



The VOICE

May 2021

Missouri District Newsletter

In This Issue: Summer Family Ministry
Plus a Wrap Up of the District's SHINE! Event

From the President's Desk

Summer and Rejoicing in God's Creation

One of the many challenges that the pandemic has presented is the church's children, youth, and family programming. Last summer saw only virtual Vacation Bible Schools. Some churches have not yet returned to Sunday School and those that have note decreased attendance. However, for many congregations, they mistakenly think that the goal is to have a specific program or activity for children. That is not the goal! The goal is to teach children the Christian faith! There are so many ways to accomplish this goal. The primary way portrayed in the Scriptures is through parents as those with the God-given responsibility.

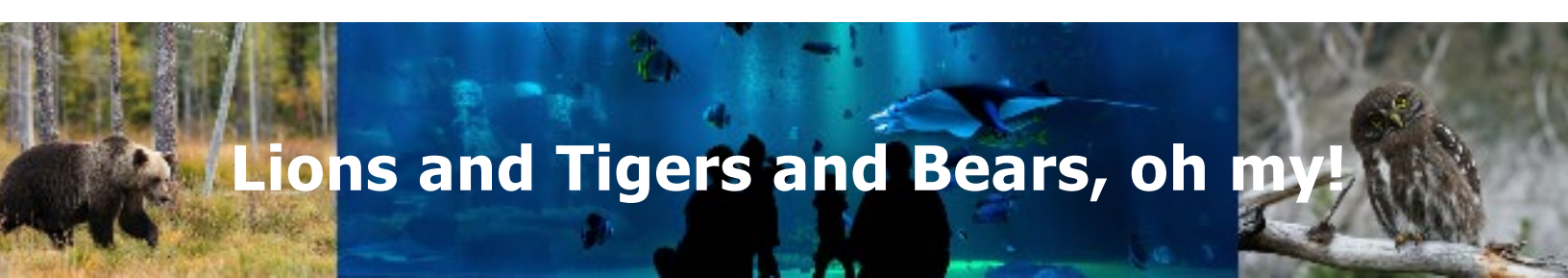
Summertime provides parents and families great opportunities to teach the faith. Parents should be reminded that they do not have to be Bible scholars or Lutheran historians to do so. When Martin Luther composed the Small Catechism, he gave the charge to teach "in a simple way." The Bible and the Small Catechism are two of the primary tools for teaching the faith, but the setting in the summertime is hardly limited to the kitchen table.

Here are a few suggestions for families to teach the wonders of God's creation this summer. Helping our children to understand God as creator of all things is a wonderful way to help affirm the value of each person while dispelling the harmful identity politics that are at work in our culture today. God's creation is everything from a laboratory, art studio, and setting for all manner of adventures take place while we discover its beauty and complexity.



Lakes, Mountains, Caves, and Beaches

Get out there and explore! A family on a budget can explore God's creation without leaving the state. All across the state, there are parks and recreation areas where families can marvel at all that God has made. A day-trip can begin with Scripture readings and prayer (Psalm 8, 98 or a host of other Scripture passages). What is the most beautiful thing each person saw? What was the most unusual thing each person saw? Why is it so important to remember that God created all of those places and things?



Lions and Tigers and Bears, oh my!

From zoos and aquariums to hiking in the wilderness, families can visit places where they can count up how many different species of fish and animals they may see. A bird-watching guide can be a great tool before a day spent outside. Read Genesis 1-2 or 6-8 before setting out. What was your favorite animal or fish that you saw? Is that creature also listed in the Bible? What animal most amazes you as part of God's good creation?



Children's Performances

Families trek across the country for sports and other performances. Parents have the privilege and responsibility to teach children to honor God with their talents and the way they interact with others. Psalm 139 and Chapter 12 of both Romans and 1 Corinthians are fitting sections to read for children using their gifts in competition. Before you set out, ask your pastor to help you find a church to visit or watch your home church's service online.



Creation Museum

As families set out for vacation across the country, a stop in Kentucky to visit the Creation Museum should be a must-see destination. This museum is extremely well-done and helps families to see the order behind God's creation from things that are vast and tiny alike. While visiting this museum, consider a trip to the nearby Ark Encounter, as well.

No matter what your family plans this summer, my prayer is that Christ will be at the center of everything. Our world is creating chaos and confusion for children and youth as they wonder about who they are and where they fit into this world. The importance of parents teaching and affirming God's creation cannot be overstated. Blessings to you as you discover and explore God's creation this summer!

