

The VOICE

May 2024

Missouri District Newsletter



Growing in Christ

**Pictured: Campus Lutheran Students
at the GO Leadership Retreat**

From the President's Desk

Growing in Christ



We live in a results-driven culture that is based on counting and measuring. That is always the way of the Law. We consider someone successful based upon the numbers, whether considering sports or business. When it comes to considering the Church, we often speak about growth. While the Acts of the Apostles regularly provides numerical reports of the growth of the Church, the Scriptures are full of references to other forms of growth as well. Growth in faith and sanctification are much more difficult to measure numerically.

As we approach the Trinity season and the focus on growth, it is good for us to consider how God gives growth. This happens through the connection with Christ, the true vine. Only as we are connected with Jesus and growing as the Holy Spirit works through Word and Sacrament do we grow in faith, hope, and love. As many congregations lament the lack of numerical growth, the starting place for church leaders in serving their congregations is actually by growing through Christ and His Word. While I pray that our congregations grow numerically, I also pray that God would grant church leaders who are growing in the faith and bearing fruits of faith in their daily lives.

St. Paul reminds us that regardless of who plants or waters, it is always God who gives the growth. Churches grow as the Gospel is preached and the sacraments are administered. Churches are blessed by faithful leaders who are growing in faith and producing fruits that flow from the Spirit's working. Such growth cannot be measured on a balance sheet, but is demonstrated as the people of God serve one another in love. We rejoice each time a child is baptized and someone new is received into membership. Such growth is given by God. However, it is good for us to pray for the growth in faith and sanctification as the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives as well. May God grant such growth in every one of our congregations.

Fraternally in Christ,

R. Lee Hagan

President Lee Hagan



College Students Grow in Faith

Campus Ministry Network

Did you know that the first 30 days on a college campus sets up habits for the whole year? There are over 16 LCMS campus ministries right here in Missouri, working hard to try and greet these new students as early as possible. However, they often don't have the contact information of new students, and it can take months for these ministries to make the first contact. This is where you can help.

This summer, take a moment to connect new college students to their campus' LCMS campus ministry using the Campus Ministry Network. It's an easy process. Simply visit: molcms.college, click on the school where the student is attending, fill out the short form, and the information will be passed on directly to that campus ministry. Students themselves, parents, and church workers can use the Campus Ministry Network.

It might only take a couple of minutes to complete a form, but helping to make that connection for a student will have a lasting impact. Thank you for helping these young adults form their faith as they move into the next chapter of their lives!

GO Leadership Retreat

To help strengthen the ministry and the fellowship of current college students, Campus Lutheran Church in Columbia hosts the GO Leadership Retreat. Students are invited to an overnight retreat, which provides indoor "glamping" with air mattresses, showers, and home-cooked meals. Held annually in February, this year was a great turn out with sixty-seven college students from twelve different schools, plus vendors and volunteers, in attendance. This year's speaker was Dr. Brad Alles, Assistant Professor of Education at Concordia University, Wisconsin. He led a great discussion of "Life's Big Questions, God's Big Answers." Plan to join next year's conference: goleadretreat.com



LEA AWARD WINNERS

This year, two teachers from the Missouri District won awards from the Lutheran Education Association (LEA). Each year LEA selects several educators from Lutheran schools who have demonstrated faithful commitment and service both in their classroom and to the church at large. This year, Mrs. Annie Ziegelbein, from Trinity Lutheran School in Jefferson City was awarded the "Distinguished Lutheran Elementary Teacher" award. Additionally, Mr. Kevin Rudzinski, from St. Paul's Lutheran School in Des Peres was awarded the "Distinguished Lutheran Middle School Teacher" award.

Mrs. Ziegelbein has been a Lutheran school teacher for 16 years. She attended Concordia University Nebraska where she earned her bachelor's degree in education; she later earned a master's degree from William Woods University in Curriculum and Instruction. She first served as a teacher in Morton, IL, and is currently teaching fifth grade at Trinity, Jefferson City. She says, "[M]y ultimate joy comes in being able to build meaningful relationships with my students which allows me to share Jesus' love with them each and every day. I am thankful to be able to engage in meaningful conversations in our devotions, class studies, or in the teachable moments throughout the day."

Mr. Rudzinski has been a Lutheran school teacher for 17 years. He is currently teaching middle school science, math, and STEM at St. Paul's, Des Peres. He attended Concordia University Chicago earning his bachelor's degree in Secondary Education in the areas of Biology and Mathematics. He also earned a master's degree from University of Missouri-Kansas City, in Curriculum and Instruction in Natural Science. He notes, "My joy comes when I can connect with a student on a personal level with their personality, attitude, and level of learning, and make a breakthrough."

Lutheran schools provide an opportunity for children to receive a strong Christian education from devoted teachers like Mrs. Ziegelbein and Mr. Rudzinski. Josh Swartz, the Director of Schools for the Missouri District, said, "Lutheran education is a profound commitment to sharing the transformative message of Christ crucified. It requires dedicated, Christ-centered, servant-minded, passionate educators willing to invest in the children in their care. We thank God for educators like Annie and Kevin, who are instrumental in guiding, inspiring, and empowering children academically, emotionally, and especially as ambassadors of Christ."

Congratulations to Mrs. Ziegelbein and Mr. Rudzinski on their awards!





Serving New Americans in St. Louis



Ethiopian and Eritrean Bible Studies

Rev. Lewi Jermyia serves as Associate Pastor of Saint Trinity, St. Louis. Part of his work includes ministering to Ethiopian and Eritrean communities. His Bible Study for Eritrean Kunama, called New Life in Christ, meets three times a week (twice online and once in person). In fact, Pastor Jermyia teaches quite a few classes online, and has experienced quite a bit of growth. In the last three months over 15 new people have joined, bringing the total to 85. The need for Pastor Jermyia's ministry is growing. He has presented at a conference in March to over 100 and he has taught and preached at a small group in Kansas City. What a blessing to receive so much growth over these months!

Nepalese at St. John in St. Louis

This year, Rev. Michael Tanney, pastor at St. John Lutheran Church in St. Louis, worked with EIIT (Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology) Vicar Ratna Mangar to minister to their growing Nepalese population. They've had quite a few successes, including a newborn baptism for a Nepalese family at St. John's. They also worked together to minister to a family. The family was already baptized, but this study allowed for in depth teachings on the Apostle's Creed, Lord's Prayer, Sacrament of Holy Baptism, Confession, Daily Prayers. Pastor Tanney led the teaching, using the new Nepali Catechism, and Vicar Mangar helped translate. When the family completed the class, they made plans to be confirmed and become members at St. John's. What a blessing!



Christian Friends of New Americans

CFNA serves new American families with physical resources (like food, clothing, and furniture) as well as knowledge and classes (like after school tutoring, driving classes, and more). One family recently arrived to St. Louis from Congo, after spending 13 years as refugees in Zimbabwe. Active in their Lutheran faith in Africa, when in St. Louis, they walked to St. John's Lutheran Church where Pastor Michael Tanney connected them with CFNA. Recently, they were blessed in a big way when CFNA found a donor who helped to fully furnish their house. The donor was seeking to empty their mother's house, and was thrilled that their furnishings could be a blessing to someone making a fresh start. It's a beautiful example of the Lutheran community helping support one another.



A New Chapter for “Trail Life Troops”

Faith Lutheran Church in Knob Noster serves the families at Whiteman Air Force Base through many outreach opportunities. One occasion to connect with families is through their group called Trail Life Troop, which is essentially a Christian scouting troop. Previously, many families were participating with a troop that was over 45 minutes away. This created a strain for families at the Base, and Faith saw an opportunity to help them. The congregation at Faith worked with some of the airmen from Whiteman to develop a new Trail Life Troop chapter at Faith.

Trail Life Troop was required to have at least five faithful leaders, one of whom was James E. Webb. Webb was one of the group’s founders in 2020, and he was very involved with the group despite a cancer diagnosis. He made the effort to participate in many activities with the Trail Life Troop and even went camping with his son, which was something he initially did not think would be possible due to his illness.

One of the Trail Life Troop’s annual activities is called a “chilly chili” hike which began as a hike through the cold snow in January while Webb cooked chili for the participants at the camp. In 2023, the troop officially named the hike, “The James E. Webb Chilly Chili Hike.” Webb unfortunately passed away in the fall, and this past January was the first time that the hike was held in his memory. On January 20th at Knob Noster State Park, about 20 youth—including Webb’s son—hiked along with about 10 dads, two of whom were commanders at Whiteman Air Force Base. Pastor at Faith, Rev. Jon-Michael Schweigert, said about the hike, “James’ wife came out and thanked us for keeping his memory alive and serving the kids he loved. Then we set out and it was so cold that my mustache froze to my beard. BUT the kids had a blast, and we used the opportunity to teach safety when one is in a cold weather environment.” He also noted that some of the men, including Webb’s son, enjoyed the hike so much that they went back and hiked a second time. Rev. Jacob Mueller from Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Emma cooked chili for the participants. It was a great way to remember a strong faith leader.

Faith Lutheran Church has a unique opportunity to share Christ with the families at Whiteman Air Force Base. We thank God for their military ministry with these families and pray that God continues to bless their work!



Mental Health Awareness and Resources for Church Workers

Since 1949, Mental Health Awareness Month has been observed in May. Today, we'd like to point out resources that contribute to the mental wellbeing of church workers. Across the Synod and in our District, the need for church workers is great. ("Church Worker Recruitment and Retention" is one of the District's strategic emphases for the 2022–2025 triennium.) One of the ways to help combat this worker crisis and increase worker retention is by taking care of church workers already in the field, including taking care of their mental health. The below resources are excellent ways for our pastors, educators, and church workers to have resources for their mental health and wellbeing. May they be a blessing to you in your ministry!

Grace Place Wellness

Grace Place Wellness is a ministry that uses retreats and supplies resources to teach professional church workers skills and practices that enable them to experience a long, joyful, and flourishing career. The Grace Place Wellness Wheel and books "Reclaiming the Joy of Ministry" and "Reclaiming the Joy of a Church Vocation" are great resources. See these and more at: lcef.org/grace-place-wellness

Concordia Plans

Concordia Plans members have access to a new resource: The Evernorth Confide Behavioral Health Navigator. This includes features like eight free sessions per topic, confidential access to discreet care, immediate 24/7/365 access to clinical help, appointment within three days of a request of a counselor, in-network providers guaranteed, and more. A great resource! concordiaplans.org/members

Shepherd's Canyon Retreat

Shepherd's Canyon Retreat offers week-long counseling retreats to pastors, church workers, and spouses. Help combat burnout, depression, fatigue, and conflicts by unplugging and attending one of these retreats, located in Arizona. No one is turned away due to lack of funds. Reach out today: shepherdscanyonretreat.org

DOXOLOGY

DOXOLOGY provides trainings, mentoring, and consultation services grounded in Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. They help emotionally and spiritually refresh pastors and equip them to more faithfully pastor to others struggling. There are many resources available, get started at: doxology.us

Have questions? Connect with Rev. Marty Hasz, Director of Church Worker Support for the Missouri District at 314-590-6204 or marty.hasz@mo.lcms.org



FAMILY CAMP

AT HEIT'S POINT MINISTRIES

JUNE 9-14, 2024

Dr. Mart Thompson leads parents in Bible Study and teaching family discipleship while kids enjoy camp activities with counselors. Plus, everyone spends time together as a family for fun and worship—a great opportunity for the whole family!

HEITSPONTLUTHERAN.ORG



Upcoming Events

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



- May 31** **LERT Basic Training**
Trinity Lutheran, Jefferson City
- June 1** **LERT Chainsaw Training**
Trinity Lutheran, Jefferson City
- June 7-9** **LWML District Convention**
Independence
- June 9-14** **Family Camp**
Heit's Point, Lincoln
- June 22** **LERT Basic Training**
Zion Lutheran, Macon
- July 18-19** **Summer Admin Conference**
Campus Lutheran, Columbia
- July 22-26** **Jesus Signs Workshop**
Immanuel Lutheran, St. Charles



Missouri District
THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD