

August 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 LCMS Youth Gathering District Event, held at The Bayou Barn in Marrero, La.  
*Photo: DCE Dan Kreienkamp*

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# FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Dear friends,*



The Word of God describes health in more than just physical terms. Throughout the Scriptures, we find an emphasis on concern for the body, soul, and spirit. In Lutheran circles, we often refer to the “Wellness Wheel,” which highlights six areas of health—relational, emotional, physical, vocational, financial, and intellectual—all ultimately supported by spiritual health.

Church workers and laypeople alike will struggle at different points in life with the various areas of wellness. This can mean anything from recovering from knee surgery, to navigating the cost of a new roof, to working through a strained family relationship. However, the Word of God provides hope, guidance, and support for Christians in all seasons of life and health and wellness.

People come to receive pastoral care for more than just matters of spiritual health. Pastors bring the Word of God to bear on the relational struggles that people face. They offer encouragement and hope in the midst of the vocational challenges, and churches even provide support for members in the midst of financial struggles. What a blessing it is to know that your church cares for your whole being—body, soul, and spirit.

It is good for us individuals to regularly see a physician for physical health checkups. In the same way, God also works through faithful Christian counselors, who provide care for the emotional needs of those experiencing struggles. At the same time, pastors are responsible for the care of souls. God’s people should avail themselves of the pastoral care their pastors provide, while also understanding that some concerns may go beyond a pastor’s specific responsibility and skills. In such cases, pastors recognize the importance of referring individuals to Christian counselors who are better equipped to address emotional or mental health needs that go beyond the care of souls.

Pastors also need care for their souls and all the same aspects of health and wellness. Congregational elders serve well when they make sure that their pastor has the support that he needs in all those aspects of health and wellness, including a “Father Confessor,” another pastor to provide pastoral care.

May God bless you all with health—of body, soul, and spirit—through our triune God!

Fraternally in Christ,

*R. Lee Hagan*

President Lee Hagan



# TOMORROW'S Teachers & Preachers

# Kicks Off Fifth Year

BY LEAH SIEVEKING

It took a while to recognize it, but the encouragement had been there for years. Rev. Will Hanke of Mount Calvary Lutheran in Brentwood marveled at the way both his grandfathers pastored congregations, but the thought of doing that himself seemed far-fetched. His uncles were “in his ear” about the gifts they saw in him, but that didn’t sway Pastor Hanke either. The tipping point came when he was listening to a story as a confirmation student at his home congregation, Timothy Lutheran in Blue Springs.

***“Anyone can encourage someone to consider ministry.” —Rev. Will Hanke***



*Pictured above: Rev. Will Hanke and his family.  
Photo provided by Pastor Hanke.*

“When my senior pastor told his story, it changed,” shares Pastor Hanke. “I heard a normal guy pursuing a normal career feeling led by the Holy Spirit to be a pastor. I felt like normal guys do this, and that was the moment it changed. All the family members, friends, Sunday School teachers, and words from pastors sunk in and I, from that moment on, pursued the path to being a pastor.”

Our annual campaign promoting church work vocations and bolstering the endowment that provides scholarships for university and seminary students preparing for these roles—*Tomorrow’s Teachers & Preachers*—is a key element in this work we do together. For more than 40 years, the funds from this endowment have been distributed to men and women who went on to serve God in Missouri and throughout the world.

Not surprisingly, there was uncertainty for Pastor Hanke on how to fund his education at Concordia Chicago and beyond. He credits many partners—including the Missouri District—that prayed for him and gave financial gifts, and he highlights how this is a role we all can play. “Anyone can encourage someone to consider ministry.”

For the fifth year in a row, the Missouri District is pleased to promote *Tomorrow’s Teachers & Preachers* and extend the invitation to participate. **Would you please prayerfully consider making a gift to the scholarship endowment that will provide support to those furthering their education in preparation for these roles in God’s kingdom?** Gifts can be made online at [mo.lcms.org/donate](http://mo.lcms.org/donate), via mail, or through your congregation’s offering plate.

Encouragement can come in many different forms from many different sources, as God uses the various gifts of His children to accomplish His will. Thank you for your continued support and encouragement!

*Leah Sieveking is director of mission advancement at the LCMS Missouri District.*

## WAYS TO GIVE

Visit [mo.lcms.org/donate](http://mo.lcms.org/donate),  
scan the QR code, or mail  
a check to:

Missouri District LCMS  
660 Mason Ridge Center Dr.  
Suite 100,  
St. Louis, MO 63141





## Missouri District Youth Gather in the Bayou

BY DCE DAN KREIENKAMP

Nearly 500 youth and adult leaders from across the Missouri District came together just outside of New Orleans for a one-of-a-kind event held at the Bayou Barn. The setting was chosen intentionally for its vibrant local flair—the location: the swampy wetlands; the food: Cajun cuisine; and the activities: music with a Southern flair and alligator petting.

District Coordinator DCE Mark Engelhardt of Our Savior Lutheran Church in St. Charles, Mo., reflected, “While it was a hot and steamy afternoon, we had lots of fun playing yard games, dancing, and enjoying some of the best jambalaya we had all week.”

Our youth and adults were no strangers to enduring the hot conditions in the heat of New Orleans throughout the entire week.

The theme of the LCMS Youth Gathering was Endure, and President Rev. Dr. R. Lee Hagan encouraged the youth with Heb. 10:36: “For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.” It was truly amazing to see youth from all around Missouri—and the entire world—seeking God’s will and praising the name of Jesus together with one voice.

District Coordinator Sam Moore, math and religion teacher at St. Paul Lutheran Church, Concordia, Mo., emphasized the purpose behind the District gathering: “When we plan for the District event at the Youth Gathering, we provide an opportunity for the youth and adult leaders of the Missouri District to connect with each other. For some, this might be the very first time connecting, and for others, this helps continue the relationships that are built across our District.”

At the heart of the event were those relationships, something Elizabeth, a youth from Zion Lutheran Church in St. Charles, shared, “The District Event was a great way to finish our week at the Youth Gathering, and I loved seeing friends from local schools along with meeting new friends from all around Missouri.” The event was a true celebration of faith, fellowship, and fun with a cloud of witnesses from Missouri—just with a Cajun twist.




*DCE Dan Kreienkamp is director of family life and youth at the LCMS Missouri District.*



# Releases 2026-28 Strategic Plan

Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) is pleased to announce the release of its Strategic Plan for fiscal years 2026-28, a forward-looking roadmap that reflects LCEF's ongoing commitment to supporting the ministries of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) through faith-driven financial and strategic solutions.

 [Download the Strategic Plan](#)

## "This new plan reflects both where we've been and where God is calling us to go." — Bart Day

Built around six strategic pillars—Purpose, People, Partnerships, Platforms, Products, and Profitability—the plan outlines clear priorities and measurable goals for the next three years. It builds upon the foundation laid by LCEF's previous five-year plan, which strengthened the organization's people, processes, and technology, while navigating the complexities of a changing financial landscape.

"This new plan reflects both where we've been and where God is calling us to go," said LCEF President and CEO Bart Day. "We remain rooted in the mission of the church, committed to excellence, and eager to walk alongside LCMS ministries as they grow and proclaim the Gospel. Together, we are building a stronger financial future for the church—today and for generations to come."

This Strategic Plan includes updated mission-driven goals, revised global ends policies, and key performance indicators designed to ensure alignment with the needs of LCMS congregations, schools, Recognized Service Organizations, and church workers. It also affirms LCEF's role as a proactive catalyst for ministry growth, equipping partners with the tools, resources, and support they need to flourish. The full strategic plan is available for [download on the LCEF website](#).

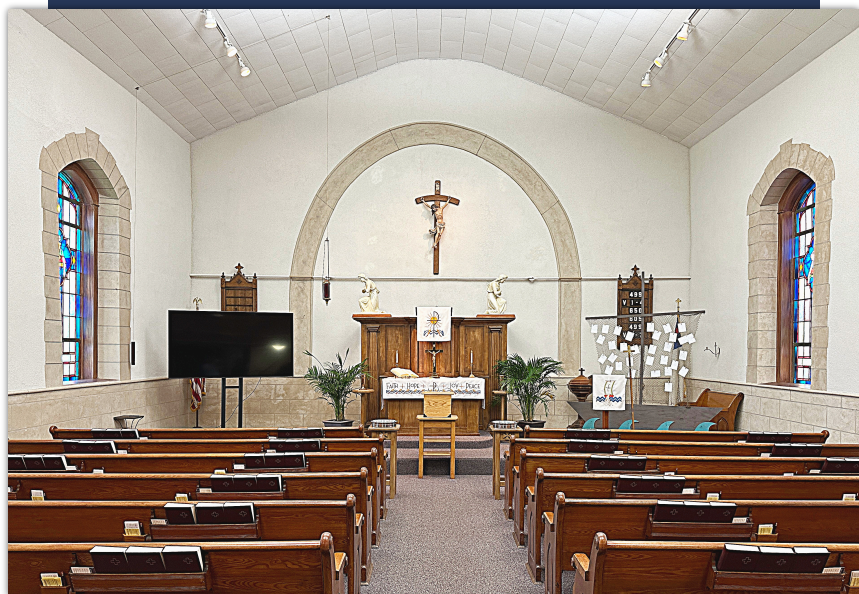
## About LCEF

Since 1978, LCEF has provided financial resources and expertise to empower ministries and individuals within the LCMS. From loans and investments to ministry and real estate solutions, LCEF helps grow God's Kingdom by connecting faith and finances.

Mike Wadley is your LCEF Missouri District vice president and is available to assist you and your congregation. Feel free to reach out to him at 314-885-6489 or [mike.wadley@lcef.org](mailto:mike.wadley@lcef.org) to discuss your needs.



# ONE MINISTRY, TWO CAMPUSES



*Pictured above: Inside the sanctuary of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in New Melle, Mo. Photo by: Mike Wadley*

BY REV. PETER KIRBY

A shining example of churches working together to address common challenges has come out of the recent merger of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Wentzville and St. Paul's Lutheran Church in New Melle. St. Paul's, a founding congregation of the LCMS 181 years ago, is the mother church to five area congregations, including Immanuel. Yet in recent years St. Paul's struggled with declining attendance and aging facilities.

In 2020, unable to call a pastor on its own, St. Paul's partnered with Immanuel, which called a third pastor to serve St. Paul's. That pastor worked to bring about change toward a discipleship and outreach mindset for St. Paul's but found progress slow. As he received a call elsewhere in 2024, St. Paul's approached Immanuel leadership about the possibility of a merger.

St. Paul's elder Jeff Schneider reflected, "The merger is somewhat of a continuation of an age-old tradition—children caring for aging parents. In this case, the daughter church is caring for the mother church that aided in bringing the daughter church into the world."

The merger process took about a year and involved leadership meetings between the congregations, consulting with other churches who had gone through mergers, and soliciting legal advice from an attorney. Immanuel Executive Director for Facilities Russ Hoppe explained, "We consider the spiritual side of things as merged in 2020. The legal side was finalized June 27, 2025. Each congregation has strengths that benefit the joined church. As the community grows, we see a great opportunity for reaching more people."

The merger operates under the name Immanuel Lutheran Church and School: One Ministry on Two Campuses. Senior Pastor Rev. Jason Auringer looks to the future, "We want to be honorable and respectful to the longevity of St. Paul's, while bringing about some changes that will give us an opportunity to be faithful to the Great Commission. There is a place for St. Paul's in God's Kingdom work, and we want to join forces to make every effort to be faithful to share the story of Jesus and the Church."

District President Rev. Dr. R. Lee Hagan reflects, "It's great to see two congregations put their common work of the care for souls and reaching the lost above anything else that might distract them or divide them. I pray that more congregations will learn from their example."

**"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations," (Matt. 28:19a, ESV).**



# Effective Family Ministry

BY DEB JURCHEN

The success of family ministry can be measured by the climate and culture of supporting families in fulfilling their household vocations in the Christian faith.

1. **Create authentic, intentional connections for the whole family**, with a focus on parental support and mentorship in developing habits of faith at home.
2. **Engage older adults with younger families.** Intentional intergenerational connections add value to both groups and strengthen the body of Christ.
3. **Identify where families in your congregation already gather**—before or after services, midweek confirmation or Bible study, or school pick-up. Focus on intentionally connecting households during these times by highlighting families or showing a member slideshow during church coffee fellowship time. Be present as a ministry leader and model authentic connection.
4. **Identify household rhythms and gathering places.** Model how to attach a faith practice to existing routines, like bedtime Bible stories, driveway prayers, or mealtime devotions.
5. **Model, model, model.** Great resources to equip families for home faith formation are everywhere, but how do you encourage families to utilize them? Model use before or after service, in announcements, or during the children's messages. Always model use of a resource at events where resources are given.
6. **Try "Name Tag Sunday."** Two or four times a year, provide disposable name tags for everyone to wear on Sunday mornings. It builds familiarity and encourages conversation.
7. **Make invitations personal.** Strive for the most thoughtful form of communication—such as a face-to-face conversation, phone call, handwritten note, individualized text, or email—when inviting families to participate in church events, programs, or connection opportunities.
8. **Ask for feedback.** Use a questionnaire in the bulletin or online surveys, or simply ask how connected and supported families feel and how to improve.
9. **Follow Up.** Use events as a starting point to build relationships and deepen connections through follow-up conversations. Empower those who have been equipped to mentor others.
10. **Wrap your arms around parents.** Support parents through intergenerational mentorship—prayer partners, "church aunts and uncles," or small groups. Parents are often overwhelmed and lonely. Personal connection and support are keys.

*Deb Jurchen is family ministry consultant at the LCMS Nebraska District.*





# SHINE! 2026 — Save the date!

Here we go again, Missouri District! Our annual statewide servant event—*SHINE!*—will take place April 10–19, 2026. As in previous years, the concept is simple: form a group, identify a need in your community, and let God's light shine by serving your neighbors. It's all about living out Matthew 5:16!

Participants are free to wear whatever suits them next year! It could be your brightest outfit to match our theme Bible verse, a servant event T-shirt from another year, or you can purchase the 2026 *SHINE!* T-shirt at a special online store created just for this occasion. Details on registration and shirt ordering will be available soon. Shine on, Missouri!

## UPCOMING EVENTS

SEPT  
1

### LEA CONVOCAION VOLUNTEER DEADLINE

Oct. 2–4, America's Center Convention Complex, St. Louis, MO

SEPT  
13, 27

### PRE-RETIREMENT AND TREASURER WORKSHOPS

Sept. 13 - Trinity Lutheran Church, Cape Girardeau, MO  
Sept. 27 - Missouri District Office, St. Louis, MO



### LEARN MORE

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



## A LOOK AHEAD

OCT. 2–4: LEA CONVOCAION  
OCT. 12–14: PASTORS CONFERENCE  
OCT. 25, NOV. 8: PRE-RETIREMENT AND TREASURER WORKSHOPS  
NOV. 8 TELL THE NEXT GENERATION CONFERENCE  
NOV. 8: PRE-RETIREMENT AND TREASURER WORKSHOPS  
NOV. 15: LUTHERAN COLLEGE FAIR

JAN. 31, FEB. 7, 21, 28, MAR. 7: E<sup>2</sup> CONFERENCES  
FEB. 6: MID-YEAR ADMIN. CONFERENCE  
MAR. 7: EARLY CHILDHOOD CONFERENCE  
JULY 16–17, 2026: SUMMER ADMIN. CONF.  
JULY 18–23, 2026: SYNOD CONVENTION  
SEPT. 25–26: SERVANT LEADERSHIP ACADEMY