

The VOICE

January 2020



Missouri District

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD

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"This is what makes Lutheran schools different; we are focused on making an eternal difference in the lives of our students and their families by teaching them who they are as children of God." - Pres. Hagan

**National Lutheran Schools Week
Across the District!**



From the President's Desk:

Why Lutheran Schools?



"What do we want students to look like when they graduate?" was the question that we discussed. Leaders of a Lutheran school were wrestling with steps to strengthen the school focused on the growth of the students in all aspects of life (physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual). It was an important conversation for me to always bear in mind: why Lutherans do the things that we do and why Lutheran schools are important for both our own children, but also for children from our communities. While there are excellent public schools and other private schools, what follows below are fundamentals that make Lutheran schools so important and different.

Christian Worldview

From early childhood centers through Lutheran high schools, our schools teach a Christian worldview. Our confession that God is the maker of heaven and earth shapes everything- from how we view the earth and all its resources to how we value every human life. Where so many schools are being influenced by external movements, our schools teach children that their identity is rooted in the fact that they are created in God's image and ones for whom Jesus Christ died and rose again. We are also able to teach God's design for marriage and how it is a reflection of His love for His Church. Lastly, we are able to teach children the beauty of God's creation and the wonder that we have as we explore and discover the complexity of the heavens and the earth that were formed not by accident, but His great design. This Christian worldview shapes how our graduates view science and discovery, dating and relationships, and their own identity as children of God.

Integration of the Faith

What makes the curricula of Lutheran schools different is not simply the addition of a religion class into the daily schedule. Rather, the Christian faith is integrated into every part of the school day. From the lunchroom to the playground, from the music room to the gymnasium- our schools teach, model, and "practice" the faith. The difference is also seen in the history lesson where the teacher unpacks with students the response of Christians to the Third Reich or slavery. The literature teacher helps the students to identify Biblical themes in the writings of everyone from C.S. Lewis to Mark Twain. The arts will help students to use their gifts in thanks and praise to God. Our school hallways and classrooms are designed and decorated to make clear what is distinct about our schools. The focus on everything that we do in our schools is to point children, parents, and families to Christ. That focus is lived on through school clubs, concerts, sporting events and every interaction between faculty and families.

The Centrality of the Word

The students in our Lutheran schools gather for worship at least once a week in a “chapel” service. But worship is every day in our Lutheran schools. Morning devotions, meal-time prayers, and end-of-the-day prayers teach children a rhythm of life as children of God. We are shaped by the Word of God and approach all things prayerfully. Students learn the Scriptural invitation to call upon God in every time of trouble as they pray for particular needs among their families. Through worship and the study of God’s Word and Luther’s Small Catechism, students learn of the blessings that God gives through Holy Baptism and Holy Communion and how these precious gifts of God are sources of strength throughout their lives. Teachers also use the tragedies of life as opportunities to teach what God’s Word says not only about suffering, but also His faithful promises and the comforting message of the Gospel: the good news of salvation in Jesus. The involvement of pastors in our Lutheran schools helps children to know that we do not shy away from hard questions but stand ready to give an answer for the hope that we have. Students also learn Bible verses, the Catechism, and hymns of the faith as the Word of God dwells richly in them. The Word of God is what sets our schools apart and that distinction is part of our every day and every class.

Reconciliation

We live during a time where conflicts are lived out on social media and motivated by power rather than guided by the Word of God and seeking reconciliation. But one of the things that makes our schools different is that we are taught that God has reconciled us into Himself through Christ and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation. We have a way to deal with conflict and that is to take it to the cross. This means that there are times where imperfect teachers (yes, all of our teachers are imperfect) ask the students for forgiveness for raising their voices. It also means that imperfect students (yes, all of our students are imperfect) are taught how to address conflict according to the Scriptures. It also means that principals regularly teach imperfect parents (yes, all of our parents are imperfect) that when they have concerns with a teacher that they go to them first and seek reconciliation. While our schools have much on display for which we can rejoice, we know that sin is also on display too as students and teachers are growing together under the grace of God. That means that we can teach children life lessons about how to approach conflict as Christians rather than the destructive approaches of the world.

