

The VOICE

March 2023

Missouri District Newsletter



Brad
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In This Issue: A Blessed Lent

Pictured: Rev. Metcalf, DCE Yochum, and Seminarian Nelson attend the Tell the Next Generation Conference

From the President's Desk

God is at Work Even in the Small Things

We live in a culture that values things that are big. Bigger is better. People want bigger houses and bigger bank accounts. From the Big Apple to everything being bigger in Texas, the not so subtle implication is that things that are small are somehow less important. We should be careful not to be misled into such thinking because God also reveals Himself in the small things.

From old man Abraham and his barren wife Sarah, God established a great nation. The Lord appears to Elijah in a still small voice and upholds the boy David as he slays Goliath. The almighty God, the creator of the heavens and the earth, also chose to dwell with us as the fetus in Mary's womb. Our Lord works even in the small things like the splash of water and the word in Holy Baptism and the sliver of bread and the sip of wine under which the true presence of Christ is delivered to us.

Our Lord is also at work in small places, in small congregations and small schools. While God may be hidden from the world, He continues to work quietly and discreetly as a parent teaches a child to pray, as a pastor pronounces absolution to but a few and as a teacher helps students to see God's handiwork in creation. While we always want more people to hear and learn of God's love, we also recognize that God is at work even in small places and in small things.

But there is nothing small about God's gifts. Through the one man, Jesus Christ, God's overflowing grace bestows forgiveness, life, and eternal salvation to all who believe. There is nothing small about that. The work of the Church may sometimes seem slow or small, but God is still at work as the faith is passed on from one person to another. May this issue help you to see some of the ways that God is at work, even in the small things!





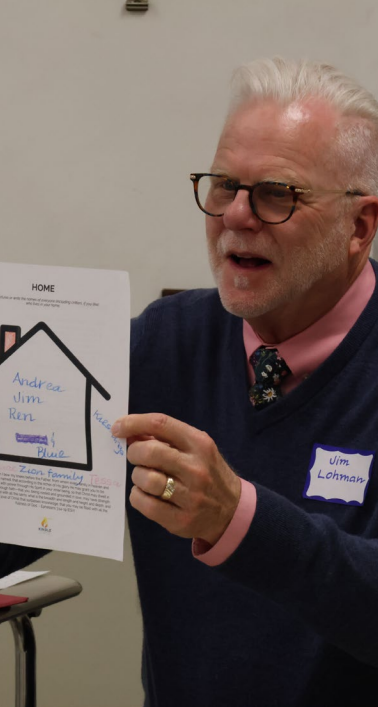
A Great Conference!

The Missouri District's Tell the Next Generation Conference was held Saturday, March 11 at the Lutheran High School of St. Charles. It was the first in-person Tell the Next Generation Conference since the COVID-19 pandemic. Over 100 were in attendance from across Missouri. It was great to see so many familiar faces and to meet new ones!

The theme was "The Christ Centered Home". Attendees were blessed to have plenary presenters Rev. Dr. Mart W. Thompson and Dr. Randy Schroeder. Dr. Thompson currently serves at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis as Associate Professor of Practical Theology and Director of the SMP Program and presented "Christ-Centered Homes are Key". Dr. Randy Schroeder is a retired professor of practical theology from Concordia Theol. Seminary, Ft. Wayne, and a successful author. There were also a variety of excellent breakout sessions with topics ranging from devotions and youth dating to mental health and family faith development.

One event attendee noted, "Thank you so much for this wonderful conference! I feel motivated and excited about building the faith in my own home! I look forward to the next Tell the Next Generation conference."

We were excited to see so many and look forward to the next conference!



Take Care of Yourself

Lent is a very busy time of year for church workers and also for church members. Additional services and events, especially during Holy Week, can increase stress in our already busy lives. Personal commitments to read/study more or to give up things/practices can also increase stress through changed routines. Consider how to take care of yourself through this season in the face of additional stressors:

PACE YOURSELF: Life and ministry is a marathon not a sprint. Slowing down and taking care of yourself mentally and physically is important, especially in busy seasons like Lent.

IT'S OKAY TO SAY NO: Because of the increase of church services and activities, it may be important to put off some activities until after Easter in order to reduce the stress of the season.

PRAY: Luther was noted for commenting that during especially busy times, he needed to pray more for spiritual strength to endure. Our temptation may be to give up prayer and devotional practices as our lives get busier. But it is important to seek God's face, "that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord." (Acts. 3:20)

PHYSICAL CARE: Whether it's formal exercise or dancing around your living room, movement can use up the adrenaline that is released during stress. Taking a walk also gives us time to reflect on the priorities of our day. And although the temptation may be to work longer at the expense of sleep, adults need an average of 7-9 hours of continuous sleep per night. Sleep helps to process the challenges of our days, rest and rejuvenate our minds and improve overall health.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK FOR HELP: Sometimes the stress of the season can be overwhelming. Church workers on Concordia Plans have access to EAP counseling on Mental and Emotional Health issues. The first six sessions on each issue are free. Contact MyCigna.com or call 866-726-5267 to register and choose a counselor. For lay members, many employers offer similar EAP services through your workplace health plan.

The Lord cares for us in our needs, so that we can continue to care for others in our churches and schools.



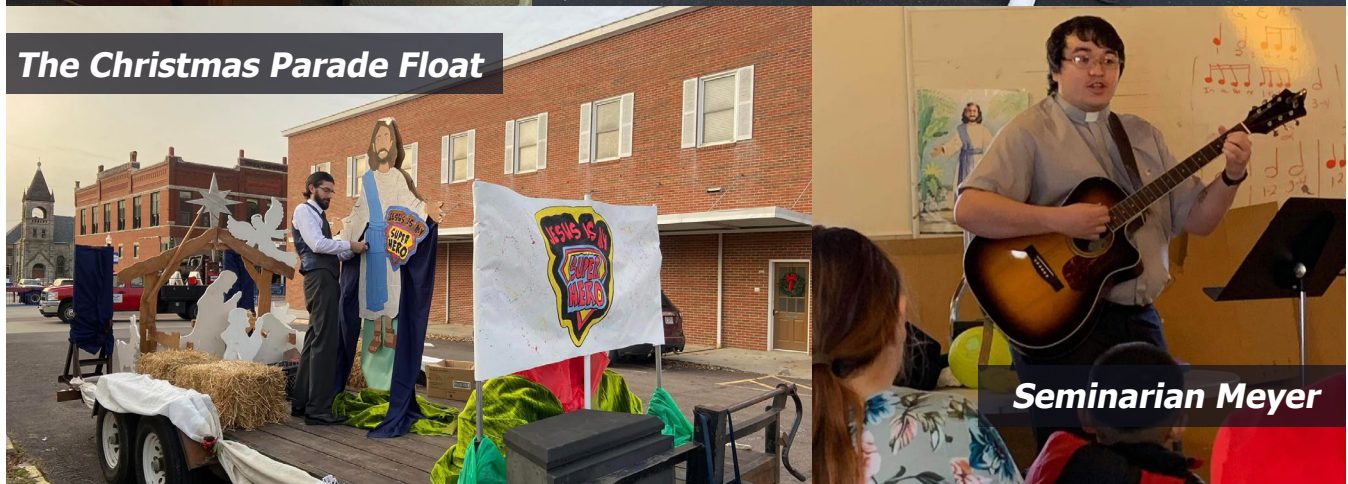
Celebrating Milestones with Community

Amigos de Cristo Lutheran Church (or Iglesia Luterana Amigos de Cristo) works hard to reach the community of Sedalia, especially the Spanish speaking population. The leadership and members of Amigos are very active and have been especially intentional in reaching into their community. Last fall, they hosted a well attended Trunk or Treat for their neighborhood. They participated in a Christmas parade, and their Sunday School class visited local assisted living facilities to sing songs and brighten their day. Plus they make intentional visits to areas where their community congregates, like the local soccer field.

Amigos de Cristo members also know the benefits of working together as the body of Christ. In October, Webster Gardens of St. Louis helped to host a weekend family-styled VBS with Amigos. They also assembled a new playground area for the church. Throughout the year, a Concordia Seminary student visits as part of his field work. He helps with Sunday School, music, youth group activities, and assists in services.

Their continual planting of seeds in faith is producing fruit. In recent months, they have had many adults and families return after several years of absences. And they've added to their numbers with new members, four confirmations, and twelve baptisms. What a blessing!

Next month, Amigos de Cristo will celebrate their 25th anniversary. It's promising to be a fantastic event. Surrounding Lutheran churches, local dignitaries, and everyone who has helped Amigos will gather on Sunday, April 30. The event starts with worship at noon and is followed by a meal and carnival. If you're in the area, consider stopping by to help celebrate this great mission.



Shared Ministry Along Highway 60

In southern Missouri, there is an effort of shared ministry underway. Kim Bradford lives in the Mountain View area and works as a rural mail carrier on several routes stretching to Cabool. She is passionate about her faith and brings caring service in the name of Christ to rural Missouri. She is aided by her efforts in ministry with Rev. John Perling and his congregation of Faith in St. Robert.

We've highlighted her efforts before. When last featured, Bible studies were starting to meet in the community room at the Mountain View Public Library. That study is still going strong as participants invite friends and neighbors week by week. Perling leads the Bible study virtually on a weekly basis and in person once a month. Bradford coordinates logistics locally and sends out invitations to new homesteaders. She organizes fellowship times with neighbors that she meets along her mail route, local festivals, and at farmers markets.

The latest developments include a new opportunity for a secondary meeting place. Bradford came across Pleasant Grove Community Church which had stopped holding services during the pandemic. So, she asked the local caretakers if it would be possible to use the church for meetings. The caretakers agreed, and monthly meetings have been held since October beginning with 12 in attendance. But the Lord wasn't done with surprises yet, their November gathering had 30 in attendance!

In addition to her natural ease of meeting people and sharing her faith, a great element of this ministry is Kim Bradford's enrollment in the online deaconess studies program from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. Perling serves as her mentor in the program. Her work with the greater Mountain View communities (Hartshorn, Summerville, Clear Springs, and Willow Springs) are part of her deaconess internship. She's providing prayer support, evangelistic invitations, and meeting the daily needs of mercy ministry in the network of residents of the neighborhoods that she serves as a mail carrier, visiting them at least weekly.

We pray God's blessings on Bradford's education and the continued growth in the Highway 60 Ministry.



Pictured: Rev. Perling at Faith, St. Robert



YouthLead a Success

Our first YouthLead training on “Motivated by Love” took place over President’s Day weekend in February with over 20 youth and 8 adult mentors from 7 different churches in Missouri. Hear what DCE Mark Thompson had to say about the training:

We had 6 teens attending the YouthLead Retreat provided by the Missouri District and the LCMS Youth Ministry. This was a great weekend and each participant grew in their faith and leadership ability. Our group learned from in person speakers, well produced videos and wonderfully written materials about leadership concepts shown in the context of Biblical teachings, along with practical applications. The event also had first-hand practical training where the teens worked together on a project to write, prepare and lead a devotion as a team. The presentation of these devotions was definitely a highlight of the weekend. Overall the weekend had a good mix of material I saw from LYF and PMT trainings.

Julianna Shults, the coordinator for YouthLead in LCMS Youth Ministry led the training. “It was great to see teens so fully engaged with God’s Word and thinking about how they can best share it with those around them,” notes Shults, “They asked great questions, practiced leadership skills, and considered how God could be using them in their vocations. We pray that the time at the event equipped and encouraged them as leaders in their church and community.”

Our YouthLead initiative is not only focusing on equipping our youth, but also working with mentors to help encourage youth to take leadership in their churches.

“One of the closing sessions I led with my group really showed me how much they were embracing the material and the goal”, says Thompson. “Each of the six made a plan with steps for who and how to reach out in Christ to people outside the church and outside the faith.... Because we were also able to take the materials we learned from home with us, we can extend this leadership growth to others in our church.”

Look for additional YouthLead events in the future.

Servant Event Breaks Previous Record

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.

In its inaugural year of 2021, more than 5,500 participants—most in matching yellow t-shirts—served throughout the ten-day span. In 2022, that number grew to more than 8,000, and the shirts were green. The Missouri District is excited to announce that more than 10,000 men, women and children from more than 140 teams throughout the state will be wearing royal blue shirts next month while being a witness for Jesus Christ.

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.



While the window for ordering shirts has now closed, interested groups are still encouraged to register. Head to mo.lcms.org/shine and let us know how and when your team will *SHINE!*. Please continue to keep this effort in your prayers. We look forward to serving with you all in April!



Upcoming Events

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

- March 24-26 "LiveLoved" District Youth Gathering
- April 14-23 *SHINE!* Statewide Servant Event
- April 19 Webinar at 10AM – A Blessed Marriage
- April 26-27 Lutheran Older Adult Retreat
- May 19–21 "Thy Kingdom Come" Pastors' Wives Retreat