

# The VOICE

December 2023

Missouri District Newsletter



## Christmas Cheer

*Pictured: Ordination of EIIT Student  
Lewi Jermiya at St. Trinity*



# From the President's Desk

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## Many Activities, One Message

Church and school calendars for the month of December are crammed full with all sorts of activities. The slots include everything from choir concerts to collections of food and clothing for families in need. The activities are varied and so are those involved. Ushering teams have special meetings. Offering counters recruit additional help. Extra hands are needed for children's programs. Extra voices are sought for special choir performances. Even trombonists are put to work during December.

For nearly three hundred congregations and more than a hundred educational ministries, many hands, feet, voices and hearts are involved. Not all of the congregations and schools have the same activities or the same gifts. However, there is one thread that ties all of those activities and people together. "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:11) Every choir anthem and every outreach event seeks to proclaim that same message. As a young pastor, I remember preaching to those who had come to our church's food pantry just before Christmas. (The service was held before food pantry opened.) Not everyone was appreciative of the delay, but the birth of Jesus is the reason behind everything we do.

Take a moment and look at your congregation's calendar. Then, give thanks to God for all of the hearts and hands that are busy making all of those things happen. May each of those events be a response to God's gift of a Savior and proclaim that message for all who attend.

Lastly, may we never be led to thinking that all of those events become more important than the singular event of the birth of the Son of God. That trumps all the other events because in these services we hear the angels' message and we receive Christ's gift of Himself. It does not matter whether your church sets up extra chairs or not. It does not matter if your church has a trombonist or not. We come to hear the Gospel proclaimed that for us is born a Savior, who is Christ the Lord in word and song. May God bless all of our congregations as we celebrate Jesus' birth once again this year!

Fraternally in Christ,

*R. Lee Hagan*

President Lee Hagan





## A Place in the Inn:

*How Zoe's Home provides women the opportunity to restore, redirect, and redeem their lives and the lives of their children through the love of Christ.*



Zoe's Home is a pregnancy and parenting home offering a safe place for moms. It's literally a house where soon-to-be moms or new moms can live. In addition to a safe living environment, Zoe's Home is a ministry, offering residents a variety of trainings (like parenting classes, financial education, case management, and more) plus lots of prayer. The director of ministry at Zoe's Home works with residents to make goals, identify barriers, and learn how to overcome obstacles in their lives.

Located in Clinton and connected with Trinity Lutheran Church, Zoe's Home has worked since 2016 to help women in need. Initially, it operated under a pregnancy center with Trinity owning the home. However, in the fall of 2021, Trinity decided to continue the project without the pregnancy center, reopening Zoe's Home in June of 2022. Emily Stocking, who now serves as executive director of Zoe's Home and attends Trinity, says the relationship between Trinity Lutheran Church and Zoe's Home is great. "Trinity is extremely supportive," says Stocking. "They are passionate about helping women in their time of need." Since they reopened in 2022, they have helped 12 women and 15 children. Most women stay for about an average of nine months. But they are allowed to stay in the program as long as they're working towards their goals.



The name Zoe's Home is based on the biblical account of Jesus interacting with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4). Like the Samaritan woman, who does not see herself worthy of interacting with Christ, Zoe's Home works with its residents to ensure they know Christ's love and life for them. The Greek word for life is "zoë" so the name, Zoe's Home, fit perfectly.



If you would like to help this ministry, be sure to follow their Facebook page (@zoeshometlc) where short term needs and immediate prayer requests are listed. If looking to donate or volunteer, contact Emily Stocking at [emily@zoeshometlc.org](mailto:emily@zoeshometlc.org). Otherwise, prayers are always greatly appreciated.

What a blessing for the community around Clinton to have a church and ministry surrounding women in need with God's love!

*Pictured:  
A little blessing at Zoe's Home (top).  
Blessing Zoe's Home in 2022 (middle).  
Participants of the Fish for Life  
fundraiser that benefits Zoe's Home.*





## EIIT: What's That?

The Missouri District is a leader raising up EIIT pastors and deaconesses. The Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (EIIT) at Concordia Seminary was launched in 2003 addressing the need for the LCMS to reach out to groups in ethnic immigrant and urban cultures. It provides seminary education leading to the ordination of pastors and consecration of deaconesses while serving in their cultural contexts.

Dr. Ely Prieto says, "the Missouri District today leads our Synod sending students to the EIIT program." Currently 30 students are in the program. Six vicars and two deaconess interns are from Missouri District congregations! Their languages include Nepalese, Oromo, Mandarin, and American Sign Language.

On November 19, Lewi Jesuwa Jermiya, was ordained and installed as Associate Pastor and Missionary at St. Trinity Lutheran Church of St. Louis. He is the first of several in the District's EIIT pipeline. He's also the LCMS' first Kunama speaking pastor. Lewi is a third generation Lutheran who lived in the Ethiopian Shimelba Refugee Camp for 19 years after being displaced by the Eritrea-Ethiopian Civil War.

In 2017 Lewi, his wife, Arobat, and daughter, Malidaya, resettled in St. Louis. Within three days they became involved in a growing Eritrean/Ethiopian Bible Fellowship at Timothy Lutheran Church. Within a year Lewi was involved in Christian Friends of New Americans (CFNA). Then local pastors worked to prepare him for the EIIT program. While serving as a vicar, Lewi led a Bible Fellowship at CFNA and established an online Kunama group which today has over 80 participants. A second daughter, Malayna, was born and Lewi became a US citizen all while he was a vicar.

Pastor Jermiya's responsibilities include Saint Trinity's "Bridge" ministry for children, helping new Americans resettling, and expanding online Kunama Bible ministry. His ordination weekend included an all-day gathering of worship of Kunama from many cities. Sunday morning's ordination filled St. Trinity with a multiethnic gathering that continues to grow today.



*Pastor Lewi Jermiya and family at his ordination.*





## *Have a Holly, Jolly Christmas*

In a mass of busy schedules, special performances, final exams, gift-buying, party-hosting, traveling, and all the hustle and bustle, the holidays can quickly become stressful. One of the main ways to ensure a healthy holiday season is to set boundaries and see to self-care. Practice the tips below during these holiday weeks which will help eliminate burnout and leave your Advent and Christmas "holly and jolly".

### *Remember Responsibilities*

During busy times, often people put everyone's needs before their own. This is a false sense of service. We should serve our neighbors, but while maintaining the needs of our various vocations. Don't ignore familial or other significant relationships simply because the holidays are busy.

### *Have Fiscal Boundaries*

So often families overextend themselves financially during the holidays. For many, the true cost of too many presents, expensive meals, or fancy parties has a terrible impact for months to come. Set budgets and stick to them.

### *Set Physical Goals*

When times are busy, it's so easy to eliminate workouts, walks, and hours of sleep. It's essential to make time to keep healthy routines which reduces stress and avoids burnout. Now is even a great time to get an early start on any 2024 resolutions! Make sure to get a good night of sleep and plenty of steps.

### *Limit Time on Social Media*

It is well known by now that life depicted on social media is misleading and askew from reality. Too much time spent in that medium is negative. It increases loneliness and covetousness. Don't get trapped in social media.

### *Increase Time in the Word*

Most importantly, take time every day to read and meditate on God's Word. In a time, so often, that can be darkened with feeling overwhelmed and stressed, it's essential to stay connected to our source of light in this world and the next. "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." (Psalm 119:105) Connect with God daily.

With some healthy boundaries balancing your vocations and God's gifts in your life, may your Advent and Christmas seasons be blessed!





# SHARING CHRIST ON CAMPUS... AND EVERYWHERE!

"I was alone in a dorm room," says Matthew, senior at the University of Central Missouri, about his early days at college. "The closest person I had was a suitemate. We didn't really talk so it was very, very lonely." The transition from living at home to the dorms can be tricky. Routines, meals, and the proximity of family and friends have suddenly all changed. That sort of upheaval can leave young adults feeling lost.

Dr. Joe Western, Assistant Professor of History at College of the Ozarks and a leader of the Lutheran Student Fellowship on campus has seen this in students and knows that campus ministry plays a key role in this transition period. "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," he shares.

The Campus Ministry Network of the Missouri District is comprised of ministry leaders from 16 colleges and universities throughout the state. Since 2019, the network has served to strengthen ministry efforts and equip others to reach students with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Our sincerest thanks to the many supporters of the Missouri District who have championed this effort through financial gifts and prayers. You are a source of encouragement to these men and women!

Matthew doesn't feel lonely anymore. "The Lutheran Student Center (LSC) provided an escape, somewhere that I could go and be a part of a group." In his more than three years of being a member of the ministry, he's taken on leadership roles and welcomed others.

Making disciples is a goal not just limited to campus ministry but for all ministries throughout the Missouri District. We're thankful for all those who share the Gospel of Jesus Christ on military bases, in rural communities, in inner-city settings, in the classrooms of Lutheran schools, among those new to our country...and in places everywhere. This Christmas season, would you please prayerfully consider walking with these ministries and workers throughout Missouri with a gift to the mission efforts of the Missouri District?

Gifts may be made online at: [mo.lcms.org/donate](https://mo.lcms.org/donate)  
Or sent to:

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

Thank you for your continued support for college students like Matthew who are experiencing this exciting, though sometimes uncertain, period of life...and for all people throughout Missouri who are growing in their faith. May God grant all of them—and you as well—His peace and joy as we celebrate the birth of our Savior!



\*Student quotes first published in Muleskinner vol 117 Issue 1 September 28, 2023 p4. Article written by Brad Hadank, current LSC student.



# CONFERENCE EQUIP & ENCOURAGE

It's almost 2024! Why not start the year with learning ways to equip and encourage your congregations and ministries? Mark your calendars for the Missouri District's E2 Conferences!

Simply choose a location close to you, gather up people excited about ministry, and join us for a morning of learning at the E2: Equip and Encourage Conferences. Everyone (lay people and church workers) is invited to attend.

Presented by Missouri District staff and leaders from across Missouri, sessions include topics like Shared Youth Ideas, Family Discipleship, Stewardship Resources, Intergenerational Faith Formation, Serving Your Community, and more.

Held on Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 12:15 p.m., the conferences are free to attend, and light refreshments and coffee will be provided. The dates and locations of the conferences are:

- Kansas City (St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Lee's Summit) – January 20, 2024
- Southeast Missouri (Saxony Lutheran High School, Jackson) – January 27, 2024
- St. Louis (St. John's Lutheran Church, Arnold) – February 3, 2024
- Central Missouri (Calvary Lutheran High School, Jefferson City) – March 2, 2024
- Springfield (Faith Lutheran Church, Springfield) – March 9, 2024

There is no cost to attend the conference, but we ask that you register so that we can have enough materials for everyone. Registration, schedule, and breakout sectional information are available at [mo.lcms.org/e2-conference-equip-encourage](https://mo.lcms.org/e2-conference-equip-encourage).







MOScholars allows you, the taxpayer, to direct your state tax dollars to a cause you feel strongly about—Lutheran education. By reserving tax credits through this program in 2023, you'll help 150 students receive a scholarship to attend an LCMS school in our state. Head to <https://mo.lcms.org/mo-scholars/> to learn more. 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, it's a win for taxpayers, students, families, and schools. Thank you for your participation in MOScholars through the Missouri District.



## Upcoming Events

Visit [mo.lcms.org/upcoming-events](https://mo.lcms.org/upcoming-events) for more information on these events.

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



Missouri District  
THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD