

# The VOICE

April 2020



Missouri District

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD

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Missouri District  
Servant Event  
SEPTEMBER 18-27, 2020

MATTHEW 5:16



**Mission Summit Postponed**

# From the President's Desk:

## For the Life of the World, For a Time Such as This



As creedal Christians, we confess that we believe in the "holy Christian Church." Such a confession has very little to do with the people who are included within that Church, but is more a confession about the God who called us out of darkness and into His marvelous light. It is a confession about the Lord who has promised that the gates of hell will not prevail against His Church. It is a confession about the Lord who preserves His Church through His Word and that where two or three are gathered in His name, there He is in the midst of them.

God has preserved His Church throughout history even though there have been many threats against the people of God gathering for worship, from wars and violence to governments and pandemics. Though there have been times when the Church has been oppressed by governments in places like the Soviet Union and China, God kept and preserved His Church. After the fall of the Iron Curtain in Eastern Europe, we heard the testimonies about how God upheld His Church as the Word was taught in homes and in small groups. The Church has never been truly about the building, but about the saints of God gathered around the Word of God and His blessed Sacraments. The Church exists so that Christ might be given and received for the life of the world.

Today, we see so very clearly the challenges that face us. And we do not shrink from these challenges because it is Christ's Church and we are assured that the gates of hell will not prevail against it. We have something to say and we have something that the world needs to hear...a world that teaches at best that all religions believe in the same God or at worst that belief in any God is ridiculous or oppressive...a world that portrays the Church as place of abuse, hatred, and bigotry...a world that would co-opt the institution of marriage for its own purposes...a world that speaks about human life in terms of financial viability...and a world that would restrict our freedoms and witness at every turn. The Church is here at a time such as this and we have something to say and we have something that the world needs to hear because our confession is the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting.

Swedish Lutheran Bo Giertz wrote of the Church's life and witness, "The message is at the same time a sowing, a seed and a grain of mustard, harboring inside the mysterious power of growth and life. The message is continually confronted with new circumstances and changing times. If the church only possessed a mechanically memorized gospel and would she only be able to reproduce and repeat the past, she would soon be dead. But she is not a lecturer of ancient wisdom. In the Spirit's power, she proclaims from the fullness of Christ. The very life of Christ pulsates in her veins. In each new generation, new people are received into this mysterious fellowship. And they are children of their time, filled with its questions and need. But they are also children of the Church, filled with the life of the Spirit and the power of the Word. Therefore they are able to present the old message as the innermost possession of their own being. And in the language of their own time, they will answer the questions of their own generation. Thus the church can handle ever new situations with an ever regenerated and refreshing gospel. Yet is always remains the same gospel."

In this generation, with its questions and need, the Church is here ready to speak and ready to act. Consider all the confusion and yet all the opportunities that come as a result of our current situation. And yet for a time such as this, the church stands ready to speak and act to helpless people, to grieving and sorrowful people, to angry and bitter people, to bewildered and beleaguered people. Our Lord had placed us here at a time such as this for the sake of the world because God loved the world so much that He sent His Son to die for the world. Now He sends us to the world He loves with a message about this Son. His Church exists to respond to the needs of those affected by this present crisis, our acts of mercy and the grace of our giving are always for the sake of our opportunity to confess and to bear witness to Christ. Such acts of mercy and witness are ultimately God's service to the world through the Church. The Missouri District stands with the 290 congregations as the regenerating and refreshing Gospel is proclaimed in this new situation for the life of the world. May God richly bless and preserve His Church and the proclamation of that Gospel for a time such as this!

Fraternally in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "R. Lee Hagan". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a long, sweeping underline.

President Lee Hagan



## PRESIDENT'S PRAYER LIST:

Give thanks to God for everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body.

Please pray for those who serve in health care professions that they would be preserved from harm.

Please pray that our congregations would be preserved and the saints would continue to generously support their congregation through their tithes and offerings.



## E2 Conferences Encourage & Equip More than 300 Across District

One of the ways that the Missouri District staff and leaders provide support to congregations is through our E2 Conferences. The purpose of the gatherings is to encourage and equip congregational leaders in key areas of our life together such as family and youth ministry, stewardship, and outreach. There were five conferences held in the fall and spring with more than 300 people attending from nearly 100 congregations.

One attendee at one of this year's conferences said, "What I found beneficial was that we all had a chance to share our concerns for our congregation and the role we have to reach people in need of Jesus in their lives." President Hagan said, "There was a very positive and encouraging spirit at the conferences as people came together to consider how we can retain our children, youth, and families and reach our communities. Those are concerns that all of our congregations seem to share."

The conferences are held every other year in metro-St. Louis, Kansas City, Springfield, Southeast Missouri, and Central Missouri. The presenters are made up of district staff, members of the Council on Mission and Ministry, and local practitioners. The Missouri District plans to host another round of E2 Conferences in Spring of 2022. We hope you will be there for another opportunity to be encouraged and equipped.





# Shout for Joy

## Early Childhood Conference

This spring's Early Childhood Conference offered through the Missouri District office was a resounding success. With over 200 educators from across Missouri, ECC teachers spent their Saturday March 7th engaging in breakout sessions and hearing from keynote speaker Lisa Murphy (lower right). Murphy, of Ooey Gooley, Inc., gave captivating and often quite emotional presentations, reminding educators the importance of treating everyday like a child's only day and the importance of play in early childhood education. Participants also had the opportunity to choose between 15 breakout sessions of a variety of topics such as STEM curriculum, art projects and inspirations, learning through music, and young ones and toddler ministry.

Rachel Larson (top row, second picture, on right) was one of the educators in attendance. Larson is a student at Concordia University: Mequon, Wisconsin. She is studying elementary education: K-8 and is completing her student teaching at St. Louis-area school Christ Community Lutheran School. Larson states, "I would say my biggest takeaway from the conference was that we are able to create an environment for students where they can play and learn about God's creations... early childhood has the foundation that kids need. They need the foundation of play in order to build on the foundation of reading, writing, and more, plus the main element of education: critical thinking."



**"What a joy to be with the Missouri District Early Childhood Educators! The annual conference was a great day of learning, sharing, and fellowship. I give thanks to God for the amazing Early Childhood Educators, Early Childhood Directors, and the Early Childhood ministries of the Missouri District!"**  
**- Alan Freeman Assistant to the President for Schools**

# MARCH ON THE ARCH FOR LIFE

"This occasion... is a plea for respecting and protecting the worth of every member of our race, from conception to final breath. This crowd is an appeal to basic science, to clear reason, and to the common humanity of us all. ... We've assembled because our heavenly Father calls each human life for His own from fertilization to forever. And that makes every human being priceless."

Rev. Michael Salemink speaking at March on the Arch March 7, 2020



Weeks before social gatherings were restricted in many areas across Missouri, there was an assembly of Lutherans and Christians already taking a stand to help neighbors' lives. March 7, 2020 saw the "March on the Arch" pro-life rally and walk in St. Louis.

Over 1200 participants marched over 3 miles from the Planned Parenthood in the Central West end neighborhood of St. Louis through downtown St. Louis to the Gateway Arch grounds. Participants gathered for a pre-march rally where one of the featured speakers was the executive director for Lutherans for Life, Rev. Michael Salemink.



LC-MS President Harrison and  
Lutherans for Life Executive Director  
Rev. Michael Salemink



SHOW UP. CONFESS CHRIST. BE LUTHERAN.



# MARCH ON THE ARCH FOR LIFE

Among those in attendance was Hope Lutheran member and President of the secular group St. Louis Pro-Life Futures, Austin Tuttle (pictured below, center). Tuttle describes March on the Arch, "This is my second year going. It was great the first year I went, so I wanted to come back. It's a great experience. You get to meet other passionate pro-life people of all ages, from all areas- even outside of Saint Louis. It's a great opportunity to hear such passionate speakers on the topic. When you do work with pro-life you're in the weeds a lot, and it can be overwhelming. So it's nice to go to an event like this to get inspired to continue to push on."



Also attending was the Missouri District Life Coordinator, Rev. Dr. Jason Wagner. "From a Lutheran perspective... we're out here because, yes, every life is valuable, but every life is valuable because of the God who made us and redeems us in Christ." Rev. Wagner continues about things Lutherans can do in their own congregations to support life, "well, there's kind of an endless number of ways to be able to do that. There are life teams in congregations, which can do everything from hosting a diaper drive to informing people about different issues all the way from conception to natural death. You can encourage people to get involved with local events, like this one. Or to support pregnancy care centers in their community, that not only encourage mothers to keep their children and care for them, but also to provide resources to them as well. There's an endless number of ways for congregations and individuals to be involved."



*Missouri District Life Coordinator  
Rev. Dr. Jason Wagner*

After the crowd marched the 3 miles to gather under the arch, LC-MS President Matthew Harrison and Rev. Saleminck gathered the Lutheran group and led them in a confession, prayer, and benediction. It was a beautiful event celebrating the gift of life.

# HappyBottoms in Kansas City

Kelsha James, Community Outreach Coordinator for Lutheran Urban Mission Agency (LUMA) connects ministry to a wide spectrum of families in the heart of Kansas City: Single mothers, a single father, first time moms, working families who need a little extra help, and two moms currently living in a domestic violence shelter.

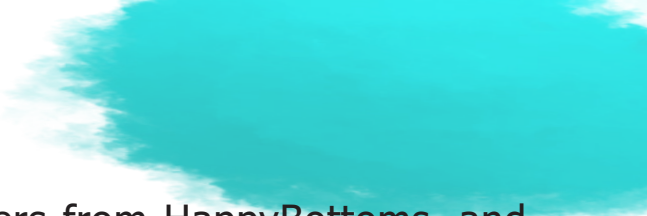


In January LUMA began a partnership with HappyBottoms, a Kansas City area diaper bank, may have a funny name, but they have a very serious mission: To “collaborate with community partners to empower, connect, and impact low-income families by alleviating diaper need.” HappyBottoms partners with 37 local Kansas City social service agencies, including LUMA.

National studies show that access to diapers improves the physical, mental, & financial health of a family and baby. Without an adequate supply of diapers, babies can spend extended periods of time in the same soiled diaper. This poses health risks to the baby, such as diaper rash and potentially serious infections -- including hepatitis. Being wet or soiled makes for an unhappy, tearful baby, which can cause family tension. To date, no public assistance programs like food stamps, WIC, SNAP, or Medicaid cover diapers.








LUMA has now received three shipments of diapers from HappyBottoms, and since February has distributed over 600 diapers from its new operations at Immanuel Lutheran Church. Kelsha explained that the extra diapers (a maximum of 50 diapers a month or 30 Pull-Ups) can allow parents to funnel their resources to other key areas. "The supplement of the diapers can help a working mother use those extra funds to buy necessary food, instead of 50 diapers."

For further support, families receive an educational brochure on proper diapering tips, stress reducing measures, and information on potty training. Early access to diapers helps raise families out of the cycle of poverty and gives them a strong foundational resource.

Kelsha has thankfully built up a supply of diapers, which is a blessing with the increased need due to Coronavirus. She proactively delivered March's diapers in advance, anticipating the quarantine. This week she has continued her deliveries, including to a mother of 7-week old twins. LUMA is also seeking baby wipe donations, which are greatly needed with the shortage.

Once the quarantine has been lifted, LUMA will also take advantage of HappyBottom's potty training resources. "We'll be able to dispense potty-training seats, along with a training video on proper potty training," Kelsha added. Caring for our neighbors in these most basic, yet essential needs, is building stronger ties to the community for LUMA's partner churches, especially Immanuel Lutheran.

LUMA and Immanuel Lutheran also continue to provide food and goods to the community during the Coronavirus. In order to protect their volunteers and neighbors during the quarantine, they have taken several measures to protect patrons and volunteers including the use of pre-packed emergency bags and asking elderly volunteers to stay at home. Kelsha has been participating in video calls arranged by Bill Geis at the Missouri District office to help social ministries exchange ideas on how best to serve their needy community during this time. She's lending her extensive expertise in best practices and resources. "Anything to try to help families," Kelsha said.

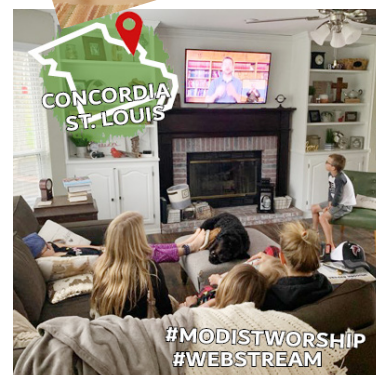


## "Show Me" Your New Normal

The work of the Kingdom is unable to be stopped! In a matter of days, worship, Bible studies, devotions, and Lutheran schools transitioned into this new normal of sharing the Word of God by means other than face-to-face interactions. It has been impressive and is worth celebrating!

As Missourians, though, we're not content with hearsay. We've got to see all this for ourselves. Join in the fun and send the Missouri District your photos of how you are worshiping these days. Got kids in a Lutheran school? Show us e-learning, too. We'll then add these images to social media and thank God together for all He is doing among and through us.

Photos can be sent to Leah at [leah.sieveking@mo.lcms.org](mailto:leah.sieveking@mo.lcms.org). If you haven't already, now would be a great time to follow the Missouri District on various social media platforms to see these images and additional updates, videos, and words of encouragement.



## Our Service Will Continue

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented the Church with the opportunity to serve our neighbors in new ways. Stories of how this is being accomplished throughout the world have been a source of encouragement during this uncertain time in history. We love because He first loved us!

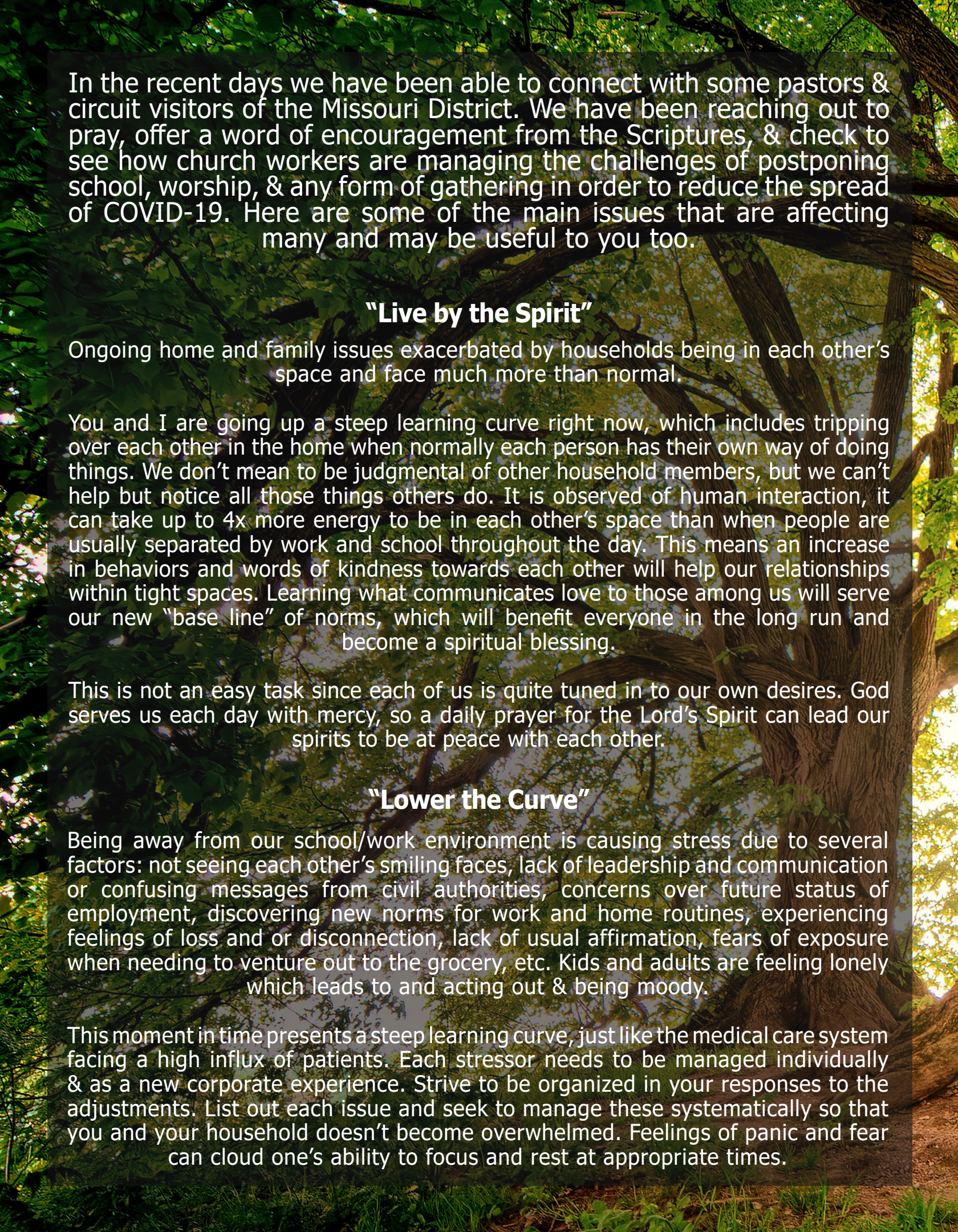
It won't be long, though, when we'll all be able to once again show the love of Christ to our neighbors in ways that don't require social isolation! The Missouri District is particularly pleased about this thought and invites all of you to share in the excitement.



The very first statewide servant event will be happening September 18-27, 2020, throughout the district. Based on Matthew 5:16 and dubbed Shine!, participants are encouraged to form teams and serve their neighbors. It is our prayer that this time of service will be a witness to our good and gracious God.

Check out [mo.lcms.org/shine](https://mo.lcms.org/shine) for more information!





In the recent days we have been able to connect with some pastors & circuit visitors of the Missouri District. We have been reaching out to pray, offer a word of encouragement from the Scriptures, & check to see how church workers are managing the challenges of postponing school, worship, & any form of gathering in order to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Here are some of the main issues that are affecting many and may be useful to you too.

### **“Live by the Spirit”**

Ongoing home and family issues exacerbated by households being in each other's space and face much more than normal.

You and I are going up a steep learning curve right now, which includes tripping over each other in the home when normally each person has their own way of doing things. We don't mean to be judgmental of other household members, but we can't help but notice all those things others do. It is observed of human interaction, it can take up to 4x more energy to be in each other's space than when people are usually separated by work and school throughout the day. This means an increase in behaviors and words of kindness towards each other will help our relationships within tight spaces. Learning what communicates love to those among us will serve our new “base line” of norms, which will benefit everyone in the long run and become a spiritual blessing.


This is not an easy task since each of us is quite tuned in to our own desires. God serves us each day with mercy, so a daily prayer for the Lord's Spirit can lead our spirits to be at peace with each other.

### **“Lower the Curve”**

Being away from our school/work environment is causing stress due to several factors: not seeing each other's smiling faces, lack of leadership and communication or confusing messages from civil authorities, concerns over future status of employment, discovering new norms for work and home routines, experiencing feelings of loss and or disconnection, lack of usual affirmation, fears of exposure when needing to venture out to the grocery, etc. Kids and adults are feeling lonely which leads to and acting out & being moody.

This moment in time presents a steep learning curve, just like the medical care system facing a high influx of patients. Each stressor needs to be managed individually & as a new corporate experience. Strive to be organized in your responses to the adjustments. List out each issue and seek to manage these systematically so that you and your household doesn't become overwhelmed. Feelings of panic and fear can cloud one's ability to focus and rest at appropriate times.





Maintain exercise routines, sleep schedules, eating healthy, caring for the members of your household and others who may have specific needs such as trouble handling stress by calling them with a word of encouragement or prayer. Consider making a list of long term effects of the current situation. Make plans for your day and week ahead within these circumstances and talk about how positive changes might result from how you might handle this experience. Little bits of organization can help manage anxiety over against the abundance of the new and unknown.

### **"Serve Outside the Box"**

Pastors and congregations are concerned about the loss of offerings/tithes to sustain budgets and salaries, and also wondering how to offer online giving for those who can continue to contribute for the continuation of their ministry.


Giving to the Lord is a natural response to receiving the gifts of God, based on the call to forward Gospel proclaiming ministry, to faithfully establish the outreach ministry to others, and build up the Body of Christ. It will be important to call the congregation to continue serving the Lord with "tithes and offerings" outside the use of a round brass offering plate. This is done not just because we want to pay the church bills, but because there are still holy and beneficial works among us, even though the offering plate is not passed from one hand to another down rows of pews. See the district and synod web sites for alternate methods while calling people to give faithfully for the sake of the Gospel and those around us. The needs of church finances will likely reflect the shift in people's lives: experiencing job changes/loss, managing family/school/child issues. Our reserves to serve will be a useful, faithful & inspiring step of spiritual leadership.

### **"Worship from Home"**

Pastors, elders, and church staff members are rethinking how to connect without a congregation without touching, at a distance and from home.

The least possible exposure the better. Respect the issues of contamination, especially since it has been reported that 4 out of 5 people who have been infected have contracted the virus by non-symptomatic infected people. Congregations are making connections with their members in every way you can imagine. These include Zoom worship meetings, live streaming worship services, regular phone calls via organized small groups/elders, and all forms of social media platforms. In some cases, a pre-recorded video of the pastor giving a message is better than trying to do live-streaming worship, depending on quality and accessibility.





Seek feedback from congregation members to inform church leaders what members need and what they can contribute to make new church norms possible. God has still called us to be His people and to serve one another.

## **"Just Start Talking"**

People are expressing feeling paralyzed, stunned, and don't know what to do next. People say this is like living underground, in hiding, or when basic staples were rationed. We're on lock-down to "flatten the curve" and reduce the spike of impending fatalities.

JUST START TALKING about it among your family members, leaders, teachers, pastors, elders, or other trusted relationships, so that you are making moves to reach out and connect with those who support you and your family. We don't know how long the "lock down" will last, but remaining disconnected from others needs for the weeks ahead will result in feelings of sadness, depression, and despair. Because this is a new experience for everyone, only those who have training in first-response situations will likely be able to maintain calm and thoughtful while others are feeling overwhelmed and stuck.

While on a walk past a neighborhood friend's house yesterday I heard a shout out "Oh! Friends! My people!" and after 10 minutes of talking at a distance the "trapped" neighbor's voice had returned to a calm pace and a smile had returned to their face.

COMMUNICATE WITH THE CREATOR. I encourage you to start by hearing from God and praying together with others in the home and at a distance with others from church. Being deliberate to talk about these issues will allow churches to meet these challenges rather than being silent or unplanned. Planning works. Setting in motion deliberate connections with people over these next several weeks and beyond will serve one's need to contribute and to build up the body of Christ and strengthen our resolve under the direction of our Lord Jesus Christ. The district and synod web sites are posting ways for you and your family to stay connected with the one who reached out to us with temporal and eternal care, the Lord Jesus. God loves us and leads us through even the valley of the shadow of death in and through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

We pray that this helps to bring comfort. This is a new experience for almost all of us, but we're in this together, side-by-side, as brothers and sisters in Christ.

*"It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed." Deut 31:8*



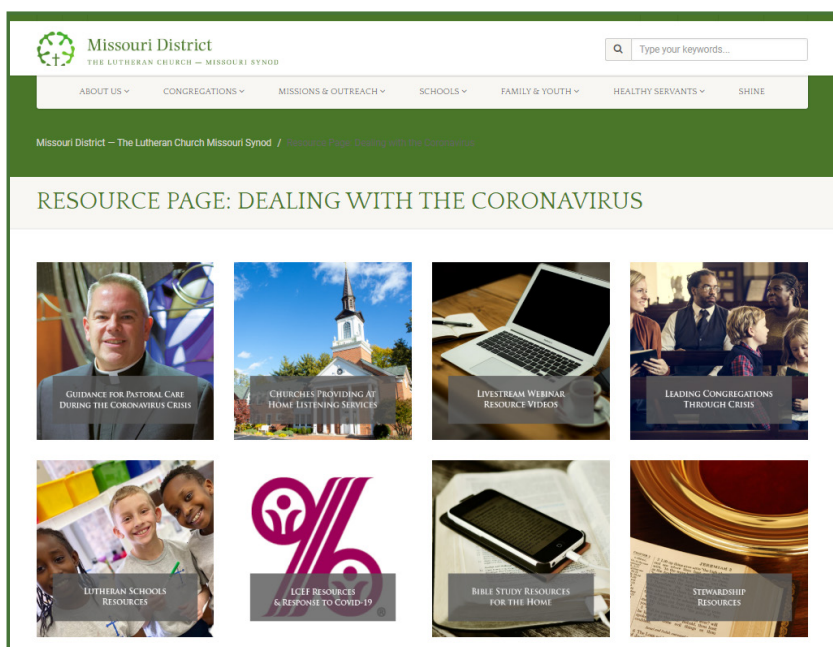
# Mission Summit 2020 Postponed

The Mission Summit scheduled for May 30, 2020 has been postponed. We firmly believe the Holy Spirit is stirring up the Church while we are scattered in our homes. We are witnessing with great joy the response of churches and schools throughout the District. These are times filled with opportunity! The Mission Summit may be paused; but the Church is working overtime in mission. Praise God! The entire staff of the Missouri District is actively working to support our churches and schools. Keep checking our COVID-19 Resource page on our website. Follow us on social media. Reach out to us with your needs and prayer requests.

Contact Bill Geis ([bill.geis@mo.lcms.org](mailto:bill.geis@mo.lcms.org) or 314-478-5244) to connect your church to mission, stewardship and coaching resources.

## Did you know?

The Missouri District has a host of resources online to help your congregations during COVID-19.



Here you can find resources on streaming & at home worship, stewardship, school & Bible study resources, guidance for pastoral care, and so much more.

We update this often throughout the week, to bring you the most up to date information we have available.

Simply visit [mo.lcms.org](https://mo.lcms.org)



Missouri District

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD