

# The VOICE

JUNE 2020

MISSOURI DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

**IN THIS ISSUE:  
MILITARY MISSIONS  
ACROSS MISSOURI**

# From the President's Desk: The Church: Separated, but United



***This issue of The Voice focuses on ministry and missions related to those who serve in the Armed Forces. Missouri District mission grants support the important work of our congregations in Knob Noster and St. Robert. Also featured are stories about those who have served in the past and those who currently serve our nation. May God continue to bless and keep all those have fought to defend our freedom! We pray that God would bless our nation to be a people united.***

Church at its most basic definition means an assembly. The COVID-19 crisis has been taxing of health care professionals and civic leaders at every level. It has also challenged individual congregations while being called on to refrain from gathering out of concern for one another. How are we still the Church when we do not assemble? How are we still the Church when we do not meet together? Dear friends, the history of the Christian Church has seen times when groups of Christians were not able to gather. Though we have been distant and separated during this crisis, we are still united!

We can rejoice and give thanks to God for the blessing of technology that has allowed the saints of God to assemble in different ways than in the past. Throughout this crisis, pastors and tech-savvy laypeople have adapted to the circumstances so that the Word of God can continue to reach the members of the flock. Streaming and recorded services have enabled us gather around the Word in our homes as it continues to dwell richly within us. This gift of technology should not be taken for granted, but is something for which we can rejoice as the Church has continued to assemble together to receive Christ, present in His Word.

However, a streamed or recorded service is never the ultimate goal. We are not content to be simply hearing the Word of God as it is proclaimed via technology. What we find described and portrayed in the Scriptures is a community of believers who gather around Word and Sacraments, praise God for His mercy and grace, offer our gifts to the Lord for the work of His Church, and finally to pray for and care for one another. It is a beautiful thing to behold when a community of faith cares for another, flowing from the font, the lectern, the pulpit and the altar. Since Christ has so loved you, what a blessing it is to show care and concern for the other members of your community of faith.

This pandemic should highlight the unity that we have in Christ Jesus. During a time of distance and separation, like St. Paul, we have longed to see our fellow believers and to celebrate the unity we share. Though we may have different opinions over how restricted or open our communities or even our congregation is during this time, we are united in Christ. Christians can disagree while bearing with one another in love. Elders may not be in complete agreement on when a congregation gathers for worship. School board members may find unanimity difficult in determining when to reopen the school. In spite of differences of opinion of such decisions, we are united in our confession of faith, in the mission that Christ has given to His Church, in the works of mercy that we can show to our neighbor in need, and ultimately in our certainty of God's love for us in Jesus.

Our congregations will not all reopen on the same date. Even when our congregations do reopen, there will be individual members who are not able to return because of their own health concerns. Yet we are one people, united in Christ, in confession, in purpose, in mission. These are certainly trying times, but our Lord continues to be at work through the Church and our individual congregations even in these dark and latter days. May God bless your congregation with a unity of faith and purpose as God continues His work among us!

Fraternally in Christ,



President Lee Hagan

## **PRESIDENT'S PRAYER LIST:**

**Please pray for our new pastors and teachers who have received calls to serve at congregations and schools in Missouri this year.**

**Pray also for our health care professionals as they continue to be God's instruments of healing in our communities.**

**Pray for pastors, elders and church leaders who make decisions about resuming public worship and the ongoing care for the flock and outreach to their communities.**

**Finally, please pray for those who serve in the Armed Forces, their families and those who care for their spiritual needs.**



# Faith Lutheran Knob Noster Whiteman Air Force Base

Faith Lutheran Church in Knob Noster is located next to Whiteman Air Force Base. The military base is more than simply an outreach for Faith, though, it's part of their church's identity. Rev. Jon-Michael Schweigert, pastor at Faith, says that 50-60% of their church is military connected. Military connected is a term used to describe those serving, but also their families and their dependents. "Because Faith has such a large group of military connected members, there's a lot of love for taking care of the airmen," says Schweigert. Schweigert says that Faith's proximity to Whiteman AFB means that military has always played a part in the church's life, but the church has been working very hard and intentionally over the last few years to increase engagement and outreach to military families.

A big opportunity came for Faith members to connect with families on base through a VBS program. The person on base responsible for coordinating the two VBS camps (one protestant and one Catholic) was given short notice to arrange things. She knew someone who attended Faith and asked for their help in coordinating the Protestant VBS. Faith worked quickly and arranged and used the CPH VBS on base. "Then the chapel on base got its budget cut by 80%, because of flood damage, so the base combined the Catholic and the Protestant VBS, and continued to work with Faith to use CPH materials. It's an entirely Lutheran VBS, even with Baptism," explains Schweigert.

In addition to yearly VBS, members at Faith sponsor a meal once a month for airmen at a place called the Stealth Lounge, a place filled with old televisions and foosball tables where airmen can hangout in their off time. Also, every other year members at Faith sponsor a big cookout for the military. Pastor Schweigert says, "This cookout started as a Plus One initiative and it was so successful and liked that we kept it! We usually get a couple hundred people that stop through. And it changes as needs change. Last time we packaged up a lot of food for airmen that couldn't get off of base."

Pastor Schweigert says that a key element to having a church close to a military base is "being vulnerable- have the ability to make friends and then have them move on... you have to be cool knowing that you're only going to have someone for a few years." However, Schweigert continues, "For the inherently transient life of the servicemen and women, the church becomes a stable place of refuge. God is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. Military life is not the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow."



# Veteran Spotlight:

## Melvin Bockelman, CMS, USAF, Ret.

As the "Military Missions" edition continues, we'd like to spotlight a World War II veteran from the Missouri District. Meet Mr. Melvin Bockelman, CMS, USAF, Ret.

Melvin Bockelman was raised in Concordia, Missouri and attended and was confirmed at St. Paul's Lutheran Church. He was only 16 when he joined the Merchant Marines in 1944 with his parents' permission. He served as a helmsman on a ship tasked with transporting aviation gasoline to the aircraft carriers on the Pacific Front. Bockelman would end up making three trans-Pacific trips through the warzone.

He recounts, "I had to follow the captain's orders exactly. You don't drive a ship like you drive a car, and you don't turn the ship unless the captain orders it. We had to zigzag to avoid Japanese submarines."

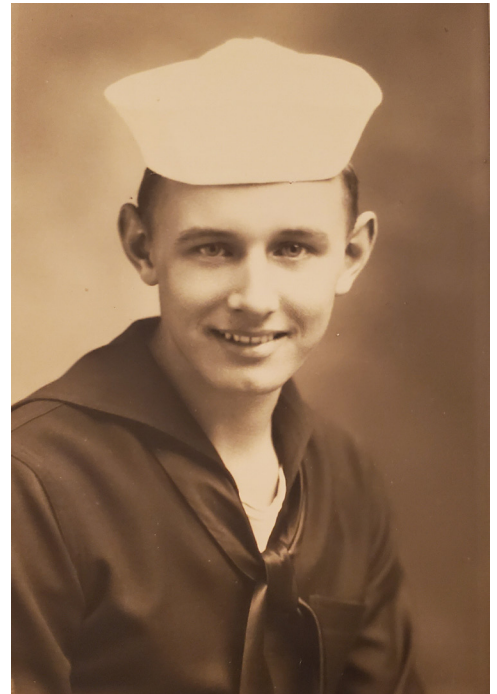
When asked what it was like being a Lutheran in World War II Bockelman explains, "There weren't very many [chaplains] on the ship. The only chaplains we saw is when we went to port in Okinawa July 1945. We were subject to the Kamazai attacks. A navy chaplain came around to the ship and gave the Lutherans communion. Overall, there was the armed forces commissioned prayer book. All the service men got their prayer books. That's the only thing we had for days and months at a time."

On one of his trips, Bockelman docked at a very recently liberated Philippines. "We had to anchor at the bay because the docks had been bombed. I ran across a little boy, Filipino, naked, and about four years old. In Manila, he was so hot. I took him back to the ship, cleaned him up and gave him clothes. I was 17 then, and I wanted to take him back home...but my commanding officer said that I would get in trouble with the authorities who check passports coming back into the US. So I had to take him back. I took him what is now is the Concordia Children's Services. And I've always wondered what happened to him, and I sometimes wake up in the middle of the night thinking about what happened to him."

After World War II, Bockelman returned home to finish his last year of high school. He then joined the Air Force, where he would serve until 1966. During his time in the Air Force, Bockelman met his wife, Harriet Klingeman. "One winter, outside of Omaha," remembers Bockelman, "it was cold, and I was down hard. I asked the guys 'where do you meet girls?' they said that I had to go to church. So I went to local Lutheran church and there she was!"

The Bockelmans married in 1949 and had three children. During his time in the Air Force, the Bockelmans traveled quite a bit, including living in London and Hawaii. After retiring from the military, Melvin Bockelman and his wife settled in the Kansas City area living closer to family.

"I'm 93 years old" says Bockelman, "When I go, I'll be thinking about that little boy, and I hope to see him in heaven."



**Bockelman at 17, 1944  
Merchant Marines**

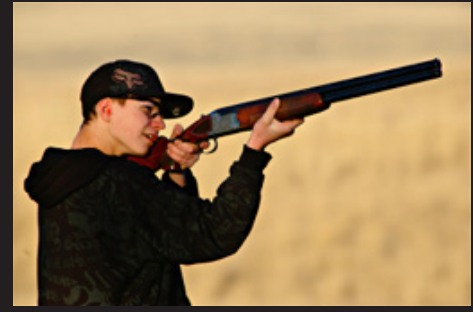


**Bockelman at 92  
In his 1947 Uniform**

\*Bockelman is pictured with the WWII Victory Medal, Philippine Liberation Medal, & the US Air Force Commendation Medal



# Our Savior Christian Academy



In western Missouri just north of Kansas City lies Our Savior Christian Academy, a fully accredited Lutheran School working with military families. It's a unique situation. There is one Lutheran church and one Lutheran School, but they operate on two different campuses: Smithville, and Platte City.

Situated close to Fort Leavenworth Army Post in Kansas and also receiving families from Whiteman Air Force Base, Our Savior Christian Academy has many military connections. "It's very much an aspect of our church and school," says Lavonne Pappert, Principal of OSCA. "Our Senior Pastor is former military, serving in Iraq. And we didn't set out to do this- it just sort of happened that military came together. Military folks attract military folks."

Pappert continued on to say that OSCA is situated uniquely to be able to serve students with a high academic standard while serving military families. "These families don't follow the same structure that others do. ... We have to make sure that we have the flexibility, technology, and the privacy requirements to be able to have a child step out of the classroom and have a meaningful and engaging conversation [virtually] with a deployed parent. This is vital for a student's wellbeing. And we have to make sure that we are infinitely flexible with scheduling. If a parent comes back for 2 or 3 weeks, and the school isn't on break, how can we give them a break so that they can be with their family the whole time? How do we balance the kids' workload and how can we reintegrate them into the classroom? These are very calculated educational and academic choices so the Gospel can be proclaimed, excellence in education can continue and we're in service to that family."

**Featured right  
are four Academy  
learners who are  
dedicating years of  
learning and service  
to the United States  
Air Force. These ladies  
are all entering the  
139th Air Lift Wing.  
Way to go!**

**KATELYN BROOKE  
LEAPE  
NURSING**



**KIANNA LYNNE'  
PAPPERT  
SECURITY FORCES**



**FAITH ELIZABETH  
PERKINS  
COMMAND POST**



**MOLLY ANN  
PERKINS  
FIRE AND RESCUE**



# Military Spotlight: Chaplain Tristan Engle



Chaplain Tristan Engle currently serves as a Chaplain in the US Navy. And even though he's currently stationed on the other side of the world in Japan, he is originally from Concordia, Missouri. Studying dietetics and nursing in college, Chaplain Engle worked as a nurse's aid for 6 years before entering the Seminary. After serving in Southeast Missouri for awhile, Chaplain Engle kept thinking about the military. "My first congregation was amazing- I loved them, they loved me, but the military was always in the back of my mind," explains Engle. Engle knew Navy Chaplain Carl Muehler, whose brother, Chaplain Craig Muehler connected with Engle and explained how serving as a chaplain worked. (Be sure to read Chaplain Craig Muehler's interview in this publication!)

A chaplain's job is specifically to serve as a religious chaplain. "We can be trained in a lot, but our job is revolving around helping people... we can also work on resilience teams: suicide prevention, drug addiction, and recovery for friends and family." says Engle. Everyday and every week in the life of a chaplain is different. But there are four main things that chaplains do.

## **Provide what spiritual things are possible.**

"The military wants us to support servicemembers, but also", Engle explains, "we're not a 'catch-all' ministry. We're LCMS."

## **Facilitate**

If there is something that a chaplain cannot do, such as a service from a different faith, the military doesn't want the LCMS chaplain to step in and provide services for them, but rather help facilitate that individual to find resources to do their worship.

## **Care about everybody.**

This is regardless of whether someone has faith or not. Chaplains serve as counsel, help, and a sounding board. "We do a lot of counseling even though we're not professional counselors, we care about them," says Engle, "Stu Brassie (formerly of the Missouri District Office) says 'we forget that every pastor is a chaplain- taking care of everybody.'"

## **Advise**

Chaplains give advice to individuals and to command.

Engle asks, "Keep us in your prayers! If there are chaplains of servicemembers in the community, keep them in your prayers. The Ministry for the Armed Forces at Synod has great resources you can use, just contact their office."



# Faith Lutheran St. Robert



Just Southwest of Rolla lies Faith Lutheran Church in St. Robert, located next to Fort Leonard Wood, a large Army Training Facility. "There's always been a strong tie," Rev. John Perling, pastor at Faith, describes. "We're not called as a congregation on post, but we are at the front door of Fort Leonard Wood, so in that way it's kind of like a campus ministry. But about 80% of our church body is military or military retired... We have retired and active military serving on counsel. We have people coming through as trainees for 9 weeks at a time. Because Fort Leonard Wood serves as a training installation for military police, chemical readiness, nuclear readiness, and engineer core, there are all branches of the military. Right next door there are big guns, little guns, things that glow, and things that will make you glow."

While there has always been a strong cultural connection between the military and Faith Lutheran Church, Faith increased its presence on grounds in 2015. Pastor Perling explains, "When I first arrived [at Faith] there was an LCMS chaplain on post. So there wasn't really a need at that time for our church to step in, but he was reassigned in 2015... with no chaplain, Word and sacrament ministry became a big focus and need. That's when I started as a community resource volunteer chaplain. Which means that I'm not military but I fill in to act as a chaplain."

Pastor Perling offers a word of advice to young people considering joining the military. They should be specific when describing their religion, "They ought to take care that when enrolling there is an option to describe what their religious preference is- they need to say 'Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod' If they just say 'Christian' then the military will lump them in with other Christian denominations...then I can't designate and request permission to come onto base, to help and administer to them. The officers take the ability for soldiers to fulfill themselves spiritually very seriously, but if people don't designate, they can't always tell."

There are a variety of outreach methods since so much of the town and surrounding area have military ties, there are other organizations helping to serve the military, and Faith members can help there too including helping a free women's center for first time parentst that might have family members miles and miles away. "Not everything is out of our building," says Perling, "but we support the neighborhood to help those serving in the military. ... Many widows will volunteer at the USO and connect with other groups serving the military in the area to help and serve." Faith also uses national holidays to host meals for active military looking for a break off-base.

Reaching active military can be tricky, since there is a wide variety of schedules and relocations. Some active military members might have to wait until basic training is finished to be able to leave base and come to church, or servicemembers might only be free during mealtimes to connect. Pastor Perling says they use online tools like Facebook Watch Parties, and post resources such as worship, Bible Studies, and guides/FAQs so visitors can familiarize themselves with Faith. "We are a pretty standard worship service- out of the hymnal, so that many people can find familiarity with it," describes Perling, "They have enough change going on in their lives, we can provide stability in worship service."





# Ministry to the Armed Forces

## An Interview with Craig Muehler

As military ministries and services are highlighted this month, a great resource to examine is the Military to the Armed Forces, a resource organization associated with Synod. Read the interview with Chaplain Craig Muehler, retired Navy Captain and Director of Ministry to the Armed Forces for the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.



### WHAT IS MINISTRY TO THE ARMED FORCES (MAF):

MAF is a branch of the LCMS to make sure we take care of the spiritual, Lutheran needs of the men and women serving in the military. We recruit, train, and sustain the chaplains and their families. My job, though, is to meet with Dept. of Defense to make sure chaplains have the religious liberties to preach and teach according to their conscience and according to our church, obviously, and to their ordination vows. I also recruit pastors to be chaplains, because there's such a need, in fact, all three service branches are looking to have more chaplains.

The MAF (really the Lutheran Church) has been around since the Civil War when CFW Walther endorsed a chaplain for Union army. It expanded in World War I and really took off in World War II when the Missouri Synod actually set up a board with the military to endorse, train, and recruit chaplains to serve. This then carried on with Korea and Vietnam and on to today.

It is really similar to being a missionary in any culture because a pastor becoming a chaplain literally has to fit in to the military culture, they have to dress like they do, meet the same physical standards and tests, medical clearances, the security clearances, wear the uniform, to be part of the team... Otherwise, if they're not part of the team, they can really be marginalized.

### HOW CAN MISSOURI CONGREGATIONS HELP?

Operation Barnabas is best since you can do a little or a lot- the sky's the limit. MAF can even meet with a congregation and provide training to congregations wanting to start an operations Barnabas. It gives them a latitude to do something in their area. With Faith Lutheran Church in St. Robert's and Faith Lutheran Church in Knob Noster, Missouri has really led the way with Operation Barnabas, with the wonderful relationships that they have established with the commanders on base.

No matter how small of a town you have there are going to be veterans. They are a unique group- veterans- that love to serve and love to lead. Once a congregation is known as a veteran friendly congregation, that they have served their country honorably in their vocations, veterans will seem more open to coming into the church and feeling welcome. Have congregations with members in military connect with us and we can provide resources such as Ministry by Mail, connect them with a LCMS chaplain, send them a Portals of Prayer, a quarterly newsletter, and other Lutheran devotional books all written specifically for servicemembers.

**To Contact the MAF:**  
[lcms.org/armedforces](https://lcms.org/armedforces)  
[lcmschaps@lcms.org](mailto:lcmschaps@lcms.org)

\*Pictures in this article and on the cover provided by MAF



# Thank You!



COVID-19 effected many plans for schools in the spring: no senior skip days, delayed or cancelled graduations, no end of the year parties... the list goes on. One yearly celebration that most could not gather together to mark is honoring teachers who are retiring.

The District Office would like to take a moment and note the teachers around Missouri who have served so faithfully for so many years, but who had to miss their last change to say "goodbye" to their class in person.



## **Pam Niewald** **Immanuel, Olivette**

Pam Niewald has spent all 40 years of her teaching career at Immanuel, Olivette. Lutheran schools seem to be part of Ms. Niewald's DNA. Originally from St. Ann, MO she attended Hope Lutheran School and Lutheran High School North. After completing her degree at William Woods University, Ms. Niewald colloquied at Concordia, Chicago. Her advice? "Enjoy each day of teaching. God is working His plan through you, as He has placed His children in your care. Know that He loves you and has promised to be with you always."



## **Doug & Lee Wagner** **Immanuel, St. Charles**

Doug and Lee Wagner have a combined 81 years of teaching that they share- including 55 years at Immanuel, St. Charles. Originally from Nebraska and Illinois they attended Concordia

Teachers College in Seward, NE. Their advice? "To all teachers young and young-at-heart: wake up every morning excited to share the love of Jesus through your actions and words! Enjoy the awesome ministry adventure the Lord is guiding you through. Keep creating, keep exploring, keep loving, keep laughing! Remember that our amazing Lord holds you and your family in the palm of His loving hands- and He won't drop you- He promises!"

## **Also Retiring from Immanuel, St. Charles**



**Debbie Boyer**  
**5th Grade Teacher**  
**25 years**



**Ken Von Ahsen**  
**4th Grade Teacher**  
**35 years**



**Lisa Bangert**  
**Immanuel, Washington**

Lisa Bangert hails from Nebraska where she attended University of Nebraska before going on to teach for over 30 years, most of which was at Lutheran schools. Ms. Bangert notes that one of her favorite aspects of teaching is when families of her students get baptized. "I have been able to witness several students through my years be baptized. I have also had the honor of becoming a Godparent to three of those students!" She says that technology has changed quite a bit over the years, "especially with COVID-19!" She loves helping children learn of Jesus' love and remarks that some of her favorite memories include Ocean Parties, Mother's Day Teas, and Graduations. Her advice? "Show your students the love of Jesus and love them like they were your own! Never give up on a student, find what works for each one!"



## Jill Ince Immanuel, Washington



Jill Ince has taught in the Resource Room at Immanuel for 11 years. Ms. Ince is originally from Indiana and attended Lake Forest College and Purdue University. One of her favorite teaching experiences came this past year when she invited a former student (now in college) to have donuts and play games before school with a current student. "Listening to the older student speak to the younger one with advice, confidence, and compassion was a wonderful experience... it was a great reminder that I may not have all the answers, but if I can put students in the right situation, perhaps they can find them on their own." Her advice? "That's EASY! Find laughter each day. Some days you will have to look harder than others, but it's there. Find the humor in tough situations. It can relieve stress and lighten the situation a bit, helping to make anger subside and compassion and love take its place. Also, get to devotions on time (sometimes tough for me!)"



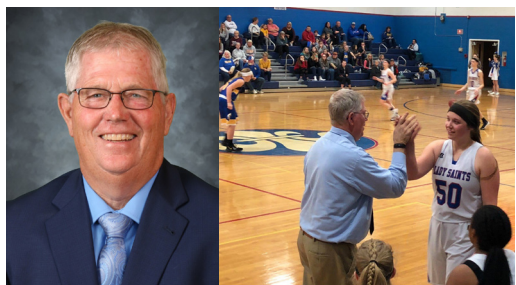
## Armand Haak Lutheran High, St. Charles

Armand Haak, math teacher (and often involved with athletic departments) for Lutheran High, St. Charles graduated from Concordia, Nebraska and received a Master's degree from University of Illinois-Chicago. His teaching career started in California! Mr. Haak would also teach and serve as head football coach at Walther Lutheran High in Chicago before arriving at Lutheran High in 1996. Everyone at Lutheran High would like to thank Armand and Karen for being such a blessing to the LHS community!



## Mary Magnus Springfield Lutheran School

Mary Magnus is a Springfield native. She attended Concordia, NE before moving onto receive a Master's degree from Missouri University, Columbia and a Master's degree from Missouri State. Ms. Magnus has taught for 44 years, 35 of those at SLS. Her SLS community would like her to know that "Mary has a true servant's heart and will do anything to support her church and school. She is a tremendous example to us all, and will be missed!"



## **John Beerman** **St. Paul, Concordia**

John Beerman is retiring after 34 years in education with the last 26 years at Saint Paul Lutheran High School in Concordia. Mr. Beerman has served as an English and History teachers as well as the head girls basketball coach for 25 years. He also served stints as a baseball coach and football coach. Mr. Beerman has also served the last several years as an administrator. He attended the Central Missouri State University, St. Paul's College, and Concordia Teachers College in Seward, NE. His advice? "Not really sure what my advice would be, but I'd say this:

1. Put Christ first in all you do--He will lead you.
2. Treat each student as God's child--they are all unique
3. Be positive and keep a smile on your face.

An amazing thing to me has been the number of former students who keep in touch--especially with our ability to make contact with one another through Facebook, Instagram, and social media. The love we share all stems from the love Christ shares with us. What a joy is ours because of that! I wouldn't trade a second for all that I've been blessed to experience in my career as an educator!"



## **Jan Schmeisser** **St. Paul, St. Joseph** **Preschool Teacher** **17 years**





## Ellie Baker Trinity, Alma



Ellie Baker, of Independence, Kansas graduated from Kansas State University before starting her career as a preschool teacher. Fifteen of those years, Ms. Baker served as a pre-kindergarten teacher at Trinity. Some of her favorite memories include students singing in church and at the spring program, as well as the annual Amtrak train trip from Warrensburg to Sedalia. Ms. Baker says that one notable change over the years is the difference in technology with curriculum planning. "I have been able to get new ideas and materials through websites that email me information and curriculum ideas almost daily. I also have had access to many more activities for music and movement without having to purchase materials such as cds." Her advice? "Never stop looking for new ways to make your teaching fun for both you and your students. When we make learning fun, there is more learning!"



## Steve Schumacher Trinity, Alma

Steve Schumacher was raised on a farm in Alma. After he graduated from Concordia Teacher's College in Seward, NE, he taught all across the country including Las Vegas, California, Illinois, and across Missouri. Altogether, Mr. Schumacher has spent 44 years in Lutheran schools serving as a teacher, youth director, athletic director, coach, and principal. He notes that some highlights from the years include one year an 8th grader, completely new to track and field, ended up learning, working hard, and medaling at state for high jump. "It was a blessing to see him progress and experience success in front of his parents at the state level."

Mr. Schumacher also notes that, "One of the greatest blessings in my ministry has been the opportunity to serve my final year at my home congregations and school in Alma where I was blessed to be nurtured in my faith and taught by loving and caring teachers and youth counselors."

His advice? "Priorities: 1. God, 2. Family, 3. School; continue to grow daily with Bible reading/study and prayer; develop a "servant attitude"; pursue advanced college degrees as soon as you can; keep going- don't quit when times get difficult; take care of yourself spiritually, emotionally, and physically; and develop close relationships with your students, families, co-workers, congregation, and community."



**The Missouri District Office would like to thank all of those serving as God's hands and feet, living out the Great Commission in their vocation and daily lives. Whether you are forming young minds as a teacher or serving in the Dept. of Defense for our nation—thank you for being a blessing!**

**You have our support, prayers, and thanks!**

**Would you join us in praying for our chaplains who serve within the Missouri District?**

Mario Ancira – Navy  
Kenneth Bomberger – Navy  
Brian Chisamore – Army Reserve  
Tristan Engle – Navy  
Glennndon Genthner – Navy  
Jeremy Gorline – Navy Reserve  
Brian Hamer – Navy

Ross Johnson – Army Reserve  
Carl Muehler – Navy  
Jaime Nava – Navy Reserve  
Bobby Niemtschk – Army  
David Oberdieck – Army Reserve  
Douglas Ochner – Army  
Jonathan Shaw – Army

Guillaume Williams – Civil Air Patrol



**Missouri District**

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD