



The VOICE

September 2022

Missouri District Newsletter

In This Issue: *Church Worker Care*

From the President's Desk

Mutual Consolation

This issue of the Missouri District Voice highlights some of the ways that church workers are supported in their challenging service. Professional conferences for our church workers are not just line items in annual budgets. These conferences are vital ways in which our church workers can be supported through the encouragement that they receive from others, but also in the ongoing development of their skills for service to Christ and His Church. From student teachers, interns and vicars, to retired pastors and teachers, Missouri District conferences provide mutual consolation of those who serve and have served our congregations and schools by their fellow servants.

When budget constraints are tight, congregations and schools will often look at continuing education and professional conferences as easy places to “save” money. Cutting such funds only adds to the stain on our church workers. If you ask a pastor or teacher, you will often hear them say that they need these opportunities to be with their colleagues. From time in the Word to conversations with a classmate, the precious times provide support that cannot be found in an online continuing education offering. Last year, I was particularly struck by how many church workers expressed their gratitude for the pastors and educators conferences.

Attendance at such conferences are required of the ordained and commissioned ministers according to the Synod bylaws. The bylaws serve as a reminder of the benefits of these conferences, stating, “The members of official conferences are to aim to cultivate positive relationships, to be mutually helpful in every way possible, and to encourage, instruct, and admonish one another in a spirit of sincerity and Christian love.” As pastors look forward to attending the 2022 Missouri District Pastors Conference and educators the 2022 Lutheran Education Association Convocation, please pray for them, encourage and support their attendance. Lastly, please join me in giving thanks to God for all of the faithful ordained and commissioned ministers who serve across Missouri District in so many ways. Our congregations and schools are blest!

Fraternally in Christ,




President Lee Hagan





2023 Pastors Conference Focuses on Church in a Virtual Age



The long-term effects and unintended consequences of COVID-19 are still not fully realized. Congregations are still coping with members who are absent from worship and questions related to worship services provided digitally. This year's Missouri District Pastors Conference will be held October 23-25 at Margaritaville Lake Resort in Osage Beach. It will explore how our Lutheran doctrine of the Church informs our practices and guides us in navigating these challenges. President Hagan notes, "This a very timely conference theme and will assist our pastors as they seek to lead congregations to treasure the gifts of God through the Word and Sacraments given through in-person worship." Dr. Joel Biermann, Professor of Systematic Theology at Concordia Seminary, and Dr. Richard Serina, Associate Executive Director of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, will be the plenary speakers.

The Conference Divine Service will be held at Christ the King Lutheran Church in Lake Ozark on Sunday October 23 at 7:00 p.m. An ice cream social, sponsored by Lutheran Church Extension Fund, will follow at Christ the King. Drs. Biermann and Serina will present on Monday and a panel discussion will allow for a time for questions and answers. We are also pleased to again offer a happy hour on Monday afternoon at the conference.

The schedule for Tuesday includes three slots of sectional presentations from District pastors and other guests. The sectional presentations allow the conference attendees to explore a variety of theological and practical topics in a more-depth basis. There will be exhibitors at the conference, including Concordia Publishing House. The conference will also include morning exercise opportunities each day. Members of the Church Worker Care Team will be available for confession, prayer and support throughout the conference. The Conference will also be electing three members to serve on the conference planning committee for the next three years.

Registration is open on the District website until October 10. [Click here to register.](#) The registration fee is \$110 for participants, \$55 for emeriti, vicars and guests. Housing is not included in the conference registration. For hotel questions, please contact Margaritaville at 1-800-826-8272.

If you have any questions, please contact Sue Thompson at the District office (events@mo.lcms.org). We hope to see you in October.

New Church Worker Orientation Programs

Each year the Missouri District is blessed to welcome new church workers to the district. These servants include interns and vicars, rostered and non-rostered teachers, and ordained and commissioned rostered workers.

In August, an orientation was offered for vicars and Directors of Christian Education and Deaconess interns that introduced them to district staff, district mission sites and conversations about the team ministry and collaboration among congregations.

The orientation of new pastors was led President Lee Hagan and Rev. Marty Hasz. It included an overview of district services and staff members. Rev. Hasz addressed topics related to church worker health and support for church worker families. President Hagan presented on the pastor's devotional life, the benefit of a "Father Confessor," and the importance of walking together in the Synod. There were also conversations unique to sole pastorates and team ministry.

In September, new Director of Schools, Joshua Swartz and Rev. Marty Hasz led an orientation for teachers in their first two years of teaching (pictured left). This orientation also included extensive conversations about church worker health and support for church worker families. Joshua Swartz said of the training, "It provided an opportunity for our church workers to reflect, build a network of support partners, and understand the importance of managing stress. A recent Gallup Poll showed that 44% of educators experienced burnout or fatigue due to unmanaged workplace stress and prioritizing how we empower our church workers to manage their stress is a key strategy in retaining our church workers."

Priority number one of the Missouri District Strategic Plan is "Recruitment and Retention of Church Workers." These orientation programs are vital for the district to assist congregations and schools in retaining church workers. The district staff will continue to work to plan orientation programs that are relevant for the challenges that church workers are facing today and support them to be faithful to God's Word and to those we serve. President Lee Hagan said, "It is exciting to see young servants who are eager to use their gifts to be a blessing to congregations and schools. We are thankful that these young people have been led to this vital form of service for a time such as this." Please pray for the Lord of the Harvest to send out new laborers into the harvest field, but also for those who have been led to new opportunities of service.



LUTHERAN COLLEGE FAIR

Join Us This Fall!

Have you ever considered the value that a Lutheran college education would have for you or your loved one? If you want to find a college that encourages academic excellence, fosters faith, and feels like home, check out the possibilities at the Concordia universities and seminaries of the LCMS!

The Missouri District office would like to invite you to Concordia Seminary St. Louis on November 5th, 2022 for our first ever College Fair. It will be an open house format from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. in Sieck Hall. Attendance is free, and registration can be found online at mo.lcms.org/college-fair.

Students will have an opportunity to meet with representatives from all the LCMS Concordia universities and seminaries and will receive a free drawstring bag to collect materials from the booths. There will be raffles for Concordia swag and numerous gift cards, food, and virtual golf, along with presentations on financial aid and choosing a college.

The purpose of this important event is two-fold. First, a Concordia education is for anyone who wants to live and study in a community rooted in the Gospel of Christ. Concordia grads serve God by successfully working in schools, medical and research offices, churches, businesses, and more. Secondly, the Missouri District office, with feedback from our congregations, schools, and church workers, has identified church worker recruitment and retention as one of our four critical targets for the 2022-2025 triennium. Through this event and other efforts outlined our 2022-2025 strategic plan, we are raising awareness of church work programs and encouraging young people to consider service to LCMS congregations and schools.

If you know families in your congregation, school, and community with high school students, recognize and cultivate those young people's gifts for ministry and encourage them to study church work. Extend an invitation to attend the Lutheran College Fair. You can even organize a youth trip to the College Fair.

Together, we can help students experience a solid, faith-rich college education to prepare them to serve the church and world. We want our young people to carry God's love into their family and professional vocations. We hope to see you at the first Missouri District College Fair!



Church Worker Care and Support

by Rev. Dr. R. Lee Hagan

A recent New York Times editorial, by Tish Harrison Warren, addresses the increasing percentage of clergy who are experiencing burnout and considering resignation. Citing March 2022 data from the Barna Research Group, the article notes that 46% of pastors under age 45 have considered resigning due to the pressures of the last three years. Warren writes, “the top reported reasons for clergy burnout were the same ones that people in the population at large face: stress, loneliness and political division. But these stressors affect pastors in a unique way. Pastors bear not only their own pain but also the weight of an entire community’s grief, divisions and anxieties. They are charged with the task of continuing to love and care for even those within their church who disagree with them vehemently and vocally. These past years required them to make decisions they were not prepared for that affected the health and spiritual formation of their community, and any decisions they made would likely mean that someone in their church would feel hurt or marginalized.”

Our church workers are hurting as they face a wide array of pressures. We cannot work to recruit new church workers without caring for those who have given so much in service to their congregations and schools. LCMS President Harrison, in a letter dated September 7, 2022, wrote, “October has typically been clergy appreciation month. We certainly praise and thank God for our pastors who serve us with Word and Sacrament each week and throughout our lives...Our commissioned workers are a true blessing to the Synod and to each person with whom they share the Word. I invite you to encourage the congregations and schools in your care to show their thanks for their church workers.”

The Missouri District is blessed to have Rev. Marty Hasz as part of our staff. His role is Director of Church Worker Support. One of the ways that He is able to assist congregations is discussing with Boards of Elders, Education and other groups, strategies for the ongoing care for the church workers and their families in all aspects of health and wellness. If Rev. Hasz can be of assistance, please contact him at marty.hasz@mo.lcms.org. Please check out the suggestions from LCMS Set Apart to Serve initiative for ways to show appreciation to your church workers. ([Click here to learn more about Set Apart to Serve.](#))





Lifestyles of Reconciliation: Coaches Training

As we continue to explore ways to support our church workers, consider joining in Lifestyles of Reconciliation: Coaches Training. Healthy congregations start with a healthy pastor. One way to alleviate some of the pressures of the pastoral office is for congregations to be able to help address conflicts when they arise. While this training is useful for elders of congregations, it's also very good training for anyone.

We live in a sinful, fallen world. Sadly, often relationships can turn into contracts, where care is only expressed when something is wanted in return. Or even people could feel justified in taking wrong actions. Failing to address the heart of the issue doesn't avoid conflict, it just creates more of it somewhere else.

To help navigate conflicts, attend the upcoming training this fall. Hosted by Ambassadors of Reconciliation and the Missouri District office, it's a two-part training that you can complete even from your own home. Training is November 12 from 8:15 a.m.– 5:30 p.m. There are two groups meeting in person, one at Faith in Springfield and one at Gethsemane in St. Louis. There is also an option to watch online from anywhere in Missouri. You can even form a group and learn together.

God calls us to be reconciled to Himself and to our fellow man. This Coaches Training can give you reconciliation tools to use in your life. [Click here to learn more and to register.](#)



MOScholars

On July 1, 2022, the state of Missouri launched MOScholars—a new tax credit program to provide educational scholarships for qualifying K-12 students attending private institutions. The Missouri District of the LCMS is blessed to be an Educational Assistance Organization within this program, enabling us to use participant tax dollars

to walk with students and their families as they seek to defray the cost of tuition at our Lutheran schools. It's an exciting opportunity for everyone involved, and today we invite you to join us in this new endeavor.

MOScholars allows you as the taxpayer to direct your tax dollars to a cause you feel strongly about—Lutheran education. At no additional cost and with minimal effort, it's a win for taxpayers, students, families, and LCMS schools in our state.

Head to the Missouri District's website for easy access to the state's MOScholars webpage. There you'll find details on tax credit reservation amounts, number of years credits can be transferred, and more. mo.lcms.org/mo-scholars Thank you for your participation in MOScholars through the Missouri District.

Upcoming Events

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

Webinar- *Connecting with Immigrants and Refugees*

October 12, 12PM

2022 Pastors Conference

October 23 – 25

Registration open until October 10.

College Fair

November 5

Webinar- *A Call to Action: Family Ministry*

October 12, 12PM

SHINE!

April 14–23, 2023

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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