

The VOICE

MAY 2020

MISSOURI DISTRICT NEWSLETTER



**THIS ISSUE READ ABOUT
THE MANY MISSIONS OF
THE MISSOURI DISTRICT**

From the President's Desk:

Mobilizing the Church Militant



This side of heaven the people of God are often called the Church Militant. St. Paul paints a picture of this struggle in Ephesians 6 as he describes the Christian putting on the armor of God and reminding us that our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the powers of this dark world. Likewise, our current struggle is not against the Coronavirus, but against that which would obscure our focus on Christ. While there are people who are worried about health, jobs, and finances, with the Spirit's strength our eyes are ever on the Lord. In the midst of calm or crisis, celebration or sadness, we face them all with God's grace and strength.

So now is the time for the Church Militant to mobilize. While our nation's leaders consider "re-opening" the economy, church leaders continue on in God's mission. This not the time of circling the wagons — we are not simply hiding away, but we seek to serve those who serve us. Pastors are reaching out to health care professionals through daily video prayers and blessings. Congregations are sending food to first responders with messages of hope and encouragement. We do not have to wait until some one gives us permission to be part of God's mission of hope and care.

While some have spent the last twenty years wondering what the future of the Christian Church will be, no one could foresee how an event like this could shake the whole world. But we find our strength in the same places where Christians always have, namely in the crucified and risen Jesus. Rather than being paralyzed by fear, we are made bold as we confidently confess "Jesus Christ as Lord."

One of the best places that St. Paul communicates the significance of the Christian faith is in the Resurrection Chapter, 1 Corinthians 15. If Christ has not been raised from the dead, the people who abuse us are right. As Christians, we endure the ridicule and scorn of those that don't understand. And if Christ has not been raised from the dead then we have done it all for nothing. If Christ has not been raised from the dead, then the suffering we are enduring now is just the beginning. If Christ has not been raised from the dead, then you are still in your sins. Then you are to be pitied more than all people. If Christ has not been raised from the dead, then all of this church stuff is good for nothing. All of the services. All of the baptisms. All of the committees. All of the plans. All of the buildings. And perhaps worst of all, all of the funerals. If Christ has not been raised from the dead, then neither shall we.

But. But. But. This is a hugely significant little word. But. Christ HAS been raised from the dead. He is the firstfruits from the dead, meaning he is the first of many who will rise again. Christ HAS risen and that means that our message is about life not death. It means that those who mourn can look forward to a blessed reunion in heaven with those they love who have departed in the faith. It means that because Christ HAS risen from the grave that we will rise bodily on the last day. Not just a spiritual resurrection, we believe that our physical bodies will rise again. What a joy it is for the person who is dying to confess their faith in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting! All this because Christ HAS been raised from the dead.

Christ's resurrection makes each and every task of the Christian life a holy thing. Your responsibilities in the home, helping your spouse, teaching and caring for your children — these are holy things because of the resurrection. Even going about your daily tasks in your vocation is a way in which you serve the Lord. The resurrection has sanctified all of our forms of service to Christ. And when you do your work in the church, when you offer your service in the ways in which God has gifted you, it is holy and pleasing to God because of the resurrection. You know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. It is not meaningless or worthless. That's why we are the Church Militant because Christ has won the war and God gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! So let's go! There is work to be done because Christ has indeed risen from the grave and we are His Church in mission.

Fraternally in Christ,



President Lee Hagan

PRESIDENT'S PRAYER LIST:

Pastors and church leaders during this difficult time.

School and early childhood administrators as guide educational ministries through this crisis.

Health care professionals and all those whose by whose vocation God brings to us "daily bread."



DIFFERENT PACKAGING. SAME CONTENT.

While Covid-19 has reshaped our world, with changes happening by the hour, the 290 congregations of the Missouri District remain committed to spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Leaders and members throughout the state are finding new ways to reach out to others with the same tried and true message.



This is not the first pandemic handled by Historic Trinity in St. Louis! During the 1849 cholera outbreak, Trinity's pastor, Rev. Dr. C. F. W. Walther, visited area homes to assess the health and needs of neighbors. This present-day virus has not stopped Trinity from a key aspect of ministry—feeding the area homeless—but has altered how this is achieved. Instead of using their walk-up window to serve food, members and volunteers are now packaging meals and hanging them from Trinity's fencing. As member Russ Bettlach noted, 'The 'Soup Alley' window may be closed, but now 'Lunches on Soular Street' is open!"

For Zion Lutheran in Macon, this time of isolation necessitated a change to the church website, now reformatted as a resource page. The site contains links to worship services, bulletins, reliable news sources, and more. "This is all geared more toward care of our members, but I am aware that others beyond our local area have been accessing and using them," says Rev. Elden Kohn. Zion also established a Care Team to make a weekly check-in on those more deemed more susceptible to complications from the virus.

Pastor Jacob Mueller of Holy Cross in Emma says that the best ideas for outreach have come from members taking initiative to minister to neighbors. He describes how one family with four kids has made it their mission to send cards to others. "We have another family who lives here in town. They colored pictures at Easter which say, 'He is risen' and gave them to their neighbors to hang on the door." Mom, Haley Fowler, and sons Bryer and Kye have been hard at work making the displays for elderly friends.

When asked how his congregation—Trinity, Clinton—is faring, Rev. Jesse Kueker describes how they're showing support for each other. "The saints are holding-up well and taking care of one another. We have a grocery-train that is being run by our younger families for anyone who has need." Trinity's maternity home ministry continues its work serving area mothers and infants. Like many congregations, worship and devotions have switched to online and audio formats.

So while much has changed, it's clear that ministry throughout Missouri goes on. It may look different, but it's still the work of God's Kingdom—proclaiming the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ and showing His mercy to others. "We all are looking forward to the day when we can all safely gather in the Lord's House. In the meantime, we give thanks for all the ways our Good Shepherd continues to provide for our needs of body and soul," concludes Rev. Kueker.

SPECIAL EDITION!

The May issue of The Voice is dedicated to missions! The ministries featured here are just a snapshot of the work going on throughout the state. The Missouri District is blessed to be able to support these ministries—and many more—through grants, counsel, and prayer.



If you'd like to know more about mission work throughout Missouri or make a gift in support of outreach efforts, contact us!

Simply call 314-590-6200
Or visit mo.lcms.org

Bethlehem Lutheran Church & Greater Things

Urban Ministry

North St. Louis Area



Rev. John Schmidtke leads
online worship



Bethlehem VBS



Associate Pastor Gerard Bolling
leads online Bible Study

Mission Overview

Bethlehem Lutheran Church and the partnership program Greater Things are located in an urban community that has been decayed, but is rebounding. Bethlehem saw a need to reach children in the community, but unable to afford starting a Lutheran school, they instead helped to create 2 charter schools close to their church and offer after a Lutheran after school program. Around 80 kids attend every afternoon, five days a week.

Greater Things is a 3 year outreach and partnership program with churches in the extended St. Louis area. The partnerships aren't just financial, as churches assist Bethlehem with staffing (such as Treasurer assistance) and volunteering with projects and programs. In return, suburban churches are inspired and learn new ministry ideas. There are 3 main areas of focus for Greater Things: reaching kids via summer programs and "club nights" during the school year; hosting a deaf ministry which includes integrated worship services, a sign choir, and sign fellowship on Thursday nights; and organizing the North St. Louis Volunteer Initiative which connects suburban Lutherans wanting to get involved in a "hand on" capacity. Bethlehem and Greater Things had over 150 suburban volunteers that would come and help with anything from small groups to assisting with club nights during the school year.

Pastor Schmidtke explains that how Bethlehem does ministry is different, but they are "Lutheran in every way". Both Pastor Schmidtke and Pastor Gerard Bolling of Bethlehem are always trying new things, not for the sake of change, but for the sake of better reaching people with the Gospel. "If we don't constantly study the people of our community and think about how best to reach them with the Gospel, our ministry will quickly die."

Changes Since COVID-19

They work with Faith in Oakville to record services to stream out digitally, Pastor Bolling has designed Bible Studies for online that has been sent out to 200 kids, volunteers have helped to distribute food to 80 families, and Bethlehem's small groups continue to meet and new people are joining. "With COVID-19 you have to think creatively, you have to realize ministry looks really different. But it's a different look for a different time. Same Jesus." Pastor Schmidtke

Campus Ministry Network

Campus Ministry

Based in Columbia



Service Time!
Staining Decks
at Heit's Point

Go Leadership Retreat
March 6-7, 2020
With Rev Micah Glenn

Students in front of
Lutheran Student Center
in Springfield

DCE Ross at Best
Practices for
Campus Ministry

Mission Overview

Campus Ministry Network serves the 15 different campus ministries across Missouri. The network is more than just a location finder for a campus ministry, though, it connects Lutheran students across the state and provides resources for the many different campuses. One of the biggest resources for students comes through the Go Leadership Retreat.

The retreat invites all college students (they don't have to be Lutheran) to Columbia for an overnight retreat experience. This year's theme and focus of the breakout sessions was "Witnessing & Telling the Testimony: How do you have spiritual conversations?" presented by Rev. Micah Glenn. There's plenty of Christian fellowship time too! This year 32 students came from all corners of Missouri, which is more than double the number from last year.

Lydia Ross, DCE in Columbia, spearheads the Campus Ministry Network and the Go Leadership Retreat. She coordinates with the many campus ministries to help them with sustainable campus ministry practices, such as how to successfully attend a school's organization fair or ensuring that campus ministries have an accountable point person in place from year to year so that ministries will survive and thrive even after people graduate.

Changes Since COVID-19

Ross explains that a lot has changed for students since the schools are closed during COVID-19. Needs arise from helping students find internet and food to long term consequences that student's don't even know the fully impact of. "For example, at Mizzou all summer activities are cancelled, the football team can't practice right now (in the fall the football season is a major fundraiser for our ministry), and schools are cutting funding in departments so students aren't even sure how that effects them academically," Ross explains, "also having Spring organization fairs cancelled makes it challenging to connect with new students. At least Zoom meetings are connecting people."

Christian Friends of New America

Multiethnic Ministry

Greater St. Louis Area



CFNA volunteers help package and distribute food during COVID-19.

Mission Overview

Christian Friends of New America (CFNA) is a ministry helping refugees and immigrants in the Saint Louis area, accessing their needs and helping to provide resources. Most importantly, CFNA provides spiritual, Lutheran resources. Rev. Stanish Stanley oversees CFNA.

Like many missions, CFNA started from a few churches seeing a need in their community. In the early 2000's, churches like Messiah and Concordia, Kirkwood had ministries that grew quickly and would become organized as CFNA in 2002, with a building on S. Grand Blvd in South St. Louis opening in 2006. The ministry continues to grow through word of mouth amongst the refugee community and churches will also connect new American families with CFNA.

Some of the programs that CFNA provides include tutoring for students, furniture donations, sewing & cooking classes, English as a second language classes, driving permit assistance, providing driving for medical appointments, LWML Women's Bible Study, health and wellness screenings, and more. They also connect new families with other kids and families in churches around St. Louis.

Changes Since COVID-19

A lot has changed for this center, which normally exists to have its doors open to the community. Stanley says that they have had to adjust their programs to comply with the health guidelines. The center tries and help explain all the updates to those struggling with English. Tutoring for students has moved online via video conferencing. There is a food distribution being served three times a week from the center. Since people cannot gather for the meals, CFNA processes the food donations, packages, and distributes them. Some days, they serve over 140 meals per delivery. They have also created a COVID-19 assistance fund, partnering with many churches including St. John's Morganford, Ascension, Trinity, Messiah, and more in an effort to provide financial assistance during this uncertain time. To date, they have raised over \$30,000, \$9,000 of which has been donated to those in need.

Church Partnerships

Immanuel Barnhart & St. John's Arnold

Rural Ministry

Eastern Missouri



S.T.M Student Austin Wellhousen provides online worship for Immanuel during COVID-19

Mission Overview

Immanuel Lutheran Church in Barnhart was looking for help filling their pastoral vacancy. Rev. Bill Geis, Missouri District's Assistant to the President: Missions & Congregational Services, contacted St. John's in Arnold to see if they would be willing to partner. Previously, St. John's has successfully partnered with Holy Cross in Ste. Genevieve.

What does it mean to partner with another church?

Rev. Andy Becker, Family Life Pastor at St. John's Arnold, explains, "Really the idea is not to create a second campus of St. John's. Immanuel has their own unique personality and culture that we want to be able to help flourish so that God's kingdom will flourish. We want to help them move forward so that they are able to move forward in ministry." St. John's does more than just provide a preacher. Austin Wellhousen, S.T.M. student at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, works out of St. John's and primarily with Immanuel. He says that the connection between the two church communities is "recognizing that they are part of a much larger church and realizing how best can we reach the Barnhart and Arnold communities."

Changes Since COVID-19

Like most churches around the District, Immanuel has moved its worship and fellowship to a digital format. "In one way it's disappointing," says Wellhousen, "because the congregation at Immanuel had so many great community engagement activities planned. But, it's also strengthened our relationships. A lot of people are excited to get back to church. And there are a lot of people that haven't been active that are excited to get back. The church is excited to have those community programs when they are able to."

Our Redeemer

Multiethnic Ministry

Kansas City



Rev. Brad Zerkel talks with a community member



Associate Pastor, Rev. Vicente Sanchez tabling



Members of the Liberian Community at Our Redeemer

Mission Overview

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church used to be full of midwest, European descendants. But over the many decades, its demographics have changed drastically. Our Redeemer is located in such a diverse-cultured part of Kansas City, that one can hear 47 different languages spoken at the local high school. Rev. Brad Zerkel, Senior Pastor at Our Redeemer, explains, "Kansas City is a secondary refugee city. So when New York City and Philadelphia have met their capacity, immigrants and refugees come here." Our Redeemer offers 3 different language services every weekend: English, Spanish, and Konobo the language of a Liberian tribe.

Zerkel credits his congregation with seeing the need to minister to many different cultures. "The need for these ministries is layity led," comments Zerkel, "they noticed the church was changing so they wanted to change with it or else it would die. If a congregation doesn't embrace change, it won't happen."

Changes Since COVID-19

Like many across the District, services are online. But this has different results for the different members in the congregation. Zerkel explains, "For the Liberian community, services have increased, from once a week to three times a week. And because Konobo is small and tight knit, their services get shared to wherever in America members of the tribe can be found, Philadelphia, South Dakota, and Minnesota."

Our Redeemer has also been working with 3 other sister Lutheran congregations to get supplies such as hand sanitizers, food, gloves, as well as offering prayers to people in the community. Zerkel notes, "Just be with your people. Outside of the pains, there is nothing but blessings. God is going to use this for His glory. The church is very proactive... people are excited to be able to worship together again when we are able."

Light of Christ

Multiethnic Ministry

Olivette



Rev. Ed Lim leads the children's message



Seniors gather for fellowship



Handmade food at the Dumpling Party



Fellowship Field Trip

Mission Overview

Light of Christ is a Chinese Ministry based out of Immanuel, Olivette in the St. Louis area. They reach out to the many Chinese nationals living in St. Louis. Rev. Ed Lim is the Associate Pastor at Immanuel Olivette and also is the main Pastor for Light of Christ. Lim says, "Many Chinese scientists and researchers come to St. Louis because of the hospitals and universities. This means that there are now a lot families and older adults (parents of the working members of the family) living in St. Louis looking for a spiritual and cultural outlet. This is where Light of Christ comes in."

Light of Christ offers worship services that blend Mandarin and English. The church also offers Bible studies, prayer meetings, youth group, and a book club with an English-languaged Christian book. It helps readers to learn a new language and about God's love.

During the week, Light of Christ also has a Chinese Community Center, which serves as an outreach for the church. The center offers many programs for senior citizens. Seniors can participate in singing classes, exercise classes, art classes, computer classes, citizen classes, and English classes (offered at two levels.) Most of the senior citizens can't drive, so Light of Christ works to arrange rides for them as well. On average, 20-30 seniors attend classes with an average age of 70!

Light of Christ is growing a lot. Baptisms continue to increase and this year two women from Light of Christ signed up for E.I.I.T Deaconess certification at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Every year Light of Christ has a Dumpling Party where families from Light of Christ gather together and make dumplings for anyone who comes, a sort of sausage dinner. This year, 200-300 families visited for the fresh, handmade delicacies!

Changes Since COVID-19

Having familial ties to China, many members of Light of Christ knew about the severity of COVID-19 back in January, and Lim says they started preparing accordingly. They divided a systematic approach with everyone at their congregation, turning small groups into multiple prayer groups of a few families. Each prayer group has a leader who calls and check in on the group's families.

Having many physicans in the congregation, Light of Christ also knew first hand about the need for medical, facial masks. So together, the congregation raised around \$12,000 in matching funds to buy and give away masks. Some of the suppliers they are working with even donated masks to the cause.

All Nations

Church Plant

University City



All Nation's 3 on 3
Basketball Tournament



Rev. Chris Paavola
leads online worship



All Nation's
Back-to-School Rally

Mission Overview

All Nations is a new church in University City (the Greater St. Louis area.) Rev. Chris Paavola loved the neighborhood, but realized there was not a Lutheran church in the area, so decided to start one. Paavola describes All Nations as a “church *of* small groups not a church *with* small groups.” Paavola also reinforces that diversity is an important element in their church’s identity. “One of our values,” Paavola states, “is that we will be a church as diverse as the city that we serve. You’ll see 100 people who are Black, Asian, European, Hispanic, etc.”

All Nations started around 3 years ago with gatherings of small groups in homes. Gatherings led to baptisms, and the church kept growing. All Nations acquired a building 2 years ago, but small group worship is still an essential element to All Nations. The last Sunday of the month is “small group Sunday” where groups gather in homes, rather than the main church building.

When asked how All Nations reaches new people in the community, Rev. Paavola explains, “We didn’t know people in the community, so we went to the community. We volunteered at different organizations outside of the church, such as public schools and city halls. We also walked about the community and prayed for what we saw. We asked God, ‘How do you want us to reach this community?’” All Nations has also hosted events like a 3 on 3 basketball tournament in 2019 and Family Fun Fridays, which is like a VBS at a playground.

Changes Since COVID-19

“All Nations is used to meeting in homes and live streaming,” Paavola reassures, “The message is the same, but the media is different... The home is the epi-center of faith. The church is gathering in people’s homes. I know there are couples who have prayed over their food, or created a family altar for the very first time... that’s beautiful.”

International Student Ministry

Campus Ministry

Greater St. Louis Area



ISM's Thanksgiving Dinner

ISM's Furniture Giveaway

Sharon Riordan with ISM group

ISM Bonfire

Mission Overview

International Student Ministry (ISM) reaches out to international college students in the Greater St. Louis area. Sharon Riordan, who leads ISM, explains "This started very informally about 25 years ago, now every year there are around 8,000 international students in the St. Louis area, and they bring with them about 3,000 family members. The majority of which don't know about Jesus, or have even heard His name."

Many students discover ISM through word of mouth and their many events held throughout the year. In August every year, ISM hosts a furniture giveaway on the campus of Washington University. It's a big event with lots of coordination. It takes months to gather and store the furniture, meet the students coming to collect the furniture, and then have volunteers with trucks and trailers help distribute the furniture. There are also American and Christian cultural events such as a Easter dinner, pumpkin carving, Thanksgiving dinner, square dancing, and more. Each event connects (almost always) unchurched international students with Christian witnesses. Riordan expounds, "The beauty of this too, is that not only do we have amazing LCMS volunteers, but also churches supporting us by opening their doors to let us use their space."

ISM also has a successful "Friendship Family Program" where members of LCMS churches are paired with an international student for a year, or even just a semester. While they are only required to meet up twice a semester, Riordan explains, "it almost always transpires into meeting many, many times. It's such a great organic way to have an ongoing witness with people."

ISM also offers English conversation groups, a mom and baby group, and help with weekly dinners at Maryville University.

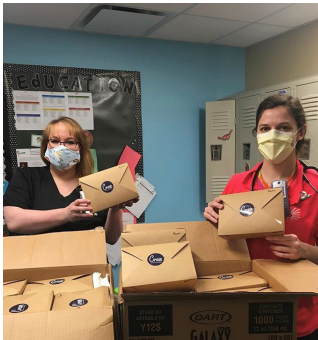
Changes Since COVID-19

Since ISM usually ministers via events and meeting on campuses, COVID-19 has put quite a damper on things. Riordan states that they've had to cancel their Easter dinner as well as ISM's big annual fundraiser dinner. But that they continue to connect with students over the phone to keep connections and make sure their families are okay.

Reliant & Crave

Urban & Student Ministry

South St. Louis City



Crave Volunteers
Prepare Meals



Crave Meal
Delivery!



Reliant Small Group
Digital Meeting



Reliant Church
Main Building

Mission Overview

Reliant Church operates out of Crave Coffee House, serving the South St. Louis City neighborhood and Saint Louis University's campus. Reliant is an urban multi-site of Christ Memorial Lutheran Church which is located in South St. Louis County. It's an two-fold relationship. Christ Memorial owns the building of Crave Coffee House, which is normally opened on weekdays. On weekends, Christ Memorial's Church, Reliant, hosts a worship service and fellowship.

Starting a church in a new community takes quite a bit of involvement and outreach. Rev. Bobby Walston, Associate Pastor at Reliant & Christ Memorial, talks about being able to expand the church in a new neighborhood. "We're really active in our neighborhood association group. The Crave building hosts [their meetings]. We've gotten to know our alderwoman and other members of the association really well. We've done special events like trunk or treat, spring fests, and fall festivals in previous years," says Walston. "There are not a lot of '3rd spaces' in this area. (Places for people to just go and be.) So we focus on opening up our space and welcoming people into the building."

Walston also says that they volunteer with other events in the area. "We've participated in community events, like neighborhood beautification days, tree trimmings, cleaning lots, and hopefully be able to do home repairs for elderly and lower income individuals." Even if these events aren't Christian in name, Walston says, "they know we proclaim Jesus, we're not shy about that!"

Reliant also hosts VBS and a speaker series in the fall, which helps to bring in neighbors.

Changes Since COVID-19

While COVID-19 has closed Reliant and Crave's building, it certainly hasn't shut down their operations. Reliant church continues to meet virtually in their community small groups, which Walston says, "is the heart and backbone of our ministry." Reliant's spring speaker is looking to shift to speaking in the fall. And Crave has shifted operations from coffee house to serving prepared lunches and dinners to the nearby hospitals like Cardinal Glennon and SLU 3 days a week. Walston notes, "our service has shifted from a 'come to us' to a 'go to them'."



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 or 314-478-5244) to connect your church to mission, stewardship and coaching resources.



Missouri District

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD

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.

Shine!

MATTHEW 5:16



Missouri District
Servant Event

SEPTEMBER 18-27, 2020

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
for more information!