Faternally in Christ,

R. Lee Hagan

President Lee Hagan



Everything You Need for Family Devotions

Summer is a time when families are on the move. From competitions to vacations, families spend a lot of time in the car and away from home. But, children and adults alike still need the strength and grounding that God's Word can provide in family devotions. Here are a few suggestions for congregations, schools, and families alike to support families growing in the Word wherever they may be.

CONGREGATIONS

1. Create Video Family Devotions – You do not have to be a high-tech church to be able to create video devotions to support families. YouTube is full of family devotion resources prepared by pastors who would not consider themselves very “tech-oriented.” Pastors, Directors of Christian Education, Deaconesses, and laypeople alike are capable of preparing something on a weekly basis that can assist families with times in God's Word and prayer. Make sure that the devotions are of an appropriate length (not too long) and have questions that engage everyone in the family.
2. Buy a summer subscription of Concordia Publishing House's My Devotions for each family in your congregation (cost is \$4.50 per issue). Perhaps by helping families with a devotion for the summer, habits will be formed. There are also lots of other resources that you can find at www.cph.org.

LUTHERAN SCHOOLS

1. Teachers can send their future students a newsletter that prepares them for next year, but also includes some of the teacher's favorite devotion books. One Lutheran school teacher has a devotional suit case that she sends home with different students during the school year.
2. Another Lutheran school teacher led Zoom devotions with students during the quarantine last Spring. Teachers could model how families can do devotions on Zoom.

FAMILIES

1. P. 294-304 in Lutheran Service Book provide simple service orders for family daily devotions and Scripture readings. This is a wonderful and very underused part of the hymnal.
2. Tools for family devotions used to include the Bible, hymnal, catechism, and a favorite devotion book. Now all of those things can be found on a tablet, along with a host of digital resources. Your family can still travel and take all of your devotional resources, as well as the kids favorite games, all found on one tablet.

Have a great summer as you travel and grow in God's Word!



Summer Activity Ideas for the Whole Church

Two churches share some top tips for ways they include everyone from the congregation.

Jolene Siethbarth, DCE, Immanuel St. Charles



OUTDOOR MOVIE NIGHT

- Pick a Summer night and set up a projector and screen or use the side of a building.
- Youth Ministry can offer or sell concessions; praise band can lead "pre-movie" entertainment.
- Families of all ages can bring lawn chairs and enjoy the movie at the church.

OUTDOOR PARKING LOT CONCERT

- A full musical parking lot concert! People can sit in their cars or lawn chairs.
- A group can provide food (like the Men's Club can grill hot dogs and brats. Everyone at Immanuel received a bag with chips, a dog/brat and then water/soda/capri sun.)
- A local food/coffee/smoothie truck can also come to the event.



SUNDAY SCHOOL KICK-OFF TAILGATE EVENT

- Families can set up tailgate style in the parking lot for food and the start to Sunday school.
- Families can spread out and have safe social distance while enjoying food, songs, games and celebrating the beginning of Sunday school.

FAMILY SAFETY FAIR



- Invite the police and fire department to a safety fair to spread the word about safe family fun. Bike helmet fittings, car seat checks, fire safety activities, sitting in fire trucks, child safe ID kits, etc are all part of emphasizing safe family fun. Great community activity for families! Can easily be an outdoor event.

[Rev. Steven Andrews](#), St. Matthew, Lee's Summit

SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

Give your Sunday School staff a break!



GATHER ALL TOGETHER

- Pastor leads a Bible Study for the many households gathered together.
- Read a chapter of Scripture, speak the Ten Commandments, Apostles' Creed, and Lord's Prayer, and then sing a hymn. (Groups can even model taking turns reading the Bible.)

THEN GO TO GROUPS

- To conclude, Pastor Andrews quickly leads the family leaders through 7 chapters of the Bible (great preparation for each of the family's weekly readings.)
- During this time the kids go off and work on a craft project led by a volunteer.

What Ideas Will You Use?

MEGA GATHERING



"Take heart, I have overcome the world." Around 14 months ago the District sent out a video message announcing the cancellation of the Jr. High District Youth Gathering at Camp Windermere in Roach, MO. This was the beginning of a string of cancellations that have changed youth ministry in the Missouri District. Next came both the Jr. and Sr. High District Youth Gatherings in the Fall, in addition to all Lutheran Youth Fellowship activities being pushed off, when finally even the MEGA Gathering became virtual. The gathering was based on John 16:33 which says "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world"— a perfect reminder through these times.

Jason Glaskey, co-chairman of the Jr. High DYG reflected on the cancellations and the new virtual format: "To be honest, we were very disappointed that the last two Jr High Retreat cycles didn't happen at camp. Gathering together as God's people to hear His Word — to sing, to pray, to serve, to play — have been the identity of both our Middle and High School ministries. After mourning this loss for a time, our planning team remembered that the heart of the Retreats could still be shared. Jesus is present in His life-giving Word, and we have the technology to share God's Good News of forgiveness and life in different, creative ways. In God's faithfulness we take heart and move forward, knowing that He is with us, bringing peace in the midst of our trouble, because Christ has overcome the world!"

Looking back, with so many online programs and switching to a new format, we were just hoping to get over 100 participants. But, by God's grace, more than 500 of Missouri's Lutheran young people were able to connect and grow virtually together!



"On April 10th, Christ Memorial Youth gathered to attend the Missouri District Youth Gathering-from our own sanctuary! 43 churches and over 500 youth attended this event from various churches across the state... The event included four short messages from Reverend Doctor Gerard Bolling, mixed in with small group discussions, songs from the band "Bread of Stone" and engaging commentary from Daniel [Meyer] and Dana [Otto]. The youth meditated on the theme of "Take Heart", learning how to put this phrase into practice in many different areas of life. The event was quite a success, throughout the course of the night faith was strengthened as the youth were able to spend time in God's Word together." — Anna Youth, Christ Memorial



2022 LCMS Youth Gathering Update

Next July will be the triennial Youth Gathering for the LCMS in Houston, Texas! The theme for the Gathering is “In All Things”, with the theme being taken from Colossians 1:15-20. If you haven’t started talking about it yet with your students, it’s never too early. There is a great deal of wonderful information and resources about the Gathering and the city of Houston on the Gathering website at [LCMSGathering.com](https://lcmsgathering.com).

However, if you’re feeling uncertain as to where to begin, feel free to reach out to our District Coordinators for the Youth Gathering, Mark Engelhardt and Emily Moss. You can reach them by emailing district.coordinator.missouri@gmail.com and they will be happy to help you find answers to all your Youth Gathering questions.

One of the ways we want to help our Adult Leaders is by hosting Adult Leader Meetings. This year we will be hosting our District Adult Leader meetings both in person, and on Zoom. These Adult Leader meetings are a great way for first time Adult Leaders to connect with veteran Adult Leaders, get some great advice, and find out more about what will happen at the Gathering. They are also a great way for the veteran Adult Leaders to find out about the new changes taking place for the 2022 Gathering. Please continue to watch District news for the dates for those meetings, or you can also join our Facebook group, Missouri District 2022 NYG Adult Leaders where we share information about the Gathering when it comes out from the National Office, as well as Gathering information from within the Missouri District. As you plan for the Gathering, remember to make plans to attend our District Event, and don’t forget about our special Missouri District t-shirts for the Gathering too (more information about both of those items coming soon.)

If you are an Adult Leader going to the Gathering, do us a favor and send us a quick email, so we can be sure we are sending the information to the right contact. Finally, be on the lookout for a Google survey regarding our District Event for the Gathering. We hope to hear from you soon, and we look forward to seeing everyone in Houston, July 9-13, 2022!



lcmsgathering.com



A BIG SHINING THANK YOU!



We were blessed to have so many across the Missouri District join together in service to our neighbors. More than 5,100 participated with over 120 groups! Preschools, high schools, youth groups, men's groups, LWML groups, congregants, organizations, and more gathered together to serve others. Projects were as varied as those serving, with items like highway cleanup, church work days, writing cards to shut-ins, care packages for soldiers, yard waste removal, making quilts to donate, helping at community food banks or thrift stores, scrap metal drive, giving meals away, and more. Our goal was to SHINE! our light as described in Matthew 5:16 "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." Mission accomplished! Thank you for joining us. We were so excited to serve alongside you.

Keep shining your light to everyone Missouri!



"While the dates have passed, it's really not possible to declare **SHINE!** over. Regardless of our age, ability, or location, we're always called to shine for Jesus Christ. How wonderful that we as residents of Missouri get to do this together. The light will never go out as you and your congregation or school continue to serve our Lord and love our neighbors. Shine on!"

Leah Sieveking
Assistant to the President: Advancement



Missouri District

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