

The VOICE

February 2024

Missouri District Newsletter



2024 Off to a Great Start

Pictured: E2 Participants

From the President's Desk

Jesus' Marching Orders as We Engage a Hostile Culture

Sporting events, movies, television shows, and concerts are not just forms of entertainment. Political statements and ideologies touch seemingly every facet of our lives. There are times when people just want to be entertained without identity politics becoming the central point. Faithful Christians can easily get frustrated with messages that are contrary to God's Word and fall into the trap of overreacting to the culture in our responses.

In Luke 24, we find our Lord giving His Church marching orders (similar to what we find in Matthew 28). Luke writes, "[He] said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.'" (Luke 24:26-47) What is clear in Jesus' words is that He died and rose again for all. The Father sent His beloved son to take upon Himself the punishment that all people deserved on account of sin. Christ died for all. There are no good people or bad people. There are only sinners for whom the Savior died.

Our Lord sends His Church to proclaim repentance and forgiveness, Law and Gospel. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Since God desires all to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, our proclamation contains both Law and Gospel so that the Holy Spirit can work faith when and where it pleases God. Our prayer is that through Law and Gospel the Holy Spirit will kill and make alive, will afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted.

The charge that Jesus gives is that this message is to be proclaimed to all nations. This includes those who ridicule or even hate Christ and His Word. The proclamation of this message is not to be confined to an hour or two on Sunday morning, but as individual Christians, bearing witness to Christ in their daily lives in their unique callings. The Gospel, in the broad sense, is to be proclaimed to Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives, or whatever labels or tags may be applied to people. The people we interact with on a daily basis are people created by God in His own image and people for whom Christ Jesus died. Our response to the culture wars is simple and straightforward. We speak the truth of the Gospel in humility and love, seeking those who have strayed from Christ and those who have never even heard the Gospel.

From Lutheran schools to campus ministries, congregational outreach to individual Christians, our prayer is that the Holy Spirit would work through the proclamation of Law and Gospel to bring forgiveness, life, and salvation to troubled sinners that they may no longer live in fear, but in hope of the resurrection unto eternal life. May God bless the seeds of the Gospel that are sown throughout our congregations, schools, and the saints of God!

Fraternally in Christ,

R. Lee Hagan

President Lee Hagan





Forgiveness: the Key to Marriage and Relationships

February is a month when we celebrate love and romantic relationships, with Valentine's Day on February 14. But if love is a positive thing, why do so many marriages and couples face conflict and strained relationships? It is because we are sinful people living in a broken, sinful world, and the devil and our own sinful selves work to undermine our relationships.

Our pride is easily offended if we feel slighted or not understood by those we love. It is easy for us to harden our hearts in those situations and fail to determine the source of the conflict and to work to resolve the issues while they are small. We allow hurts of the past to fester and grow and impact our current relationship with our loved ones. We do not forgive and forget easily.

Forgiveness is key to positive relationships. It is hard for us to take responsibility for our part in conflict and to work to keep or restore the peace in relationships, but it is necessary for the sake of positive long-lasting relationships. It is necessary for us when conflict develops to swallow our pride, approach our loved one and say those challenging words, "I'm sorry for what I said (or did). Please forgive me." We may have been the one who caused the argument or started the conflict, or we may be the offended party, but regardless, we value the relationship strongly enough to want to keep our list of offenses short and resolve the conflict quickly, taking responsibility for our part. Paul encourages in Ephesians 4:26, "Be angry and do not sin, do not let the sun go down on your anger."

It may seem strange to be talking about conflict and forgiveness in the context of love and Valentine's Day. But we acknowledge that marriage and relationships are under attack almost continuously in our society and so need to be encouraged and preserved. Marriage and relationships are to be valued, and we need to take regular account and work to preserve them. Our sharing of forgiveness will strengthen marriage and relationships to give us strong families, and improve our relationships in churches and schools.

Helping our Church Workers Now and in the Future

Imagine, fully active youth in our church community, participating, leading, and experiencing how to share Christ Crucified with joy and zeal. Imagine, second, third, fourth, fifth generation called church workers in our schools, churches, and RSO organizations serving and proclaiming Christ throughout our communities. What a blessing! What a difference that sight would make.

Currently, we are amid a church worker shortage. According to the most recent projected Concordia placement graduate statistics there are 115 potential church worker candidates for 534 requests made over the 2023-2024 academic year. (CUS stats and state of education). A staggering trend that cannot continue.

But how do we reverse this trend? First and foremost, praise God in His infinite wisdom that He has placed you where you are for such a time as this. One of the most impactful influences for young people is the recommendation of church work from a mentor. You can help encourage a young person to pray about and consider a church worker vocation. Through such efforts as modeling, mentoring, and investing in our youth when they are young, we can identify, encourage, and inspire the next generation of church workers. Second, consider helping support our District Scholarship Aid Endowment Fund, Tomorrow's Teachers & Preachers. It is through this fund that we actively support our youth going into church work through our Seminaries and Concordia's by providing a scholarship.

Meanwhile, our best prevention method in the short term is the retention of our church workers currently serving. No work on this side of heaven is easy, and church workers often fight emotionally draining, spiritual battles. While the Missouri District has made it one of its critical priorities to provide mentor support, coaching, and on-going training to assist in retention efforts, you can have an incredible impact by lifting church workers up in prayer and making little deposits of salt. As Christ calls us to be the salt of the Earth, consider what types of salt deposits you can make such as saying thank you to a church worker for appreciation of their hard work, dropping a letter of encouragement, saying things like "Thinking of you today.", or "What can I pray for you?". Making those little deposits indicates to a worker, they are valued, noticed, and their work matters.

Together, as faithful servants we can pray for, identify, and inspire new generations of church workers for the harvest field. Together, as a body of believers we can encourage those who are currently serving so faithfully. Not because of their merit, but because of what Christ has done for us. May the Lord bless such efforts as you seek to raise up and inspire new generations of church workers and faithfully provide lift to those who serve.



Families Let Their Light **SHINE!**

Tell the Next Generation

The **SHINE!** servant event this April is a wonderful opportunity to join together across Missouri in service to our neighbors. Groups are able to choose their own project which best serves their community. Since these projects can be of any scale and size, consider bringing families of all ages to serve in a multi-generational group. Serving together as a family models and imparts values to the next generation like empathy and generosity. Plus, serving side by side creates a stronger connection with one another.

If you are looking for a way for your family to serve, below are several projects that families completed last year, that you can use for inspiration. There are options for all skills and interests. And for some projects, adults without children or children without parents were partnered together or “adopted” by families promoting intergenerational help and fun.



Three generations served together with the 6th grader mowing while his dad and grandfather raked and spruced up the yard.

Families with members from 5-year-olds to grandparents cleaned up yards for 14 homes in the church's neighborhood. The neighbors were given a potted plant with a note of encouragement and the adults, teens, and children made special connections with the homeowners. Children raked, pulled weeds, and carried brush while adults handled power tools and heavier jobs. By the end of the day, seven little boys were all raking together in a yard.

All generations of servants chose cards for seniors, military chaplains, and firefighters as a favorite project.

Husbands and wives partnered to make sandwiches for distribution in the city.

Creating bracelets for bingo prizes for a Lutheran Senior Center was a big hit with families. One dad helped his daughters get lots of beads strung on lots of laces! A grandmother and granddaughter also enjoyed this creative project.

One family chose to donate and serve at a food bank. Their shopping became a math game! With a specific amount of money for their food donations, the cost was added as each item was placed in the cart. The whole family worked together and came within 50 cents of their target amount.



There are few things more beautiful than the smiles on the faces of the children and adults shining the love of Jesus and the glory of our Father in heaven before others. May God bless all those who serve and are served in **SHINE! in 2024!**

Thanks to Hannah Knehans (Trinity, Springfield) and Kathy Chinberg (King of Kings, Chesterfield) for sharing these stories.



Cassie Moore



Tanner Olsen

NOW➤

GALATIANS 2:20

APRIL 5-7, 2024

**MISSOURI DISTRICT
LCMS YOUTH GATHERING**

What are you worried about right now?

What are you ashamed of right now?

What is God doing in your life right now?

Join us as we wrestle with these questions at the Missouri District Youth Gathering April 5–7. This spring, junior and senior high youth are invited to come together and hear from DCE Cassie Moore and author Tanner Olsen about how God is a part of our whole story, our past, present, and future. And see how He speaks to the anxieties, worries, regrets, and shame that weigh us down. Galatians 2:20 reminds us, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

Let this weekend be one that fills you with laughter, comfort, and challenge as we connect in creative and engaging ways and talk about the stories of real people who have struggled, just like you, with life’s tough questions. It’s an experience you simply can’t miss.

For more information and registration (closes March 25): mo.lcms.org/youth-ministry.





E2 CONFERENCE EQUIP & ENCOURAGE

We have had three of our five E2 Conferences this year, and the impact has been amazing! Through January and February, the Missouri District hosted these morning conferences at St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Lee's Summit, Saxony Lutheran High School in Jackson, and St. John's Lutheran Church in Arnold.

Topics include how to structure your congregation, using demographics to study your community, intergenerational faith formation, effective stewardship resources, ways to engage your community, youth ministry ideas, family discipleship, and more. Thank you to everyone who attended!

Looking to be a part of these conferences? There are two opportunities remaining: March 2 at Calvary High School in Jefferson City and March 9 at Faith Lutheran Church in Springfield. 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. Designed for laypeople and church workers, there's no cost to attend (so bring a group!). We'd love to see you there!



ARE YOU READY TO *Shine!* MISSOURI DISTRICT?



Registration is now open for our annual servant event, this April 12-21, 2024. Groups of all sizes and skillsets are encouraged to live out Matthew 5:16 by showing the love of Christ to their neighbors through service during this timeframe. As is our tradition, participants will be outfitted in matching t-shirts...and in 2024 these shirts will be red. Head to mo.lcms.org/shine to learn more about *SHINE!* and place your shirt order. Please note: the deadline for ordering is Tuesday, March 12 (or for as long as supplies last).

The Missouri District is excited to share that *SHINE!* has now spread to four states. Joining us this year will be the Northern Illinois District, the Nebraska District, and one congregation from Virginia. Please continue to keep this effort and all its participants in your prayers. We can't wait to see you *SHINE!* this spring.



Upcoming Events

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

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| 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 | <i>SHINE!</i> Servant Event <i>Registration now open!</i> |



Missouri District
THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD