

The VOICE

November 2023

Missouri District Newsletter



A Thankful November

***Pictured: Reception at the Professional
Church Workers' Conference***

From the President's Desk

Lessons from Ebenezer

The word Ebenezer comes from 1 Samuel 7:12 after the Lord God led the Israelites in victory over the Philistines to recover the Ark of the Covenant. Samuel took a stone and set it up and called it Ebenezer because "Thus far has the Lord helped us." The Ebenezer stone is often called a stone of remembrance to remind God's people of all of the ways that He had blessed them and provided for them.

Thanksgiving is a good time to remember. It is an opportunity to remember all the ways in which we have been blessed. Remembering for the people of God is a prelude to thanking.

For Moses and the Israelites who had escaped enslavement in Egypt, there was a lot for them to remember. The manna and quail. The clothes that did not wear out and the feet that did not swell. Even the promise of the land that was awaiting them. God had been present to guide and direct His people throughout the forty years. It was good for the Israelites to take time to remember the Lord's blessings.

For Samuel, the prophet and the Israelites in his day, there was still much to remember. The same God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses, was continuing to bless and keep the Israelites in the days of Samuel. The Ark of the Covenant had been possessed by the Philistines for twenty years. The Israelites, repentant of their worship of false gods, turned back to the Lord to serve him alone. Then Samuel raised the stone of remembrance, the Ebenezer stone, to remember all that the Lord had done for them.

You have much to remember as well. "Thus far has the Lord helped you." This is a time for remembering and thanking, for counting blessings and praising the God who so generously gave. You can raise your Ebenezer stone and remember how rich and blessed you are. You can look around you and see all of the ways that God sustains you and strengthens you. Every good and perfect gift comes to us from above as our heavenly Father gives us all that we need to support this body, life, and even life everlasting. Thanks be to God for Christ and His Church, faith, family, friends, and all the things that He has given to us. It is good for us to remember these things, these Ebenezers, and we thank God that "Thus far has the Lord helped us."

Fraternally in Christ,

R. Lee Hagan

President Lee Hagan



QUARTERLIFE Fellowship

Quarterlife is a ministry initiative started by the Missouri District several years ago to gather adults in their 20s and 30s for time around the Word, networking, developing friendships, and more. This ministry is composed of autonomous groups across Missouri who gather together for Bible Studies and fellowship events. Two of the larger Quarterlife ministries are in the St. Louis area and the Columbia area.

Eric Bear, Vicar at Village Lutheran Church in Ladue, serves as the Bible study leader for the St. Louis Quarterlife ministry, which draws in Lutherans from many churches across the St. Louis area. "You have young adults who are connecting to other Lutherans and being fed by the Word of God as they live out their various vocations," notes Bear. "All these accomplish the strengthening and encouragement of our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ." Those in the St. Louis area can join together for weekly Bible studies and the occasional cookout or "Theology on Tap" where those gathered (usually with a mug of ale) can ask a pastor or vicar theological questions in a casual atmosphere.



Quarterlife Fellowship at Pickleball at Campus and Good Shepherd

Quarterlife Fellowship in central Missouri is hosted by Campus Lutheran Church in Columbia and Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Centralia who join together in shared ministry to reach young adults not only at their churches, but also in the community. Natalie Carlson and Emilia Trickey serve as leaders in the ministry. Carlson moved to Columbia as a graduate student and was looking for an environment which better reflected her age. "Because of Quarterlife, I have made so many friends, both from Columbia and Centralia, and grown in my faith," says Carlson. "Beyond study, we have served together both within the church and community. ... Having a group to pray with and for has also been a huge blessing! As a group, we are witnessing to new believers, and one group member wishes to be baptized later this summer." Quarterlife Fellowship meets for Bible study on Mondays and also has fellowship events like Pickleball and meals. Recently they shared a weekend of camping.

Quarterlife Fellowship Bible Study in St. Louis



If you are or know a young Lutheran looking to connect with a group, consider attending a Quarterlife group, or starting one in your area. It's a great way to connect people with Christ!

MISSIONS IN KANSAS CITY



OUR REDEEMER



One of the missions that Our Redeemer offers is Community Dinners. Their latest dinner fed over 50 recipients from the community and beyond. The congregation of Our Redeemer, Bessie's Mission, and other churches work hard to help put on these dinners. In addition to the Community Dinners, they have a Thanksgiving dinner planned for November 19 and a Christmas dinner on December 17. Great work Our Redeemer!

LUTHERAN URBAN MISSION AGENCY

LUMA also works hard in serving their community. In September, they were able to provide supplies and backpacks for over 30 youth for the 2023-2024 school year. One young five year old boy was happy to be starting his kindergarten year of school, but he had little to start off the year. His family contacted LUMA for help in getting school supplies from our community closet just days before starting school. With LUMA's help, he started kindergarten with a superhero bag full of everything he needed to be successful!



JESUS EL BUEN PASTOR



Last September, Jesus El Buen Pastor Lutheran Church had a special service to celebrate "Christ for All Nations Sunday". It was a great way to celebrate and learn from all of their cultures, as their church represents many countries like Mexico, Guatemala, Bolivia, Honduras, Cuba, Venezuela, El Salvador, USA, and many more. Tables were decorated with items from their country and offered some of their unique food. It also served as a great outreach opportunity since visitors came to celebrate with them!

Tax Dollars Provide Scholarships for Students at Lutheran Schools

On July 1, 2022, the state of Missouri launched MOScholars—a new tax credit program to provide educational scholarships for qualifying K-12 students attending private institutions. The Missouri District of the LCMS is blessed to be an Educational Assistance Organization within this program, enabling us to use the tax dollars of participants to walk with students and their families as they seek to defray

the cost of tuition at our Lutheran schools. The inaugural year was a success—providing 97 full and partial scholarships to students attending 24 LCMS schools. Thirty five percent of these recipients experienced their very first year in a Lutheran school, making MOScholars a wonderful tool for growing God’s Kingdom.

“When a family receives MOScholars scholarships, their life has been blessed beyond measure,” shares Brenda Spieler, principal at St. John’s Lutheran School in Arnold. “So many of our families desperately want their children to attend a Lutheran school to receive an excellent education and, most importantly, to hear the Good News of Christ. MOScholars gives these families that ability.”

Given the great blessing MOScholars has been for students at our schools, we are pleased to expand the list of those who could potentially benefit. Along with these original 97 recipients now in their second year of the program, we’ve added approximately 50 additional students to the scholarship waitlist for the 2023-24 school year. Would you, as a taxpayer to the state of Missouri, please consider taking part in this tax credit reservation process to provide scholarships for these 150 students?

To learn more about MOScholars and begin the process, head to mo.lcms.org/mo-scholars for easy access to the state treasurer’s official page. There you’ll find the specifics of the program and the online reservation form. Simply follow the prompts and select “Missouri District” when asked which institution you’d like to make use of your funds. When finished, send your reservation number and check to the Missouri District office. You will then receive the official documentation you’ll need to redeem those credits when filing your taxes.

“The state of Missouri has given us an opportunity to use our tax dollars to support Lutheran schools and their students throughout the state. The process is easy and most importantly makes a lasting eternal impact on a family,” concludes Principal Spieler. Leah Sieveking at the District office can be reached at 314-590-6211 or leah.sieveking@mo.lcms.org with any other questions. Thank you for your participation in MOScholars through the Missouri District.



Professional Church Workers' Conference 2023

This past October, it was a great joy to have our first in-person gathering of the Professional Church Workers' Conference in six years! The Missouri District office provides many resources for additional learning, one of which are conferences. While often there are pastoral conferences and educational conferences, every so often all church workers are gathered together for learning, respite, and fellowship in our Professional Church Workers' Conference. This year, we were blown away with over 600 participants!

The theme was "A Reason For Our Hope" based on 1 Peter 3:15. This was expounded on by our many breakout leaders and our plenary presenters, Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford, Rev. Dr. Justin Hannemann, and Dr. Brad Alles.

"I witnessed many reunions and conversations among church workers," noted Missouri District's Rev. Peter Kirby. "It was a joy to get together with the District Church workers after such a long time due to the pandemic. There was a positive energy throughout the conference."

Thank you to all who came, and we pray God's blessings on your ministry!



SECOND COLLEGE FAIR A SUCCESS

The Missouri District hosted its second Lutheran College Fair on November 4. It was a great success with over a hundred people in attendance!

Students had the opportunity to visit with representatives from Concordia Wisconsin/Ann Arbor, Nebraska, Chicago, Irvine, and St. Paul. Plus, there were representatives from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, and the LCMS initiative Set Apart to Serve.

For those looking for a more in depth introduction to college life, several presentations were held throughout the day on topics like navigating financial aid, why a Concordia is so important, and there was a panel discussion featuring current church workers. Participants were treated to Chick-fil-A, and students in attendance won prizes!

Our prayer is that students consider attending a Concordia University. They offer excellent academics across many degrees. And, most importantly, they provide this education in a setting that encourages the development of faith.



Shine!

MATTHEW 5:16



Missouri District
Servant Event
APRIL 12 – 21, 2024

Mark your calendars, Missouri District! The fourth installment of **SHINE!** is happening April 12-21, 2024. Our statewide servant event gives congregations and schools the opportunity shine the light of Christ (Matthew 5:16) in their communities. As always, groups will be outfitted in the official servant event t-shirt...and the 2024 version is red! Registration will open in January at mo.lcms.org/shine.

We're thrilled to share that SHINE! has now spread to four states. In addition to the Missouri District, we'll be joined again by our friends in the Northern Illinois District. New to the effort this spring is the Nebraska District and church in Virginia. God has truly blessed **SHINE!** over the years, and we can't wait to see what He does in 2024. Shine on, Missouri District!



Upcoming Events

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

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| Jan 20 | E2 Conference
<i>St. Matthew, Lee's Summit</i> |
| Jan 27 | E2 Conference
<i>Saxony, Jackson</i> |
| Feb 3 | E2 Conference
<i>St. John's, Arnold</i> |
| Feb 9-10 | Mid Year Administrators' Conference |
| Mar 2 | E2 Conference
<i>Calvary, Jefferson City</i> |
| Mar 2 | Early Childhood Conference |
| Mar 9 | E2 Conference
<i>Faith, Springfield</i> |
| Apr 5-7 | District Youth Gathering |
| Apr 12-21 | SHINE! Servant Event |



Missouri District
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