

# The VOICE

AUGUST 2020

MISSOURI DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

IN THIS ISSUE:  
NEW BEGINNINGS IN THE  
MISSOURI DISTRICT



# From the President's Desk:

## Ventures Bold and New



**I am always struck by the account of Jesus preparing breakfast for the disciples after his resurrection. In Matthew's Gospel, the angel tells the women that Jesus is going before them into Galilee, but no further instructions are given. In John's account, we find Peter declaring to the others that he is going fishing. It is a return to what is familiar, a comfort zone, if you will. Equally familiar are Jesus' words to cast the net onto the other side of the boat provides them with another great catch of fish.**

The exchange between Jesus and Peter that follows is not just a restoration of Peter, but a sending of Peter. The Lutheran hymnwriter, Herman Stuempfle writes of the charge that Jesus gave to the disciples:

"O Christ, who called the Twelve to rise and follow you  
Forsaking old, familiar ways For ventures bold and new."  
(Lutheran Service Book 856, v.1)

The last few months have found us in many respects called out of our comfort zones and what was familiar and safe. Our congregations have not been able to provide the care and encouragement that assembling together affords. These have been difficult and challenging times and has led to the regular refrain "I want things to go back to normal." The reality is that things never go back to the way they were. Even in the midst of our longing for the "old, familiar ways," God is doing new things among us even now.

Each summer a band of new teachers, Directors of Christian Education, deaconesses, pastors and vicars are sent out to Missouri District congregations and schools. Our orientation efforts this year will like so many other things be changed and adapted, but we will continue to walk alongside these servants of the Church.

God is also doing a new thing as churches “pivot” to serve their respective flocks in “ventures bold and new” with the unchanging Word of God. From family Sunday School to online Vacation Bible School to creative confirmation programs, this is a time for new approaches with the same old and familiar Word of God. We proclaim the same unchanging message of the changeless Christ in a constantly changing world.

From new mission starts to new workers for the harvest, our God is always doing a new thing in our midst. The theme of this issue of the Missouri District Voice is “New Beginnings.” Please join us in praying for our new servants in our churches and schools. We also invite your prayers for other ventures bold and new from church mission starts to creative approaches to teaching children the faith. Now is the time for us to follow in the steps of Peter as God prepares us to leave what is familiar to where He leads us for the sake of His kingdom.

Finally, I leave you again with words from Herman Stuempfle’s hymn:

“O Christ who sent the Twelve on roads they’d never trod  
To serve, to suffer, teach proclaim the nearer reign of God;  
Send us on ways where faith transcend timidity,  
Where love informs and hope sustains both life and ministry.”  
(LSB 856 v. 4)

Fraternally in Christ,



President Lee Hagan

## PRESIDENT’S PRAYER LIST:

**Please pray for our church and school leaders as we serve during the difficult time of this pandemic.**

**Pray that the Holy Spirit would renew and strengthen all servants who are weary and heavy laden by these challenges.**

**Finally, please pray for our shut-ins and senior members who have felt separated from their loved ones and church in these last months.**





# Praise & Worship Branson

The congregation at Praise & Worship Lutheran Church in Western Branson were blessed this summer to celebrate worshipping in their first ever building—and you helped make that happen!

Praise & Worship started in 2007 as a mission to reach the unchurched in the Branson area. Their first gathering had less than ten dedicated people in attendance and was located in a theater. Over the years the mission would be based out of theaters and homes, wherever they could creatively find space, growing in size every step of the way. In 2013 Praise & Worship officially joined the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. At that time, they were operating out of a winery's event space.

As Praise & Worship continued to grow and the winery got busier, it became clear that Praise & Worship needed a space of their very own. However, in the Branson area space and property are premium. Renting is very costly, as is, of course, buying land and building a structure. That's where the Missouri District was able to help. The District owned land in the Branson area. Leaders at Praise & Worship worked with the District Office to acquire the property and start building a new worship center. Now located on 20 acres in Branson West, the congregation of Praise & Worship can gather together in their own building and use their center to reach even more unchurched.

The congregation at Praise & Worship serves a unique demographic. The mission was started to reach the unchurched, but Rev. Mark Hunsaker, Pastor at Praise & Worship, describes their outreach as "dechurched". He states, "Many have stopped going [to church] years ago, and most do not have a Lutheran background. They maybe went to a Baptist, Assembly of God, etc... This creates a unique opportunity where those worshipping can hear the lifesaving message of Christ crucified, while learning about the Lutheran church along the way. "We'll also have a 'dig deeper' section that explains the parts of the worship," Rev. Hunsaker explains, "like 'today we did a Sanctus, here's what that means.' ...One of the areas that this is a big deal is baptism. We baptize infants, but many were brought up believing that's wrong– that baptism is your promise to God. And we'll take scriptures and show how it's God's promise to you... They get excited about how it's reversed!"

"We're going forth and making disciples– disciples that know that Jesus loves them through Word and Sacrament."  
– Rev. Hunsaker



# How Long, O Lord, How Long?



COVID-19 has brought a host of emotions, hurdles, and changes for everyone. For some, these changes include the loss of a job. And while there are many books that give advice on finding new employment, Dale Kreienkamp's devotion *How Long, O Lord, How Long?* addresses the many emotions that come with unemployment and where God is working in that process.

"I think people get surprised by the emotions: anxiety, anger, embarrassment, self-confidence, and even struggles with identity," Kreienkamp explains. He is no stranger to unemployment as twice he has had his positions eliminated due to organizational restructuring. "When I was first unemployed, my kids were at school, my wife worked part time, and I was left alone. Often people see their coworkers more than their own family, and when that's taken away it can be very lonely."

Kreienkamp continues to explain that often the wrong question is asked when unemployed. "Many people ask 'WHY'... people should be asking 'WHAT'. What am I supposed to learn? And what am I supposed to do next?"

Easy to read and well organized, *How Long, O Lord, How Long* uses firsthand experience and Scripture passages to guide the reader along the many ups and downs of first learning of unemployment, telling friends and family, seeking new work, and healing from the loss of a job. This devotion is not only helpful for those unemployed, but family and friends of someone unemployed will also find its material insightful and useful in supporting their unemployed loved one.

It can also serve as a great resource tool for churches. "Every year there are 21.7 million job losses in the United States in a normal year- this isn't even including COVID-19, this is a 10 year average... and often there are people in congregations not talking about unemployment."

To acquire a devotion for you, your loved one, or to share with your church visit [dalekreienkamp.com](http://dalekreienkamp.com)

"I think that these days, that COVID has kind of paralyzed people. It's so out of the ordinary, that people don't know what to do. So the book will really help people organize their thoughts and their process to help them move forward. We look at the world today and see it not changing. But there are employers looking for good help right now, and people are getting new jobs, I've met them. So instead of being paralyzed, look at 'What skills has God given me and how can my skills have an impact in an industry?' "

**Dale Kreienkamp, Author *How Long, O Lord, How Long***

*Dale Kreienkamp is an active member & leader at Concordia Lutheran Church - Kirkwood*



# Higher Groundz

Many ministries and churches have struggled to find ways to provide outreach during COVID-19. How can people be welcomed in when most areas have restrictions on visitors? Zion Lutheran Church in Maryland Heights has found a unique way to serve its congregation and its community: a coffee house.

Recently, Zion started a project to add an accessibility ramp to their fellowship hall which is in the basement. Rev. Mark Femmel, pastor at Zion, explains how the project grew: "Originally the plan was to create accessibility for the fellowship hall so that everyone could reach all areas of the building... now that we have this space, we've been entrusted with it, how can we use it to reach more people?" Ultimately Zion found that the most popular idea was to open up part their building as a coffee house.

But the \$750,000 to get the 1947 fellowship hall renovated and up to code for a business serving food was quite a number. Zion ended up doing internal fundraising, receiving a grant from the Lutheran Foundation of St. Louis, and working with the Lutheran Church Extension Fund to help them realize their goal. Higher Groundz had its grand opening August 4, 2020 to great success.

"We've already had so many conversations to non-Christians... We have a family that comes every morning, not Christian, but that we get to greet and say 'hi' to. There's someone else that's really struggling that has started coming to [Zion]... it's so exciting to see God working... That's what the coffee, tea, and smoothies, really is all about- it's a way to reach people." - Rev. Femmel

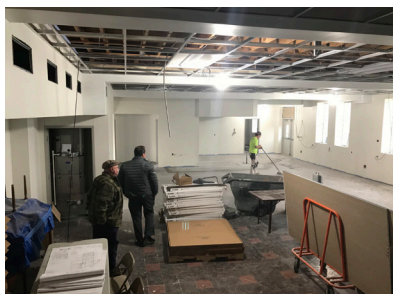
Looking for a place with a friendly atmosphere and delicious coffee?  
Bring this story to Higher Groundz & receive any drink for \$1.50 until 10/1/20!

**Higher Groundz** 12075 Dorsett Rd. Maryland Heights, MO [zionmh.org/hgz](http://zionmh.org/hgz)

In my role, I get the joy to be the sure assurance that the funds that over 60,000 LCEF investors have entrusted us with are going out to spread His Kingdom! Not only is Zion finding a new way to reach their community and to connect with the unchurched, in their own building no less, this is a great ministry that our investors can go check out with their own eyes to see the ministry they are helping make happen all across the Missouri District! Interested in how you can earn a great rate and partner with LCEF to extend ministry forward? Check out [www.lcef.org](http://www.lcef.org)

**Casey Carlson, Missouri District VP for LCEF**

*Pictured on the lower right with Rev. Mark Femmel*



The Missouri District is blessed to have eleven Seminary graduates called to serve. The next few pages feature these new workers for Christ. Please keep them, their families, and their new congregations in your prayers.



## Rev. Greg Barto Zion, Hillsboro

Rev. Greg Barto was born and raised around Orlando, Florida. He and his wife, SarahBeth, have a one year old son, Harrison. Rev. Barto is a second career pastor, having worked in construction management for Walt Disney World. He enjoys camping, hiking, and reading. His favorite book is *The Hobbit* by JRR Tolkien, which he tries to read every few years. In his free time he also enjoys collecting and painting miniature wargaming figures.



## Rev. Robert Brown Peace, St. Louis

Rev. Robert Brown hails from Troy, Illinois. Rev. Brown and his wife, Judy, currently live in Collinsville, Illinois. Rev. Brown enjoys traveling, including to his favorite vacation destination Charleston, South Carolina. He also loves baseball and has served as an umpire for over a decade.

## Rev. Paul Dickerson

### Christ Memorial St. Louis



Rev. Paul Dickerson is originally from Ann Arbor, Michigan. He and his wife, Pamela, have been married for 15 years. They have two children Jack and Sarah aged 11 and 6 respectively. Rev. Dickerson once spent a year in college serving as the PA announcer for the University of Michigan baseball team.



## **Rev. Maxx Fisher** **St. Paul** **New Melle**

Rev. Maxx Fisher is from Seymour, Indiana where he attended Redeemer Lutheran Church. Rev. Fisher enjoys playing sports and played tennis and basketball as a Preacher while attending Concordia Seminary St. Louis. Rev. Fisher is also recently engaged. He and his fiancée, Janie, are to be married this fall.



## **Rev. Mark Kranz** **Mount Calvary** **Excelsior Springs**

Rev. Mark Kranz and his wife, Bethany, are blessed with two children Emma (4) and Roland (2). Rev. Kranz enjoys many hobbies including darts, board games, watching baseball, reading, handtool woodworking, and dancing with his wife.

## **Rev. Dr. James Marriott** **Concordia Seminary** **St. Louis**



Before serving as Director of Musical Arts for Concordia Seminary- St. Louis, Dr. James Marriott lived in Mobile, Alabama. He and his wife, Kristi, have been married for 17 years and have been blessed with two children, Joel (12) and Kirstin (9). Dr. Marriott is an avid ice cream fan, which he counteracts in part by his other hobby, running (he clocks about 30 miles per week!)



## **Rev. Joseph McCalley** **Trinity, Columbia**

Rev. Joseph McCalley is serving at Trinity Lutheran Church in Columbia. He is a world traveler, having been to Asia (most recently Beijing, China.) He also enjoys playing badminton and studying geology of the American West.

## Rev. Nicholas Schram



### Lutheran Church of the Resurrection St. Louis

Rev. Nicholas Schram is originally from Saginaw, Michigan. He met his wife, Ariana, when they were students at Valley Lutheran High School. They both graduated from Concordia University-Wisconsin and love spending time outdoors. They love to camp, fish, play tennis, and spend time with their two dogs.



## Rev. Tanner Wade St. Paul Des Peres

Rev. Tanner Wade is from Orange, California. Rev. Wade is married to Whitney and loves all sports, especially baseball, football, and golf. Rev. Wade's favorite vacation destination is Cabo San Lucas, Mexico.



## Rev. Eric Stacy (pictured right)

### Grace Lutheran Chapel Bellefontaine Neighbors

Rev. Eric Stacy hails from Des Moines, Iowa. He has traveled to Japan and Europe as an Iowa Ambassador of music. He plays piano, trombone, and the organ. His hobbies include playing Poke'mon, watching the NY Yankees, and movie watching. He also enjoys studying the works of Flannery O'Connor and how they provide insight into a Christian's everyday life.

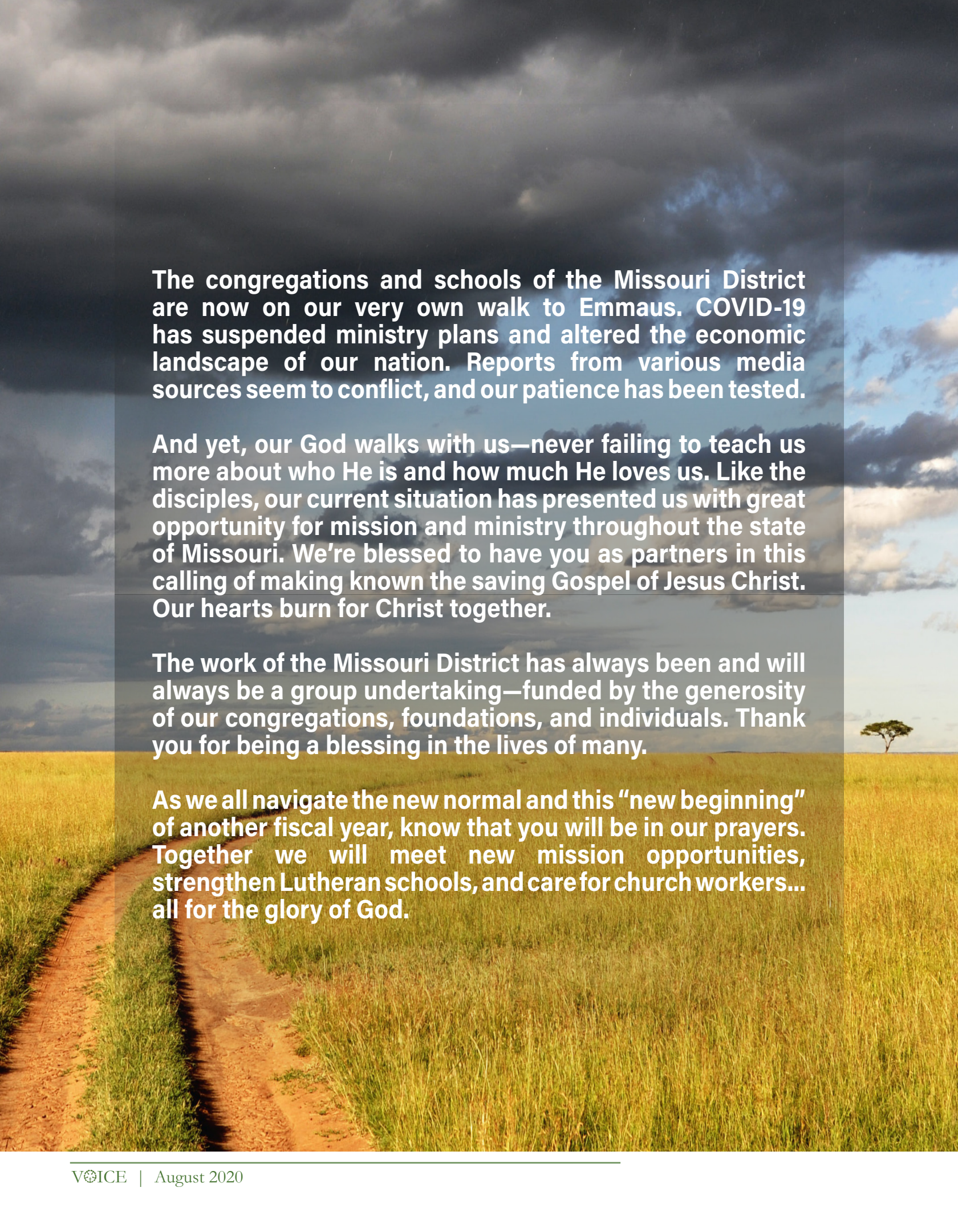
## Rev. Craig Wehmeyer

### Immanuel Washington



Rev. Wehmeyer is Missouri born and bred. From Grace Lutheran Church in Holts Summit, he attended Lutheran schools before acquiring his Agricultural Science degree from Truman State University. He and his wife, Emilie, have one daughter and are expecting baby number two in September. Rev. Wehmeyer also enjoys spending time in the great outdoors and playing guitar.

# WELCOME TO MISSOURI!



The congregations and schools of the Missouri District are now on our very own walk to Emmaus. COVID-19 has suspended ministry plans and altered the economic landscape of our nation. Reports from various media sources seem to conflict, and our patience has been tested.

And yet, our God walks with us—never failing to teach us more about who He is and how much He loves us. Like the disciples, our current situation has presented us with great opportunity for mission and ministry throughout the state of Missouri. We're blessed to have you as partners in this calling of making known the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ. Our hearts burn for Christ together.

The work of the Missouri District has always been and will always be a group undertaking—funded by the generosity of our congregations, foundations, and individuals. Thank you for being a blessing in the lives of many.

As we all navigate the new normal and this “new beginning” of another fiscal year, know that you will be in our prayers. Together we will meet new mission opportunities, strengthen Lutheran schools, and care for church workers... all for the glory of God.



MISSOURI DISTRICT-LCMS

LUTHERAN YOUTH

# MEGA SPRING GATHERING

JR HIGH / SR HIGH

## APRIL 9-11, 2021

CAMP WINDERMERE, LAKE OF THE OZARKS

The Fall JR. and SR. Missouri District Youth Gatherings are going to look a little differently this year. Instead of having separate fall conferences, the District is combining both the JR. AND SR. groups into one MEGA GATHERING!

While some activities will be shared between groups, leaders will have studies and activities specifically tailored to JR. and SR. Youth.

**Mark your calenders today!**



# District Missionary ZOOM Meeting

The state of Missouri is one vast and varied mission field.

Starting on September 22, the Missouri District will be hosting three evenings called "Meet the Missionaries" via ZOOM. You are cordially invited to log on and learn about these ministries, as well as how you can be involved through prayer and support.

Head to [mo.lcms.org/missionaries](https://mo.lcms.org/missionaries) for more information.

**See you online!**



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

Originally scheduled for September 2020, plans have changed concerning the first ever statewide servant event in the Missouri District. But, we're not canceling- just moving it to April! Head over to our website for more information and to register:

**[mo.lcms.org/shine](https://mo.lcms.org/shine)**

**We're excited to serve with you in April 2021!**



**Missouri District**

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD