

The VOICE

June/July 2022

Missouri District Newsletter



**In This Issue: Tell the Next Generation
Plus an update on the 2022 District Convention**

From the President's Desk

Discipling Youth By Equipping Parents



Consistently, the most common concern expressed in congregations is related to the retention of children and youth. Baptisms occur far less often. Confirmation classes are smaller or only happen every couple of years. What can congregations do to curb this tide that is leading young people away from the congregation? This is a question with which congregations of all sizes and settings are grappling.



LCMS Department of Youth Ministry has highlighted "7 Practices of Healthy Youth Ministry." The sixth practice is "Engaged Parents." On the LCMS Youth Ministry E-Source website, it is noted, "Engaged parents prioritize faith development by encouraging daily faith practices especially during times of transition. Today's busy families are constantly forced to make difficult decisions to prioritize their schedule and resources...By teaching Christ centered priorities in the home, young people learn to set similar priorities during life's transitions as they grow and become independent."

This issue of The VOICE focuses on examples of how congregations can assist parents in faith formation in the home. The Missouri District has trained Tell the Next Generation coaches from across the state to work with congregations that would like support in this effort. The coaches have been trained by Concordia Center for the Family and are available to work with congregations as of July 1. A mailing will be sent to all congregations this summer with more information about Tell the Next Generation and how your congregation can participate.



The challenges facing our children and youth are great. Congregations cannot stop the pressures and influence of our culture on families. However, by equipping parents in this critical work of family discipleship, congregations are helping families to be centered in Christ, formed by the Word of God and prepared for lives of witness and service. The goal is for catechesis to be a partnership of the church and home, whether it is Sunday School, Confirmation, or a mid-week program. We hope this issue will provide some new ideas for your congregation and lead your leadership to consider participating in Tell the Next Generation.

Fraternally in Christ,

R. Lee Hagan

President Lee Hagan



Tell the Next Generation Family Discipleship Coaching

by Dan Kreienkamp

My dad was my baseball, basketball, and (begrudgingly) soccer coach for most of my childhood. He was not an expert in any sport (especially soccer, though he may disagree on the others), but he made it look easy! However, as I entered the coaching sphere as an adult, I realized very quickly that coaching is not easy, and it is different than training. It is popular nowadays to do intensive training for hours and hours with an expert, but that only leads to individual success. In sports it is not about individual accomplishments but succeeding as a team. This is where coaching is vital. Coaches do not spend every hour of a day with a player, but a coach equips his team with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed and encourages them to go out and do! I think we can all agree that in youth sports today we need more great coaches and less individual training. In the Missouri District we have trained 14 great coaches who are ready to encourage and equip our team – the pastors, staff, leaders, and congregants in the Missouri District LCMS.

Our Missouri District Tell the Next Generation coaching initiative is designed to start with a paradigm shift. For a long time, our paradigm for faith formation was to take your kids to church, in some cases drop them off, and then they will grow in their faith. We have seen this approach fail. Our coaches will all start with a paradigm shift in family discipleship: the formation of Christ-centered families starts in the home. This shift does not change the fundamentals of the game! A baseball coach does not re-train the players on how to play baseball, but does help them shift to one common goal: team success. Our goal is for families to have Christ centered homes.



Tell the Next Generation Coaches at their 2022 training

A good coach will look at the strengths and context of his team, and then work with them on how they can be successful together. This is the approach of our Tell the Next Generation coaches. The fundamentals are the same! Coaching is not intended to change everything a player/team does, but it does encourage tweaks. A coach might notice a player throwing with an arm angle that causes his throws to be inaccurate. The coach doesn't tell him to throw with his left hand! Rather, the coach will offer to help tweak the approach. Our coaches will help pastors and congregations tweak their ministries to equip parents to share and model being disciples of Jesus in their families.

The Missouri District is our team. Our goal is not to win a World Series, but to see the love of Jesus Christ passed down to the next generation. Starting in this triennium, we will have coaches ready to work with your congregation. Are you ready to play? Contact our office today to get started.

A Stampede of Youth

An amazing way to see the next generation of Lutherans in action was at the Missouri District Event at the LCMS Youth Gathering in Houston. It was sold out with just under 1,200 from Missouri attending!

Partakers enjoyed a Texas-style BBQ lunch, armadillo racing, giant Jenga, corn hole, pool tables, karaoke, mechanical bull riding, and lots of dancing. Thank you to all who came. It was wonderful getting to connect with so many Lutherans from our state. What a great time!





Bringing the Faith Home

"Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it." Proverbs 22:6

Many churches work hard to involve families, kids, and youth in the church. Congregational activities such as Palm Sunday processions, Lenten passion plays, and/or Christmas pageants hold a special place in the hearts of many. (Not to mention the years of children's sermons and Sunday School!) While they can be helpful and fun for kids, too often these activities become more of a cultural tradition than a means of instilling faith in the next generation. A great way to take faith formation a step further is for churches and families to work towards having at-home family lessons and devotions.

It may seem daunting to have more resources for families, as so many churches already have busy volunteers and staff, but it can be simple to connect families with devotions. A popular and easy way is incorporating important days and seasons in the church year. For example, some churches have a special service shortly before Advent season starts, which includes family activities such as constructing an Advent wreath or a log with a series of candles. This is then followed by a family devotion, and a take-home booklet is given for individual family devotion time. This pattern can easily be adapted for many seasons and festivals throughout the church year, like Transfiguration Sunday and Ash Wednesday.

Some churches hold fairs during the year, where they make available devotion resources for families with children of all ages. This is particularly useful to equip families for summer months, when the ability to build devotions off of normal resources like Sunday School and midweek services aren't available, since they adjourn for many weeks.

Here are some more ideas to get started from Hannah Knehans, Director of Family Life at Trinity Lutheran Church in Springfield who uses these hands on activities in order to help parents engage with their kids for the Gospel message.

"We had families bring blank pages home with illustration prompts, then the Sunday School kids brought those illustrations back to church and I added them to a member-written devotion book. We handed those out for Lent and Easter. They were written for whole families to do together. We also did a family Easter event with an egg hunt, but the main activity was families making a craft together that followed the passion. Last year it was a resurrection garden, and this year it was a candle with colored layers to represent the days of Holy Week. We sent each family home with ways to dig deeper into Bible Study."

Congregations like Trinity and others across the District have been taking the time to work with families, focusing on what parents can do to share the Gospel with their children in addition of what might be called "church time." Their results and impact are amazing. Realizing that parents are often the first exposure that children might have to the saving message of Jesus Christ, take steps like home devotions and activities to help all families in your congregation grow in the faith.

Make Them Known to Your Children...*But How?*

by Rev. Steve Andrews Jr.

Parents and grandparents. The Lord has entrusted you with the wonderful gift of children. The single most important task you have as a parent is to teach your children about the faith you have in Jesus Christ, in who He is and what He has done for you. It's how God designed us to pass on our faith. But how? How do we teach our children? How do we do family devotions? What is a devotion? A devotion is based on that word, "devote." A devotion is anything that we do as we set aside time in our day for God.



Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.

- Read God's Word daily yourself and together daily as a family.
- Ask children questions about the chapter.
 - Content: where was Jonah supposed to go?
 - Exploring: why didn't Jonah want to go to Nineveh?
 - Application: who is someone that needs to hear about Jesus' love?
- Children's Bibles are useful, but are made to be outgrown (unlike our faith.)



Singing Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

- Sing a hymn together as part of your daily devotion.
- For learning, try staying with the same hymn for at least a week at a time.
- Ask for a hymn from next weekend's service to learn ahead of time.
- CPH's "My First Hymnal" is a wonderful tool for children.



With thankfulness in your hearts to God.

- Keep praying: by yourself, as a family, throughout the day, and at set times.
- Use Luther's Small Catechism, which includes a guide to daily prayer.
- Rote prayers (pre-written), like the Lord's Prayer, Luther's Evening and Morning Prayers, the Psalms, and our hymns are wonderful prayers.
- Spontaneous prayers can also be useful tools. As a family, it helps you know what your children are wrestling with in their lives.

Our family pattern with our four daughters happens at dinner each night. I'm the fastest eater, so I've got the opportunity to read God's Word to them before they start wanting to run around. I read them a chapter of the Bible, then we speak together the Ten Commandments, Apostles' Creed, and the Lord's Prayer, and then we sing a hymn. It takes roughly 10-15 minutes per evening. We aren't perfect at keeping our routine, but on those few days we miss, the girls will often remind us!

That's why perhaps the most crucial part of family devotions is to make it a routine. Pick a place and a time where your family can be together. Carve it out intentionally as something of primary importance, as this will teach your children what you value in life.

A Shift in Sunday School

It takes more than one hour of Sunday School learning once a week to set children up for a lifetime of faith growth. Sunday School is a wonderful blessing and can be a great teaching tool. But, congregations need to ensure that this time isn't simply Jesus-themed childcare, filled with happy distractions. Rather, Sunday School can be a time where parents can come alongside teachers and be connected to resources that aid in the continual teaching of their child.

It's important to note that not everyone has the opportunity for strong Christian parents. But whether single parent, being raised by other family members, or legal guardians, adult mentors play a key role in establishing patterns that result in lifelong learning, especially concerning faith. Like it says in Deuteronomy chapters six and eleven, concerning the Lord's commandments, "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise."

Timothy Lutheran Church in St. Louis has been working towards different methods of engaging with parents. Mark Thompson, who serves as DCE there, notes they had a lot of interest in a hybrid Sunday School, which was implemented during a summer before COVID. There was one Bible Study with all age groups with discussion and table activities. When COVID hit, they shifted gears and worked towards empowering parents to teach faith in the home. As the weeks progressed and in-person learning grew over the weeks, they now have a new hybrid. Twice a week there is more traditional learning, where classes are broken into age groups. And the remaining weeks are "family group style". Families (parents/care givers and kids) sit at tables and have small group activities and large group participation. This way parents know what is being taught to their kids and can reinforce lessons at home.

Whether it's increasing take-home resources for families, helping practice family devotion time, adapting in-person Sunday School learning, or anything in between, try to find ways to build on the resources your congregation already has in place to encourage family learning to raise up the next generation.

"Taking a look at post-COVID, how it looks better for churches and family is great. But it's better to look at how do you want to set up for lifelong faith? Help children and their families create discipline and learning for the rest of their lives."

Mark Thompson,
DCE at Timothy, St. Louis





Circuit Visitors Gather for Learning and Fellowship

Summer Trainings

This July featured some continuing education for leaders around the Missouri District. School administrators heard from speaker Ted Neitzke about "Buffalo Leadership". Circuit visitors also gathered together in Columbia to hear from Dr. David Peter of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis and Kansas District President Justin Panzer. Both of these conferences were held in Columbia. And while most of their respective conferences were in different locations, both conferences shared evening fellowship and were concluded with a group worship session at Campus Lutheran in Columbia.

Participants at the Summer Administrators' Conference; speaker Ted Neitzke pictured upper row, center



2022 Convention Update

Looking to the Future

The Twenty-First Convention of the Missouri District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is behind us. Meeting under the theme of “Tell the Next Generation,” the common thread running through resolutions and the convention essay was related to the future. Our faithful God brought us through the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic. Now is the time for our District congregations, schools, and leaders to look at how we go about our work, faithful to the Scriptures and Confessions, and with an eye on the future generations of the Church.

Below are four areas of focus for this triennium around which we will channel resources and support.

1. Recruiting and Retaining Church Workers

There is a great need for congregations and schools to encourage church work vocations among young people. We also need to strengthen the support that we provide to our church workers and their families so that they continue their service to the Church.

2. Family Discipleship

The key factor in the retention of youth to adulthood is the involvement of the home in faith formation. The Missouri District has trained a team of coaches to assist congregations in equipping parents to teach the faith in the home. Please watch for a mailing about Tell the Next Generation coaches, or contact the District office to learn more.

3. Community Engagement

From the Plus One initiative to the *SHINE!* servant events, the Missouri District has been encouraging and equipping congregations to engage their communities with the love of Christ through witness and service. Our prayer is that congregations will move beyond one time community events to consistent community engagement, always for the sake of Gospel proclamation.

4. Shared Ministry

Approximately half of the congregations of the Missouri District have worship attendance of 75 or less. The twenty-first century culture presents great challenges to congregations of all sizes, but there are growing pressures on small congregations in terms of sustainability. We are encouraging shared ministry workshops throughout all regions of the District, so that congregations can explore how they can collaborate for the sake of the ongoing ministry of Word and Sacraments in our communities.

Now the hard work begins! Please pray for the work of our District leadership and staff in supporting the congregations, schools, church workers and lay leaders across Missouri. These are challenging times, but we have a faithful God who has promised to sustain His Church as we look to the future!



Convention Report



Left to right: First Vice President Rev. Bill Marler preaching; participants singing; youth volunteers serving as pages.

The Missouri District opened its 21st Regular Convention June 12, 2022 in Columbia, Missouri and concluded June 14. The convention engaged its business with the theme of "Tell the Next Generation" drawn from Psalm 78:6-7. The delegates re-elected the Rev. Dr. R. Lee Hagan to a third term on the first ballot. The Missouri District presidium remains mostly unchanged. Rev. William Marler was re-elected first Vice President. Rev. Kristopher Morris (Assoc. Pastor, Christ the King-Lake Ozark) and Rev. Brian Thieme (Senior Pastor, Trinity-Columbia) were both re-elected to service as second and third Vice Presidents, respectively. Rev. Jason Shaw (Senior Pastor, St. Paul-Jackson) begins his first term as fourth Vice President. Rev. Samuel Powell (Senior Pastor, Trinity-Jefferson City) was re-elected as Secretary. The officers were installed at the District's Board of Directors meeting July 21, 2022.

The delegates adopted Resolution 4-04a, a bylaw change, so the District's own governance may change in a timely manner, if needed, to reflect similar changes at Synod level. In line with the convention's theme, Resolution 2-01 "Tell the Next Generation: To Encourage the Equipping of Families in Faith Formation" was adopted to equip congregations and schools to teach the parental responsibility given in Scripture to catechize children in the one true apostolic faith.

The delegates also adopted a resolution from the District Board of Directors on church worker recruitment. Recognizing the church worker shortage, and serving alongside the Synod's Set Apart to Serve initiative, the delegates recognized the need to find ways to encourage young people to consider church work and offer financial support. Seeking to confess Christ and doctrine clearly, the convention debated and adopted three resolutions asking Synod to assist with prescient life and culture matters:

- To Encourage Synod to Clarify Our Stance on Fetal Tissues and Their Use Related to Pharmaceutical Products;
- To Encourage Synod to Develop Resources to Aid Congregations and Schools Regarding Gender Identity Issues;
- To Affirm Biblical Anthropology and Denounce Racism as an Anti-Gospel Belief.

Praesidium installed July 21 at the District office.

Interested in learning more about the twenty-first District Convention? Visit us online at <https://mo.lcms.org/district-convention/>. Here you can read about all the resolutions passed. Plus, you can click to watch the proceedings and worship, which were recorded and shared on our YouTube page.



Essayist and Synod Report

Pastors and lay delegates were blessed to learn from Rev. Dr. Mark Kiessling, Director of LCMS Youth Ministry, who served as Essayist. Speaking to the convention theme, Tell the Next Generation, Kiessling commented that despite youth growing up surrounded by identity issues, pressures of social media, and cancel culture, that Jesus gives calm and hope to every generation. He also pointed to two helping points of data for youth: having engaged parents and a group of supportive adults help ensure faith formation.

Convention participants also heard from LCMS President Matthew Harrison, who gave an overview of the Synod. While he covered many topics, which can be found on our online resources, his main takeaway was "We have nothing but Christ and the resurrection ahead of us." Amen.



Missouri District Military Chaplains Honored at Convention



Chaplain Lieutenant Colonel Steven Hokana, Assistant Director of the LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces, presented the Bronze St. Martin of Tours award to two chaplains from the Missouri District for 20 years or more of outstanding service and exceptional ministry to pastors Chaplain Jeremy Gorline, US Navy Reserve and Chaplain David Oberdieck, US Army Reserve.



The award is named after Martin of Tours, an officer in the Roman Army in the fourth century AD. He became a baptized Christian, a cleric, and eventually a bishop in the early church after receiving a vision from Christ. In this vision, a beggar shivered from the cold and Martin cut off half his cape to clothe him. The beggar then revealed himself as Jesus Christ. The Latin *capella*, which was used for the shrine of Martin's cape, is the origin of the English words chapel and chaplain. Additionally, upon the same day Martin of Tours is commemorated, November 11, Martin Luther was baptized. It is for Martin of Tours that Luther was named. Martin of Tours has since been traditionally recognized as a symbol for military chaplains.

Convention Offering

Missouri District congregations and individual households were invited to participate in the convention offering. The offering itself is an opportunity to invest in the work God has called us to do and to encourage one another as we seek to "Tell the Next Generation." The designation for the offering is twofold: help defray the costs associated with training coaches for our Tell the Next Generation coaching endeavor, and help keep participant costs to a minimum for an upcoming youth leadership summit, to teach high school students about leadership roles within the church.

We are so blessed that the offering has totaled over \$20,000! May these gifts be used for God's glory!

Walking with the Missouri District

In each issue of The VOICE, it is a joy to share with all of you how God is using men, women, and children throughout the state to do His work in Missouri. Many ministry efforts featured are made possible by His grace and through the generosity of the people and congregations of the Missouri District. Thank you for your support! Your partnership is making an eternal difference.

If you would like to play a role in the continuation of this work, know that there are options for giving:

- Checks (made payable to "Missouri District" and sent to address below)
- Online with a credit card at <https://mo.lcms.org/donate>
- Automatic withdrawal from a checking account (please contact the District for details)

Are you a member of Thrivent? The Missouri District is an option for the Thrivent Choice program. Simply select "Missouri District LCMS" to direct Choice dollars to the District.

Contact Leah Sieveking at 314-590-6211 or leah.sieveking@mo.lcms.org with any questions. Correspondence may also be sent to:

Missouri District—LCMS 660 Mason Ridge Center Drive, Suite 100 Saint Louis, MO 63141

Thank you, again, for showing God's love to brothers and sisters in Christ throughout the state of Missouri. You're a blessing to many!



Upcoming Events

Visit mo.lcms.org/upcoming-events for more information on these events.

New Church Worker Orientation

August 4 – 5

Tomorrow's Teachers & Preachers Offering Day

August 28

Early Childhood Directors' Conference

September 23

New Teacher Retreat

September 23 – 24

College Fair

Fall 2022

Learn about the Concordia Universities in one place!

2022 Pastors Conference

October 23 – 25

Featuring speakers Rev. Dr. Joel Biermann and Rev. Dr. Richard Serina

For more news from the District office, sign up for email communications at mo.lcms.org and follow us on social media.



Missouri District

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD