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The VOICE



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

Pictured above: The Bible.

Photo by: Christie Hampton

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear friends,

It is said that memorization has fallen out of fashion in our current culture. People suggest that children are incapable of committing things to memory. However, it would seem that the evidence suggests otherwise. Just watch and listen to a stadium full of screaming fans belting out their favorite singalong songs. It is not that children are incapable of memorization, rather, they have been led to believe that it's not that important. Psalm 119, the longest chapter in the Bible, extols the blessings that come from treasuring the Word of God.

The child of God holds the Word sacred as it is preached, prayed, sung, and meditated on as a part of one's devotional life. While it is a wonderful practice to read from the Bible, the Lutheran Confessions, and the hymnal, committing them to memory is also part of the practice of holding the Word of God sacred. What is described in Psalm 119 is one who meditates on the Word of God each day and is prepared for what each day brings.

What does it look like? It looks like the father who cradles his newborn daughter in his arms in the NICU unit and sings "I Am Jesus' Little Lamb" as a source of comfort for them both. It looks like the teenage girl who looks in the mirror and says to herself, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." It looks like the nursing home resident whose eyes have failed her, but whose memory remains strong enough that she is still able to pray the Psalms. It looks like the man with Alzheimer's disease who confesses his sin before receiving absolution and the Lord's Supper.

We can take the Bible, the Lutheran Confessions, and the hymnal with us wherever we go, whether in print or on our devices. Thanks be to God that we can meditate on God's Word no matter where we go in this life because we carry it in our hearts. May God strengthen your faith and lighten your path with His holy Word.



Fraternally in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. Lee Hagan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rev. Dr. R. Lee Hagan
President

RECONCILIATION THAT FEEDS WORKER RETENTION A STANDARD IN MISSOURI DISTRICT MINISTRIES

BY REV. MARTY HASZ, LPC

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Matt. 5:9, ESV).

Healthy ministry relationships are essential for sustaining faithful church work. One of the most significant ways congregations can support church worker retention is by cultivating Biblical reconciliation skills among staff and ministry leaders.

Conflict is a normal part of life in a fallen world, but unresolved conflict can quickly lead to discouragement and burnout in ministry settings. When reconciliation skills are absent or underdeveloped, even small tensions can grow into long-term division that affects both workers and congregations.

“Having a Christ-centered perspective as a filter for viewing life’s circumstances leads to unity and joy among God’s people.”

– Director of Church Worker Support Rev. Marty Hasz, LPC

Biblical reconciliation does not ignore sin or minimize pain. Instead, it calls God’s people into confession, forgiveness and restoration rooted in Christ. Acknowledging our own contributions to conflict becomes a place where the Holy Spirit works in healing and renewed unity is achieved through the Gospel.

Missouri District staff are committed to supporting congregations and church workers with encouragement and practical resources during challenging seasons. No one is meant to carry ministry burdens alone. As Paul reminds us, God defines our identity and ministry calling: “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:20, ESV).

The Personal Peacemaking Course from Ambassadors of Reconciliation provides foundational training in Biblical conflict resolution and reconciliation practices for church workers and leaders.

Next steps for congregations and leaders:

- **Include reconciliation training in onboarding for staff, volunteers, and elected leaders.**
- **Encourage elders and ministry leaders to complete the Personal Peacemaking Course.**
- **Incorporate Biblical peacemaking into ongoing leadership development.**
- **Utilize available District support during seasons of conflict or transition.**



When congregations invest in Christ-centered peacemaking, they strengthen unity, support their workers, and build healthier ministry environments. Through ongoing reconciliation shaped by the Gospel, the church is equipped to serve faithfully together in their God-given mission.

Rev. Marty Hasz, LPC, is the director of church worker support at the LCMS Missouri District.

ZION LUTHERAN BREAKS GROUND ON NEW CHURCH BUILDING

BY SHIRLEY BATTON

Zion Lutheran Church of Poplar Bluff marked the future construction of a new church with a groundbreaking ceremony and service of thanksgiving March 1 at its property on Shelby Road.

Congregation President Ray Batton welcomed attendees and called the occasion a historic milestone more than 30 years in the making. He encouraged members to use the opportunity to invite others to hear God's message of love and salvation.

Member Randy Garrett shared a history of the congregation, which began Feb. 18, 1897. Early growth led to a church at Ninth and Cedar, followed by decades of ministry as the congregation expanded its facilities, later purchasing land on Oak Grove Road in 1993 and, after years of planning, sold part of the property in 2023 to help fund construction of a new church.

The Rev. Justin Sponaugle, installed as pastor in 2021, led the service, which included hymns and a message emphasizing God's presence with His people.

"God has graciously chosen to dwell with His people," Sponaugle said. "After the Exodus, we remember God dwelling with His people in the Tabernacle and Temple, until the Temple's fulfillment in God's Son, our Lord Jesus, when God 'tabernacled' among us. Now, after Jesus' ascension, God continues to dwell with us by His Word and Spirit."

Sponaugle initiated the groundbreaking, turning three spadefuls of earth in the name of the Holy Trinity.



Photo by: Zac Batton

“The church which will be built here may serve as a place where God will cause His name to dwell and where He will come to His people and bless them.”

— REV. JUSTIN SPONAUGLE

Committee members, architect Elmer Wind and contractor Ed Norton joined him, followed by attendees. A highlight of the ceremony was 95-year-old member Irene Hamm, who also turned three spadefuls of earth (*Pictured above*).

Shirley Batton is building chairman for Zion Lutheran Church of Poplar Bluff.

CHRIST IS RISEN

1 corinthians 15

..... INDEED



Every three years, the LCMS gathers for its National Synod Convention—an opportunity to worship, pray, plan, and make decisions as a church body. The 69th Regular Convention will be held July 18–23, 2026, in Phoenix, Ariz. Congregations, circuits, and districts play a key role in preparing for this event well in advance. As we approach the Synod Convention, resources and links to important dates, responsibilities, the Convention Workbook, the First Edition of *Today's Business*, and additional information are available on the [website](#).

The Synod President Election is currently underway via internet balloting, June 6–30. Eligible pastoral and lay voters previously registered by their congregations are participating in this process. No opportunity will be provided to add names to the slate of five candidates. Election results, which may require more than one round to achieve a majority, will be announced at least two weeks prior to the convention.



Pictured from left (in order of highest nominating votes): Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison (900), Rev. Dr. Joel D. Biermann (334), Rev. Benjamin "Ben" T. Ball (311), Rev. Brady L. Finner (148), and Rev. Peter K. Lange (65).

KEY DATES

- July 4, 2026 – Synod President Election results announced
- July 11, 2026 – Deadline for comments on resolutions in *Today's Business*
- July 17–18, 2026 – Floor Committee Hearings (Open and Closed)
- July 18–23, 2026 – 69th LCMS Synod Convention in Phoenix, AZ

FAITH FORMATION RESOURCES

BY DCE PAM NUMMELA

INTRODUCTION

Are you looking for faith formation resources for your family or your congregation? Here are great places for you to start:



The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod website:
[LCMS.org/family](https://www.lcms.org/family)

On the first page you can meet Rev. Andy Becker, director of family ministry for the LCMS Office of National Mission and learn the LCMS goals to support Christ-centered homes. Three components on the page offer resources to support families, including building habits of reading God's Word, praying together, and learning about our Christian faith with the Small Catechism.

Family Devotions Calendar

Watch the video to learn how to customize a monthly family calendar, including a downloadable calendar introduction, explained in an encouraging way. The second page has 15 QR codes for great resources for memory cards, Bible story books, Catechisms, and more.

Daily Devotions Guide for Families Check out the short video and download the four-page yearly guide. Select what will work for your family and choose what is appropriate for their ages and abilities.

The Catechism in the Home

This brief, straight-forward guide equips parents to teach their household the Small Catechism in a simple way discussing how the six chief parts impact your family's lives and faith.



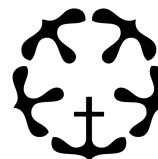
Concordia Center for the Family (CCF) website:
[concordiafamily.org](https://www.concordiafamily.org)
The CCF

"Resources" webpage provides materials to benefit family discipleship facilitators and others interested in family discipleship. All materials are produced, vetted, or recommended by CCF. Many are free, created by pastors and directors of family life ministry who want to share their work. Others can be purchased from publishers or for-profit entities.

The ten sections on the website include Faith-Filled Conversation (49 resources): Books (58), Family Devotions (49), For Church Workers (47), Parenting (42),

Household Habits (33), Sexuality (24), Marriages (19), Podcasts (6), and Non-Traditional Families (2).

It is worthwhile to spend time reviewing these helpful materials!



Missouri District website:
[mo.lcms.org/family](https://www.mo.lcms.org/family)

The Missouri District website has pages for family ministry and youth ministry. The family ministry page includes information for congregations on the training by Concordia Center for the Family supported by the District. A family ministry webpage to share resources mentioned in this article is coming soon.



Faith at Home website:
[gracefaithlove.org/faith-home-corner](https://www.gracefaithlove.org/faith-home-corner)

Rev. Steven Andrews Jr., pastor at St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Lee's Summit, has a weekly devotion guide, Faith at Home Corner. The page also includes two podcasts by Andrews: "The Daily Bite" and "The Layman's Guide to the Lectionary." His "Faith at Home Milestone Series" for families is available at:
[sandhandrews.wordpress.com](https://www.sandhandrews.wordpress.com).

DCE Pam Nummela, is the family discipleship lead facilitator at the LCMS Missouri District.

“Encouragement and sharing the stories of the Lord’s work around Missouri and throughout the church opens hearts and minds to new possibilities. If they can do it, so can we!” — REV. JOHN PERLING

This month we have a new member of the Missouri District staff. Get to know him a little more through a Q&A below!

Meet Rev. John Perling



Q: Could you describe your new role with the Missouri District?

A: As director of mission services, I will help identify and build support for potential new mission efforts across Missouri while continuing to serve Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church in St. Robert, Mo. Many of these efforts are strengthened through the combined resources of our congregations for the good of the whole church—supporting college students and military members away from home, encouraging regional partnerships, and bringing the Gospel across cultural and language boundaries. New mission efforts benefit from collaboration among congregations with a variety of gifts, talents, resources, and perspectives.

Q: Could you share a bit about your background?

A: I grew up in a parsonage in West Los Angeles and attended both public and Lutheran schools. A high school exchange year in Germany deepened my appreciation for Lutheran heritage and the Lord’s call to repentance and faith in every generation. I met my wife, Heidi, at Concordia University, St. Paul, Minn., and we shared Seminary years in St. Louis, the U.K. and Colorado. I have served congregations in Minnesota, Connecticut, and Missouri, with work in evangelism training and mission development. Since returning to Missouri in 2014, my ministry at Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church has focused on military families at Fort Leonard Wood and rural ministry planting along the Missouri 60 corridor. Heidi and I raised and homeschooled our three daughters, who taught us as much as we taught them.

Q: Looking ahead, how can others partner with District mission efforts?

A: Mission education across our District remains a high priority. Congregations and individuals can partner through prayer, encouragement, sharing stories of the Lord’s work and supporting mission efforts with generosity and creative thinking. The Lord’s work through one congregation can inspire another. Tools for mission brainstorming, vision casting, strategizing, and practical mission skills are readily available, and we are happy to help congregations bear the name of Christ confidently and joyfully.

Professional Church Workers Conference Oct. 20–23, 2026 | Osage Beach, MO

Save the date! This conference gathers pastors, educators, and other professional church workers for worship, learning, and fellowship, encouraging one another in our shared calling in Christ.



Schedule overview:

Oct. 20: Pastors arrive and register 9:30a.m.–1 p.m.

Oct. 21: Educators may arrive and attend sessions; registration 10 a.m.–6 p.m.*

Oct. 22: Pastors may depart after morning worship.*

Oct. 23: Conference concludes

*Lunch is not provided for educators Tuesday, Oct. 21. Lunch is not provided for pastors Thursday, Oct. 22. Watch for additional details, including registration and lodging information, coming soon at mo.lcms.org.

UPCOMING EVENTS

2026

Learn more: mo.lcms.org/upcoming-events, 314-590-6200

July 16–17

SUMMER ADMINISTRATORS CONFERENCE

July 18–23

LCMS SYNOD CONVENTION

Aug. 7

ADULT MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID TRAINING

Oct. 19–23

Professional Church Workers Conference
Margaritaville, Osage Beach, MO

Oct. 25–28

Regional District Education Executive Conference
Missouri Hosting
Lake Ozark, MO