Vocation

While not every student would necessarily know the phrase “the doctrine of vocation,” they all are taught its meaning. From the earliest ages, students learn what is it to be called and to serve as a child of God, a member of a family, a student, a worker, a church member, and a citizen. This teaching of the calling as servant of God and one another shapes our understanding of family and the state. Students learn why voting is important and their calling as a citizen. They are taught the differences of God’s design of the roles of parents and children. No matter what direction in life the students are led, they have been taught that they are called by God into each of those unique roles of service. This gives purpose to the calling of husband or wife, accountant or actor, elected official or concerned citizen, and pastors or hearers. Most of all, each graduate has been taught that he or she is a child of God, created in God’s image and one for whom Christ Jesus died and they are now sent to serve God and the world that He created.

These are some of the foundational principles behind Lutheran schools. Having been connected to Lutheran schools in some way or another since first grade, I can assure you that our schools have helped shape young people who have entered a wide variety of fields of service with a Christian worldview, a zeal for God's Word, and a desire to serve their neighbor, the church, and the world.

Neither Lutheran schools, nor Lutheran school teachers are perfect. There may have been times where some Lutheran schools have struggled in particular areas. But like each of us, God's grace has covered over our weaknesses, our imperfections and our sins. This is what makes Lutheran schools different; we are focused on making an eternal difference in the lives of our students and their families by teaching them who they are as children of God. I hope and pray that you all will support our Lutheran schools with your prayers. May God continue to bless our schools so that Christ is at the center of everything!

Fraternally in Christ,



President Lee Hagan

PRESIDENT'S PRAYER LIST:

Please pray for our Lutheran schools to be Christ-centered schools of excellence.

Please pray that God would lead parents within our Lutheran churches, and also our communities, to value Lutheran education and make every effort to provide it to their children.

Join me in giving thanks to God for all of the faithful Lutheran school teachers, and also pray that God would lead more young people into lives of service as Lutheran school teachers.

Please pray that God would bless the relationships of churches and schools, pastors and principals, that they would be focused on the same mission in our Lutheran schools.





CONFERENCE

EQUIP | ENCOURAGE | CONNECT



Rev. Nathan Ruback & Missouri District's Leah Sieveking

On Saturday, Jan 25 over 60 lay persons, church leaders, and pastors gathered at St. John's Lutheran Church in Arnold to attend the Missouri District's E2 Conference. E2 Conferences presents new ministry ideas, provides congregational resources, helps troubleshoot and support common ministry challenges, and connects attendees to others serving in their community.

John and Carla Hagan from Timothy Lutheran in St. Louis attended the Arnold Conference. They sat in on sessions about Youth Ministry, Stewardship, Elder Training, and the Plus One Initiative. "The great thing about Plus One," says John, "is that you don't have to do something all new. You can build off of other things already started or even team with groups outside of the church, while still meeting the needs of the church." They say people coming together to share ministry ideas is one of the best aspects of the conference. Carla states, "I appreciate the ability for people to come together on a cold, blustery morning to do what the Lord has called us to do."

"WE ALL NEED HELP, AND THE DISTRICT GIVES US TOOLS TO DO THAT THROUGH THESE CONFERENCES" – JOHN HAGAN

Gathering together is one of the biggest advantages of attending an E2 Conference. Scott Davis of Village Lutheran in Ladue agrees: "The E2 conference is a terrific way to meet and exchange ideas and encouragement with other LCMS members in your area. It is so easy to strike up conversations, share insights... The highlight for me was an ad hoc conversation with four other men from four different congregations in the men's room after the conference ended. We must have spent 10 minutes talking about what we had heard that day."



St. John's Arnold

The conference concluded with an announcement about the Missouri District's new State-wide servant event this September. "We

really loved the servant event,"

John and Carla Hagan

commented, "as our group left, we were already planning ways that we can include our neighbors."



DCE Larry Yockum with Tell the Next Generation

"Bring a group," encourages John Hagan, "We must have had 8 or 10 people from Timothy at E2 and we went out to lunch after the conference; you don't need your pastor present to be able to attend...I definitely encourage people to get together to chat and plan." Scott Davis notes, "It's clear that everyone at the conference has a strong desire to share God's love and grace with those around us. It's not a competition, it's a shared mission."

There is still opportunity to attend an E2 Conference:

**"I RECOMMEND THIS
CONFERENCE TO ANYONE
WHO CARES ABOUT THEIR
COMMUNITY AND ITS NEED
FOR THE GOSPEL."**

– SCOTT DAVIS



Rev. David Lewis and a group from St. Trinity



Feb 29, 2020

8:30 a.m.

Jackson, MO

Saxony Lutheran High School
2004 Saxony Dr.
Jackson, MO 63755



Feb 15, 2020

8:30 a.m.

Jefferson City, MO

Calvary High School
2525 State Hwy B
Jefferson City, MO 65101



Mar 7, 2020

8:30 a.m.

Springfield, MO

Faith Lutheran Church
1517 E Valley Water Mill Rd.
Springfield, MO 65803

Campus Ministry Spotlight: Lindenwood University

The Missouri District helps to support many campus ministries across our state. One of these is in St. Charles, just west of St. Louis at Lindenwood University. Vicar Ian Thormodson serves at Immanuel Lutheran Church in St. Charles. Part of his duties include serving as the leader for the Lindenwood Lutheran Student Union. He shared some of the challenges and the benefits that student ministry can bring.

One major hurdle to overcome for the Lindenwood LSU was student turnover. When Vicar Thormodson started in August, most of the main participants of the group graduated the previous May. By fall semester, he had zero students as members at LSU. "Really I just did everything I could think of," Thormodson reflects concerning reaching students. "I attended Lindenwood's organizational fair at the beginning of the school year, which is how I first met some of the students that have become regulars. I had a list of names from the Vicar who served in my place last year. I even contacted churches around the greater St. Charles area to ask pastors and DCEs if they knew of any students attending the campus. Thanks to these efforts and God's grace, the LSU group now has a strong following of 10 regular students.

Like all ministries, finding basic, sustaining resources are essential. "We're a smaller campus group. According to Lindenwood's guidelines, clubs need to be a certain size and adhere to some pretty rigorous standards in order to gain access to university organizational funding and easy room reservation. Thankfully, Immanuel has been a great support for the LSU students. The church is very close to campus, and there are several alumni that attend. The church provides prayer and support, they sponsor the rent so that we can have a place to gather close to campus, we have a comfort dog come from Immanuel once a month, and the Women's group provides meals for our student Bible Study every week. They are a great support!"

Vicar Thormodson champions the importance of having a Lutheran presence on campus for our young adults' faith. "In college all sorts of thoughts, ideas, and opinions are fighting. It's very important to have strong Christian opinions to navigate those waters. It's really when they think 'who is God calling me to be? And what is God calling me to do?'. Campus ministries helps point students to Christ in the midst of all sorts of challenges and sinful temptations."



Mission Grants

As far as mission fields go, it doesn't get any more interesting or exciting than the state of Missouri. Look at a map and you'll see it all—rural communities, booming metro areas, college towns, and military bases. The sheer size of our state and the variety of communities means we're presented with countless opportunities for sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Last fiscal year alone, the Missouri District budgeted almost \$800,000 for statewide mission work. All of this was made possible due to our donors—individuals and congregations that continue to pray and make generous gifts. We're blessed to have you as partners in this work. Thank you!

Curious as to what types of ministries receive district mission grants? Here's a quick overview!

Campus Ministry

In addition to financially supporting seven campus ministries sites, the Missouri District is pleased to provide leadership and support for all congregations involved in this type of ministry through the Campus Ministry Network.

Multiethnic Ministries

On any given weekend, LCMS worship is held in more than 10 languages throughout our state. Ethiopians in Platte Woods, Chinese in Olivette, or Hispanics in Sedalia...God has brought the nations right to us.

Church Planting

We're currently 291 congregations strong...with an additional five church plants conducting worship in new locations.

Rural & Small Town Ministry

The partnerships formed among rural congregations and the sharing of resources leads to ministry that is efficient and effective.

Plus One Initiative

The district's outreach initiative allows for congregations to get creative while reaching out to their communities...and even provides small grants to help with these new ideas!

Military Ministry

Missouri is home to two military bases—Whiteman Air Force Base and Fort Leonard Wood. Nicely positioned next to each base is an LCMS congregation ministering to service personnel.

Urban Ministry

Congregations and ministries in these settings provide much-needed stability in changing neighborhoods.

The district's outreach initiative allows for congregations to get creative while reaching out to their communities...and even provides small grants to help with these new ideas!

If you'd like to see the full list of current district mission grant recipients, or learn more about the Missouri District in general, check out the 2019 Annual Report available online at mo.lcms.org.

If you would like to apply for a Mission Grant for your ministries go online for the grant application. The application process will be open from January 26 to March 8th for projects beginning July 2020.

Mound City

Your Ministry Dollars at Work



Rev. Emmonn Ferguson

The flooding may have first started in March 2019, but according to Pastor Eamonn Ferguson of Holy Trinity Lutheran in Mound City, the community is “starting to feel reality now.” Water levels in the area dropped below flood stage in December, allowing displaced residents to finally return to their homes and assess the damage. For some, the destruction to their property was significant.

Thank you to the many congregations and donors throughout the Missouri District who have faithfully sent donations to aid in this recovery effort. For months, you’ve prayed and been generous with your resources. The Missouri District is pleased to share that \$10,000 has now been given to Holy Trinity and the Mound City community to replace furnaces

in up to five homes and help defray costs associated with other home repairs for a number of other area families.

Two-thirds of those helped by Holy Trinity are not affiliated with the congregation, making this an excellent opportunity to share Christ’s love with those who may have not already heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Pastor Ferguson notes how his congregation has been growing, despite the hardships the community has endured. He’s performed four or five baptisms recently—including one adult. To God be the Glory!

Area levees are still yet to be repaired, and some farmland is now unusable due to large deposits of sand. Many questions about the future remain. That said, Pastor Ferguson recognizes the blessings of today. “I’m content with the moment we’re in and the work being done.”

To the faithful donors of the Missouri District, our sincerest thanks for your part in this effort. We continue to thank God for the many ways He is using you in His Kingdom.



Some of the Damage at Mound City

Bethlehem's Blessings

Located in the northeast corner of St. Louis lies Bethlehem Lutheran Church. Bethlehem is one of seven urban ministries supported by the Missouri District. Even though weekly attendance is close to 150, Bethlehem still struggles with basic financial needs. This is because, despite having a faithful congregation eager to hear God's Word, Bethlehem is located in a part of St. Louis that is struggling economically. Only 1 out of every 6 ministry dollars comes from Bethlehem's offering plate.



Recently Rev. John Schmidtke, Senior Pastor at Bethlehem, shared how the congregation was challenged by the cost of necessary repairs such as replacing lightbulbs in their facility and fixing the church van after it was broken into. (A van which 200 children and youth across three campuses have come to rely on for support and service each week.) So how does a church that is so committed to congregational health and neighborhood ministry afford even the most basic of needs while still continuing to grow?

Thank God for providing generous partners in ministry! The Missouri District is pleased to work with donors throughout the state to support churches like Bethlehem. Pictured here is Lutheran Church of the Resurrection in Sunset Hills, MO. Resurrection worked with an anonymous donor who wanted to give to Bethlehem and asked if Resurrection



Rev. Schmidtke, Rev. Bolling, and Rev. Gruenwald

was able to match their gift. Resurrection not only matched the donor's check, but the Lutheran Foundation also matched the original amount, surprising Bethlehem with more than \$75,000 in support. What a blessing!

Would you like to be a part in helping ministries grow in changing times and neighborhoods? Simply go to the Missouri District website at <https://mo.lcms.org/donate/> or call 314-590-6200 for more information.

How Strong Are You?

Strong muscles would be critical if you had plans to challenge Rev. Guntars Baikovas, a pastor from the Lutheran Church in Australia who is also a super heavyweight arm-wrestling champion. Rev. Baikovas' talent and strength in arm-wrestling allows him to interact with other heavyweight competitors, connecting those with strong physical strength to the might of Jesus. When competing, Rev. Baikovas uses all of his strength to win an arm-wrestling match, focused on overpowering his competitor. While most cannot claim to have arms as strong as a heavyweight champion, we can all relate to using any means necessary to defend our own authority, even if our actions are contrary to God's Word. How often are we guilty of using any means and strength to exert power over another?

Perhaps the strength of your voice rises loudly, overpowering others. Or perhaps silence is a tool that is used to withhold information. Or how often do we simply wait, passive, failing to act out of fear of consequences?

There is a psychological reason for feeling this way. These measures are taken because we are trying to manage under duress the potential or real loss of something valuable. We are defensive of losing our authority. Even though we value the relationships as brothers and sisters in Christ, we often we succumb to our own feelings and our own defenses. However, acting in such a way doesn't merely damage relational health with others, but it raises our wants and needs above our neighbor, failing to serve as Christ has calls us.

So how do we keep our own defensiveness, and often power-hungry, selves in check so that we can serve our neighbor well? We can't. But God can and does. Through Jesus we have been delivered grace which covers our sins. We regularly fail to represent Jesus as we should, but in baptism we have been delivered eternal strength. Strength to confess; strength to put our neighbors before our own selves; and strength through His grace to support our church leaders and pastors.

How strong are you? You are a baptized Child of Christ. Now, those are some muscles!

Peace in Christ,
Marty

Rev. Marty Hasz was installed this month as the Assistant to the President: Church Worker and Congregational Health

Plus One – One New Step

Pastor Cory Stallings was praying over the neighborhoods in his community, asking God for guidance. He was looking for a way to make intentional connections with unchurched neighbors -- to truly get to know them and invite them to get to know Jesus.

Pastor Stallings is part of a mission effort of the Exchange Community that serves southeastern Missouri. He began building new relationships in their missional communities. As they grew, they began meeting with area families at the local splash pad and enjoying cookouts.



Pastor Stallings applied for a Plus One grant to help offset food costs for establishing weekly summer gatherings as a new step in their community. Planning came together when a neighbor volunteered their backyard. Flyers were created and distributed in the neighborhood, with an invitation to share a meal. They were held weekly for 15 weeks. Working with their coach, DCE Leah Kortmeyer (Trinity Lutheran, Cape Girardeau), they used \$100 of their Plus One grant funds to purchase meat, and volunteers supplied the rest.

Over time, the personal connections developed and soon fall had arrived. Summer BBQs turned into bonfires and hotdog roasts. One single gentleman they connected with now attends church every Sunday. "If people didn't show up who had previously attended, we'd bring them leftovers and invite them out again."

Pastor Stallings was able to engage with families on a personal and spiritual level. "We have one family and we've formed a deep relationship with them. They come to events and we talk about Jesus. We're building trust."



Pastor Stallings encourages other congregations to apply for a Plus One grant – "With Plus One and the Missouri District's help, we're able to do what we're called by God to do...to connect with new unchurched people. Without Plus One, we would have tried to do this with very limited resources, and it likely would not have went as well. The people that we reached are so excited about this... They enjoy it so much that many are asking when the next one is and what they can bring."

"Plus One takes away the excuse that you don't have the funds," Pastor Stallings continued, "so now we can bring God's light into the world. People who feel disenfranchised and don't come to church, who feel that they aren't 'good enough' – connecting one-on-one washes those fears away. There's something good to believe in."

Mid-Year Administrators Conference

The Missouri District Offers many professional conferences throughout the year. January 17 brought our Mid-Year Administrators Conference for our professionals working in schools. However, it was a conference of many unexpected events as a severe winter weather storm greatly impacted much of Missouri immediately before its start. With over 60 registered administrators expected to attend, 10 brave souls ended up venturing out to the conference physically. With some help from technology, flexible presenters, and Zoom video



Keynote Jon Dize

conferencing, the number of "attendees" tripled! Topics included Gradelink Presentation by Steve Lockwood, an Early Childhood Director's Roundtable led by Bev Gruenwald, and Marketing and Fundraising "Must-Dos" by keynote Jon Dize.

School Administrators mark your calendar for another conference coming July 2020.

Rev. Marty Hasz Installation

The Missouri District Office is pleased to announce that Rev. Marty Hasz was installed on January 9th as Assistant to the President: Church Worker & Congregational Health. Rev. Hasz brings with him years of counseling and reconciliation management.



Rev. Hasz had served as senior pastor at Eisleben Lutheran Church in Scott City since 2012.

Rev. Hasz also served as a DCE in Indiana for 15 years.

Serving as Assistant to the President: Church Worker & Congregational Health means that Rev. Hasz travels all across Missouri helping congregations and church workers. So if you see him around your church, be sure to say "hi"!



The Missouri District's first ever state-wide servant event!

"In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."
Matthew 5:16

Come together with other brothers and sisters in Christ in service!
Our beautiful state of Missouri has lots of amazing opportunities to SHINE
God's light to our neighbors, congregations, and communities.

Whether you have a group of 2 or over 200, you can participate!
Have your event anytime between September 18-27, 2020.
Be a part of a district-wide movement.



Find an Opportunity

Pick somewhere very close to you or travel a bit.



Pick a Time to Serve

You pick a date between September 18-27, 2020.



Register with the District

Registration opens March 1 online at mo.lcms.org.



Get Amazing T-Shirts

T-shirts are for free for the group while supplies last.



SHINE Your Light!

Youth News

Junior High Retreat- Peace Rules March 27-29 Registration Now Open!

We have a NEW online registration system. We can now accept credit cards! Simply visit

https://mo.lcms.org/event/spring-junior-high-retreat/?event_date=2020-03-27

Here you can find the link for registration as well as information on our presenters, band, Bible Study topics, "what to bring" and "what to expect" lists, and more.

The Missouri District LCMS
LUTHERAN JUNIOR HIGH RETREAT
Camp Windermere, Lake of the Ozarks

SARAH SALZBERG
Orange, California

BREAD OF STONE
Sioux City, Iowa

Peace RULES
COLOSSIANS 3:15

LUTHER'S SMALL CATECHISM
TABLE OF DUTIES
CHRISTIAN VOCATION

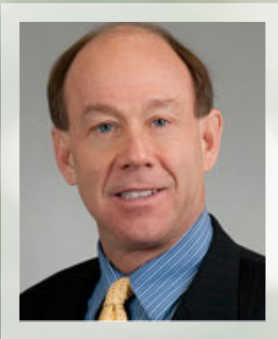
March 27-29, 2020
Learn more at mo.lcms.org/youth-ministry/

Don't forget nominations are open for serving as leaders on Lutheran Youth Fellowship. Candidates for LYF are currently in their freshman year of high school. LYF youth help host Junior High Retreats, receive Peer Ministry Training, and assist at Senior High District and National Gatherings. Nomination forms are due April 1, 2020. Forms and more information are found online at: <https://mo.lcms.org/lutheran-youth-fellowship/>

Mission Summit 2020

Save the Date!

Featuring Plenary Speaker, Rev. Dr. Reed Lessing



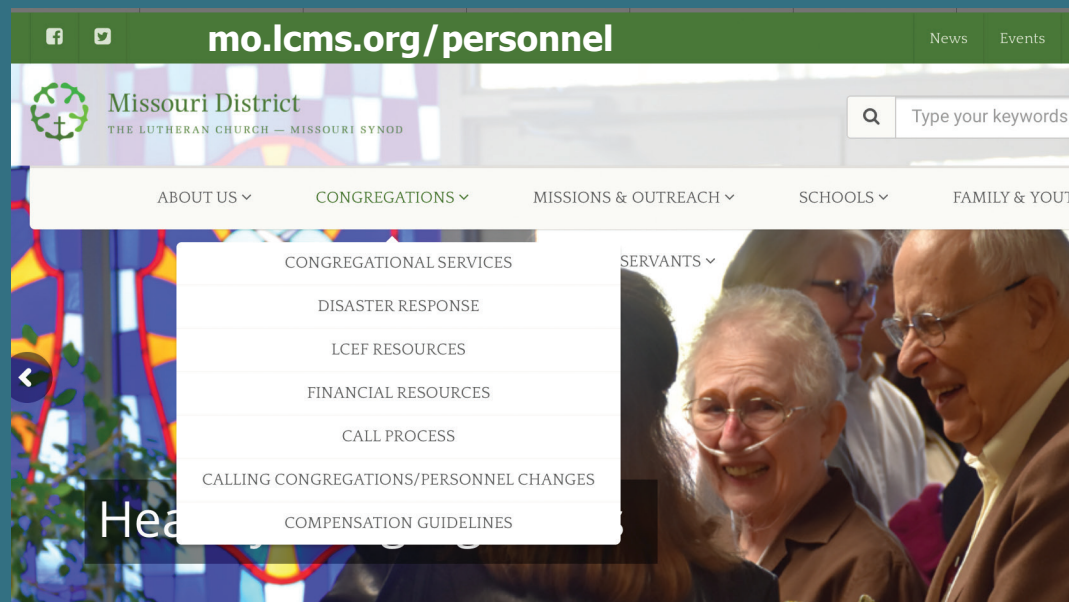
Mission Summit
May 30, 2020
Concordia Seminary,
St. Louis

Last Summit filled quickly, so mark your calendars today!

Calling Congregations and Personnel Changes Now Available Online!

Did you know that you can now view Missouri District roster changes for ordained and commissioned ministers of religion online? The Calling Congregations and Personnel Changes lists can be found at

mo.lcms.org/personnel/



Missouri District

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD