

# The VOICE

February 2022

Missouri District Newsletter



***In This Issue: Marriage Ministry***



# From the President's Desk

## Strengthening Marriage

How do we help children in our congregations today? The answer may surprise you. The answer is to strengthen married couples. The external influences of the culture on marriage and family are overwhelming. It also means that the Church can provide something that the culture cannot and that is equipping and strengthening couples in their marriages. This issue of The VOICE highlights some of the ways that congregations can help husbands and wives to live according to God's design.

We know as a Church that education about a Christian marriage cannot simply exist in confirmation class. From Bible classes to podcasts, youth events to marriage retreats, our congregations can provide guidance for Christian couples based on the Word of God and in stark contrast to the ways of the world.

For some pastors and congregations, that support might be through sharing of resources like books and videos with couples. In other cases, it might be regularly offering a Bible class or video-based class on marriage. Bible classes for couples can focus on confession and absolution, prayer and devotional life for couples, and marriage roles according to God's design. Marriage is not a topic to be covered once, but a gift from God that is to be explained and commended continually.

Being Christians does not mean that couples are immune to the temptations of the devil, the world, and their own sinful flesh. However, couples who are regular in worship and Bible study, who pray together and spend time in God's Word together in the home have exactly what they need to resist temptation and live holy lives with the Holy Spirit's strength.

As many of our congregations struggle to retain young adults, it is vital that our congregations address those things that are applicable to their daily lives. Dating, relationships, and marriage must be subjects that the Church addresses from God's Word and with loving concern for those young adults. From campus ministry groups to marriage preparation for engaged couples are some of the ways to equip young people for the future. Yet, there will always be needs for direction from the word of God for married couples at all stages of life. Perhaps these articles will help your congregation to consider a new or old way to support husbands and wives in their holy calling of marriage.



Fraternally in Christ,

President Lee Hagan



# Using Zoe Score in Marriage Ministry



Not only does the Bible show us the importance of marriage, it's statistically proven that strong marriages make society stronger. "I had all this research on marriage data and relationships. It's unequivocal that the strength of the family is based on the strength of the marriage. ... It's a bedrock of society," says Rev. Jeff Meyers. Pastor Meyers serves as an advisor with a group called Zoe Score.

Zoe Score is a marriage ministry, and compatibility assessment for couples. Over the years, Pastor Meyers was finding solid statistical data that showed broken marriages have major impacts on society at large. "When you have a breakdown in the family...incarceration goes way up, substance abuse goes way up, dropout rates go way up," explains Pastor Meyer. "If you finish your education, get a job, get married, then have children—in that order—regardless of your race, where you came from... your chances of being in poverty goes down. If you get that order wrong, the chances go way up."

Building on this data, it was asked how to strengthen marriages? "Fifty percent of marriages end in divorces, half of those divorces occur in the first 18-24 months," notes Pastor Meyers. So Pastor Meyers takes a proactive approach.

Marriage ministry starts in Junior High and High School. "We go all the way back to 6th grade, getting it in front of confirmation age kids," says Pastor Meyers. "Focusing on 'How do you build a relationship with the opposite sex that's God pleasing?' They need to understand

how they are wired by God, not by nature... getting into their mind the thought of their future spouse. Over 95% of them will get married. What you do now is investing in that future. It's not a 'free pass' for your teens and twenties. It's important to develop that clear conscience now."

Then, when couples are in a serious relationship, there is additional support. Any couple can take the Zoe Score assessment (even just seriously dating, but not yet engaged couples can take it.) Pastor Meyers notes that the Zoe Score is also a process. For premarital couples it includes agreeing to live in separate households, being over the age of 20, and waiting 6 months before getting married (with abstinence).

But even if couples don't complete the full Zoe Score process, they can still take the assessment (also called inventory), which provides great support and insight in their relationship. "Just by taking it, you begin to lower the divorce rate," says Pastor Meyers.

