

The VOICE

August 2024

Missouri District Newsletter



"Tomorrow's Teachers & Preachers"

Pictured: New Called Workers at Missouri District Training

From the President's Desk

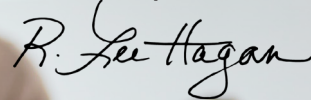
Opportunities for Lutheran Schools

Every August thousands of students are entrusted to our Lutheran schools. All over Missouri, children from varied backgrounds walk through our school doors as their parents look for safe places for them to grow and develop. Some parents may send their children because of the excellent academic programs. In some cases, athletics may be the draw for students. However, what makes Lutheran schools distinct is that we share Christ with all of our students and their families.

The COVID-19 pandemic led many families to discover things their children were being taught of which they were unaware. Our urban and suburban schools saw significant growth from non-Lutheran families. They came because they didn't like what their children were receiving in public schools, but they have stayed because their children are learning that their lives have value because they are created in God's image and ones for whom Christ died. They are also learning how to use their unique gifts in service to God and others. In addition to learning about math and science, arts and literature, they are taught a Christian worldview that shapes how they view their place and future.

In our early childhood centers to elementary schools and high schools, God is doing great things through our teachers and servants. There are great challenges that face our schools, but also great opportunities. As another new school year kicks off, please pray for wisdom for our school administrators, joy for our Lutheran school teachers, and growing faith for our students and their families. Please join us in praying for our newest school, Faith Lutheran School in Branson. We also invite your prayers that God would raise up more Lutheran school teachers. This includes young people to attend one of our Concordia Universities to train to be teachers in our Lutheran schools. However, this also can include public school teachers who have also grown frustrated with the educational philosophies that undermine or even attack a Christian worldview. More and more teachers are leaving the public school system to teach in Lutheran schools so that they serve with joy and boldly confess their faith in Christ!

Fraternally in Christ,



President Lee Hagan



New District Pastors

The Missouri District is blessed to welcome eight new pastors graduated from our Seminaries. Read below to get to know these servants of the Lord, and keep them in your prayers.



SAMUEL AIZENBERG
IMMANUEL, CARROLTON

Originally from Las Vegas, Pastor Aizenberg attended Faith Lutheran Junior and Senior High School before getting a bachelors degree in History. He and his wife are expecting their first baby boy in October. Pastor Aizenberg was born into the Jewish faith before becoming Lutheran. He's looking forward to getting people excited about our Lutheran identity.



JASON GROTH
LCMS BOARD FOR INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS

Pastor Groth is from Lawrence, Michigan. Raised Roman Catholic, he also grew up on a farm, complete with 33 horses, 2 pigs, and more. He and his wife have 4 children. He will serve in Belize, and is looking forward to the challenges of being in a new place and serving alongside the team there.



IDONIS KING
SAINT TRINITY, ST. LOUIS

Idonis King is from St. Louis. He's married with four children and loves going to the gym, spending time with his kids, playing drums, and cooking. You can also catch him rooting for the home team whenever they're playing. He is excited about trusting God and moving forward into the unknown.



CHRIS KNEPPER
BETHLEHEM, ST. LOUIS

Though originally from Dallas, Texas, Pastor Knepper is a Concordia University, New York graduate. He loves urban and multi-ethnic ministry, and is excited about his Call to Bethlehem Lutheran Church. You can also find him spending time cooking up authentic meals, and sharing them with his wife.



JASON KOHM
HOLY CROSS, O'FALLON

Pastor Kohm's hometown is St. Louis. A Concordia, Chicago graduate, he is really excited to meet and build relationships with his new church family. When not cheering on the St. Louis Blues and Cardinals, you can find Pastor Kohm out sailing; a hobby that he picked up in the British Virgin Islands.



RATNA MANGAR
ST. JOHN, ST. LOUIS

Pastor Mangar is from Kafley Tar, Bhutan, but now calls St. Louis home. He enjoys playing sports like soccer and volleyball and visiting the Botanical Gardens and the Zoo. He and his wife have a son. He is excited about serving the congregation at St. John's and also helping the Nepali ministry there.



NABIN SAMAL
ST. JOHN, ST. LOUIS

Originally from Bhutan, Pastor Samal lives in St. Louis. He and his wife have four children. He enjoys visiting new places and playing Carrombord. He is excited about serving in God's Kingdom and taking care of His flock at St. John's.



MICHAEL WINCKLER
TRINITY, FRIEDHEIM

Pastor Winckler was born in Yankton, South Dakota, and was raised in Fremont, Nebraska. A Concordia University, Nebraska graduate, he also has a DCE certification. He and his wife have two little boys, and love spending time outdoors and gardening. He is looking forward to serving the saints in Friedheim.

Welcome to the Missouri District!
We pray God's blessings on your ministry.

Changes To Missouri District Praesidium

There are some recent changes to the Missouri District's Vice Presidents. Rev. Craig Otto of St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Lee's Summit has been appointed by the Missouri District Board of Directors to serve as fourth vice president. This change has come about due to Second Vice President Rev. Kris Morris accepting a call to serve at Concordia University, Nebraska. We are so grateful to Pastor Morris for his time at the District, and wish God's blessings to him and his family during this time of transition!

Rev. William Marler remains first vice president, Rev. Brian Thieme now serves as second vice president, Rev. Randy Asbury now serves as third vice president, and at the first of the month, the Missouri Board of Directors appointed Rev. Craig Otto to serve as fourth vice president.



Rev. Craig Otto of St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Lee's Summit

Pastor Otto has served as senior pastor at St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Lee's Summit for the past 20 years. Prior to that, he served as pastor for nine years at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Perryville, Missouri. Pastor Otto also has been Circuit Visitor in the Altenburg and Kansas City South circuits, and currently assists congregations as a Missouri District reconciler. He has a Journalism degree from the University of Missouri—Columbia, and a Master of Divinity degree from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. He and his wife, Becky, have two children. We are excited and blessed to have Pastor Otto serving in this role at the Missouri District.

"Pastor Craig Otto is a faithful and respected pastor who has spent his entire ministry in the Missouri District," says Missouri District president Rev. Dr. Lee Hagan. "He served in Perryville before being called to Lee's Summit. He is a trained reconciler and brings a wealth of experience to the praesidium. He will be a blessing in this role."

President Hagan leads the Circuit Visitor training August 8–9 where Rev. Craid Otto was installed as fourth vice president alongside new circuit visitors. Training was held at Campus Lutheran in Columbia.



Church Worker Appreciation

Throughout the month of August in the Missouri District, we've been celebrating "Tomorrow's Teachers & Preachers". One aspect of this is lifting up and noting the amazing church workers and their various vocations across Missouri. Now as we begin to transition to the fall, it's a perfect time to look forward to Church Worker Appreciation Month in October. Below are some ways that you can help your pastors, teachers, deaconesses, DCEs, musicians, and all church workers know that you appreciate their times and efforts.

Write a Letter

Take the time to write out how God has used your church worker as a blessing in your life. Not only does a letter or card stand out in this digital and increasingly fast-paced age, but it's very personal and meaningful.

Give a Gift

A gift card to their favorite restaurant or a bottle of their favorite beverage is a nice thank you. But, gifts don't have to be expensive, sometimes even something like offering a free evening of babysitting, or making your famous baked goodie is a wonderful way to let your church workers know that you are thinking about them and are appreciative of their efforts.

Pray for Them

This is a good practice at any point in the year, but it's an especially good reminder as we lift up those that work hard to serve us. Not only do they often shoulder the burden of others in their professional lives, but they have personal lives with ups and downs. Remember your church workers in your prayers.

Go to Church and Bible Class

This may not sound like a regular sort of present, but ask any pastor and he'd tell you that one of the best gifts is seeing congregant's faces sitting in the pew. Come to the service to be fed God's good gifts, and engage in your church's community.

Encourage a Youth to Consider Church Work

Have an amazing church worker in your life? Use them as an example for youth and young adults for what service in the church looks like. This is a great compliment to our church workers.

Take time in the coming weeks to prepare something special for the church workers in your life for Church Worker Appreciation Month this October.



Strengthening Our Foundation: Supporting Church Workers Year-Round

In a world brimming with uncertainties, one constant remains: the unwavering dedication of those who work tirelessly to nurture and guide our children through their spiritual and academic journeys. Giving children hope while providing the opportunity to develop future leaders to serve our church and world through Christ as the chief cornerstone is more than just a mission statement; it's a promise made to raise up the next generation of leaders in Christ.

Hebrews 13:7 encourages us, "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith." This scripture captures the essence of the work given and done by our church workers in the field. Their commitment to imparting the word of God and living out their faith serves as a beacon of hope and a source of strength for us all.

Now, more than ever, it is crucial to provide our children with a strong foundation to navigate a world filled with challenges. Our church workers in our schools and our congregations play a pivotal role in this endeavor. Their dedication and love create environments where generations can thrive, learn, and grow in their relationship with Christ.

It is essential for us to recognize and support the incredible efforts of these devoted individuals year-round. Their work is not confined to the classroom or the church; it extends into the hearts and lives of everyone they touch. By nurturing our children's spiritual growth and academic excellence, they are helping to pass on the legacy of what it means to be a redeemed, loved, forgiven, child of our Heavenly Father.

As a community, we can offer our support in various ways. We can uplift our church workers through prayer, recognizing their hard work and dedication, and providing resources to aid in their mission. Small acts of kindness and intentional year-long encouragement and prayer can go a long way in showing our appreciation for their tireless efforts.

Let us remain steadfast in our mission to support these men and women that God has called to share Christ Crucified with our children. Together, we can ensure that our children receive the strong foundation they need to navigate the complexities of life with faith, hope, and resilience.

Thank you to all the church workers for your unwavering commitment. Your impact is immeasurable, and your dedication does not go unnoticed. May God bless you abundantly and grant you the strength and wisdom to continue your vital work.



Tomorrow's Teachers & Preachers

"Providing an educational scholarship can help prepare others for church work by giving them the opportunity to even explore that dream," says Missouri District educator and scholarship recipient, Aaron Hentges. "A scholarship will help more than one party; it can relieve the financial stress for a family that cannot provide the resources for their loved one to enter the ministry."

As is our custom each fall, the Missouri District celebrates Tomorrow's Teachers & Preachers—a campaign dedicated to building awareness of church work vocations and an effort to build up our scholarship endowment so that even more financial assistance can be provided to those students on the path to ministry. Our sincerest thanks to congregations, schools, and individuals who continue to generously support this effort. If you are interested in making a gift, head to: <https://mo.lcms.org/donate/>

This upcoming school year, 62 men and women from Missouri will be awarded scholarships through this process—an increase in number compared to previous years! We thank God for this group and those that will follow. By God's grace, and with His guidance, we will take steps today so that the number of students entering church work will continue to rise. Thank you for your forward-thinking ways and caring for generations to come.

Upcoming Events

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

- Sep 17** **Philippians Stewardship Workshop**
Campus Lutheran, Columbia
- Sep 20-21** **New Teacher Orientation**
Margaritaville, Osage Beach
- Oct 20-22** **Pastors' Conference**
Margaritaville, Osage Beach
- Oct 23-24** **Lutheran Older Adult Retreat**
Pere Marquette Lodge, Grafton, IL
- Nov 24-26** **Educators' Conference**
Four Seasons, Lake Ozark
- Apr 4-6** **District Youth Gathering**
2025 *Cross Point Retreat Center, Rocky Mount*
- Jun 22-24** **Missouri District Convention**
2025 *Columbia, MO*



Missouri District
THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD