

The VOICE

October 2023

Missouri District Newsletter



Fall Blessings Abound

Pictured: Pastors at the Professional Church Workers' Conference held in October

From the President's Desk

Confessing Luther's Theology in Song

On July 1, 1523, two Augustinian monks were put to death in Antwerp for refusing to recant the theology of Martin Luther. To honor these martyrs of the faith, Luther wrote his first hymn, "A New Song Here Shall Be Begun." His second hymn would be the more familiar, "Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice" (Lutheran Service Book 556). A few months later, the first Lutheran hymnal would be released containing eight hymns for congregational singing. These early milestones opened the floodgates for setting the Biblical theology of Luther to music, which would go on to influence the vast majority of Christianity.

The significance of the common people singing Luther's theology cannot be overstated. For generations, the faith of Lutherans have been shaped by the Scriptures, the Small Catechism, and the hymnody. Lutheran worship is still shaped by the practice of involving the congregation in the Church's song by singing hymns that confess the truth of Holy Scripture. It's not about singing Luther's hymns, though sometimes we do; it is about singing hymns that proclaim Christ and God's Word.

Towards the end of the month, Lutheran congregations will likely join in singing Luther's "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" or "Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word." However, take time to peruse some of the other hymns by Luther and other Lutheran hymn writers of the past such as Paul Speratus, Phillip Nicolai, and Paul Gerhardt. But also, give thanks to God for those who have risen up in every age to confess Christ through hymns of faith. Newer examples are Pastor Stephen Starke, who has contributed a large canon of hymns in this current hymnal, but also Lisa Clark, from Concordia Publishing House, who has written a growing number of hymns that are being introduced to congregations today.

Just think about it, prior to Luther's reforms, singing was the function of the choir. Luther brought not only the Scriptures to the hands of the people, but also placed the songs of faith into the mouths of God's people throughout Christendom. It is good for us to remember Martin Luther for more than just the 95 Theses and the Small Catechism. Give thanks to God for the continued witness of Dr. Luther as you sing every Sunday in worship!

Fraternally in Christ,

R. Lee Hagan

President Lee Hagan



Ideas for Church Worker Appreciation Month

The Missouri District has more than 1600 rostered church workers, in addition to those who serve in church and school offices as support staff or in other administrative positions. The month of October affords congregations and schools the opportunity to give thanks to God for the faithful service of our church workers. This is a time when Boards of Elders and Education can put their heads together to come up with appropriate ways of showing our appreciation for those who serve. The LCMS website also has lots of ideas and even resources to assist in such recognitions. ([You can find that by clicking here.](#))

For many young church workers, a date night would be a great way to show care for church worker and spouse. They often live far away from family and their support system. Church family can provide gift cards for dinner and a movie and provide babysitting for children as a way to demonstrate care.

The Synod website suggests the idea of "Thank You Notes." Consider including retired church workers in an organized card shower as a way for acknowledging those who have served in the past and who continue to be involved in very meaningful ways.

A more robust way of showing appreciation to church workers could be to develop a fund to assist with church worker educational indebtedness. Ministry Focus is an LCMS Recognized Service Organization that provides grants to church workers who have significant educational debt. Consult with Ministry Focus (<https://ministryfocus.org/>) to consider how your congregation or school might support our church workers in this area.

Another way to support church workers is to create a Worker Support Team. Dr. Bruce Hartung's book *Holding Up the Prophet's Hands* suggests how such a team can provide ongoing and intentional support for church workers beyond cards and thank you notes. If you would like assistance in developing a Worker Support Team, contact Rev. Marty Hasz from the Missouri District staff for help (marty.hasz@mo.lcms.org).

More than anything, please pray for all of the church workers who serve your congregation and schools. Oftentimes, our commissioned ministers can be forgotten in such recognitions, especially when they serve at association schools. Take time to plan for how to recognize and support your church workers on a long-term basis and pray for them each day!





Transfiguration Lutheran Church's Community Day

Transfiguration Lutheran Church in St. Louis has served as a beacon of light in their community for 120 years with Rev. Aaron Dickerson currently presiding as pastor. Each September, Transfiguration hosts a "Community Day".

Ms. Leslie Jones, Transfiguration church president, oversees planning out everything that goes into Community Day. "Through our pastoral and lay leadership, and organization of auxiliaries and committees, we strive to preach, practice, and teach, the word of God," says Jones. "Our love for God, the members of the church, and people in the community drive us in our efforts to meet the needs of all people. We are proud of our rich heritage and history being the first African American Lutheran Church west of the Mississippi."

They go all out with games, activities, food, and entertainment. But, their main goal is for members of the community to connect Transfiguration as a place of love and worship, as well as a place to obtain resources. So transfiguration partnered with local, neighborhood schools (there was an amazing drum line performance!), healthcare facilities, homeless shelter, and fire and police departments to help make Community Day even more impactful.

The Sunday following Community Day, Transfiguration hosts "Invitation Sunday" where visitors of the event are welcomed into worship. This Sunday they had several new visitors, who had attended the Community Day less than 24 hours before. What a great example of ways to share God's love by connecting with community members!

They will soon celebrate their 120th anniversary with a special worship service and banquet on November 11. God's blessings to them as they celebrate this milestone!



Board of Directors Makes Appointments



Rev. Randy Asbury

Rev. Randy Asbury, pastor of Hope Lutheran Church in St. Louis, has been appointed by the Missouri District Board of Directors to fill the vacancy of Missouri District Fourth Vice-President that was created when Rev. Jason Shaw accepted a call to the Northern Illinois District. Rev. Asbury had served on the District Board of Directors since 2022. He is a graduate of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis completing his Master of Divinity degree in 1990 and his Master of Sacred Theology in 1998. Additionally, he earned a Master of Arts in Classics from Washington University in 1992. He has previously served as a Circuit Visitor in the Wyoming and Missouri Districts. Rev. Asbury has served at hope since 2001. He has authored Bible studies and articles for a number of publications and appeared as a guest on programs featured on KFUO-AM and Issues Etc. He and his wife, Rachel, have two children and two grandchildren.



Rev. Dr. Jon Furgeson

The Board of Directors then proceeded to appoint Rev. Dr. Jon Furgeson to fill the vacancy on the board created by Rev. Asbury's appointment as a vice-president. Dr. Furgeson serves as senior pastor of Peace Lutheran Church in St. Louis County. He completed his Master of Divinity degree in 2006 and Doctor of Philosophy degree from Concordia Seminary in 2020, focusing on spiritual warfare. In 2022, his book *The Sword and the Mask: Building an Anti-Fragile Approach to Spiritual Warfare* was published. He has also appeared as a guest on programs on KFUO-AM and Issues Etc. Dr. Furgeson has served at Peace since 2006. He and his wife, Alice, have two sons.

The Vice-Presidents of the District meet quarterly for Praesidium meetings with President Hagan. Additionally, they assist him in representing the District President in ordinations and installations and advising him on matters of ecclesiastical supervision. The Missouri District Board of Directors also meets quarterly. The board oversees the fiduciary responsibilities over the district's resources. Please pray for Rev. Asbury, Dr. Furgeson, and all those elected to positions of responsibility in the Missouri District.

————— Pictured below: the Missouri District Praesidium, from left to right: —————
Rev. Randy Asbury, Rev. Bill Marler, President Lee Hagan, Rev. Kristopher Morris, Rev. Brian Thieme





TELL THE NEXT GENERATION

PSALM 78:6-7

Tell the Next Generation Events

"Tell the Next Generation" is the theme for the 2022-2025 triennium. There are many different facets to this, including our Tell the Next Generation coaches which we have previously discussed. Below, read about some Tell the Next Generation events. Congregations across Missouri are starting to host different events that revolve around family discipleship and outreach. Here are Hanover Lutheran Church in Cape Girardeau and the Rolla Circuit.



"Joining Jesus as a Family"

This workshop was put on by the Rolla circuit. (Circuits are a section of the District in which many churches are grouped.) Hosted at Redeemer in Rolla, this family discipleship event invited authors Rev. Greg Finke and his wife, Susan Finke, to speak on their book "Joining Jesus as a Family: How to raise your Children to be Followers of Jesus". The morning event was a great success and participants were treated to a potluck lunch. This event was the start of a sermon series, which is concluding with a Church picnic on Oct 29.

"Passing the Promise"

This family discipleship workshop was hosted by Hanover Lutheran Church in Cape Girardeau and featured Rev. Dr. Mart Thompson. Dr Thompson serves as an associate professor of Practical Theology of Concordia Seminary, and a director of the SMP program. He presents frequently and works with the Missouri District on family discipleship. It was a great time of learning for attendees and their families!



LUTHERAN COLLEGE FAIR

We're so close to our next Lutheran College Fair! Make plans to join us November 4 from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. at Seick Hall on Concordia Seminary campus in St. Louis.

Representatives from the Concordia Universities, our two seminaries, and other organizations will be present. Presentations will be held throughout the day for financial aid advise and tips for choosing a college. Drawings will be held for gift cards and giveaways!

This is an open-house styled event, and is free to attend. Register now so we can save you some Chick-fil-A!

Register at mo.lcms.org/college-fair.

Bring your questions and learn why our Concordias are amazing places to continue your education and grow your faith!



Save the Date!

The Missouri District Youth Gathering is scheduled for April 5-7, 2024 at Crosspointe Retreat Center. Featured speakers: DCE Cassie Moore will serve as the keynote speaker with Tanner Olsen as the musical talent.

Mark your calendars
and join us April 5-7!

Registration opening soon.

Upcoming Events

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

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| Nov 4 | Lutheran College Fair |
| Jan 20 | E2 Conference <i>St. Matthew, Lee's Summit</i> |
| Jan 27 | E2 Conference <i>Saxony High School, Jackson</i> |
| Feb 3 | E2 Conference <i>St. John's, Arnold</i> |
| Mar 2 | E2 Conference <i>Calvary High School, Jefferson City</i> |
| Mar 2 | Early Childhood Conference |
| Mar 9 | E2 Conference <i>Faith, Springfield</i> |
| Apr 5-7 | District Youth Gathering |