

The VOICE

January 2024

Missouri District Newsletter



New Year, New Things

*Pictured: Participants at the campus ministry
GO Leadership Retreat in Columbia*

From the President's Desk

New Things

Through the prophet Isaiah, our Lord promised that He would be doing new things for His people (42:9; 43:19 and 48:6). Rather than longing for things from the past, God's beloved are able to look forward to the new things that He will do for us. As God's Word is proclaimed, as children and adults are baptized, as absolution is pronounced, as the Lord's Supper is distributed, God is renewing us by giving each of His children a new heart and a new spirit.

God is also opening new doors for the Gospel through Lutheran schools, campus ministries, outreach to military personnel, and the faithful witnesses of congregations across Missouri. The Gospel is proclaimed in a dozen different languages each week across Missouri District. God is indeed doing new things as new people are hearing the Gospel and being brought to faith.

Each issue of The VOICE is intended to provide "news" about the new things that God is doing in congregations, schools, and missions throughout the District. The news about what God is doing through the work of the Holy Spirit in calling people to faith and sustaining them in the faith is always good news.

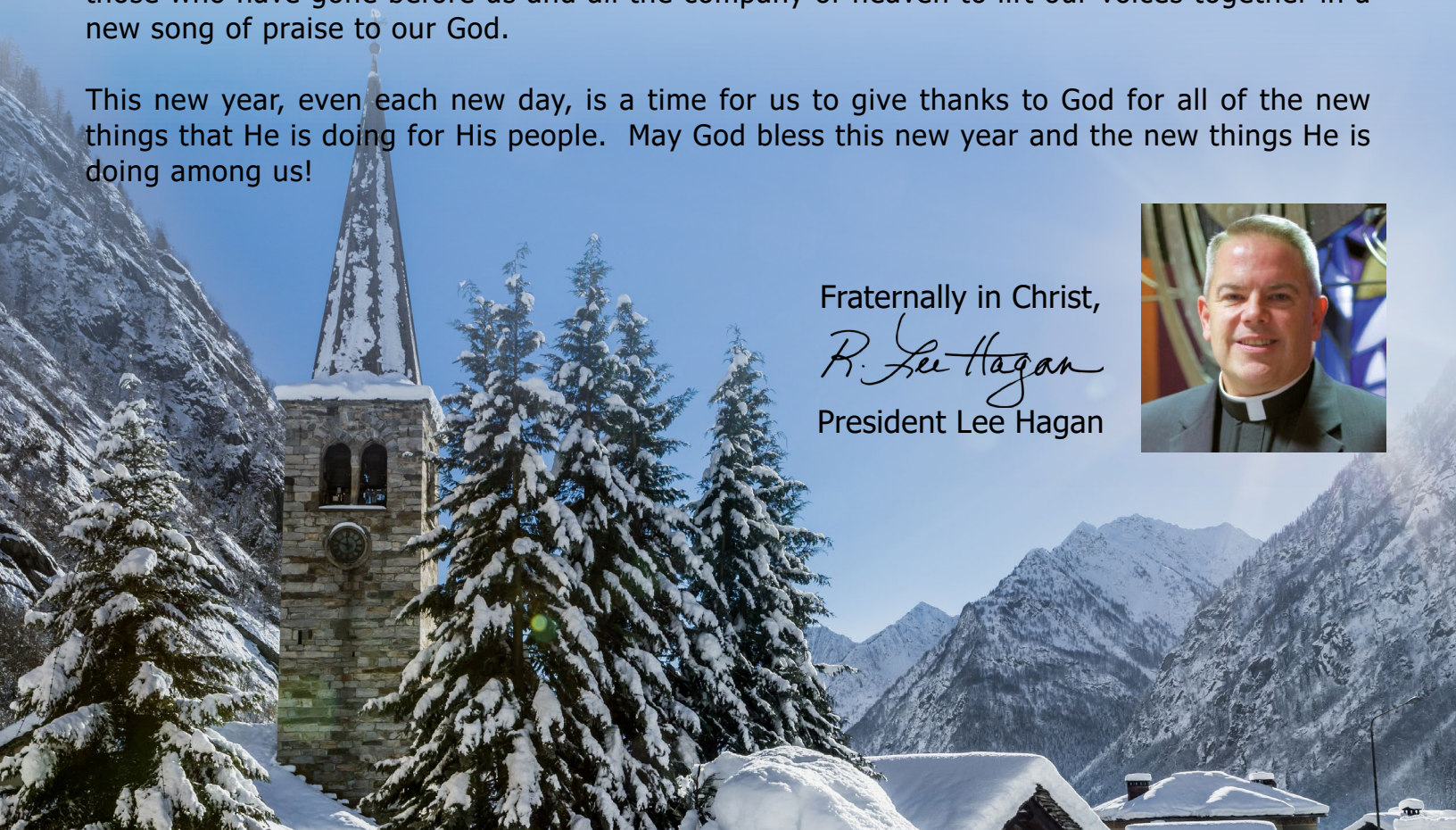
There is one new thing that Christians are still waiting for God to do. When Christ comes again in glory, He will make all things new. We look forward to the new heavens and the new earth. We live each day in the hope that we will rise again with glorified bodies as we gather with those who have gone before us and all the company of heaven to lift our voices together in a new song of praise to our God.

This new year, even each new day, is a time for us to give thanks to God for all of the new things that He is doing for His people. May God bless this new year and the new things He is doing among us!

Fraternally in Christ,

R. Lee Hagan

President Lee Hagan



Mission Update: My Church

In Ozark, you can find My Church and Pastor Jim Bartok. A big part of their church's identity is being present in the community. This allows for easy conversations and connections to their time in God's Word.

Prosper The City

One of the ways My Church does this is through their "Prosper The City" project. This is held twice a year, in the spring the whole church has one big project, and in the fall each of the church's small groups serves. Their church's small groups choose an organization in their community that serves others. Some of the projects included helping with a clothing drive and adopting a family for Christmas. One of these projects included their kid's small group making games for the local assisted living center. They spent time together designing, building, and testing the games. Then they took the games to the center and taught the residents how to play.

Ministry Impacts Can Arise at Any Time

One set of siblings had been repeatedly invited by family friends to come to church. One time, these siblings decided to try My Church's teen group. While the group was reading from the Bible, it was realized that one of these siblings had some trouble reading due to poorer eyesight. A couple of weeks after this first meeting, the group leader presented the youth with a new Bible with text large enough for her to read. The youth was the first to volunteer to read from her new Bible! Now these siblings have invited their older sister and are going to start confirmation in the coming months. Never underestimate the impact that an invitation can have (even if it's repeated).

Ministry Can Happen at Any Place

Pete was riding along in a park, when he noticed a large group of people with a sign reading "Welcome to My Church". He stopped by and asked someone what was going on. That someone was Pastor Bartok, and what was happening was the church's meeting at a park. Pastor Bartok and Pete talked over coffee for about an hour. Pete came to church the following week and has been going to My Church ever since. While he grew up in a heavily emotionally based Christian church, Pete said he always wondered if he was forgiven. After several weeks of wrestling with scripture, he found Jesus's true peace and assurance of salvation. And at age 72, he received communion for the first time; true body, true blood, true Jesus, and total forgiveness. He's now a communion assistant. It all started from a meeting at a park.



MISSOURI DISTRICT TO Shine! FOR FOURTH TIME



For the fourth consecutive year, the Missouri District is pleased to host a statewide servant event. Based on Matthew 5:16 and aptly named *SHINE!*, the event runs April 12-21, 2024.

SIMILAR TO PREVIOUS YEARS, THE CONCEPT IS SIMPLE:

FORM A TEAM

Groups of all sizes and skill sets are welcome.

IDENTIFY A NEED

Who needs an extra hand in your community?

REGISTER ONLINE

Order t-shirts and describe your event:
mo.lcms.org/shine

SERVE THIS APRIL

Show love to your neighbors and be a witness for Jesus.

We're once again blessed to have a list of sponsors who are helping to provide matching t-shirts for those who are "shining." In 2024, these shirts will be red! *(Please note: The cutoff date for ordering t-shirts will be Tuesday, March 12.)*

"To God be all the glory for such an opportunity as *SHINE!*" says Josh Swartz, Director of Schools for the Missouri District. "We do not do this for the accolades or the pats on the back. We engage in outreach events like *SHINE!* because it matters. It matters, to those we serve, and to the next generation we are raising up."

Since its inaugural year in 2021 with more than 5,000 participants, *SHINE!* went on to almost double that in 2023 with more than 10,000 volunteers. Last year, the Missouri District was joined by the Northern Illinois District. They'll be back in April...and new to the group is the Nebraska District and an energetic congregation from Virginia.

"I remember my first visit to the Missouri District and learning about the *SHINE!* servant events," says Swartz. "I was so astounded to learn that a District took such an active and bold role in firing up the masses to go out and impact the community, and to learn just how fired up the masses were."

Indeed, the Missouri District is as fired up as it has ever been about serving in April and looks forward to seeing you all in action this spring. Shine on, Missouri!

Campus Ministry is a Go

Campus ministry is an invaluable source of comfort and a great resource that strengthens our young adults as they navigate a fallen world in this next step of their lives. There are many LCMS campus ministries across Missouri, eight of which are directly supported by the District. Campus Lutheran Church in Columbia has many great and impactful ministries, some of which include their campus ministries.

Mizzou freshman Lauren Bruss got involved with the Lutheran Student Fellowship at Campus Lutheran. "It was always important to me to find a church family during college since community is so important when it comes to worship," notes Bruss. "My advice for anybody considering joining a group like this is to pray about it. It can seem like belonging is hard to come by in college, but asking for guidance and surrounding yourself with people who point you toward God is what truly helps you find your place."

If you would like to get connected to a campus ministry, or perhaps you would like to connect a student you know, but not sure where to start? Visit molcms.college to access our Campus Ministry Network. This is a collection of Campus Ministries across Missouri. You simply click on the school where the student is attending, fill out the contact form, and your information will be passed on directly to that school ministry. It's a great way to make that first introduction into a ministry.

Another great way to make connections is by joining together in fellowship and learning. Students from all across Missouri are invited to attend the GO Leadership Retreat February 9–10. This is the sixth year for this great event, hosted by Campus Lutheran. This year's theme is "Big Questions, Biblical Answers" and features speaker Dr. Brad Alles. Students arrive on Friday evening and everything wraps up by 3 p.m. on Saturday. There is plenty of fellowship, food, worship, and speaker sessions. (Plus it's easy for students to overnight as Campus Lutheran's facilities already have showers and air mattresses for students to use.) Register by January 31 at goleadretreat.com to get great resources on how to witness Jesus Christ on your campus and in your life.



Pictured: Lauren Bruss (top) and students at a GO Leadership Retreat

Trainings this Winter: Lutheran Early Response Teams

Are you prepared for when a disaster strikes near you or your neighbors? Did you know that there are Lutheran Early Response Teams all across our state (and country) that are trained to help in the event of calamities? If you have thought about serving as a volunteer, now is a great time to receive training and get connected to a LERT group!

There are two trainings coming up, a Basic Training and a Chainsaw Training. Volunteers new to the program, must have completed the Basic Training before completing the Chainsaw Training. Those aged 14 or older are welcome to participate. (Those aged 14-17 can attend the Chainsaw Training, so they can participate at a site as a dragger, but cannot become a chainsaw operator until aged 18.) This training runs from the morning til the early afternoon, with refreshments and lunch provided.



1/27/24

Basic LERT Training

St. Matthew Lutheran Church
Lee's Summit, MO

2/24/24

Basic Chainsaw Training

St. Paul Lutheran Church
Concordia, MO



To learn more about the schedule, registration fees, and needs for the class, simply visit mo.lcms.org/disaster-response Here you'll find the links for the respective classes.

Be prepared for the next disaster; get prepped with LERT training!



2024 CONNECTED

NATIONAL LUTHERAN SCHOOLS WEEK



It's January, which means for most of our schools across the District, these dark winter days will enjoy some excitement, fellowship, and fun with National Lutheran Schools Week! Running from January 21–27, 2024, this year's theme is "Connected". Based on John 15:1-5, the whole week, students will learn how they are connected to Christ, who is "the vine" and by being connected with Him, there is eternal life and spiritual fruit. There will also be a strong emphasis on the Trinitarian connections with Christ, how the Father sends the Son as a sacrifice for our sins and the Holy Spirit connects us to the Father and the Son through Baptism and the Word.

Educators have been working hard to prepare days full of festivities. To help celebrate the week, the Synod office has many resources available. Not only do they supply the theme of the week, but each day has a related subtheme with daily devotions, prayers, and talking points. Additionally, there are two main hymns that have been crafted for this week: "Jesus is God's Living Vine" and "In Christ, We are Forever Grafted" with text by Jeffrey E. Burkart. Follow along at your congregation or homes by accessing these resources on the Synod's website at lcms.org/lutheranschoolsweek

MONDAY

CONNECTED TO CHRIST

TUESDAY

**CONNECTED TO THE FATHER
AND HIS CREATION**

WEDNESDAY

**CONNECTED TO THE SPIRIT
AND HIS FRUITFUL GIFTS**

THURSDAY

CONNECTED TO THE CHURCH

FRIDAY

CONNECTED TO HIS COMMISSION

Lutheran Schools across the state of Missouri will soon be celebrating National Lutheran Schools Week. There will be all sorts of creative celebration going on from dress days, activities, to even assemblies; and more. National Lutheran Schools week is a good reminder to all of us that our schools are a mission vehicle for our churches to impact lives for eternity through the life-giving message of Christ Crucified, while developing future leaders to serve our church and world through Christ as the cornerstone.

Josh Swartz
Director of Schools
Missouri District



CONFERENCE

EQUIP & ENCOURAGE



Our E2 Conferences are right around the corner! These conferences are located where your congregation could easily travel for the day. Find a location near you and register online at mo.lcms.org/e2-conference-equip-encourage

Sessions provide support and training for your congregation and ministries. All are invited to attend (lay people and church workers). The conferences are free to participate, so bring a group! There are many ministry ideas and resources presented, and best shared amongst many of your church leaders.

Doors open at 8:30 a.m. with the event running from 9 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.. Light refreshments and coffee will be provided. Register online at the link above and let us know you're coming.

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 | School 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 Registration now open! |



Missouri District
THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD