



DISTRICT NEWS

MINNESOTA SOUTH

TALKING POINTS WITH PASTOR



MINISTRY IN THE GRAY ZONE



Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford
District President

There is nothing new under the sun, says Ecclesiastes (1:9). Challenges come and go, repeating themselves throughout history, including within the Holy Christian Church. Nonetheless, each age encounters challenges new to those living in it. So it is for the church today. A digital world, a fractured and secularized culture, obsolete institutional structures, outmoded governance models, contracting church bodies, shrinking congregations longing for the past, pastoral shortages, all exacerbated by a global pandemic, just for a start. With the rest of culture, the North American church has entered what author Mark Sayers calls a “gray zone” — an overlap of time between the ending of an old era and the beginning of a new one. With it comes uncertainty and anxiety. What’s next? How will we survive? What will we do?

The Gospel of Christ the crucified speaks a clear word of hope and confidence for all times and places. Those who speak it bring with them a non-anxious presence regardless of the challenges faced. More than ever, the church needs non-anxious pastors and church workers to shepherd and lead congregations living in this gray zone. We must understand the age we are in, take it head on, and learn to flourish in it with the calmness and confidence of the Gospel.

Across the district, I regularly see the gray zone frontline challenges the church is facing — an unbelieving world, a secular culture, the loss of its privileged position, extracurriculars taking priority in families, declining attendance, aging congregations, financial struggles, conflicted congregations, and a loss of trust in the church itself. Satan would have us become overwhelmed by anxiety and wallow in despair. He wants us to become cynical and give up on the mission. But we have a Lord who declares, “I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (MATT. 16:18). This promise gives us boldness and confidence to act as the church, “the holy community,” as Luther says in his Large Catechism.

Our congregations and workers must continue to be unashamed of the Gospel we confess, unabashed about teaching it to adults and children, and unyielding about evangelizing the lost, all the while remaining passionate about the care of souls — lost and found. Congregations must be strategically agile as they engage their communities which have changing needs and a fluctuating worldview. They must be adaptively nimble with their governance and organizational structure as they meet the realities of this world. All of this even as we remain steadfastly faithful amid a digital generation whose worldview has been shaped by a screen carried in their pocket.

This means (1) the technical compe-

See **ENGAGED**, Page 8

INSTALLATIONS

Rev. Matthew Cephus was ordained and installed as pastor of Royal Family at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, on Jan. 21.

Pictured are, from left (front row) Revs. Vue Lee, Aaron Kuehn, Matthew Cephus; (middle row) Martin Cornes, Chou Vang, Bill Hugo, Dr. Lucas Woodford, Benego Kangar, Hunde Takele, Jason Krause, Steve Frentz; (back row) Mark Shockey, Ryan Alvey, Juan Palm, Paul Biebighauser, Ben Griffin, Toby Schmidt and Steven Wheeler.



Rev. Jordan Voges was installed as associate pastor of Saint James Lutheran Church, West St. Paul, on Jan. 14. Pictured are, from left, Revs. Dr. Rich Carter, Kurt Klaus, Paul Strawn, Joel Vano, Frank Milo, Richard Stadler, Jordan Voges, Thomas Aadland, Frank Ruffatto, Scot Missling, Dr. Ralph Rokke, Christopher Horton, James Kroonblawd, Thomas Evans, Steven Benson, Caleb Waite, David Edwards and Dr. Joshua Miller.



Rev. Peter Gueldner was installed as an Intentional Interim Pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church, Faribault, on Feb. 3. Pictured are, from left, Revs. Stefan Wismar, Peter Gueldner and Jon Niebuhr.



Rev. David Hahn was installed as pastor of St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Worthington, on Jan. 7. Pictured are, from left, Revs. John Scheutz, Paul Sajban, David Hahn, Mark Loder, Dale Hedstrom and Shawn Ethridge.

Celebrating our Lutheran schools

Our Lutheran schools provide excellent academics; however, that is not all! Day to day, the love of Jesus is shared by teachers and staff to witness to the students who attend. National Lutheran Schools Week (NLSW), held Jan. 21–27 under the theme “Connected,” is an opportunity to celebrate God’s work in the schools and to share these blessings with others.

CONNECTED

JOHN 15:1-5



Trinity Lutheran School, Waconia, had a wonderful NLSW filled with field trips, dress-up days, service projects, games and more. Pictured are students in the stands greeting their mascot during a Trinity Tigers junior high boys basketball game against St. Joseph Catholic School, Waconia. Both schools had all students attend! The energy was high and the Tigers earned a hard-fought, one-point victory. There were lots of cheering and togetherness, and lasting memories were made!

Lutheran school students joined together at Concordia Academy and King of Kings Lutheran Church, Roseville, for a celebration of Lutheran education. The participating schools were King of Kings; Trinity, Hudson; Trinity, St. Francis; Trinity Lone Oak, Eagan; Trinity First, Minneapolis; St. John’s, Elk River; and St. Paul’s, Prior Lake.



David Laflin, a Christian illusionist, amused and amazed students at Mayer Lutheran High School, who were joined by students from 10 area Lutheran grade schools. David not only presented a fun, exciting and engaging show, he also wove the Gospel message throughout his presentation.

Congrats!

Madison Patrow, DCE at Messiah, Lakeville, has been honored with the prestigious title of Outstanding New DCE by the National Association of Directors of Christian Education (NADCE). This esteemed award recognizes Madison for her outstanding contributions to student ministry and discipleship to nurture and guide people in their faith journey. She was recognized on Feb. 1 at the National DCE Conference in Houston. Congratulations, Madison, and thank you for your service to the kingdom of God!



On March 11, **Debbie Borchardt** will celebrate five years as Administrative Assistant for Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford and Rev. Stefan Wismar. We praise God for her ministry in our district! You are invited to share letters of appreciation for her service. Send them to christina.krentz@mnsdistrict.org or:
Minnesota South District, LCMS
Attn: Christina Krentz
14301 Grand Ave.; Burnsville, MN 55306



MinistryFOCUS

Helping our teachers reduce student debt

Our dedicated Lutheran school teachers are in the classroom every day helping children grow spiritually and academically. Along the way, many students come to know the eternal promise of our Savior.

During the 2023 LCMS convention, delegates acknowledged teachers' student debt and how that impacts their well-being and ability to deliver ministry. Delegates passed Resolution 12-03A, specifying an annual special designated offering in support of commissioned teacher student debt reduction, to be first taken during the 2024 National Lutheran Schools Week held in January. That offering will be administered by *MinistryFOCUS*, an LCMS Recognized Service Organization that since 2015 has given grants to more than 250 called workers with challenging student debt.

Gifts received through this designated offering will be accepted through April 15. For more information, visit ministryfocus.org.

Take Heart Scholarship



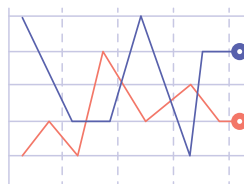
The Take Heart Scholarship was developed for high school seniors who will soon begin higher education. Students who have an LCEF Young Investors Steward Account have the opportunity of financial support through the Take Heart Scholarship. Three awards of \$3,000, \$1,000 and \$500 will be granted.

Applications close May 1 and winners will be announced on May 31. Learn more at lcef.org/scholarship.

Report your congregational stats to Synod

It is that time again to complete your congregation's end-of-year statistics and update your current list of lay leaders at <https://lc.lcms.org>. The deadline to submit your report is March 31.

Use the same login information that you used last year to register your presidential voters. If you cannot remember the username and/or



password you created for your congregation last year, follow the on-screen helps on the login page to recover your login credentials.

If you do not know your congregation's login information, an authorized staff member should contact the LCMS Church Information Center at:

- ▶ rosters.stats@lcms.org, or
- ▶ 888-843-5267

Online reporting is intended to help congregations honor their commitment as members of the Synod, as confirmed by the 2016 LCMS Convention in Bylaw 1.3.4.3:

Congregations of the Synod, to enable the Synod to plan current and future ministry efforts and to lend accuracy and integrity to the Synod's delegate representation and voting processes, agree to provide annual membership and statistical information to the Synod.



ALL are welcome at convention!

By Wendy Sjoblom
VP of Communications,
LWML Minnesota South District

This winter has been strange weather-wise, but spring is finally in the air! Spring brings the hope of new life and LWML spring events and rallies throughout the Minnesota South District. If you want to find a zone event near you, visit mnsfwml.org, go to the “Events” tab and choose “Zones” from the drop-down menu. All of the zone presidents would love for you to attend one of their events.

The spring season of the LWML will end with our 30th Biennial Minnesota South District

Convention June 20–22 at the Mayo Clinic Health System Event Center in Mankato. We invite all who are interested in what Lutheran Women in Mission do to attend and “Walk in Love” with us as we joyfully proclaim Christ.

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.

EPHESIANS 5:1-2

Convention registration fellowship will begin at 4 p.m. on Thursday, June 20. There will be a silent auction of baskets to raise money for missions; opportunities to visit with exhibitors; and devotional time as we

are “walking in prayer.” The convention opens at 8 a.m. on Friday. Throughout the day, there will be Bible study, mission speakers, announcement of new mission grants and a new mission goal, voting for bylaws and officers, and a communion service that evening. The convention continues on Saturday from 8 a.m. to noon. The day will begin with Bible study and the installation of new officers.

As we “talk the talk,” may we be encouraged to “walk the walk” as God’s beloved children, sharing the love of Christ with others. Everyone is welcome, including non-LWML women, former members, spouses, sisters, pastors, daughters and friends. If you need more convention and registration information, visit mnsfwml.org, go to the “Events” tab and select “District” from the drop-down menu.

Please join us as we continue to “Walk with Christ” this June.



Your District Mission Gifts at Work

It’s not too late to register for the **Go First! Ministry Conference**. There will be lots of interesting presenters, and still more interesting people, who will gather April 19–20 at Concordia Academy, Roseville. Together we will share and explore new ideas for how we can do life together, care for one another, and find ways to work together to reach out to a world in need of the Good News of Jesus. Best of all, you and your team can register for this event at no cost! Learning, singing, talking, sharing and free food await you at the conference. To register, scan the bar code, or visit mnsdistrict.org/go-first-initiative#go-first-registration. We look forward to seeing you there!

Go First! Ministry Conference

Life Together

Soul Care

Go First!

Collaboration

Outreach

April 19 - 20, 2024

Concordia Academy
2400 Dale Street
Roseville, MN

COMING EVENTS

**Dr. Rich Carter - My Life Matters?!
Freedom in Christ for Service with the Neighbor**



March 15-16

- Men from LCMS MN South District invited to 24-hr retreat
- Fellowship and recreation at Camp Omega



BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE FOR MANHOOD

For more information or to register, scan the QR code or go to campomega.org/event/manup.



**MAY 13 - 15, 2024
Madden's on Gull Lake
Brainerd, MN**

Featuring Keynote Presenters:

Rev. Dr. David Maxwell
Professor of Systemic Theology, CSL

Angus Menuge, PhD.
Professor & Chair of Philosophy, CUW

And Bible Study Leader:
Rev. Dr. Reed Lessing
Director, Center for Biblical Studies, CSP

REGISTER NOW



for lunch and \$20 per person for the banquet.

Complete the registration form below and mail it with your registration fee to Doyle Benson, Minnesota South LLL District President, 24198 100th St., Stewart, MN 55385. For more information, contact Doyle at 320-583-7695 or doylebenson321@gmail.com.

The registration deadline is April 1.



**MINNESOTA SOUTH
LLL DISTRICT
CONVENTION**
Energizing Mission
Psalm 89:1-2

The Minnesota South LLL District invites you to gather and celebrate the impact the Lord makes in people's lives every day at their annual convention

on Saturday, April 13, at St. Michael Lutheran Church, Bloomington.

The featured banquet speaker is Kurt Buchholz, Lutheran Hour Ministries CEO, and the keynote speaker is Dr. Kari Vo, theological editor and author of *LHM Daily Devotions*. Leading the breakout sessions will be Rev. Issa Safadi of People of the Book Lutheran Outreach (POBLO); Rev. Vue Lee, Minnesota South District Assistant to the President for Missions; and Rev. Chris Ballenger, LINC Twin Cities.

Doors open at 9:30 a.m. and the convention begins at 10. The banquet begins at 5 p.m. and the day closes with the Lutheran Hour Rally at 6:30 p.m. The registration fee is \$10 per person

REGISTRATION FORM 2024 MN SOUTH LLL DISTRICT CONVENTION Registration deadline **April 1**

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email Address: _____

Number of Attendees for Lunch (\$10 per person) _____ Number of Attendees for Banquet Dinner (\$20 per person) _____ Total Enclosed: \$ _____

Proclaiming life



On Jan. 22, a group of 22 students and adults from Martin Luther Jr./Sr High School, Northrop, attended the annual March for Life at the state capitol grounds in St. Paul.

Before the March, the group attended a chapel service at Concordia University, St. Paul. They then went to the capitol, joining thousands of others in support of life. The annual event is organized by Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life.

The trip to the March for Life was sponsored by the school's Knights4Life, which sponsors activities throughout the year to promote the value of all life from conception to natural death. This is the second time students from the school have attended the March for Life, something they hope to do on a regular basis in the future.

LCMS members from around the district gathered at the steps of the capitol in St. Paul for the 2024 March for Life, held annually on the anniversary of the legalization of abortion



Congregation mission receipts

For the period ending Jan. 31, 2024

Actual receipts.....	\$130,252
Budget receipts	\$170,833
Over (under) amount	(\$40,581)
Year-to-date receipts	
Actual receipts.....	\$130,252
Budget receipts	\$170,833
Over (under) anticipated amount.....	(\$40,581)
Use of mission receipts (YTD-year to date)	
50% designated to District & Synod (YTD)	\$102,948
100% designated to District (YTD).....	\$21,339
100% designated to Synod (YTD)	\$5,965
Total receipts	\$130,252
Mission receipts—2024 vs. 2023	
Mission receipts — YTD 2023	\$130,252
Mission receipts — YTD 2022	\$122,665
Over (under) last year	\$7,587
<i>2024 congregational receipts budgeted at \$2,100,000 (Does not include designated to Synod)</i>	

MINNESOTA SOUTH DISTRICT LCEF

December 2023	
New investments	\$5,311,136
Withdrawals.....	\$3,321,096
Net increase (decrease).....	\$1,990,040
Year-to-date July 1–Dec. 31, 2023	
New investments	\$13,169,915
Withdrawals.....	\$13,454,021
Net increase (decrease).....	(\$284,106)



DISTRICT OFFICE

- ▶ 14301 Grand Ave. S.
Burnsville, MN 55306
- ▶ 952-435-2550
- ▶ mnsdistrict.org

ENGAGED

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

tence of our congregations — “the way we’ve always done things around here” — must be balanced by (2) the adaptive capacity to meet people where they are at, and (3) the relational ability to demonstrate a sincere care for the souls traversing the gray zone of individualism, misinformation, cryptocurrency, digital chaos, a fading democracy, and globalization. The overlap of those three areas, says Todd Bolsinger, helps the church find its footing in the community by looking outward rather than only inward. In our case, this means we must cherish our 16th century Reformation heritage and 19th century Germanic immigrant history without imposing the nostalgia of the past as a requirement for the church of the present.

The truth of Holy Scripture is unchanging and relevant to every age. Its message remains powerful and sufficient for all times. The church’s job, therefore, is not to contextualize the Gospel to every age (i.e., change it to look exactly like the culture), but rather to textualize the people of every age with the unchanging Word of God (i.e., wrap people in the truth of Scripture), and thereby create a culture of the Word, filled with disciples of Jesus Christ. Doing so requires a commonsense assessment of the culture around us in which we compassionately, morally, and ritually engage the people with the Word of God. In doing so, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting become joyfully instilled among them.

To that end, I give thanks for how so many pastors, teachers, and DCEs remain calm and stand on the promise of Christ, weary as they might be. I rejoice how our church workers are meeting the challenges of the day. I love to see how they get into the lives of their people and walk right into the life of their communities. It may not always be perfect, but despite the challenges being faced, the pastors and church workers of the Minnesota South District boldly engage people adrift in the gray zone of uncertainty with the certainty of the shed blood of Christ and the life He gives. It is a joy to behold!

Older adult gathering is May 6–7

S.A.G.E.S. (Saints Alive, Growing, Ever Serving) is organized to enhance Older Adult Ministry of the Minnesota South District by providing experiences in Christian fellowship, service and life enrichment. One such experience is the annual GATHERING.

The 2024 event, “Finishing Strong,” will be held May 6–7 at Country Inn and Suites in Mankato. The event begins at 1 p.m. on Monday and concludes at 2:30 p.m. on Tuesday.

The featured speaker is Rev. Dr. Dean Nadasdy, former district president

(2012–18) and a published author. Pastor Nadasdy will have three presentations during the two-day event. There will be seven breakout sessions of topical interest in addition to music, fellowship and joyful activity.

The Monday evening banquet will feature The Benson Family Singers from Faribault. Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford, district president, will deliver the closing devotion. The quarterly newsletter, SAGACITY, as well as the GATHERING registration document, is available at mnsdistrict.org/sages.

HEARTS FOR JESUS

Blessings in Cambodia

Each year, the Minnesota South District education committee chooses a project to support with their prayers and offerings throughout the school year.

For the 2023–24 Hearts for Jesus project, our district schools are spreading the Good News of Jesus with children and their families by helping to furnish Garuna Christian (Lutheran) School #8 in Siem Reap, Cambodia. The school recently had its formal dedication ceremony. This was exciting, as students received their Garuna backpacks and uniforms for the first time! The Minnesota South District’s support of this school has really made an impact. Thank you for your partnership!



Read more about Hearts for Jesus and the Garuna Christian (Lutheran) School at mnsdistrict.org/hearts-for-jesus.

Liane Henkell, content developer for Garuna Ministries, will lead a breakout session at the *Go First! Ministry Conference* (see page 5). Register at mnsdistrict.org/go-first-initiative#go-first-registration.

District to sponsor four THEOLOGICAL CONVOCATIONS

The Minnesota South District will sponsor four theological convocations in 2024 (all on a Friday) to be hosted by a local congregation in each region.

Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford, district president, will facilitate each convocation. Two speakers from the district will present perspectives and responses on the topic at each convocation. Small group and plenary discussions will

follow. The schedule is:

- May 31: Ecclesiology and the Future of the LCMS (Region 1)
- Sept. 20: Worship Theology and Practice (Region 2)
- Oct. 18: Office of the Ministry and Routes to Ordination (Region 3)
- Oct. 25: Theology of the Practice of the Lord’s Supper (Region 4)

Each convocation begins at 9 a.m. and ends at noon. Lunch will be provided. Stay tuned for more details!