladue. Rev. Golden likes this resource because of its strong biblical and theological foundation, but also because it offered his congregation very practical applications.

Rev. Golden had heard of the training for a while, and he credits the Missouri District's promotion of this resource as one of the reasons they decided to take it on. He hopes the continued promotion of this training will lead to other congregations in the Missouri District participating in it. Another reason Rev. Golden decided to offer this training was the urging of Jostes, who is now serving the congregation as a deaconess.

Every One His Witness contains a robust introductory training, which can be taken over a series of weekly events or as a weekend intensive, and then offers specific modules based on reaching out to specific groups of people, such as Muslims, Mormons, or "de-churched" people. Rev. Golden thinks these follow-up modules also have potential for small group settings.

Rev. Golden describes this introductory training as "meat and potatoes" Christianity, which can sometimes be harder to discuss. He notes that if people are discussing more advanced theology or questions, odds are they're talking to another believer, which can be less intimidating. However, if they're talking about the basic foundations of the faith, that's probably a conversation with someone they want to witness to, which is a more challenging dynamic.

The congregation reacted very positively to the experience. Rev. Golden heard from members they felt more comfortable speaking with their adult children who have strayed from regular church attendance in particular. In addition, people reported feeling more equipped to reach out to their neighbors and their co-workers, something many had been thinking about and doing already.

Rev. Golden thinks the flexibility inherent to Every One His Witness means congregations in pretty much any circumstances will be able to succeed with it. While Rev. Golden led the training for Village Lutheran Church, the role of the in-person trainer is more of a facilitator.

With materials developed by Rev. Mark Wood, the theological foundation is already baked into the materials, which means this experience can be a lay-led training if that's what works best for the congregation. Rev. Golden also thinks circuits could come together to get large groups together for this training.

Sometimes, because they care so much, Rev. Golden has seen people feel like they need to have all the answers. He says, "You can put so much pressure on yourself when it comes to witnessing, but it's the Holy Spirit that does the conversion." This tendency is something addressed in the training.

Rev. Golden points out that once people embrace admitting they don't know everything, it can actually be something that spurs on a conversation about faith with a friend or family member. Saying something like, "I don't really know, that's a great question. Let me think about that or talk to my pastor," can extend what started out as a casual conversation.

If you're uncertain about taking on Every One His Witness, Rev. Golden has this advice: "Don't hesitate. Just make use of it."

If you're a Plus One congregation, the Missouri District is willing to cover half the costs of Every One His Witness. Contact Bill Geis to learn more at bill.geis@mo.lcms.org or (314) 590-6205.



Healthy Schools

The Missouri District has 114 educational ministries, which serve communities in cities, the countryside and everywhere in between. Schools serving rural and small town communities, often have a unique experience, but one that brings significant benefits to students and their families. Here's how our educational ministries are serving two areas: Frohna and Concordia.

Frohna

When students walk into class at United in Christ Lutheran School, the teachers often know them from church, the Frohna community, and in some cases, having taught their parents. Nestled approximately 30 minutes from both Perryville and Cape Girardeau, United in Christ serves many families of generational students. Ms. Honoree, the principal, says a feeling of being a family is one of the things we do best.

The Lutheran faith has been historically well represented in this part of Missouri, and as a result, United in Christ serves almost all families from the association of three congregations that support it, support which includes covering tuition of members' children. As a result, approximately 90 percent of their students attend a Lutheran church with their families. Ms. Honoree says this means they can take an advanced approach to teach the faith.

They have a 15-minute chapel service every day, with a bible verse and a hymn verse. All the kids are well educated not only about the words of the ten commandments, but the meaning behind them as well. She quips, "If a kid comes into my office for discipline, I can ask them 'Which commandment [are we here about?]'"

In addition to the local Lutheran heritage, many of the United in Christ students share farming and hunting. Many parents who work jobs in Perryville and Cape Girardeau also farm part-time, either on plots of land or through seed companies. This can make it hard for parents to attend classroom events or chaperone field trips. To help them out, the staff goes to great lengths to plan all activities like Grandparents' Day and big field trips as far out as possible, so parents who want to take off work can. Even with these efforts, she notes that it's often hard for parents to be as involved as they'd like to. That's why the school opens its doors at 6:30 a.m., to help some of the parents manage their commutes to work in nearby cities.

Hunting is a big part of community life, and after families nab a big buck or turkey, they often drive through the community and show it to their friends and relatives. Sometimes, a close relative might show up at school with a turkey in the truck and ask, "Can Johnny come take a look at my turkey?" And the school recognizes the value of this experience and makes it work. Sometimes, a teacher might greet students by asking, "Did you get a deer this weekend?" if she knows they were out in the woods that weekend.

With 80 students and a staff of seven full-time and five part-time people, United in Christ utilizes dual grade classrooms from first grade on (pre-K and kindergarten classrooms are separated out). While many small schools take this approach due to their size, Ms. Honoree wrote her research paper for her master's degree on mixing ages in classrooms. The research supports many benefits to this approach.



In a dual-grade classroom the older kids hear the material being taught to the younger kids and they get a review. Similarly, the younger kids get a sense of what's they'll learn later on. Ms. Honoree notes that their kids tend to do very well on standardized tests, and they do particularly well on tasks that involve critical thinking and independence, traits that are not easy to teach. Because of the nature of their classroom experience, the kids learn these skills organically.

Another advantage comes in reading groups. A lower reading group in a second grade class might overlap with the top reading group of a first grade class. With a dual grade classroom, the teacher can place students in groups more closely aligned to ability. The biggest downside is the effort and classroom management required by the teachers, though Ms. Honoree notes that the teachers at United in Christ have embraced this approach.

Concordia

In a town of approximately 3,000 people, the influx of students from everywhere in the United States and across the world make a big difference to the community. Approximately a third of the students at Saint Paul High School are international, another third are from across the country and the remaining third are local.

The Executive Director, Rev. Paul Mehl, encourages all students, even the day students, to spend at least one semester in the dormitory. The experience of navigating a shared space with other people build communication and conflict resolution skills, as well as preparing the students for college. For the international students, climate and culture are a big part of the adjustments they make living on campus. For students from Norway for example, the landscape is much flatter than the mountainous scenery they're accustomed to. Plus, it's a new lifestyle for some of these students to be somewhere people go to church not every week, but every single day.

Church work is a significant focus at Saint Paul. Of the enrolled students, approximately 25 percent of them will go onto professional church work for their career. In light of this statistic, the service opportunities present for students makes a lot of sense. The football team regularly volunteers at a local nursing home, and many students work with Orphan Grain Train, a program that helps deliver material resources to people in need. Rev. Mehl says, "If you're not interested in ministry [at this school], you're a bit of a weirdo."

At the local elementary school, St. Paul, Nathanael Poppe sees an organic connection between the community and his students. As with many other rural and small town educational ministries, he sees families go to great lengths to ensure their children and grandchildren receive a Lutheran education. This means they have a lot of highly engaged kids, who attend the congregation's youth group services. They're very good about bringing their friends from school who don't come from a religious family. As a result, many students at St. Paul attend youth events, even if their families are not members of the congregation.

"If you're not interested in ministry [at this school], you're a bit of a weirdo."

— Rev. Paul Mehl, Executive Director, Saint Paul Lutheran High School



Strengthening Families:

Missouri Pastor Publishes Free Family Ministry Resources Every Week



Rev. Steve Andrews of Saint Matthew Lutheran Church in Lee's Summit thinks we're living in challenging times, as Christians often have. He says, "You see the work of the devil in our culture to keep us busy and put so many things before us to keep Christ from being the center of the family and the center of the home." He also thinks that for the past few generations, programs like Sunday school and confirmation classes have provided many benefits, but also led to some parents taking a back seat when it comes to teaching faith at home.

That's one of the reasons he started publishing the Faith at Home Corner, a resource he updates weekly to help parents take the lead on equipping their children to know and love the Lord. Rev. Andrews emphasizes that scripture clearly points to parents as the ultimate teachers of the faith. Rev. Andrews thinks many parents feel intimidated in teaching the faith because they don't have formal training in theology or Christian education. But Rev. Andrews wants to assure parents that it's okay. "You won't have all the answers, and that's okay," he says. "You might go to your pastor and he might not know the answer. It could even be the kind of thing that we never know the answer. That's okay."

Similarly, congregations sometimes don't know where to start when it comes to equipping parents. Because churches have taken leadership in teaching kids, sometimes for several generations, they feel as confused about how to equip parents as the parents feel about teaching their children. Once, when he was speaking with some parents about leading devotionals, and one of the fathers raised his hand and asked, "What's a devotional?" Sometimes, he says, it's about starting simple and letting parents know they can start simple as well. And this means your congregation doesn't have to have a full-time person on staff who focuses on family ministry.

As a congregation, you can start with simple things, like:

- Creating an advent display kit to let kids make holiday decorations at home (include a display in the narthex of the church)
- Encouraging young families to sit in the front instead of the back (many families are hesitant to try this but are often surprised how much better it goes)
- Encouraging other people in the congregation to welcome families with small kids in church and sit with them
- Let parents know that teaching the faith doesn't have to be hours of in-depth theological study. Equip them with quick ways they can address faith in small amounts of time, depending on their day.

For many congregations, the biggest challenge is shifting the mindset from the seeing the church and the pastor as the main teachers of children to seeing the parents in that role. It's something that he thinks is going to take some time, but Rev. Andrews is optimistic that with some thought and creativity, every congregation can transform their approach.

You can sign up to receive his weekly publications of the Faith at Home Corner by emailing Rev. Andrews at andrews@gracefaithlove.org. The Missouri District has put a strong emphasis on strengthening families, something Rev. Andrews has noticed. "I've only been in the district a short while and I've appreciated seeing this emphasis," he says.

District-Supported Missions:

Missouri District Unites Campus Ministry Professionals for Training and Fellowship

Campus Ministry can be a lonely mission field, even though the job often means working with young adults during one of the most exciting times of their lives. This work also comes with some unique challenges and a much smaller population of church workers than other types of ministry. For starters, there's not a clear career path or degree program that equips people to work with college students. While greatly rewarding, this lack of a clear path also means there are not as many opportunities for professional development as other ministry tracks.

Plus, the number of colleges and universities in each state is dwarfed by the number of primary and secondary schools and congregations. This leads to a smaller pool of campus ministers people in this field can turn to for fellowship and camaraderie. While college students have great energy, they also have a transient presence and every four years there's almost total turnover. This can often lead to turnover of the church workers as well. Funding challenges often exacerbate these challenges.

Once everyone had the chance to get acquainted, they discussed their ministries more in-depth and shared their needs and challenges together. Rev. Anthony Cook, Vice-President of Global Ministries of Lutheran Hour Ministries, was the facilitator for the conference. Attendees also participated in learning sessions led by Don Everts, the content development manager in the Global Ministries division for Lutheran Hour Ministries, in which they focused on learning about the latest research and trends of campus ministry.

There was an emphasis on digital conversations with students, discussing the role of being "plugged in" constantly and the changing landscape and usage habits of college students and social media. For example, many campus ministry workers are familiar with Facebook. While many young adults have Facebook accounts, they've shifted their primary usage in recent years to platforms like Instagram and Snapchat.



On Wednesday, June 12, Rev. Bill Geis of the Missouri District and Rev. Kent Pierce of Campus Lutheran Church teamed up to unite and empower campus ministry professionals and volunteer leaders in Missouri. Rev. Pierce had approached the district about getting campus ministry people together. He'd realized that with some turn over the past few years, there were church workers in the district who'd never met. He wanted to get everyone in the same room.

Many campus ministries offer Bible study, worship and fellowship opportunities to Lutherans on campus. These campus leaders learned from each other and their facilitators how to equip these students to be effective evangelists to their peers. Rev. Pierce says, "When students come to Bible study, we try to use that time with them to equip them and help them be comfortable inviting and talking about their faith with peers and that's how we get more people to come to bible study." He also notes that when people attend their events with established friends, it's a lot easier to keep them engaged than if they come alone.

Joyce Cronin, the Campus Ministry Director at Hope Lutheran Church in Maryville, has recently returned to working her role after taking time off to care for her children full-time. The event allowed her to meet some new people and share space with people with the same passion for this work.

One of her favorite parts was seeing a new book by Don Everts, that included specific details about a more personal approach to evangelism. She says, "Instead of being so intentional about it and having a spiel, it's about analyzing the situation seeing where the person you're talking to, receptive, unreceptive, or seeking...I think the college kids are going to really feel like they can do that."

This uplifting experience is only the beginning. The Missouri District will continue to work with campus ministry professionals on capacity building, effective communications and resourcing congregations to share the love of Christ with college students across Missouri. The goals for these efforts are:

- Add capacity for our campus ministries
- Support, encourage and equip, campus ministry leaders
- Resource and release students as missionaries in their communities
- Communicate vision and opportunities for more congregations to engage student ministries

When considering the future of campus ministry, Rev. Pierce says, "I think it's going to continue to be a very relational kind of ministry that's going to require resourcing students in particular to be able to share their faith with their peers and creating inviting community spaces for people to gather together." in the Word."

It's an important goal, and one that will require a lot of support. Ms. Cronin says, "There's a lot of programs starting from zero again, so we really need support from our churches and lots of prayers. And if your student is going to college, please encourage them to seek out campus ministry. In fact, we need churches to tell us when their kids are coming, so we can connect with them."



**Find us on YouTube:
Missouri District LCMS**

Engaging Communities

Summer Camp Teaches Kids in High Crime Area about Identity in Christ

Who am I? How do I define myself? How does being created by a loving God impact my identity? The kids at Hodiamont Identity Camp will be tackling these questions, under the guidance of Cyril Loum, a vicar at St. Timothy Lutheran Church in St. Louis. At the end of the first week of Identity Camp, Vicar Loum led children of all ages in games, while the program coordinator (and his mother), Hannah Loum, led them through a conversation about the different aspects of identity.



Though not a long distance from St. Timothy by car, the community of apartments known locally as “Hodiamont” feels a world away. Home to many refugees, it’s also the location of many violent crimes, including a steady string of homicides. No parent wants their children to call such a dangerous environment home, but without the means to move, they are left making the best of an unimaginable situation.

The team decided to start this camp, because with school out for the summer, many of the children needed more structure and a safe place to go. School provides much

needed security and supervision, something that can be a challenge for parents and the community during the long summer months. Identity Camp offers a sanctuary for families surrounded by the dangers of modern poverty.

Plus One Grant Helps St. Timothy Shine a Light in a Dark Place

Identity Camp runs three times a week, Wednesday and Fridays from 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and Sunday evenings 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. Festivities started in mid-June and will run through the middle of August. Keeping approximately 50 kids hydrated, fed, entertained and ministered to for the whole summer is quite the undertaking.

The Missouri District provided a Plus One grant in order to cover the costs of art supplies, food, items like bubbles for outdoor games, tables, wrist bands and leadership team building and celebration. Congregations participating in Plus One are eligible to apply for grants to assist them in their chosen project.



A Focus on Identity to Help Children Navigate a Complex World

Mrs. Loum focused on the theme of identity, because many of the children in the apartment complex where the camp is held are new to America. Embracing our identity as a follower of Christ can sometimes feel at odd with other parts of identity that seem “cool,” but do not ultimately reflect their true identity in God. This also helps the camp’s focus on Christ-centered relationships.

As an incredibly diverse spot in town, the apartments along Hodiamont hosts many different ethnicities, which can be both a challenge and an opportunity for the community. The programming of Identity Camp includes Gospel messages, lessons, discussions and the chance for kids to tell each other about their culture.

A Safe Haven for Kids of All Ages

Throughout the program, older children were given the opportunity to help lead games and make sure the younger children were having fun and participating. The dynamic between the children reflects some of the larger goals of Identity Camp:

- Provide a safe and healthy space for children and teens of all backgrounds to get to learn about their identity that is found in Jesus Christ.
- Teach and encourage children to develop Christ-centered relationships with each other.
- Encourage leadership, responsibility, and healthy communication skills.



A Grateful Community Embraces and Supports Identity Camp

At first, the parents were open to the camp, but as time went on, Vicar Loum noticed a shift in how they were thinking about it. Instead of place to send their children, the parents started to see Identity Camp as a community resource, one they felt compelled to nurture and take ownership in, so all the children in the neighborhood could take part. Many parents have started to become involved and volunteer to help the camp run smoothly. As word of Identity Camp has spread, other organizations and churches have asked to become involved as well.

The kids look forward to Identity Camp all year long. Vicar Loum says, “The kids’ response has been with huge excitement and anticipation of having something to do during the summer. In fact, even during Sunday school they want to know about our summer program. Also, the summer program has allowed us to reach out to some children that do not attend our Sunday school.”



The Missouri District is excited to award a mission grant to Hodiamont ministry for this very special summer program. Would you like to be a partner in ministry through prayer and financial gifts?

Go to mo.lcms.org/donate/ or call Leah at (314) 590-6211. God’s blessings!



Ascension Lutheran Church Sends Youth Group to Assist in Tornado Aftermath

Chris and Kathy Thies are youth volunteers at Ascension Lutheran Church in St. Louis. With friends who live in the Jefferson City area and experience on the ground cleaning up after tornadoes, they saw an opportunity to give the teenagers a service project. After the recent tornado, they contacted Trinity Lutheran Church in Jefferson City to see how they might be able to help.

When the email request for volunteers first went out, the response was fast and Thies could tell the kids were excited. A group of 18 people, including adults, came together to assist people in the tornado's aftermath. They settled on the date of June 5, and asked the congregation to supply them with things like tarps, gloves, rakes and other supplies. Judging by the pile of items they took with them to Jefferson City, the congregation was as enthusiastic as the youth group.

In 2014, the Thieses traveled to Nebraska, after two tornadoes wreaked havoc on a town. They were not necessarily surprised by the extent of the damage in Jefferson City, but many of the youth were. Chris says, "They were astonished to see how much devastation was packed into a narrow tight corridor, right through the countryside and right through the town."

The group worked on three different projects. The first involved a woman named Hilde, who had constantly turned away assistance. An independent personality, she had often sent volunteers to her neighbors and other community members, certain they needed help more than she did. By the time the Ascension youth group came, she was ready to accept help. The tornado had lifted the shed off the ground, but left her belongings—right down to the magazines. The teens helped her clean and sort her belongings, which included cherished family heirlooms.

After a generous lunch back at Trinity, they went to the home of Dr. Jean King and her daughter, Jocelyn. Dr. King is the widow of Dr. Robert King, a former Synod Vice-President. The yard had been damaged extensively and still had significant amounts of debris that needed to be cleaned up, including pieces of a fence that had been splintered.

Finally, the group went to a local park. The tornado had pretty much left the park alone. Unfortunately, the city's parks department had been forced to do the same, as all their time and energy had been on assisting people in the aftermath of the storm. They had been planning to do landscape work and tree planting, but the supplies had been sitting on the sidewalk. The Ascension group was able to pick up where the city employees left off.

The ride home had the kind of positive atmosphere that only comes after a long day of satisfying work. Chris says, "We met some awesome people and really felt we'd been able to help in a few situations that had been overlooked, or in which the individual withheld help from themselves. They really saw God's hand in how the community came together."

The Missouri District has been working closely with our circuit visitors to coordinate with congregations impacted by both tornadoes and floods, to quickly connect people in need with resources and assistance most relevant to their situation. Whether the need is tools, clothes or help from a LERT team, many of our congregations have members and neighbors facing the hardest time of their lives.

To contribute to helping people in the aftermath of disasters in the Missouri District, go to mo.lcms.org/donate/ or contact Leah Sieveking at leah.sieveking@mo.lcms.org or (314) 590-6211.

Mission Advancement Snapshot

Circuit visitors throughout the Missouri District are assessing the needs of people and communities during this flooding season. We've been able to respond with the love of Christ and financial assistance from Mound City in the northwest all the way to St. Louis and Orchard Farm in the east. If you'd like to be a part of this response with a financial gift, please go online at mo.lcms.org/donate/ or call (314) 590-6200 to make a gift today.



On June 6, 2019 President Hagan, Leah Sieveking and Sharon Gutowski took a tour of Orchard Farm's flooded area.

Don't miss the special
work anniversary
edition of the Voice!

*Congratulations to everyone
celebrating a milestone
work anniversary.*

Go to mo.lcms.org/anniversaries



Missions10:02 Prayer: Pray for the Team

"Thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere."
—2 Corinthians 2:14

St. Louis' Blues captured fans who never cared about hockey. Long before last week's celebrations, there was a growing procession of "believers" parading from "worst to first."

Do you pray for your team? Have you prayed for a child athlete or favorite team? Come out of hiding and pray for "The Team!" We follow Jesus, rising from "worst to first" in triumphal procession. We are His Church engaging our communities and courting new followers. Many ignored Jesus and His Church, but when they see our Champion in you, the Spirit whisks them into the parade.

Pray for your team! Jesus, lead us all to spread the knowledge of You... everywhere!

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.



Missouri District Publishes Theological Essays for Pastors

Read 5 different essays from district leaders:
Go to mo.lcms.org/essays/



Partner News

Laborers For Christ Help Ministries by Working to Improve their Space

The sight of RVs camped together might bring to mind fishing, camping or road trips. However, for Laborers For Christ, it's not the call of the wild that brings the campers, but the desire to give back to LCMS entities through their work on construction projects. While there, the workers become embedded in the community, treating the congregation as their own temporary church. The workers of Laborers For Christ drive their RVs to work sites and contribute directly to active ministries by building or improving the spaces they operate in. They attend worship and Bible study, often flying back for the building dedication after the work is complete.

The ministry of Laborers For Christ combines service and expertise, which it then offers to LCMS organizations ready to grow or improve their buildings. They're often able to offer more competitive rates than a typical general contractor or building company.

Jeff Herndon, Director of Laborers For Christ often can help save money from the moment they start with renderings. Herndon says, "It's hard to have a capital campaign without images of what [the building] could be."

However, not every congregation knows the best architects or firms to hire, which can mean paying too much at the start at the project. Most churches don't know how much renderings should cost, and having an experienced can help guide them.

In addition, the Laborers For Christ team is able to offer full project management, from start to finish, similar to a general contractor. With a project manager and a team of skilled workers motivated by the Gospel and desire to serve, Laborers For Christ can typically cut building costs by 10 to 30 percent.

The Architectural Advisory Committee of the Lutheran Church Extension Fund will often come at no cost (or charging only for travel) to visit the property. For a small fee, there can also be a site and facility analysis. For example, a school wanting to add classrooms may find they can remove walls to better use their space, rather than construct a whole new space. A committee member can also advise on the ramifications of ADA compliance and other code issues to help inform the plan. Knowing these variables at the start of the project means a better plan, smoother execution and avoiding surprises.

By the time the RVs roll in, much of the work has already been done. The project manager usually oversees any excavating, plumbing work or pouring of concrete. Laborers For Christ have worked on many projects in the Missouri District.

Last fall, we wrote about a set of apartments being rehabbed by Lutheran Development Group (with help from Laborers For Christ), to provide quality affordable housing to people in the community. Chris Shearman, the Executive Director of Lutheran Development Group, expects to be able to lease the apartments this fall. With windows and dry wall now being installed, the potential and future of these buildings is starting to be visible from the street. This is no small feat, because as sometimes happens in construction, they found unanticipated problems once they started work on these buildings. Shearman notes the community response to their work has been quite positive, with significant quality of life improvement beyond quality housing.

Laborers For Christ has made a large impact on the apartments, churches and schools across the Missouri District, giving people appropriate and welcoming spaces in which to conduct their ministries.

They're also looking for more volunteers. With on-the-job training, this is a phenomenal opportunity to serve the many people working in LCMS ministries. To learn more about this ministry, contact Casey Carlson at casey.carlson@mo.lcms.org or (314) 590-6207.



St. Johns Lutheran Church Befriends Family of Nepalese Refugees and Grows their Church Family

This year, Rev. Michael Tanney of St. Johns Lutheran Church in St. Louis led Pentecost worship services in the midst of two baptisms and twenty-seven confirmations. Every individual confirmed and baptized came from a close-knit Nepalese Christian community that was worshipping nearby. Many people in this group were already Christian, having become Presbyterian, Pentecostal, Baptist or another denomination back in Nepal. However, they were worshipping together and needed a space.

They approached Rev. Tanney, who connected them with Eagle College Prep. The school and the congregation have a partnership for Christ-centered community outreach.

Some of the parents started sending their kids to Compass, a before and after school program. As the relationship grew, some of the parents wanted to know more about the LCMS and what Rev. Tanney's church stood for. So, he taught the catechism to the adults, with the help of translators.

In February of 2018, he confirmed two pastors of the group, in what they've coined their "pre-Seminary training."

They were also attending events and ESL courses hosted by St. Johns. Eventually many of them became members of St. Johns, at which point they moved their worship from the school to the church. In addition to weekly worship, the group would meet for fellowship and meals Saturday evenings, convening in a very crowded living room. Rev. Tanney would often give a message, which amounted to teaching the catechism to the larger group.

The elders of St. Johns now reflect a diversity that is far greater than the congregation at large, something Rev. Tanney sees as quite a positive mix of perspectives. He is working on assisting some of the new members of the church to enroll in the Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (EIIT) at Concordia Seminary St. Louis. These programs focus on theologically sound ministry to specific ethnic communities and an alternative to the M.Div. degree that prepares men for ordination in the LCMS.



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).