



# Missouri District

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD

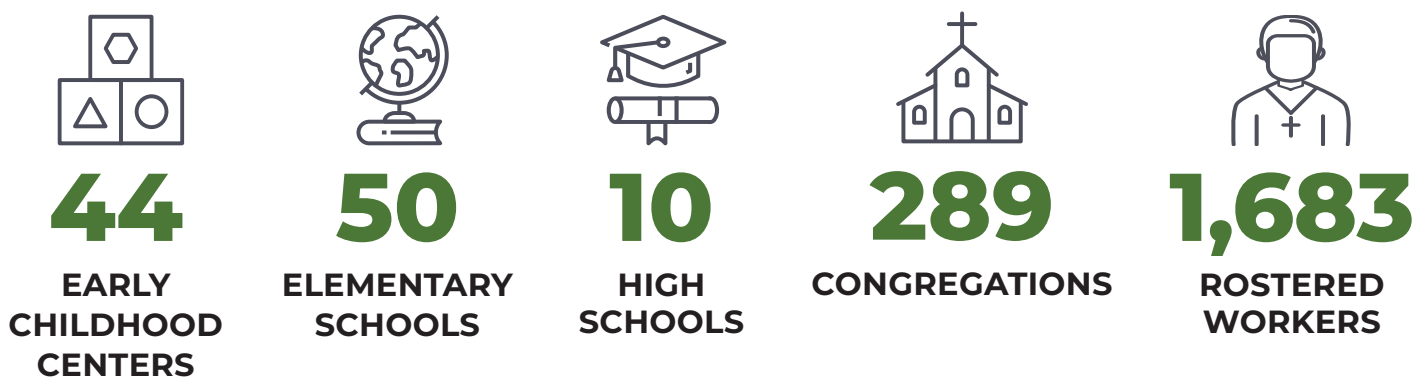


# ANNUAL REPORT 2024



# ABOUT US

**OUR MISSION:** To serve and encourage congregations to fulfill the Great Commission and promote unity of the true faith.



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# FROM THE PRESIDENT

## *‘Labor that truly matters’*

### **Dear Partners in the Gospel,**

The Missouri District is made up of nearly 300 congregations and more than 100 educational ministries. Each day, pastors and teachers, lay staff and volunteers are involved in work that has an eternal significance. St. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:57:

***Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.***

From one side of the District to the other, our congregations, schools, and workers are engaged in labor that truly matters as we point those we serve to the resurrected Christ!

Each year this annual report provides examples of the ways that the Missouri District supports those congregations, schools, and workers. From providing training for early childhood teachers and administrators to a conference for campus ministry leaders, the Missouri District is helping our ministries to navigate the winds and waves of change in our culture today while remaining

faithful to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.

The report also notes the support for mission work in a range of settings and among different people. We are thankful to God for the growing shared ministry partnerships that we see in places across the District. God has also opened new doors for the Gospel as we see Lutheran congregations reaching people from across the globe. This report helps us to be mindful of the growth for which we give thanks and prayerful for new opportunities to bear witness to Christ and reach the lost in the future.

We invite your prayers for the work of our congregations and schools, but also the District staff and leadership as we walk together! Please pray that God will bless our common work of preaching and teaching the Gospel through all of our ministries for the sake of the kingdom! May we all be encouraged in knowing that on account of Christ’s resurrection from the grave that our labor is not in vain!

**Fraternally in Christ,**



**Rev. Dr. R. Lee Hagan**  
President, Missouri District



## **CRITICAL TARGET #1**

# **Church Worker Recruitment and Retention**



With a shortage facing the LCMS for years to come, the Missouri District has made it a priority to promote church work vocations and strengthen efforts to retain current workers. The recruitment of new workers can begin early — even starting in Lutheran schools. One of the ways this is accomplished is through the distribution of resources through the *Set Apart to Serve* initiative, an effort designed by the LCMS to encourage people of all ages to consider church work vocations. The Church Worker Leadership Service Hours Certificate pilot program allows youth to gain service hours that are required by some high schools and provides participants with leadership opportunities in congregations and Lutheran elementary schools—all in an effort to help them gain experience in church work ministry.

In addition to introducing youth to the various roles of service within the church, the Missouri District is working to support these men and women financially. The *Tomorrow's Teachers & Preachers* campaign funds the endowment that provides educational scholarships for those attending a school within the Concordia University System or either LCMS seminary who are preparing to enter church work ministry. For the 2024–2025 academic year, 62 men and women are receiving

a scholarship through this initiative. The Missouri District recognizes how finances could continue to be an issue even after graduation, and so is also promoting and supporting the “Ministry Focus” initiative, which helps church workers pay off educational debt. Josh Swartz, Director of Schools for the Missouri District shares, “This is a national effort to reduce teacher-student debt with a special collection to take place during National Lutheran Schools Week.”

Supporting workers who have completed school and are already serving is key to retaining those who serve our ministries so faithfully. Within Lutheran schools, the focus of the District is in leadership development programs. “The future of Lutheran education is directly connected to successful leadership,” notes Swartz. One key program this school year is Principal 360 STL Edition. Fourteen Missouri Lutheran school principals will participate in this intensive training lasting 11 months. The five key areas the program targets are School Culture Development, Leading Academic Excellence, Strengthening and Managing School Finances, Recruiting/Retention/Marketing, and Innovation. At the end of these courses, the principals will receive a comprehensive and strategic plan tailored to their specific school.





## CRITICAL TARGET #2

# Family Discipleship Expansion

This June, the inaugural weeklong Family Camp gave families time to develop discipleship skills together and enjoy the fun of camp. Five family groups gathered for the event at Heit's Point in Lincoln, Missouri. Rev. Dr. Mart Thompson, of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and his wife Cheryl, a Licensed Professional Counselor, served as leaders for Bible study and family discipleship skills.

Each day began with a group devotion on the lakeshore. After breakfast, parents had education time, and the kids explored with the camp counselors. Some of their favorite things at camp were the paddle boards and boat rides. After lunch, parents had the opportunity to apply what they had learned with their children. Each day ended with fellowship and devotions around the firepit.

Dr. Thompson told the



parents, "God established the church to teach disciples, the home to raise disciples." One parent found the quiet time with God "A great way to help get the habit going!" Another said, "Including my child in daily devotions and making it a priority in my day is a practical skill for me. My child sees my faith in action." There are already dates booked in 2025 and 2026 for more Family Camp.

In addition to Family Camp, the "Tell the Next Generation" Family Discipleship Initiative continues to support pastors and Family Discipleship Champions throughout the state. Facilitators partner with families to help them grow in faith in the

home with daily prayer, studying God's Word, remembering their Baptism, and putting the Scriptures into practice.

Pam Nummela is available to share information about the Family Discipleship Initiative and "Tell the Next Generation" Best Practices with pastors, other church workers, and congregations. She presents and visits with individuals, church elders, school staff members, and anyone who would like to learn more. Thirteen Family Discipleship Facilitators are available and are serving Missouri District congregations. If your congregation is interested in learning more about "Tell the Next Generation" and the Family Discipleship Initiative, contact Pam Nummela, Family Discipleship Coaching Facilitator for the Missouri District at [family@mo.lcms.org](mailto:family@mo.lcms.org).





## CRITICAL TARGET #3

# Community Engagement



Saint Trinity in south St. Louis has done a wonderful job of reaching out to diverse populations in their community. In November 2023, Lewi Jesuwa Jermiya was ordained and installed as Associate Pastor and Missionary at Saint Trinity. Pastor Jermiya completed the Concordia Seminary Ethnic Institute of Immigrant Theology (EIT) program in the summer of 2023, and he is the first pastor in the LCMS to speak Kunama, a language spoken by groups from Ethiopia and Eritrea.

He and his family came to St. Louis in 2017 and became affiliated with an Eritrean/Ethiopian Bible Fellowship group, which eventually helped them to get connected to Christian Friends of New Americans (CFNA). It was the connection through CFNA that led Pastor Jermiya to Concordia Seminary.

Pastor Jermiya has been able to connect with people who speak Kunama throughout the country and around the world as he leads online Bible studies. He has also helped to connect people to The Bridge program at Saint Trinity. The Bridge is designed to support young people who are new to America as they adjust to a new culture and lifestyle.

"The long-term goal of The Bridge is that by the time the students complete high school, these young people will be mature disciples of Jesus and effective disciple makers," says Rev. David Lewis, Senior Pastor of Saint Trinity. "It is our prayer that God might use these remarkable young people to be a catalyst for kingdom growth in new ministries and churches in St. Louis and around the world."

Another way that Saint Trinity has reached out to diverse populations in their community was through their Pentecost Festival, where people from various countries gathered at church to worship. The Pentecost Gospel was read in Hindi, Kunama, and English. Rev. Dr. Stanish Stanley, Executive Director of CFNA, and Pastor Lewis shared how God still works to bring people to the Gospel today.

After the service, attendees were invited to celebrate with a multi-ethnic meal, music and dancing, and games/activities for children and youth. Pastor Lewis said about the gathering, "...all added to the joy and the celebration of what God is doing at a congregation that not too many years ago was on the verge of closing but is now reaching the nations (all in south St. Louis)."



## CRITICAL TARGET #4

# Shared Ministry Collaboration

"The congregations of Our Savior Lutheran Church, Buffalo, and Zion Lutheran Church, Bolivar, are learning to share," says Rev. Jeffrey Sippy, pastor of the new dual parish. "Sharing has become the new way of life and doing ministry for the two congregations of Southwest Missouri located 30 miles north of Springfield and 25 miles east and west of each other."

Both Zion and Our Savior were vacant, and the leadership teams of the congregations began meeting to consider the opportunity for shared ministry in November 2023. After much prayer and consideration, the congregations decided to enter into a shared ministry. They called Pastor Sippy, who was installed in March 2024.

Ron Hinds, member of Zion and Our Savior, said, "God answered our prayers when He sent Pastor Jeff Sippy to Zion and Our Savior." Russell Moore, chairman of the Zion congregation, comments, "We are learning that when we work together, the gifts that we are given collectively are more bountiful than what we have individually. We can all be successful together! By sharing the gifts God has given to us, both congregations are thriving, whereas by ourselves neither congregation could see much of a future..."

There are some challenges to shared ministry as noted by a few of the members. A few of these challenges include the changing of worship times at both congregations, combating the distance between the two churches, and trying to avoid overworking the pastor. However, they agreed that the benefits far outweigh the challenges. Reflecting on the shared ministry of Zion and Our Savior, Shan Kruse, member at Our Savior, comments, "We have found the opportunity to gather with the two church communities to be rewarding... something like, the sum is greater than the whole..."

In regards to the shared ministry, Pastor Sippy concludes, "Shared ministry is not only a pragmatic stewardship of resources. Shared ministry is a way of life in which people of God learn the ways of Jesus, putting the needs of others before one's own."



# MISSIONS IN MISSOURI

*Our state is one vast and diverse mission field! We marvel at the many opportunities God has given us to work together on initiatives throughout the year and in all corners of Missouri. For a list of District-supported mission projects, please take a look at page 15 of this report. It's a joy to work together in God's kingdom with you all.*

## Campus Ministry Network Boosts Outreach to International Students

The Campus Ministry Network of the Missouri District is currently made up of 16 campus ministry sites. Their leaders continually stay in contact to discuss ministry efforts, as well as share best practices and provide encouragement. A key component—and highlight—of the network is the annual GO! Leadership Conference held at Campus Lutheran in Columbia each March.

Throughout the 2023-2024 academic year, the network made it a priority to reach out to international students at universities and colleges throughout the state with friendship and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Through a generous grant, campus ministry teams were provided with funds to either add new programming geared towards international students to their annual schedules or enhance already existing programming by adding an international ministry component.

At the University of Missouri in Columbia, Campus Lutheran scheduled more than a year's worth of gatherings at church to get to know international students and their families. This included things like a Family Bunco Party, Easter Egg Hunt, VBS, Fall Ice Cream Party, Pumpkin Carving Party, and more. There were also houseware giveaways, English classes, and Bible studies for adults and youth. More than 100 students from other counties were impacted by these efforts.

At the Lutheran Student Center (LSC) at the University of Central Missouri in Warrensburg, this encouragement to expand ministry led to contact with



“  
**God sends  
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doorstep.”**

**Rev. Dr.  
Kent Pierce**  
Senior Pastor,  
Campus  
Lutheran  
Church,  
Columbia

approximately 50 international students. It started with invitations for meals and fellowship at the LSC, but it wasn't long before students began inviting friends and sticking around for Bible study and more.

Rev. Dr. Kent Pierce, serving the students in Columbia, highlights the reopening of these opportunities in a post-Covid setting. “God sends the world to our doorstep,” he shares. He also notes how the newly baptized will return home as believers—and how faith can then spread among these families. It is our fervent prayer that the Holy Spirit would work in the hearts and lives of these students—forming new disciples who will then take the Gospel around the world upon graduation.





**Pictured are scenes from Campus Ministry sites across Missouri.**







# SHINE! has Biggest Year to Date

For the fourth year in a row, the Missouri District held *SHINE!* — the annual statewide servant event occurring each April. Based on Matthew 5:16, *SHINE!* encourages groups of all sizes and skillsets to serve their neighbors and be a witness for Jesus Christ. This year was the largest yet with approximately 10,800 participants from 150 groups serving throughout April 12-21, 2024...and beyond. *SHINE!* has also now spread to four states. Additional teams from Illinois, Nebraska, and Virginia headed out into their communities this spring.

As in previous years, participants were outfitted in the official servant event t-shirt. A huge thank you to the 2024 sponsors: Lutheran Church Extension Fund, Rod's Sports & Apparel, Concordia Plans, and Timothy Lutheran Church in Blue Springs. The teams looked great wearing the color red.

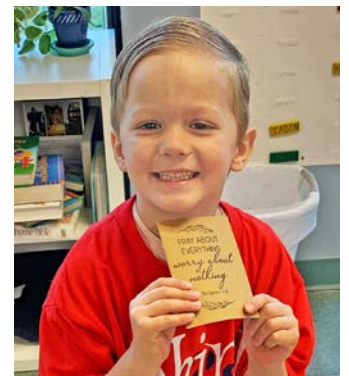
While the window for *SHINE!* may have passed for 2024, those serving this year were quick to share that glorifying God through service is something that can happen all the time. Matthew 5:16 is a way of life!

"You know, Jesus is the reason we do everything. And when He's not...He should be!" said Marilyn Haldiman, group leader for Redeemer Lutheran in Springfield. "The spotlight is always on God," added Shirley Jackson, group leader from Transfiguration Lutheran Church in St. Louis. "We're praising Him even when we don't know we're praising Him. Our walk, our talk, the things we do. We always have that opportunity to lift up God's name."

So until the Missouri District serves together again during April 4-13, 2025, continue to shine His light for all to see!









# MOSCHOLARS

## A Cause for Celebration



Missouri's tax credit program providing scholarships for children attending private institutions—MOScholars—continues to be a blessing for students at LCMS schools throughout our state. Thank you to all the taxpayers who have participated in this endeavor that is making an impact that will last an eternity. Children throughout the state who may not have otherwise been able to are now getting a quality education and hearing the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ at Lutheran 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 school year. This amount, when combined with the funds from the first year of the tax credit program in 2022, means that more than \$1.25 million has 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 anyway 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 reach of MOScholars will expand in 2024. Along with this group of 136 recipients from previous years, the Missouri District has added additional students to the scholarship waitlist for the 2024-25 school year. We welcome your participation in the MOScholars program as taxpayers and thank you for walking with these students. The tax credit reservation system for this current calendar year is up and running. If you haven't already started the process this year, you can begin at [mo.lcms.org/mo-scholars](https://mo.lcms.org/mo-scholars). Additional questions can be directed to Leah Sieveking at **314-590-6211** or [leah.sieveking@mo.lcms.org](mailto: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.

**“**  
**MOScholars**  
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**education.”**

**Leah Sieveking**  
Director of  
Mission Advancement,  
Missouri District



# FINANCIAL REPORT

Total Fiscal Year 2024 Budget: **\$3,845,098**

## MISSOURI MISSIONS AND CHURCH EXTENSION

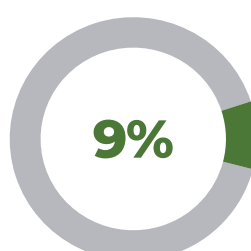
**\$776,681**



District outreach ministries within include urban, rural and small town, campus, multi-ethnic, military, shared ministry, as well as new starts and restarts. The District also provides coaching for those focusing on missions in Missouri.

## ECCLESIASTICAL SERVICES

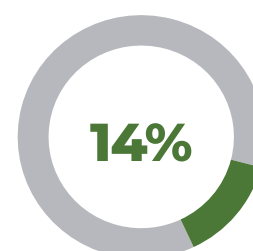
**\$336,621**



The District provides structure and support of rostered church workers, congregations, and schools—especially in ecclesiastical matters.

## NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

**\$530,147**



The District supports the work of the national office of Synod and the many initiatives of the LCMS including both National and International Missions.

## SERVING OUR CONGREGATIONS AND CHURCH WORKERS

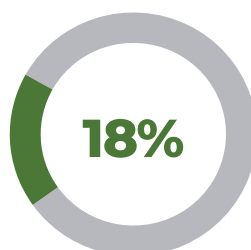
**\$854,489**



The District offers support to congregations, Lutheran schools, and church workers. This includes support for Family Discipleship, Community Engagement, and Church Worker Recruitment and Retention.

## OFFICIAL CONFERENCES, CONVENTIONS, AND WORKSHOPS

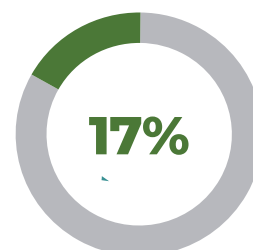
**\$705,187**



The District conducts various gatherings in support of the work of congregations and Lutheran schools and their workers.

## GENERAL OFFICE AND ADVANCEMENT

**\$641,973**



The District office carries out the day-to-day administration, as well as fundraising. This includes legal, audit, accounting, insurance, as well as certain costs associated with the Board of Directors.

# ADVANCEMENT



***Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.***

**PROVERBS 27:17**

Kitchen knives need regular sharpening in order to stay functional. Not only will the cutting process be less efficient, but a dull blade is actually very dangerous. The extra pressure required in using it gives way to a loss of control, increasing the likelihood of the chef being harmed. In order to return to proper slicing and dicing, friction needs to be applied to the blade with something as strong or stronger than the metal used in the knife.

With a full staff of servants, it's highly unlikely that King Solomon was preparing his own food while writing Proverbs. His analogy of sharp tools and Godly friends is spot on, though! Like knives, humans get run down, less effective, and sometimes dangerous while navigating life in a broken and sinful world. God knows this—and sends fellow believers to encourage, challenge, and support those working in His kingdom.

Thank you for walking with the Missouri District and “sharpening” the efforts featured in this annual report. Throughout the last year, you’ve prayed for ministries, attended events, gave generously, shined God’s light through service to others, and so much more. We’re grateful to God that He saw it fit to have us all work together in this time and place.

We’re excited to see where He leads us all in the future, and we invite you to continue to make the journey with us as we “sharpen” one another in ministry!

Thank you for your continued support. Please reach out to Leah Sieveking at [leah.sieveking@mo.lcms.org](mailto:leah.sieveking@mo.lcms.org) or 314-590-6211 should you ever have questions. God’s richest blessings!



## GIFTS CAN BE MADE TO THE MISSOURI DISTRICT IN A VARIETY OF WAYS



**MAIL** a gift in the centerfold envelope, or use your own envelope and direct a gift to:

**Missouri District LCMS**  
660 Mason Ridge  
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St. Louis, MO 63141



**VISIT** us online at  
[mo.lcms.org/donate](https://mo.lcms.org/donate)



**CALL** 314-590-6200  
for gifts with a  
credit or debit card



# 2025 MISSION PROJECTS



## **Military Ministry**

- Faith Lutheran Church, Knob Noster
- Faith Lutheran Church, St. Robert

## **Campus Ministry**

- Campus Ministry Network, Columbia
- International Student Ministry, St. Louis
- University of Missouri, Columbia
- College of the Ozarks, Point Lookout
- University of Central Missouri, Warrensburg
- Southeast Missouri State University, Cape Girardeau
- Missouri State University, Springfield
- Northwest Missouri State University, Maryville

## **Shared Ministry**

- Boone County: Centralia and Columbia
- Rolla Circuit
- Our Savior, Buffalo, and Zion, Bolivar
- Sedalia Circuit

## **New Starts**

- My Church, Ozark
- US 60 Church Plants
- Jefferson Avenue Mission, St. Louis
- Spanish Lake
- All Nations, University City
- Community Outreach Grants
- New Mission Coaching

## **Urban Ministry**

- Bethlehem, St. Louis
- Saint Trinity, St. Louis
- Lutheran Urban Mission Agency, Kansas City
- Allgn
- Black Ministry Initiative, St. Louis
- Epiphany, St. Louis

## **Multi-Ethnic Ministry**

- Our Redeemer, Kansas City
- Jesus el Buen Pastor, Kansas City
- Oromo Evangelical Lutheran, Platte Woods
- Amigos de Cristo, Sedalia
- Hodiamont, St. Louis
- Light of Christ Chinese Mission, Olivette
- Christian Friends of New Americans, Kansas City
- Christian Friends of New Americans, St. Louis
- Nepalese Outreach, St. Louis
- St. John, St. Louis
- STL Immigrant Outreach, St. Louis

# DISTRICT STAFF



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Meeting & Office Assistant
- **Cassie Behrmann**  
Project Coordinator
- **Lauren Brody**  
Communications Specialist
- **Rev. Bill Geis**  
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- **Rev. Marty Hasz, LPC**  
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- **Sue Thompson**  
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LCEF District Vice President



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