



DISTRICT NEWS

MINNESOTA SOUTH

💡 TALKING POINTS WITH PASTOR



A statue of Martin Luther is pictured on the campus of Concordia University, St. Paul.

him. In 1530, they publicly confessed that people “are justified for Christ’s sake, through faith, when they believe they are received into favor and their sins are forgiven for Christ’s sake.” This confession was publicly stated to the Holy Roman Emperor in direct opposition to the teaching at the time and is known as Article IV of the Augsburg Confession.

It summarizes what Luther had rediscovered years before and makes clear justification by faith is not some abstract idea or high-minded elite thought, but a reality. In other words, justification is rooted in the truth that God’s Word not only teaches or describes, but it creates; that it is something to be regarded experientially, not merely cognitively. It confesses that on the cross our sin was put upon Jesus, and in exchange, by faith, we are given Jesus’ everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness. This is not some legal fiction or playing pretend. This is a divine, comforting reality.

Martin Luther is known for *going first* to debate important doctrinal matters. However, the Reformation did not start simply because he was a stickler for right doctrine. It began because he had a crisis of conscience about his salvation. His terrified conscience found no consolation from the wrath of God by

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During the time of the Reformation, justification was heralded as the central article of the Christian faith. Namely, as Scripture says:

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

ROM. 3:23-24

All humankind is guilty of offending God by their sin, deserving only death and damnation, but on account of Christ, they are declared innocent and



Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford
District President

made righteous through faith in His death and resurrection. Justification brings with it the conviction that all other teachings (doctrines) of the Bible were understood to revolve around this one pivotal truth, that “in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them” (2 COR. 5:19). Remove this truth and the church would crumble and fall.

That’s why Martin Luther was a champion of justification. He started it all by posting his 95 Theses in 1517, and then in 1521 he was willing to *go first*. He made his stand and put his life on the line in reclaiming the clear biblical truth that people cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merit or works.

His boldness led others to stand with

INSTALLATIONS

Rev. Martin Cornes was installed as pastor of the Alley, Cottage Grove, on Aug. 13. From left, (front row) Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford, Rev. Martin Cornes; (middle row) Rev. Dean Dunavan, Rev. Fran Green, Rev. Craig McCourt, Vicar Matthew Cephus, Rev. Ben Griffin; (back row) Rev. Dr. Bob Gehrke, Rev. Jim Bender, Vicar Ben Kangar, Rev. Bill Hugo and Rev. Ted Diedrick.



Rev. Fred Limmel was ordained and installed as Minister of Worship, Care, and Discipleship at Our Savior Lutheran Church and School, Excelsior, on Aug. 20. From left, Revs. Adam Hengst, Armand Boehme, Dan Schultz, Howard Krienke, Fred Limmel, Dr. Lucas Woodford, Michael Michalk, Richard Holz, Josh Hoffman and Randall Neal.

Rev. Steve Wilson (left) and **Rev. Jeff Hagen** (right) were installed as pastors of the dual parish of St. John's Lutheran Church, Sherburn, and St. Paul Lutheran Church, Ceylon, on Aug. 6. The installation was held at St. Paul. Also pictured is Rev. Russell Reimers, emeritus.



Tracy Koepsell was installed as preschool director and pre-K teacher at St. John's Lutheran School, Chaska, on Aug. 27.



Keith Traska was installed as principal of St. John's Lutheran School, Norwood Young America, on July 9.



Kelly Hanlon Hunt was installed as teacher for grades 5-6 at Trinity Lutheran School, St. Francis, on Aug. 20.



Lily Carls, was installed as preschool director of Little Saints Early Childhood Center, St. Paul's Lutheran School, Prior Lake, on June 18.



Kristen Skura was installed as principal of St. John's Lutheran School, Corcoran, on Aug. 20. She is pictured with Rev. Matthew Moss, St. John's Lutheran Church senior pastor.



Rev. William Otte (left) celebrated the 50th anniversary of his ordination at Trinity, Rochester, on Aug. 6. He is pictured with his wife, Deanne, and Rev. Nathaniel Schwartz, Trinity senior pastor. We praise God for your ministry of Word and Sacrament through the years!



Milestone in Sargeant

The congregation of St. John's Lutheran Church, Sargeant, celebrated the 30th anniversary of its current building. Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford, Minnesota South District president, was the guest preacher for the anniversary service, held on July 23. He is pictured at left with Rev. Marc Freiberg Sr., St. John's pastor (and pastor of Immanuel, Racine), and his son, Theodore, who served as acolyte.

Immanuel has been an LCMS congregation since 1874.



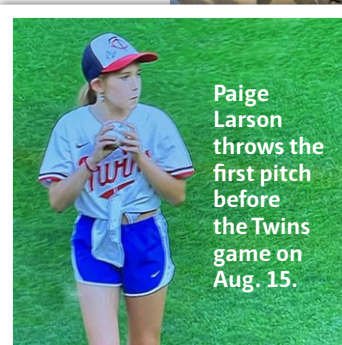
Welcome to the district

This great group of people was welcomed at the Minnesota South District office on Aug. 8 for New Worker Orientation. The new church workers were introduced to the district staff and each other, and given an overview of the resources and ministries available within the district. Pictured are, from left (front row) Rev. Weslie Odom, Rev. Joshua Moldenhauer, Rev. Jason Krause, Rev. Daniel Langewisch, Victoria Ritzma, Kristen Skura, Lily Carls, Dina Safadi, Rev. Issa Safadi, Dr. Norman Piatti, Thomas Johnson; (middle row) Rev. Hailu Gorobo, Rev. Scot Missling, Rev. Nick Wagenknect, Rev. Derek Broten, Phil Hunt, Kelly Hanlon Hunt; (back row) Dean Jennissen, Rev. Michael Holmen, Rev. Dan Borkenhagen, Rev. Dr. Vernon Wendt and Steve Schoenecker.

Dollar hot dogs, and a Twins win!

Each year, thousands of Lutherans converge on Target Field for Lutheran Night at the Twins. The 2023 gathering was held on Aug. 15 as the first-place Twins took on the Detroit Tigers, a game which the home team won 5-3! Our own Paige Larson, daughter of Kai Larson, LCEF VP, threw the first pitch.

Groups get discounted tickets, vocally talented Lutherans volunteer to arrive early for a quick rehearsal before singing the national anthem on the field, and everyone loves Dollar Dog night! Lutheran Night at the Twins is a great opportunity for congregations to enjoy a fun field trip. Watch for details next summer.



Paige Larson throws the first pitch before the Twins game on Aug. 15.



Members of St. Paul, Pipestone, and Zion, Hardwick, root for the Twins.

WANTED: Young women for district convention

Serving the Lord with Gladness looks different for each woman in the LWML. It might mean serving as group president, organizing a soup supper or making crafts for a fundraiser. Seeing how each person individually serves our risen Lord brings joy to my heart, and reminds me of how God has blessed each of us with unique gifts and talents. And knowing that the LWML values each of us as individuals and encourages us to support each other in our specific God-given gifts is one of the many reasons I enjoy being part of the LWML.

It is a privilege for each of us in our district to reach out to women of all ages, to encourage and support her in how she may serve our Lord. We can help her learn how God is calling her to use her talents to support Him in His will and, God willing, to support the LWML in our goal of supporting global missions. This starts with a relationship between women who are active within the LWML and those who have an interest in learning more about this mission-focused organization.

Our district is looking for women who are excited about missions, have a love for the Lord and want to learn more about the LWML to consider attending the June 2024 district convention, “Walk in Love,” as a zone Young Woman Representative (YWR). Join us in praising God for His steadfast love and support, learn more about LWML, and enjoy time in fellowship with Christian women. We are also looking for experienced women to invite young women to attend our convention. Start now developing a relationship with a young woman, find out what she may know about LWML, and encourage her to learn how her God-given talents can be used to support global missions. And above all, be in prayer for the young women God is encouraging to learn more about the LWML.

The application to be a zone YWR is available at mnslwml.org/young_women. For more information, contact me at vpservantresources@mnslwml.org.

In His Grace, Tracy Eickhoff
Vice-President of Servant Resources

Nominations sought

Nominations are now being accepted for the following officers:

- Vice-President of Christian Life
- Vice-President of Human Care
- Vice-President of Servant Resources
- Treasurer
- Nominating Committee members (one from each conference)
- Pastoral counselor (2)

Candidate nominations are for the next LWML Minnesota South District Convention, to be held June 20-22, 2024.

The deadline for nominations for pastoral counselors is Oct. 15.
The deadline for other officer nominations is Jan. 15, 2024.

Nominee Suggestion Form for LWML Minnesota South District Officers

Nominator does not need permission from nominee.

Your Name _____

Phone _____

Address _____

Email address _____

I suggest the following person for office:
(please fill in as much information as you can.)

For the office of _____

Name _____

Phone _____

Address _____

Church name/city _____

LWML Zone and Conference _____

Mail/email: Kathy Kohner, Nominating Committee Chair
1345 49th Ave., Winona, MN 55987
Email: nominatingchair@mnslwml.org
Cell phone: 507-450-013



SCHOOLS ARE A MISSION

Schools are beginning to flow in a normal routine. Students understand what is expected of them, educators are teaching the daily lessons, and administrators are busy ensuring the overall flow is going smoothly. The best part of our Minnesota South District schools, though, is the ability of our faculty and staff to proclaim the forgiveness of sins through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ to students and families.

What a blessing to share this Good News! In our district we have 40 early childhood centers, 35 preschool through grade-8 schools, and four high schools. Within these, enrollment is growing! According to Sean Martens, district Assistant to the President, Education and Commissioned Ministers, and LCMS Rosters and Statistics, at 4% growth, the Minnesota South K-12 enrollment is doing extremely well compared to the non-public school average at 3.4%, the Catholic schools at 3%, home school at -5%, and public schools at -0.3%.

Taking a look at the statistics since COVID, the elementary (K-8) enrollment has grown 35% (12% per year) and the high schools 13% (4% per year). Unfortunately, the early childhood programs have shrunk 12% (-4% per

year). Overall, however, the combined education programs in the district have grown 8% since COVID or 3% per year. That's a lot of students!

As such, our Lutheran schools are a ripe mission field. From the 2018–2021 Synod School Statistical Report, one-fifth of all students enrolled in K–12 and one-third in the early childhood district schools come from families that disclose they are unchurched. By God's grace, these children and their families, as well as our churched students and families, regularly hear of Jesus' love for them. Chapel time and lessons in the Lutheran faith are a regular part of the school day. Students get to see faith in action in the lives of teachers and staff as these leaders demonstrate kindness and forgiveness. They also get to practice it as the Holy Spirit begins to increase their faith and encourage them to share it with others. Indeed, this mission field is ready for growth.

Alongside our teachers and staff, you can be a laborer in this mission field. Opportunities abound! At the district convention in 2022, Resolution 4-03 was adopted: "To Encourage and Support Evangelism through Lutheran Schools." It was resolved "that the congregations of the Minnesota

South District support and uplift our Lutheran schools in prayer and encourage them to continue to be faithful to God's Word and strive for excellence in catechizing and educating the students in their care."

What a powerful statement! Listen to those action words: *support*, *uplift*, *pray*, and *encourage*. Perhaps you can support a Lutheran school through volunteerism. Read a book to a classroom of eager students, assist office staff, or help with fundraising efforts. There's always plenty to do! Uplift these workers by sharing a favorite Bible verse, sending a card, baking a treat, or fixing something in their classroom. Encourage them with the gentle reminder of their vocation, and give them a listening ear when things get tough. And most of all, pray for the school, the administration, the staff and the teachers. God will hear those prayers and answer them in His wisdom.

Be involved in the mission even if you don't have a local Lutheran school. A meaningful way to do this is by actively identifying and encouraging future Lutheran school teachers, as there is a shortage. Maybe you know a member of an LCMS congregation or someone with a bachelor's degree in education who would like to be a Lutheran teacher. There are online colloquy courses through a consortium of the Concordia system to begin the journey (call the Minnesota South District for details).

You may know someone who displays the gifts of a good teacher but doesn't realize it. Encourage that person to explore teaching as a church vocation. Financial gifts are another opportunity to support Lutheran schools, even if they're not in your vicinity. They depend on the generosity of faithful servants. And no matter where you are and where the schools are, God hears your prayers on behalf of them.

As the school year flows forward, give praise and thanksgiving to God for our Lutheran schools. Administrators, teachers, students, families and you help in the mission of sharing Jesus' love and forgiveness in our communities!

Concordia Classical Academy

A story of GOD'S GOODNESS IN CHRIST

In 2004, a group of families at Good Shepherd, North Mankato, got together to explore the idea of opening a Lutheran school in Mankato. Speaking to sister congregations in the Mankato area, the hope was to form an association with the mission of providing a Christ-centered, biblically focused education to the children in our community.

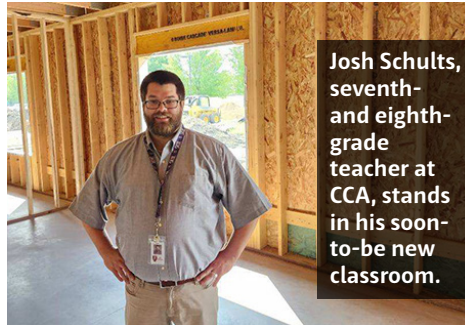
The hope of an association was small as the only church interested was Good Shepherd. Undeterred, this group of faith-filled parents asked a consultant from St. Louis to provide a feasibility study, the results of which were less than what was hoped for. While acknowledging the need for a school in Mankato, the consultant advised Good Shepherd, and these parents, that a school would not be possible for them.

God had other plans.

In 2005, Good Shepherd Lutheran School opened with its first class of five kindergarten students. Through many prayers and much dedication to the tasks that Christ had given them, this little school grew to 20 students when, in 2015, the decision was made to become a classical school.

Like many of our Lutheran schools, Concordia Classical Academy (CCA) was given a modest increase in enrollment due to the effects of COVID-19 policies on area public schools. In 2020, enrollment was a modest 35 students, and 38 students in 2021.

The 2021 school year brought an amazing blessing as enrollment increased to 84 students. Enrollment continues to grow at CCA, necessitating this little school in North Mankato to once again step out in faith and add on to our facilities, building six new classrooms and a full bathroom. With this increase in enrollment, we have



been blessed with more involvement with our sister congregations. Both Our Savior and Hosanna in Mankato have been instrumental in the ongoing support and success for our school. Current enrollment in grades K-8 for the 2023-24 school year is 95 students.

At Concordia Classical Academy, in partnership with families, we strive to help students grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ as they grow in body, mind, and spirit with truth, goodness and beauty.

These words encompass the mission Christ Jesus has given to CCA. With daily chapel, and an unwavering commitment to the truth of the Word of God found in Scripture, the purpose of this school is clear. Our aim is to form children and families by the Word of Christ to lead lives of virtue, knowing that in Jesus their eternity is secure. The success of CCA comes solely from the goodness and mercy of God. This is His work in and through us, for which we can only give humble thanks and joyous praise to Him.

If you are ever in the North Mankato area, we would love for you to stop in and see what our Lord is doing for His kingdom. Join us for chapel, held every day at 8:30 a.m. And find out more at ccamankato.org.

— Submitted by Rev. LeRoy LaPlant, pastor, Good Shepherd, North Mankato

Going first! in opportunities of collaboration, networking, and sharing unleashes the potential of our congregations in the name of Jesus, that we might serve and declare all the more that we are justified by faith in Christ!



Congregation mission receipts

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

Actual receipts.....	\$167,298
Budget receipts	\$170,832
Over (under) amount	(\$3,534)

Year-to-date receipts

Actual receipts.....	\$1,292,639
Budget receipts	\$1,366,656
Over (under) anticipated amount.....	(\$74,017)

Use of mission receipts (year to date)

50% designated to district and Synod	\$986,690
100% designated to district operations ..	\$272,291
100% designated for Synod operations	\$33,658
Total receipts	\$1,292,639

Mission receipts—2023 vs. 2022

Mission receipts — YTD 2023	\$1,292,639
Mission receipts — YTD 2022	\$1,392,781
Over (under) last year	(\$100,142)

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

MINNESOTA SOUTH DISTRICT LCEF

June 2023

New investments	\$2,174,428
Withdrawals.....	\$2,597,996
Net increase (decrease).....	(\$423,568)

Year-to-date July 1, 2022–June 30, 2023

New investments	\$26,110,385
Withdrawals.....	\$25,076,810
Net increase (decrease).....	\$1,033,575

► 14301 Grand Ave. S.
Burnsville, MN 55306

► 952-435-2550

► mnsdistrict.org

District mission 'takes it to the streets'

Royal Family has been on a campaign this summer to reach the neighborhood and community with the love of Jesus Christ — and thank God it's working!

"Take it To the Streets" was a community outreach event held in July in northeast Minneapolis. The turnout of both adults and kids from the neighborhood was awesome! The event featured a live gospel artist, a variety of food, a bounce house and games. Vicar Matthew Cephus gave a brief opening message for the community and then blessed the food while the connections with new faces began.

Two people who attended the event, Dan and Jason, are now worshipping with Royal Family! These two brothers live right on the same block where the church building is located. "I really felt the love that was shown to me during the event and how people made me feel welcome," Dan said. And from Jason, "From the community event to my first worship service in this church edifice, I do feel like I'm home." Since then, Dan surprised the congregation with some homemade snacks and Jason brings his three kids to church.

Everyone had some fun and enjoyed the food, but mostly they experienced the true love of Jesus Christ. The residents are now awakening to the fact that the church on the street corner is not only just a building to go to and worship, but it consists of people who love God and also care for their neighbors and community.



After the event and testimonies of Dan and Jason, Vicar Cephus has been asking himself, "I wonder how many more people in our community are yearning to experience the love of Jesus from me or the church?" "It's kind of a challenge," he answered, "but more so a greater desire now for me to share the love of Christ to others."

— Submitted by Vicar Cephus. Royal Family is a district mission congregation.

Go First! Through our daily vocations, we **reach out** with the hope of Christ, which often begins with 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.

MESSAGE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

a doctrine that was teaching people to look within for comfort.

The issues we wrestle with today are not the same as Luther's day. But his *go first* moment gives us pause to reflect and, likewise, *go first* as we battle against the lies of our day. Our culture claims we can look to ourselves to find all we need. Such lies deceive and mislead many burdened souls today. But that's why justification remains so important.

Luther was willing to *go first* to champion justification by faith because he knew it to be the ground of consolation and comfort for burdened consciences. You might call him a *Go First!* champion. His boldness inspires us in our life together even now.

Because of the Reformation, the Holy Christian church worships and cel-

brates together as a community of faith and love expressed in word and deed, rooted in the truth of justification by faith. Our **life together** acknowledges the guilt and the shame of sin, but rejoices in how the shed blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin.

Luther was adamant it was not about looking internally to find consolation, but looking outside oneself to Christ. The Reformation came to represent a revolution in **soul care**. We still stand in that shadow. As Jesus looked upon people with compassion and cared for their souls, we do as well.

Those whom Christ justifies, He also sanctifies to be light bearers and hope mongers in a broken and dysfunctional world. Justification by faith gives us great confidence to be the church.



Through our daily vocations, we **reach out** with the hope of Christ, which often begins with 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.

Finally, as Christ justifies us, He also unites us, not just as the church, but as the body of Christ. Therefore, our desire is to complete each other rather than compete against each other. We are stronger together. *Going first* in opportunities of **collaboration**, networking and sharing unleashes the potential of our congregations in the name of Jesus, that we might serve and declare all the more that we are justified by faith in Christ!

We are a *Go First!* people.