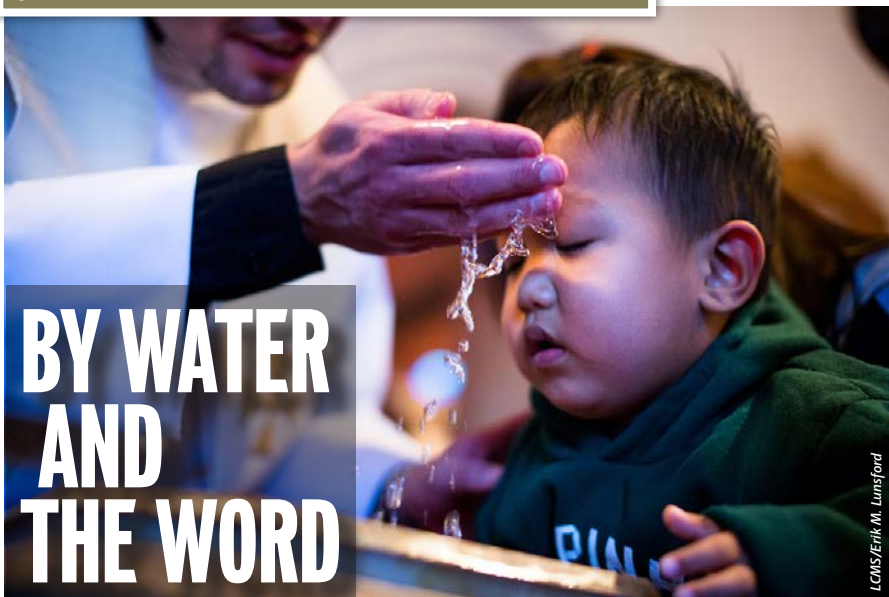




DISTRICT NEWS

MINNESOTA SOUTH

TALKING POINTS WITH PASTOR



LCMS/Erik M. Lunsford

BY WATER AND THE WORD



Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford
District President

Observing how God created and uses the element of water is a marvel to behold. Water is a fascinating part of our lives. Over 70% of the earth is covered by water. Of that, 97% is salt water and the remaining 3% is made up of fresh water. Glaciers and ice caps make up 2.4%, while lakes, rivers and streams make up 0.6%. What's fascinating is that there is over 33 times more fresh water under the earth than there is on top of the earth. It's estimated Americans use about 323 billion gallons of surface water per day and about 84.5 billion gallons of ground water per day.

God's use of water is remarkable. He created it out of nothing and yet He makes it an essential part of life. In fact, without it, there can be no life. Consider the human body. Lean muscle tissue contains about 75% water, blood contains almost 70% water, bone has 22% water and body fat contains 10% water. Even our skin has a significant amount of water. The winter season reminds us of this when our chapped hands are longing for a little lotion, while during the summer season our sunburned skin needs some aloe.

In all, the human body is about 55% water in adult females, 60% in adult males and 78% in infants. It's contained in the cells of the body (intracellular fluid), in the arteries and veins (blood plasma — which my college buddies would often donate to earn some extra cash) and in the spaces between the blood vessels and cells (interstitial fluid). The body's water supply is responsible and involved in nearly every bodily process, including digestion, absorption, circulation and excretion. When we eat, breathe and use our muscles, our body creates waste products which must be eliminated. Water helps us do this. While the body can survive without food for about five weeks, the body cannot survive without water for longer than five days.

Water is everywhere, at the beginning and in the end. God created it and He can use it as He sees fit — be that to cover the earth in a worldwide flood or to sweep away Pharaoh's army. It's sprinkled throughout the ministry of Jesus (pun intended). The water of the Jordan River is the beginning of Jesus' ministry. At the Sea of Galilee, Jesus tells Peter and Andrew to follow Him. His first miracle is changing six stone jars of water into wine at the Cana wedding feast. He calms the waters of a raging storm, heals a man at the Pool of Bethesda and walks on the Sea of Galilee.



See **BAPTISM**, Page 2

BAPTISM

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Jesus tells the woman at the well that He is the living water and those who drink of it will never thirst again. When He is dead on the cross, the spear that pierces His side draws blood and water. And the third time the resurrected Jesus appears to His disciples, they are back fishing on the Sea of Galilee.

This resurrected Jesus tells the 11 apostles they are to use water to make disciples. He is rather specific. They are to baptize, *baptizmo* — to apply water — **in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit**, and teach disciples to observe all that He has commanded (Matt. 28:19-20). It is fascinating how God uses the simple element of water to help bring about such a profound reality.

In Holy Baptism, God uses the familiar element of water as a means to deliver His Word of promise. The Small Catechism answers the question of “What is Baptism?”

Baptism is not just plain water, but it is the water included in God’s command and combined with God’s word.

There is great power in the waters of Baptism because God’s Word makes it so. In fact, this is the very word of God that was “in the beginning” and created water out of nothing. It reminds us that Jesus’ words of Matthew 28 are essential to Baptism, delivering faith and the forgiveness of sins because it’s drenched with the power of His Word — the power to rescue and renew; the power to deliver and direct; the power to free and forgive. In fact, Scripture says “**Baptism now saves you**” (1 Peter 3:21). Yes, Baptism cleans the conscience of transgressions and cleanses the soul of shame. But it does so in no ordinary way.

God’s use of water is simply fascinating. The physical use of water mirrors the spiritual use. As water carries away the toxins and waste from our



LCSW/Erin M. Lumsford

“**To be baptized is to live drenched by God’s Word. To be baptized means you are claimed as God’s very own.**”

bodies, God uses the water and the Word of Baptism to carry away the sin and the filth of our spiritual lives. The water of Baptism drowns all which is evil and all which is sinful. The Small Catechism says it this way in Baptism, Part IV, under the question, “What does such baptizing with water indicate?”

It indicates that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

Therefore, Baptism does not leave us dead and buried — rather through daily contrition and repentance it refreshes and resurrects. To be baptized is to live drenched by God’s Word. To be baptized means you are claimed as God’s very own.

By water and the Word, you are His and He is yours!

For I know the **PLANS** I have for you,
declares the **LORD**,
plans for **WELFARE** and not for evil,
to give you a **FUTURE** and a **HOPE**.

Jeremiah 29:11

2024
HAPPY NEW YEAR

The Minnesota South logo, featuring a white outline of the state of Minnesota with the words "MINN South" in white text below it.

**The Minnesota South District office will be closed
Dec. 30 and Jan. 2. Please plan accordingly.**

Go First! conference registration opens Jan. 7

We are excited to invite you to this first-of-its-kind ministry event here in the Minnesota South District, to be held April 19-20. Concordia Academy in Roseville will be ground zero for you to gather with others from your congregation and from across the district. This will be a time for encouragement, for learning, and to celebrate how God continues to be at work in and through the congregations and ministries of the Minnesota South District!

Guest registration is very easy. Pastors, teachers, parish professionals, and lay members alike can go to the district's website, mnsdistrict.org, and click on the *Go First!* tab at the top of the page. Input your information and submit! There is *no cost* for you to attend. All three meals during the course of the event will also be provided free of charge. You are invited to attend and learn and grow and connect with others who are seeking to do the same.

If you are coming from a distance that requires you to spend the night, you can find information regarding hotels in the immediate vicinity of the conference location. You are encouraged to make your own reservations.

Once you have registered for the event, there are a few things you can do to assist us:

First: When you register, choose up to four breakout sessions that best suit your needs. Your selections will *not* lock you into those sessions, but it will help us plan when each topic should be scheduled and how many times each session should be offered. As the final schedule is determined, you will have an opportunity to better plan your experience.



Second: If you or your congregation is involved in an effective ministry that fits into one of the four *Go First!* initiatives, we encourage you to register to lead a breakout session. Your insights and experience could provide the encouragement another congregation might need to take the next step in their ministry.

Third: There are many, many ways you and a group of friends could be part of making this event a blessing to others. On the website, register as a volunteer to assist with set up, take down, serving meals, greeting and hosting guests, and so much more! Your participation in helping to plan and host a portion of the *Go First!* Ministry Conference is a wonderful way to encourage others.

In review, visit mnsdistrict.org and click on the *Go First!* tab on the top of the page to get registered as an event guest, host a breakout session, and to tell us how you are able to help plan and host the event. Finally, be sure to place April 19 and 20 on your event calendar, and we will see you at Concordia Academy for the *Go First!* Ministry Conference!

Submitted by Dr. Phillip Johnson
Minnesota South District Assistant to the President, Mission Formation
phillip.johnson@mnsdistrict.org



Make plans to attend convention

Happy New Year! As we enter into 2024, we are nearing the end of our current biennium. The 2022-2024 Biennium will conclude June 20-22 with our 30th Biennial LWML Minnesota South District Convention at the Mayo Clinic Health System Event Center in Mankato, where we will “Walk in Love.”

Our theme verse is Eph. 5:1-2:

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

The logo was designed by graphic designer Jocelyn Polley from Insightful Pair LLC.

As we prepare for the convention, we are still looking for nominations for officers. The positions on the ballot are Vice-President of Christian Life, Vice-President of Human Care, Vice-President of Servant Resources, Treasurer, and a Nominating Committee member from each conference. The deadline for nominations is Jan. 15. Also, the Committee on Young Women encourages you to invite a young woman in your church to join us at convention. She can submit an application, found at mnslwml.org/young_women, and a picture of herself to your zone president by Feb. 1.

We look forward to “Walking in Love” with you at the convention. For more information, visit mnslwml.org and select “District” from the “Events” tab and click the link; and check out the monthly *Enews*, and *WOM (Women in Mission)*, at mnslwml.org/newsletters.

Submitted by Wendy Sjoblom
LWML Minnesota South District
VP of Communications



Each month, a focus will be given to one of our district missions. For January, we highlight Cornerstone Light of Life Lutheran Church in your personal and corporate prayers, that those who lead and serve would be strengthened in their efforts to reach people with the Good News of Jesus.

The following article was submitted by Vicar Daniel Thao, who is serving at Cornerstone Light of Life.

To support Cornerstone Light of Life and other district missions, visit mnsdistrict.org/donate or scan the QR code.



Rooted and growing

Cornerstone is a new church in our Minnesota South District. Our first service was held on Jan. 9, 2022, with 28 worshipers present, and we signed our constitution to become a member of the LCMS on March 5, 2023. Thanks go to Concordia University, St. Paul (CSP) and its president, Rev. Dr. Brian Friedrich, who are partnering with us to launch this new city church.

We held our first service in CSP's Buetow Auditorium using the university's equipment. Cornerstone has come a long way since that first day. Today, we have an entire worship team and our own equipment and sound system. On Sunday mornings at 8 a.m., you can find me and a few team members setting up church in Buetow. Yes, we are a stand-up church.

Our mission is to reach the diverse families in our city. We call these families "Today's Families." We believe in contextualizing our ministry to reach these English-speaking families. For example, there are over 100,000 Hmong families in the Twin Cities. Only 10% of these families identify themselves as believers in Jesus, and out of these 10%, only half worship on Sundays. Less than 5,000 Hmong people identify themselves as churchgoers.

I am finishing my last two semesters at the Cross-Cultural Ministry Center (CMC) program at Concordia University Irvine, Calif., and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. This program requires each student to create a new ministry. So I decided to launch a new church. Why not? I can leverage all those years serving as a

congregation president at both an Anglo and then a Hmong church. My wife, Kia, served the church during those years as program director and fellowship director. We felt like God was working and equipping us to serve Him differently.

Cornerstone continues to grow each week and month, even during the pandemic years. We worship regularly with 80- plus and sometimes over 100. We have baptized over five infants and over 15 young people and adults.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." **MATT. 28:19-20A**

At Cornerstone, we believe in "teaching them" all that has been commanded by Jesus. New believers begin with what we call "START HERE." This is our Small Catechism class in which we teach the Apostles' Creed. We encourage people to take the next class, "NOW WHAT," which uses the *Rooted* workbook by Rooted Network. Finally, we have "SHOW UP," helping our people move from believing to witnessing.

Yes, Cornerstone has been a recipient of the "Great Sort." We have also reached new believers. God is working at Cornerstone. Kia and I are planners, and we work through this ministry similar to how Paul and Silas wanted to share the Gospel to Asia, but the Holy Spirit

Continued on next page



Pictured are, from left, Gaoyee Xiong, Vicar Daniel Thao, Angelina Her and Levee Yang.

kept closing doors for them to go west. Paul eventually crossed over to Greece. The Holy Spirit is working in Christ's church, moving Cornerstone in the direction God wants His ministry to go.

Together, we are His house, "Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone ... in him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit" (EPH. 2:20). Together, Minnesota South is His house and the Cornerstone is Christ Jesus.

Partner with Cornerstone with your prayers. Visit us on our home page at cllc.church. What is next for Cornerstone? We are looking for a permanent home to grow God's Kingdom and reach today's families.

Intentional Outreach, Life Together

Through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, the Holy Christian Church is bound together in a community of faith and love expressed in word and deed. Our life together acknowledges both the guilt and the shame of sin, where we sin and are sinned against.

But the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. Life together centers upon the remission of sins won by Jesus and delivered to us through Word and Sacrament worship. Together we are disciples and then dispersed out into our daily vocations to serve our neighbor, love the Lord, encourage one another, and give witness to His mercy.



Celebrate life with Lutherans For Life

A week of learning about life issues from a Gospel-motivated perspective, each themed day of Life Week 2024 explores a distinct aspect of life ministry through local activities, online educational events, and interviews. This year, Life Week kicks off on Life Sunday, Jan. 14, and runs through Saturday, Jan. 20.

The theme is "Just as ... I AM"

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. EPH. 2:10

Daily themes

- **SUNDAY:** Just as ... I AM from Fertilization to Forever (A Gospel-Motivated Foundation)
- **MONDAY:** Just as ... I AM in Terminal Diagnosis
- **TUESDAY:** Just as ... I AM Surviving and Thriving
- **WEDNESDAY:** Just as ... I AM in Surprise Pregnancy
- **THURSDAY:** Just as ... I AM with Courage and Compassion
- **FRIDAY:** Just as ... I AM as Male or Female
- **SATURDAY:** Just as ... I AM for Blessing and Service

Find out more at y4life.org/life-week-2024.

Also, the Minnesota March for Life, sponsored by Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life (MCCL), will be held from noon to 1 p.m. on Monday, Jan. 22, at the Minnesota Capitol in St. Paul.

For more information and resources, please visit mccl.org/march.

Soul Care

Throughout His ministry Jesus looked

upon people with great compassion. He came not to be served, but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many. He cares for the hurting, loves the brokenhearted, and cleanses sin-ridden souls.

By His shed blood, He removes guilt, puts away shame, and gives hope to lost and wounded souls. Therefore, the soul care we give is rooted in how our Lord Jesus Christ "Goes First!" to care for our souls to bring healing and forgiveness through His Word and Sacrament.



It's cold outside! Everyone can help

Everyone knows this: Minnesota gets cold in January! That's why groups all over the Minnesota South District provide warmth by making, collecting, and distributing winter clothing. Age doesn't matter! Elementary and middle schoolers — and adults — are learning new skills and helping those in need. Get inspired with these stories!

Students at **Rochester Central Lutheran School (RCLS), Rochester**, recently held a winter clothing drive. Each year, the eighth graders research potential recipients of chapel offerings and present them to their classmates. This year, a group of students championed the cause of the Olmsted County Social Services winter clothing drive. Clothing donations were collected in October.

Signs were placed around the school, and the drive was also advertised in morning announcements and classroom newsletters. Collection bins were accessible at the school. Collected were coats, hats, mittens, warm socks, boots and scarves in all sizes. Residents of Olmsted County are able to visit the clothing rack in the social services building to find sizes for family members who need assistance.

The students shared that they picked to do this project because they know that Minnesota winters are harsh and cold. Service is a key component of student life at RCLS as teachers and staff strive to help the students share their blessings and live out their faith.

Submitted by Kim Schauer, eighth-grade teacher



The Knifty Knitters Club of **Trinity Lutheran School, Waconia**, was started in 2018 when a now retired teacher had her class make hats in class. The students were excited to learn a new skill, so we developed an after-school club so more students could participate.

We meet once a week after school for an hour during the winter, although students are also welcome to work on their hats at home. Any student in grades 4-8 is welcome to join, and over the years we have had around 60 kids participate. No experience is necessary to join the club as students are taught how to knit hats on looms using yarn that has been donated or purchased with Thrivent Action Team grants. Students knit one hat to give away and one to keep.

Hats have been donated to a local hats and mittens outreach organization that supplies winter clothing to Minneapolis schools, as well as to our church's Servant Life Ministries Team, which brings the hats to their outreach events in downtown Minneapolis. Over the years, the students have made and donated hundreds of hats! I so enjoy working with my Knifty Knitters!



Submitted by Heidi Pawelk-Rauworth, Student Resource teacher



St. John's Rich Valley, Rosemount, has been collecting hats, mittens, scarves and blankets for decades. Pictured is a sample of this year's donation.



Members of **St. Matthew Lutheran Church, St. Charles**, are excited to learn a new skill and be able to serve the community. Using the Thrivent Action Team grants, nine knitting machines and yarn were purchased to begin a ministry — winter stocking hats.

Starting in mid-October, 15 loomers received lessons on how to use the knitting machines and went to work! Bags containing the knitting machine and yarn are available for individuals to check out. The crafters make the hat at home, bringing the finished product and kit back to church for someone else to check

out. Believe it or not, once the technique is learned, it takes less than one hour to complete a hat! It is so popular and convenient that more sessions to learn the knitting machine will be offered in 2024. Of course, those who prefer to knit by hand contribute hats as well.

The goal is to make this a year-round ministry. Over 100 people will be blessed with these hats, which are donated to the Resource Center in St. Charles, The Landing in Rochester, and the Mayo Clinic. The knitters love how professional the thick, reversible hats look, and that they are able to help people stay warm.



Intentional Outreach

Christ has called us to be light bearers and hope mongers in a broken and dysfunctional world. Through the daily vocations of life, we stand ready to reach out with the hope of Christ. Many long for a compassionate word, a welcoming smile, or a kind gesture. Extending the love of Christ in word and deed is a welcome relief for hurting and wondering souls. We extend the love of Christ to both the lost and the found, championing His sacrifice on Calvary for the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

NATIONAL LUTHERAN SCHOOLS WEEK 2024

January 21-27

Theme:

CONNECTED

JOHN 15:1-5

Why is there a National Lutheran Schools Week (NLSW)?

The NLSW *Resource Manual* provided to guide school staffs in their activities states: “National Lutheran Schools Week celebrates that Christ is the focus of the Lutheran school not only for a special week, but every day in every activity. The focus (John 15:1-5) declares that He is

‘the vine’ and only by connecting to Him is there life and fruit.”

Daily themes:

- **Monday:** Connected to Christ (John 15:5)
- **Tuesday:** Connected to the Father and His Creation (Psalm 139:14-15)
- **Wednesday:** Connected to the Spirit and His Fruitful Gifts (Gal. 5:22-23)
- **Thursday:** Connected to the Church (John 17:20-21)
- **Friday:** Connected to His Commission (John 15:16)

Resources include theme hymns, daily devotional material for teachers and students, posters, bulletin inserts, logos and graphics, and are available at lcms.org/lutheralschoolsweek.

What can you do during NLSW? Get “Connected” with the Lutheran schools in the district! Pray for all of our Minnesota South District Lutheran schools — the teachers and staff, the students and their families, the community in which they reside, and the congregations that support them. Get involved with the NLSW activities if you have a school near you.

Advocate for private education and education savings accounts in the political realm. Volunteer your time and skills. Opportunities abound to be “Connected!”

WANTED: Future church workers

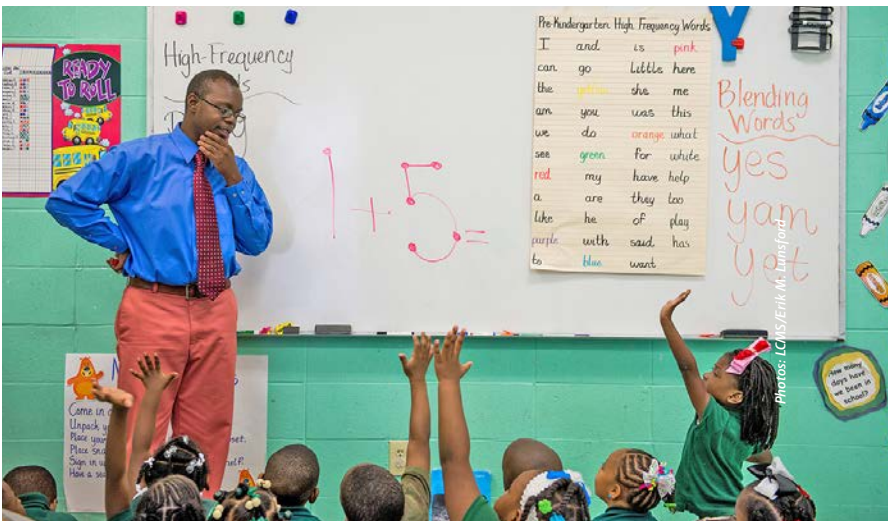
SET APART TO SERVE

LCMS CHURCH WORK RECRUITMENT



Set Apart to Serve is the intentional effort of the LCMS to identify, encourage and form future church workers for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ until His return.

Your congregation can help spread the word about this effort and point interested future workers in the right direction by sharing information about the Set Apart to Serve initiative within your congregation. To download bulletin inserts and presentations, and to learn more about the initiative, visit lcms.org/sas.



Congregation mission receipts

For the period ending Nov. 30, 2023 (unaudited)

Actual receipts.....	\$151,415
Budget receipts	\$170,832
Over (under) amount	(\$19,417)

Year-to-date receipts

Actual receipts.....	\$1,723,858
Budget receipts	\$1,879,152
Over (under) anticipated amount.....	(\$155,294)

Use of mission receipts (year to date)

50% designated to district and Synod ..	\$1,318,665
100% designated to district operations ...	\$355,897
100% designated for Synod operations	\$49,296
Total receipts	\$1,723,858

Mission receipts—2023 vs. 2022

Mission receipts — YTD 2023	\$1,723,858
Mission receipts — YTD 2022	\$1,835,689
Over (under) last year	(\$111,831)

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

MINNESOTA SOUTH DISTRICT LCEF

October 2023

New investments	\$1,453,504
Withdrawals.....	\$2,327,931
Net increase (decrease).....	(\$874,427)

Year-to-date July 1, 2023–Oct. 31, 2023

New investments	\$6,176,320
Withdrawals.....	\$8,091,889
Net increase (decrease).....	(\$1,915,569)



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