

# ANNUAL REPORT 2023

## Missouri District

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD





# ABOUT THE MISSOURI DISTRICT

OUR MISSION: *To serve and encourage congregations to fulfill the Great Commission and promote unity of the true faith.*

44

Early Childhood Centers

49

Elementary Schools

10

High Schools

1,682

Rostered Workers

292

Congregations

## Table of Contents

- 3 President’s Letter
- 4 Tell the Next Generation
- 5 Lutheran College Fair
- 6 Missouri “SHINES”
- 8 Missions in Missouri
- 10 Shared Ministry
- 11 MOScholars
- 12 YouthLead
- 13 Fishing in Missouri
- 14 District Budget
- 15 Mission List for 2024



Some of the most hopeful words that we find in Scripture are found in 2 Corinthians 1 when St. Paul writes, “All the promises of God find their Yes in [Christ].” As we live in the gray and latter days, it would be easy for us to be driven to despair when we see the darkness that surrounds us. However, we find great comfort and hope in the promises that God has made and their fulfillment in Christ.

The 2023 Missouri District Annual Report once again highlights the ways in which the Missouri District is supporting congregations and church workers. The strategic plan that has been adopted by the Missouri District Board of Directors is very future focused and holds on to the promises of God!

Church worker recruitment and retention (Critical Target 1) and shared ministry (Critical Target 4) are both focused on ways in which we can work together to provide Word and Sacrament ministry for congregations across the District. While we need more church workers to serve congregations and schools, there are also opportunities for cooperation for the sake of our common work and life together.

Family discipleship (Critical Target 2) focuses on how congregations can work to retain children, youth and families by equipping parents for passing on the faith in the home. The pressures on families are great, but the promises of God in Christ are greater and give hope to families of all shapes and sizes.

Many congregations have seen declines in worship over recent decades and especially as a result of the pandemic. Community engagement (Critical Target 3) is the District’s support for congregations to bear witness to Christ to those around them and serve their neighbor in love.

The annual report provides some snapshots of how congregations, schools, and mission efforts are being lived out across Missouri. Thank you for your partnership in the Gospel. Now is not the time for fear and timidity, but boldness in faith, clinging to the sure and certain promises of God. Please join me in praying for our congregations, schools, and church workers as we walk together in Christ and His promises.

Fraternally in Christ,

*R. Lee Hagan*

President Lee Hagan





# TELL THE NEXT GENERATION COACHING

The Missouri District's theme for the 2022-2025 triennium is "Tell the Next Generation" (which you can read about in our strategic plan online). There are many facets of this, but one of the main aspects is providing the opportunity for Family Discipleship Coaching to congregations.

This coaching focuses on helping congregations equip parents to teach faith in their homes—shifting the focus to having a home-centered and church-supported family discipleship ministry. The coaching is unique to each congregation and can include a one-to-two-year partnership with the pastor and the coach.

"My role as a 'Tell the Next Generation' coach is one of two things," notes Larry Yochum, DCE at St. John's, Arnold. "First, I see it as my job to help the congregation and the pastor to understand what family ministry can be at their church, and what that could look like, and the value of having that in their congregation. And then secondly, to walk alongside them as a coach. To help them process, to help them dream, and to help them figure out where they want to go with family ministry into the future."

The Missouri District currently has eight coaches across the state. If your congregation is interested in learning more about the "Tell the Next Generation" initiative and coaching, please reach out to Pam Nummela, Family Discipleship Coaching Facilitator for the Missouri District, at [family@mo.lcms.org](mailto:family@mo.lcms.org).



## LUTHERAN COLLEGE FAIR HOSTED BY DISTRICT

Last fall, the Missouri District was blessed to host its first ever Lutheran College Fair. It was a resounding success with over 125 high school students and their families from across Missouri in attendance!

Hosted on the campus of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, students had the opportunity to win prizes, eat free Chick-fil-A, and interact with representatives from the Concordia Universities as well as our two seminaries and other organizations. Additionally, participants could attend presentations on topics like Financial Aid, Making a Concordia Education Affordable, and more.

We pray that students, whether in a Lutheran school, public school, or homeschool, 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.

For students considering their next steps for their future, come and learn more about our Concordia Universities. Bring questions and chat with representatives at our next Lutheran College Fair from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. on November 4. Additional information can be found at [mo.lcms.org/college-fair](https://mo.lcms.org/college-fair).





# MISSOURI “SHINES” FOR A THIRD TIME

For the third consecutive year, the Missouri District hosted *SHINE!*—its statewide servant event in April 2023. More than 10,000 participants donned royal blue t-shirts and lived out Matthew 5:16 by serving their neighbors and being a witness for Jesus Christ. Adding to the excitement this year was the addition of the Northern Illinois District (NID) with their own 8,000 volunteers sporting light blue.

“The church is always better when it’s connected to Christ, each other, and the community. We are excited that we get to do good as Jesus did. All we do is a response to what Jesus has done for us,” says NID President, Rev. Dr. Allan Buss. “We are grateful to the Missouri District for the journey together. We will be better for it!”

Both districts look forward to serving together again next year as *SHINE!* continues to grow. Missouri groups can mark your calendars for April 12-21, 2024, and order new red t-shirts when registration opens in January. Shine on!



Peace participated in the *SHINE!* event as way to reach out to our community and have a chance to love our neighbor and share the love of Jesus with them. The *SHINE!* event has been a blessing to all in Missouri since the inaugural event in 2021. We at Peace love how the event has grown and helped so many connect in different parts of Missouri as we work together to show God’s love for all those we come in contact with. The online registration process makes signing up for the *SHINE!* event worry free. The support you receive from the individuals involved in organizing the event is amazing. Peace is looking forward to participating in the *SHINE!* event for many years to come.

Dr. Heather L. Carlson, Peace—Lemay



# MISSIONS IN MISSOURI

These mission activities in the Missouri District are a simply a snapshot of the many ways God is at work in our communities. We thank our donors for walking with us in providing grants to support this work. A list of Missouri District mission grant recipients can be found on page 15.

## Ministering to Service Personnel

Faith Lutheran Church in Knob Noster has built a strong relationship with the military community at Whiteman Air Force Base. Rev. Jon-Michael Schweigert notes, “Our congregation is almost entirely military connected in some way, either through personal service, service of a family member, or working in a support role as a civilian contractor. Each of us has a passion for ministering to the service men and service women of Whiteman.” The congregation partners with the chapel on base and helps with VBS for the children each summer, hosts BBQs for the Whiteman Community, and more.



## Campus Ministry Builds Disciples

The Campus Ministry Network of the Missouri District supports ministry to college students at sites throughout the state. Here’s what it looks like at the University of Missouri:



“My life after making the connection to Campus Lutheran and the student ministry has changed. Just over the last year I have grown so much deeper in my belief, and I feel more confident in my faith. The student ministry made me feel super accepted and comfortable enough to ask questions and clarify various questions on why we believe what we believe.” Hope, sophomore

## Oromo Calls First Pastor and Charters

About seven years ago, a group of Oromo immigrants, an African tribe mainly in Ethiopia and some areas of Eritrea and Kenya, partnered with Christ Lutheran Church in Platte Woods. Pastor Abdi Megerssa was called to serve the Oromo in 2021 as assistant pastor. The Oromo worship in their own language weekly, and the children participate in catechesis offered by Christ Lutheran. The Oromo officially chartered as a separate congregation of the LCMS on January 29, 2023. Rev. Demelash Yoseph, director of the Oromo Evangelical Lutheran Mission Society, preached in English and Oromo. Praise God for this new congregation!



## Church Plant Charters in UCity

All Nations Church in University City began as a church plant around eight years ago and chartered as an LCMS congregation in August 2022. All Nations serves the



community by providing services like after school opportunities for children and storm clean up. Jon Christopher, the Small Groups Director at All Nations said, “We think our faith should permeate through all of our lives. When we talk about being brothers and sisters in Christ, we think that means sharing meals with one another and bearing each other’s burdens. We celebrate with one another and grieve with one another.”



# SHARED MINISTRY: “It’s good to have help.”

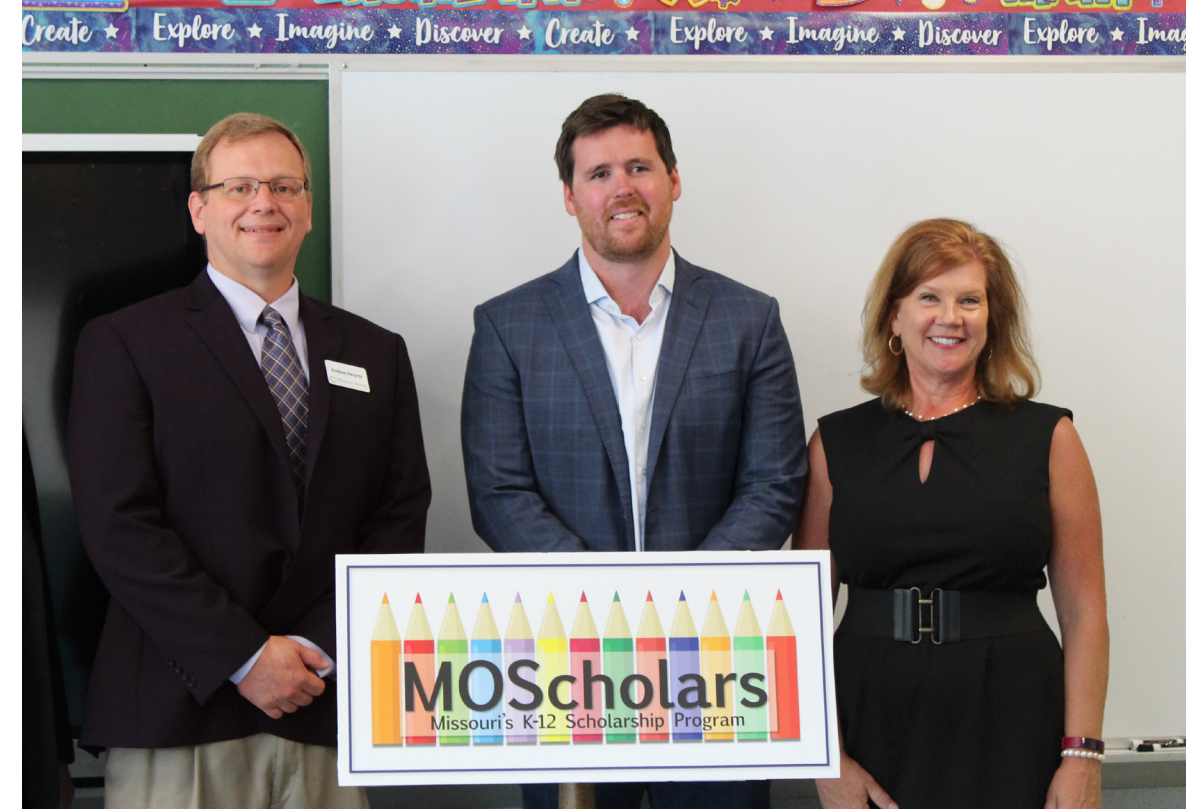
On Wednesday evenings at 9 p.m., members of Campus Lutheran in Columbia and Good Shepherd Lutheran in Centralia gather via Zoom for time together in prayer. They pray for the members and work of both individual congregations and also for the shared ministry partnership between the two churches. This online gathering is one of many things the two churches do together.

Shared ministry between the two congregations formally began in 2022, though conversations about the initiative started much earlier. Rev. Dr. Kent Pierce of Campus Lutheran shares how meetings with the Circuit Visitor and District President got the process going—noting how Good Shepherd had been vacant for five years and that Campus Lutheran could be a reliable partner in ministry. The Missouri District was also willing to walk with both churches and provide support with finances and other resources. These conversations then led to the installation of Rev. James Lanning in Centralia—as sole pastor at Good Shepherd and a role assisting at Campus.

“One of the great things that shared ministry can help congregations do is to get rid of this unbiblical view of ‘our church’ and ‘their church’ and start thinking about ‘the Church’. It is a well-needed antidote to a major problem,” says Pastor Lanning. “Let us start seeing each other as members of the same Church in different places, rather than different churches; this, I think would be pleasing to the Lord.”

Both congregations have been intentional about working together, even forming the “Turbo Team” with representation from each church with the purpose of planning joint efforts and working through issues. In addition to the weekly prayer meetings, the churches have combined confirmation classes, exchanged pastors during Advent and Lent, had social gatherings, and more.

Dr. Pierce notes that this level of coordination is work, but the benefits of shared ministry are great. “More strength. More encouragement. Shared workload,” he lists. “It’s good to have help.” We thank God for this partnership and continue to remember both churches as together they look to support communities throughout Boone County.



## MOSCHOLARS KICKS OFF SECOND YEAR

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.

Directing your taxes to Lutheran education through this program is as simple as completing an online form and pre-paying a portion of your taxes in the amount of your credit reservation. The Missouri District website ([mo.lcms.org/mo-scholars](https://mo.lcms.org/mo-scholars)) contains even more information on MOScholars, as well as the links to get the process started. Leah Sieveking at the District office can be reached at 314-590-6211 or [leah.sieveking@mo.lcms.org](mailto:leah.sieveking@mo.lcms.org) with any other questions.

At no additional cost and with minimal effort, MOScholars allows taxpayers to decide how their tax dollars should be spent. Directing these tax dollars for scholarships to attend Lutheran schools is a blessing to children and families that will make an eternal difference. “We’re so thankful for all of you who were willing to participate in 2022, but we also invite you to come back onboard in 2023,” says President Lee Hagan. “It’s a win-win situation for all of us.”



# YOUTHLEAD HELD FOR FIRST TIME

YouthLead is an exciting new opportunity to equip high school youth to serve as leaders in their home congregations as well as preparing adult mentors to support these leadership roles. A key aspect of this is bringing youth and adults together for retreats and training.

Over President's Day weekend, the Missouri District hosted the first YouthLead retreat with the theme "Motivated by Love". More than twenty youth and eight adult mentors from seven churches attended the retreat. The training focused on Scripturally-based leadership concepts. Throughout the retreat, youth were encouraged to ask questions, apply the skills that they were being taught, and reflect on how they could implement the use of these leadership skills in their current vocations.

"This was a great weekend and each participant grew in their faith and leadership ability," says Mark Thompson, DCE at Timothy Lutheran, St. Louis. "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 firsthand 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."

The Missouri District looks forward to hosting this event annually. Youth interested in learning leadership skills should keep an eye out for future training events.



# FISHING IN MISSOURI

The Missouri Department of Conservation provides a list of acceptable fishing methods within our state. The list varies depending on the species of the fish being caught, but in total it includes everything from pole and line to live bait traps to crossbows...even just reaching into the water and grabbing fish with your hands! Whatever the method, the end goal is always the same.

The Missouri District and our partners—including you—have been given the awesome task of being "fishers of men" by our God (Matthew 4:19). Our methods may vary depending on the environment—urban, rural, military bases, college campuses, schools—but the end goal is always the same. We're working together so that the name of Jesus Christ may be known and glorified among our neighbors.

This annual report is our thank you to all of you for standing with us—fishing pole in hand—ready and willing to share the Gospel with others. We're blessed by your partnership and look forward to serving with you for many years to come.

If you'd like to continue supporting this work, please consider making a gift to the Missouri District. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways:

## Use Our Envelope

Look in the centerfold.

## Checks Via Mail

Make payable to "Missouri District".

## Visit Us Online

Use a credit card at [mo.lcms.org](http://mo.lcms.org).

## Automatic Withdrawal

Deduct from a bank account.

Contact Leah Sieveking at 314-590-6211 or [leah.sieveking@mo.lcms.org](mailto:leah.sieveking@mo.lcms.org) with any questions.

**Correspondence may also be sent to:**

**Missouri District LCMS  
660 Mason Ridge Center Drive, Suite 100  
St. Louis, MO 63141**



**Thank you, again, for the kindness that you are showing to brothers and sisters in Christ throughout the state of Missouri.  
The love you have demonstrated is a blessing to many.**



# MISSOURI DISTRICT BUDGET

## 2023

**TOTAL 2023 BUDGET**  
**\$3,548,857**

**Conventions, Conferences,  
& Workshops**  
**\$355,176**

Conferences, events, and trainings  
for youth, workers, and laypeople.

**Ecclesiastical  
Services**  
**\$220,316**

Records and rosters of congregations  
and their workers, plus the oversight  
of ecclesiastical matters.

**LCEF Cooperative  
Ministries**  
**\$102,325**

Partnering with LCEF to benefit  
congregations and church workers  
within the Missouri District.

**Missions Across  
the District**  
**\$734,135**

Support for many missions within our  
District including new church plants,  
multi-ethnic, military, and more.

**National Office  
Support**  
**\$519,317**

Supporting the Synod and their  
many initiatives of the LCMS.

**Office Costs  
& Fundraising**  
**\$683,967**

Costs of administrative and  
fundraising costs of the District (plus  
legal, audit, and accounting).

**Services to Congregations  
& Church Workers**  
**\$933,621**

Supporting congregations, schools,  
and church workers. This includes  
scholarships awarded.

### CAMPUS MINISTRY

Campus Ministry Network | Columbia  
International Student Ministry | St. Louis  
Missouri State | Springfield  
Northwest Missouri State | Maryville  
Southeast Missouri State | Cape Girardeau  
Saint Louis University-Reliant | St. Louis  
University of Central Missouri | Warrensburg  
University of Missouri | Columbia

### MILITARY MINISTRY

Faith Lutheran Church | Knob Noster  
Faith Lutheran Church | St. Robert

### MULTI-ETHNIC MINISTRY

Amigos de Cristo | Sedalia  
Ethiopian & Eritrean Outreach | St. Louis  
Christian Friends of New Americans | Kansas City  
Christian Friends of New Americans | St. Louis  
Hodiamont Outreach | St. Louis  
Jesus el Buen Pastor | Kansas City  
Light of Christ Chinese Mission | St. Louis  
Nepalese Outreach | St. Louis  
Oromo Lutheran Church | Kansas City  
Our Redeemer | Kansas City

### NEW STARTS

All Nations | University City  
Community Outreach Grants  
Jefferson Avenue Mission | St. Louis  
My Church | Ozark  
New Mission Coaching  
Our Savior | Buffalo  
Our Savior | Platte City & Smithville  
US 60 Church Plants

### SHARED MINISTRY

Boone County: Centralia & Columbia  
Raytown & Independence  
Rolla Circuit

### URBAN MINISTRY

Align | St. Louis  
Bethlehem | St. Louis  
Black Ministry Internships | St. Louis  
Lutheran Urban Mission Agency | Kansas City  
St. Trinity | St. Louis  
St. Paul | St. Louis

## 2024 MISSION PROJECTS



## DISTRICT STAFF

REV. DR. R. LEE HAGAN  
President

COLLEEN BACKER  
Meeting & Office Assistant

CASSIE BEHRMANN  
Project Coordinator

REV. BILL GEIS  
Director of Mission Services

REV. MARTY HASZ, LPC  
Director of Church Worker Support

Sarah Irwin  
Assistant to the President

REV. PETER KIRBY  
Exec. Dir. of Congregational Services

PETER KREGE  
Chief Financial Officer

DAN KREIENKAMP, DCE  
Director of Family Life & Youth

ELSA MORT  
Communications Coordinator

PAM NUMMELA, DCE  
Family Discipleship Coaching

MARTHA SCHELLIN  
Rosters & Reporting Assistant

LEAH SIEVEKING  
Director of Mission Advancement

JOSH SWARTZ  
Director of Schools

SUE THOMPSON  
Events Assistant & Receptionist

MIKE WADLEY  
LCEF District Vice-President





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