

The VOICE

September 2024

Missouri District Newsletter



“Multi-Cultural Milestones”

Pictured: Baptism at Oromo Lutheran Church, Kansas City

From the President's Desk

Salt and Light

During the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus calls Christians to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. We live in dark and difficult times in this post-Christian culture. The world teaches that our sex is something that we determine for ourselves rather than being a gift from God. Our culture speaks about reproductive rights rather than the sanctity of life. Marriage is no longer taught to be the lifelong union of a man and woman who become one flesh according to God's design. We see many ways in which what is taught in the Scriptures is incongruent with our culture today.

Dear friends, there is nothing new under the sun. The pressures of the culture were just as real in Jesus' day as He speaks to the crowd from the mountain. The response of Christians, though, is not one of anger and frustration, but to be simply who God has called us to be: salt and light. Now is not the time for anger and judgmental attitudes from Christians, but faithfully bearing witness to our Savior in word and deed. Dr. Jeffrey Gibbs writes, "Jesus' disciples, then, are by definition the people who salt the earth and light the world; no one else has this calling. This reality need not cause the disciples to fear, however. Their identity is not created or preserved by how well they acknowledge and live out their identity as salt and light. Their identity is created and preserved by the word of Jesus." (Matthew 1:1-11:1, p. 259-260)

Our world needs our service and witness, words and deeds. We can provide a stark contrast to the disciples of the world who seek to serve not their neighbors but themselves. As salt and light, we are God's means by which He serves the world around us. Through our demonstrating the fruits of the Spirit, rather than the sins of the flesh, we are salt. Through our confessing the truth of God's Word rather than cursing, we are the light of the world, reflecting the true light that is Christ Jesus. May we as individual Christians and as congregations of believers live out the callings that God has given to us as the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

Fraternally in Christ,

R. Lee Hagan

President Lee Hagan



Day of Celebration for Nepalese

On Sunday, August 25, St. John's Lutheran Church (Morganford) in St. Louis celebrated the ordination and installation of two new pastors, Ratna Mangar and Nabin Samal. These are the first Nepalese Lutheran pastors in the world.

Pastor Bill Wilson, the new transitional pastor at St. John's, led a multiethnic service that included worship in English and Nepalese, hymns, spiritual songs, children's choirs, and diverse musicians. This "All Nations" worship service is a monthly tradition at St. John's bringing together the historic mother church, the Nepalese mission, and other immigrants and visitors.

Pastors Mangar and Samal have been mentored by Pastor Michael Tanney through the Ethnic and Immigrant Institute for Theology (EIIT) at Concordia Seminary. This program allowed them to study theology, prepare for ordination, and support their families while working in the community and planting a mission church.



Ratna Gurung-Mangar, born in 1977, fled to Nepal at the age of nine due to terrorism in his homeland. Originally a Buddhist, Ratna converted to Christianity in 1993 and was baptized in July 1994. Despite the instability in his home country, he pursued various Bible and theological training programs. After arriving in St. Louis, Pastor Tanney introduced him to the local Nepalese fellowship and the Ethnic and Immigrant Institute for Theology (EIIT) program.

Nabin Samal, born in 1986, spent 19 years in a refugee camp. His family's plea for spiritual guidance was answered when his mother and uncle, suffering from illness and local harassment from a witch doctor, learned of Jesus and the comfort of prayer through a Presbyterian missionary.

The entire family converted to Christianity and Nabin was baptized in 1993. Arriving in the US in 2010, Nabin and his family received support from Christian Friends of New Americans (CFNA), St. John's, and Pastor Tanney, benefiting from Christian aid, education, and fellowship.



Nabin will travel with Pastor Tanney to Nepal in September and October to evangelize and teach emerging Christian communities. Last year, Nabin taught Luther's Small Catechism to one such group and has been invited back to teach the Augsburg Confession this year.

Pastor Tanney delivered the sermon and joined 15 pastors and seminary students in blessing these new pastors. Tanney gave insight for all, especially the Nepali Mission, into the grace-filled work of a pastor. The message resonated with "Angurah Church," the chosen name of their mission, which means "Grace." On Saturday, September 14, Angurah Church, funded by a Missouri District grant, will celebrate its tenth anniversary with a cultural festival at St. John's."

Personal Stewardship

The act of stewardship is found throughout the Bible and practiced throughout our LCMS congregations in many fashions. Serving as a steward of something means taking care of possessions for which your authority to oversee has been delegated by the owner. You do not own whatever it is that you are stewarding but are responsible for managing it in such a way as to care for the possession for the benefit of the owner and for those who rely on the owner for their welfare.

To clarify, we are not personally nor collectively the owners of anything in this world. Our wealth, skills, talents, and all our blessings are granted oversight to us by God alone, but He remains the owner of that with which we are blessed. Psalm 24:1-3 teaches us:

"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof,
the world and those who dwell therein,
for he has founded it upon the seas
and established it upon the rivers."

Because God has delegated authority over his possessions to us, we should therefore be intentional in our effort to further His kingdom through those blessings. Good stewardship benefits expanded ministry, leading to greater resources for sharing the Gospel with all who will hear. We should be prayerfully contemplative about what we need for ourselves and what portion of the blessings in our lives can be used to lead others to salvation through Christ.

The Lutheran Church Extension Fund provides opportunities for you to further the reach of our LCMS ministry as you steward God's financial blessings in your life. Investing with LCEF allows us to provide competitive mortgages to rostered church workers, offer lending options to churches and schools, give scholarships to high school students, and provide services such as demographics, strategic planning, and real estate solutions to congregations and schools far and wide. Account holders have an opportunity through the Shared Interest Program to take their support of ministry one step further by donating interest from their investments to the ministry of their choice. They can choose from many LCMS ministries such as a local Lutheran school or church, a seminary or university, or the LCMS Global Mission Fund.

If you would like to learn more about how your stewardship of the financial blessings in your life can benefit those in the Missouri District, feel free to reach out to Mike Wadley at 314-885-6489, or visit lcef.org.

Oromo Evangelical Lutheran Church Of Kansas City



This past quarter has been busy as we welcomed newly elected leaders from our congregation, baptized five children and welcomed new believers. The newly elected elders were installed on May 26th and took the office of elder officially on June 1st and are now fully functioning. These elected elders will assist Pastor Abdi Selbana in reaching out to souls and preaching the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ within our church and outside the church. It has been an exciting chapter for our church but a tough process to find leaders who are willing and qualified for this service. By the help of Almighty God, we were able to make it happen.

We were also blessed to have five children baptized in this past quarter. On May 19th Pastor Abdi Selbana baptized these children before the congregation. God is expanding our territory and is blessing us with baptized children every day. Out of these baptized children, one of them belongs to a newly believing family. Takele and his family moved here from Ethiopia around two years ago and believed in Jesus Christ as their Savior last year. Now the adults are taking their confirmation class, and soon they will be finished. God has continued blessing us in all directions, and we are thankful for that.

In December last year, the congregation celebrated and became overjoyed with baptizing three of our young adult children (Ebba, Motu and Horenus) and the completion of their confirmation class. Pastor Froiland from Christ Lutheran Church, Kansas City, helped in a big way with leading their confirmation class. Ebba is one of the graduates and he has been deeply involved in serving our Sunday school students and he said, "I can't be happier because this teaching has given me more knowledge and a great foundation as I continue to serve." Ebba is a dedicated and mature young man who keeps inspiring us. Motu and Horenus are now joining a young adult choir to serve the Lord through choir ministry. This training has impacted their lives to grow in Christ and learn more about the Kingdom to come. We hope and pray for them to impact their environment as good examples.



Mental Health First Aid

There is a growing awareness in society about the importance of good mental health and its impact upon our work and daily life. Concordia Plans has addressed this need through the provision of several initiatives to make counseling and mental health a priority for church workers and congregation members. One of these initiatives has been the provision of Mental Health First Aid training. Kelly Menke from Concordia Plans has teamed up with Missouri District Church Worker Health staff member Marty Hasz to become facilitators for Mental Health First Aid training among church workers and staff in Missouri. You don't need to be a Concordia Plans member to receive the training; it is offered for any church worker.

The target audience for the training are those in administrative and leadership positions: pastors, school administrators, counselors, church/school receptionists and secretaries. In the future they may be able to offer training for lay leaders, but they are starting with church workers for now.

The program equips people to have a simple approach to recognize, support and refer people to help when they recognize that there is a mental health challenge: ongoing or momentary. The website: mentalhealthfirstaid.org provides additional information on the program and its impact.

Participants are trained to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental distress. The training uses the ALGEE action plan: Approach non-judgmentally, Listen in a helpful way, Give reassurance with information, Encourage toward professional help, and Encourage self-help or other resources.

A recent training at the International Center involved church and school workers, chaplains, and staff from the LCMS, LCEF and LHM. An upcoming session at the Missouri District Office on October 11 will be provided for school administrators and education workers of the Missouri District. The facilitators also plan to provide virtual training for those at a distance who would like to receive training. They can do training for 15-30 people, but prefer smaller groups for better interaction. For the schedule of upcoming trainings or for more information, contact Marty Hasz at marty.hasz@mo.lcms.org.

Marty Hasz says about the program, "This program brings the complicated challenges of the stewardship of our mental health to a manageable process. The ALGEE action plan approach keeps it simple when times are tough. It increases the number of people who are caring for our workers and congregation members. And the training includes suicide prevention training components."



Bus Tour and New Worker Orientation

August 22-23 were busy days at the District Office as we welcomed new District workers for a Mission bus tour and orientation. Sixteen vicars and new called workers joined four District staff as they toured mission sites in the city of St. Louis on Thursday: Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Holy Cross Lutheran Church and Intersect Arts Center, and Christian Friends of New Americans. Participants were able to tour the facilities and hear how God is working through partnerships and volunteers to reach out to communities and new immigrants through these ministries. There was a lot of interactions and questions answered as new workers interacted with staff at the various sites.



On Friday, nine new called workers in the District received orientation to the District and to their roles. They were introduced to the District staff and had opportunities to learn about church and worker health, devotional life, worker support resources, District missions, shared ministry, personal and professional boundaries, and walking together. Breakout sessions allowed pastors, deaconesses and youth/family workers to get more specific orientation related to their called positions. One of the new workers reflected on the two days, "I left with even more appreciation for the leadership of our district and the ministry of our district as a whole. I also left inspired and expectant of how God will use all of us in the coming days and years. Your care for us new church workers and for intentional Gospel proclamation was very evident."



Use Your Tax Dollars to Support Lutheran Education

Taxpayers to the state of Missouri—both individuals and businesses—now have the unique opportunity to direct up to 50% of their state taxes to Lutheran Education. The tax credit program, MOScholars, allows the Missouri District to convert tax dollars into scholarships for qualifying students attending LCMS schools throughout the state.

Reserving these tax credits is easy and can be completed online in a matter of minutes. The Missouri District website (mo.lcms.org) contains even more information on MOScholars, as well as the links to get the process started. The deadline for reserving these tax credits is December 31. Questions can be directed to Leah at 314-590-6211 or leah.sieveking@mo.lcms.org.

At no additional cost and with minimal effort, MOScholars is a win for taxpayers, families, and Lutheran schools throughout the state. Thank you for your participation in MOScholars through the Missouri District!

Upcoming Events

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

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| Sep 20-21 | New Teacher Orientation
Margaritaville, Osage Beach |
| Oct 11 | Mental Health First Aid Training for Educators
District Office |
| 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
2025 | District Youth Gathering
Cross Point Retreat Center, Rocky Mount |
| Jun 22-24
2025 | Missouri District Convention
Columbia, MO |



Missouri District

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