

The VOICE

June 2023

Missouri District Newsletter



**In This Issue: Summer Activities
Pictured: Pastor's Wives Retreat**

From the President's Desk

Stir Up One Another to Love and Good Works

The state of affairs in our culture today makes for fodder on evening talk shows and daily podcasts. We see so much evidence of a culture that is in conflict with the Scriptures that it is difficult to turn on the television or go to the grocery. It is easy for Christians to fall into the same trap of lamenting what we see going on all around and yet having nothing to offer that is encouraging. Yet the answer for Christians is not to throw another log onto the fire of frustration and bitterness.

Christians have always found themselves in conflict with the culture. The New Testament is full of letters to the saints who were trying to navigate the waters between isolating from the culture and being conformed by the culture. The writer to the Hebrews offers words that are just as relevant in the Twenty-first Century as they were in the First, "let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." (10:24-25) Rather than adding angry voices to the white noise of the modern culture wars, we can put into practice those words. Our culture needs Christians who demonstrate love and good works, who encourage one another and meet together for worship. For the best way to make our difference in our world is sending out Christians who understand their calling to serve God and their neighbor. When the Word of God shapes and forms our lives then we are not looking and sounding like the culture but rather salt and light in the world.

That is not to say that we condone what is happening in our culture. However, we remain faithful to the Word of God in its call to love God and our neighbor, speaking the truth in love, explaining the hope that we have with gentleness and respect. We will continue to find ourselves out of step with the culture, but our response is to stir up one another to love and good works. So if there is someone who has been neglecting worship recently, reach out and encourage them by letting them know that you care for them.

Fraternally in Christ,



President Lee Hagan



Youth Growing in Faith

Hey youth of Missouri; we hope that you are enjoying your break from studies and are getting a chance to soak up the sun! If you are looking for some opportunities to engage and deepen your faith, here are some great options.



High schoolers can grow as a leader amongst peers in the YouthLead training held in St. Louis July 28-30 and again in March 2024. Youth are equipped for leadership in two key ways. First, engaging in studying God's Word through a Bible study they experience and then are trained to lead back home. Secondly, there's a focus on their unique identity and vocations so they can lead from their strengths in their home congregation. For more information or to register for the training, visit <https://lcms.org/youthlead>



Higher Things has been delivering Jesus' cross-won, empty-tomb-certain salvation to thousands of youth and young adults with their summer conferences, regional retreats, and digital resources. Their upcoming summer conference "Beyond Reasonable Doubt" is held at two locations, with over 1100 youth attending in Carbondale, IL from July 18-21 and over 600 in San Antonio, TX from July 25-28. Higher Things Executive Director, Erica Sorensen explains the theme, "Jesus isn't just some guy. He died and then didn't stay dead. That's our hope. You can even prove it. God gives us verifiable scripture that can be traced and upheld through history. You just can't by your own reason or strength believe it. So He speaks to us, doubting hearts and minds that can't quite help but question."



If you aren't able to tackle doubt this summer at a conference, don't worry! Higher Things works hard to make the gifts of Christ Jesus known year round. "We offer youth-gearred topics such as mental health, culture issues, and apologetics through daily posts on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube," notes Sorensen, "Also check out our regional retreats, high school Bible studies, podcasts and more!" Find it all at <https://higherthings.org/>.

Want to check out Higher Things a little closer to home? Attend their retreat being offered at our own St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Lee's Summit. Mark your calendars for September 15-16. Designed for high school students, Rev. Harrison Goodman, content executive at Higher Things, will lead youth through Living the Baptized Life... "it's not just something that happened when you were a baby. It's a reality today." Visit <https://higherthings.org/events/retreats/> for more information and to register.

Driving Conversations

Christian Friends of New Americans is all about touching the lives of refugees and immigrants in the St. Louis area, with the assistance of volunteers and staff at their building, the Peace Center. Some of the many resources they offer are English as a second language and Driver's Ed. classes which has recently greatly helped a group of Indian men.

These men have arrived via New York, eventually being settled in St. Louis, close to the Peace Center. Around 20 of these men— Hindus and Buddhists by faith— have been attending ESL and Driver's Ed. so they can get themselves to their jobs (which requires transportation.) "We struggled for almost 3 years now because of English problem and driving problem...nobody can help us," notes Jalim S., one of the students. "But CFNA help us a lot. I studied here and got my license permit, then all the American volunteer help me prepare for my driving test... Thank you so much."

CFNA Operations Associate, Gary Schaefer, spent a lot of time training Jalim for his on-road driving test, and many of these occasions were a time for prayer to Jesus, and to talk about Jesus. "On Good Friday morning before I went to church worship, I taught Jalim a driving lesson, because I felt this would give me an opportunity to share the crucifixion and resurrection story of Jesus...Jalim was a curious listener and I felt I witnessed God's story in Christ to a Hindu man. This is what we should be doing at CFNA, and I thank God for the opportunity," observed Gary.

For the over 50 Driver's Ed. students at CFNA (mostly Afghans, Indians, Congolese, and Sudanese), Lutheran volunteers, and CFNA's cars have been a blessing. Jalim got his driver's license, and he got his other friends to come to CFNA- "My friends have to get their license," said Jalim, "...I told them these are good Christian people who help us."

CFNA has been engaging this group of men for the past 4-5 months, and four of the men have their licenses. And while the CFNA ministry has been impactful in securing their freedom of mobility, more significantly, it has also helped them engage with Christians in St. Louis, and be introduced to the freedom they have in Christ Jesus as a welcomed child of God.





“We have seen remarkable things!”

Our Redeemer Lutheran partners with Bessie’s Mission, a Kansas City area non-profit, to host a Bible study and distribute food, vouchers, clothing, personal care items, and cups of coffee to homeless and financially strapped neighbors. Whatever the weather conditions, members are out in the parking lot every Monday morning to share the love of Christ and invite those they are serving into the fellowship hall for a time in God’s Word. The group gathered recently to review how Jesus forgave and healed the paralyzed man lowered into a house by his friends (Luke 5). *Thank you for your continued prayers and financial gifts! You are a partner of Our Redeemer and many other mission sites through our mission grant process.*

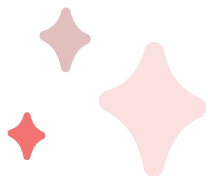
The account of the paralyzed man ends with an amazed and thankful group of onlookers. “We have seen remarkable things today” (Luke 5:26). Participants in Our Redeemer’s Monday Bible study can see it in their own lives—how God can take broken people in seemingly hopeless circumstances and restore relationships with Him and each other. What happens each Monday in Kansas City is just one of the “remarkable things” we see God doing daily throughout the Missouri District: worship in a dozen languages for immigrants and refugees, new congregations being planted, college students hearing about who they are in Christ at campus ministry sites, military personnel knowing God’s peace in uncertain times, and rural congregations strategically sharing resources and workers to advance the Kingdom.

We can daily celebrate the ultimate “remarkable thing” our God has done—sending His only Son to die on a cross and be raised from the dead so that we may know eternal life. It is this message that we joyfully and boldly proclaim throughout Missouri...and we invite all of you to join in this work. **Would you please prayerfully consider supporting the mission efforts of the Missouri District by making a financial gift?**

Head to <https://mo.lcms.org/donate/>

Your investment will be a blessing that will make a difference for eternity. Thank you for your generosity!

The man healed in Luke 5 went home praising God...the onlookers who saw Jesus at work praised God... and people of the Missouri District join in these shouts of praise and thanksgiving today. What a remarkable God we serve!



Rooted in Faith, United in Christ



United in Christ Lutheran School sits in rural Perry county, located in the same area where many Lutherans first arrived in Southeastern Missouri. There's been a school building in the vicinity since the 1840's, but there's another really neat aspect about this school... and the clue is in its name.

United in Christ is not just an association of congregations, they were previously independent schools. They decided to join together for their mutual growth and shared desire to ensure a continuous presence for a quality school based on the beliefs of the LCMS—to be "United in Christ".

Trinity, Altenburg has had a school building since 1841, with Concordia, Frohna building its school in 1883, and Salem, Farrar following suit with a distinct building in 1892. These churches are less than 11 miles apart. Trinity and Concordia (the closest neighbors) combined forces and resources starting in 1957. However, over time, both Concordia-Trinity Lutheran School and Salem Lutheran saw decreases in enrollment. So, in February 2010, a committee was formed to brainstorm how these schools could combine. A year later, they were officially joined, and August 2011 brought these congregations together in one school, United in Christ. Their success continues today.

Being connected together while reaching out and making new connections is at the heart of everything here. "I coined the phrase 'Culture of Connection,'" notes United in Christ's principal Cheryl Honoree, "We seek to make connections in all kinds of ways, with our Lord and Savior, with our community, between congregations, with the local public school, and between the students." There are daily chapel services. And the pastors from Trinity, Concordia, and Salem come onto campus and teach certain religion classes and confirmation. There are chapel families, where each "family" has kids from every grade level and sit together in chapel, read, and do community service projects. And students from the local public school are invited to play on United in Christ's sports team (plus that includes their parents/staff members helping coach.) The schools come together to help support community members who need help.

"It is a blessing to be able to serve in this place," says Honoree, "The faith of the people of the communities is evident in how they approach the school. Almost every one of them, when surveyed, say they send their children here because they learn about Jesus. That faith started in 1839 with the first immigrants. I love to walk through the cemeteries and see the names of the teachers and pastors who taught and preached in the area churches and realize that in some small way, God has allowed me to be a part of what happens here."



Pastor's Wives Retreat

Nearly 40 pastor's wives gathered for worship, devotion, and fellowship time for the "Thy Kingdom Come" retreat. The event was hosted May 19-21 at Heit's Point Lutheran Ministries in Lincoln. Deaconess Mary Laesch, Lisa Clark, Janine Mallardi, and Jamie Truwe led events while Rev. Dr. Rocco Mallardi, executive director of Heit's Point, led Sunday's worship service. "The wives of pastors have a unique vocation, and it is such a blessing for these sisters in Christ to spend time together and be strengthened in God's Word and through mutual encouragement," notes fellow pastor's wife and retreat organizer Lisa Clark. "This is the first overnight pastor's wife event for the Missouri District in years, and it was a huge blessing for all who attended! It is the hope that these women can now return home and continue serving in their vocation as a pastor's wife with joy." A great time was had by all! Keep an eye out for future events.



Last Chance to Present at the Professional Church Workers' Conference

Do you have a special area of study, ministry experience, or training to share? Join us as a presenter!

This year's Professional Church Workers' Conference will join all church workers together October 10-13 in Osage Beach. Building on the theme "A Reason for Our Hope" (1 Peter 3:15), this conference will focus on confessing the hope we have in Christ to a world that often is hostile to our message, and will address the art of speaking the truth in love about difficult topics. Plus, as always, the conference will be a time of refreshment and encouragement of that hope in Christ for our church workers as they live this out each day.

Simply click here or contact the District office at 314-590-6200 for a presenter form. Forms must be completed by July 1.



Upcoming Events

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

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

Interested in presenting at this conference? Click for details.



Missouri District

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD