

The VOICE

February 2023

Missouri District Newsletter



In This Issue: Springtime Growth Across the District

*Pictured: Participants of SHINE! from Epiphany St. Louis
Remember to register by March 14 for this year's blue t-shirt!*

From the President's Desk

The Challenge of Retaining Children and Youth

The primary concern that congregations express when beginning the process of calling a pastor is retaining children, youth, and families. The way to face this challenge is the way that the Church faces every challenge put before her and that is with the Word of God. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to call, gather, enlighten, and sanctify young and old alike. That Word may be delivered in a variety of different ways, but the simple solution to the complex concern is the Word of God.

Here are some of the ways that congregations are facing that challenge today...

Inter-generational Catechesis – Some congregations no longer have divided Sunday School classes, but may have an entire Family Sunday School or a teaching format where the older children assist in the education of younger children. Some adapted confirmation programs to include multiple age levels where the children learn together and parents are even involved and attend.

Family Discipleship in the Home – A growing number of congregations are providing guides and resources to assist parents in leading devotions in the home. Some use a family altar to gather for a time of reading Scripture and the Catechism, the singing of hymns, and prayer. Lent is an excellent time for families to begin devotions in the home by using a resource that guides them through the Lenten season to the celebration of Christ's resurrection.

Parallel Sunday School lessons – Some congregations have an adult class that follows the same lessons as the children's lessons to assist parents in the conversation about what they are learning.

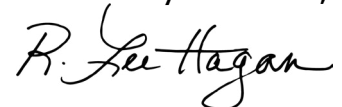
Support from Technology – Other congregations have provided short videos for families to watch in the home during the week to support their ongoing growth in the faith, often connecting to the Scripture readings from either the previous or upcoming Sunday.

These are just a few ways that congregations are assisting families in teaching the faith to children. The solution is not to try to do a long list of things, but evaluate what your congregation is doing and determine if there is something else that would help meet this challenge.

If your congregation would like assistance in family discipleship, the Missouri District is here to help. Please contact Pam Nummela at family@mo.lcms.org for information about our Family Discipleship coaches. Also, come and learn more about strategies for teaching the faith to children, youth, and families at our upcoming Tell the Next Generation Conference on March 11. See p. 7 for more information.

May God the Holy Spirit guide our congregations as we tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord.

Fraternally in Christ,



President Lee Hagan

Oromo Congregation Chartered

Eight years ago, someone came and knocked on the door of Christ Lutheran Church in Platte Woods. A group of Oromo immigrants had been meeting at a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) nearby in the North Kansas City suburbs. The group was growing increasingly uncomfortable with the direction of the ELCA, especially regarding its stance on sexuality. That action has led to a strong partnership between Christ Lutheran and their Oromo brothers and sisters that began a new chapter with the chartering of the Oromo Evangelical Lutheran Church of Kansas City.

The Oromo people are an African tribe primarily from Ethiopia, but also some from Eritrea to the north and Kenya to the south. In 2021, Christ Lutheran called Pastor Abdi Megerssa Selbana to serve as assistant pastor and care for the Oromo members. While the Oromo had weekly worship in their own language, their children began participating in Christ Lutheran's catechetical programs. In time, plans began for the group to charter as a separate congregation.

The chartering service took place on January 29. Rev. Brandon Froiland, senior pastor of Christ Lutheran Church said, "It has been a joy working with Pastor Abdi and the Oromo congregation meeting at Christ Lutheran. It had been our fervent prayer that God would establish this much needed ministry for Oromo immigrants in our area and we are now glad to have this established congregation." Rev. Demelash Yoseph, director of the Oromo Evangelical Lutheran Mission Society, preached in English and Oromo. An authentic Oromo meal followed the service, prepared by the congregation members.

President Lee Hagan said, "It is a joy for us to welcome this new congregation to the Synod. We are thankful that Christ Lutheran's charge to proclaim the message of repentance and forgiveness of sins is being fulfilled here in north Kansas City. We pray that God will bless this congregation and many more Oromo will be reached with the Gospel!"





The Missouri District Youth Gathering is almost here! Coming March 24-26, register your congregation by the end of February for our annual weekend ministry event, designed for youth in grades 6 through 12. "Live Love(d)" will feature music and insight from Marcus Gray, the award-winning Lutheran hip hop recording artist with a degree from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Our main presenter will be Rev. Brandon Metcalf, a family man and pastor, a gifted LCMS Gathering presenter, and author.

Currently held once a year each spring, the Missouri District Gathering gives youth and adults the opportunity to come together as a community of God's people to be encouraged in their walk with Jesus Christ and learn about the Christian faith and their Lutheran identity—often focusing on one of the Six Chief Parts of Luther's Small Catechism. This year our theme points not only to God's love for us shown at the Cross, but toward the life that begins at our Baptism and continues daily through Christ and His love for us.

"This is how God showed His love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world, that we might live through Him." (1 John 4:9)

Beautiful Cross Pointe Camp on the Lake of the Ozarks will once again be our District Gathering location, with both hotel and dormitory style rooms, comfortable facilities, great food, and lots of space to move about and enjoy views of God's creation. In addition to inspiring music, worship, and Bible study, District Youth Gathering participants will enjoy fun and thoughtful breakout sessions, age-specific junior high and high school activities and learning, meaningful service opportunities, and thrilling free time activities.

We hope your congregation will be a part of "Live Love(d)", the Missouri District's 2023 Youth Gathering this spring! Learn more and sign up your group at mo.lcms.org/youth-ministry.

**"When I'm doubting
my faith and I'm
stuck in my head**

**Then I look outside
to the promise He
gives**

**That baptism saves
Was buried and rose
up with Christ**

**That's what our
baptism is**

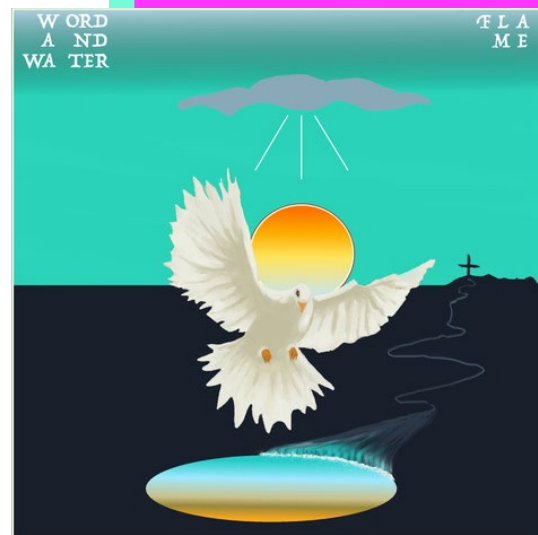
**And everything
Jesus' baptism did**

**We benefit 'cause
our baptisms in His**

**The Spirit,
forgiveness, Jesus'
perfection**

**Resurrection, the
Word and the water
gives"**

—quoted from "He
Delivers" by FLAME
from the album Word
and Water, 2022.





Missouri to **SHINE!** for the Third Time

For the third consecutive year, the Missouri District is pleased to host a statewide servant event. Based on Matthew 5:16 and aptly named **SHINE!**, the event is scheduled to take place April 14-23, 2023. Similar to previous years, the concept is simple:

Form a Team: Groups of all sizes and skillsets are welcome.

Identify a Need in Your Community: Who needs an extra hand in your area?

Register with the Missouri District: Head to mo.lcms.org/shine to share what your team is doing and order the official servant event t-shirt for participants.

Serve: Show love to your neighbors and be a witness for Jesus Christ while serving in April.

Our sincerest thanks to the 2023 t-shirt sponsors: Lutheran Church Extension Fund, Rod's Sports, Concordia Plans, Concordia Seminary-St. Louis, and Immanuel Lutheran in St. Charles. (Note: The cutoff for ordering t-shirts is Tuesday, March 14.)

With more than 5,000 participants wearing yellow in 2021 and more than 8,000 participants in green in 2022, excitement is growing as teams prepare to wear royal blue this spring. More than 3,300 shirts have already been spoken for since registration went live in early January.

Adding to the joy this year is the addition of a second LCMS district. The Northern Illinois District will host their own servant event during the same timeframe and under the same name and logo.

"The church is always better when it's connected to Christ, each other, and the community. We are excited that we get to do good as Jesus did. All we do is a response to what Jesus has done for us," says NID President, Rev. Alan Buss. "The Northern Illinois District will be more greatly engaged through **SHINE!**. We are grateful to the Missouri District for the journey together. We will be better for it!"

Now is a great time to start forming teams, register on the Missouri District website, and pray for those serving and being served throughout Missouri and Northern Illinois. May our lights shine brightly so that God can be glorified!



Sharing Hope in South City

In South City, St. Louis among the many historic LCMS congregations, you can find Pastor Geordie Denholm (pictured left) at Jefferson Avenue Mission. It's a beautiful church, surfaced in stone, with three arched red front doors, intricate carvings accented on every little surface and covering, and huge pieces of stained glass adorn every wall. Here Pastor Denholm works hard to bring a message of hope to the church's neighbors of South City.

There are about 20 people who regularly come to Jefferson Avenue Mission. They gather together on Sunday evenings and begin with a meal and conversation together. This regular gathering has even led to occasional new connections with transient and underhomed passersby. The evening concludes with time and teaching in the Word. Once a month, the group has "Second Sunday Celebration" which is a larger worship celebration and includes songs and Holy Communion.

This mission is quite an undertaking. There are future plans in the works for roof repair and to have an exterior accessibility ramp installed with easy access to a new ADA seating area. It's all about eliminating any stumbling blocks for people to join together to hear the Gospel message. The narthex area will be renovated and include an ADA bathroom on one side with a small kitchenette on the other. This will make it so much easier for the group to gather for their weekly dinner and time in the Word.

A core component of this church is intentionally making connections into their community—a community that has a thriving fine arts environment and charter school. Thankfully, there is a great opportunity for growth here, as Pastor Denholm has a background in theater. He has built on this, and part of his outreach during the week is using theatrical productions to make connections in the neighborhood. This past December, they had a very successful production of "A Christmas Carol". And he is in talks with the principal of their charter school on how they can help provide theater education. "That's one of the reasons why we're doing what we're doing here, and why we want to do it," says Pastor Denholm, "To be Christians entering into spaces that are not necessarily Christian and to be holding firm to our Gospel and to the truth that we know in Jesus Christ. To be lights to the world rather than waiting for people lost in darkness to find us."

Pastor Denholm sums up his work in their mission statement, "Jefferson Avenue Mission wants to spread hope in the Gospel of Jesus Christ to our neighborhoods through our work and through our craft." It's a beautiful example of using the talents and gifts that God has given to bring His comforting message of hope and salvation to everyone.



the Christ Centered Home

A Tell the Next Generation Conference

Saturday, March 11

9^{AM} – 3^{PM}

Lutheran High, St. Charles

Our culture and the devil work hard to shift the focus of our Christian homes. Sports? Work? Stress? Media? Digital devices? Sadly, adding to this list is easy. And creating a home with a Christ-centered environment takes intentionality. Join us March 11 from 9am–3pm at the Lutheran High School of St. Charles for a great opportunity to hear top family ministry experts present on ways to create and live in “the Christ Centered Home”.

This conference is designed for all: parents, church workers, and anyone who works to help create Christ-centered homes for families of all stages and ages. Plus, pastors and congregations will learn more about the Tell the Next Generation Family Discipleship Coaching Initiative now available in the Missouri District.

Plenary speakers are Dr. Randy Schroeder, author of “Simple Habits for Marital Happiness” and “Simple Habits for Effective Parenting” and Rev. Dr. Mart Thompson, Associate Professor of Practical Theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Plus, there are over 12 breakout presenters ranging in topics like, the role a Christian marriage plays, the impact of parenting, forming healthy faith habits in the home, the impact and interactions of depression, practicing forgiveness and reconciliation, talking to teens about dating, being followers of Jesus in the 21st century, and many more.

This day of learning is just \$15 to participate and includes lunch. Register by March 1 to ensure a place at the conference. Visit mo.lcms.org/ttng-conference-2023 to register and to read more about the day’s schedule and presentations.

Fighting against culture is not a new sin. Joshua took a stand in the cultural war Israel faced as they headed into the Promised Land when he said, “And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” (Joshua 24: 15) We too, must look to focusing on households that serve the Lord.

May God bless our families as they live, love, and serve the Lord Jesus Christ in Christ-centered homes.



MOScholars Starts Strong

The inaugural year of MOScholars—Missouri's tax credit program providing scholarships to families of children attending private institutions—was truly a success. The Missouri District gives thanks to God for the willingness of taxpayers to participate in this new endeavor. It has made an impact that will last an eternity, as children throughout the state are now getting a quality education and hearing the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ at LCMS schools.

The District was able to secure more than \$479,000 in funds in 2022, which resulted in 100 children from 23 Lutheran schools receiving a full or partial scholarship for the current school year. Thirty five percent of these recipients are experiencing their very first year in a Lutheran school, making MOScholars a wonderful tool for growing God's Kingdom.

We look forward to expanding the reach of MOScholars in 2023. Along with these original 100 recipients, we'll add additional students and their families for the 2023-24 school year. We welcome your participation in the MOScholars program in 2023 and thank you for walking with these students. The tax credit reservation system for this current calendar year is up and running once more. The process can begin at mo.lcms.org/mo-scholars. Additional questions can be directed to Leah Sieveking at 314-590-6211 or leah.sieveking@mo.lcms.org.

Again, thank you for walking with the Missouri District and using your tax dollars to change the life of a child.



Upcoming Events

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

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| March 4 | "Developing Today's Child" <i>Spring Early Childhood Conference</i> |
| March 11 | "The Christ Centered Home" <i>A Tell the Next Generation Conference</i> |
| March 15 | Webinar at 12PM – Congregational Financial Forum |
| March 24-26 | "LiveLoved" <i>District Youth Gathering</i> |
| April 14-23 | <i>SHINE!</i> Statewide Servant Event |
| April 19 | Webinar at 10AM – A Blessed Marriage |
| April 26-27 | Lutheran Older Adult Retreat |
| May 19–21 | "Thy Kingdom Come" <i>Pastors' Wives Retreat</i> |



Missouri District

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD