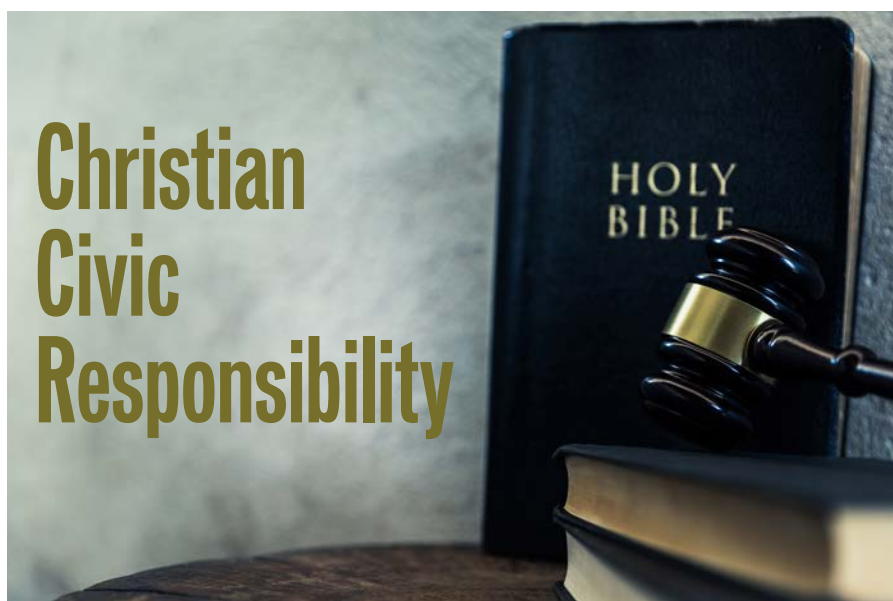




DISTRICT NEWS

MINNESOTA SOUTH

💡 TALKING POINTS WITH PASTOR



Amid all the rancor, exactly how then do we navigate our civic duty as Christians? To start, although the platform of the Republican Party may have substantially more areas of overlap with the Christian view of morality, we dare not make the church or her pastors into mere cogs of a political party. Forming coalitions with like-minded people, focusing on specific moral issues, and even calling out policies (like Minnesota's new abortion law) as evil is different than embracing a political identity and making it synonymous with the Christian faith.

To be sure, fighting against the latest versions of the progressive cultural agenda can seem like a bleak endeavor, but we must resist the temptation to simply turn to a political party and tie the church to it as the only means of defense. Scripture is clear — Christ Jesus did not found His church to be a branch of a political party (MARK 12:17; JOHN 18:36). Nor did he use those means to accomplish His will in the hearts and minds of people. He did, however, promise He would never leave us nor forsake us (HEB. 13:5). And He does send us His Holy Spirit to lead us in truth (JOHN 14:16).

Go first! The Lutheran understanding in civic vocation

So then what are we to do? Lutheran theology has a rich understanding of vocation, a person's station and place in life. The vocation of a Christian citizen is one who carries out his or her civic duty and use of the legal system

See MESSAGE, Page 3



Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford
District President

Go First!

In a society that continues to propose and pass laws meant to implement immoral and unbiblical public policy, what is our responsibility as Christians? As it stands, the American political system is contested by two parties. Presently both parties have become so ideologically and diametrically opposed to each other they no longer see one another as colleagues who work for the common good, but as enemies that must be defeated, lest the Republic fall. To the devil's delight, the people and pastors of our congregations are often pulled into this kind of thinking.

Sadly, there is little remaining common ground to be found between the parties. Simplifying to the extreme, Democrats wish to be progressive — to progress past and beyond the virtues and constitutional structures that first established our republic. Republicans wish to be conservative — to conserve the virtues and constitutional structures that first established our republic. There are variations and shades of each, of course, but this is where the lines seem to be drawn.

Congratulations!

2022 Outstanding Professional Church Worker Awards

Last October, Rev. Dr. James A. Baneck, executive director of the LCMS Office of Pastoral Education, said: “The pastor teaches us the Word of God for our eternal salvation. Teachers and commissioned workers assist him in specialized ways in the classroom, through youth ministry, music ministry and more. And all servants in the church are worthy of our deep appreciation and encouragement for serving us, the baptized children of God, and for their love for Christ’s church.” (Reporter, October 2022)

To that end, these professional church workers of the Minnesota South District have been recognized for their outstanding contributions to ministry in 2022. The quotes are taken from the letters of recommendation submitted for each award recipient.



2022 OUTSTANDING SCHOOL SHEPHERD

Rev. Joel Haak

Rochester Central Lutheran School/Trinity Lutheran Church, Rochester

“He connects well with the students and shares God’s Word in a way that is meaningful for kids.”

“His chapels bring joy and laughter with a strong biblical message. . . . Pastor Haak also spent time each month in elementary classrooms, presenting Bible stories so that the students have an opportunity to connect with a pastor and ask questions to deepen their faith.”

OUTSTANDING SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR

Rocky Sandcork

Hope Lutheran School, Winona

“He has aided many families, so that they may attend Hope, and gain a Christian education.

He has also raised god-fearing children, who shine Christ’s light, and reflect the fact that his Christian life is not only lived in public, but at home.”

“There are very few educators in the world that have this man’s level of positivity, care and enthusiasm about his students, staff, and the Lord.”



2022 OUTSTANDING EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER

Rachel Orr

Woodbury Lutheran Preschool, Woodbury

“Mrs. Orr is an amazing example of what a follower of Christ is! Teaching is her ministry; I’m convinced God has gifted her with the love of teaching so she can spread the love of Christ to the youngest learners. She truly loves each student and cares about their spiritual growth.”



2022 OUTSTANDING ELEMENTARY TEACHER

Juanita Krueger

Trinity Lutheran School, North Morristown

“Whatever Juanita does, she does it with 100% effort, relying on God, and sharing His love with those whom she meets. . . . She is truly a gift and blessing to our church and school.”



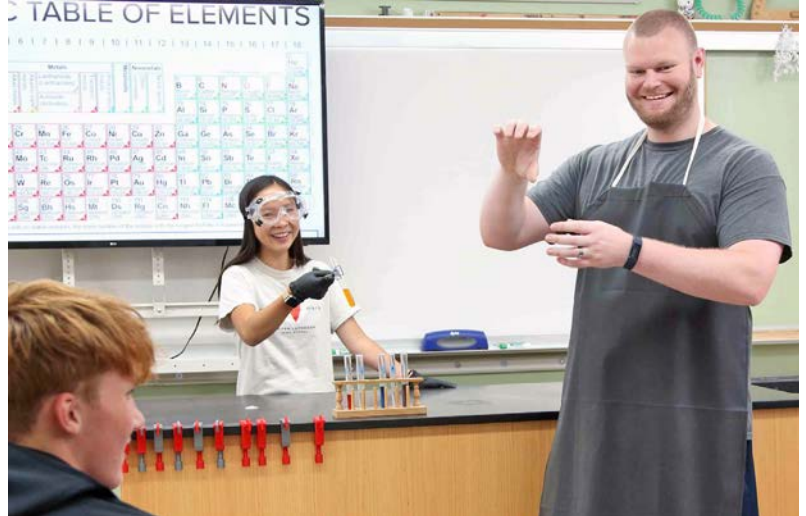


2022 OUTSTANDING PARISH PROFESSIONAL

DCE Peter Hiller • Family of Christ Lutheran Church, Ham Lake

(Hiller, left, is pictured with Dr. Phillip Johnson, district Assistant to the President, Mission Formation)

“Simply stated: He is one of the best DCEs in our church body and we are blessed to have him.”



2022 OUTSTANDING HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER

Ben Schulteis • Mayer Lutheran High School, Mayer

“He makes sure to integrate biblical truths into his science presentations to make sure the Creator is seen in the order and complexity of the world He created. He strives to engage students through demonstrations, experiments and labs.”

MESSAGE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

and its rights of redress with all vigor and might. This means engagement in things like voting, expressing concerns to elected representatives, engaging in peaceful demonstrations, volunteering to serve the community, giving input in community forums, offering expertise to shape public policy, or even running for elected office. But it means doing so as one with a biblical worldview; a deep, spiritual life of prayer; and meditation upon God’s Word as our guiding principle.

To be sure, the Holy Christian Church is the one institution that through time and history has been strong enough to push back against oppressive governments while simultaneously caring for the souls being repressed. That means the church must continue championing the divine and permanent design of marriage and sexuality, the preciousness of children, and the importance of motherhood and fatherhood. Likewise, we must go first in extending compassion and help



for those in need (pregnant mothers, single parents, children, families, and community members). We must go first in speaking kindly but boldly to those who do not have a biblical worldview, demonstrating the reasonableness of our view for human flourishing.

Yet the Holy Christian Church was not formed to be a political party. As pastors and people, we must be careful our congregations do not merely adopt political platforms as our guiding principle, but always uphold the Word of God as our sole guiding principle. Where there is overlap of virtue and human flourishing in approaches to public policy goals

with those of a biblical worldview, we can in good conscience champion those goals and even vigorously engage in the political process as citizens of this country for the common good.

Our hope in Christ

What I have offered is a basic framework to navigate our politicized and vitriolic times. But along the way, remember that you are loved by the Good Shepherd. Take heart that you have been washed in the saving waters of Holy Baptism and nurtured by His life-giving Word and Holy Supper. Keep your eye fixed on Him and your ears tuned to His Word amid the political and social tumult of our day.

Yes, the times seem challenging, but the Lord is faithful to His promises. He is the Lord who came into the flesh to suffer on the cross for our sins and, in so doing, also taught us how to suffer and bear up under injustice. Yet He is also the Lord who walked out of the tomb alive as the Resurrection and the Life, the Alpha and the Omega. He is the Lord of all Lords and the King of Kings. He will lead us forward.

Lutherans gather, pray, march

Debates on life issues are constantly in the news. However, God's Word is clear on the sanctity of life, from conception to natural death. In the LCMS, many congregations have a Life Sunday, focusing on these life issues.

At Martin Luther Jr/Sr High School, Northrop, the Knights4Life students led an all-school prayer walk consisting of seven stations focused on the blessings of all life. The participants prayed for:

- ▶ Children in the womb whose mothers and fathers are considering abortion, and also women who are considering abortion or who have had an abortion.
- ▶ Workers in the industry, that the Holy Spirit will turn their hearts to life rather than death.
- ▶ The elderly and those who are homebound.
- ▶ Both state and federal officials, that



those who are pro-life will stand firm in their beliefs and that those who are pro-choice will have a change of heart to protect life at all stages.

- ▶ People struggling with depression or thoughts of self-harm or suicide.
- ▶ Those who are struggling with gender dysphoria or other body image issues.
- ▶ Single parents who have kept their children and need support.

Members of Minnesota South District congregations also gathered at Graebner Memorial Chapel on the campus of Concordia University, St. Paul, to worship the Author of Life and to pray for all people to uphold the sanctity of life. This was followed by the Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life (MCCCL) March for Life held at the State Capitol grounds in St. Paul.



IN PHOTOS

Top: Martin Luther Jr/Sr High School students stop to pray for those with depression and thoughts of self harm or suicide.

Left: Lutherans marching to protect life are pictured at the Minnesota State Capitol.

Wanted: teams to pack Mercy Meals



By Doyle Benson
Minnesota South
OGT Branch Manager

Greetings everyone as we celebrate God's perfect gift to us, Jesus Christ! When we understand His story and that we don't deserve the gifts He gives us, we are moved to give to others even if we ourselves don't live in abundance.

As we have done in the past, the Minnesota South Orphan Grain Train (OGT) branch transported your gifts of quilts, blankets, layettes, kits, medical supplies and clothing to Norfolk, Neb., to be shipped around the world and domestically to help those in need. This year we sponsored a shipment to Romania to help Ukrainian refugees and Bread of Life Orphanage.

During the year, we also purchased equipment to package Mercy Meals. Developed by nutrition scientists, Mercy Meals consist of rice, soy flakes, a blend of six dried vegetables and chicken flavoring, making them highly nutritious, well-balanced and easily digestible. They are packaged in three-ply food bags for strength and have a long shelf life. Each bag contains six meals at a cost of 12 cents per meal, and

each shipment costs between \$7,000 and \$15,000, depending upon where it goes. During the last fiscal year, nearly 5.1 million meals were shipped to hungry and malnourished people throughout the United States and worldwide.

Members in southeast Minnesota have already packed over 18,000 meals! We rejoice for their service as this is one way we reflect Jesus' love for others. Rev. Mark and Karla Meier have been planning and supervising the packing events as well as taking care of the equipment. We thank them for their service and reflection of Jesus' love to those with whom they work.

This year, our goal at the Minnesota South OGT is to pack over \$10,000 worth of Mercy Meals and pay for the shipping. Toward that end, one of the next opportunities to pack Mercy Meals will be during the Lutheran Laymen's League (LLL) convention at Martin Luther Jr/Sr High School, Northrop, on Saturday, April 15. Teams of 16 will be needed throughout the day, so form your teams now!

We thank everyone who is part of the Minnesota South OGT ministry,

supporting us with prayers, sewing, packing Mercy Meals, sorting medical supplies at the Mayo Clinic warehouse in Rochester, hauling trailer loads of boxes to Norfolk, joining/hosting our regular meetings or being a board member, managing our warehouses, or giving financial donations. We definitely appreciate all of the prayers, our volunteers and our financial supporters. Everyone can do something!!

May God bless you during Lent as we remember His suffering for us.

For more information, contact me at 320-583-7695 or doylebenson321@gmail.com.

If you would like to make a financial contribution to Minnesota South OGT, please write checks payable to Minnesota South District Orphan Grain Train (MN So. OGT) and send to Darlene Fretham, 611 1st Ave.; NW Winnebago, MN 56098. By contributing in this way, your donation will be used through the Minnesota South branch of Orphan Grain Train rather than the national headquarters, and helps to sponsor our local efforts such as Mercy Meals and shipments. Thank you!

Helping hands at **GLORIA DEI**

By Rev. Martin Cornes
Pastor, Gloria Dei, Minneapolis

December was an exciting time for outreach at Gloria Dei Lutheran church, northeast Minneapolis! It is a blessing to work together as a church to impact our neighbors who might be in need with God's love.

- ▶ \$888 worth of Christmas gifts were purchased and passed on to the Salvation Army in northeast Minneapolis to bless families in need this Christmas time.
- ▶ 32 Christmas baskets were put together. Sixteen were given to those connected with the church, including shut-ins and those requested on behalf of their friends, and 16 were given to those in care homes who are lonely or in need.
- ▶ 300 sandwiches were made (and packed with chips and granola bars) and then passed on to DCE Dr. James Seemann and Radias Health Care, a Christian charity, for distribution to the homeless in Minneapolis and St. Paul on our behalf. This project was a wonderful opportunity to help the homeless while also encouraging the church members to participate in reaching out into our community. Thank you to Thrivent, who helped fund these events.

My focus as the pastor of Gloria Dei has been to encourage church attendance, build up small groups and promote participation in mission opportunities. These projects were a perfect way to enable our congregation — which, though small, has grown by 25% over the last three years — to come together and work on outreach opportunities together, building up friendships and encouraging growth in our faith.

Pastor Cornes serves as a multi-ethnic outreach pastor at Gloria Dei, and is partly funded by the Minnesota South District.



From left, Rev. Martin Cornes, Shirley Holzinger, Gwen Johnson, Sandy Westling, Wenda Schwoch, Verlayne Sather and Pam Morelli put together sandwiches.



Also making sandwiches were, from left, Katy-Beth Carlson, Daniel Carlson, Josh Orugboh, Wenda Schwoch, Pastor Cornes, Jim Kautz and Larry Schlais



Packing Christmas baskets were, from left, Pam Morelli, Mary Ann Piper, Meridel Christopherson, Verlayne Sather, Shirley Holzinger and Pat Scott.



From left, (kneeling) Patty Lyrenmann, Mary Ann Piper; (standing) Gwen Johnson, Meridel Christopherson,, Sandy Westling, Pat Scott, Shirley Holzinger, Pam Morelli and Verlayne Sather.

Congregation mission receipts

For the period ending Jan. 31, 2023 (unaudited)

Actual receipts.....\$122,665
 Budget receipts\$170,833
 Over (under) amount (\$48,168)

Year-to-date receipts

Actual receipts.....\$122,665
 Budget receipts\$170,833
 Over (under) anticipated amount.....(\$48,168)

Use of mission receipts (year to date)

50% designated to district and Synod\$111,816
 100% designated to district operations\$9,461
 100% designated for Synod operations\$1,388
 Total receipts\$122,665

Mission receipts—2023 vs. 2022

Mission receipts — YTD 2022\$122,665
 Mission receipts — YTD 2021\$152,081
 Over (under) last year(\$29,416)

2023 congregational receipts budgeted at \$2,050,000 (does not include designated to Synod operations)

MINNESOTA SOUTH DISTRICT LCEF

December 2022

New investments.....\$3,364,352
 Withdrawals.....\$2,018,102
 Net increase (decrease).....\$1,346,250

Year-to-date July 1, 2022–Dec. 31, 2022

New investments.....\$10,454,965
 Withdrawals.....\$9,534,870
 Net increase (decrease).....\$920,095



Celebrating Lutheran schools

National Lutheran Schools Week, held Jan. 22-28, celebrated “Making Disciples for Life.” Take a peek at other activities throughout the district at mnsdistrict.org/2023nlsw. Having fun were students at St. John Lutheran School, Elk River (top); and Concordia Academy, Roseville (right).



DISTRICT OFFICE

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Burnsville, MN 55306
- ▶ 952-435-2550
- ▶ mnsdistrict.org



Spring's almost here:

Rallies! ... Convention!

By Wendy Sjoblom

VP of Communications • LWML Minnesota South District

I love winter! I enjoy the snow, blizzards, the cold (most of the time) and most of all, the lack of seasonal allergens which allows me to breathe more freely.

With that being said, I will admit that by March I am often sick of the bitter cold, sloppy and icy roads, and even the blizzards. I begin to look forward to spring, even with the impending pollen. Spring brings the promise of brighter days and new life.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 2 COR. 5:17

Spring also brings LWML rallies — and the LWML national convention is that much closer! The 40th Biennial Convention will be held June 22-25. LWMLers across the country will meet to “Celebrate the Lord of Nations” in Milwaukee.

If you are interested in attending, you can register for the convention (and find more information) at lwml.org/2023-convention. If you need a ride to Milwaukee, the LWML Minnesota South District will have a bus available to ride for \$150, leaving Wednesday, June 21, and returning Sunday, June 25. Pickups will be in Waconia, Bloomington, Owatonna and the southeast corner of the state.

If you are interested in riding the bus, contact Deb Vinkemeier, transportation coordinator, at transportation@mnskwml.org.

More information about our district zone rallies can be found at mnskwml.org. Go to the “Events” tab and select “Zones” from the drop-down menu.

First call for OFFICER NOMINATIONS



Nominations are now being accepted for the officer elections at the next LWML Minnesota South District Convention, to be held June 20-22, 2024.

Nominations are being accepted for VP of Christian Life, VP of Human Care, VP of Servant Resources, Treasurer, Nominating Committee Members (one from each conference), and two pastoral counselors.

Nomination forms are available at mnskwml.org. Deadline for nominations for pastoral counselors is Oct. 15, 2023. Deadline for all other officer nominations is Jan. 15, 2024.

A gift from God



The January meeting of the LWML Women’s Guild of Our Savior’s, Hutchinson, was transformed from

the ordinary to the extraordinary by two special guests.

Angie Charlesworth visited with Lucy, her certified therapy dog, to inform the group about the work of this very special animal, often referred to by her owner as a wonderful animal from God. Lucy was adopted by Angie at the age of 10 weeks. Angie’s mother, who had been diagnosed with dementia, lived in a care facility. When the staff at the care facility noticed that Lucy was so very well accepted by her owner’s mother, they encouraged Angie to look into training Lucy as a therapy dog. After numerous hours of training and testing by both Lucy and her owner, she became certified by Therapy Dogs International to provide emotional therapy and support to those in need.

In 2022, Lucy made 54 visits to two primary care facilities in Hutchinson. Angie noted that Lucy recently met with 40 residents in just one visit. The joy that Lucy brings to people is truly a gift from God and Lucy’s owner, Angie, has shared this wonderful gift with numerous people. Before leaving the group’s January LWML meeting, Angie walked Lucy around the room to meet with each of the members and guests.