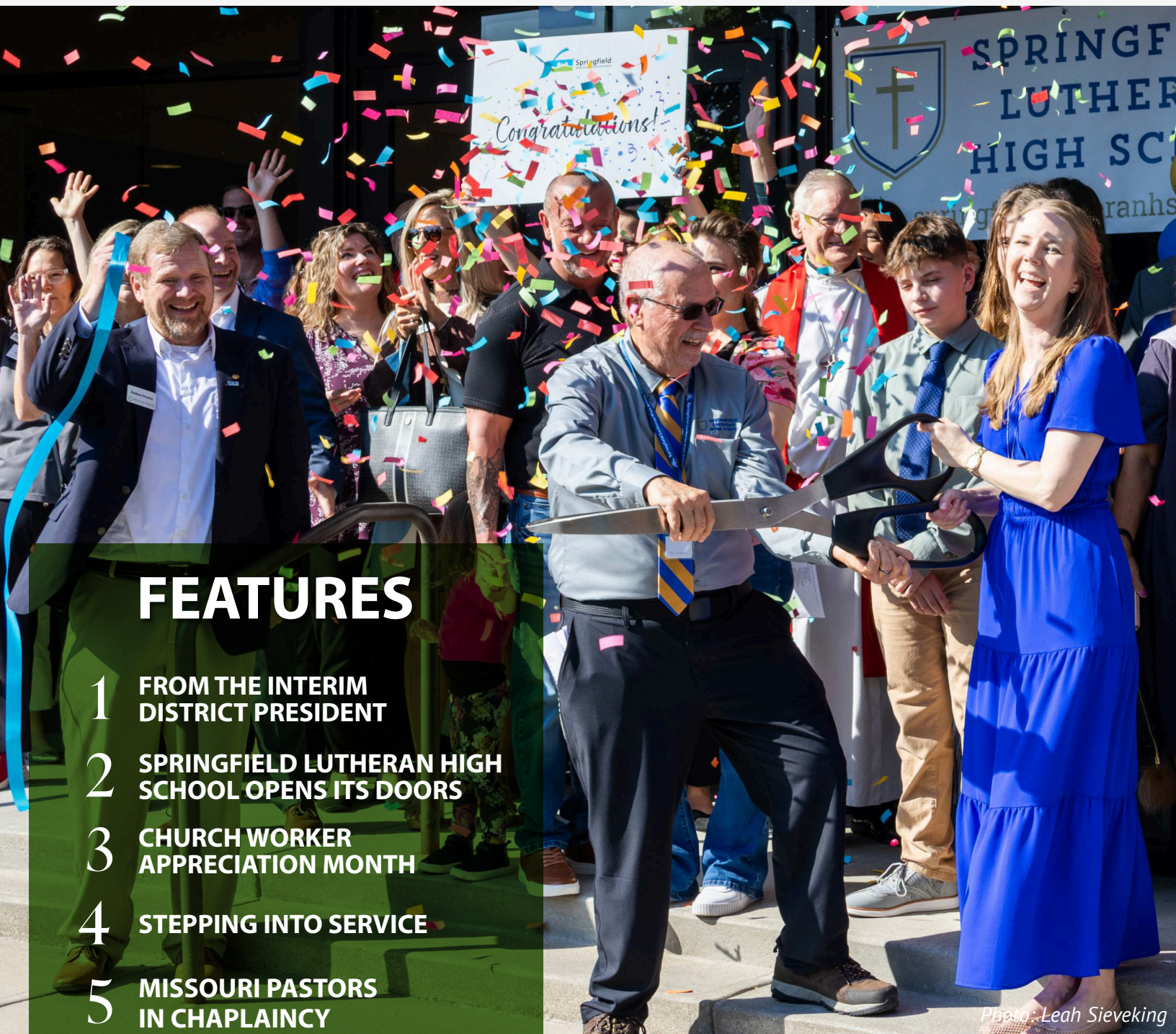


September 2025

# The VOICE



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Photo: Leah Sieveking

The Missouri District is to serve and encourage congregations to fulfill the Great Commission and to promote unity of the true faith. Pictured above: Aug. 13, Springfield Lutheran High School opened its doors with an inaugural chapel and ribbon-cutting.

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# FROM THE INTERIM DISTRICT PRESIDENT

Dear friends,

I will speak of Christ.

“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ ... raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and *gave him as head over all things to the church*, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all,” (Eph. 1:17,20b–23, ESV).

“We are to grow up in every way *into him who is the head, into Christ*, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love,” (Eph. 4:15b–16, ESV).

“*Christ is the head of the church*, his body, and is himself its Savior,” (Eph. 5:23b, ESV).

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. *And he is the head of the body, the church*,” (Colo. 1:15–18a, ESV)

Christ is the Head of the Church, and we are His body. Do not be afraid.

Christ knows your needs. Christ knows the needs of your family. Christ knows the needs of your congregation. Christ knows the needs of your school. Christ knows the needs of President Hagan as he recovers from his health challenge.

Christ is always present and imparts His Spirit to us.

We trust You, Lord Jesus. You are the Head of the Church. At Your bidding we follow, knowing You go before us to prepare the way.



Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Craig D. Otto".

Interim District President Rev. Craig D. Otto



# Springfield Lutheran High School Opens Its Doors

BY JOSH SWARTZ

Springfield Lutheran High School joyfully celebrated its inaugural start on Aug. 13, 2025, marking a historic milestone for Lutheran education in Springfield, Missouri. The day began with the school's first chapel service, centered on the mission of partnering with families to form students into faithful disciples of Christ and accomplished scholars who joyfully serve others. Worship and prayer set the tone, grounding the celebration in the school's core values of Christ-Centered Community, Relationship-Driven Culture, and Educational Excellence.

Following chapel, the community gathered outside for the ribbon-cutting ceremony. Confetti filled the air as students, parents, faculty, and community members cheered, giving thanks to God for His provision. This public moment of joy signaled the official opening of the school and the beginning of its ministry.

Springfield Lutheran High School starts its journey already recognized for excellence, having achieved accreditation through the National Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA), the Missouri Nonpublic School Accreditation Association (MNSAA), and the National Federation of Nonpublic School State Accrediting Associations (NFNSSAA).

In the spirit of the occasion, the words of C.F.W. Walther, from his 25th anniversary address to the Synod in 1872, rang true: *"Our congregational schools are the nurseries of the Church, from which the young trees, when they have grown older are transplanted into the fruit orchard of the Church. The better the condition of our schools, the better will conditions be in our congregations... next to pure doctrine, our schools are the greatest treasure we possess."*

With praise to God for His blessings, Springfield Lutheran High School looks forward to nurturing the hearts, minds, and spirits of its students for generations to come. **Soli Deo Gloria!**

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



Photo: Leah Sieveking

Pictured above (from left): Missouri District Director of Schools Josh Swartz, Principal Tim Zeigler, and Executive Director Stephanie Grandestaff at Springfield Lutheran High School.



# Planning for Church Worker Appreciation Month

BY REV. MARTY HASZ, LPC

In two short weeks, Church Worker Appreciation Month begins this October—a dedicated time to recognize and uplift those who serve in ministry. This annual expression of gratitude reflects an ongoing relationship initiated by Jesus Christ. Through the faithful service of church and school workers, communities receive the Gospel and spiritual care. Serving in ministry can often feel like swimming upstream—a lonely and challenging journey. That's why building a culture of care and mutual support is essential for sustaining emotional and spiritual well-being.

Many individuals may not be aware that October is Church Worker Appreciation Month or have a plan in place to show their care and support. Now is the perfect time to come together and develop meaningful ways to encourage ministry workers. Expressions of gratitude are most impactful when part of ongoing, intentional care.

Ministry leaders and teams are encouraged to use the resources below to create thoughtful plans to honor and support ministry workers—whether part-time or full-time. Supporting workers also means caring for their spouses and children, who often share in the demands and sacrifices of ministry life. Recognizing the whole family's role in ministry strengthens the culture of care.

Church workers themselves are invited to engage in training and relationship-building opportunities that foster mutual encouragement with lay leaders and volunteers. These supportive relationships not only sustain current workers but help raise up future leaders in the Church.

Together, congregations, schools, and ministry workers can build a culture of encouragement that reflects the enduring love and faithfulness of Christ.

## Helpful Resources for Planning

### **LCMS Missouri District**

#### **Congregational Worker Wellness Teams:**

A practical guide for building a culture of wellness and mutual care within your ministry team.

### **The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS)** **Church Worker Wellness Resources:**

Access articles, tools, and support networks that promote emotional, spiritual, and relational well-being for church workers.

### **The Grace Place Podcast:**

Features episodes focused on worker wellness, mutual support, and emotional and spiritual care in ministry. Director of Church Worker Support Rev. Marty Hasz, LPC, will be featured in the September episode. Check it out once it drops!

The following tools can help congregations, schools, and ministry teams take intentional steps toward encouraging, supporting, and caring for church workers year-round:





# STEPPING INTO SERVICE

## KNOLHOFF RETURNS AS INTERIM DIRECTOR OF MISSION SERVICES

BY CHRISTIE HAMPTON



*Rev. Dr. Wayne Knolhoff recently stepped into the interim role of director of mission services at the Missouri District, bringing with him a passion for whole-life stewardship and a deep connection to congregations. He and his wife, Joyce, live in Ballwin and are blessed with three children and six grandchildren.*

### **Could you share more about yourself?**

"I have been a Lutheran teacher and parish pastor, served in Iowa District East and the Missouri District in the areas of mission and stewardship, worked as the director for stewardship for the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and worked as the director of placement at Concordia Seminary. In retirement, I assist in teaching the Finances in Ministry class at the Seminary and volunteer with Orphan Grain Train."

### **What are you most looking forward to in this season of ministry?**

"It's really connecting with the missionaries—walking alongside them and serving where we can. That's what's impressed me about the District office. I get to see servants of God using diverse gifts to accomplish His work."

### **What do you appreciate most about stepping back into this role with the District?**

"I appreciate the opportunity to see the larger Church at work. The District staff, pastors, and congregations—faithful servants doing what God has called them to do. It's amazing to see how God uses many people with different gifts to fulfill His mission."

### **Why is mission work important for congregations today?**

"Mission is important to God, so it should be to us. Acts 1:8 is special to me—when Jesus says, 'But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.' That starts right where we are—here, near, and far—carrying the Gospel to the ends of the earth."

### **How can congregations and individuals partner with mission efforts in the District?**

"Prayer is number one—pray for workers in the harvest. Second, give and share the resources God has blessed you with so the Gospel can be advanced. Then act—participate in initiatives like *SHINE!* and urban and campus ministries. Nearly half of Missouri's six million people are unchurched. There's plenty to do."

*Knolhoff welcomes anyone interested in mission to reach out—he's available at [wayne.knolhoff@mo.lcms.org](mailto:wayne.knolhoff@mo.lcms.org) or by phone at 314-590-6205. "I love to talk about missions and opportunities for God to lead us," he says. His return is a hopeful reminder of faithful service: "Lord, if there is any way I can help in the kingdom, show me, and I'll do it."*

**"That starts right where we are—here, near, and far—carrying the Gospel to the ends of the earth." — Rev. Dr. Wayne Knolhoff**

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



# MISSOURI PASTORS IN CHAPLAINCY

BY REV. PETER KIRBY

Congratulations to Rev. Guillaume Williams, pastor at Hope Lutheran Chapel in Osage Beach, Mo., who was honored with the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) Missouri Wing's Chaplain of the Year award on March 22, 2025. He is one of only four chaplains serving the Missouri Wing for the past eight years.

His involvement began when his daughter joined a CAP squadron that needed a chaplain. Since then, he's led monthly character development classes, imparting Christian virtues to the cadets, and provided counseling and prayer support to cadets and senior members.

Williams also assists at summer encampment, leading devotions, music, and prayer, while offering encouragement and spiritual care throughout the week. "It has been great getting to know the cadets and being a positive influence," he says. One cadet, moved by William's example, was confirmed and joined his Lutheran church—bringing his family as well.



*Photo provided by Rev. Guillaume Williams*

*Pictured right: Col. Jen Smith, Missouri Wing commander, Civil Air Patrol, U.S. Air Force Auxiliary, presents Rev. Guillaume Williams with the Civil Air Patrol Missouri Wing's Chaplain of the Year award, honoring his dedicated service in ministry and chaplaincy.*

Rev. Kyle Castens of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Festus has served as chaplain to the Festus Fire Department since 2014. His chaplaincy began after a simple conversation with the fire chief and captain. "I thanked them for being responsive in our lives," he said, "and asked how the church could be responsive in theirs."

★ ★ ★  
**Just ask,  
'How can we be  
more responsive  
in your lives?'"**  
**— Rev. Kyle Castens**  
★ ★ ★

"The work is broad and often comes unexpectedly," Castens said. "But it centers around Christ's vocation of service and care." The fire department's guidelines call for the chaplain to be available 24/7, offering counseling, tending to the injured, and addressing spiritual needs during emergencies.

The Immanuel congregation supports first responders with meals, snacks, and service Bibles for EMS, police, and fire personnel. Castens encourages other congregations to do the same: "A plate of cookies and a warm smile can go a long way. Pastors, visit your local responders. Just ask, 'How can we be more responsive in your lives?'"

Pray for our pastors who serve their communities through chaplaincy and consider how your church might extend its ministry by building relationships in similar ways with local first responders.



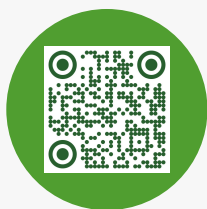
# SUPPORT LUTHERAN EDUCATION



## DIRECT YOUR TAX DOLLARS TO MOSCHOLARS

MOScholars is a tax credit program that provides scholarships for students attending Missouri LCMS schools. To date, more than \$2.3 million has been awarded by the Missouri District through the program. With no additional cost and minimal effort, being a part of this opportunity is easy.

## BEGIN THE PROCESS TODAY



Scan or visit  
[mo.lcms.org/mo-scholars](https://mo.lcms.org/mo-scholars)  
to reserve your tax credits



Complete the prompts and select  
“The Missouri District”  
for the EAO



\*Mail your check to the Missouri  
District or send funds electronically  
by using the link on our website.

\*Note your confirmation number in the memo and make the check payable to “Missouri District LCMS.”  
Mail to: Missouri District LCMS, 660 Mason Ridge Center Dr., Suite 100, St. Louis, MO 63141

It's a win for taxpayers, students, families, and LCMS schools in our state. Thank you for your participation!



**Missouri District**  
THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD

Questions? Contact  
Director of Mission Advancement Leah Sieveking  
[leah.sieveking@mo.lcms.org](mailto:leah.sieveking@mo.lcms.org) • 314-590-6211



# 2025 Missouri District Convention Recap

Thank you to everyone who attended and contributed to the success of the 2025 Missouri District Convention, held June 22–24 in Columbia, Mo. This year's theme, *Bold Hope in Christ* (2 Cor. 3:12), was reflected throughout the event in worship, presentations, and fellowship.

Convention materials—including the Workbook, *Today's Business*, videos, and the newly released Proceedings—are available at [mo.lcms.org/district-convention](https://mo.lcms.org/district-convention).



## UPCOMING EVENTS

SEPT  
-NOV

### PRE-RETIREMENT AND TREASURER WORKSHOPS

Sept. 27 - Missouri District Office, St. Louis, MO  
Oct. 25 - Timothy Lutheran Church, Blue Springs, MO  
Nov. 8 - Faith Lutheran Church, Springfield, MO

OCT  
2-4

### LEA CONVOCATION

America's Center Convention Complex, St. Louis, MO

OCT  
12-14

### PASTORS CONFERENCE

Margaritaville Resort, Osage Beach, MO

#### 2025

OCT 24–25: YOUTHLEAD MISSOURI RETREAT  
NOV 8: TELL THE NEXT GENERATION CONFERENCE  
NOV 14–16: ELDERS RETREAT  
NOV 15: LUTHERAN COLLEGE FAIR

#### 2026

JAN 31, FEB. 7, 21, 28, MAR. 7: E<sup>2</sup> CONFERENCES  
FEB 6: MID-YEAR ADMIN. CONFERENCE  
MAR 7: EARLY CHILDHOOD CONFERENCE  
APR 17–19: DISTRICT YOUTH GATHERING  
JUL 16–17: SUMMER ADMIN. CONFERENCE  
JUL 18–23: LCMS SYNOD CONVENTION  
SEPT 25–26: SERVANT LEADERSHIP ACADEMY  
OCT 18–23: PROFESSIONAL CHURCH WORKERS CONFERENCE

### LEARN MORE

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

