

The VOICE

December 2022

Missouri District Newsletter

In This Issue: A Season of Joy

Pictured: Boar's Head at Immanuel, St. Charles

From the President's Desk

A Great and Mighty Wonder

During my years in parish ministry, the weeks of Advent were indeed a time of preparation. Sermon preparation, that is. One of the ways that I would prepare was to read the sermons and meditations of great teachers of the faith down through the centuries. I was always blessed by the Word as it was taught by the pen of Martin Luther and John Gerhard, in particular. Gerhard's Sacred Meditations is a gem for pastors and laity alike to the read and ponder. As we once again reflect upon God's promise of His messiah and the fulfillment of His prophecies in the birth of Christ, there is so much for which we marvel. The crude surroundings. The virgin birth. The faithful earthly father. The absence of the finery fit for a king. The unlikely first worshippers. God becoming a baby boy. For some two thousand years, preachers and poets have labored to describe their marvel at the Christmas story. Though you have heard the story and sung the hymns many times before and will hear a sermon that may not provide nothing "new," you will once again be amazed at the Word made flesh as the Babe of Bethlehem.

Here is a portion of one of Luther's reflections. He writes, "Look upon this Lord of Peace and your spirit will be at peace. See how God invites you in many ways. He places before you a babe with whom you may take refuge. You cannot fear him, for nothing is more appealing to man than a babe. Are you affrighted? Then come to him, lying in the lap of the fairest and sweetest maid. You will see how great is the divine goodness, which seeks above all else that you should not despair. Trust him! Trust him! Here is the Child in whom is salvation. To me there is no greater consolation given to mankind than this, that Christ became man, a child, a babe, playing in the lap and at the breasts of his most gracious mother. Who is there whom this sight would not comfort? Now is overcome the power of sin, death, hell, conscience, and guilt, if you come to judge this gurgling Babe and believe that he is come not to judge you, but to save." (Martin Luther's Christmas Book, p. 33)

Gerhard's "The Mystery of the Incarnation" captures well the many facets of our Savior's birth for which we can ponder. He writes, "O let us admire the marvelous goodness of our God, who, when we could not ascend to Him hesitated not to descend to us. Let us stand in wonder at the marvelous power of our God, who was able to unite in one two natures so diverse as the divine and human, so that one and the same Person is now both God and man. Let us admire the marvelous wisdom of our God, who could devise a scheme for our redemption, which neither angels, not men could have devised...Let us stand in wonder at this mystery, but let us not too curiously pry into it. Let us desire reverently to study it, although we cannot fully understand it." (p. 80-81)

May the marvel of Christ's birth bring you joy and hope always!



Fraternally in Christ,

R. Lee Hagan

President Lee Hagan

Zion, Harvester



Lutheran High, St. Charles



Immanuel, St. Charles



Musical Fine Arts in Our Lutheran Schools

We have all experienced the power of music. Research shows that music activates several regions in the brain stimulating new neuropathways, impacting our mood, reducing stress, connecting to others, and even helping us to recall information. Music is weaved throughout our everyday lives from the visual arts, dance, to theatre. We are designed to be social creatures and music is one of those gifts God has provided giving us that opportunity to connect with others.

In Ephesians, we learn about being imitators of God, walking in love and being a fragrant offering “addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart.” (Ephesians 5:19) And our Lutheran schools across Missouri are immersed in utilizing a wide range of musical fine arts. These opportunities serve not only for students to learn and grow, but also as a powerful witnessing tool to our community.

Take, for instance, Immanuel St. Charles. Since 1986, Immanuel has intentionally brought congregational adults and students grades four through eight together in instrumental, choral, and colorful acting to share the good news of Christ’s birth through a medieval Boar’s Head Christmas Festival. Calvary in Kansas City creates connections by students going caroling right before Christmas break. Many elementary schools also have musical fine arts programs, like Zion Harvester’s Fiddle Festival and Lutheran High in St. Charles who utilizes jazz, choral opportunities in worship, and even theatre to push their students to take a more active role in production, directing, and performance.

Lutheran Schools are and continue to build generations of leaders by helping them hone their God given gifts and abilities putting themselves out there utilizing musical fine arts to bring people together as Martin Luther said, “there are, without a doubt, in the human heart many seed-grains of precious virtue which are stirred up by music.” This December, may God bless you and your family through the gift of music celebrating our Savior’s birth.

International Campus Ministry in Missouri

The Great Commission in Matthew tells us to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you...” (Matthew 28:19) So often this verse is used in sending missionaries to far away countries, but did you know that there is a way to reach “all nations”, right in your own backyard?

International students at universities and colleges are eager to learn about American customs and culture. This includes learning about religion. Campus Lutheran in Columbia, located right next to the University of Missouri, has a thriving church and campus ministry. One unique aspect of this busy congregation is their ministry to international scholars. Different than an undergraduate student, often international scholars visit for about a year’s time to master the English language, bringing their family with them. A wonderful blessing and connection for students is Beth Greimann, an English Language Learner instructor at University of Missouri. Beth also serves as the Director of International Ministry at Campus Lutheran.

“It has come as a natural outreach,” says Beth. While teaching at the university, she is allowed to answer any questions that the students have. And there are easy ways to use Campus Lutheran as a resource, like inviting students to experience Thanksgiving dinner or inviting them to a free English class on Friday mornings at the church. She also teaches a class “Authentic Writing Using Recipes and Cooking”, for which she can utilize Campus Lutheran’s kitchen.

There are many aspects to this ministry, that together, help foster building relationships. For example, there is a free “garage sale” where a number of household items are set up and available for international students. There are always plenty of events, like Easter egg hunts, pumpkin carvings, family fun night. By making sure there is another event scheduled, there is a welcome invitation. Keeping the relationship going can be as simple as having a postcard prepared with the upcoming event information. Plus, there are plenty of meals to be shared.

The harvest does not return empty. In addition to creating many friendships over the years, and planting the seeds of Christianity in students, Campus Lutheran has been blessed to experience the fruit of the Holy Spirit firsthand. There are baptisms that can come out of these relationships, and even a Christian marriage!

If you are involved in a college ministry, the Missouri District Campus Ministry Network has some grant funding available beginning or expanding outreach among international students. Contact our District office about “Reaching the Nations Through Campus Ministry” initiative.





Christ in an Ever-Changing Community

About every two to three years, a change in command takes place at Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri. While this is typical of military life, it adds a unique challenge to ministry when relationships with many neighbors are continually beginning and ending. Faith Lutheran in Knob Noster understands the Whiteman community, however, and is ready to share the Gospel with service personnel and their loved ones—regardless of how long they remain in the neighborhood.

The congregation brings consistency to an area always in flux and has established itself as a reliable resource for the Whiteman AFB community. This was very clear when Pastor Jon- Michael Schweigert and members of Faith pitched the idea of hosting Vacation Bible School on base to the new wing chaplain...and were approved!

“The secret to making VBS happen was to tap into the relationships we had built over years,” says Pastor Schweigert. “It also helps to remember that everyone involved wants the children to grow closer to God. Our job was just to show how we could amplify what the base already wanted to do.” In July 2022, Faith Lutheran hosted “God’s Wonder Lab” VBS for five days on base. More than sixty children heard about the miracles of Jesus and did science experiments together.

The state of Missouri contains so many varied neighborhoods—small farming communities, college campuses, urban centers, suburban areas, military bases, and more. The people living in these environments may be lifelong residents or simply passing through for a short time. Regardless of their length of stay among us, the Missouri District stands ready to support congregations and schools in mission and ministry. The way you amplify this work in God’s Kingdom through your partnership with the District continues to be a source of great joy. This Christmas season, would you please prayerfully consider making a gift to the mission efforts of the Missouri District?

Gifts may be made online at: mo.lcms.org/donate

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

Our neighborhoods—and even our world—may be in a constant state of transition, but God remains steady and faithful through it all. We marvel at the way He works among us—utilizing our collective interests and gifts to strengthen relationships and make His name known throughout Missouri. Thank you for your support of this work.

Webinars

The Missouri District is pleased to present a series of webinars. We pray that these may help aid in your congregation's ministry. The upcoming webinars are:

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS DESPITE DISAGREEMENTS

Jan 18, 2023 at 12p.m.

Race, Sex, Guns, Climate, Politics, Gender, Religion, Ethnicity, Vaccines, Poverty...are we letting cultural issues prevent relationships? Why is the answer often to dissociate from people with whom we disagree? How can church leaders model and foster an approach for bridging relationships, even if we can't bridge ideologies?

Join with Rev. Dr. Chad Lakies, regional Director for North America at Lutheran Hour Ministries, and Rev. Marty Hasz, Director of Church Worker Support, for a biblical vision for how to engage with others who think and believe differently than we do.

CONGREGATIONAL FINANCIAL FORUM

Mar 15, 2023 at 12p.m.

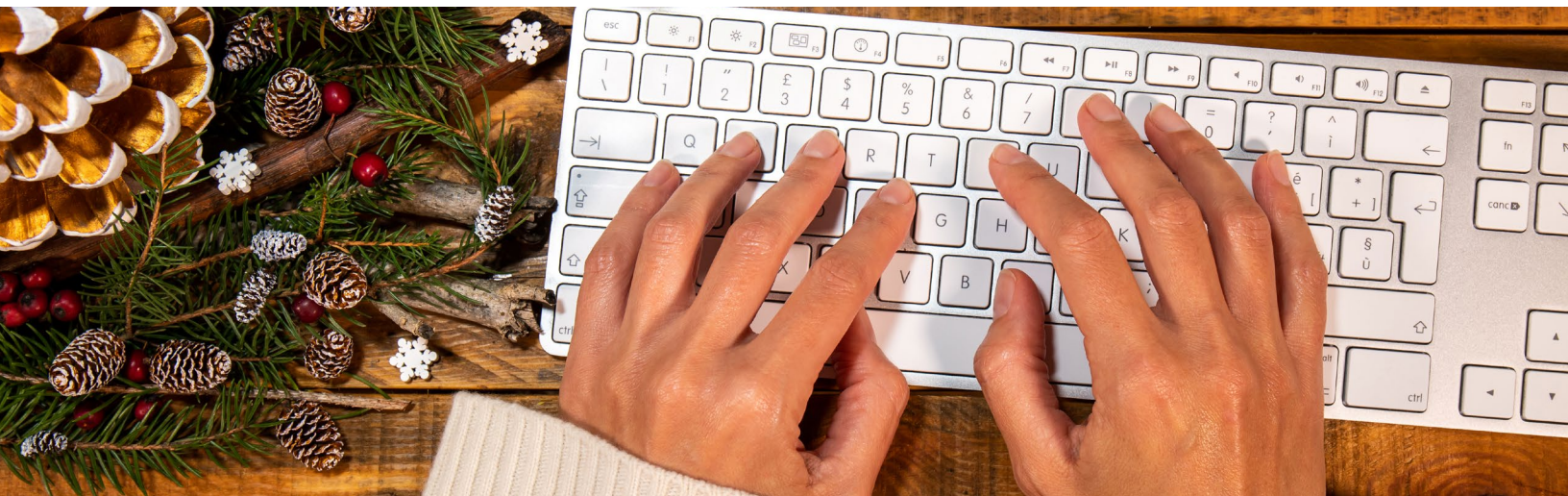
Join us to learn tips on the best operating procedures for your congregation. Topics discussed are related to church finances and administrative matters. Congregational treasurers, business managers, and newly elected congregational leaders are encouraged to attend.

A BLESSED MARRIAGE

Apr 19, 2023 at 10a.m.

Join Rev. Dr. Todd Biermann, noted speaker, as he presents simple, memorable, Christ-centered content and tools to strengthen your own marriage...so you can be a blessing to all those who are, or plan to be, married around you.

To watch past webinars, featuring topics like MOScholars, Family Ministry, mission work, and more, visit our webpage mo.lcms.org/webinars.



YouthLead

MISSOURI

February 18-20, 2023
Rocky Mount, MO

YouthLead is an exciting new opportunity for high school youth. It combines our previous leadership efforts in Missouri District leadership by taking the training elements of Peer Ministry Training (PMT) with the community of leaders in Lutheran Youth Fellowship (LYF). Our goal is to train and encourage youth in Gospel-centered leadership across Missouri.

Our youth will receive practical training to help prepare them to be leaders in their own churches and community. "Motivated by Love" will walk our youth through learning to listen, ask, seek, share, invite, and encourage their peers as they share their faith. They will also learn practical skills like how to lead a devotion. Julianna Schults from LCMS Youth Ministry Training will lead the training for our youth. Our goal is to focus on growing in our relationship with Jesus Christ and our relationships with others with Christ at the center.

Another major component of YouthLead is having a mentor to walk alongside these high school youth. Mentors will work with a YouthLead trainer to recognize and encourage youth leadership in our congregations and communities. So this weekend of training is open to adult mentors also.

The cost is all inclusive, just \$75 per registrant. This covers meals, lodging, and registration. For registration and more information, head to mo.lcms.org/youthlead

Calling junior and senior youth! Mark your calendars and plan to join us this March at the District Youth Gathering. The theme is LiveLove(d), and focuses on Holy Baptism.



To help us learn this are our main gathering presenters, FLAME and Rev. Brandon Metcalf.

FLAME (Marcus Gray) is an award-winning Christian Hip-Hop artist with a degree from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. And Pastor Metcalf is long-time church worker from Missouri and a popular youth presenter. Both FLAME and Pastor Metcalf were featured presenters at the Houston LCMS Youth Gathering last summer.

The gathering runs March 24-26, 2023 at the Cross Point Retreat Center. For registration and more information about the retreat, visit mo.lcms.org/youth-ministry.



Marcus Gray (left) & Brandon Metcalf (right)

Still Time to Act for MOScholars

The deadline for participating this year in Missouri's newest tax credit program—MOScholars— is December 31. Please consider taking this opportunity to direct up to 50% of your state taxes to fund scholarships for Lutheran education. Participation in this program is as simple as completing an online form and pre-paying a portion of your taxes in the amount of your credit reservation. Head to the Missouri District website (mo.lcms.org) for more information or call Leah Sieveking at 314-590-6211. Thank you for your support!

Upcoming Events

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

Reconciliation Coaches Training

January 11–February 8, 2023

Webinar – *Building Relationships Despite Disagreements*

January 18, 12PM

YouthLead

February 18–20, 2023

Tell the Next Generation Conference

March 11, 2023

Webinar – *Congregational Financial Forum*

March 15, 2023 12PM

District Youth Gathering

March 24–26, 2023

***SHINE!* A Statewide Servant Event**

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

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD