



Missouri District

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD

2025 PASTORS CONFERENCE

Oct. 12–14, 2025

Margaritaville Lake Resort, Osage Beach, MO

Sectional Guide

Plenary Presentations

Plenary I	Monday, October 13	9:30-10:15 a.m.
	Introduction to “Restore the Roar”	
Plenary II	Monday, October 13	10:30-11:15 a.m.
	The Lion Roars: Amos 1-3	
Plenary III	Monday, October 13	12:45-1:30 p.m.
	The Day of the Lord: Amos 4-6	
Plenary IV	Monday, October 13	1:45-2:30 p.m.
	Five Visions: Amos 7-9	

Plenary Presenter

Restore the Roar

Amos, a herdsman from Tekoa, heard the voice of God and compared it to a roaring lion. Throughout his book the prophet describes Lord Yahweh confronting economic exploitation, phony religion, and fake worship. Amos’ crushing Law, however, gives way to this Gospel announcement in Christ Jesus, “The Lion of the tribe of Judah has conquered!” (Revelation 5:5)

Rev. Dr. Reed Lessing, Professor of Theology & Ministry, Director of the Center for Biblical Studies, Concordia University, St. Paul



Reed Lessing serves as The Edwin F. and Esther L. Laatsch Chair of Old Testament Studies at Concordia University in St. Paul, Minnesota. He directs the university’s Center of Biblical Studies and pre-seminary program. Reed also serves as the Associate Pastor as Cross View Lutheran Church in Edina, Minnesota. He has authored six commentaries in the Concordia Commentary series, CPH books on Exodus, Numbers, and Jeremiah, and has co-authored three CPH Old Testament books with Andy Steinmann. Reed enjoys running, hiking, riding his bike, and cross-country skiing.

Sectional A: Tuesday, October 14**8:45 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.**

Sectional	Title	Facilitator
A-01	Family Discipleship	Rev. Andy Becker
A-02	Pastoral Spiritual Warfare from a Mental Health and Wellness Perspective	Rev. Dr. Gary Ellul
A-03	"The Spirit's Procession from the Son": Fidelity and Fraternity in the Filioque	Rev. Michael Fieberkorn
A-04	Various Ways to Share the Same Gospel of Christ	Rev. Virgil Kelm
A-05	How to Lead a Retreat	Rev. Dr. Rocco Mallardi & Janine Mallardi, DCE
A-06	Is It Inspired? How Do You Know?	Rev. Dr. Craig Meissner
A-07	Planning for Retirement	Paul Endorf
A-08	Pastoring in a Smaller Church...In a Smaller Town	Rev. John Schoedel

Sectional B: Tuesday, October 14**9:45 – 10:30 a.m.**

Sectional	Title	Facilitator
B-01	A Dialogical Approach to Confirmation Instruction	Rev. Rod Benkendorf
B-02	Word of Worship - CPH Initiative for Engaging Children in LSB Worship	Dr. Jacob Corzine
B-03	Financial Wellness for All Ages	Paul Endorf
B-04	Restore the Roar - Caring for Those Who Serve	Rev. Dr. Steven Hokana & Chaplain Craig Muehler
B-05	"He descended into hell..."	Rev. Elden Kohn
B-06	"I wish it didn't exist at all!" - Luther and the Book of Esther	Dr. Philip Penhallegon
B-07	Ministry Partnerships: Not a Handout or a Hand Up, But Hand-in-Hand	Rev. Michael Pottschmidt
B-08	A Reader's Guide to the Catholic Epistles	Rev. Erik Rottmann

Sectional C: Tuesday, October 14**10:45 – 11:30 a.m.**

Sectional	Title	Facilitator
C-01	BOLD about Godly Marriage	Rev. Dr. Todd Biermann
C-02	Feel Like a Slave?	Rev. Robert Gadeken
C-03	The Roaring Silence of a Congregation's Closing	Rev. Kirk Griebel
C-04	Developing a System of Worker Wellness in the Local Congregation	Brian Belter, Dawn Kahler, Vickie Glasstetter, Rev. Dr. Matthew Clark, Rev. Marty Hasz
C-05	A Sophisticated Septuagint	Rev. Paul David Landgraf
C-06	Thriving in Small Town Rural Mission and Ministry	Rev. John Perling
C-07	Lutheran Mission: Creating and Supporting a Community of Lutherans Faithful to Christ for Generations	Rev. Dr. Mark Rabe & Rev. James Baumgartner
C-08	Protecting Your Religious Freedoms	Gena McFarland, Alliance Defending Freedom

A-01: Family Discipleship

Explore the concepts of Family Discipleship and receive a practical framework for implementing these concepts in your own context.

Rev. Andy Becker serves as the manager of Family Discipleship for the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Before joining the team at the Office of National Mission, he served for 14 years as family life pastor at St. John's Lutheran in Arnold, MO. He served as a DCE in Texas before going to Concordia Seminary, St. Louis and has a master's degree in Family Life from Concordia Nebraska. Andy is married to Nikki and they have two children teenage boys.

A-02: Pastoral Spiritual Warfare from a Mental Health and Wellness Perspective

As pastors, we face spiritual warfare daily in our ministries. This battle arises from external forces, within the church, and from our own sinful nature. Recognizing the impact of this constant struggle on our mental health and well-being is crucial for sustaining a pastor's life in ministry.

Equipping ourselves with effective coping tools can greatly benefit those who are struggling. In this presentation, we will explore strategies for setting healthy boundaries, overcoming people-pleasing tendencies, and navigating toxic environments to thrive in these challenging circumstances.

Rev. Dr. Gary J Ellul is a Licensed Professional Counselor, Certified Pastoral Counselor, and a retired LCMS pastor. Dr. Ellul is also an Ecclesiastically Endorsed Counselor through LCMS Spiritual Care Ministry Program. Dr. Ellul specializes in trauma-focused therapy and addiction-based therapy, along with individual and couple counseling.

A-03: "The Spirit's Procession from the Son": Fidelity and Fraternity in the Filioque

In honor of the 1700th Anniversary of the Nicene Creed, we'll take up the historical context in which the filioque phrase ("and the Son") was added to the language of the Third Article, which had been complete prior in 386 A.D. at Constantinople without the phrase. We'll discuss the phrase's fidelity to the Scriptures, and the fracture in the fraternity between the East and Western Church that both preceded and was exacerbated by the addition.

Rev. Mike Fiebert is Associate Pastor at Zion Lutheran Church in St. Charles, MO. He holds an MDiv (2013) and PhD in Doctrinal Theology (2021) from Concordia Seminary St. Louis. He is author of the 2023 CPH title: "Battle of the Soul: Luther Reforms Vice and Virtue." Mike has taught on creedal theology in the SMP program at Concordia, St. Louis, and Theological Ethics at Concordia Irvine.

A-04: Various Ways to Share the Same Gospel of Christ

Anyone who listens can add something to a conversation. Believers in God's promises can easily interject a spiritual insight and truth and then trust the Holy Spirit to use such for bringing someone to faith in Christ, and cause spiritual growth to those of faith. Anyone who has their ears and eyes open is well able to share the gospel in a relevant manner.

Rev. Virgil Kelm

Since 1973, trained and training others in evangelism methods. An LCMS pastor in parish ministry since 1982. Helped start evangelism programs in 3 different Lutheran congregations. An LCMS pastor in parish ministry since 1982, he has discovered, and used, a variety of ways to share the truth of God's Word and the way to heaven. Survey says, many Lutherans and people of all denominations, are not able to tell another person the way to heaven.

A-05: How to Lead a Retreat

God our Creator built rest into our daily lives. Jesus took time away to pray and be led by his Father. He loves for us to get away and hear from Him. He loves for that to be by ourselves or with other like-minded believers. It is amazing how the family of God builds bonds when they get together for a retreat - whether they come to somewhere in the beautiful Ozark woods or not! :) We would like to help the pastors of our district lead meaningful retreats. We will look at the benefits of retreats - what do congregations gain from spending a weekend on retreat? Next, we will look at the key ingredients for building community on a retreat and hopefully practice a few. Finally, we will end with the practical scheduling and advertising tips for a successful retreat.

Rev. Dr. Rocco Mallardi & Janine Mallardi, DCE

My name is Rev. Dr. Rocco Mallardi. My family and I currently reside at Heit's Point Lutheran Ministries on the Lake of the Ozarks. I am the Camp Pastor and my wife, DCE Janine Mallardi, is the Executive Director. Janine and I have been married for 20 wonderful years and in that time, God has blessed us with four amazing children Caleb 16, Leah 14, Hannah 13, and Abigail 11.

Over the course of my life, I have been blessed with many years of education. I received my Bachelor of Social Work degree from Florida Atlantic University, a Master of Divinity degree from Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne, IN and a Doctor of Ministry degree from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO. I have had the privilege of serving God's people in many ways. Before seminary I started and ran our church's homeless ministry in Miami FL; during seminary, I served the saints of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Stroh, IN, and on vicarage I served the saints of Zion Lutheran Church Clark, NJ. I've served at St Paul's and Trinity Lutheran Churches in Southeast Kansas and at Messiah Lutheran in Hays, KS. I was given the honor of serving LWML as the KS district pastor and was on the FORO for Lima, Peru.

A-06: Is It Inspired? How Do You Know?

This presentation will seek to show how questions regarding the Doctrine of Inspiration that led to the Seminex controversy of the 1970's continue to plague the LCMS and "Conservative" Lutherans today, though in different ways. These may be underlying some of our greatest current subtle confusions and divisions. A fresh look at the doctrine from Holy Scripture itself, Luther, Melancthon, Chemnitz, and David Scaer can clarify much for us, and lead to greater faith, confidence, and healing.

Rev. Dr. Craig Meissner has been Pastor of Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Kansas City for the past three and a half years. Prior to this he served parishes in Northern Illinois since 2003, where he was also District Life Coordinator, and chaired multiple Regional Pastoral Conferences, and the Northern Illinois Confessional Lutherans. He received M.Div (2002), S.T.M. (2010), and D. Min (2018) degrees from Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, and is currently in the Ph.D program at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Craig, his wife, Rebekah, and daughter live in KC.

A-07: Planning for Retirement

If retirement is on the horizon for you, join us for this session as we focus on retirement income – including Social Security and the Concordia Retirement Benefits – health care in retirement, and steps to take to prepare for retirement.

Paul Endorf

Paul joined Concordia Plans in 2022 as a Financial Educator working primarily with Seminary Students. Paul received his bachelor's degree in Secondary Education from Concordia Nebraska and a Master's degree in Educational Administration from UMSL. He taught business classes for 15 years at Lutheran North High School in St. Louis. Using his experience in the classroom along with knowledge of Concordia Plans, he is able to help educate workers to help them improve their overall financial health.

Paul and his wife, Katie, a Lutheran Educator, have three daughters and are members of The Lutheran Church of Webster Gardens, Missouri.

A-08: Pastoring in a Smaller Church...In a Smaller Town

75% of our LCMS churches have 100 or fewer in church. Yet these are not dying churches but churches with members who still need shepherding and are still passionate about their church...and its future.

In this session, we will talk about pastoring and serving a smaller church and what that means. It is not about numbers but about the ministry being done and how. It is not about copying larger churches and all the programs and services they can offer. It is simply about being a pastor who is making a difference.

Rev. John Schoedel is a 14th career pastor who is also a 3rd generation pastor. He grew up in Fort Wayne, IN and attended Emmanuel-St. Michel Grade School, Concordia Lutheran High School and Concordia College Bronxville, NY. Determining that the ministry was not his calling, he earned a B.A. in Counseling and an M.A. in Business administration and Finance through Webster University in Webster Groves, MO. His life experiences through his careers in managing businesses, teaching at the university level, raising money for ministries and non-profit organizations, financial advising and more provided the training in being a pastor. Since his ordination in 2019, he has served smaller churches as a vacancy pastor and now serves as the permanent pastor of St. John Lutheran Church in Beaufort, Missouri. This church was founded in 1852, is not located on a main road in Franklin County and yet has been sustained by the grace of God and the members desire to share the Good News.

B-01: A Dialogical Approach to Confirmation Instruction

Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation is the hallmark of Lutheran teachings and catechesis. For decades, many have worked their way through the catechism in a "page by page" way of instruction and learning. For some, this has worked. However, there is another way to uncover the truths of God's Word as expounded in the catechism, namely, a dialogical, "conversational" approach. In this approach, the truths of God's Word as expounded in the catechism are uncovered through a series of logical questions to be discussed. This dialogical approach can have a much more conversational feel. It has been helpful with both youth and adult confirmands.

Rev. Rod Benkendorf wanted to be a teacher since 4th grade. Having been trained as such at Concordia Seward, he served as a Lutheran High School Teacher for seven years in Houston, TX. After going to the Concordia Seminary, St. Louis for an M.Div and getting "all but dissertation" on a PhD (while still teaching part-time at Lutheran High North, St. Louis), he has served as parish pastor, in advancement/development for Lutheran Heritage Foundation, and currently back as a parish pastor at Hanover Lutheran, Cape Girardeau, MO. One of his highest passions is teaching God's Word and making the Truth of God accessible to people of all ages.

B-02: Word of Worship - CPH Initiative for Engaging Children in LSB Worship

Studies indicate that participation in intergenerational worship (i.e. Sunday morning) is an important contributor to passing on the Christian faith. Thanks to funding from Lilly Endowment Inc., Concordia Publishing House is in the early stages of an initiative to engage children in worship using Lutheran Service Book (LSB). CPH will be collaborating with the Missouri and Northern Illinois districts to develop and pilot resources for use in the pew and the home, as well as for parents, pastors, and church workers. This presentation will share the details of CPH's "Words of Worship" initiative and invite feedback in the early stages of resource development.

Rev. Dr. Jacob Corzine is the Vice President of Publishing at Concordia Publishing House. He previously served as Associate Professor of Theology at Concordia University Chicago and in campus ministry at the University of Pretoria (South Africa). He and his wife, Tiia, have three small children (5,3, and 2) who are sometimes more, sometimes less engaged in LSB worship.

B-03: Financial Wellness for All Ages

Everyone needs strong financial foundations, but our goals change as we age. Learn how to create and maintain healthy financial habits and discover actionable steps for different life stages, from managing debt to saving for retirement.

Paul Endorf

Paul joined Concordia Plans in 2022 as a Financial Educator working primarily with Seminary Students. Paul received his bachelor's degree in Secondary Education from Concordia Nebraska and a Master's degree in Educational Administration from UMSL. He taught business classes for 15 years at Lutheran North High School in St. Louis. Using his experience in the classroom along with knowledge of Concordia Plans, he is able to help educate workers to help them improve their overall financial health.

Paul and his wife, Katie, a Lutheran Educator, have three daughters and are members of The Lutheran Church of Webster Gardens, Missouri.

B-04: Restore the Roar - Caring for Those Who Serve

This presentation focuses on caring for those that currently serve our military or those that are now veterans. Topics include: reintegrating Veterans back into the Body of Christ, caring for those in your congregation that are currently serving, reaching out to family members of a loved one in the military, caring for the military spouse. Plenty of resources are presented. Come with questions and restore the roar in the military!

Rev. Dr. Steven Hokana & Chaplain Craig Muehler

Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Steven Hokana has over 26 years of experience as an active-duty U.S. Army chaplain. Hokana graduated from Concordia College New York, Bronxville, N.Y., in 1982. He earned his Master of Divinity from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in 1987 and his Doctorate of Ministry from the Oblate School of Theology, San Antonio, Texas, in 2006. He is a board-certified chaplain and an active member of the Association of Professional Chaplains, a member of the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE) and a Diplomate with the American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress.

During Hokana's military service, he provided pastoral care in diverse units, including Combat Service Support, Airborne Infantry, Light Infantry and Armor. Hokana served as Chief of United States Disciplinary Barracks, Manager of Chaplain/Chaplain Assistant Training, U.S. Army Medical Command, and Chaplain of the 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary). He twice served as ministry chief in Army hospitals.

In March of 2025, Rev. Dr. Hokana received "Fellow" status in Specialized Care Ecclesiastical Endorsement of the LCMS, a title of one of only a handful of churchworks hold.

Hokana is married to his bride, the former Mary Ophardt since July of 1983. They have three children and five grandchildren.

B-05: "He descended into hell..."

We recognize Jesus' descent into hell as part of His victory over sin, death, and the devil. But where is this written? How do our Lutheran Confessions speak about this event? And how has the Church proclaimed this act of Jesus as part of the Gospel? This session will explore these questions and offer pastors a Bible study resource for use in their congregations.

Rev. Elden D. Kohn: Child of God since March 8, 1981; husband to Molly since July 11, 2008; father of five (Matthias-14, Eleanor-12, Nehemiah-10, Micah-8 & Sylvi-3); and pastor to the saints of Zion Lutheran in Macon, MO, since July 2013. Elden is a former elementary school teacher who enjoys playing stringed instruments, reading about the Early Church, learning languages, running, and hanging out at home with his family.

B-06: "I wish it didn't exist at all!" - Luther and the Book of Esther

Luther is often quoted as saying, "I am so hostile to the book [2 Maccabees] and Esther that I wish they did not exist at all; for they Judaize too much and have much heathen perverseness." Yet, it is notable that Luther made other, more positive, references to the book of Esther and made no attempt to argue against Esther's canonicity. In this sectional, participants will gain a better understanding of Luther's statement and attitude by exploring the context of the statement and Luther's overall use of Esther.

Dr. Philip Penhallegon is Professor of Exegetical Theology and Chair of the Exegetical Department at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. In 2009, he authored "For Such a Time as This," a CPH Bible study on Esther. In 2020 he contributed to the Esther portion of the Lexham Context Commentary. Currently he is working on the Esther volume in the Concordia Commentary series.

B-07: Ministry Partnerships: Not a Handout or a Hand Up, But Hand-in-Hand

Hear the story of two congregations in another District who formally joined together for the sake of God's mission. This session will give an overview of the timeline of conversations and activities between the congregations, share the design for this particular partnership, and highlight the fundamental attitudes shared by both congregations as they endeavored together. While every situation is different, this session may provide ideas for potential avenues for partnerships in your own context.

Rev. Michael Pottschmidt has been a pastor for twenty years, serving as the Senior Pastor of two congregations: previously, Trinity Lutheran Church in Richmond, Virginia (the congregation highlighted in this presentation), and currently, St. Paul's Lutheran Church & School in Concordia, MO. Although these congregations are situated in two very different contexts, the need and goal for each is the same - connecting with their community to share the saving love of Jesus. Pastor Pottschmidt is married with two children. In addition to being a husband, father, and pastor, he has served on the boards of directors for Concordia Music Conservatory, Lutheran Women in Mission, the Rotary Club of West Richmond, Saint Paul Lutheran High School, and the Whiteman Air Force Base Community Council.

B-08: A Reader's Guide to the Catholic Epistles

The Catholic Epistles are more than a collection of books written by men other than Paul. The Epistles of James, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, & Jude can be profitably read as a cohesive unit of overarching theme(s). The evidence suggests that the ordering of the Catholic Epistles was as deliberate and divine as each book's individual composition and eventual inclusion in the canon.

Rev. Erik Rottmann is the pastor at Grace, Versailles.

C-01: BOLD About Godly Marriage

God's way for marriage is the key to every relationship in life, having been established prior to the fall in Eden and embodying the love of Jesus for His bride, the church. In a diabolically deceived world, we must BOLDLY proclaim God's way for marriage. It's the only way to healthy, joyful marriages and all other relationships. Dr. Biermann offers simple, biblical guidance to do this as drawn from CCF's Family Discipleship curriculum.

Rev. Dr. Todd Biermann is the Executive Director of the LCMS RSO Concordia Center for the Family (CCF). Having earned his MDiv at CSL and DMin at CTSFW, he served as a parish pastor for 33 years. For the past fifteen years he has taught about godly marriage across the globe, carrying it on through his service at CCF. Find out more at concordiafamily.org.

C-02: Feel Like a Slave?

Peter, James, John and Paul all called themselves slaves of Christ, but they said it with joy. Can you? If not, maybe it's time to take a look at how you see yourself and your ministry. What are we missing in that ugly and surprising word that they rejoiced to confess? Pastor Gadeken will share with you some insights from his recently published book (2025), *Slaves of Christ: A First-Century Understanding for Twenty-first Century Christians*, that just may help you find more joy in serving.

Rev. Robert Gadeken is a retired pastor living in St. Louis. He has served congregations in Iowa, Nebraska and Michigan, all with Lutheran schools. Since retiring he has served a couple of vacancies and tutors with his wife (both former teachers) at Lutheran South High School. He is a life-long learner and loves to share what he learns.

C-03: The Roaring Silence of a Congregation's Closing

What happens when, instead of roaring, your congregation has stopped functioning altogether? This session will explore the various aspects of a congregation closing its doors.

Rev. Kirk Griebel is a retired pastor living in Kansas City. He has encountered church closings from several perspectives including as a circuit visitor, pastor of a congregation that has closed, and as a fill-in pastor at congregations that are considering closure.

C-04: Developing a System of Worker Wellness in the Local Congregation

Two examples of congregation-based worker wellness will illustrate how two of our Missouri District congregations attend, care and strengthen their workers: Three volunteers from Holy Cross-O'Fallon will discuss their team's creative drive to support their pastors in the midst of our infamous 2020. Another example of systemic support is presented from the perspective of a pastor who has been a recipient of systemic support. He brings a shepherd's perspective and also serves as a circuit visitor and guest instructor at Concordia Seminary. Real-time examples will illustrate these congregation-based support systems. Come to learn how to educate and encourage the development of a professional ministry worker support team in your congregation. Tips and practical applications will be discussed.

Facilitators:

- Brian Belter – Church Worker Support Team (CWST) founding member & seminary student, Holy Cross - O'Fallon
 - Dawn Kahler - CWST founding member, Holy Cross - O'Fallon
 - Vickie Glasstetter - CWST member, Holy Cross - O'Fallon
 - Rev. Dr. Matthew Clark, Senior Pastor at Ascension Lutheran - St. Louis City
 - Rev. Marty Hasz, LPC - Director of Church Worker Support - Missouri District-LCMS
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C-05: A Sophisticated Septuagint

"And indeed," the so-called KAIGE translation style contained within 1-4 Kings of the Septuagint may have been done by a different translator than the rest of the work, but from a literary perspective the alternation between the two styles may help understand both the theological and the literary structure of the work, and (indeed!) it may also help better understand parts of both the Old Testament and the New.

Rev. Paul David Landgraf grew up on a small farm near Grafton, Wisconsin, and had a Lutheran education for the vast majority of his young life. He vicared in Queens, New York, under the Rev. Dr. Larry Vogel. He graduated from Concordia Seminary in 1990, with his final year being class president. His first call was to be an urban missionary. His current call is to serve two rural congregations (St. John, Drake, and Pilgrim, Freedom). His 1998 STM Thesis was a study of Luther's translation style.

C-06: Thriving in Small Town Rural Mission and Ministry

President Harrison and President Hagan have both laid out visions for Rural and Small Town Mission and Ministry. While taking account of the challenges facing rural ministry, we also take seriously the need to establish new work. Ministry in every county of Missouri is a good place to begin. Hear how the Institute of Rural Small Town Ministry can lend its support to you and your work.

Rev. John Perling is Circuit Visitor of the Rolla Circuit and Pastor of Fatih Ev. Lutheran Church in St. Robert, MO, on the front doorstep of Fort Leonard Wood. Pastor Perling is a 1993 graduate of CSP and a 1997 graduate of CSL with a year at Westfield House in Cambridge on the exchange program. He is writing His dissertation on second generation Lutheran Hermeneutics with the Exegetical writings of Mattias Flacius Illyricus as the case study. Pastor Perling is married to Heidi Perling, who serves as primary and volunteer music director of FELC and together they raised 3 daughters.

C-07: Lutheran Mission: Creating and Supporting a Community of Lutherans Faithful to Christ for Generations

Scripture highlights the necessity of passing along the faith to the next generation (Psalm 78:4). This Biblical approach of Catechesis, theological education, Word and Sacrament ministry, and works of mercy produces generational Lutherans. It ensures that people learn and grow in the sound doctrine and practice clearly distinguished in our Lutheran tradition. It's a Biblical approach that crosses cultures and borders. Lutheran Mission is a team effort that include pastors, church workers and laity as they faithfully serve in their vocations, using their God given talents, and work together toward the goal of making disciples for generations to come.

Rev. Dr. Mark Rabe & Rev. James Baumgartner

Rev. Dr. Mark Rabe has served as the Director of Missionary Recruitment with the LCMS Office of International Mission since December 2021. Mark, his wife Stefanie, and their four children served as missionaries with the Office of International Mission from 2015-2021 where he taught at Mekane Yesus Seminary in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. In addition, he has served congregations in Oroville, California and Albany, Georgia.

C-08: Protecting Your Religious Freedoms

There is a great opportunity to advance the Kingdom through the church. At the same time, churches and ministries are facing increasing legal threats. There are many recent court cases that impact churches and ministries. Now more than ever, it is critical to proactively protect your church's rights to operate according to Biblically held beliefs.

Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) is the world's largest Christian legal organization, winning 80% of our cases. ADF has played various roles in 77 Supreme Court victories. Since 2011, ADF has represented parties in 16 victories at the Supreme Court. ADF has three cases at the US Supreme Court next term. We exist to keep the door open for the Gospel and defend each person's God-given right to live and speak the truth. We contend for the truth in law, policy, and the public square, and equip the alliance to do the same. Our alliance includes 5,000 network attorneys, 3,000 Blackstone Legal Fellows, and nearly 4,500 religious associations and organizations in the Church and Ministry Alliance.

Presenters: Gena McFarland, Alliance Defending Freedom Regional Manager, Church and Ministry Alliance and legal staff from ADF.