

The VOICE

August 2022

Missouri District Newsletter



In This Issue: *Tomorrow's Teachers and Preachers*

From the President's Desk

Tomorrow's Teachers & Preachers

This issue of the Missouri District VOICE focuses on church work vocations. Last year, the Missouri District launched a campaign, "Tomorrow's Teachers and Preachers" to call on God's people to do the following:

1. Pray for young people to consider church work vocations;
2. Encourage specific young people to consider service as professional church workers;
3. Financially support the Missouri District Church Work Endowment scholarship fund.

We need your help and participation as we work to recruit and prepare the next generation of servants in the LCMS. The data shared at this summer's district convention was startling. The number of students preparing for church work at our Concordia University System (CUS) schools has dropped at an alarming rate. In 2005-2006, there were 2,613 students in church work programs. In 2020-2021, the number of students had dropped to 787. There is a particular shortage among Lutheran Teacher Diploma graduates from CUS schools.

We hope that this issue of The VOICE will move you to action. What congregations or schools in your circuit currently have pastoral or teaching vacancies? Please pray for them. Which young people in your congregation or extended family could be blessings of God in church work vocations. Please encourage them to consider. How can you assist in meeting the financial need for those preparing for church work vocations? Please consider giving to your congregational endowment, to a particular Concordia University church worker scholarships, or to the Missouri District Church Worker Scholarship Endowment Fund.

Earlier this summer, I identified Church Worker Recruitment and Retention as the first critical target of the Missouri District's strategic plan. We are convening a committee to help us implement these action steps from this critical target. There is much work to be done to help us grow in this area, That's why we need your help. Please support "Tomorrow's Teachers and Prayers" with your prayers, with your own recruiting, and with your financial gifts. Let us together pray to the Lord of harvest to send out laborers into the harvest fields!

Fraternally in Christ,



President Lee Hagan



Pastor



Rev. Jesse Kueker (pictured left alongside Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Leininger and Rev. Micah Glenn.) Rev. Kueker served as Pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church in Clinton, MO. And now serves as an Admissions Officer at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Below are his insights into the pastoral office.

What was your path to become a pastor?

I had a faithful father and mother who made sure I was in church every Sunday, even if we were traveling. And they would talk highly of the pastoral office and about showing care and love for the pastoral office. When I was young, I was making my own communion set, pretending to have communion with my stuffed animals. In high school, I would be mowing and thinking about "...if I had a sermon, I would say this." I think what really helped me was just watching Pastor [Craig] Otto, Pastor [Matthew] Marks, Pastor [Thomas] Handrick, and Pastor [David] Loy model what a caring pastor looks like and what it means to be a faithful shepherd under the Good Shepherd. And I just felt, "I'm supposed to do that too".

Even then, though, it was a process. After I graduated college, first it was, I feel this calling, but I'm not going to be a pastor. Then it was, well I'll be a pastor—but in 30 years. Then I felt, well maybe 5-10 years ... I lasted a year. I joke that the Lord brought me to the Seminary kicking and screaming.

Now, I serve the church by serving at the Seminary, by talking to people about the possibility about becoming a lifelong church worker, to pray for them, to guide them, to guide them through the discernment process, "Is this for me?".

How to prepare to become a pastor?

If you are a young man thinking about becoming a pastor, pray and read the Scriptures. Continue to go to church. Continue to take the next step in faith. It's imperative that we form pastors. There are 6,000 congregations in the LCMS Synod, about 1,700 of them are empty. There's a desperate need. Pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers. Continue to take the steps forward. If the Lord's calling you, come!

What about being a pastor gives you joy?

Seeing people receive Christ's gifts brings a pastor joy. ...That was the greatest joy of my week, to baptize a child or adult. And to give communion. Or when you're preaching and you can see the people in the pew really receiving a sermon and learning. The greatest thing you can do for your pastor is to be in the church on Sunday.

Now, I've really enjoyed getting to meet with the young men who are still 6-7 years away from the Seminary, and they are inheriting a different world. Thirty years ago, everyone loved Christianity, sort of "the glory days" of Christianity. These young men recognize that this is a different time and that there's hostility, and to see these young men acknowledge this and still say, "Yes, I want to serve in this office." It's amazing to see and strengthens my faith too.

Teacher



Josh Swartz serves as the Director of Schools for the Missouri District office. He has vast experience as an educator and administrator. Read below for his guidance that being a teacher is more than simply having summers off—it's a calling.

What does a teacher do?

So much goes into the preparation of getting ready for a school year. It is literally a huge production that involves many. From the obvious, teams assembled to clean the building, install new wiring and equipment, to the ordering of consumables, site licenses, and equipment use. To the not so obvious. The countless hours of educator training over the curriculum framework while simultaneously delving into the intricate details of how the learning process takes place regarding the age and development stage of each child, transferring all that knowledge into his/her craft as they work to engage the children in the classroom. Not to mention the details of bulletin board colors, placements of posters, wording used, theme, name tags, positioning of desks, supplies, movement through the room, paper turn in, grading setup, day schedule, recess and lunch duty details, and the list goes on. Who knew that so much purposeful care and attention to detail takes place BEFORE a school year can begin?

How to prepare to become a teacher?

Depending upon the path a Lutheran teacher feels eager to pursue, there is a varying degree of schooling. A balanced curriculum for pedagogy, philosophy, and ethics, along with any specialized training or degrees that add more knowledge and expertise or experience. From there, a Lutheran teacher hones their craft commonly referred to as the art of teaching, taking continuing education credits and training to maintain up to date changes in previously studied pedagogy, philosophy, ethics, etc. What brings it all together though is the absolute joy of inspiring others to discover who they are and who's they are, a child of the Heavenly Father. After all, teaching is a calling.

What about being a teacher gives you joy?

The joy and art of a teacher is getting to know each redeemed, child of the Heavenly Father that enters their classroom. Learning their needs and in God's wisdom, engaging and ultimately inspiring the child to become a life-long learner growing in grace and wisdom. Those relationships with the child along with the family, are often life-long and always life altering. From the joy of sharing God's words of encouragement and hope to the love of seeing the growth of each child from the beginning of the year to the end watching the child take ownership of their learning while occasionally being honored with the opportunity of seeing a child taught get baptized is what a teacher gets to do, and why in so many ways, is called to become a teacher.

DCE



Daniel Meyer serves as a Director of Christian Education (DCE) at Christ Memorial in St. Louis. Daniel's ministry focuses on middle and high school youth and their families as well tech for Christ Memorial.

What does a DCE do?

A DCE, short for Director of Christian Education, is an individual who serves the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, usually in the congregational setting. They work in conjunction with the pastor and other staff to disciple people of all ages. A DCE's ministry is often a variety of aspects such as VBS, Children's Messages, Confirmation, Youth Ministry, curriculum development, volunteer management, or other tasks that would bless a congregation and its members.

How to prepare to become a DCE?

Their training happens through a degree through a Concordia University with the DCE Program. The undergraduate degree consists of four years of class work and then a one-year internship at a congregation. After completion of the program, the individual can receive a call to serve in a congregation.

What about being a DCE gives you joy?

I love it when I am able to personally connect with an individual and discuss faith and life together. Sometimes a person shares something exciting, a prayer request, or a hardship. It is a wonderful opportunity to share the hope of the Gospel. In my job setting, this often happens with children and youth. I feel it is especially joyful to assist youth as they navigate the transitions for middle school, high school, and college.

What was your path to become a DCE?

I was greatly inspired by the Holy Spirit throughout middle school and high school. My congregation had DCE's Ben Freudenburg, Jeremy Becker, and Jim Meyer. They along with my sister, Christina Stackle (also a DCE) provided me with numerous opportunities for service and leadership in ministry settings. In addition, I worked after school during high school at my Lutheran grade school with their after school program. I also participated in weekly youth group, mission trips, and National Youth Gatherings. All of these events, led to feeling called by Jesus to serve as a DCE.

Deaconess



Deaconess Sarah Longmire (pictured center, between Deaconess Glenn and Deaconess Sherwin) shares insight on the blessings that serving as a deaconess can provide. Deaconess Longmire serves at St. Matthew in Lee's Summit. Since 2020 she has served as President of the Concordia Deaconess Conference.

What does a deaconess do?

In the broad picture, deaconesses intentionally engage and love their neighbors. The work of a deaconess is rooted in sharing Jesus' love and mercy. In specific, though, deaconesses serve out this work in many different ways. I LOVE sharing and teaching about Jesus. I love thinking theologically, meeting with people, sharing the faith (especially with kiddos), and serving others.

How to prepare to become a deaconess?

There are three main ways that a young woman can become a deaconess. First, as an undergraduate student, she can enroll in the Deaconess Program at Concordia University Chicago. Second, she can enroll as a graduate student at either Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, IN or at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, MO. Third, especially if she is becoming a deaconess as a second career or later in life, she can investigate online programs which are also through the Seminaries.

What was your path to become a deaconess?

I had no intention of being a deaconess! In fact, I had never even heard of a deaconess before I was a student at Concordia University Chicago. It wasn't until two different pastors, independent of one another, told me that I should consider being a deaconess that I even investigated diaconal work! After exploring the program and the work, though, I knew that this was definitely a fit for who I was and who I am.

Advice for young ladies?

One of the greatest opportunities associated with being a deaconess, in my opinion, is how varied the work can be. My skill set is in education and administration - thanks be to God! I get to serve in educational settings! Others' skill sets may be in: organization, medicine, leadership, visitation, relationship-building...and the list could go on. If there is a love for Jesus and a deep respect for Lutheran theology, consider becoming a deaconess. Use your other gifts in and with the faith you have been given through the Holy Spirit and nurtured through Word and Sacrament; deaconesses get to serve in various vocations and use their unique gifts to share Jesus' love with their neighbors.

Tomorrow's Teachers & Preachers



Tomorrow's Teachers & Preachers Kicks Off Second Year

This upcoming school year, 48 students from Missouri—preparing for church work vocations within the Concordia University System and at both seminaries—will be receiving educational scholarships from the Student Aid Endowment Fund of the Missouri District. For the last 40 years, we have seen how God has used this endowment and its faithful donors to help prepare future pastors, deaconesses, DCEs, and teachers for work in His Kingdom. Thank you for your support!

For the second year, the Missouri District continues Tomorrow's Teachers & Preachers—the annual campaign to promote church work vocations and bolster the scholarship endowment. We have seen the shortage of professional church workers within the LCMS and are taking these steps to slow and perhaps reverse this trend. Having already seen what God is capable of doing, this task is taken with a joyful boldness—and offers an invitation to all of you to join in the mission.

Would you please prayerfully consider making a gift that will be added to the Missouri District Student Aid Endowment Fund? Your contribution will be combined with donors from throughout the state today, as well as those gifts given in the four decades of the endowment's existence. Together we will encourage and pray for those students furthering their education now, as well as those we have not met—those whom God has already identified as the next generation of professional church workers.

Gifts may be made online at <https://mo.lcms.org/donate/> or sent to:

Missouri District LCMS
660 Mason Ridge Center Drive, Suite 100
St. Louis, MO 63141

All congregations within the Missouri District were encouraged to celebrate the initiative by including current and future church workers in their prayers and collecting a door offering.

Tomorrow's Teachers & Preachers is a celebration of all that we have seen...and what we will see in years to come. Our God is faithful and will continue to build His Kingdom through men and women serving the church. What a blessing to have you be a part of this. Thank you!

College Fair



Join Us November 5

Come and meet with representatives from all Concordia Universities and both seminaries. Plus learn the latest information with presentations on topics like Financial aid and tips for choosing a college. Saturday, November 5 from 10AM–3PM on the campus of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

Event is free.

Chick-fil-A will be provided.

Drawings held throughout the day for gift cards and swag prizes.

Visit <https://mo.lcms.org> for more information.

Upcoming Events

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

Early Childhood Directors' Conference

September 23

New Teacher Retreat

September 23 – 24

Webinar- *How Your State Tax Dollars Can Send a Child to a Lutheran School*

September 29, 12PM

2022 Pastors Conference

October 23 – 25

Registration open until October 10.

College Fair

November 5

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



Missouri District

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