

July 2025

# The VOICE

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The Missouri District is to serve and encourage congregations to fulfill the Great Commission and to promote unity of the true faith.

Pictured above: Participants at the District Convention, held at The Wyndham Executive Center in Columbia, Mo.

*Photo: Noah Clark*

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# FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Dear friends,*



The Christian faith is not personal, private, or individualistic. People who are brought to faith in Jesus become part of a community of believers. The baptism of a child or adult is not a private or family event, but a celebration shared by the entire community. Similarly, the whole body of believers grieves together at the death of one of the saints.

While the funeral service proclaims the hope that we have in Jesus to all who mourn, visitations and luncheons provide opportunities for the body of Christ to encourage and comfort through both the verbal and physical expressions of love and support for the family of the dearly departed. We grieve together, but with hope.

Gatherings beyond the Sunday morning worship service and the single congregation remind us what it means to belong to a larger communion of saints. When the ladies of the Lutheran Women in Mission gather for a convention or young people across the world gather for an LCMS Youth Gathering, we recognize what it means to be part of a larger community where Christ remains at the center of our life together.

We gather together to receive Christ and His gifts, to be reminded of our identity as the saints of God, to respond in praise and thanksgiving, and to encourage and support one another in our callings.

Pastors gather in their circuits to encourage one another. Lutheran school administrators gather each summer and winter to support one another. Even our district convention is ultimately about being together, servants from diverse congregations, united in our confession and in the task of proclaiming God's Word.

We give thanks to God for all of the opportunities to gather as the communion of saints in our individual congregations and larger events where many congregations come together, sharing the same confession.

We give thanks to God for all of the attendees of the 2025 Missouri District Convention, the 2025 Lutheran Women in Mission Convention, and the upcoming 2025 LCMS Youth Gathering. May God richly bless these gatherings where Christ is at the center of our life together!

Fraternally in Christ,

*R. Lee Hagan*

President Lee Hagan



# 2025 MISSOURI DISTRICT CONVENTION

BY CHRISTIE HAMPTON

Delegates, church workers, and guests from across Missouri gathered in Columbia for the 22nd District Convention under the theme “Bold Hope in Christ” (2 Cor. 3:12). Over the course of three days, attendees joined in worship, elected leaders, engaged in theological reflection, and committed to the work God has called us to in congregations and communities.



## Opening Worship

The convention opened with Divine Service Sunday, June 22, 2025. Rev. Peter Lange, first vice president of The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS) (*pictured above; photo by: Noah Clark*), served as preacher and built on the convention’s theme “Bold Hope in Christ.”

## President’s Report

President Rev. Dr. R. Lee Hagan, re-elected as District President, opened the business sessions Monday morning with a message of hope rooted in the unchanging promises of Christ. He celebrated signs of encouragement across the District, including:

- *SHINE!* servant events, which engaged over 10,000 participants
- Continued growth in Lutheran school enrollment
- Over \$2.3 million in scholarships awarded through the MOScholars program

Hagan noted progress to the four ministry priorities for the past triennium: church worker recruitment, family discipleship, community engagement, and shared ministry. “Our hope,” he said, “is not in plans or programs, but in the risen Christ.”



## A Hope That Transforms

Rev. Dr. Kevin Golden, associate professor at Concordia Seminary and longtime Missouri District pastor (*pictured above; photo by: Noah Clark*), delivered Part I of the Convention Essay on Monday afternoon. Drawing from 2 Cor. 3:12, Golden explored what it means to live boldly because of our hope in Christ.

Using illustrations from *The Shawshank Redemption*, and rich Scriptural imagery, he reminded delegates that Christian hope is grounded, not vague. “If your hope is in your hope,” Golden warned, “then your hope is uncertain. But in Christ, it is specific, secure, and bold.”

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## Convention Business, Elections

In addition to resolutions and other business, delegates elected leadership for the next triennium. Rev. Dr. R. Lee Hagan was reelected president of the Missouri District Monday, June 23, 2025. **Hagan received 100% of the votes cast on the first ballot.**

Rev. Craig Otto, senior pastor of St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Lee's Summit, was elected first vice president by just one vote, receiving 50.16% of the ballots. Elected second through fourth vice presidents, respectively, were: Rev. Randy Asbury, sole pastor of Hope Lutheran Church in St. Louis; Rev. Samuel Powell, senior pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Jefferson City; and Rev. Richard Cody, sole pastor of St. Peter Lutheran Church in St. Joseph.

*Pictured right: The newly elected president and praesidium (left to right): Rev. Richard Cody, Rev. Samuel Powell, President Rev. Dr. R. Lee Hagan, Rev. Craig Otto, and Rev. Randy Asbury. Photo by: Noah Clark*



## Student Assistants

Students served in various support roles throughout the District Convention. Special thanks to (pictured left to right) Kaitlynn Swartz, Kiera Swartz, Jack Hagan, Noah Clark, Caroline Moede (not pictured), and Ella Bradley (not pictured) for their dedicated service.

*Photo by: Christie Hampton*

The Convention Offering was designated for the scholarship endowment that supports university and seminary students preparing for full-time church work—commonly known as *Tomorrow's Teachers & Preachers*. \$23,011.55 was collected in Columbia. Thank you for your generosity!

All 2025 District Convention materials, including the *Workbook* and *Today's Business*, can now be downloaded **online**.

## Greetings, Final Blessings

Delegates were blessed to receive greetings from leaders of LCMS ministries and partner organizations, including representatives from LWML, LCMS Foundation, Concordia Publishing House, Concordia Plans, and others.

The convention closed Tuesday with a memorial service, closing devotion, and the installation of President Hagan and Circuit Visitors.



*Pictured above: Missouri District First Vice President Rev. Bill Marler led delegates in the Matins Memorial Service on Tuesday morning. Photo by: Noah Clark*

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## Watch Online

You can view the Opening Communion Service, President Hagan's acceptance speech, and Rev. Dr. Kevin Golden's essay sessions at the Missouri District **Facebook page**.



# ***Celebrating Excellence:***

## ***57 Missouri Lutheran Schools Hold NLSA Accreditation***

BY JOSH SWARTZ

Across the state of Missouri, 57 Lutheran schools are accredited through National Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA), a recognition that speaks volumes about their commitment to Christ-centered, high-quality education. This accomplishment highlights their dedication to excellence, accountability, and continuous improvement.

Since 1987, NLSA has been the accrediting arm of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), evaluating Lutheran schools across the nation and worldwide. The accreditation process is guided by defined national standards, which reflect the essential qualities expected in Lutheran schools. The process is not only about accountability, but also about helping schools grow and thrive.

**"Accreditation isn't just a title — it's a reflection of our commitment to Christ-centered excellence."**

To be accredited in good standing, each school must fully meet required indicators of success in areas including mission, ministry, governance, curriculum, and student services. Schools conduct a detailed self-study, supported by evidence, to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement. A key part of the process is a two-day site visit from a trained NLSA validation team, which reviews documentation, observes classrooms, and interviews stakeholders to confirm the school's self-assessment.

One shining example from this year's site visits is Lutheran High School South in St. Louis. Its Student Enhancement Program includes the Spartan Center for academic support and the Kaleo Academy for future church workers. The school's innovative Flex-Mod schedule encourages time management, independence, and real-world skills, reflecting a deep trust in students and a commitment to developing lifelong competencies.



*Pictured above: A teacher and student at Lutheran High School South, St. Louis, working together. Photo provided by Lutheran High School South.*

NLSA exists to encourage, assist, and recognize schools like Lutheran High School South that provide quality Christian education. Through the Evidence-Based Accreditation (EBA) model, schools are equipped to reflect, grow, and live out their Gospel-driven mission more effectively. The process not only affirms excellence but also encourages ongoing renewal.

To the 57 Missouri schools currently holding NLSA accreditation: thank you for your tireless dedication, for walking with students in faith and learning, and for striving every day to model excellence in Christian education.

*Josh Swartz is director of schools at the LCMS Missouri District.*

# All Generations Growing as Disciples of Jesus Together

BY DCE PAM NUMMELA

What does it look like when grandparents, parents, youth, and children grow in faith—together? Across the Missouri District congregations, families and individuals are discovering the joy of intergenerational discipleship.

*Discipleship in the Home* includes all generations growing in faith every day, sometimes individually but also together.



*Pictured above: Volunteers from King of Kings Lutheran Church in Chesterfield, crafting community gifts during SHINE!  
Photo by: Leah Sieveking*

To support congregations and families in growing together as disciples, resources are available through [LCMS Family Ministry](#), which offers tools, guidance, and encouragement for fostering faith across generations. You can also explore [ConcordiaFamily.org](#) for Bible study guides, devotions, and practical ideas for building up faith at home.

Whether you're just starting or expanding your intergenerational efforts, these resources can help equip your church and household for the joyful work of making disciples of all ages.

## How Your Church Can Start Intergenerational Discipleship

Here are some examples of intergenerational practices observed or shared by Missouri District congregations:

- Congregations gather all generations of the family of God for worship. Together, they receive the blessings of God's Word and the Sacraments. In addition, conversations with disciples in the pew, narthex, or fellowship hall can lead to sharing concerns and blessings, providing compassion or encouragement, and including one another in prayer.
- Bible studies that welcome preteens, teens, and adults can create a family routine of being together in worship and study. Adults reported that comments from the youth are welcomed, giving the group new insights.
- Bible Study or Sunday School opening worship can include learning groups of all generations before moving to age-specific groups.
- Groups of women and men of all ages engage in conversational Bible studies and activities that connect the generations and build relationships that extend beyond the church.
- Church choirs can include adults, youth, and children, with rehearsals scheduled in various ways.
- Confirmation programs in some Missouri congregations have a variety of intergenerational structures in addition to the pastor solely teaching the confirmands. These include parent participation at home and in the instructional settings. Adult mentors may engage in small groups of confirmands with pastoral leadership. Strong mentor connections are said to have lasted for years.
- Events like Vacation Bible School (VBS) for families, church picnics, and fellowship gatherings offer opportunities for all generations to connect within the family of God.
- Shine together! "SHINE!" servant events in congregations often include multiple generations. These all-age events may involve yard work, visiting senior communities, assembling sandwiches or gifts, and more.



# Introducing President Hagan's New Book: *Faithful, Hopeful, and Bold*

BY CHRISTIE HAMPTON

Just released in mid-May by Concordia Publishing House (CPH), *Faithful, Hopeful, and Bold: Encouragement for the Church* by Missouri District President Rev. Dr. R. Lee Hagan offers timely and deeply needed encouragement to pastors, congregational leaders, and lay people alike.

Drawing on his years of service as LCMS Missouri District President, Hagan speaks honestly about the discouragement many churches face today—from declining attendance and cultural shifts to a sense of uncertainty about the future. Through 12 engaging chapters, he offers biblical insights, pastoral reflections, and thoughtful encouragement to strengthen the Church's witness and mission.

Each chapter concludes with discussion questions, making the book ideal not only for personal reading, but also for leadership retreats, Bible studies, or team discussions. At just 197 pages, it's a manageable yet rich resource for equipping those who serve.

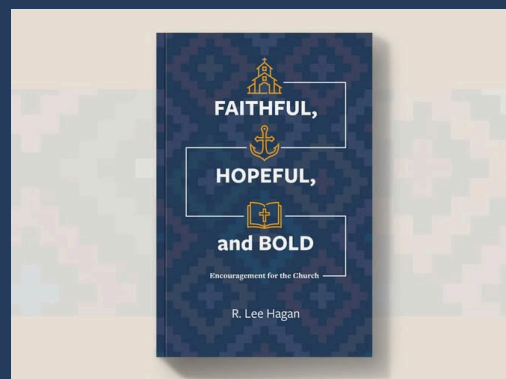
Joel Biermann, professor of Systematic Theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, notes, "Hagan encourages the church to be what God created her to be: a community of believers who faithfully, confidently, and joyfully live their lives together as followers of Jesus witnessing God's grace to a broken world."

"His guidance is biblically based, administratively aware, and – above all – pastorally sound," said author Harold L. Senkbeil.

This is the kind of resource that helps renew focus on faithful ministry, leadership rooted in Scripture, and the enduring hope found in Christ. As many congregations look to strengthen their ministries for the road ahead, *Faithful, Hopeful, and Bold* is both timely and timeless.

The book is available through [Concordia Publishing House](#) and other retailers.

**"The Gospel is God's  
antidote to despair,  
and it fills us with hope  
that is sure and  
certain," Hagan writes.**



*Christie Hampton is communications specialist at the LCMS Missouri District.*



Taxpayers throughout the state of Missouri can now use their tax dollars to support Lutheran education! MOScholars is a tax credit program that provides scholarships for students attending LCMS schools. Over the last three years, the Missouri District has distributed more than \$2.3 million in tuition assistance through the program, blessing hundreds of students and their families.

At no extra cost and with minimal effort, participation is easy. Head to <https://mo.lcms.org/mo-scholars/> to learn more about the program and begin the credit reservation process.

Have more questions? Contact Leah Sieveking at 314-590-6211 or [leah.sieveking@mo.lcms.org](mailto:leah.sieveking@mo.lcms.org). Thank you for your support!

## UPCOMING EVENTS

JUL  
17-18

**ADMINISTRATORS CONFERENCE**  
Campus Lutheran Church, Columbia, MO

JUL  
19-23

**LCMS YOUTH GATHERING**  
New Orleans, LA

JUL  
23

**LCMS YOUTH GATHERING  
MISSOURI DISTRICT EVENT**  
Bayou Barn, Marrero, LA

LEARN MORE!



[mo.lcms.org/upcoming-events](https://mo.lcms.org/upcoming-events)  
Phone: 314-590-6200



## A LOOK AHEAD

AUG. 1, 8: ADULT MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID TRAINING  
SEPT 13, 27: CONCORDIA PLANS PRE-RETIREMENT WORKSHOPS & MISSOURI DISTRICT TREASURER WORKSHOPS  
OCT. 2-4: LEA CONVOCATION  
NOV. 15: COLLEGE FAIR