For more information on Zoe Score visit [www.zoescore.com/bp/home](http://www.zoescore.com/bp/home)



Rev. Jeff Meyers



# Marriage and Family Conference

There is a wonderful way to strengthen marriages right in the Missouri District. The Marriage and Family Conference, hosted in Cole Camp, was first held in April of 2018. The goal for the conference then – and still today! – is to work together to serve the laity so that together, as Christians, we might: grow in our appreciation for God’s wonderful gifts of marriage and the family; and return to our homes encouraged and better equipped to lead faithful lives, regardless of the makeup of our families.

This year the conference is April 22-23. The 2022 keynote speaker is Rev. Erik Rottmann, who serves as Pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Versailles. This year’s plenary theme is titled, “Oh, Lord! What Shall I Do Now?” In two plenary presentations, Pastor Rottmann will draw from Martin Luther’s Fourteen Consolations and other resources to offer concrete, deliberate ways that each Christian can place the healing medicine of God’s living Word onto those personal places in family life that hurt the most. This topic is very important, especially for those who find themselves in situations where they now realize things they wish they would have known years ago, or otherwise are living with guilt and regret.

Conference participants will have the opportunity to attend services, plenary and breakout sessions, and a complimentary Gemütlichkeit, which is held at The German Table (owned and operated by members of Mt. Hulda). A Children’s Track is provided for children younger than seventh grade. It includes teaching time, as well as crafts, games, and other activities all planned around a biblical theme related to marriage and the family. In the past, participating children have learned a hymn and served as the choir for the closing service.

Rev. Gregory Truwe, Senior Pastor at Trinity Lutheran in Cole Camp, emphasizes the importance of marriage ministry:

“We are born because of the family. We are raised in a family. We long to have a family. ... What is more is that marriage and the family in the center of the cultural crosshairs, and are under attack. Questions which most of us never dreamed we would have to address, or speak with our children about, are headline news and a part of popular culture. If the Church and her pastors do not boldly speak and confess the biblical teaching on marriage and the family, the people we serve will be threatened by the lies of the day, and families will suffer as a result. We cannot afford to be bashful, or blush at the subject matter. But rather, we must be diligent in our study of the Scriptures and Confessions, and apply them today’s questions so that the people we are called to serve as strengthened and encouraged to live faithful lives in the places and families where the LORD God has placed them.”

It’s important to note, there is no cost to attend the Marriage and Family Conference! For more information visit <https://www.marriagefamilyconference.org/>



*Marriage and Family Conference*

# Lutheran Marriage Encounter

Lutheran Marriage Encounter is a 48 hour interaction weekend for married couples that serves as a crash course in teaching communication. This experience is for all married couples: newlyweds, those celebrating 50 year anniversaries, those that feel they have good communication, and those that know they need some help.

Put all notions of uncomfortable group “share” sessions aside. Lutheran Marriage Encounter makes sure that private conversations stay between a husband and wife. The goal is for husbands and wives to communicate, know each other, trust, and respect each other more. It’s not for the group to know secrets. Instead the presenters (a couple themselves) lead group sessions and examples from their own relationship. This sets an example of how to listen and how to approach difficult subjects. Couples then split into private share sessions.

One couple who has served for forty years with Lutheran Marriage Encounter is Rev. Dan Teuscher, pastor emeritus of Webster Gardens, and his wife Judy, an RN who serves as a certified parish nurse at Lutheran Church of Webster Gardens. They’ve also assisted with Lutheran Marriage Encounters internationally serving in Scandinavia and India. They say the key is communication, and there are several components to that.



*Dan and Judy Teuscher*

An important aspect to that is understanding feelings. “Anger is a secondary feeling,” explains Judy, “What was the primary feeling: shock, hurt, or surprise?” She also notes that feelings aren’t themselves right or wrong, as they are spontaneous, but the responses to feelings are important. “You are each other’s best friend. You can have a fight or disagreement for the sake of the relationship. ... How do you talk about it without hurting each other? And how do you resolve these things without hurting each other?”

For more information on finding a Lutheran Marriage Encounter near you (or to participate in an online option), visit [godlovesmarriage.org](http://godlovesmarriage.org).

Since married couples are Christ to each other they help shape the character and life of one another as well as their children. Couples need help in how to live out their marriage, how to be a God pleasing husband or wife and parent. They need guidance so they can experience their oneness more fully. A good marriage ministry in the congregation can be a great resource and encourager for their marital journey.

—Rev. Dan Teuscher

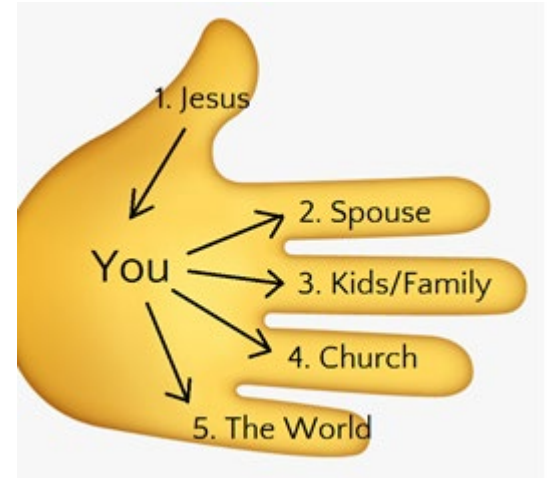
## *Lutheran Marriage Encounter in India*



# Congregational Support

Spend any time with Rev. Dr. Todd Biermann, senior pastor at Faith Lutheran Church in Grand Blanc, Michigan and you will quickly learn how passionate he is about marriage. For Pastor Biermann it goes beyond just healthy marriages, but how congregations, its leaders, and members can help support healthy Christian marriages in God's way. The Missouri District has been fortunate to have Pastor Biermann speak in various settings and events and in these presentations he has shared some ways for congregations to support marriages in God's way.

**It's everybody's job to support marriage.** – Every member of the congregation should understand God's design for marriage. It starts with three key questions, where did we come from (God), where we are going (returning to God) and what's our purpose in between. Our purpose in between is to make Jesus known and healthy Christian marriage is the perfect parable in real life that shows how He first loved us and we can show that love to the world through healthy marriages.



Teach all members from the very young throughout the generations. Teaching and modeling Christian marriage at a young age builds the foundation for a healthy marriage and will hopefully prevent future heartache and sadness.

As we ask our leaders and members to give time to the Church, we need to ensure that it doesn't pull them away from their first priority to their spouse and family. Model this in all the Church does making sure that we are being good stewards of the time of our members and leaders.

**Pre-Martial Counseling** – Take this opportunity to work with the couple to lay out God's design for marriage. Be honest of God's expectation for marriage and if they have fallen short, they can start their foundation in a new, right way. This is a great model for Christian confession and forgiveness found in Jesus.

**Invest into Marriage** – The congregational budget should reflect the importance of marriage. It goes beyond just preaching on marriage in God's way, but the congregation needs to budget funds for Bible studies, guest speakers, retreats, and seek resources that lift and build up marriage.

**Celebrate Marriage** – Marriage is a reason for congregational celebration, celebrate anniversaries (they are a BIG deal), exalt marriage in God's way as models and mentors, implement programs to capitalize this. Encourage your members to use talking about their marriage as a witness to others, sharing the reason for longevity and healthy marriage is centered on Christ not the cheesy hokey answer like "always say yes" "stay in your man cave" etc.

For more on Rev Dr Todd Biermann's thoughts and resources on marriage in God's Way check out [lifeingodsway.com/sample-page](http://lifeingodsway.com/sample-page).

May we as Jesus' Church lift up healthy Christian marriages and may they be a witness to His perfect love for us that we can share with the world!



# SHINE!: Can't stop. Won't stop.

*Are we doing this again? People are already talking about how we're going to serve next year.*

The commentary on SHINE!—the Missouri District's first ever statewide servant event—started well before the 10 days of service began in April of 2021. It continued throughout the event and got even louder when it ended.

“Before any official decisions were made on the future of SHINE!, so many of you could clearly see where all this was headed. I thank you for pointing it out,” says District staff member and SHINE! coordinator Leah Sieveking. “That sort of encouragement from brothers and sisters in Christ makes conversations about the future fun.”

With more than 5,100 participants in 2021, the enthusiasm for serving others and the desire to be a witness for Jesus Christ throughout Missouri is a cause for celebration and a starting point for even more outreach. The theme Bible verse for SHINE! (Matthew 5:16) reminds us that we all have a light—and these lights will point others to the Savior of the whole world. With that in mind...the state of Missouri will SHINE! again.

All Missouri District congregations and schools are now cordially invited to participate in SHINE!—The Sequel—happening April 22-May 1, 2022. The concept is simple:



- Form a group: Friends, family members, a Sunday school class, a basketball team, or an entire school or congregation. Teams of all sizes, ages, and abilities are welcome.
- Identify a need in your community and pick a time to serve: What's going on in your community that needs some extra attention? Are you available to help for an hour, two hours, or even a full day?
- Register your team with the Missouri District and order official servant event t-shirts: We want to hear what how you're going to serve and celebrate with you! Are you the proud owner of the yellow t-shirt from 2021? Add to your collection by getting the 2022 version in green. Registration can happen at [mo.lcms.org/shine](http://mo.lcms.org/shine)

While groups are welcome to register throughout April, the cutoff for ordering shirts is Monday, March 21. Once again, the Missouri District is blessed to have Lutheran Church Extension Fund and Rod's Sports serve as sponsors for the servant event.

“God knew exactly how SHINE! would turn out in 2021, and He's been guiding plans for 2022 and beyond,” adds Leah. “We saw His strength and were blessed by His gifts last year. How awesome to know that we get to experience it all again this year. Shine on, Missouri!”

# Presidential Nominees

## Rev. Dr. R. Lee Hagan



### **1. What are the greatest issues currently in the congregations of our District? How can the District support them through those challenges?**

The greatest issue facing the congregations of our district is sin. This is the root cause of all of our problems that our congregations face, including false teaching, divisions, and apathy. It is also nothing new. From St. Paul's missionary journeys and letters to the letters that we find to the "Seven Churches" in Revelation, we are reminded that the struggles of congregations to be faithful have existed since our Lord established the Church. There is nothing new under the sun.

However, there are specific needs for support of congregations today. The District can support congregations through these key ways:

- Church worker health – The Missouri District continues to provide significant resources and support for our church workers. Throughout the pandemic, Zoom meetings, one-on-one visits with district staff and the church worker care team have been just some of the ways that we have walked alongside our church workers to remind them that they are not alone.
- Support for Families – Retention of children, youth and families is a great concern in many of our congregations. The Missouri District has trained a team of coaches to assist congregations in equipping parents to faith formation in the home. We will be sharing more information about this effort at the convention.
- Shared Ministry – 48% of Missouri District congregations had a weekly church attendance of 75 or less before the pandemic. The Missouri District is helping facilitate shared ministry conversations across the state. These conversations are leading to greater collaboration among congregations where we are able to work together more.
- Faithful teaching – In addition to the ecclesiastical supervision of the president, the district also provides conferences and weekly encouragement that seeks to support our church workers and congregations in faithfully proclaiming God's Word in our changing world.



# Presidential Nominees Convention 2022

## Rev. Dr. R. Lee Hagan

### **2. As western society accelerates its abandonment of Biblical mores and even natural law, how can the Missouri District support congregations, pastors, teachers, and other church workers to remain both steadfast in the truth but also bold in outreach?**

We cannot be afraid to discuss the hard topics. Our professional conferences and workshops for lay leaders assist our congregations and church workers in faithfully confessing the truth in a society that denies the existence of truth. The district's E2 (Encourage and Equip) Conferences have included presentations on Church and State issues and Church and Culture in recent years. Our professional conferences have tackled topics such as Sexuality, Pastoral Care in a Changing World, Preaching and Church and State issues. Support for our church workers on addressing these issues also happens through circuit pastors' meetings, and gatherings of School Administrators and Early Childhood Directors. As these groups gather around the Word of God, we are built up and strengthened in our faith so that we proclaim it in its truth and purity for the salvation of our souls.

The Church's faithfulness is not limited to the purity of our confession, but also that of bearing witness to Christ and serving our neighbors. We must be careful to not allow a false dichotomy between doctrine and mission because the Scriptures hold these two together. One of the key ways that our congregations demonstrated such boldness in outreach was through our Shine Servant Event. In April 2021, faithful Lutheran congregations and schools boldly served in their communities through our first district-wide servant event. More than 5100 people from 130 different groups across the district participated. We hope that we will have another great response as Shine happens again in Spring, 2022. We are called to be faithful in proclaiming the truth in our congregations and schools, but also in our communities and to the ends of the earth.

### **3. What most excites you for the future of the Missouri District and the LCMS?**

Our Lutheran schools, universities and campus ministries make me hopeful for the future of the Missouri District and LCMS. Each day students all over Missouri attend Lutheran schools where they are taught the truth of God's Word, a Christian worldview and prepared for lives of service for a variety of vocations. Our Lutheran universities also provide strong, Christ-centered education for young men and women who will work both inside and outside the Church. I am also particularly thankful for the young men and women who are involved in our campus ministries at our public universities. They specifically seek out the Lutheran campus center and find in it a faithful and caring support system for a critical time in their lives.

Ultimately, my hope is not in the faithfulness of our young people, but in the faithfulness of our Lord. He will preserve His Church, just as He has promised and just as He always has. As I look to the future, my prayer is that our congregations would be open to more ways of serving together for the sake of Christ's kingdom.

# Presidential Nominees

## Rev. Dr. William Marler



### 1. What are the greatest issues currently in the congregations of our District? How can the District support them through those challenges?

No era, no area, and no arena in all of Christian history has had a break in the number and seriousness of challenges to the Church, her congregations, her people (the New Testament royal priesthood of all believers), her pastors, and her congregations. The list of issues is always numerous, substantive, and evolving. Those priorities our District Board of Directors, Presidium, and staff defined and on which we have been focused the past six years:

- \*supporting and equipping our pastors and professional churchworkers, congregations, and schools to be faithful to the Word of God and to be “healthy;”
- \*supporting parishes, schools, and our other ministries in the strengthening of our households to be centers of teaching the faith in Christ-centered truth and love;
- \*helping our members to engage their communities as witnesses of the Gospel in words and acts of service.

These priorities have proven to some extent to touch the challenges of our times, some of which are:

- \*the cultural relativism of truth and moral standards;
- \*legal assaults on The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, especially religious freedom within the boundaries of the rule of law;
- \*disrespect for rightful and necessary authority, and a dangerous preference for revolutionary measures over reform;
- \*disrespect for the sanctity of human life;
- \*disrespect for the institution of marriage and family as the basic unit of society (life together);
- \*disrespect for fellow human beings’ dignity, welfare, reputation, and property.

A most immediate issue to be addressed is recovery from the physical, emotional, social, and spiritual consequences and casualties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Such tragedies have often unified populations in the past, but history will note the divisions Americans have added to the suffering. No one on earth is more equipped for this recovery and renewal than Christians, not because they have not suffered or were less impacted, not because of who they are of themselves, but because of WHOSE WE ARE.

# Presidential Nominees Convention 2022

## Rev. Dr. William Marler

God enables us through the power of the Holy Spirit which dwells in each of us to muster vigor to speak His words of truth and wisdom, and to sacrificially serve our neighbor in love. Our energy will flow from Christ's real presence in our world—we can humbly speak and show that the Church was mislabeled “non-essential,” as we deliver hope and genuine care to the hurting in our communities. We can shine a new light on the Creator's design for humanity to be in fellowship in real time for those who discover that virtual space cannot fulfill this basic human need. As the pandemic weakens, active members must give their all to bring back those for whom continued absence from church might become habit, as well as those already inactive before March, 2020. As our doors reopen, we have opportunity to form partnerships to help and revive those congregations on the verge of closing. The crises faced by many schools and many members of their faculties in the public sector provides opportunity for us to strengthen and promote in a civil manner our own school ministries.

### **2. As western society accelerates its abandonment of Biblical mores and even natural law, how can the Missouri District support congregations, pastors, teachers, and other church workers to remain both steadfast in the truth but also bold in outreach?**

The Missouri District is the sum total of tens of thousands of God's baptized children which the Holy Spirit has called and placed in the various congregations, positions, roles, etc. throughout our Show-Me-State. This includes pastors and all professional church workers, all laypeople, all our schools and personnel, all our other ministries and staffs. This question begs our awareness that we need all of us to recognize what a gifted and impactful force God has made of us and wants us to be. The more we “walk together” in God's Word through Biblical like-minded confession of doctrine, and the more we work together in our communities in Christ-like service to our neighbors, the more we give faithful witness to our God-given identity and mission. The District Board of Directors and Presidium you elect to serve, and the District staff called and hired to serve you can provide ministry to equip, encourage, and resource all of you to better know, understand, and apply Biblical truth and to better understand and respond to our contemporary challenges and opportunities, both of which are many, the latter difficult to navigate, the former for us the assurance and energy of strengthening the found and seeking the lost.

### **3. What most excites you for the future of the Missouri District and the LCMS?**

In His great mercy and His steadfast love God has revealed in His Word all we need to know about Him, about ourselves, about the origins of the world, and, most importantly, about the hope we possess because of the redemption and new life He has given us as a free gift in His Son Jesus. His truths deliver to us also in our space and time all the tools and “categories” we need to be His confessing people. I was raised in a church still in a the time when people spoke of a ‘beloved synod’ in the proper sense in which the Lutheran Christian heritage was meant to be passed down. Knowing divine grace, we are confident in what we believe, teach, and confess. With humility, we live in the reality of the truths of original sin and our total dependence upon Christ our Savior. We acknowledge our interdependence on one another in the Church, thankful it is not in our ability or lot to resolve the paradoxes and dilemmas so that we fall into errors on one extreme or the other. We possess and enjoy a unity beyond our own making and imagination and we move on simply because God is marching His Church forward. God has always seen his people through the worst and best of times, and He will see us through the polarities and diversities of this space and time, continuing His great entrepreneurship on this planet on which He has made us aliens just visiting for the moment. We are still in the world doing our duty, but we are not of the world and trapped by its desperation and hopeless ends, or by its foolish utopian idealisms and efforts to be divine and eternal. We know soon we are to be co-rulers with His Son for all eternity. That's our destiny! That's our shared excitement! However we are called to serve, let's get on with it.



# Convention Nomination Updates

District President:

Rev. Dr. R. Lee Hagan

69 nominations

Rev. Dr. William Marler

3 nominations

District Vice-President:

Rev. Dr. William Marler

29 nominations

Rev. Brian Thieme

8 nominations

Rev. Kristopher Morris

6 nominations

Rev. Jason Shaw

6 nominations

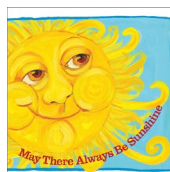
## Upcoming Events

Visit [mo.lcms.org/upcoming-events](http://mo.lcms.org/upcoming-events) for more information on these events.



### E2 Conferences

March 5 & 12



### Early Childhood Conference

March 5

Registration Deadline Feb 25



### JR & SR Youth Gathering

April 1 – 3

Registration Deadline Mar 7



### SHINE!

April 22 – May 1

T-Shirt Deadline Mar 25



### District Convention

June 12 – 14



### NYG Event in Houston

July 9

District Event Registration Open

For more news from the District office, sign up for email communications at [mo.lcms.org](http://mo.lcms.org) and follow us on social media.



Missouri District

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD