

Life Together In Mission, Part I: Congregation

KANSAS DISTRICT LC-MS CONVENTION 2018

Life Together In Mission, Part 2: District-Synod

KANSAS DISTRICT LC-MS CONVENTION 2018

Life Together In Mission, Part 3: Nation-World

KANSAS DISTRICT LC-MS CONVENTION 2018

I come as a fellow-sinner

- And as a fellow Hispanic (with the other 1% in the synod)...
- And as a recovering *isolationist (which I fear far-surpasses 1% in the synod)*.
- My young assistant pastor (idealist that he was) about a dozen years ago challenged me regarding what I had become. BNM is part of my repentance!

Why?

- 1. God's creation: His CHURCH. Our unity!
- 2. We are commanded to love and serve one another!
- 3. Because I need you...we are facing the onslaught of the world and the devil more than ever before. We can't do it alone!

“Synod” isn’t St. Louis

- I’m going to get into definition (beyond the Handbook) in just a few minutes, but...
- strictly speaking as you know “members of synod” are ordained and commissioned ministers...and the congregations!
- So let’s be accurate: WE are synod!

This St. Louis as synod things is offensive to me!

- What about us out in CA?!
- Some folks relish getting out...but I'd rather be like Jonah...he didn't want to go to Nineveh! But God had other plans!
- Let's stop complaining about where we are! Let's cherish where we are! It's God's Holy Ground for the Gospel of Jesus Christ! So yes, we're synod too! We're the Church too! In CA and in KS!!! We're the synod! We're the Church!

But in my sin, I want to be like Cain

- I want to say to God as a sinner:

- **“Am I my brother’s keeper?”**

Yeah! I am!

- 1. Several months ago one of you Kansas district pastors literally picked up the phone and called me! One of your parishioners was flying out to So Cal for major surgery and staying for a few weeks for recovery...as a result, my elders and I worked together for the member to come to our Divine Services, we visited her in the hospital and in her temporary home...we prayed with her, gave her the Sacrament...and celebrated our unity, our fellowship, our life together!
- 2. At Saint Paul's we actively pray for our synodical president in Divine Service AND we actively pray for our district president...now sometimes these two leaders don't see eye-to-eye on things, but that does not change our practice...we pray for them BOTH and call both of them our brothers in Christ!

Yes, I am my brother's keeper!

- Bonhoeffer in *Life Together*:
- *“In other words, life together under the Word will remain sound and healthy only where it does not form itself into a movement, an order, a society, a collegium pietatis, but rather where it understands itself as being a part of the one, holy, catholic, Christian Church, where it shares actively and passively in the sufferings and struggles and promise of the whole Church.”* (HarperOne, 1954. 37)

I also come as one..

- 1) having never gone through our synod's *Koinonia* Project. That's bad and that's good!
- 2) serving along side of you at the grassroots level as a full time pastor.
- 3) also with a broad view...volunteer police chaplain, U.S. Army chaplain candidate school, CU Irvine adjunct where we have multi-everything on campus, former Roman Catholic...grad school in England...it's been good to see the Body Christ beyond the LCMS.
- 4) but I love the LCMS...and I serve with great enthusiasm on the Board for National Mission. The Office of National Mission that exists to serve YOU is doing GREAT THINGS!

Just recently...

- We have received a new Executive Director of the Office of National Mission.
- His Name is Rev. Robert Zagore...he is a gifted and dedicated servant of the King of Kings and servant of the Church...he is there to serve YOU!
- Contact him! Employ his service! He is there for you! Call the LCMS staff switchboard at 800-248-1930 OR
Robert.Zagore@lcms.org

In the LC-MS we typically express this great logo in a particular order...we say: “Witness, Mercy, Life Together”



But...

- “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” – John 13:35

-- ἀγαπῆν

Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol 1, p 53: “This love is a vital movement...an actualization of God in this world.” This is God’s love for each other!

Tertullian (circa A.D. 145-220) in his *Apology*

- “I shall at once go on, then, to exhibit, the peculiarities of the Christian society...We are a body knit together as such by a common religious profession, by unity of discipline, and by the bond of a common hope. We meet together as an assembly and congregation, that, offering up prayer to God as with united force, we may wrestle with Him in our supplications. This violence God delights in. We pray, too, for the emperors, for their ministers and for all in authority, for the welfare of the world, for the prevalence of peace, for the delay of the final consummation. We

Tertullian continued...

- assemble to read our sacred writings...with the sacred words we nourish our faith, we animate our hope, we make our confidence more steadfast; and no less by inculcations of God's precepts we confirm good habits...we have our treasure-chest...to support and bury poor people, to supply the wants of boys and girls destitute of means and parents, and of old persons confined now to the house...But it is mainly the deeds of a love so noble that lead many to put a brand on us."
- "...a brand on us???"

Tertullian continued...

- See, they say, *how they love one another...[!!!]...One in mind and soul, we do not hesitate to share our earthly goods with one another...When the upright...assemble in congregation, you ought not*

Tertullian continued...

- to call that a faction, but a *curia* – [i.e., the court of God].”

-- Roberts, Alexander & James Donaldson, eds. Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 3. Hendrickson, 1995. 46-47.

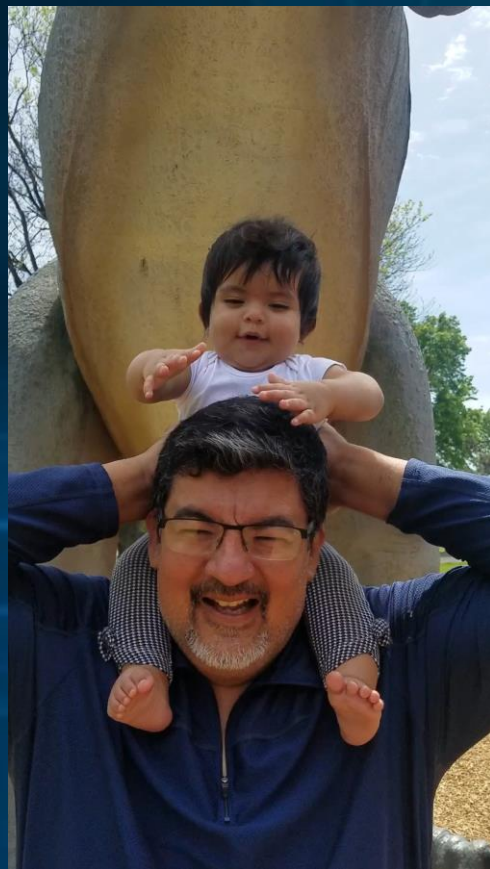
But how do we...

- 1) present a missional and confessional witness as the Body of Christ if we do not love each other?

And how do we...

- 2) present ourselves/The Church as merciful if we do not love each other?

First, love each other! Life Together is about Harmony in relationship.



Life Together is another word for Fellowship (koinonia)

- From Rev. Dr. Albert B. Collver III in the published Bible Study *Witness, Mercy, Life Together*
- “[Fellowship] also has a horizontal dimension, as we have fellowship with Christ’s body and blood in the Lord’s Supper, which gives us fellowship with Christians here on earth, Paul describes this connection to our fellow Christians as the ‘body of Christ’ (1 Corinthians 10:17; 12:27; Ephesians 4:12). Christians share together in sorrow and joy; they care for one another (50).”

This is HUGE

- We love our doctrine. Believe me, I'm right there on the doctrine page. I am a systematics guy. I LOVE our doctrine. In ***Faith That Sees Through The Culture*** I get into the great dualities of our faith to equip our people with greater clarity about our DOCTRINE to live out our faith more effectively in today's culture.
- But here's the thing: sometimes we love our doctrine so much that we read passages like 1st Corinthians 11:19: ***“for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized”*** that we turn it into just wanting to be right/correct/true...and then we treat this as an excuse to put down and say, “You're wrong!”

Analogous to strategies in Evangelization!

- Back in CA after every Tournament of Roses Parade (where we continue to be the ONLY Christian float in this amazing parade!!!)...at the end of the parade...
- What do you think about this kind of evangelization?!
- Well, sometimes this is how we go about our relationships within the synod...we do just enough to pull out our megaphones...

I'm getting back to Collver's point

- There is ALSO a horizontal dimension to Life Together, to fellowship.
- We are too eager to say, "You're wrong about your doctrine and practice, case closed, discussion over."
- And we do this from a distance and we don't strive in long-suffering to LOVE...to serve each other...to strive for understanding...taking the time to love.

I heard a radio clip recently...

- 1. Look, I'm a conservative guy. I love our Confessions, our liturgical tradition, when I go on calls to give the Sacrament, or meet a parishioner in my study for individual confession and absolution, I wear a collar, etc., and...
- 2. The LCMS pastor-theologian on the radio is someone I really respect, but...they made a caricature of those who identify themselves as missional. His concern in my mind is a POTENTIAL problem, but my NO MEANS does it mark the what is in the hearts and minds of missional Christians [it was about congregations meeting practical needs in the community].

That first step...

- Was a step for cutting off communication and life together.
- Our first-step, rather, needs to be love.
- I said I'm a conservative guy...that also means that I LOVE our hymnody. It does two things and not just one: 1) It leads us to PRAISE God; and 2) It teaches and inculcates the faith! But this doesn't mean that I can't enjoy contemporary pieces...and here is one that reminds us of what we need...

Love Is Patient Love Is Kind

Izzy Hunzek

The Buzz Label

Youtube. LOVE IS PATIENT LOVE IS KIND.
May 22, 2018. Online Video Clip. Youtube.

The Order Needs Adjusting

- “Life-Together” *must* come first. Not Witness, Not Mercy, but Life-Together...in my opinion we should say Life-Together, Mercy, Witness...
- Our LC-MS logo has for Life Together, an art depiction of the Holy Sacrament! Amen to that! That is how our unity is created!
- Our unity is known through concord in doctrine and practice.
- But the only way to approach and experience this is through harmony.

[on the three key terms see “Harmony Final Report” of the Task Force for Synodical Harmony, LCMS, 2011. 1-2]

Let's Put It Simply

- Bonhoeffer wrote in *Life Together*, “We belong to one another only through and in Jesus Christ.” (HarperOne, 1954. 21)
- That is in *Life Together* we practice coming to one another within the family of God “only through and in Jesus Christ.” And what kind of mutual approaching is that? Answer: unconditional love that sees the other in Christ.
- Such love casts the other in the best light: IN CHRIST!

Best light...

- Such an approach does not insist on its own way. It is not for us to approach others in the family in order to change them (this is not the first step)...it is rather for us to approach others in the family to love them FIRST as they are!
- If your first goal is to be a watch-dog and to rebuke, then no wonder so many people within our synod become isolationists. Shame on us when we behave this way.

Perspective

- No implication here that unity and concord in confession and doing ministry is incidental or being glossed over.
- ***Much to the contrary***, we focus on Life Together so that we have a chance to experience our unity created in Christ and our concord in doctrine and practice (even if we must wrestle with these).
- But it's easy to get on our high horse here and say, "But this is all backwards...how can one have harmony when you're not even on the same page doctrinally or in practice?"

Catch-22?

- That is, **IF** Holy Communion is the central expression of Life Together/Fellowship, and **IF** Holy Communion requires common confession (Concord)...
- But this is lacking...
- **THEN** how can we ever begin to practice Life Together?

Catch-22?

- Don't forget the other dimension...don't forget the horizontal...and here's the thing: this takes work!
- We should bear each other's burdens as fellow-sinners who acknowledge our struggle for complete concord.
- We ought give each other the benefit of the doubt while seeking to heal our synod (not in the spirit of compromise of doctrine), but in the spirit of serving each other in love so that we have a chance to get on the same page.

Perspective

- I don't think that anyone here is going to say that doctrine and practice is not important. And please stay with me here.
- I asked President Lange for a list of ordained and commissioned ministers in this district that I could speak to in preparation for my time with you.
- I asked him for participants that represent the **spectrum** within the district...I wanted a well-rounded representation and I can tell you, that's what I got!

Perspective

- I didn't get to speak to everyone, but I spoke to some who were to the right, to the left, and in the middle.
- And it reminded me of "synod"...we are well familiar with the translation "walking together," but we can do better than that...it's closer to "together road"...and think about how you drive on the road, or how your mother in law drives...or how your teenager drives. But for the most part we are on the same road, heading in the same direction. That is, the proper view of synod, accepts a level of diversity...the road can be fairly broad.

Perspective

- I hope that this doesn't seem overly-stated, because...
- Paul and Barnabas represented this road.
- Augustine and Jerome represented this road.
- Luther and Melancthon represented this road.
- President Harrison and former presidents of the LCMS represent this road.
- We do, even within our own parishes.
- And in every example I just listed, even the most important articles find some fluctuation in practice.

Perspective

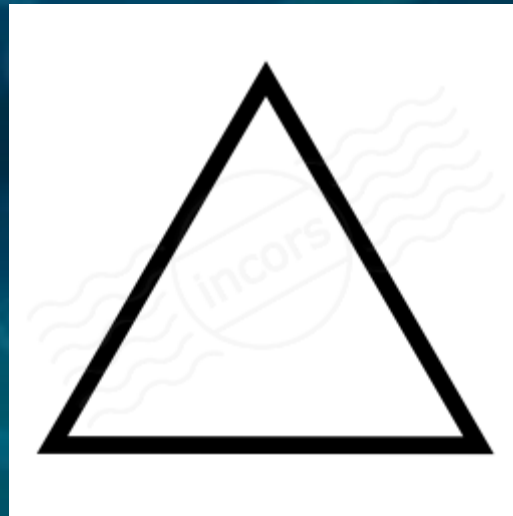
- If you translate this to mean that concord is not essential, then you are taking my meaning too far.
- Life Together is also another way of saying *koinōnias* (as in Galatians 2:9 when Paul and Barnabas received the right hand of fellowship from James, Peter, and John) and this was in acknowledgement of both concord in doctrine and practice.
- A concord committed to the truth of God's Word and the life of love...recall that James, Peter, and John in Galatians 2 **also** asked Paul and Barnabas at verse 10 to remember the poor...that is, this doctrine had to be seen in lives of **love**.

Perspective

- In all sincerity, I had a great time talking to fellow-servants here in the Kansas District...and I heard from a diverse group – at different points on the road – still going in the same direction.
- And in every case, each one prayed for me at the end of each interview. All of them were generous, and kind; all of them expressed loving the LORD, loving His Word, and loving His people...and I was reminded that we can do a lot to revive our LIFE TOGETHER in the LC-MS.

Unity, Concord and Harmony Triangle

1. God creates our UNITY in Christ.



2. In unity we express CONCORD.

3. In HARMONY we care for unity and concord.

There is a theological order

- God creates unity...note that I put this on top of the Triangle...it represents what comes from above. God (who is above) creates our unity.
- **However**
- Our **experience** of what God creates happens in harmony or in fellowship or in Life Together when we gather together, especially in the Holy Sacrament. That is, our theology – experientially and practically – **occurs from below.**

This is theologically consistent

- God is above us, but we can only know Him through a theology **from below**...God took on flesh...the Incarnation means we know God as “Immanuel”...God with us. This is a “from-below” theology.
- If you want to know God, then you must know Jesus.
- If we want to experience the unity that God creates and, yes, expresses itself in concord of doctrine and practice – of course – **we must however begin from below**...we need real contact...**we need LIFE TOGETHER.**

So I'm thinking about starting a new Youth Ministry

- Called "Lower Things"
- This is a joke.
- I love Higher Things...I'm slated to teach at the upcoming Higher Things in Washington...at least up to now I was.

I hope I didn't lose any of you!

- I didn't turn a theological corner for nothing.
- If we understand where things need to BEGIN with us...from below...then we must accept that this is MESSY...but also wonderful at the same time.
- We really get to learn to love, and to forgive, and to be patient...we get to live like Christians!
- Think of the Incarnational Ministry of our LORD...it was messy...He endured to teach His disciples. They struggled...they had wrong ideas along the way...but Jesus loved them. It was all about LIFE TOGETHER!

And then Pentecost came and everything was perfect...

- Ah...no!
- There can be no idyllic view of the Early Church. In Acts we see:
 1. They had troubles within the Church.
 2. There were negative internal reactions against the disciples.
 3. There were negative external reactions against the disciples without physical violence.
 4. There were negative external reactions with physical violence.
 5. There were power encounters against philosophy, false religion, and the occult.

Life is hard, so we need...

- LIFE TOGETHER
- So that the Mission of the Church will actually occur.

Congregation

- But how is all this different than what is going on in our congregations? And I understand that with time, there can be increased concord...but fundamentally...
- Every pastor, elder, deaconess, teacher, DCE, etc. KNOWS that when we view the congregation as a whole, God's people are at diverse places in their clarity of God's Word and their ability to confess the faith.
- And every servant of God needs patience and kindness to serve God's people. The LORD permits trials, so that we would learn to forgive and show grace!

So...

- Why are we willing to practice long-suffering within the congregation, but not within the greater church?

Congregation

- When love is our commitment...and we refuse isolationism, and we insist on getting together for the common good...it is AMAZING what the Holy Spirit can and will do!

Pr. Tim Detviler at Orange Lutheran High School got area LC-MS pastors together at Homecoming!



And this is true in the parish

- We love each other as we get into the Word...
- And just think about where people are at when they start to get into the Word. All over the map!
- But so what? Do you kick people out of your congregation, because they aren't Luther or Chemnitz? Do you conduct excommunication because two elders are not in full agreement about something, even something very important? That should not be our first impulse.

What I've learned...

- Is people need to see how much we care, before they'll listen to how much we know (a fairly well-known idea).
- We build bridges when we learn to put the best construction on things; to be patient and kind to one another; to learn how to treat others as more important than ourselves...to learn to remind oneself – when around others – that the guy right here [point to self] is the worst of sinners...that breeds humility.
- And humility breeds trust...and trust is what you need to celebrate the unity God creates to talk concord.

But it's hard, because conflict happens!

- Congregation #1: there was a big divide after a voter's meeting...and I had to reach out and go into the lion's den so to speak...and in tears seek reconciliation!
- Congregation #2: there was a big divide during a voter's meeting (beware of voter's meetings!)...and it became evident that the effort to teach about a recommended change had not gone on long enough...we sought change too quickly!
- Congregation #3: there was exhaustion from a drawn-out strategic planning process...and frustration that the process had taken on a life of its own...and when this happens the bond of peace & life together is unnecessarily strained.

But does this surprise you?

- Of course not!
- I would imagine that many of you can relate to conflicts like these.
- However, so what? I can do one better than this list from the three congregations I've served...I can go to the list between me and the single most important person in my life under Jesus Christ...and that's my amazing wife, Traci.
- And newsflash: we have had over our 31 years this summer, some conflict! But the LORD has used it not to drive us further apart, but to meld us to be closer together. By God's grace, Traci and I live in constant mutual confession and absolution.

Though at times, in order to cope with me,
she has had to resort to strong drink



But in-spite of the conflict, we learn Life Together!

- Bonhoeffer on page 23 explains the phenomenal benefit we derive from one another in the Body of Christ that far, far surpasses any silly conflict: “The Christian needs another Christian who speaks God’s Word to him.”
- Bonhoeffer wrote, “The Christ in his own heart is weaker than the Christ in the word of his brother; his own heart is uncertain, his brother’s is sure (p 23).”
- Man I just need the gospel...so I’m willing to fight for harmony so that I can keep getting the gospel from my sisters and my brothers in Christ! It’s that important!

But the flesh wants to go the other way...

- Harmony puts the best construction on things. Not lazy and irreverent practice that concedes to lowest-common denominator “fellowship,” but a real effort to strive for concord by insisting on loving conduct, honor, and respect. And this leads to a greater realization that we are saying the same thing more often than we realize!
- We just have to start listening to each other!
- What I’ve learned in conflict resolution pastoral counseling: LISTEN! And I mean ACTIVE LISTENING (shut up for awhile and be absolutely sure that you know EXACTLY what the other person is saying). As a result, 50% of the time (at least)...[what happens?]

And...

- Even if we come to the conclusion that we are indeed at different places, then at least we have practiced mutual respect...at least we are in a better position to take next steps!

But The Flesh

- Puts the worst construction on things!
- It demonizes.
- It distrusts.
- It accuses.
- It shuts down, creates distance, and builds walls.
- It replaces love with attacks, and lies, and rumors.

I was taught differently by a Christian man (and this was also an inter-congregational relationship)

- By my sainted church father John Andreas, president and elder where I was confirmed at age 18. It was my home congregation, Church of Our Savior, LC-MS. John Andreas was the first man I considered to be my spiritual mentor when I was a wet-behind the ears teenager with peach-fuzz facial hair. I use this wording because this is what John said about me (with great affection of course).
- He gave me a job working on his farm...let me tell you about John who poured out grace [the tractor story].
- What did this experience of amazing love do for me?

This is what our congregations need.

- Bonhoeffer says on pg. 29 (and trust me I do not quote this as one who sits up high...it convicts me too): “A pastor should not complain about his congregation, certainly never to other people, but also not to God.”
- And yet as poor sinners, how often do we complain about our own people! Moses did. We have.
- But I pray dear fellow servants **that you might find a father-confessor**, a pastor of your own you can trust, and confess this sin, and then rise up and make a covenant with your mouth not to complain about God’s baptized people you are called to serve...love them by speaking of them in love...and in grace! **Crucify the other talk.**

Then Get Busy in Life Together

- No matter how small your congregation is; no matter the challenges...you get to worship, you get to share the faith, and you get to be salt and light on this earth...again, no matter how small you are...no matter the challenges.
- First, worship and teach. As I said before, I'm a traditional guy. I rejoice to do liturgical Divine Service with passion and gusto -- and chanting --and sincerity...for me liturgy **cannot** be lethargy...I am driven by the beauty and power of our traditional worship...but...
- I would be headed in the wrong direction, if I insisted that everyone had to worship as I do. Fundamentally, it would rub against what I know foundationally: we Lutherans confess the MEANS of GRACE...where the Word and Sacrament of Christ are...there, the power of God resides. Period.

So...let's major in majors...

- In whatever style you're doing, the preaching, teaching, and other transmission of the WORD should be done:
 - 1) As ***excellently as we possibly can!***
 - 2) As ***often as you possibly can (to reach more)!***
- And this is such a priority, that we should be willing to do it ANYWHERE...in the living rooms of our people, in an I-HOP at an early morning hour, in our studies, in our church facilities...wherever it needs to be...I say this because we hear, "But people won't come...", then go to them.

Back home at Saint Paul's in Irvine

- A premium is placed on preaching.
- Sunday Bible Study is very important.
- Weekday Bible Study (like a Tuesday morning men's Bible Study at I-Hop from 7-8 am) is a special offering.
- Adult catechesis and Bible Study are constants (which include going into the homes of our people).
- A daily 8-12 minute devotional-commentary is offered every single day on Facebook worldwide.

Life Together in Mission, The Congregation

- And if we're doing this...even if just for 2 or 3 gathered together as Jesus said...then do it EXCELLENTLY. If you -- by the grace of God and through His means of grace -- thoroughly equip just one other person, then Life Together is happening!

Kansas servants talked about what is **GOOD** and what is **HAPPENING NOW!**

- Here are some testimonies!

Interviews on Life Together in Mission, The Congregation

- Pastor #1 said that everything that is good in Life Together at the congregational level flows in and out of the Divine Service...there is a rhythm in the congregation to go to Divine Service and then outflow through acting in love and bearing each other's burdens. These people are proclaiming Christ all the time and then all of a sudden they show up with other people [guests] and these join catechesis. The members live out their vocation in the most un-splashy ways and just do the work of their callings...never glorious, but Lutherans are the grease on a rusty axle...being moms and dads, teachers and accountants...doing good works and being His witnesses.

Interviews on Life Together in Mission, The Congregation

- Pastor #2 said that the two main intersection points for Life Together (on what is working and what is good) as a family of faith in the gospel are: 1) Divine Service; and 2) Pastor-led Bible Study. We have grown to value the Sunday morning event of receiving God's gifts. We value this time together as a family of faith. The Sunday morning adult Bible Study has grown to 130 people (not counting a vigorous Sunday School led by 20 adults). We really value this. We point to Jesus. We point to the gospel. Sunday morning Divine Service is really big – its all about God and His gifts to us – we actually worship and leave church to obey God's commandments during the week; we live as God's people and then come back next Sunday to get fed and nourished all over again.

Interviews on Life Together in Mission, The Congregation

- Pastor #3 said that his congregation enjoys freedom in worship and it is definitely Divine Service (God is doing for us) and I am very personal in my pastoral guidance and watchful. The music and songs should be Christ-centered. I make preaching and teaching extremely relational and I'm known for being a story-teller. I love the Greek and the word pictures from the original language; I let the Scriptures come alive in the hearts of people. Adult study is very important to us and we offer three different adult classes on Sunday mornings: we do one biblical book, we do a class on a popular Christian book, and we do a study for parenting and the family.

Interviews on Life Together in Mission, The Congregation

- The DCE said that his congregation in Kansas has a very positive focus on where God has led them and how He is using them as well as a good idea as to where they should go next. He said, “We are to be in the Word, reach out to the lost, and actively discuss how *not* to be stagnant. We focus on fellowship, connecting with one another and with Christ. We do this mostly in Bible Study and then have service and outreach events. This is our bread and butter: to grow, connect, and reach out. For example, we serve twins in high school whose mother has cancer and another high schooler whose parents are atheists. Our goal is to surround one another with the love of Christ and then we reach out (for example we take mission trips to different cities every spring break).”

Interviews on Life Together in Mission, The Congregation

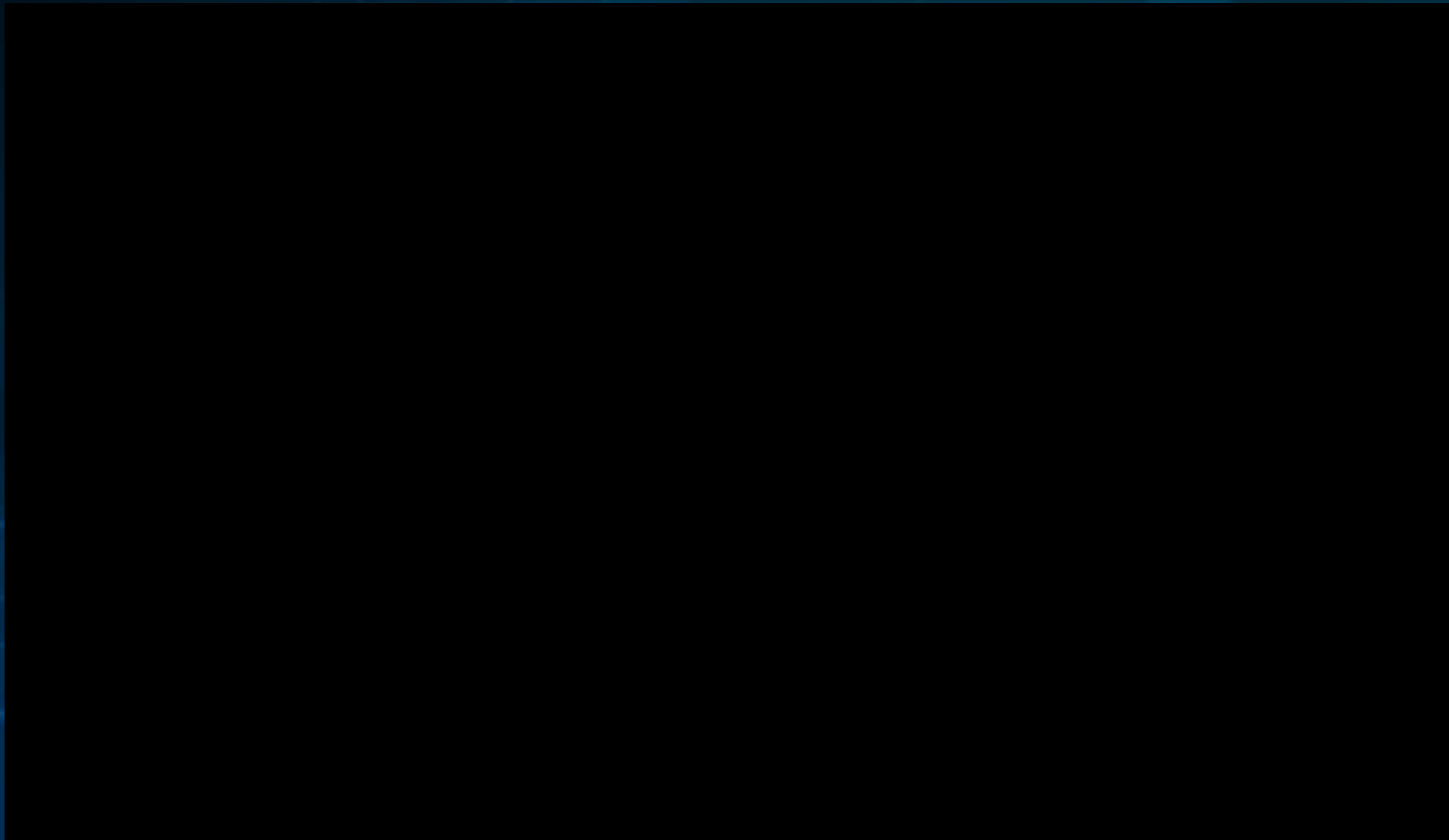
- The teacher said that the teachers at her school meet daily for devotions and to support each other. The teachers conscientiously set the example to the students on how to treat people. They strive to forgive as Christ forgave and forgives us. In our congregation we have evangelism callers that reach out to the community and within the congregation the women get together for coffee every-other-Friday just to fellowship and encourage one another. It's important to remember that we are put here for a short time...we should treat one another in a way that is pleasing in God's sight and not be so petty over little things...remember: we're here to share Jesus!

Life Together in Mission, The Congregation

- It really does help to know where we are at...recall that I mentioned that one reason Life Together can be strained is when we are unclear about where we're at as a congregation.
- Rev. Dr. Mark Wood is one of the directors within the Office of National Mission. In my humble opinion, the Office of National Mission within the LC-MS is one of the best-kept secrets in our church. Not because we aren't trying to get the word out, but you know how it is: we get busy with the day-to-day. But don't miss out! Check out the work that Dr. Wood has done and is doing for our districts and congregations...it's really, really good stuff.

Life Together in Mission, The Congregation

- For your congregation, first make sure you know where you are at and what this means you should be doing about it.
- So let me give you some clarification. I am encouraging you to connect directly to Rev. Dr. Mark Wood...let's call him "Pastor Wood."
- For clarity, please be aware that he is the Director for two distinct national missions: He is Director of Revitalization, **and** he is the Director of Witness and Outreach.
- I think there is a logical order for building a bridge with Pastor Wood: start with Revitalization.

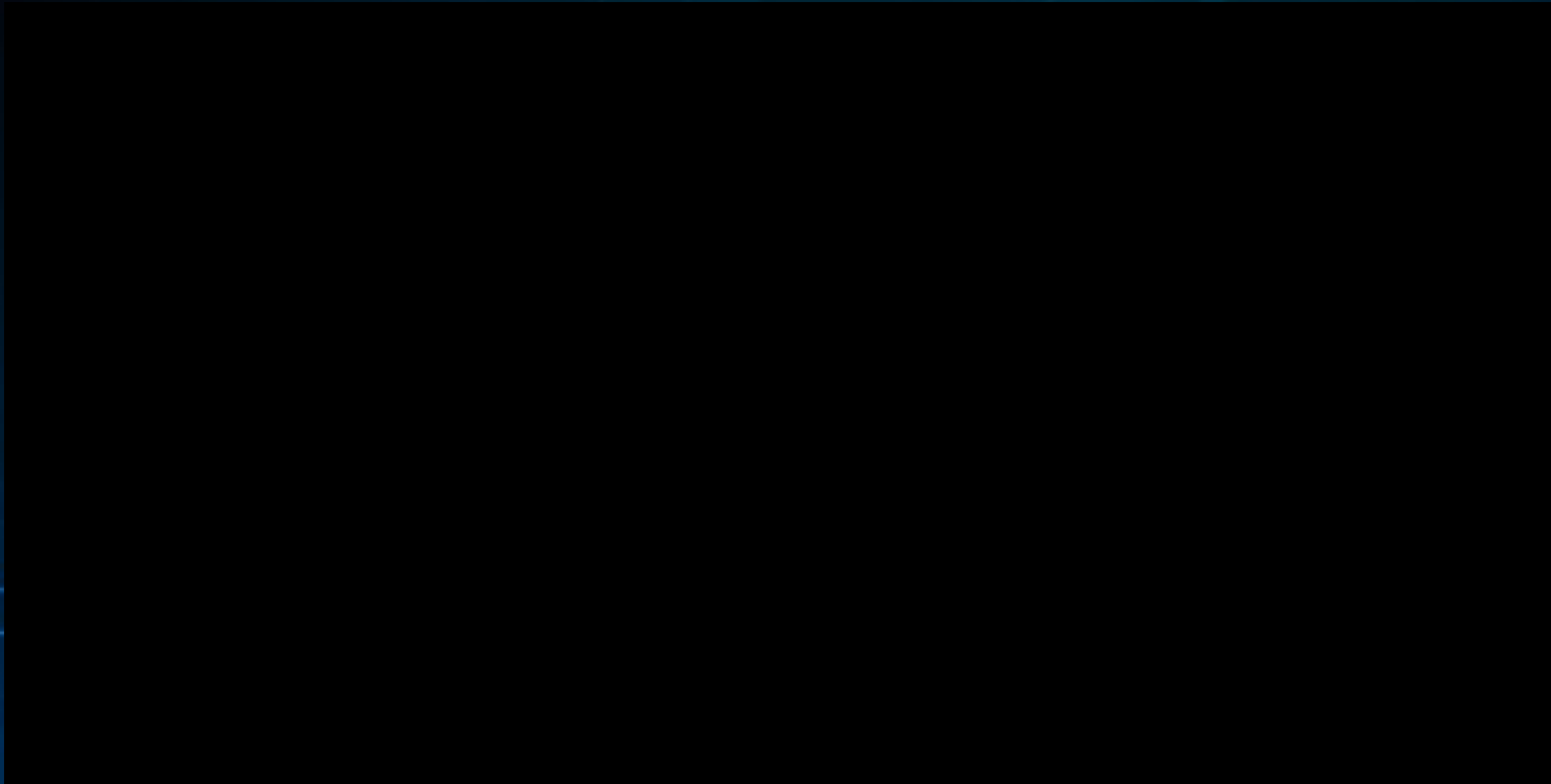


Life Together In Mission, The Congregation

- Pastor Wood will lead you in a process for making it easy for you to determine where you're congregation is at.
- Don't be afraid of what comes out of this...much to the contrary, knowledge and information is power. It will make it easy to know how to proceed.
- You can determine and understand your "stage of vitality" as a congregation. Contact Pastor Wood via this email address: revitality@lcms.org

As you're doing the organizational thing with *revitality*, there is nothing like the present for **witness and outreach!**

- I heard about some of the things we might do for evangelism and its easy to try too hard and make it intimidating for the people of our parish.
- If at the end of the day, our message is: if you want to effectively be God's witness then you need to memorize a long outline and a lot of Scriptures, and then you need to go knocking on doors...if that's our approach, then no wonder so many Lutherans don't want to sign up for evangelism.
- Pastor Wood has led us to a jewel of an approach through Every One His Witness. Contact Pastor Wood at [lcms.org/witness-outreach](https://www.lcms.org/witness-outreach)



Again, we must begin with Life Together

- Bonhoeffer in Life Together
- “Without Christ there is discord between God and man (23).”

And...

- “The way is blocked [however] by our own ego (23).”

Through humility we can see that we are closer than we give ourselves credit for

- My eldest brother -- who is Roman Catholic -- asked me recently at a family gathering, “Are you ever conflicted?”
- Though I didn't know where he was going, I knew I could nevertheless answer clearly and honestly: “every day!” [it's called being ***simul (old man and new man all at once!)***]
- However, he went on...

Many say, “Roman Catholics and Lutherans have so much in common.”

- But to this day our differences with Rome are vast compared to our own diversity within synod.
- We confess -- besides the fundamentals that other Christians do like the Holy Trinity and creation – these distinctives:
 1. The devastation of original sin.
 2. Justification by grace through faith in Christ alone.
 3. The complete necessity of the means of grace.
 4. Sacramental washing and meal for the forgiveness of sins.

These 4 alone represent enormous concord in today’s world.

We have witness *AND* confession!

- Way back in 2010 President Harrison wrote an article entitled, *Life Together: Confession or Witness?*

“I’ve come to be convinced by the Bible that *witness* requires the strong confession of the truth as it is in Jesus – ‘teaching all things which I have commanded you’ (Matt. 28:19); ‘the doctrine and all its articles’ (FC SD X 31). Likewise, *confession* (‘Here I stand!’) that does not ‘Go, therefore, into all nations’ is not the full confession of Jesus. Put simply, witness without confession is not witness, and confession without witness is not confession. Confession or witness? Yes! God grant us such a life together.”

We have convinced ourselves that we are greatly divided & we live out our pessimism

- We have engrained our categories of division:

Pastor #1: Confessions as Operational vs. Confessions as Relic kept on a Dusty Shelf. And as I heard Pastor #1, I felt that I could identify 100% with his observations.

But in speaking to Pastor #3, I was speaking to a pastor otherwise considered to be on the left (yet another “division” word), and as I spoke to him his divine service theology was spot on and then I learned what he is doing with his elders: *they are studying the Lutheran Confessions!*

Apart from Labels We Have Indeed Bound Ourselves to our Confessions

- Remember these words from the Ordination Service:

Question: “Do you promise that you will perform the duties of your office in accordance with these Confessions, and that all your preaching and teaching and your administration of the Sacraments will be in conformity with Holy Scriptures and with these Confessions?”

Response: “Yes, I promise, with the help of God.”

Insight

- Sometimes the so-called guys on the “right” (again, a division word) ASSUME that guys on the “left” (division word again) have forsaken our Confessions.
- This might be true sometimes (even as it is sometimes true that guys on the “right” forsake the Confessions), but not always. Bottom line: **AVOID** assumptions!

And the assumptions go both ways

- Do any guys that wear collars and who love the ancient liturgy have a passion to reach the lost?
- Back in crazy southern California, I have the joy of working with a bunch of traditional guys who do two things every year:
 - 1) Sponsor an annual Catechism Convocation.
 - 2) Sponsor Southern California Campus Ministry Initiative.

Let us eradicate unnecessary division

- Another example of engrained division:

“Circle the Wagons guys” (Preservationists) vs.

“Do Anything for The Gospel guys” (Reductionists)

- ❖ In the spirit of seeking solutions, the second pastor said:

1) The right wing guys need the zeal for mission the left wing guys have.

2) The left wing guys need the zeal for doctrine that the right wing guys have.

Still...

- There are “left” guys studying our Confessions.
- There are “right” guys reaching out to the lost.

So why are we still so far apart?

- We falsely convince ourselves that we just can't get together...
 - 1) as we judge from the right: since we are still divided on *women, wine and worship*, then any confessional subscription from the left is lip-service.
 - 2) and as we judge from the left: since the right tries so hard to preserve tradition, adiaphoron is treated as dogma even to the extent that evangelism is *only* Divine Service.

Reject the Caricatures!

Let us learn to counter this tendency:

1. **Confess** your sins one to another that you may be healed (James 5:16).
2. **Count** others as more significant than yourself (Philippians 2:3).
3. **Connect** in ways where you can serve side-by-side with ANYONE in the synod, and **converse** and **console**!

Connect through AWESOME side-by-side opportunities!

- 2 Examples:

- 1) Life Ministry.

- 2) World Relief and Human Care.





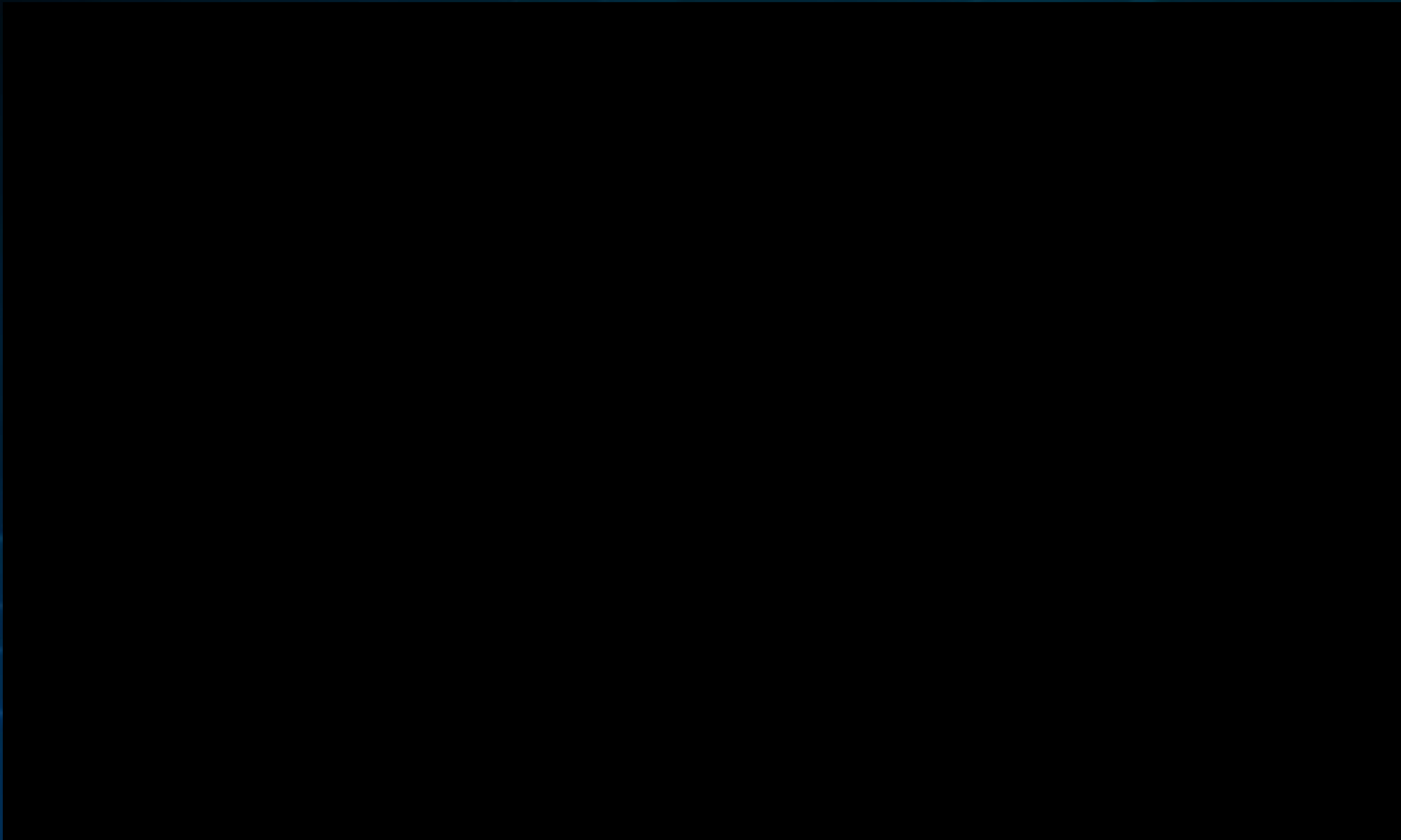
THE
LUTHERAN CHURCH
Missouri Synod





Contact

- 888-THE-LCMS
- lcms.org/life (still waiting for updated information on next National Life Conference)
- Ask for next National Life Conference and March for Life information (January 2019 in Washington DC).
- Or help to organize a local March for Life and do it with other LC-MS congregations in your area! Just remember that our approach is gentleness and respect (1st Peter 3:15), not adversarial...again, show God's love. Don't engage in angry chants, but sing hymns!



An opportunity for Life Together!

- Consider organizing or supporting a disaster response training event in your area with other LC-MS congregations.

Highlights for Training for Disaster Response

- Registration is \$35.00 per person.
- Advertise in your congregation, and ask if sister congregations would also advertise, and ask if your district would assist in advertisement as well.
- 9 am to 3 pm on a Saturday or ½ on Friday night and ½ on Saturday morning.
- 3 parts: 1) Intro to LCMS disaster response; 2) Congregation preparedness; and 3) Lutheran Response Teams

Highlights for Training for Disaster Response

- Trainers from synod arrange for their own transportation, housing, and meals.
- Anyone may attend, but only LCMS members 18 yrs old and up may receive certification as LCMS volunteers.
- Training can be scheduled within three months of the request, just leave enough time for advertisement.

To schedule:

- Phone: 314-996-1638
- disaster@lcms.org

A Prescription for Life Together

1. Start with the conviction that our faith *must* begin here, and Life Together includes love.
2. Remember synod as a “together road”...and not always as close “together” as we might like...that’s ok.
3. Look for common ground (often more than we assume).
4. Reject isolationism.
5. Put the best construction on things.
6. View conflict as an opportunity to grow closer (like in a good marriage).

Prescription for Life Together continued...

7. Do it out of the conviction that we need each other.
8. Know what to expect from the flesh.
9. Repent from divisive language.
10. Inventory concord that *does* exist and highlight it.
11. Look for ways to stand side-by-side for Life Together.

The Need For Constructive Approaches For Getting Together!

- My Kansas DCE interviewee was very helpful in bringing out the NEED:

“I love traditional worship and contemporary worship...but we have people in our district that get into a camp like Republican and Democrat. Once this happens, we dig our heels in and don't listen to the other side.”

“It is incredibly hard to hear the comments about some church leaders from other church leaders that speak negatively...”

The Need For Constructive Approaches

- One might favor our National Youth Gathering or our Higher Things Conferences.
- But let's not pit these against each other politically.
- The good news is that we offer both!







What happened in 2016 in New Orleans

- Over 22,000 youth and adults came to the 13th triennial [since 1980] LCMS Youth Gathering, held July 16-20 with the theme “In Christ Alone.”
- Grant Karsten of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Decatur, Ill., said, “Finding my hope in Christ means I don’t have to trust in any human power, just Him alone.”
- Made 1000 fleece hats for children with cancer.
- Packaged 500,906 meals with Feeding Children Everywhere.
- 33,000 volunteer hours w/ a 29.4 million dollar impact to the economy of New Orleans.

Coming up...



Sanctified

2018 HIGHER THINGS CONFERENCES

Higher Things 2018

July 3-6: Carleton College, Northfield, MN

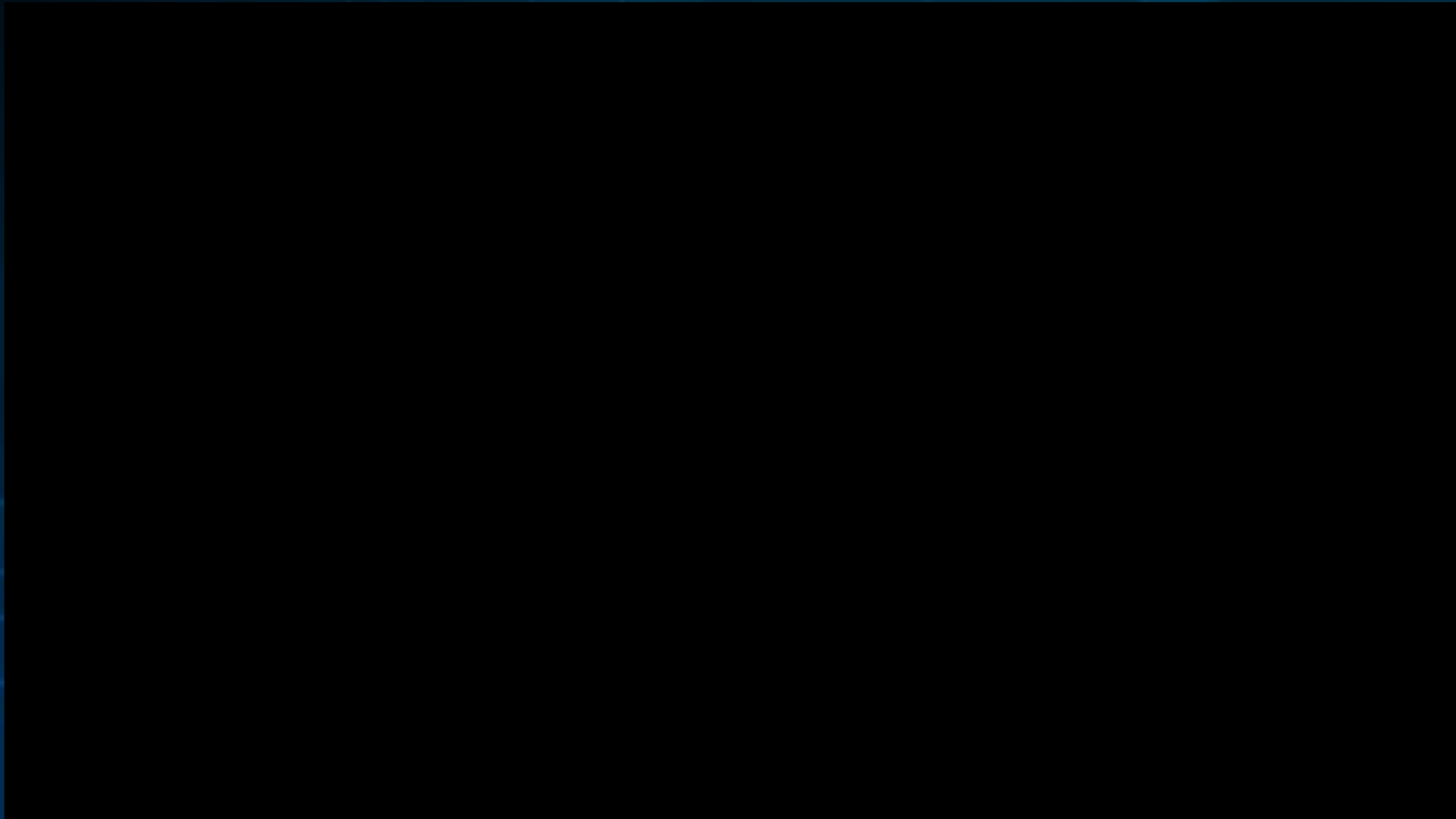
July 10-13: Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL

July 24-27: The University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS

July 31-Aug 3: Pacific Lutheran University, Tacoma,
WA

NYG and HT congregations can do this TOGETHER!

- For more than 35 years, thousands of Lutheran youth have participated in LCMS Servant Events, learning that serving others can make a difference because of Jesus Christ. LCMS Servant Events equip God's people to grow in their faith through serving, sharing Christ and developing relationships.
- Note: upon last glance at LCMS.org, there were no Servant Events planned in Kansas...why not get together with a few other congregations and do something about it?



Contact Info:

- www.lcms.org/servantevents
- Office of National Mission,
Director, Youth Ministry is
Rev. Mark Kiessler
- Staff switchboard
- **800-248-1930**

When it comes to the world, there is the elephant in the room

- The controversy is above my pay-grade.
- Our Commission on Constitutional Matters, “Synod As The Only Sending-Agency” – Bylaw 3.8.3 (14-2724) released their opinion on September 27th, 2014.
- As for any sponsorship of missions not going through synod in existence before the CCM opinion, that is something that the consciences involved must sort out. Having said that...

Here is what we are doing at Saint Paul's Irvine

- First, we are backing our synodical president's leadership which means we are enthusiastic about our LCMS missionaries.
 - FYI: the # of our missionaries has currently stabilized, but point of fact: if we fund synod to increase missionary administrative support, we can increase the # of missionaries.
- Second, we live out our advocacy by actually getting behind our real LCMS missionaries:

In my small-mid sized congregation, we help support:

1. Rev. Jacob Gaugert, Togo, West Africa.
2. Rev. Daniel and wife Kathy Conrad, Mexico.
3. Rev. Brian and wife Amanda Gauthier, Panama.

But we are not stuck to one approach...

- Remembering our (LCMS's) fellowship with the ***International Lutheran Council***, we have committed to further expressions of Life Together in Mission to the World while honoring the CCM opinion:
 - a. We sent LCP's seminary several copies of Pieper's Dogmatics and Walther's Law and Gospel.
 - b. Our congregation is currently hosting a SELK summer vicar.

There are many Life Together opportunities here:

1. Regardless of what you are already doing when it comes to international missions, pray about co-sponsoring an LCMS missionary along-side another congregation in your district.
2. Get together with other LC-MS congregations and work directly with the LCMS BIM to learn how to help increase administrative support for sending out MORE missionaries.
3. Think about fostering a relationship with another **ILC** body and consider creative ways to help!

But let's make things even more personal and interactive...

- **Mercy Medical Teams**

- 1-2 weeks long.
- Team of 15.
- Laity can travel with Medical personnel and pastor.
- You need to raise funds for airfare and ground fee.

Here is the list of the 2018 offerings

- **May 4-14, 2018:** Sierra Leone (filled)
- **May 19-28, 2018:** Tanzania (filled)
- **July 14-25, 2018:** Madagascar (one more team member needed)
- **Aug. 9-20, 2018:** Kenya
- **Sept. 7-17, 2018:** Togo
- **Nov. 8-19, 2018:** Uganda



MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS NEEDED FOR SHORT-TERM SERVICE

**PHYSICIANS · NURSES · PHARMACISTS
EMERGENCY PERSONNEL · CLERGY
HARDWORKING LAY PEOPLE**

LCMS Mercy Medical Teams need volunteers to demonstrate Christ's mercy and love to the world's most vulnerable people around the globe. If you have a heart for service, we can provide you with an opportunity.

PLEASE JOIN US.

To volunteer, call 888-THE LCMS (843-5267)
For more information, visit lcms.org/mercyteams



Madagascar

