

the VOICE

November 2024 Missouri District Newsletter



*Pictured:
King of Kings
Lutheran
Church,
Chesterfield*

*Family Event at
Eckert's Farm*

“HERE AM I, SEND ME”



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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK *"Living in Two Kingdoms"*

St. Paul reminds the Christians at Phillipi that their primary allegiance is to Christ. He writes, "Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." (3:20) These words are still relevant for us today. This means that while we live in two kingdoms, we are called to fear, love, and trust in God above all things. Additionally, we honor God-given authority of elected officials at every level of government.

God rules through His left-hand kingdom, the state, for the sake of the common good and to preserve peace and order amongst us. The response of the Christian to the state is to pray for those in all elected positions as God's servants. We owe to the state what is required of us, such as respect, honor - even taxes.

Thanks be to God for His work through the right-hand kingdom, the Church. It is my prayer that our congregation members would demonstrate even greater zeal for their heavenly citizenship than our political allegiances. What we owe as citizens of Christ's heavenly kingdom is our thanks and praise for His saving work. This means that there is great joy and celebration as the saints gather around Christ to praise Him for His gift of salvation. Each Divine Service reflects the throne room of heaven as seen in Revelation, chapters 4-5. The saints, angels, and all heavenly hosts lift their voices together to praise the Lamb who was slain, whose blood has ransomed people from every tribe, language, and nation.

We are thankful to God for the blessing that is this nation and the freedoms that we enjoy. However, it is a joy to look forward to the Church Triumphant which will be composed of people from every nation. May we be faithful as we live in both kingdoms and honor God and His gifts.

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*"Our citizenship is
in heaven, and
from it we await a
Savior, the Lord
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—



Fraternally in Christ,

R. Lee Hagan
President Lee Hagan

MOSCHOLARS GAINS MOMENTUM

Now in its third year, MOScholars - the tax credit program benefiting K-12 students attending private institutions - continues to bless students enrolled in Lutheran schools throughout the Missouri District. While 97 students were awarded full and partial scholarships in its inaugural year, the goal for the 2024-25 academic year seeks to double this effort.

Approximately 200 students from 32 LCMS schools are awaiting funding through this statewide effort. Taxpayers to the state of Missouri, both individuals and businesses, can easily make this goal a reality.

“With each year, we’ve watched MOScholars gain momentum - in both the number of students receiving scholarships, as well as the taxpayers reserving credits and supporting them,” says Leah Sieveking, Director of Mission Advancement for the District. “God can use anything, including our taxes, for work in His kingdom.” The Missouri District invites all of you to join in this movement.

Directing up to 50% of your Missouri state income taxes to Lutheran education through this program is as simple as completing an online form and pre-paying a portion of your taxes in the amount of your tax credit reservation. The District website (mo.lcms.org) contains even more information on MOScholars, as well as the links to get the process started.

At no additional cost and with minimal effort, MOScholars allows taxpayers to decide how their tax dollars should be spent. Directing these tax dollars for scholarships to attend Lutheran schools is a blessing to children and families that will make an eternal difference. Thank you for your participation in MOScholars through the Missouri District.

Please note: Taxpayers have until December 31 to participate in MOScholars for the credits to apply for the 2024 calendar year. Leah Sieveking at the District office can be reached at 314-590-6211 or leah.sieveking@mo.lcms.org with any questions.



POST-CHRISTIAN AMERICA

2024 Missouri District Pastors' Conference

In late October, pastors from around the Missouri District gathered at Margaritaville Lake Resort in Osage Beach to discuss some of the cultural shifts that have taken place throughout the last year and equip each other with the knowledge on how to respond to these shifts while holding steady to the word of God. The conference opened with festival worship and an ice cream social at nearby Christ the King Lutheran Church in Lake Ozark.

Exhibitors included Concordia Publishing House, LCEF, Concordia Plans, Ministry to the Armed Forces, and a host of other ministry-focused organizations. Breaks, evenings, and a Monday *Gemütlichkeit* provided opportunities for pastors to renew friendships and share with each other both the blessings and challenges of ministry. Space was also provided for pastor's wives and children to gather for devotions and fellowship.

One of the plenary speakers, Dr. Russell P. Dawn, perhaps said it best when he kicked off the event by writing about "...social trends that have influenced American culture away from a prevailing Christian framework that worships the self through a confused mixture of isms, including Gnosticism, atheism, and paganism." The other plenary speaker, Rev. Dr. Joel Biermann of Concordia Seminary, addressed the advent of normal nihilism in our society and suggested ways for the church to respond confidently and faithfully to our changing world.

On the second day of the conference, pastors continued to hear from speakers that delved into related topics, such as, "Genesis, Genetics, and Gender", "Assertive Engagement of Religious Freedom in the Military", and "Living as Exiles in the 21st Century" among many others. One of the speakers, Rev. Dr. Chad Lakies, presented on the idea of "How NOT to Let Issues Prevent Relationships" in which he laid out the practice of engaging with non-believers instead of straying from them. He says, "Let's learn from Jesus, who never let an issue prevent a relationship." Another speaker, Rev. Brandon Boos, shared his personal experiences on being a Gen Z pastor within the LCMS and his resolutions for reaching the next generation while staying faithful to the Word. Upon his return after the conference had ended, District staff Rev. Peter Kirby reflected, "Pastors needed this opportunity to get away from the busyness of parish life for a few days to reflect on the broader changes we are facing in society, to be encouraged in our callings, and to strengthen relationships with others facing similar challenges."





PRINCIPAL 360 STL


“Building Leadership for a Brighter Future”

In an era marked by rapid change and increasing demands on educational leaders, the Missouri District, in partnership with LCEF, has brought in an 11-month intensive program, titled “Principal 360 STL”, to equip and position our Lutheran educational leaders for the challenges of 21st-century education. Drawing inspiration from scripture to “Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance,” (Proverbs 1:5) the program brings together 14 educational leaders from 4 districts, with 11 representing schools across Missouri.

“Our goal is to equip and support our Lutheran school leaders so they can navigate modern educational challenges while building upon our rich Lutheran heritage,” says Josh Swartz. This vision aligns perfectly with 2 Timothy 2:2, which is about compounding ministry by training those who will also be able to teach others. The participants will focus on 5 essential areas: culture, marketing, finance, recruitment/retention, and innovation. Each educational leader will earn 15 graduate credit hours from Concordia Chicago, underscoring the program's academic rigor and ensuring its credibility. This structured approach to leadership development echoes Luke 14:28: “For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?”

Principal 360 STL's 19 modules offer a holistic approach to leadership development. The program emphasizes practical skills while maintaining a strong spiritual foundation. Each participant develops a comprehensive strategic plan tailored to their ministry's unique needs and mission field. One of the program's distinctive features is the unwavering focus on sustainable growth and mission-driven leadership. This spiritual endurance is crucial for educational leaders facing today's challenges, ensuring steady and sustainable growth for our schools.

Principal 360 STL extends beyond professional development to fulfill Christ's Great Commission, but also to prepare leaders to create vibrant centers of faith-based learning where academic excellence and spiritual growth flourish together. Through mentorship, coursework, and real-world application, participants emerge ready to lead their schools into the future. Each strategic plan developed through the program serves as a blueprint for ministry, ensuring that resources align with long-term goals while maintaining focus on the school's spiritual mission. Principal 360 STL is a beacon of support and growth for Lutheran schools. The program demonstrates that with proper preparation, dedication, and faith, Lutheran educational leaders can confidently guide their communities forward, ensuring that Lutheran schools remain strong centers of academic excellence and spiritual formation for generations to come.



THE BLESSING OF RETIRED CHURCH WORKERS

The congregations and schools of the Missouri District are truly blessed with faithful pastors and teachers. Our Lord has commanded us to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest fields. We should regularly be praying for young and “not-so-young” people to consider church work vocations as God meets the needs of the Church in the future. While we recognize that there is a shortage of pastors and rostered teachers, it is good for us to be reminded that God is still providing for His people through retired church workers as well. Retired pastors and teachers serve all over our district as they bring the Word of God through congregations and schools.

Our Lord continues to do great things through retired pastors and pastors who could retire but instead choose to continue to serve. From visitation to vacancy work, many pastors continue to serve well past the time when they stepped back from full-time service. There are retirement-age pastors who are involved in pulpit supply, leading Bible classes, serving as Circuit Visitor, and even assisting in church plants. They are eager to continue to serve the Lord in a wide range of needs in congregations without the burden of having to attend meetings. Our congregations see and appreciate their labor.



Our congregation members may be less aware of all the ways in which retired principals and teachers support our schools. Retired principals regularly serve as interim principals and mentors for teachers who are serving as principals for the very first time. Retired teachers supervise student teachers, teach specific classes of expertise, and even come in to listen or read to students. Our emeritus teachers support our schools in so many ways.

October was Church Worker Appreciation Month. Many churches and schools found ways to show their love for the church workers that are actively serving. However, we should also take time to give thanks to God for the continued service of those who may be considered “retired” or “emeritus” in terms of their roster status, but who remain incredibly active as they use their gifts for others. Thanks be to God for all our retired church workers and for their service - both past and present!



“YOUR FAMILY MATTERS”

Family Discipleship Initiative at King of Kings Lutheran Church

“Your family matters! This year, in a very intentional way, we are going to put a greater emphasis on our family ministry,” Pastor Chinberg explained to King of Kings Lutheran Church in early 2024.

“One of the key characteristics of a Christian family is that they prioritize their relationship with God. This means setting aside time each day for prayer, Bible study, and worship as a family. It also means living out our faith in practical ways, such as serving others and sharing the love of Jesus with those around us.”

King of Kings is using the Missouri District’s “Tell the Next Generation” Family Discipleship Initiative to address this goal. The Family Discipleship Initiative (FDI) seeks to “unite homes and congregations in making lifelong disciples of Jesus!” Research shows that parents and other family members may not have the knowledge and skills typically used in faith practices.

In November, King of Kings will complete the training begun in September 2023. The two-fold strategy of the training begins with what has been labeled as “The Shift.”

This is an intentional paradigm shift from relying on church-centered nurturing to equipping parents, grandparents, and other caring adults to nurture faith in all members of their family – especially the next generation – in their homes. A few resources introduced additional FDI key concepts to the congregation, such as: “28 Days of Prayer for Families” and three Family Ministry studies about families in crisis, what Family Ministry is, and how it works.

Other components of FDI include the focus on the biblical basis of God’s plan for parents to share faith, an explanation of the “The Shift,” the emphasis on “It Starts with Me”, and the creation of a “Family Mission Statement.” The second strategy is “Faith Formation in the Home” which focuses on giving adults knowledge, skills, and attitudes for building a Christ-centered home and using strategies to grow together in faith, such as faith milestones, confirmation, family service events, Advent/Lent family devotions, and more.

Benjamin Simmons (DCE) says, “We are excited to see this ministry grow over the coming years as we continue to champion our families. We believe that everyone, whether single or married, parent or child, old or young, is a vital part of a family. We also recognize that families come in all shapes and sizes and are not always structured the same. Together in faith, we are all vital parts of the family – that of Jesus!”



TELL THE NEXT GENERATION

The Missouri District has trained Tell the Next Generation Family Discipleship coaches from across the state to work with pastors, congregations, and schools who are ready and willing to embrace home-centered, church-supported Family Discipleship. The initiative was first launched at the Missouri District Convention in June 2022 with the approval of Life Together Resolution 2-01, encouraging congregations to participate in coach-led training.

The upcoming Tell the Next Generation Conference will take place on March 15, 2025, at Lutheran High School in St. Charles, Missouri. Contact Pam Nummela at family@mo.lcms.org for more information on this initiative and how your congregation or school can participate.



UPCOMING EVENTS

2024

*Nov. 24-26: Educator's Conference
Four Seasons, Lake Ozark*

*Dec. 6: Missouri District Open House
District Office, St. Louis*

2025

*Mar. 15: Tell the Next Generation (Family Discipleship) Conference
Lutheran High School, St Charles*

*Apr. 4-6: District Youth Gathering
Cross Pointe, Rocky Mount*

*June 22-24: Missouri District Convention
Columbia, MO*

*July 19-23: LCMS National Youth Gathering
New Orleans*