

The VOICE

April 2024

Missouri District Newsletter



Shining God's Light in Missouri

Pictured: Participants at Bethlehem Lutheran Church

From the President's Desk

Easter as a Way of Life

Easter is not merely a Sunday, but a season. We celebrate our Lord's resurrection for fifty days until the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Throughout the season, joyful Easter hymns fill our services and joyful hope fills our hearts. Actually, Easter is not simply a season, it is a way of life. Eastertide is the ongoing celebration of the saints of God until our risen and ascended Lord returns in glory.

Jesus' resurrection from the dead changed everything. It provides security for the parents who bring their newborn child to the baptismal waters and hope to those standing at the graveside of a loved one. Like Jesus speaking words of certain hope to Mary at Lazarus' grave, we speak words of certain hope of the resurrection each time we gather next to a tomb. The resurrection of Jesus is the right message for every season of the year and every season of life.

Easter is the reason for our worship, our witness, and our service. Everything we do is ultimately a response to Jesus' resurrection from the grave. That's why we have campus ministries at universities. That's why we operate Lutheran schools. From art projects to understanding the science of the world that God created, we operate with an eternal worldview and the cross and the empty tomb are the lens through which we see everything.

Everything that we do as congregations and a District office and staff flows from Christ's victory over sin and death. Hundreds of junior and senior high youth from across Missouri join to celebrate our identity in the risen Christ at the District Youth Gathering! We serve in red t-shirts in our communities because our Savior served us by the shedding of His blood. Pastors, teachers, deaconesses and other servants are sent out to awaiting congregations and schools to proclaim that resurrection reality. It is a joy to see how the resurrection is being lived out across Missouri District among God's Easter People!

In this edition of The VOICE, read about how missions across Missouri are living out the resurrection in their communities. We pray God's blessings upon their service.

Fraternally in Christ,

R. Lee Hagan

President Lee Hagan



MOScholars Update: Second Year Cause for Celebration

Calendar Year 2023 was the second year of MOScholars—Missouri’s tax credit program providing scholarships to families of children attending private institutions—and what a year it was! Thank you to all the taxpayers who participated in this endeavor that has made an impact that will last an eternity. Children throughout the state are now getting a quality education and hearing the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ at LCMS schools.

The Missouri District was able to distribute \$867,000 in funds in 2023, which resulted in 136 children receiving a full MOScholars scholarship for the current school year. This total amount given, when combined with the funds from the first year of the tax credit program, means that more than \$1.25 million has now been awarded to LCMS students by the Missouri District through MOScholars. Praise God!

“We know the expression—paying taxes is one of two certainties,” says Director of Mission Advancement for the Missouri District, Leah Sieveking. “So how wonderful and convenient that something we’re required to do anyway can now be easily transformed into a tool for work in God’s kingdom. MOScholars gives us all the opportunity to direct our tax dollars to a cause we feel strongly about—Lutheran education.”

The Missouri District looks forward to expanding the reach of MOScholars in 2024. Along with this group of 136 recipients, we’ll add additional students and their families for the 2024-25 school year. We welcome your participation in the MOScholars program again and thank you for walking with these students. The tax credit reservation system for this current calendar year is up and running once more. If you haven’t already started the process this year, you can begin at mo.lcms.org/mo-scholars. Additional questions can be directed to Leah Sieveking at 314-590-6211 or leah.sieveking@mo.lcms.org.

Again, thank you for walking with the Missouri District and using your tax dollars to change the life of a child.



URBAN MINISTRY—ST. LOUIS

Bethlehem Lutheran Church

The congregation of Bethlehem Lutheran Church is focusing on “vibrant and missional work in their community” in north St. Louis according to their pastor, Rev. Dr. Gerard Bolling. In addition to worship services and Bible study, Bethlehem has outreach all over the northern parts of St. Louis city and county. Their mission program is called “More Greater Things,” and they are working to duplicate this framework into other communities as well as their own.

One of the ways that Bethlehem reaches out to their community is through their program called “Taking Jesus to the Streets.” They had their first event on Easter Sunday. During this event, the congregation held their service outdoors and offered giveaways to people in the community. Pastor Bolling reported that the event was very successful and that they saw over 400 people. They are planning to hold another event in early April in which there will be music, singing, and games for those in attendance. They will have a total of 12 events throughout the spring and summer months.

Currently, Bethlehem provides after school care programs at Saint Matthew in Walnut Park, Saint Peter in Spanish Lake, and Chapel of the Cross in north county as well as at their own site. During the summer, Bethlehem will host summer camp from 9 am to 3:30 pm. In the past they have offered summer camp at three sites, but this year they are increasing to five sites. These sites will be at Grace Chapel, Saint Matthew, Bethlehem, Saint Peter, and Chapel of the Cross, and they are expecting to have an attendance of about 220 children across all of these camps. What a blessing!

Bethlehem also hosts Christ Community Lutheran School (CCLS) micro school that is for students in 3rd-5th grades. They recently received the test scores for their students and 11 of 13 students have increased beyond proficiency. At the micro school the education is individualized; the students work at their own pace rather than following the direction of a teacher in a traditional classroom. Pastor Bolling noted that this model of education has been working well for them and that they have one student in the 5th grade who has finished his course work for the 5th grade and is already beginning 6th grade coursework in April. He said this is unique for a community in which many students are multiple grades behind in their coursework.

We pray God’s blessings on all the work that Pastor Bolling and his ministry are doing in and around Bethlehem!





Amigos de Cristo Lutheran Church in Sedalia has a long history of serving the Hispanic population in their area, but lately they are coming together as a congregation for even more outreach into their community. There are many Hispanic families that are relocating to the Sedalia area right now because of the job availability. And the members of Amigos de Cristo are working to provide these families with information about their church and inviting them to attend their worship services. Two of their faithful members, Norma and Milton, help fill a community need by providing rides on Sunday morning to people who need transportation to the church.

Their efforts have not been in vain. Four new families visited Amigos de Cristo in the past six months, and two of these new families have continued to attend worship there regularly. Amigos de Cristo also has a growing children and youth music group that leads music in the church each week. New members to this group include a 6-year-old who is a beginning guitar player, a 7-year-old who plays the thumb drum, and an 8-year-old percussionist. Their marimba player can sight read and plays the melody to the majority of their songs now. Elvera Satterwhite mentioned, "Since some of [the new families] speak very little English, we pray that they will continue to come until we can offer more services in Spanish."

Amigos de Cristo is taking steps to keep their congregation growing. One of Amigos de Cristo's future plans include hoping to find a bilingual pastor who can serve their congregation. And they are taking steps now to help develop more leaders from their congregation. Plus this fall, Amigos de Cristo is once again collaborating with Webster Gardens Lutheran Church in St. Louis. Volunteers from Webster Gardens will be hosting a family weekend Vacation Bible School and helping with maintenance projects and painting.

Amigos de Cristo is a great example of how a church can continue to grow in ministry using the resources at hand, collaborations in ministry, and long term growth planning!



URBAN MINISTRY—KANSAS CITY

Lutheran Urban Mission Agency

The Lutheran Urban Mission Agency (LUMA) is a Missouri District supported mission located in Kansas City. And they have been hard at work reaching out to the members of their community in a variety of ways.

Recently, they have been blessed to have a grant that is being used to help families pay for their gas bills. This grant can be split up from anywhere between ten and twenty-five families depending on how many people need the aid. Families that benefit from this program include current clients of their food pantry or walk-ins. This is the second month that LUMA has had the grant, and they hope to continue this in the future, as it is a wonderful blessing for families that need it.

Another major way that LUMA serves their community is through their food pantry, which serves around 30-40 families per week. The pantry resembles a grocery store in layout and includes not just food, but medicine, hygiene products, and more. The recipients have a specific number of items that they can take from each section, depending on how many people are in their household. In addition to the pantry, LUMA also has a library for their clients with a variety of literature, ranging from children's picture books to Bibles.

When clients arrive at the pantry, they sit in a waiting area and then have a personal shopper who walks with them through the pantry. Pastor Phil Cook, the interim director of LUMA noted that the waiting area provides a great opportunity for fellowship for the clients. As they build relationships and community with the individuals who utilize the pantry, they also invite them to attend a Bible study. It's a wonderful way to connect with people.

If you would like to learn more about LUMA and their mission, visit their website www.lumakc.org.



CAMPUS MINISTRY

Lutheran Campus Center at Northwest Missouri State

The Lutheran Campus Center (LCC) at Northwest Missouri State University is an active campus ministry. The LCC is affiliated with Hope Lutheran Church in Maryville, MO, and some of the members of their campus ministry often attend the church on Sundays. There are about five students that are involved with the LCC regularly, and while this may seem a smaller sized group, the ministry for these students and their presence at Northwest Missouri State is making a significant impact.

The Lutheran Campus Center has several weekly opportunities for the students to join together in learning and fellowship. They hold Bible Study on Wednesday nights at the LCC throughout the school year. And when Advent and Lent are happening, the students join together with the congregants at Hope for worship services. In addition to Bible Studies, every Sunday night, the members at Hope provide the students with free home cooked meals at the LCC. Oftentimes, the meals will be followed by a short Bible Study.

The Lutheran Campus Center also holds some large events on Northwest Missouri State's campus. Joyce Cronin said, "What makes Northwest Missouri State University's Lutheran Campus Center unique to other ministries is also the big events we hold. The students have chosen as their outreach/mission project mental health awareness." They have an event each semester in the Student Union for the National Association of Mental Illness' (NAMI) "Stigma Free Me," in which they invite students to sign their pledge. NAMI and the University's Wellness Office work with the students from the LCC to ensure that they have educational materials and resources about where individuals can get access to assistance and support if they need it. The students from the LCC also pass out stickers with the Suicide Hotline number to the students, faculty or staff who sign the pledge.

It's amazing the impact that even smaller groups can have. Every moment is a great opportunity for Christians to show God's love—bringing hope and planting a little mustard seed of faith.



SUPPORTING MISSIONS ACROSS MISSOURI

This edition of The VOICE featured missions across our state. If you would like to support the ministry efforts of the Missouri District, we invite you to visit mo.lcms.org/donate and make a gift. Additional questions can be directed to our offices at 314-590-6200.

Thank you for walking with us in ministry!



Upcoming Events

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

- April 12–21 **SHINE! Servant Event**
- April 23–24 **Call Day at our Seminaries**
- April 26–28 **Pastor's Wives Conference**
- June 7–9 **LWML District Convention**



Missouri District
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