

The VOICE

February 2020



Missouri District

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD

In this Issue:



From the President



Lent in our Homes



March on the Arch



Night to Shine



Church Planting



Jr High Retreat



"Grill to Glory"



Mission Summit



From the President's Desk:

The Comfort of Quiet Prayer



We live in a world of constant noise. If you listen, there is a constant hum of noise. It's the noise of cell phones ringing or vibrating, televisions blaring, cars going by pounding out the bass line of the latest rap song, eighteen wheelers rumbling by, doors slamming, horns blaring, birds chirping, dogs barking, sirens whining, church bells chiming. The list and the noise go on and on. The sounds are always there assaulting our ears and even our minds.

Perhaps it was no different in Jesus' day. While there were no stereos or cell phones, the constant clatter and noise was there. So, it is not surprising that we find Jesus wandering off away from the commotion to a solitary place to pray. Several times the Gospel writers note Jesus taking time away from the crowds to spend in quiet prayer with his Father.

It is very easy for us to become slaves of the sounds. To let the busyness and commotion of our lives drown out the voice of God speaking to us through His Word and preventing our calling out to Him in prayer. Our ears are constantly filled with useless and senseless noise. Pastor Harold Senkbeil's excellent book *Dying to Live* has a chapter in it on private prayer. Senkbeil writes. "We get so caught up in the real world that we forget who we actually are as children of God. Our heads do not naturally bow in humility; our knees do not naturally bend in worship; our hands do not naturally join in prayer. Our lives are so filled with other things that there is no room to be filled with God. And so like rats in a maze, we keep on wandering, but never arriving. We may not realize it, but we're on a fitful search for tranquility."

That's what prayer is for the Christian. Tranquility. Peace. Comfort. Strength. It is knowing that the almighty God, creator of heaven and earth hears my prayer. What a blessing prayer is in the life of Christians. What a gift it is to be able to turn to God with whatever is going on in our lives.

The challenge for us is to turn off the noise and flee to that solitary place and spend time in prayer to God. The silence seems unnatural to us. It almost seems uncomfortable. But as Christians, we need to seek out silence. "It is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord." (Lamentations 3:26) Tuning out the world is not a bad thing. Silence is not the enemy, but a rare gift from God and invitation to prayer.

But the comfort we have as Christians is that God hears our prayers no matter what the decibel level is that surrounds us. God is never distracted by the noise. God hears our prayers whether it is the fearful scream or the sobbing cry. He hears the angry yells and even the barely audible whispers. The setting and the volume level don't matter. The only thing that matters is God's promise to hear our prayers for Jesus' sake. He has promised to hear us and so he does because that's the sort of Lord He is.

Fraternally in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. Lee Hagan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

President Lee Hagan

PRESIDENT'S PRAYER LIST:

Please pray that during this Lenten season we would find time as individuals and families for devotions as we focus on our Lord's path to the cross.

Pray for all of the congregations, schools, camps and organizations in the Church that work to support children, youth and families.

Ask the Lord of the Harvest to move the hearts of young people to consider church work vocations such as pastor, teacher, deaconess, and Director of Christian Education.



Lent in Our Homes

Rev. Stephen Andrews, Jr

Associate Pastor, St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Lee's Summit

The Church calendar is full of seasons and events that are all meant to point us to Jesus Christ. With Ash Wednesday on February 26th, another season of Lent begins. Lent is a season of preparation, much like Advent prepares for Christmas, only now we prepare for Good Friday.

That gives Lent a sad and humble tone, as we focus on our sins and the penalty Jesus was willing to pay for us by His death on the cross. For this reason, one tradition in our churches is to put away the celebration word "alleluia" until we gather for Easter. But, at the same time, we still rejoice, knowing that Christ forgives us always. Congregations take the opportunity to gather for worship (and often dinner!) on Wednesdays during the season of Lent.

Besides coming to church an extra day each week, there are many traditions Christians have used in their homes throughout Church history to help focus on Christ and the themes of the season. Consider if any of these might be beneficial in your home:



Lent in Our Homes

Give Something Up

This is the most common one. We sacrifice something we enjoy (desserts, meat, screens, etc.) in order to help us remember the sacrifice Jesus made for us. Every Sunday in Lent is a mini-Easter, where you can enjoy whatever you were giving up. That's how we keep it at 40 days, even though it's really 46 if you count them!

Almsgiving

As a family, collect money or food throughout the season. Or, fill a bag every day with items in your home that you can donate. Come Easter time, donate your collection to an organization or even people you know in need of support.

Lenten Candles

Like the Advent wreath, only purple! A table centerpiece is a great family reminder.

Make Pretzels Together!

The Catholic Church required fasting for centuries: no meat, dairy, or eggs. This led to the invention of the pretzel as an easy Lenten food, with arms crossed in prayer.

Daily Devotions

If you aren't already doing these as a family, try to get in the habit this Lent. Read a chapter of the Bible together, pray, sing a hymn, learn the Apostles' Creed. If you'd like a guide, your pastor can help you find a good tool. The habit may just stick beyond the season!

Strip Your Mantle, Table, or Countertop

A Maundy Thursday tradition in the Church is to remove all the things from the chancel and altar up front. The emptiness draws our attention to Christ's cross. You can do this at home as well!

Jesus Tree

If you've ever done a Jesse Tree, this is a very similar idea. (<https://amandamarkel.com/2012/04/10/the-jesus-tree/>)

Bury the "Alleluia"

Make a poster or another craft featuring the word, and then hide it in your home. Bring it out again on Easter to celebrate the resurrection!

Lasty

Wait until Easter to celebrate and bring out your Easter decorations! Easter is a season of its own, lasting until Pentecost on May 31st.

MARCH ON THE ARCH FOR LIFE



St. Louis, Saturday, March 7

Area congregations, schools and groups from The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod will join hundreds of other pro-life men, women, and children from the bi-state region for the March on the Arch.

We are calling on all LCMS Lutherans to turn out on March 7 for the March on the Arch, an event sponsored by the Coalition for Life.

Please join us & lend your voice as we bear witness to Christ and support LIFE! We will teach and proclaim God's gift of life as we carry signs, sing hymns & pray.

Families, individuals, youth groups, church leaders, the young, the not-so-young, church choirs — everyone is invited!

CONTACT THE LCMS CHURCH INFORMATION CENTER TO RSVP:
infocenter@lcms.org or 888-843-5267

LEARN MORE: lcms.org/marchforlife



SHOW UP. CONFESS CHRIST. BE LUTHERAN.

Night to Shine

While most of the world is preparing for Valentine's Day, for many, early February brings another amazing opportunity for fancy dress and a party- Night to Shine. Night to Shine is "a worldwide movement that is centered on God's love for people with special needs," Jessica Crawford of Concordia Kirkwood explains. Crawford, Director of Children and Families with Special Needs at Concordia says this is Concordia's second year hosting a Night to Shine event.



Sponsored by the Tim Tebow foundation, Night to Shine is a prom party for people living with special needs, and has occurred yearly since 2015 on the same night all across the world. For participants of Night to Shine at Concordia, this is quite a prom party including guests arriving by limo, hair and make-up stations, every guest gets a corsage or boutonniere, and a guest favorite- a red carpet area with over a 100 people cheering them on. Crawford reports that one guest exclaimed about the red carpet, "That was the best 3 minutes of my life!" There are other fun elements such as a live DJ, a music room with karaoke, and the Chick-fil-A cow.



Parents get a royal treatment as well. While each guest gets assigned a "buddy" for the duration of Night to Shine, parents or family of guests have their own separate, concurrent party complete with a catered dinner, massages, music, and a watch room. If guests need a break, there's a calming corner away from the sounds of the party and Concordia has their own state-of-the-art calming room as part of the church.



But it's really more than a prom as Crawford explains, "It is a one night event that changes Valentine's Day weekend from a time about a love to a time centered on God's love...it lets people know that there is a God in heaven that has a plan for their life. These families feel the warmth not just of Concordia, but that they're getting the love of Christ showered on them." Concordia concludes the event with a big balloon drop in the gym where all the parents, families, guests, and volunteers come together and watch a

video message from Tim Tebow and listen to one of Concordia's pastors proclaim they are made "perfectly and wonderfully by their creator".

Night to Shine is an ever growing event. Crawford explains, "this year we filled up [registration] in 3 weeks- last year it was 4 months." According to Tim Tebow's Foundation, Night to Shine started in 2015 with 44 churches around the world, in 2020 there were over 700 churches hosting the event. Out of these 700, there were 3 Missouri District churches. In addition to Concordia in Kirkwood, Messiah in Weldon Springs and St. Paul in Jackson all hosted a Night to Shine.

Concordia, Kirkwood also has a weekly Bible Study for adults with special needs. "I love that we have a place for people to land," says Crawford. "Some have never stepped foot in Concordia before Night to Shine and then decide to attend the adults with special needs Bible Study." While the Bible Study has been growing and changing over the past decade, and has challenges there are many blessings. Crawford describes, "There's a message and then an activity to reinforce the message. It might take years to see retention, but it's worth it. They're socializing. They know God is in heaven and loves them and Jesus died on the cross to save them from their sins."



Church Planting- Ozarks



Deep in the southwestern part of Missouri lies one of the fastest growing cities in the state. The once little town of Ozark, MO is now expanding with new housing developments in all directions. As young families move into their new homes, they are looking for new schools, new grocery stores, and- for some families- a

new church. The MO District is helping those young families with one of its most recent church plants.



The new mission is called "My Church" because when Jesus asks His disciples, "Who do you say I am?" Peter answers, "You are the Christ." Jesus tells Peter, "Upon this confession I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail over it." (Matt. 16:18, emphasis added). My Church is led and supported by Lutherans confessing Christ, making new disciples and building them up together in body of the Christ.

Over the past seven months My Church has grown to an average of 40 people in worship attendance. Rev. Jim Bartok (2019 STL graduate) and the core team believe that planting a church is a "God-sized dream" and something that can only happen when Christ is asked to be part of every aspect. That's why last summer and fall Rev. Bartok and the core team began prayer walking through neighborhoods in Ozark on Friday mornings.



In the past month My Church's small group attendance has doubled. The groups meet at restaurants around the city and are creating conversations and connections. On an average Sunday in groups, there are lifelong Christians sitting next to someone who hasn't heard the Gospel in years. It's a place where people are experiencing healing from things like addiction, abuse, and being hurt by the church. All this is happening because the conversations are always centered around the greatest healer of all, Jesus.

Church Planting- Ozarks



There is also buzz around Ozark for "My Karate+," a donation-based ministry of My Church. Before attending seminary, Rev. Bartok owned several successful family martial art schools in Michigan. With the help of his wife, Kim, My Karate+ is providing kids with the confidence to acquire new skills and also hear about Jesus, (that's the plus).

My Church started with a handful of people getting together on a Sunday afternoon in a small group. Planting a church is something any congregation can do. It all starts with prayer and people who have a God-sized dream to participate in building Christ's Church. The MO district is committed to helping all our churches regardless of size or demographic multiply and make disciples.



Church planting is an investment that takes a considerable amount of time and financial resources. Due to the generosity of individual donors and congregations, the Missouri District currently walks alongside five such plants... all while looking for the next opportunity. Thank you to these investors!

If you're interested in knowing more about making a commitment to this type of ministry, contact Leah Sieveking at 314-590-6211 or leah.sieveking@mo.lcms.org.

JR YOUTH RETREAT

March 27-29, 2020

Peace Rules

"A great opportunity to grow in faith."
DCE Jason Glaskey



Registration Ends March 16!

We have a NEW online registration system. We can now accept credit cards! Simply visit
mo.lcms.org -> events -> Spring Jr. High Gathering

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.

Come and learn about the Table of Duties from Luther's Small Catechism and answer questions about relationships and Christian vocation.



Questions? Contact Sue Thompson at 314-590-6217 or sue.thompson@mo.lcms.org

Plus One - “Grill to Glory”



St. Paul Lutheran Church in the College Hill neighborhood of North St. Louis connected with the Missouri District's Plus One process shortly after the first Mission Summit. Working with their coach, Matt Miller, and Pastor Bill Geis (Missouri District: Missions) the congregation identified several community partnerships that could connect their church to new steps in community engagement.

St. Paul chose to partner with Better Family Life (BFL) of St. Louis. Teri Rose of St. Paul had built a relationship there and BFL had the resources, tools, networks to help them take steps in their community without overwhelming the congregation. St. Paul wanted to bring Christian hope and strengthen relationships in their community where crime threatened to have people withdraw. “Grill to Glory” was an such effort marketed by BFL but sponsored by churches in several neighborhood. St. Paul went “all-in” as the sponsor for their neighborhood. This small urban congregation of about 30 people connected with people every week from May to August (17 weeks) with “Grill to Glory.” Teri shared, “When it rained, we just grilled in the kitchen on the electric grill and served them through the backdoor. We had about 30 people attend, many regularly.”

St. Paul received a Plus One grant to help buy food. This allowed the congregation to focus on the most important thing: having their volunteers building relationships, praying and showing their hope in Christ with their neighbors. “It was a big-time commitment, but not a lot of work,” shared Ed Neithe, “many of our members got involved.” Teri adds, “We wanted a consistent event at the church that people could count on. Some participants would leave prayer requests and we could sit down and talk to them about the Lutheran Church. It was as tremendous outreach opportunity!”

St. Paul member, Lester Bradley, would stand outside with a megaphone to call people in. He never missed a week. Members now know many names of people in their neighborhood. The congregation also experienced a transformation in their relationships, not merely doing something "for" the community, but serving "with" their community. Teri shared one particular story, "One woman from the neighborhood pitched in in the kitchen like she had been at St. Paul's forever! Another gentleman was an organist and ended up playing a hymn during service."

The summer program didn't end the church's Plus One effort. Grill to Glory has multiplied to include "Leave the Hanger Boutique" which began in October. The Boutique offers clothes free of charge on Saturdays. One woman in the neighborhood has been participating weekly and has attended church. The partnership with BFL is also opening doors for St. Paul to be a community "Triage center," staffed by BFL. These centers are taking on the opioid crisis and the destruction it brings to individual and a community.

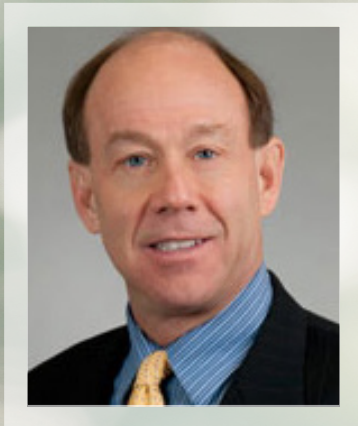


St. Paul looks forward to taking part in the next Mission Summit (see another story in this issue) as they serve continue to serve their community. "The Mission Summit and Plus One launched this effort and we are encouraging other congregations to participate and take one new step," former Pastor James Kirschenmann recalls. "It's a good way to refresh, connect with people and try something new," adds Teri. "You never know how the Holy Spirit is going to work. Plus One helped us to partner and get out there with people -- you never know what will make a difference."

Connect your congregation to the next Mission Summit and the many resources the Missouri District has to assist your congregation with community engagement by contacting Bill Geis (bill.geis@mo.lcms.org).

Mission Summit 2020

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis



**Featuring
Plenary Speaker
Rev. Dr. Reed Lessing**

The Missouri District will host its second "Mission Summit" on Saturday, May 30 at Concordia Seminary. This summit is designed to bring together church workers and lay leaders of all sizes and demographics in a one-day Biblical, practical process of designing (or refining) sustainable plans of community engagement. Congregations are strongly encouraged to send a work team to this event because this will be a hands-on personal experience designed to take home.

Dr. Reed Lessing, pastor, theologian, author, and speaker will lead two sessions of Bible Study. Those studies will be complimented with practical exercises and tools for congregations to examine their own context and mission opportunities. There will be twelve elective sessions to choose from examining specific mission contexts (e.g. small churches, children's ministry, Millennial outreach) In the afternoon, congregations will work in one of seven tracks (Rural, Small Town, Suburban, Urban, Multi-Ethnic, Partnerships, and Church Planting) where facilitators will help congregations work through the first steps of a designing their own specific mission plans. The goal is to leave the Summit with a plan in hand and the opportunity for a year of follow up with a trained coach. The summit is free, but registration is required. Deadline is for the first 225 registrations or May 17 whichever comes first. Churches are highly encouraged to send teams for maximum effectiveness.

Last Summit filled quickly, so mark your calendars today!



September will be a very bright month in the Show Me State!

For the first time ever, the Missouri District is pleased to announce that a statewide servant event will be happening September 18-27, 2020. Based on Matthew 5:16, the initiative is called Shine! and encourages participants to serve others so that God may be glorified.

"The Missouri District servant event will be a great opportunity for God's people to serve their neighbors in love and demonstrate our loving concern for our communities," says President Lee Hagan. "It is something in which every congregation, school, and campus ministry can be involved as we let our light shine before others."

The concept is simple: Starting March 1, all churches, schools, ministries, RSOs, etc. throughout Missouri are welcome to register on the district's website. Groups are then free to assess the needs of their community and find a project that works for both the size and skillset of their group. Anytime between September 18 and September 27, groups can then serve for an hour, two...or more!

To add to the brightness of the initiative, the Missouri District is blessed to work with generous sponsors to provide participants with an official Shine! t-shirt to wear as they serve.

This may be the very first servant event for the Missouri District, but the effort is being started with the future in mind. "This is a wonderful example of what it means to walk and serve together. We hope that this becomes not an event, but a way of life," concludes President Hagan.

To get things started for your group, head to mo.lcms.org/shine

Ministry Safe Training

The Missouri District is partnering with Ministry Safe to launch the "Not Even One" initiative to better educate and equip the workers in our congregations and schools to recognize the signs of child sexual abuse and understand better the tendencies of child predators...at no cost to congregations and schools.

Sexual abuse of children is a "quiet" epidemic that is only occasionally brought to light when a sensational news story hits the press. The reality is that 1 in every 4 girls and 1 in every 6 boys in the United States are sexually molested before the age of 18. Ninety percent of the time, they are molested by someone they know and trust.

We want every staff person in every congregation and school in the Missouri District, to commit to helping protect children and ministries entrusted to your care. Take the online training video today.

mo.lcms.org/ministry-safe-training/



Lutheran Youth Fellowship

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/>

Upcoming Events



March 7
E2 Conference
Faith- Springfield



March 27-29
Jr. High Retreat
Camp Windermere



May 30
Mission Summit
Concordia Seminary



July 20-21
School Administrators
Conference, Columbia



Sept 18-27
Servant Event
An Area Near You



Oct 16-18
Fall Jr High Retreat
Camp Windermere



Oct 20-23
Professional Church
Workers Conference
Osage Beach



Nov 20-23
Sr. High Retreat
Cross Pointe Retreat
Center, Rocky Mount



Missouri District

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