

The VOICE

April 2023

Missouri District Newsletter



In This Issue: Bringing Hope Through Missions
Pictured: Participants of GO! Leadership Retreat in Columbia

From the President's Desk

The Bright Joy of the Resurrection

From the betrayal by Judas to Jesus' burial in Joseph of Arimathea's tomb, the events of those few hours cast a pall over all the followers of Jesus. As Mary Magdalene and the other Mary left for the tomb early on Sunday morning, darkness covered both the land and their hearts. However, the angel's announcement of Jesus' resurrection scatters the darkness. It would be like watching a movie on an old, black and white television and suddenly brightness and clarity replace the grainy darkness. The announcement of Christ's resurrection still brings a joyful hope to those who stand at graves, longing for the One who conquers death.

Local liturgical artist, Kelly Schumacher, a member at St. Paul in Des Peres, portrays the risen Christ with brightness and color that stands in such contrast to Good Friday's darkness (pictured below). Of this work, Kelly writes, "This painting is based on a combination of Old Testament and New Testament references. The garment our Lord is wearing is full of colors. God sent Noah a rainbow as a sign of His covenant to never destroy the earth by water again. Jacob gave Joseph a coat of colors as a gift to demonstrate his favor. In traditional Christian iconography, the resurrected Christ waves a victory banner as He steps forth from the grave. In this interpretation, Christ wears the victory banner. His head is covered with a crown of thorns, transformed into a halo. Light beams project how Christ's suffering brought good to all mankind." (To view more of Kelly's works, go to her website - <http://agnusdeiarts.com/>)



From choral anthems to Sunday school lessons, from confirmation classes to SHINE! servant events, everything that our congregations and schools do is for the purpose of proclaiming the risen Christ to all the world. As we confess through our corporate and individual witnessing, we bring the resurrection of Jesus into brightness and clarity and this news scatters the darkness of sad hearts. This issue of The VOICE highlights some of the ways that the Gospel message is bringing hope to students on college campuses, Chinese Americans, and to the deaf community.

Our prayer is that the Gospel proclamation of our congregations, the teaching of our schools and the witness of God's people, would bring the splendid colors of God's grace into this dark world. Now is not a time for fear and timidity, but joyful confidence in the risen Christ!

Fraternally in Christ,

R. Lee Hagan

President Lee Hagan

Signing God's Love

There are over 100 million deaf people around the world; 98% of them do not know Jesus. It's a startling statistic. One of the hardest parts about deaf ministry is overcoming the communication gap. It's different than having a language barrier, because it's one way. Deaf people can't learn how to hear, and most hearing people don't know how to sign. But that's something that Rev. Dr. John Reinke is working hard to change.

Pastor Reinke first started in deaf ministry while he was attending seminary, and for the last thirty-plus years he has been helping serve wherever God leads. Which, today includes sharing and signing the Gospel on a local and international level.

Pastor Reinke serves as a "missionary in residence" at Immanuel, St. Charles. This position allows him to partner with deaf outreach to the St. Louis area. Locally, he hosts a variety of training ministry opportunities including Deaf Family Grow on Mondays nights at Immanuel with fellowship, sign language practice, learning, and worship. He also serves as a vacancy pastor for Holy Cross Lutheran Church for the Deaf which currently worships at Concordia in Kirkwood.

In recent years, Pastor Reinke has been approached by Lutheran schools to help teach American Sign Language. He realized, though, that standard ASL classes are missing a very important component—religious vocabulary. So he wrote and developed a signing curriculum where students learn ASL with "Jesus Signs", where religious words are also taught. This is now a digital course that anyone can take.

Another important aspect of deaf ministry is training up the next generation of signing ministry leaders. There are very few Christian ministry leaders who sign, and even fewer Lutheran ones. Pastor Reinke is working with Concordia Seminary through their EIIT program to educate new pastors and deaconesses. There are now seven students across the United States that are in training with Pastor Reinke serving as a mentor. What a blessing!

The need for prayers and helpers in deaf ministry is strong. Pastor Reinke has requests for materials and training across many congregations and even internationally. If you are interested in learning more about Deaf Ministry, or to partake in digital courses or the Jesus Signs Immersion conference this summer, visit deafoutreach.org.



Shining Christ's Light

There are more than a dozen languages used in worship on any given Sunday in the state of Missouri. If you are stopping by Light of Christ in Olivette, you can hear (and participate in) a Chinese- English bilingual Divine Service. It's an amazing experience. Lutheran Liturgy spoken side by side in two languages.

Light of Christ is in an area where many Chinese families have settled over time. Graduate students and professionals from China bring their family to live with them, so there are often multi-generations present. This is one of the reasons Light of Christ shifted to offering a bilingual service several years ago, not just a Chinese service. As with many new-to-America families, youth and kids often speak mostly English. And some families have interracial marriages. So now families can worship together regardless of which language they know better.

Additionally, senior citizens in the neighborhood can take part in Light of Christ's Chinese Community Center. They offer weekly classes in painting, English, Bible study, and singing and dancing. The community center is managed by Helen Qiu, a Deaconess student at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis in the EIIT program (Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology).

The Lord has blessed the ministry at Light of Christ, as they continue to grow and bring new members via transfer or baptism. They are very good at blending community activities and needs with theological learning. Like their annual dumpling party in January. Over 270 people came to partake in the homemade feast, watch musicians, dance performances, and listen to the beautiful witness of faith from another EIIT Deaconess student, Kan Hsu.

Pastor Lim notes that many Chinese people are from non-Christian backgrounds and many are atheist. He says that often someone will arrive in the U.S. as a student and learn about Christianity through a campus ministry. So Pastor Lim, also a first generation Christian, does a great job of incorporating studying liturgy, the Apostle's Creed, and books of the Bible into many aspects of their community life.

If you would like to learn more about Light of Christ, connect with Pastor Lim who is happy to come and speak to your organization or church. And if you are passing through the St. Louis area, Pastor Lim asks for you to stop on by, "Come and worship with us!" (plus there's a delicious Chinese lunch after the service!)



Vicar Her with Pastor Lim

Light of Christ's Labor Day Retreat

Pastor Lim Baptizes New Member



Spring Cleaning Planning

Easter season is decidedly underway, and summer is just around the corner... it's a perfect time to discuss college ministry. Despite pending vacations, now is actually a great time to start making connections and planning with students for fall semesters.

This is particularly true for high school seniors. Congregations, church workers, and families can help seniors make the transition to keep faith in the forefront of life when they become college freshman. Rev. Kent Pierce, pastor at Campus Lutheran in Columbia, also serves as the Director of Campus Ministry Network. He says that often seniors "can disperse and go their own way." But students or family members can use the referral tool at <https://www.molcms.college/> for quick access to 16 ministries. Simply fill out a short form and your information will automatically connect to the selected ministry.

The Campus Ministry Network serves to connect Missouri LCMS-U college ministries and provide leadership training. Once a year, the GO! Leadership Retreat invites student ministry leaders to gather for learning and fellowship. This past February was the most successful with 37 students gathered, representing 8 schools and Darcy Paape presented "Growing Together, Fostering Fruitful Conversations."

Lutheran Student Fellowship (LSF) of College of the Ozarks is a newer member to the College Ministry Network. Established in 2019, they attended the GO! Leadership Retreat this year. Dr. Joe Western, Assistant Professor of History at College of the Ozarks (a Christian school), helps lead the ministry.

"Because each Christian denomination talks about Christian truth in a unique way and uses language differently, several other LCMS faculty and I wanted to create a confessional home for our Lutheran students on campus to help them to place their experience at the College in a Lutheran framework," says Dr. Western. "We also wanted to equip them to have better conversations with their non-Lutheran friends on campus, build community with each other, and to connect them with a local LCMS congregation."



Dr. Western knows the value of keeping college kids connected to faith: "As college students navigate increasing independence, they need Christian community and a connection to a congregation where they can continue to receive Christ and His gifts in Word and Sacrament."

Make plans this spring to discuss campus ministry plans with a high school or college student in your life.



Youth Gathering

It was an exciting weekend in March for the Missouri District. Over 450 people attended the District Youth Gathering, including 250 Jr. Youth, 89 High School Youth, and over 100 adult leaders, volunteers, and presenters. "I know that many of the youth came to hear FLAME's music, which was certainly worth it!", says Rev. Brandon Metcalf, who served as the Gathering's plenary speaker, "But what they probably didn't realize was how great his teaching is as well." FLAME and Pastor Metcalf worked great together as they shared about their confidence and faith in their baptismal promises received from God. Youth also enjoyed lots of fellowship and games, connecting with with other youth from across Missouri.



Meet Mike

The Missouri District has a new addition to its offices! Mike Wadley has accepted the position of Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) District Vice President.

Mike is originally from St. Charles, Missouri, but has resided in five states and been a member of six different LCMS congregations. He relocated back to the St. Louis area in 2010 with his wife of 29 years, Michelle, son Nick, and daughter Lauren.

His background includes a Master of Business Administration from Saint Louis University and a Bachelor of Arts in Business Management from Webster University. He spent the previous 12 years as a COO / CFO for a software company. Prior to that, he spent 10 years in commercial real estate development and asset management.

Mike and his family attend Zion Lutheran Church in St. Charles, Missouri, where he serves on the Church Leadership Council at Zion. He is also currently the chairman of the Board of Directors for Lutheran High School of St. Charles County, from which his children graduated. In his free time, Mike enjoys traveling and flying hot air balloons. He is a second-generation hot air balloon pilot. His most memorable flights include flying over the Alps in Austria and launching from Kiener Plaza in downtown St. Louis.

"There are so many opportunities to build relationships and assist those that are intently working to share the love of Jesus Christ", says Mike.

We pray God's blessing on you, Mike, as you begin this role as a resource for congregations and institutions across the Missouri District. Be sure to say "hi!" to Mike, if you see him visiting at your organization.



Call Day 2023

While we can receive called workers throughout the year into the Missouri District, in April our two seminaries host "Call Day" where vicars and deaconess interns get their year-long assignment and students finishing their education receive Call placements. This year, we were blessed with two deaconess interns, eight vicars, three deaconesses, and seven pastoral Calls. President Hagan attended and spoke at the services in Fort Wayne and St. Louis and greeted all the newly called workers. We praise God for current workers and for calling new workers to the field.



Upcoming Events

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

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| May 19-21 | <i>"Thy Kingdom Come" Pastors' Wives Retreat</i> |
| July 27-28 | School Administrators Conference |
| July 29-Aug 3 | LCMS National Convention |
| Aug 24-25 | New Church Worker Orientation |
| Oct 10-13 | Professional Church Worker Conference |



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