

# The VOICE

"Welcoming the New Year"

Missouri District Newsletter, January 2025



PICTURED: LUTHERAN URBAN MISSION AGENCY



# From the President's Desk



## *"New Things in the New Year"*

In Revelation 21, our Lord provides the comforting words, "Behold, I am making all things new." This is the promise that means, in the resurrection, God will restore His creation to its former glorified perfection. The aging saints who struggle with the effects of sin on bodies manifesting in the form of disease or decay can live in the hope of bodies being set free and made new. The widow can live in the hope of the blessed reunion with those who have gone before in the faith. God specializes in making things new! God's "making all things new" is not just at a time in the future, but what we see happening each week within the Divine Service as well.

God takes our hard hearts of stone and makes them new as we confess our sins and hear His Word of Absolution. He gives us a new spirit as His Word takes root in our lives. Through the preaching of the Gospel and the reception of the Sacrament, the Holy Spirit makes sinners holy and makes each old sinner into a new creation. As this new year begins, our prayer is that congregations and schools will boldly share the hope that we have in Christ. While we confess the same "old" truths of God's Word, it is still for the purpose of God making all things new. We don't have to use "new" strategies for God to make things new.

Old members and new members, children and seniors, established congregations and recently chartered ones - our God is at work through and among them by the means of grace. Our prayer for this year is just like the old prayers of years gone by - that God will make us His new creation through the Holy Spirit's work and, when Christ comes again in glory, we will be raised to immortality in our new, glorified bodies.

*R. Lee Hagan*

# NATIONAL LUTHERAN Schools Week



As we welcome the new year, we reflect on God's many blessings from the past year. Among these blessings are the dedicated and talented educators in our Lutheran schools who work tirelessly to inspire faith, cultivate knowledge, and guide students toward fulfilling God's purpose for their lives. Their efforts shape young minds and nurture young hearts, pointing them toward Christ's love and grace.

National Lutheran Schools Week (NLSW) is an annual celebration that unites students, teachers, families, and congregations under the shared mission of Lutheran education. It's a time to rejoice in the blessings of being part of a Christ-centered learning environment that impacts lives for eternity. Through events, worship, and service, NLSW highlights the joy of working together to equip the next generation with high academic rigor and a strong foundation of faith. At its core, Lutheran education is about teaching children about Jesus Christ. While students gain valuable knowledge and skills for life on Earth, they are also taught the most important truth: the promise of eternal life with Jesus. This eternal hope fuels the passion of Lutheran educators. Their deepest desire is for each of their students to know Jesus as their Savior. To this end, teachers faithfully integrate biblical principles into every subject. They also build meaningful relationships with their students and their families, nurturing faith that

endures throughout life. In Lutheran schools, students are encouraged to grow not just academically but holistically, that is, spiritually, socially, emotionally, and physically. This comprehensive approach educates the whole person, preparing students to live out their faith in every area of life.

Still, the burden of educational debt presents significant challenges for many. At the 2023 LCMS Convention, Resolution 12-03A was passed, which acknowledges the burden of educational debt on commissioned teachers and establishes an annual special designation to support student debt reduction. Administered by MinistryFOCUS, an LCMS Recognized Service Organization, this initiative provides financial assistance to called workers. This year, the first offering will open during NLSW and remain open until April 15, 2025. We encourage everyone to prayerfully consider contributing. Donations can be made securely through the MinistryFOCUS website: <https://secure.qgiv.com/for/ministryfocus>.

National Lutheran Schools Week 2025 is an opportunity to celebrate the dedication of our educators and the joy of working together to equip the next generation to live lives of purpose, service, and faith. Happy New Year, and may God richly bless you and your family in 2025!

# Registration Now Open

The Missouri District will “shine” for the fifth consecutive year in our statewide servant event on April 4-13, 2025. Based on Matthew 5:16, the 10 days of service encourage groups of all ages and skillsets to serve their neighbors and be a witness for Jesus Christ. The process is simple:

- Form a team: Round up your family, friends, and classmates. Everyone is welcome!
- Identify a need in your community: Talk to your neighbors and find out who needs help.
- Register with the Missouri District: Head to <https://mo.lcms.org/shine/> and let us know about your project.
- Serve: Use those God-given skills to bless others in April.

“The *SHINE!* t-shirts for participants not only look great, but also serve as an easy conversation starter about why we do what we do,” says Leah Sieveking, Director of Mission Advancement for the Missouri District. “For the first time ever, we’re serving during Lent...which made the shirt color easy to select. Teams will look great in purple this spring!” **Please note: The cutoff for ordering shirts is Tuesday, March 4, or as long as supplies are available.**

With more than 10,000 participants each of the last two years, *SHINE!* is a huge blessing for those who serve and those being served. “By inspiring children and congregation members to serve, we equip them to live out their faith boldly,” adds Josh Swartz, Director of Schools for the Missouri District. “God uses even the smallest gestures to create extraordinary change in others’ lives. Therefore, *SHINE!* serves as a reminder for congregations and schools to get and stay connected by serving the needs of their community simply out of love for those who are hurting.”

Stay tuned to the Missouri District website and social media channels for more information and updates. We can’t wait to see you all in action this spring. Shine on, Missouri District!





# Convention Registration Opens



The 2025 Missouri District Convention will be held June 22-24, 2025, at the Holiday Inn Executive Center in Columbia, Missouri. The Convention theme is "Bold Hope in Christ" based upon 2 Corinthians 3:12. The Convention essayist will be Rev. Dr. Kevin Golden, Associate Professor of Exegetical Theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

Every congregation may elect one lay delegate. This means each congregation in a multi-congregation parish may elect one lay delegate. Emeritus pastors and commissioned ministers may not serve as lay delegates. The congregation should mail in the lay delegate form, with original, wet-ink signatures by the congregational president and secretary to certify their lay delegate.

Each congregation or multi-congregation parish may designate one pastoral delegate. This means that a dual or tri-parish can have one pastoral delegate, not one per congregation in the parish. A pastor who is on the Synod's clergy roster and who is called and installed at the parish is eligible to serve as the pastoral delegate. Vacancy and/or emeritus pastors are not eligible to serve as a pastoral delegate. The congregation or multi-congregation parish should mail in the pastoral delegate form to the District office. Delegate forms were mailed to congregations in October, and they are on the District Convention webpage. Please mail any lay and pastoral delegate forms that are past the January 13 requested deadline as soon as possible. Completion of the lay delegate and pastoral delegate forms does not register these delegates for the District Convention. Each delegate must also register online. Online registration for Convention delegates opened on December 13 and will close on June 13. There is not a form for advisory delegates; they only need to register online. Housing is on your own and is not included in the online registration. Hotel information links will be available on the District Convention webpage by the end of January. Please contact Sue Thompson in the District office with any questions on Convention registration.

The deadline for Convention overtures is January 24, 2025. A template is available on the District Convention webpage. The convention overtures and reports will be reviewed by Convention floor committees on February 22 to prepare resolutions for the Convention's consideration this summer. The resolutions will be included in the Convention Workbook, which will be posted online by March 31. The next issue of "The Voice" will include the slates for District President and First Vice President. The LCMS Handbook provides the following description of district conventions, "Conventions of the districts shall afford opportunities for worship, nurture, inspiration, fellowship, and the communication of vital information. They are the principal legislative assemblies, which amend the district's Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws, consider and take action on reports and overtures, and handle appropriate appeals." "The Voice" and District website will continue to provide updates related to the District Convention in the coming months. Please keep Convention plans in your prayers and contact the District office with any questions.



# Epiphany Hair & Care



Epiphany Hair & Care, a ministry of Epiphany Lutheran Church in South City, St. Louis, is dedicated to engaging with the local community through compassionate and specialized haircare services. Guided by faith, the ministry offers free hair care to individuals with neurodivergence (such as autism), as well as to students and staff at nearby Woerner Elementary School, residents of a women's shelter, and various other local groups.

Thanks to support from the Missouri District, Epiphany Hair & Care has partnered with Genesis African Hair Braiding to bring African hair braiding to a wide range of people. One of the most recent events was in collaboration with Humanitri, an organization committed to helping unhoused families find stability through a safe, supportive environment. Humanitri provides these families with the necessary skills and resources to thrive. The event with Humanitri was truly heartwarming. The women of Humanitri gathered at the salon for a day of self-care and fellowship. Following Sunday morning worship at Epiphany, they enjoyed time with the congregation before the braiding began.

Following Sunday morning worship at Epiphany, they enjoyed time with the congregation before the braiding began. Over the course of six hours, everyone left the salon looking fabulous. We were honored to serve these incredible women and partner with such a wonderful organization.

One memorable moment occurred when a woman, who had spent over four hours in the salon chair, stood up and began dancing. With a wide smile, she exclaimed,

*"I'm back!"*

She was thrilled to see and feel her best – a true testament to the uplifting spirit of the event.

At Epiphany Hair & Care, our goal is to help people feel beautiful both inside and out. Just as Jesus restores us, body and soul, we believe that we should help serve our neighbors in His name. Serving our community in this way brings us immense joy and reminds us of the power of love and restoration in the lives of God's people.



# "Day of Caring"

Back in June 2024, Lutheran Urban Mission Agency (LUMA) had the privilege of being contacted by Savion, a company with a deep commitment to environmental sustainability, green energy, and giving back to the community.

Savion organizes a nationwide event known as the "Day of Caring," where employees volunteer their time and talents to support various charitable organizations across the country. LUMA was thrilled to be selected as one of the recipients of this wonderful initiative and eagerly anticipated the arrival of their team. On July 25th, a group of about 15 volunteers from Savion arrived ready to make a difference. Their enthusiasm and energy were infectious as they dove into a variety of tasks. Since they work closely with those who manage it, LUMA thought it would be a perfect opportunity for the volunteers to lend a hand to Manheim Community Garden. They spent the morning weeding, watering, and harvesting fresh produce for the pantry. They also took on some maintenance and general upkeep of the garden, ensuring it remained in great shape for the season.

In addition to the garden work, the LUMA office had recently undergone some updates, which unfortunately led to dust and debris accumulating throughout the space. A few volunteers took it upon themselves to help clean and organize the office, making it a much more welcoming and presentable environment for visitors.

Their attention to detail made a noticeable difference, and LUMA was incredibly grateful for their efforts. The day was reported as an absolute success, filled with hard work, laughter, and a sense of community. Not only did the volunteers help improve the garden and office, but they also expressed their desire to return for future projects. They mentioned their intention to continue supporting the garden and even contribute donations to the pantry in the future as well. The day left LUMA feeling inspired by the power of service and collaboration.



**Jan. 28:** Mental Health First Aid Training Session #1  
*Virtual*

**Apr. 4-13:** "SHINE!"

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

**June 6:** Mental Health First Aid Training Session #2  
*Virtual*

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

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

**Aug. 1:** Mental Health First Aid Training Session #3  
*Virtual*

*Upcoming Events*