

The VOICE

March 2024

Missouri District Newsletter



God Gives Growth

*Pictured: Saint Trinity Kids at
The Bridge Ministry*

From the President's Desk

God Gives Growth

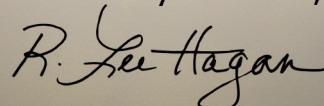
In Matthew 13 and Mark 4, we find Jesus speaking in a series of agricultural parables. The evangelists record parables that are in common (the Sower, the Mustard Seed), but also parables unique to each gospel (the Weeds in Matthew and the Growing Seed in Mark). Jesus' use of parables illustrates His ability to use examples from their daily lives to be able to communicate truths about God and His work in the world. The images of sowing and reaping, grain and weeds were familiar to all His hearers.

St. Paul will use agricultural language to describe kingdom work to the Corinthians. He describes how both he and Apollos were used for their growth in the faith. He planted and Apollos watered, however "God gave the growth." (1 Corinthians 3:6) Across the state, farmers will be planting once again this Spring. Though they have worked the ground this winter, once they plant the seed they trust that God will bring forth the growth. My prayer is that the members of our congregations would be bold in sowing the seed of God's Word to their friends and neighbors, co-workers, and family. We do not have to know **HOW** the seed grows, instead we know **WHO** grows the seed.

From campus ministries to Lutheran schools, new church plants to outreach to new people groups, we are blessed to see different ways by which the seed is being sown across Missouri. Some congregations have equipped members with Every One His Witness. In other congregations, pastors have used the Apostles' Creed as a simple paradigm for telling others about God. Some congregations have organized efforts through which they reach school and early childhood center families. Many congregations have participated in the Missouri District *SHINE!* servant event and been afforded opportunities to tell others why they serve and how Christ has served them. All of these different ways are examples of sowing the seed of God's Word and trusting that He will give the growth.

We hope that this and all of our Missouri District communications remind you of the many ways God is at work as His Word is proclaimed, taught and spoken in our communities. God's Word will not return to Him empty, but will accomplish what He intends. God gives the growth.

Fraternally in Christ,



President Lee Hagan



Shared Ministry Update: Highway 60 Corridor

From Sikeston to Springfield, Highway 60 stretches across south Missouri, through national forests and across the Ozark mountains. And dotted along this highway are dozens of rural communities, most which lack a Lutheran church. It's a unique situation that Faith Lutheran Church in St. Robert (over 80 miles away) saw as an opportunity to engage with shared ministry.

The Highway 60 Corridor ministry has grown over the years. Pastor John Perling of Faith, St. Robert oversees the ministry and runs Bible Studies, including in Mountain Grove and Mountain View on Highway 60. He is assisted by Online Deaconess Student Kim Bradford. Bradford lives in Mountain View and is very passionate about the Lutheran faith and sharing it with her neighbors.

Many gathered at these towns for Bible studies are not from a Lutheran background. It's an interesting ministry approach where there's a focus on trusting the scriptural text, seeing Christ as the focus of both Testaments, the value of distinguishing between Law and Gospel. Forming a community of believers takes time, lots of effort, and even more prayer. But the Word of God does not return empty.

The group in Mountain View anchor around a weekly Bible study meeting. They meet on Mondays at the Mountain View Public Library around supper time. There's a community room which allows easy access. There are regularly 6-12 in attendance. And the group in Mountain Grove regularly has between 15-25 people of all ages in attendance. Groups go where the community is. Last fall, groups would meet outside at a Pumpkin Patch, or as the weather turned colder, a member's barn. At Christmas, there was a Christmas Story potluck and Bible study on a farm in a barn surrounded by the lowing cattle.

It's such a joy to see this ministry grow and we pray for further blessings for them!

Bible Study Group Gathers Outside



*Rev. Perling and ODS Bradford
at Missouri District Conference*



Let's Shine! Next Month

April is set to be a very bright month in Missouri. For the fourth consecutive year, thousands of men, women, and children throughout the state will head out into their communities and be a witness for Jesus Christ while serving their neighbors. Dubbed *SHINE!* and based on Matthew 5:16, this year's statewide servant will be held April 12-21, and groups from all corners of the state will be participating.

What started in 2021 with 5,000 participants expanded to more than 10,000 in 2023. "God's plans for *SHINE!* have been bigger and better than any of us could have ever imagined," says Leah Sieveking, *SHINE!* Coordinator for the Missouri District. "It's been entertaining to see where He has led us all."

Interest in *SHINE!* has even crossed state lines. Last year, the Missouri District was joined by the Northern Illinois District (NID). Sue Green, *SHINE!* Coordinator in NID says returning groups are ready for another year and new groups are eager to jump in. "As we begin our second year of *SHINE!* I'm heartened by the congregations who didn't participate last year that contacted me early on to make sure they could participate this year," she shares. "And I'm excited that some of the groups who participated last year are again participating but planning to serve in different ways."

In addition to the Missouri District and NID, a congregation in Virginia and the Nebraska District will also be participating this year. Rev. Lonnie Jacobsen, Mission Executive for Nebraska adds, "The Nebraska District is joining *SHINE!* for the first time, and we are excited about the opportunity to have our congregations and campus ministry groups shine the light of Jesus while serving others.

As in previous years, matching t-shirts will be provided in 2024 for Missouri participants though the generosity of sponsors. This year we are thankful for Lutheran Church Extension Fund, Rod's Sports, Concordia Plans, and Timothy Lutheran in Blue Springs. While shirts are no longer available for ordering, registration is certainly still open! Head to mo.lcms.org/shine and let the Missouri District know your plans for service. If your team didn't receive shirts but would still like to look the part, email Leah at leah.sieveking@mo.lcms.org for the *SHINE!* logo that can be used on shirts of your choosing.

"Please continue to keep *SHINE!* groups in all four states in your prayers," concludes Leah. "And get ready to be wowed at how God will use His children for His glory."

Witness Workshop: *Training the Next Generation*



Pictured: Student groups at Calvary Lutheran High School participate in the Witness Workshop

As the United States—and even the world—continues to become more secular, our children must understand who they are in Jesus Christ. How we engage our children in discussions about their faith and allow them to practice witnessing to others in a safe, educational environment is critical in preparing them for the next phase of their lives, be it college or the workforce, with the skillset to have challenging conversations and serve as a bold ambassador for our Lord.

As the Missouri District emphasizes the importance of training young people as faithful disciples by placing a spotlight on best practices across the district and providing resources, training, and support, our school ministries across Missouri have been taking on that bold challenge to instill such experiences in our youth and share effective practices. This past February, Calvary Lutheran High School in Jefferson City shared one such method, Witness Workshop, with other Lutheran high schools across the District during the annual high school association conference.

Calvary's Lutheran high school demographics represent a typical spectrum of high school students at different maturity levels in their faith and depth of Biblical knowledge. The workshop's goal is to challenge their students to grow in their faith and learn to share that faith in a natural, relational way. Calvary asks various church leaders from around the state to come in for a power-packed day and role-play a character who believes in a certain way for their students to engage with. Such character role-play has focused on characters believing they are just good enough, are being crushed by sin, believe that God is unloving, or even about being sexually pure. The students come in as two paired groups of two, with one pair shadowing while the other is actively engaging. At the end of the role play, there is a debriefing about what went well and what did not. This time allows the students to gain additional insights, understanding, and, most importantly, experience in how to naturally talk about God in such life encounters. The groups go through all these different characters four times so that each group gets to engage and shadow twice. The whole assembly is brought back together for a quick debrief and sharing.

The profound impact on the students and even the church leaders who come to role-play is treasured and shared by all. Like many of our Lutheran Schools, Calvary impacts lives for eternity by creatively providing opportunities for the next generation of leaders to practice what they learn so that when they are old, they will not forget.



Summer Camping at Heit's Point

Heit's Point Lutheran Camp in Lincoln, Missouri, is preparing for two exciting events this June:

The first is Family Camp to be held June 9-14. Speakers will be Rev. Dr. Mart and Cheryl Thompson of St. Louis, with a focus on Family Discipleship. They plan for daily themes of Spiritual Habits, Spiritual Conversations, Serving Others Together and Home & Church as Partners. They will lead morning adult sessions, afternoon whole family sessions with active learning and fun group activities in the evening. There will be free time each day for families to enjoy the outdoors together: swimming, fishing, canoeing, hiking. Dr Thompson says "we will be learning family discipleship practices in a camp setting which provides valuable time for reflection and practice in an environment of family fun and mutual support with other families." The topics chosen support faith formation in the home: devotions, speaking confession and forgiveness, children asking their parents for help in faith matters, and parents modeling service. The Thompsons have lived out these experiences as a family, he as a pastor and she as a counselor, and they are eager to share what they have learned and are available through the week for private consultations. Program Director Janine Mallardi encourages, "Studies show that parents have the biggest influence on their kids' faith lives, and we want to help you as your child grows! Come join us at Family Camp as we have hands on experiences talking about God and faith in everyday life plus have lots of fun doing so!"

The Water of Life LCMS Servant Event will be held at Heit's Point, June 23-28. DCE Daniel Meyer of Christ Memorial, St. Louis, is working with Janine Mallardi to combine work projects with faith development. Outdoor construction projects are planned: trail restoration, wood cutting, rebuilding stairs and a craft trailer. They also hope to do light home construction projects for families in a nearby town. There will also be time to enjoy camp activities in the afternoon and campfire and Bible study in the evenings. Daniel is bringing a group from his church and hoping to gather small teams from churches in Missouri and the Midwest. He says "we are getting into God's creation, removing ourselves from the busyness of life to focus on work, Word, prayer, fellowship, friends and building new connections." He hopes the youth will be able to put their faith in action, grow in their faith walk, work hard, and relax some. Janine says "Middle school and high school students - come join us for an amazing servant event while meeting new friends, having fun and spending time in God's Word!"

More information on these events can be found at heitspointlutheran.org.



The Bridge at Saint Trinity



It was jokingly referred to as the “Dinner of Champions” and it consisted of corndogs, potato chips, pizza bites, and chocolate s’more brownies. Typical fare for a youth group at an LCMS congregation in Missouri these days. This wasn’t exactly your average youth group, though.

At Saint Trinity in south St. Louis City, this gathering was made up of kids from three counties and multiple countries—and those corndogs were part of an answered prayer. “For 10 solid years we have been praying for Jesus to send kids, teens, and families to our church community,” says DCE Heidi Lewis. “Little did we know He was going to answer those prayers with young people from all around the globe.”

Thank you, friends and supporters of the Missouri District, for walking with this district-supported mission congregation. Saint Trinity faithfully serves 50 underserved families in their neighborhood weekly through their food pantry...and now your generosity is part of a new outreach initiative—one that is sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the next generation of believers and leaders of the church.

The congregation recently launched The Bridge—“an intentional mission effort at Saint Trinity to come alongside and assist young people in thriving in an American culture filled with challenges and opportunities.” The Bridge meets three times each week: twice after school for “Homework Help Hangout” and a Friday evening basketball and social time. These opportunities are provided so that participants and their families will be pointed to Christ, spend time in His Word, build relationships, and mature in the faith.

As the Missouri District, we continually seek God’s guidance for the awesome work He has put before us. Pointing our neighbors to Christ is a calling we’re blessed to heed—especially when these efforts are undertaken with our faithful partners. We thank you for your generosity and invite you to continue in this work. Would you please prayerfully consider making a gift this Easter season to mission efforts of the Missouri District?

Gifts may be made online at: mo.lcms.org/donate

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

Be it to immigrants, college students, military personnel, or those in urban or rural settings, God has given us all the task of sharing the Gospel with those around us. It’s a message we boldly proclaim as we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord—and throughout the entire year. Thank you for your support!



Cassie Moore



Tanner Olsen

NOW

GALATIANS 2:20

APRIL 5-7, 2024

**MISSOURI DISTRICT
LCMS YOUTH GATHERING**

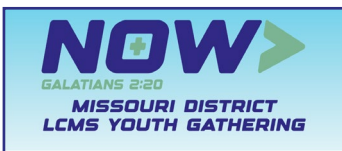
Last week to register for the Missouri District Youth Gathering April 5–7!

Junior and senior high youth, come together and hear how God is a part of our whole story and how He speaks to the anxieties, 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."

Featured speakers are DCE Cassie Moore and author/poet Tanner Olsen. For more information and to register your group (before March 25), visit mo.lcms.org/youth-ministry.

Upcoming Events

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



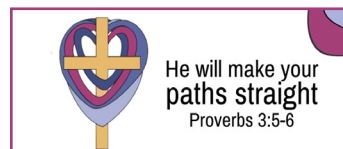
District Youth Gathering
April 5–7



Pastor's Wives Retreat
April 26–28



SHINE! Servant Event
April 12–21



LWML District Convention
June 7–9