

The VOICE

April 2021

Missouri District Newsletter



In This Issue:
SHINE! The Statewide Servant Event

From the President's Desk

What do Lutherans Look Like?

What do Lutherans who attend Missouri District congregations look like? We do not look particularly different from everyone else in a physical sense. Lutherans go to work in hospitals and office buildings, in classrooms and on the farms. We wear scrubs, overalls, and uniforms as we serve in our callings as workers. Our prayer is that regardless of the setting of our work that we would be clothed with Christ, the robe of His righteousness and the garment of salvation that by His Spirit our lives would also be adorned with good works in service to our neighbor. As St. Paul writes to the Colossians, we are called to "put on" those qualities of "God's chosen ones."

This month, thousands of Lutherans across Missouri District will be putting on those qualities of kindness, humility, meekness, and love along with a bright, neon yellow t-shirt. The Missouri District's "SHINE!" Servant Event will include nearly 5000 LCMS Lutherans from more across the state. Serving is what we do in response to God's service to us through the work of Christ on the cross and the Spirit through the Means of Grace.

This means that we look like those who care for college students, shut-ins, and even those who have been victims of human trafficking as Servant Event groups across Missouri serve those groups. We also use shovels and rakes, hammers and screw drivers as they use their abilities to serve their neighbors in love. We do not all look the same though. From the more than 100 groups participating, there are early childhood programs, elementary and high school students, campus ministry groups and even Lutheran Women's Missionary League groups. These groups come from the inner city and the small towns. After a year of being distant from others, our prayer is that this is a time of renewal for the Church as we return to serving those around us in love.

The one thing for all of us to remember is that service in Christ's name is not confined to an event, but rather a way of life. Our Lord Jesus Christ came among us as one who serves and who continues to serve us through His good gifts. Those who have been served by Christ are therefore freed to serve others in response. This concept is masterfully explained in Martin Luther's landmark treatise, "On the Freedom of a Christian," where he writes, "A Christian man is the most free lord of all, and subject to none; a Christian man is the most dutiful servant of all, and subject to every one." We have been saved not because of our service, but because of God's grace and Christ's service to us. Therefore we are free to serve in a variety of different ways, but with the gifts and abilities with which God formed us, creating us for good works as His instruments of service to our neighbor.

This issue of the Missouri District Voice highlights just a few of the groups and means of serving in our communities. If your group still would like to participate in the Servant Event sometime between April 16-25, please go to <https://mo.lcms.org/shine/> for more information.

Lutherans who attend Missouri District congregations do not look like anything special. We are ordinary sinners, who have been covered over with Jesus' blood and righteousness. Our prayer is that as we take to the streets during the SHINE! Servant Event that others will see our good deeds and praise our Father who is heaven! God's blessings to you all as you "let your light shine." (Matt. 5:16)

Fraternally in Christ,



President Lee Hagan



Made for This

I spent a lot of February and March in shock over the Missouri District's upcoming statewide servant event. Ask any of my co-workers and they'll tell you my standard expression was, "This is nuts!" whenever questioned about *SHINE!* I couldn't believe it as the number of participants continued to climb (now close to 5,000 strong). The service projects that groups were selecting were all just so creative and loving, too. Crazy as it is to admit, I never could have predicted just how many people have stepped forward to join us in serving their neighbors.

But God's Word showed me that there's absolutely nothing surprising about what is going to happen later this month. It was all planned a very long time ago...

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2:10 NIV

We were made especially for this, Missouri District.

There are a lot of issues and hurts that are concerning to our neighbors, and they're about to see that there is a God who loves them enough to send help. Care for the homeless and disadvantaged, environmental and animal issues, encouragement for the elderly, military, and those afflicted by various diseases, as well as safety for human trafficking victims...these are just some of the issues to be addressed in the next few days.

And God made preschoolers in Festus, new Americans in St. Louis, college students in Kirksville, and LWML members in Jefferson City to help tackle these problems. He created members of youth groups in Blue Springs and Springfield to offer hope to a hurting world. God also went on to equip high schoolers in Jackson and Concordia to bless their corners of the state. Men and women in Rolla and LaGrange will use their God-given gifts to offer hope in Jesus Christ in uncertain times.

My shock over *SHINE!* has given way to pure wonder at God's expert planning. He made us for this moment to serve in this place. Thank you to all of the participants and sponsors for answering the call. Let's shine brightly for Him!



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SHINE! To Our Neighbors

There are so many ways to serve our neighbors. Below are some churches and groups that have found unique ways to serve in a way tailored to their community and congregational needs. Blessings on your service!

Small Groups Can be Part of a Larger Cause *Every little bit helps—pick a cause to support!*



Abiding Savior Lutheran Church St. Louis, South County

A small group at Abiding Savior was looking for a low-contact project that could still make a big impact. That's when they partnered with Monarch Jewelry—a ministry of Crisis Aid International whose profits go towards combating human trafficking in the St. Louis area. So, the group at Abiding Savior is hosting a jewelry collection, where used and unwanted items can be donated to be repurposed to be sold by Monarch Jewelry. Their gathering of jewelry is the start of a ripple effect to help a cause that impacts so many.

Gather Up & Divide Out *Have a bigger group? Divide into several projects!*

Bethlehem Lutheran Church Raymore



South of Kansas City, Bethlehem assembled several different groups from their church. Their LWML, Men's Group, and their "RATS" group assembled for different projects. One will help with 1/4 mile of highway cleanup, which, due to COVID-19 restrictions, has been difficult to maintain for the past year. At the beginning of the pandemic, Bethlehem made signs for shut-ins, an activity looking at being recreated one year in. And also plans are made to help support a congregational family that is well loved and needing some support. Dividing a larger group into several projects is a great way to reach into and be seen by your community (especially if wearing bright yellow SHINE! shirts).

Go Out Into the Community *If they don't come to you, go to them!*



St. John's Lutheran Church Mexico

St. John's in Mexico normally has a big "Easter Eggstravaganza" hosted by their church and open to the community. With entertainment telling the Easter story (complete with a dog that does tricks) usually this is a big event for their community and brings many new faces to the church. But changing parameters from schools, plus COVID-19 has made it difficult to invite in a large crowd. So St. John's is going into the community. They coordinated with a local grocery store to purchase individually wrapped food items, which they will distribute with New Testaments on a Saturday outside of the store. Since St. John's is in a more rural area, this store is the popular spot on a Saturday morning, making St. John's presence all the more impactful. What areas in your community can be used to maximize sharing God's love?

Fulfilling Neighborhood Needs *Look around your area—what's something your community needs?*

Timothy Lutheran Church St. Louis



Those at Timothy were also looking for a project that could meet the needs of their community. So they are hosting a scrap metal drive and a paper shredding event. Living in a more urban part of the city, it can be difficult for people to dispose of larger items. This, in turn, can lead to random bits of scrap metal lying around. Timothy (partnering with other churches) will help by going into the community and offering to gather it. Also new this year, they are renting a large paper shredder where people can have access to confidential disposal of paper items.

Everyone's neighborhood is different—what are some needs in your community?

Part of the District Youth Gathering *Add in some service before your District gathering.*



St. Paul's Lutheran Church St. Joseph

The Missouri District Youth Gathering is happening April 10. This online event for junior and senior youth will feature the study of God's Word, songs of praise, and fellowship time. But one thing that's difficult to do online is engage in service. St. Paul's decided to have an in-person servant event before the online gathering. Their junior youth will be helping out a local thrift shop. They also took into consideration elements like food and timing. Since the gathering is in the evening, it keeps things simple by working in the afternoon, returning to the church for group pizza, and then participating together in the gathering. They also found a project that streamlines transportation; the thrift shop is right across the street—no cars needed. How can you find simple ways to add service to your group?

Provide Support While Socially Distant *You can be spaced out for COVID-19 precautions and still serve!*

St. Peter Lutheran Church La Grange



Another idea for your group could be finding a project that supports your neighbors, but allows your group to keep COVID-19 precautions in place. Even if you live in an area where mandates are low, there are still many people who take precautions in their personal lives. Finding a project to incorporate everyone draws your congregation together—even when socially distant.

St. Peter's found a project in which their whole congregation could participate: card making. St. Peter's will provide materials to congregants for making unique cards to support their shut-ins, elderly, and widows. But participants can choose to join the group card-making day, or pick up materials individually and return the card when completed. A great idea to engage the whole congregation!

A Special Thanks to Our Sponsors!

It is thanks to your generous support that so many across the District have been able to join in service to our neighbors AND be literally shining while we do it in our bright yellow shirts. Thanks for all of your support!

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UPCOMING MISSOURI DISTRICT EVENTS



TAKE HEART Youth Event

April 10, 2021 7PM-10PM Online

THIS SATURDAY join with Youth all across Missouri for fellowship and the study of God's Word. Speaker sessions led by Rev. Dr. Gerard Bolling, reflection discussions, music from Bread of Stone, and live Q&A sessions. You can watch from your home or plan a party! Registration is required, but there is no cost to participate. <https://mo.lcms.org/youth-ministry/>



Wednesday Webinar

April 14, 2021 12:30PM Online

Join Rev. Marty Hasz and learn how you can become LERT trained and help your neighbors when natural disasters strike. Plus, get information about the upcoming LERT training April 17 at Concordia, MO. Contact us for the Zoom link: sue.thompson@mo.lcms.org | 314-590-6217.



Meet the Missionaries

April Event Cancelled

Thanks so much for everyone who has joined us on our "Meet the Missionaries" online series! The April 13 event "Church Planting Through Lutheran Schools" is cancelled, but if you missed an event, you can watch all the Meet the Missionaries videos online:

<https://mo.lcms.org/missionaries>



SHINE! Servant Event

April 16-25, 2021

You have had the opportunity to read all about *SHINE!* in this edition of The VOICE. If you are already registered, we are excited to serve alongside you. If you haven't registered, there is still time to join in service with the almost 5,000 across Missouri! Register online at

<https://mo.lcms.org/shine>



Missouri District

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD