



Our mission is to support and encourage the members of the District in carrying out the mission Christ has given His Church

MONTHLY KANSAS DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

WORKERS TOGETHER

OCTOBER 2026



Pastor Michael and Shanna Hageman moved from southwest Kansas to Shinyanga, Tanzania, earlier this year to become missionaries for the LCMS.

Hagemans bring the Word of God from the plains of Kansas to the plains of Tanzania

The pull to mission work has been working the hearts of Pastor Michael and Shanna Hageman for decades. After participating in several short-term mission trips during their years as a pastor and director of Christian education (DCE), the Hagemans made the decision late last fall to move their ministry from the high plains of southwest Kansas to the plains of East Africa.

As new career missionaries for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), Pastor Michael and Shanna Hageman arrived in Tanzania earlier this year and are in a phase of language and culture acquisition as they prepare for full-time mission work. He will work as a theological educator at a seminary in Shinyanga, and she plans to teach English as a Second Language (ESL) classes to non-native English speakers.

While the thought of mission work had been at the back of the Hagemans' minds since they were young, the decision to become international missionaries came after Pastor Hageman had served for 25

years as pastor to congregations in Ohio, Florida and Kansas.

An early suggestion eventually comes to fruition

The seeds of Hageman's ministry were planted in his youth. He remembers Pastor Lee Seetin at Grace Lutheran Church

Continued on page 14



Standing in front of his new house, Pastor Hageman got plenty of help during move-in day in Shinyanga.

New music conservatory started with a mission of more than music

Our Saviour Lutheran Church in Kansas City recently dedicated a new outreach effort that aspires to draw on the rich musical heritage of the Lutheran church to serve their urban Kansas City community. The Our Saviour Music Conservatory was created to offer music instruction in the form of instrument and vocal lessons for all ages and all levels of students. But it offers so much more.

A hymn festival to launch the conservatory was held at the church on Aug. 19.

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OUR SAVIOUR
MUSIC CONSERVATORY

What it means to 'Pray the Catechism'

What does it mean to be a Lutheran? Certainly, many definitions could and have been given to that question. I want to suggest yet one more answer. What is the answer I put forward? To be a Lutheran is to pray the catechism regularly. But before you judge this answer, let me explain what I mean.

I am certainly not talking about putting away your Bible and opting for your catechism instead as your primary tool of spiritual formation. Of course, the Scriptures, which reveal Jesus Christ, must be our constant source of truth and our path back to Jesus.

However, one cannot obviously consume the whole of the Scriptures in a single devotional sitting. So what is one to do? Luther spoke about praying the catechism as the key. For many years, this was sort of a weird idea in my brain. I knew about memorizing the catechism. I knew about learning from the catechism. But praying it? That seemed rather odd. The more I have looked into this the more I am convinced that most times when Luther speaks of this practice, he is simply saying: "Meditate on the Ten Commandments. Confess the Apostles' Creed.



Rev. Philip Hoppe
District Fourth
Vice-President,
Region 4

OCTOBER DEVOTION

Pray the Lord's Prayer."

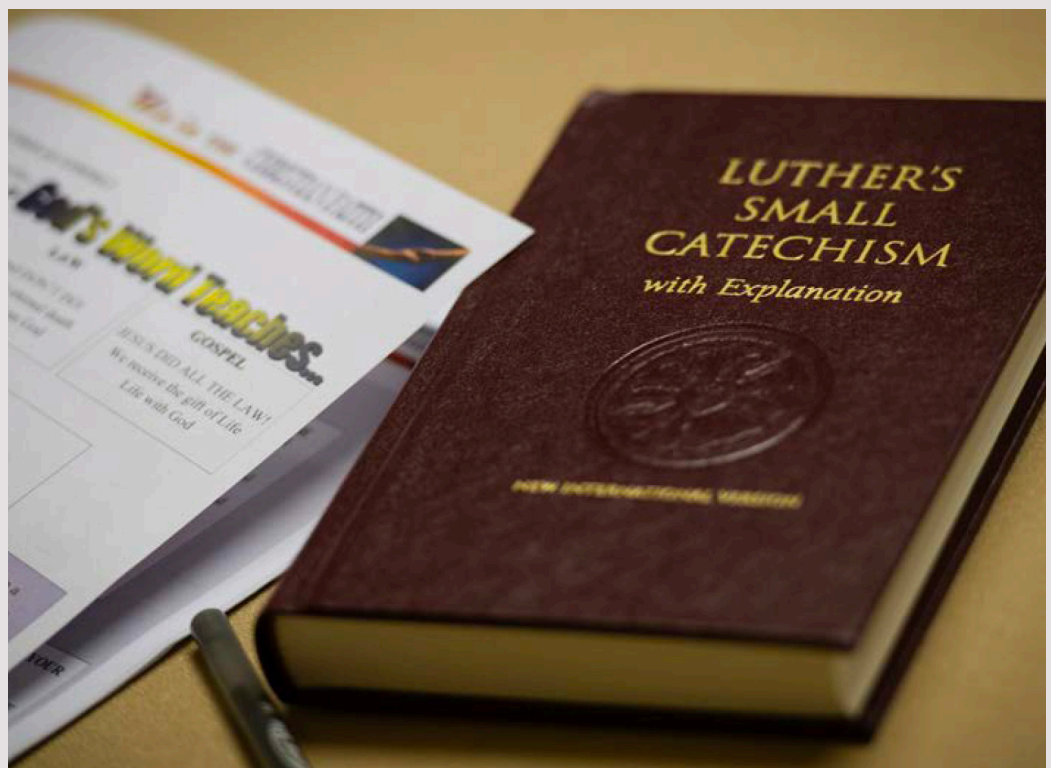
In our hymnal, the *Lutheran Service Book*, we actually do this in one of our services called the Service of Prayer and Preaching. While there is some freedom in exactly how that service is prayed, it is our one service where the Ten Commandments, Creed, and Lord's Prayer are present so closely together, right after one another. And ideally when we do this in church, it should feel rather comfortable because it should be at the core of our daily devotional life as Lutherans.

Yes, these three texts of the Christian faith run us quickly

through the basics of our faith. Perhaps even more importantly they lead us quickly to confession of our sins, to rejoicing in our saving God, and to bringing our petitions and thanksgivings to the God that has brought us near to him through the work of his Son Jesus. They form the foundation of our daily devotions individually and with our families gathered together. Upon that we can stack portions of the Scriptures, great music, and individual prayers and thanksgivings.

I am simply saying: "Meditate on the Ten Commandments. Confess the Apostles' Creed. Pray the Lord's Prayer." Pray the Catechism. It leads you to Jesus.

Rev. Hoppe also serves as pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Colby.



Missions

Kansas District opens application for 2027 Mission Grants

Applications are due Oct. 15, 2026, with grant funds to be distributed after Jan. 18, 2027

The Kansas District is accepting online applications for its 2027 Mission Grant program. Congregations and organizations may apply through the 2027 Mission Grant Application, with an application deadline of Oct. 15, 2026.

Three areas of focus have been specified for this year's grant cycle: Circuit Convocation Witness & Outreach Grants, Expanding the Spanish Footprint, and SEO minigrants.

Outreach Focus and Eligibility

Applications will be evaluated with a focus on outreach: "Outreach is our congregation's efforts to make disciples by engaging the non-churched in our community through our ministries and activities in order to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ." (Rev. Mark Wood, Meaningful Outreach)

The Board of Missions will not fund meals, salaries or other compensation, mission trips, construction costs, or other capital improvements. Food used as part of a broader outreach effort—including food pantries, campus ministries, neighborhood canvassing, or Jesus Door-to-Door—will not be classified as a meal for this restriction.

Three Funding Opportunities

- **\$500 SEO Microgrants**
Up to 12 LCMS congregations in Kansas may receive \$500 grants to work with the Rev. Dr. Christopher Jackson of churchseo.io. The initiative is designed to help congregations improve their online visibility so they can be more easily found. Additional details are available on the mission fund webpage.
- **Expanding the Spanish Footprint**
Through LCMS International Mission, the Expanding the Spanish Footprint program prepares LCMS pastors for Hispanic outreach with six weeks of Spanish-language immersion and Latin American cultural and theological training in Santiago, Dominican Republic. The Board of Missions will offer \$3,500 grants to two congregations whose pastors seek the training for outreach in Kansas. More information is available on the mission fund webpage.
- **Circuit Convocation Witness & Outreach Grants**
In recognition of 2027 as the LCMS year of the "Circuit Convocation," the board will make grants of up to \$2,500 available to as many as eight Kansas District circuits. The grants are meant to

bring congregations together for witness and outreach or equip them for that work. Circuit visitors are encouraged to discuss the opportunity at September winkel meetings. One congregation must apply on behalf of the circuit, receive the funds, and complete the required reporting.

Deadline and Review Process

Applications must reach the District Office by Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026. The deadline allows the Board of Missions to review submissions before the Kansas District Board of Directors meets in early November. Applicants who already have a budget worksheet may submit it instead of completing the application's financial section.

Approved grants will be disbursed after Jan. 18, 2027.

Mission grants are intended to help recipients move toward self-support. The application is structured to encourage that planning while recognizing that grant assistance may remain essential and will be awarded as funds permit.

Application information is also available on the Kansas District mission fund webpage. Printed copies may be requested from Tami Lierz at tami@kslcms.org.

Big gifts bring big decisions

Free webinar for congregational leaders

A significant gift from an estate or faithful donor can be a tremendous blessing to a congregation. It can also raise difficult questions about how those resources can best serve ministry to-

day and in the years ahead.

On Tuesday, October 27, at 10:30 a.m. CT, the LCMS Foundation is hosting a webinar titled "Big Gifts Bring Big Decisions" for pastors and congregational leaders.

The webinar will focus on what congregations should know about investing when considering how to best steward a significant gift. It will cover the benefits of long-term investing, the differences between an

investment fund and an endowment, and how an endowment can provide ongoing support for ministry and encourage future gifts.

Learn more and register at lcmsfoundation.org/big-giftswebinar26

Youth & Education

Your year-end gift can boost Lutheran education in Kansas, but time is running out!

As the end of the year approaches, Kansans have an opportunity to make a charitable gift that can have a lasting impact on children and families — while also receiving a substantial Kansas income-tax credit.

The Kansas Lutheran Schools Scholarship Foundation (KLSSF) helps qualifying students attend Lutheran elementary and secondary schools across Kansas. Through the state's Tax Credit for Low Income Students Scholarship Program, individuals and businesses can support scholarships for children whose families might otherwise be unable to afford a Lutheran education.

The program also provides donors with an unusually significant tax benefit.

Qualifying taxpayers who contribute to KLSSF may receive a Kansas income-tax credit equal to 75% of their donation. For example, a qualifying \$1,000 contribution can generate a \$750 Kansas income-tax credit. A \$5,000 contribution can generate a \$3,750 credit.

Under Kansas law, at least 90% of

Don't miss this tax credit opportunity

The Kansas Lutheran Schools Scholarship Foundation is providing scholarships to 106 students attending 11 Lutheran schools across Kansas this school year — a significant increase from the 63 students who received scholarships during the 2025-26 school year.

That growth also means a greater need for scholarship funding. Students are eligible to receive scholarships of up to \$8,000, but current funding allows KLSSF to provide an average award of only about \$2,200. If the foundation can raise an additional \$500,000 by Dec. 1, it can fully fund scholarships for all 106 students at the \$8,000 level.

Support for the program has grown significantly. In 2025, 47 donors contributed \$271,527, up from 14 donors and \$160,000 in 2024.

Donors also have an added incentive to give sooner rather than later. Contributions to KLSSF qualify for a 75% Kansas state income tax credit, but the credits are limited statewide. In 2025, KLSSF missed out on approximately \$40,000 in potential donations after the statewide scholarship tax-credit program reached its \$10 million cap by Dec. 15. As of this fall, just under \$6 million in tax credits remained available for 2026.

Those planning to support KLSSF are encouraged to make their gifts early, while the tax credits remain available.

contributions must be used to fund scholarships for qualifying students. KLSSF handles the process of securing the donor's state tax-credit certificate.

The Kansas Lutheran Schools Scholarship Foundation was established at the request of the LCMS Kansas District

Board of Directors specifically to benefit Lutheran education in Kansas. It is an independent nonprofit organization and an approved Scholarship Granting Organization under the Kansas program.

For Lutherans, there is an additional reason to consider supporting the foundation. Lutheran schools have long been an important part of the church's mission of teaching the faith to the next generation.

As families and businesses consider their charitable giving before Dec. 31, a contribution to KLSSF offers an opportunity to direct some of those dollars toward Lutheran education in Kansas.

Donors interested in receiving the state tax credit should consult their tax professional regarding their individual circumstances and complete the required KLSSF donor information form. Donations postmarked by Dec. 31, 2026, are considered 2026 donations.

More information about the Kansas Lutheran Schools Scholarship Foundation, the tax-credit program and making a contribution is available at klssf.org.

Lord of Life Early Education Center named Best Preschool in Johnson County

Lord of Life Early Education Center in Leawood, Kan., was recently recognized as the Best Preschool in Johnson County by the Johnson County Post. Licensed by the state of Kansas and accredited by the National Lutheran Schools Accredi-

tation, the preschool has classes for children 18 months to pre-kindergarten along with Before/After Care and special Friday learning programs. Lord of Life Early Education Center is a ministry of Lord of Life KC.





Step by Step Donor Instructions

1 Determine your Kansas tax liability

- Consult your tax professional.
- Review your prior year state tax return to see what you paid in state tax last year.

2 Make a donation that takes full advantage of the 75% tax credit

- Send a check in the mail.
- Give electronically via our secure [Online Donation Portal](#).
- Contact us to gift appreciated securities or grain.

3 Complete the Donor Information Form

- [Download and Print](#) the form to mail it with your check.
- Or complete and submit the form online:
[Online Donor Information Form](#).

4 Claim the Credit

- KLSSF staff processes your donation with the state of Kansas.
- The Kansas Department of Revenue issues a certificate, which we will mail to you with the acknowledgment of your gift.
- Provide the certificate to your tax preparer to claim the credit, or use it when you file your Kansas tax return.

CALLS & VACANCIES

PASTORAL CALLS

Rev. Jacob Sipes, Immanuel, Washington, Mo., to St. Paul, Leavenworth – **pending**

Rev. Richard Schneider, Redeemer, Atwood, to Concordia Lutheran Ministries, Cabot, Penn. – **pending**

COMMISSIONED MINISTER CALLS – from the field

DCE Hannah Elsey, Fairmount Ministries to St. Paul, Columbia, Ill. – **accepted**

DCM Andrea Simianer, to Bethany, Overland Park – **pending**

CONGREGATIONS CALLING or PREPARING TO CALL A FULL-TIME PASTOR

Leavenworth, St. Paul (sole)

Mission & Shawnee, Trinity (associate)

Overland Park, Christ (senior)

Vassar, Zion (sole)

CONGREGATIONS CALLING A COMMISSIONED MINISTER

Leavenworth, St. Paul (Teacher)

Wichita, Holy Cross (Director of Christian Education)

Winfield, Trinity (Principal/Teacher)

Manhattan, Christ (Teacher)



OCTOBER PRAYER REQUESTS

Those grieving the loss of loved ones

- **Family and friends of Rev. Don Copley**, who entered his heavenly rest on Sept. 16.
- **Family and friends of Linda Schmidt**, mother of Rev. Michael Schmidt, who is the pastor of Peace Lutheran, Natoma. Linda entered her heavenly rest on August 29.

Those experiencing recent or ongoing health issues

- **Rev. Jacob Anderson**
- **Rev. Richard Andrus**
- **Rev. Dr. Michael Bingenheimer**
- **Rev. Neil Buono**
- **Rev. Dean Christ**
- **Rev. King Crawford**
- **Rev. Rodney Fritz**
- **Rev. David Gruoner**
- **Rev. Dr. Lee Hagan**
- **Rev. David McCloskey**
- **Carrie Meyers**
- **Rev. Gerald Radtke**
- **Rev. Dr. Mark Schulz**

Congregations & Schools Facebook Prayer List

- **St. John Lutheran Church & Classical School, Topeka – Oct. 5**
- **Trinity Lutheran Church, McFarland – Oct. 12**
- **Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church and Good Shepherd Lutheran School, Marysville – Oct. 19**
- **St. Luke Lutheran Church, Manhattan – Oct. 26**

Out and About in Kansas

President Panzer's October Travel Schedule

Oct 4-6

Pastor's Conference @Zion, Newton

Oct 11

Preach @St. John's, Topeka

Oct 18

Preach @St. Paul, Cheney

Oct 20

Circuit 16 Winkler

@Holy Cross, Dodge City

Oct 23

Concordia Plans Meeting

@Christ, Manhattan

Oct 24

Treasurer's Workshop

@Christ, Manhattan

Oct 25

Preach @ Christ, Topeka/Preach

@Trinity, Burlington (75th Anniversary)



Rev. Tim Wangerin – Concordia, Hoisington

Rev. Tim Wangerin was installed as pastor at Concordia Lutheran Church in Hoisington on Sunday, Sept. 6, 2026. From left, Rev. Justin Panzer, DCS Ashley Nelson (Tim's daughter), Revs. Tim Wangerin, Nathan Nelson, Gary Wolf and Chris Kellogg.



Peggy Gott and Nola Gray, above left and right, were installed as deaconesses at Redeemer Lutheran Church, Olathe, on Sept. 6. They were commissioned for deaf ministry. The service was led by District Executive Dan Grams, below center, who was joined by Rev. John Reinke, Pastor at Lutheran Deaf Outreach, left, and Rev. David Kahle of Redeemer Lutheran Church, Olathe. Signing during the ceremony was Robert Ayers.



Allison Kern was installed as deaconess intern at Zion Lutheran Church in Topeka on Aug. 30, 2026. Kern is going through the Online Deaconess Studies program and Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, and hopes to complete the program in 2029. Pictured with Kern is Pastor Timothy Koch.



Rev. Chris Kellogg, right, was installed as visiting pastor of St. John Lutheran Church in Topeka on Sunday, August 30, 2026. Joining him is Rev. Andy Wright.

Promotional media kits available for Advent/Christmas

As you begin planning your outreach efforts for Advent and Christmas, be aware of the "Media Kits for Congregations" that are available from The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

The kits include social media graphics and ads, newspaper ads, postcard designs and more. Check out the available resources at: resources.lcms.org/media-kits/

CURRENT GRANT APPLICATION WINDOWS

Kansas District Mission Grant

<https://kslcms.org/missions/mission-fund>

Amount: Four categories. See application.

Application period: Sept. 1–Oct. 15, 2026

LCMS Campus Ministry Mini-Grants

Michael.Meyer@lcms.org

Amount: Up to \$2,500

Application period: Aug. 1, 2026–Jan. 1, 2027

Thrivent Community Action Grants

<https://www.thrivent.com/about-us/membership/thrivent-action-teams>

\$250 gift cards may be used for many ministry-related items, including food and candy.

Older Adult Ministry event to focus on long-term care

A legal perspective on long-term care, with guidance around aging, chronic illness and the legal and financial challenges associated with them, will be the focus of an upcoming event coordinated by the LCMS Kansas District's Older Adult Ministry.

Clinkscales Elder Law Practice, Hays, will present as part of the event which will be from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 10 at St. John Lutheran Church, 512 N. Wilhelm, Ellinwood, Kan.

A Bible study will be led by Rev. Cliff Winter. Lunch will be provided for a free-will offering.

2027 Kansas District Salary and Benefit Guidelines

The 2027 Kansas District Salary and Benefit Guidelines are available on the District Resources page of the website. The guidelines provide congregations with an objective approach to developing a suitable comprehension plan for church workers.

Visit <https://kslcms.org/business-office/district-resources> to access the 2027 Salary Guidelines. If you have any questions, please call the Business Office at 785-357-4441, ext. 1002 or email Heather Williams at heather@kslcms.org.



'Reading & Preaching the Gospel of Mark'

Reading and Preaching the Gospel of Mark was held Aug. 10-12 at Messiah Lutheran, Hays, with Rev. Dr. David Lewis, professor of exegetical theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, presenting. The class gave an overview of Mark's Gospel and highlighted the readings that show up in Year B of the Lectionary. In addition to the class, there were opportunities for worship and evening fellowship. Those pictured are (seated) Rev. Dr. David Lewis; Michael Schmidt and Nathan Kramer (Indiana). Standing from left to right are Phineas Shoaff, Abraham Shoaff, Don Haselhuhn, Kenton Abbott, Jeff Lane, Alexander McNally, Matthew Goehring, Reed Shoaff, Rick Schneider, Phil Hoppe, Amy Schneider, Matthew Koterba, Joel Hiesterman, and Luke Brown.

Out and About in Kansas

Rev. Daniel Grams' October Travel Schedule

- **Oct 1** – Church Planting Training Immanuel Hispanic
- **Oct 2-3** – Confirmation Retreat - Rock Springs Ranch
- **October 4** – Mission Sunday at Grace McPherson
- **October 4-6** – District Pastors' Conference at Zion Newton
- **October 9-11** – CSL Church Planting Students Visit Good Shepherd Spring Hill
- **October 17-19** – Great Plains Lutheran Educators' Conference at Concordia Nebraska
- **October 20** – Circuit 5 Winkler at Grace Iola
- **October 23** – Lutheran Schools of KS District Leadership Team at St. John Alma
- **October 24** – Strategic Planning at Trinity Atchison
- **October 25** – Mission Sunday at Zion Hillsboro
- **October 25-27** – NLSA Visit to Beautiful Savior Preschool Olathe
- **October 26-27** – LCMS Regional Education Executives - Lake of the Ozarks, Mo.



St. Paul Lutheran in Oswego confirmed six new members on August 15. Pictured left to right are: Dan Swafford, Kaylee Swafford, Kaytlenn Swafford, Brooklenn Swafford, Pastor Michael Hofmann, Kevin Cruz, and Magaly Rojas Luna.

Help get the word out on Workers Together

Does your congregation send out a newsletter? Please consider including a link or mention of Workers Together, the monthly newsletter of the LCMS Kansas District.

You can find the updated edition each month on our website at kslcms.org, under the "About us" tab, then clicking on "Communications." The monthly devotional is also posted on that page as its own document, among many other resources for Kansas Lutherans.

Please help us spread the word about the ministry and mission of Lutherans in the Kansas District by sharing Workers Together!

Dan Thalmann to serve as new Communications Specialist

Dan Thalmann is the new communications specialist for the LCMS Kansas District. He is responsible for the communication and outreach efforts of the District through newsletters, social media and the District's website.

Dan brings over 25 years of media and

journalism experience to the position and has also spent time managing fundraising campaigns for non-profits. He is a past president of the Kansas Press Association, previously served as a lay board member on the LCMS Kansas District Board of Directors, and as a

lay delegate to Kansas District conventions, among other civic and volunteer activities.

He and his wife Jen have five children and two grandchildren. They live in Palmer and are members of St. John Lutheran Church, rural Palmer.

In this capacity, Dan



Dan Thalmann
Communications
Specialist

aspires to help bring forward the mission of the Kansas District to support and encourage its member churches, schools and organizations. You can help him do that by submitting your news items to comms@kslcms.org.

Caring Ministry

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month

The Purple Leash Project

The Purple Leash Project is a national initiative dedicated to helping people and pets escape domestic violence safely. Research shows that many survivors delay leaving abusive situations because they fear for the safety of their pets. The Purple Leash Project works to remove this barrier by supporting domestic violence shelters in becoming pet friendly.

Launched by Purina (Purnia.com/purple-leash-project/about) in partnership with the nonprofit RedRover, the program raises awareness about the strong bond between people and their pets and how that bond can influence decisions during dangerous situations. Through grants and community support, the project helps shelters build safe spaces where survivors can bring their pets with them when they leave abuse.

Purple leashes have become a symbol of hope and

protection. They represent the commitment to ensuring that families—including their beloved animals—can find safety together. The project also encourages communities to advocate for policies and programs that protect both people and pets affected by domestic violence.

By supporting pet-friendly shelters and raising awareness, the Purple Leash Project helps remove one more obstacle that keeps survivors trapped in abusive environments. Its message is simple but powerful: no one should have to choose between personal safety and the safety of a beloved pet.

The project partners with shelters and with domestic violence shelters in your community.

— Mary Hume, District Representative
for Parish Nurses in Kansas

Caring Ministry

Training set for November for Lutheran Early Response Teams

Our volunteers are the lifeblood of what we do. It's people reaching out to people during the most vulnerable and unsettled times in their lives offering hope and comfort. "Why do you do this work?" Because, Jesus said, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

LERT Training Event & Community Calendar:

- Nov. 14, 2026: LERT Basic Training at St. John Lutheran Church, Alma

For more detailed information including contact information and registration for LERT training events, please go to LCMS-LERT.org. If you wish



to host a LERT Training or Community Awareness event, please reach out to us at ksddrc@gmail.com – Prepare to Adapt, Donna Williams – DDRC
Isaiah 6:8

Recent highlights from our Concordias

- Concordia-Seward anticipated about 110 new freshman church work students on campus this fall.



- Concordia-Chicago will be up to almost 60 new incoming frosh church work students—this is up from only just over 20 a couple of years ago.
- Concordia-Irvine is also anticipating at least 41 new church work students compared to under 30 a year ago.
- According to the Set Apart to Serve (SAS) summer newsletter, there were 97 more Lutheran church work students in the 2025-26 school year compared to the previous year.

According to SAS data, when church workers talk with youth about church work, nearly 50% consider it. When those conversations do not happen, only 17% of youth will consider church work. Be intentional - have the conversation!

Schedule of Events



November 14 - Immanuel Lutheran Church in Norton, KS



December 12 - Zion Lutheran Church in Linn, KS



Jan. 16 - Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church in Marysville, KS



February 20 - TBD



March 18-21 - Phoenix, AZ (cost is \$300 if interested))



April 24 - TBD

**For all ages
6th grade and up!
RSVP
@ 785-747-7633**

"The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully."
~2 Corinthians 9:6~



Education & Youth

Webinar Series focuses on protecting children

There is a MinistrySafe Webinar Series being offered titled *The Journey to a Safer Ministry*. This free webinar is a monthly, one-hour series designed to help ministry leaders take meaningful steps toward stronger child protection.

Through practical teaching from MinistrySafe experts, you'll learn what it means to move toward a safer ministry. Topics include understanding risk, identifying vulnerabilities, implementing safeguards, and building a culture of protection for children and volunteers.

October 27, 2026 - 10:00 a.m. CT
Creating Background Check Strategy – Part 1
[REGISTER HERE](#)



November 17, 2026 - 10:00 a.m. CT
Creating Background Check Strategy – Part 2
[REGISTER HERE](#)

Visit the **MinistrySafe** page on the District website <https://kslcms.org/presidents-office/congregation-resources/ministrysafe> to learn more about how your congregation and school can protect your children and ministries.

LCEF Loves Church Workers

It's Church Worker Appreciation Month, and we're celebrating those who keep LCMS ministries running. Our financial and wellness resources equip church workers to navigate the realities of life in ministry work through every season.

See how LCEF supports church workers year-round at lcef.org/resources.



Help recognize our Lutheran church workers

Our LCMS church workers — pastors; deaconesses; teachers; and directors of Christian education, outreach, parish music and family life ministry — work tirelessly on behalf of the church in service to all of us. Let's be sure to show our gratitude. No gesture is too small! Join us on the following dates in 2026 and 2027 as we let our church workers know, in word and deed, how very thankful we are for their service and dedication.

Oct. 11 (Pastor), Oct. 25 (Deaconess, Director of Family Life Ministry, Director of Christian Outreach, Director of Church Ministries), April 25 (Director of Parish Music), May 3–7 (Teacher) and June 26 (Director of Christian Education).

Reach out to Kansas Lutherans

Want to spread the word of your news and activities to other Lutherans across the Kansas District? Reach out to the Kansas District communications specialist by emailing Dan at comms@kslcms.org.

DISTRICT MEETINGS & EVENTS

DISTRICT CALENDAR

<https://kslcms.org/calendar>

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER

Oct. 2-3 Fall Confirmation Retreat (Rock Springs Ranch, Junction City)

Oct. 4 Circuit Visitors / Vice-Presidents meeting, 6-8 p.m. (Zion Lutheran Church, Newton)

Oct. 5-6 Pastor's Conference (Zion Lutheran Church, Newton)

Oct. 9-11 CSL-Seminary Students Visit, (Spring Hill and DeSoto)

Oct. 12 Board of Education and Youth, 4:30-5:30 p.m. (Zoom)

Oct. 14 Board of Caring Ministry, 1-2 p.m. (Zoom)

Oct. 17-19 Great Plains Lutheran Educators Conference (Concordia University, Seward, Neb.)

Oct. 22 Board of Missions, 4-5 p.m. (Zoom)

Oct. 23 Pre-Retirement Workshop, 10am-2 p.m. (Christ Lutheran, Manhattan)

LOOKING AHEAD

Oct. 24 Treasurers Workshop, 10am-2 p.m. (Christ Lutheran, Manhattan)

Oct. 25-29 District President Administrative Assistant Conference

Oct. 31 Reformation Day

Nov. 2 Board of Admin. and Stewardship, 10 a.m.-noon (Zoom)

Nov. 2 Executive Committee, 1-2pm (Zoom)

Nov. 5 Presidents Council, 1-5 p.m.

Nov. 5 Kansas Lutheran Schools Scholarship Foundation Board, 4-5 p.m.

Nov. 6 KSLCMS Board of Directors, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. (District office, Topeka)

Nov. 6-7 LCEF Annual Meeting (St. Louis, Mo.)

Nov. 8-12 Council of Presidents (St. Louis, Mo.)

Nov. 20-22 Kansas District Youth Gathering (Wichita)

Nov. 25-29 Thanksgiving (District office closed from 2 pm Nov. 25 through Nov. 29.)

Dec. 24-Jan. 3 Christmas (District office closed from Dec. 24 through Jan. 3)

IN BRIEF

Students from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, will visit church plants in Kansas as part of an LCMS Church Planting Workshop on Oct. 9-11.

The students and seminary leaders will visit the Kansas District's newest church plants in Spring Hill and DeSoto and will participate in educational breakout sessions each day. They will worship at Light of the World Lutheran Church in DeSoto on Sunday, Oct. 11.

...

Treasurers Workshop registrations will be taken right up to the week of the workshop on Oct. 24. Please consider having your congregation's treasurer attend this important and educational workshop.

...

"Congregation at Prayer" is a free resource for families to integrate Scripture reading, prayer and devotions into their daily routine. This document can be found on the KSLCMS website under the Education and Youth tab, then under Parish Education.

...

The 86th Kansas LLL/LHM District Convention is set for Nov. 6-7 at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Hutchinson. The speaker is Rev. Germán Novelli, Director of LHM Hispanic Ministries. A meet and greet is Friday and the convention is Saturday.

 KANSAS DISTRICT YOUTH MINISTRY EVENTS (2026-2027) KSLCMS.ORG/EDUCATION-YOUTH/YOUTH-MINISTRY 	
	CONFIRMATION RETREAT OCTOBER 2-3, 2026 ROCK SPRINGS 4-H CAMP (JUNCTION CITY, KS)
	KANSAS DISTRICT YOUTH GATHERING (KDYG) NOVEMBER 20-22, 2026 DRURY INN (WICHITA, KS)
	YOUTH LEAD TRAINING MAR. 13-16 AND APR. 24-27, 2027 (ST. LOUIS, MO) -- REGISTRATION OPENS OCTOBER 2026 --
	MIDDLE SCHOOL HUDDLE APRIL 9-10, 2027 CAMP WOOD (ELMDALE, KS)
	LUTHERAN VALLEY RETREAT (LVR) JUNE 6-11, 2027 (WOODLAND PARK, CO)
	HIGHER THINGS HIGHER THINGS 2027 DATES HIGHERTHINGS.ORG/DCRH/
	LCMS YOUTH GATHERING 2028 JULY 3-7, 2028 (SAN ANTONIO, TX)

Leaders needed to help engage Lutherans in service to others

Want to help promote Christian service by Lutherans across Kansas?

The Kansas District's Faith at Work committee is looking for a couple servants to fill open positions on the district planning team.

Faith at Work is an annual Districtwide service event where congregations, schools and RSOs find needs within their local communities to serve friends and neighbors in the name of Jesus Christ. The next event is planned for April 2027.

The planning committee works to grow participation in the program and completes post-event promotion

of the work by servants across Kansas.

Committee meetings are mostly held online, with a couple in-person meetings per year, according to Rick Hanebutt, who chairs the committee.

There were 32 projects registered across Kansas for the 2026 effort, which was the third year of Faith at Work. The projects included 1,100 participants, 22 congregations and three Lutheran schools.

Interested individuals can contact Faith at Work chair Rick Hanebutt at 913-660-8898.

Teachers heading to Great Plains Educators Conference

Lutheran educators in Kansas will gather for the second triennial Great Plains Lutheran Educators Conference from Oct. 17-19 at Concordia University, in Seward, Neb.

Approximately 700 Lutheran educators and school leaders from LCMS districts across the Great Plains are expected to attend. The professional development conference, themed "Created for Every Good Work."

Keynote speakers include Concordia President Dr. Bernard Bull, Dr. David Rindt and Kathy L'Heureux.

Sessions will address topics ranging from Lutheran education and classroom instruction to artificial intelligence, student leadership, educator wellness and school administration.

2027 Congregational Commitments

Every fall, congregations are given the opportunity to make a commitment to support our joint work in the Kansas District and the LCMS Synod for the upcoming year. We appreciate your prayerful consideration for your 2027 commitment!

Congregational commitment forms were mailed last week, along with an updated "Mission and Ministry" document and a 2026 Kansas District budget summary. Please sub-

Your congregational commitments support the work done by the Kansas District and the LCMS for and with local churches.

mit your 2027 form by **November 30** (January 15, 2027 at the latest) in any of the following ways:

- Email / scan your form to **Shannon Fender** at shannon@kslcms.org or call 785-357-4441, ext. 1001. You can



also fax your form to 785-357-5071.

- Mail your form to the LCMS Kansas District, 1000 SW 10th Ave., Topeka, KS 66604-1104.



The 2026-2029 National Offering theme is "Christ is Risen! Tell the Next Generation." The National Offering theme is taken from Psalm 78:4 and is an extension of the 2026 Synod Convention theme.

Prayerfully consider giving towards the LCMS National Offering! Gifts to the National Offering will directly benefit ongoing domestic work carried out by LCMS congregations, districts and RSOs. Visit the National Offering webpage <https://www.lcms.org/convention/national/offering> to learn more and find resources!



The **DOXOLOGY Classic Series** is a continuing education program for pastors, their wives, and congregational lay leaders to experience a time of study, renewal, worship, and growth. The DOXOLOGY Classic consists of three retreats: the Gathering (for pastors), the Encore (for pastors and congregational lay leaders), and the Grand Reunion (for pastors and their wives).

There are upcoming DOXOLOGY conferences in Wichita. **The Encore will be held Oct. 30-Nov. 1, 2026; The Grand Reunion will be held July 30-Aug. 1, 2027.**

Registration is open for the Oct. 30-Nov. 1, 2026 Encore conference. Visit <https://www.doxology.us/event/2026-ks-classic-encore> to register and for more details.



The annual Kansas District Reformation Offering supports the Rev. Eugene Schmidt Memorial Mission Fund for mission outreach right here in Kansas. This includes church planting, church revitalization, and campus ministry.

Prayerfully consider a gift in support of these ministries! You can donate online at: <https://kslcms.org/kansas-district-offerings>

Click the red "Donate" button and select "Reformation Offering" from the dropdown menu on the payment page.

You can also send a check with "2026 Reformation Offering" in the memo line to LCMS Kansas District, 1000 SW 10th Ave., Topeka, KS 66604-1104.

Thank you for your generosity as we seek to expand the Kingdom of God in Kansas!

2026 Kansas District Youth Gathering

The 2026 Kansas District Youth Gathering (KDYG) will be held **November 20-22, 2026**, at the Drury Plaza Hotel in Wichita!

The KDYG is designed for youth who are currently in grades 9-12. This year's theme is "AGAIN" based on Philippians 4:4. Visit <https://kslcms.org/kdyg> to register and for more information!

Hotel room reservations need to be made by Oct. 18 to receive the group rate. Click on the provided link to find more information: [Drury Plaza Hotel, Wichita](#). The Group Number for the hotel rate is **10132281**.

The speakers this year are Rev. Dr. Pete Jurchen and Rebekah Freed.

The Rev. Dr. Pete Jurchen is assistant professor of Lutheran education and faith formation at Concordia University, Nebraska. A former parish pastor and Concordia Publishing House editor, he teaches Christian education leadership and works to equip God's people for lives of faith.

Rebekah Freed is an author, speaker and Christian educator who serves in Student Life and Campus Ministry at Concordia University, Nebraska. A certified Director of Christian Education, she has degrees in psychology and behavioral science and a master's degree focused on discipleship in crisis and trauma.



Rev. Dr. Pete Jurchen



Rebekah Freed

Continued from page 1

in Lyons, Kan., first mentioning it in a receiving line at church. "This will be a future pastor" he said. Hageman was in third grade, and at that time, it had never crossed his mind.

But people continued to say it and as he got closer to a point where a decision like that could solidify his path, Hageman said he really didn't want to be a pastor – "It looked too boring."

He started college at Kansas State University, and this is where he started wrestling with God. He said he was reevaluating why he was going to school and assessing his skills. He was also dating Shanna (his future wife) and she was in-tune to theology. It was the perfect storm to pursue the ministry.

He transferred to Concordia University, Seward, Neb. (CUNE), to run track there (he was an all-American in middle distance events) and started to learn Greek and Hebrew and take other classes that would lead him to seminary. He said he was all-in at that point.

He and Shanna were married on Jan. 1, 2000, and both had one more semester at CUNE before heading to seminary at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. Hageman said he was dabbling in the missionary tract at seminary, but this was during a time when all missionaries were pulled from the field by the LCMS for budgetary reasons, so he thought maybe this was not something to pursue.

Mission driven work in parish ministry

Hageman's first Divine Call was to an inner-city church in Cleveland. This was not a typical first call location for a Kansas boy, but he thought maybe the seminary saw his willingness to engage in unique situations. He served a church in Florida next, and in 2018 he was called to be senior pastor of the T.I.G. Ministry in Kansas, which includes Trinity Lutheran Church, Garden City; Immanuel Lutheran Church, Lakin; and Grace Lutheran Church, Ulysses.

"Mission work has been something that's been on my mind the entire time," said Hageman. "It was the reason I went into pastoral work. When I was placed in the inner city, it was super mission driven."

When ministering in this kind of setting,

Why become a missionary? Why uproot your family, move to another country, learn a new language, and live with the feeling of not quite belonging? Because this world is only our temporary home—a truth every Christian knows. And because of that, we are filled with joy and urgency to share the Good News of Jesus Christ: the Savior who rescues sinners and has prepared an eternal, perfect home for us in heaven."

-From the LCMS Eurasia Facebook page

Hageman said it feeds the desire to be a pastor, because people are uniquely open to the Gospel.

Though he was not in a foreign country, everywhere he went had a major mission emphasis. He couldn't bear the thought of coming across someone who had the chance of not going to heaven because they were not hearing God's Word.

Maybe it was a time of preparation, because the timeline never quite worked out for the Hagemans to do international mission work. Life and family kept pushing the timeline back. But that pushback slowly changed.

His two daughters were out of the house and though they had put down roots in Garden City, Hageman said his family had also done that elsewhere so he knew it was not impossible to take a new path.

He remembered a message that said "We are pilgrims here on earth." So the new question was, "Lord, where do you want us to go?"

Also on Shanna's heart

Pastor Hageman said it was a surprise to nobody that he would eventually get involved in mission work. The same couldn't have been predicted for his wife early on.

Shanna Hageman did not grow up in a religiously active home. She was technically Catholic, but after being invited to a Baptist youth group, she became interested in youth ministry. She was living in Manhattan and dating Michael when a friend invited her to confirmation classes at St. Luke's Lutheran Church where she was confirmed at the age of 18.



Shinyanga is located in Tanzania in the eastern plains of Africa.

She jumped in the deep end. Once Shanna got a taste of the theology, she wanted more and more. Pastor Hageman said he saw that in her when she got ahold of the Book of Concord and read it.

At one point, she was reading the back of a Lutheran magazine about Lutheran programs and learned about the Director of Christian Education (DCE) program at CUNE. So she went there to study theology and entered the DCE program.

Shanna's lack of a Lutheran upbringing was not unusual though. She said over half of the participants in the new international missionary orientation program last year were not born Lutheran. Despite that, her childhood did contribute to her desire for mission work. Mission work has been on her heart for a very long time.

While her mother was studying at Kansas State University, there was a consistent multi-cultural exposure. Shanna said her family always had people over to her house or joined others for picnics, and even as a student at Manhattan High

Continued on page 15



Pastor Hageman will teach at the seminary, which is across the street from their house in Shinyanga.

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School, she had a very multi-cultural experience.

"These were people I cared about and they're not believers and not going to heaven," said Shanna. "I was 15 or 16 and dealing with those big issues." This forced her to think. "What can you do during your short life to make an eternal difference?"

Exposure through mission trips

The Hagemans participated in a variety of short-term mission trips during their ministry. During Michael's seminary years, they went to India for cross-cultural education. He said this experience was an eye-opener for how people elsewhere live differently. His church in Ohio had a relationship with a church in Haiti, where they would travel for short-term missions. They also went on trips to Dominican Republic, Peru and Uganda through the Office of International Mission.

These trips allowed them to see the mission field firsthand.

"What they do... what life is like... it was not as horrible as we imagined," said Hageman.

But there was a need. Hageman said the LCMS used to recruit twice the number of missionaries as they do now.

Covid was hard on the mission field. Hageman said many missionaries came home in 2020 and didn't go back. In Africa specifically, retirements hit numbers hard, as did other normal reasons, and they have not been able to recruit fresh missionaries to serve.

A decision to be made

The Hagemans' trip to Uganda started giving more concrete direction to moving their mission work to the next level.

"We got to meet all the missionaries on the continent of Africa for a meet and greet," said Shanna. "The question kept coming – 'When are you coming?' You have to kind of sit with that."

It was maybe a year later that a serious decision was about to be made.

"For myself, what was really hard, was the amount of time and effort put into serving," said Hageman. "Seven to eight years is kind of a sweet spot... maybe you continue or you've done what you've needed to do." He said there was a lot of prayer and listening and wondering if they've become complacent.

How can you help the mission?

PRAY

- ☑ For the Hagemans and their family
- ☑ For the people of Tanzania and for the Word of God to go out faithfully to the people there.

SUBSCRIBE TO NEWSLETTER

- ☑ Go to hagemansinafrica.org and scroll to bottom to sign up.

DONATE TO SUPPORT THE MISSION

- ☑ Mission Central – <https://missioncentral.us/hageman/>
- ☑ LCMS Mission – <https://www.lcms.org/givenow/hageman>

"I knew Shanna was ready," said Hageman. "There are a lot of things involved with the decision. I served on the Kansas District Board of Directors and there were other ways to serve. I loved Kansas so much."

But he had to ask himself, was he being selfish?

The decision was announced to the T.I.G. Ministry congregations on Sept. 7, 2025. The congregational response reassured them – people seemed to know they would eventually enter the mission field.

"Nobody was surprised," said Shanna. "Maybe sad, but no element of surprise."

Their daughters reacted to the news with "a little crying, a little stress" but Hageman said they likely understood. They'd joined them in the past on short-term mission trips. "But we're still mom and dad," said Hageman. It takes three days of travel to get from Tanzania to Kansas. There are still major life events happening back home.

"We will work through that," said Hageman. "We can still get back." He said the girls knew vocationally why this was important and that they fit the role.

Modern technology helps. They can stay in touch with family easily. The Zoom connection for this interview never skipped. Pastor Hageman recently participated in a fantasy football draft online. Things are different than for missionaries of the past where it might be months without contact, at risk of disease or even death.

They showed up in Africa on April 10, 2026.

The LCMS only has missionaries in five African countries. Work permits and paperwork limit what they're able to do. Most are in Nairobi, which is also the location of the regional missions office. Tanzania is an area with a new seminary. Africa was always at the back of their minds, according to Hageman.

Learning how to live

It might be an entire year yet before the Hagemans' actual mission work begins. Since moving to Tanzania, they've been learning how to live there through language and culture acquisition. They participate in language camp, but much of the work is a slow go, according to Hageman. He said the style of taking on this new position was a very foreign experience.

"After moving in as a pastor, you might preach that Sunday and then go, go go," he said. With this missionary transition, they are given their house and told to get used to it, get to know the people that work for them and get used to the shops and transportation system.

Shanna said the training period is "frustrating for our culture because we are go-go-go and do-do-do." She said there is 18 months of pre-work and that is intentional because otherwise missionaries can

Continued on page 16

Do you feel led to mission work?

LCMS International Mission has the need for long-term career missionaries, participants in short-term mission trips for small teams of laymen and everything in between.

See a listing of missionary service opportunities at www.lcms.org/service

Opportunities are included for career missionaries, GEO missionaries, short-term volunteers (1 week to 6 months), and short-term teams (1-2 weeks).



Shanna in the Soko Kuu (a market) in Iringa in front of a pile of small fish. The markets are very different than a familiar American market.

Typical life (so far) as a Lutheran missionary in Shinyanga, Tanzania

Let's just get the stereotype out of the way – Pastor Michael and Shanna Hageman are not living in a brick and mud hut in the wilds of Africa. They're not eating mystery meats. Their lives are not under threat. Actually, they are quite comfortable.

Pastor Hageman said he had some preconceptions on what daily life might be like as a missionary in Tanzania, but as they sat for a Zoom interview for this article on a couch in their living room of a well-equipped modern home, with sheer curtains behind them and air conditioning moderating the room temperature, Hageman said the LCMS has done a good job making sure they were comfortable.

Their day begins with chapel in the morning at the seminary which is across the road from their home. For now, language acquisition is at the forefront of daily life – they're learning Swahili. Hageman said Shanna speaks it well already. He said he doesn't do it well yet, but he can communicate enough to get by. There is almost no English spoken in Tanzania.

Other mundane tasks fill time too. Shanna likes to cook, but local markets have maybe 20% of what an average American grocery store would have,

according to Shanna. There are no prepared sauces, no brown sugar, no Amazon delivery. In Tanzanian culture, very few women of the Shanna's situation cook. It is considered beneath them, and helpers are traditionally hired to make meals. But Shanna said she'd like to continue to cook and usually does.

It is a three-hour trip to Lake Victoria for "big shopping," according to Shanna. But even then, selection is still limited. A bag of tortilla chips is \$12, because it is imported.

Once they're through this period of acclimation, Pastor Hageman will be teaching theological courses at Shinyanga Confessional Lutheran College. He will instruct students on homiletics, hermeneutics and exegetical topics; basically, everything it takes to become a pastor. It is a full-blown pastoral training ministry. Hageman has 25 years of experience, so he is comfortable teaching any of those subjects.

Shanna is supposed to be teaching English as a second language classes and she has dreams of starting an English school. She is trying to get candidates for such a school, but there are 126 tribal languages, which adds another tier of language challenge.



Pastor and Shanna Hageman's daughter Kiera Hageman, a senior at the University of Kansas, stands outside of the church in Shinyanga watching an offering auction take place. Many Sundays after church there is an auction of animals or food, with bids raising funds that goes to the church. Kiera visited her parents for five days in August. The rural people are super nice and Kiera said it was very peaceful and she felt safer there than she did back home. Safety for missionaries in the field is a priority for the LCMS. Hageman said major precautions are taken for their security. He said there were moments during his time in Cleveland where his hair would stand up like something was about to go down, but he has not felt that way in Tanzania at all. They will take more safety and security classes this fall and they have a detailed response itinerary if something does happen. News of pastors being killed in Sudan and West Africa is very far removed from their area. Tanzania is the size of two states of California. They do have an evacuation plan and an always-ready go bag with medicine, currency and emergency supplies. They will get a Land Cruiser soon, which will be loaded with a bunch of gas tanks to get to the border if needed. But the culture is very family oriented. "If there are needs, there are people to go to," said Hageman.

Continued from page 15

experience burnout.

The harvest is plentiful, so why not?

It might not be simple to explain the call to become missionaries, but Hageman said his "why" is very simply "why not?"

"As you engage yourself in the Gospel, we cannot but do what we do," said Hageman. "It's just part of how the Lord has made us. That goes with someone being a mother, father... the Lord has given us these gifts, how dare we not use them?"

Shanna hears people talk about their interest in doing mission work, but they don't because of various fears.

Shanna said there is a misconception that she and Pastor Hageman are somehow unique in their ability to be missionaries in the field. Like somehow they are more capable or more brave.

"I've heard that a lot, but there is nothing about us that's different," said Shanna. "The love of Christ compels us. What we've been given, we want others to receive. We desire each human soul to be saved. And He hasn't come back yet, so we still have time."

Treasurers Workshop offered by Kansas District staff

A Congregational Treasurers Workshop is being offered by the LCMS Kansas District for new and returning treasurers, bookkeepers, financial secretaries, office managers, stewardship leaders, pastors, church members and others who have financial or administrative responsibilities in the church.

The workshop is set for 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 24 at Christ Lutheran Church, 4592 Green Valley Rd., Manhattan.

Presentations and information will come from Kansas District Business Manager Heather Williams, Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) Vice President Jeff Maltz, and representatives from Concordia Plan Services and other churches.

The workshop will include practical and straightforward help, including:

- Reviewing the Congregational Treasurers Manual and learning about LCEF borrowing and investment opportunities.

- Exploring district dollars at work, narrative budgets, salary guidelines, board governance, internal control and planned giving.

- Discussing clergy taxes, document retention, employer resources, and employees vs. contractors, with dedicated time for your most frequent

questions.

A free lunch will be provided, sponsored by LCEF.

To register, sign up online at <https://forms.gle/Tuohm278eZeyieUW8>.

For more information, contact Heather Williams at 785-357-4441 or heather@kslcms.org.

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It's not too late to help children access a Christ-centered education at a Lutheran school in Kansas. Help us raise an additional \$500,000 for scholarships by December 1st!

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- Just under \$6 million in tax credits remain unclaimed for 2026. In 2025, the tax credits were gone by December 15th.

Lutheran Witness billing

Be sure to watch your mail for the billing statements for 2026-2027 Lutheran Witness subscriptions, which are set to be mailed to all subscribing congregations the first week in October. Payment is due to the District office no later than Dec. 31, 2026.

Please include a remittance voucher with payment, noting the check is for Lutheran Witness subscriptions. Make checks payable to the LCMS Kansas District and send to:

LCMS Kansas District
Attn: Shannon Fender
1000 SW 10th Ave.
Topeka, KS 66604-1104

Please note that no additional additions or cancellations will be taken for this subscription year. You can, however, still make address changes.

If you need to update an address on your subscription list, please contact Shannon Fender at 785-357-4441, ext. 1001 or shannon@kslcms.org for a change form.

REV. DANIEL GRAMS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

(785) 357-4441
www.klssf.org
dgrams@klssf.org



Appreciating our church workers in Kansas



Dear Kansas District Members,

As we enter the month of October, we celebrate Church Worker Appreciation Month throughout the LCMS and here in the Kansas District. October also brings together many of the people who serve our congregations and schools. Pastors will gather at Zion Lutheran Church in Newton, Oct. 5-6 to study "Truth: Abiding in the Word in Cases of Conscience," and Lutheran educators head to Concordia University in Seward, NE, for the Great Plains Lutheran Educators Conference, Oct. 17-19. Later in the month, Christ Lutheran Church in Manhattan will host a Pre-Retirement Lunch & Learn on Oct. 23 and the Congregational Treasurers Workshop on Oct. 24th. We thank God for each of these faithful servants and the ministries they support.

To that end, one of LCEF's goals is to make the most of God's blessings to serve the needs of the LCMS, both in Kansas and throughout the Synod—and that includes the church workers who carry out that ministry every day. If you work for an LCMS church, school or organization, the Church Worker StewardAccount® lets you align your financial goals with your faith, earn a competitive interest rate, and manage your funds at your own pace. Invest with purpose and serve with peace. Open your Church Worker StewardAccount today.

Blessings,
Jeffrey Maltz
District Vice President, Kansas & Oklahoma

Jeffrey.maltz@lcef.org
785-230-4112

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The timing of the development of this program coincided with Our Saviour's 100th anniversary, which was celebrated by the congregation the final weekend of September.

The church was actively looking for a new mission outreach and had a unique capacity to pursue this educational effort. Their property had space available for the conservatory in a building connected to their church in what served for many years as a preschool (in a building that was a Lutheran grade school before that). There was also no similar music instruction program of this kind in their urban KC neighborhood which was underserved by this kind of enrichment program.

Our Saviour's serves unique neighborhood

The ministry of Our Saviour's is unique because of its setting in the midst of three very different neighborhoods with economically and demographically diverse populations. To one side is the significant campus of the University of Kansas Medical Center. KU Med has a very global, affluent population, according to Pastor Jim Bender, and there is opportunity for outreach to international students and scholars.

Within the square mile of the campus is a neighborhood with a significant amount of poverty, and a block and a half away from the church is an elementary school, which has basically been adopted as the neighborhood school.

As the neighborhood radiates out, Bender said the residents tend to get more affluent, including retirees and empty nesters. These are settled and rooted Kansas Citians according to Bender.

"It's a very distinct community," said Bender. "We're trying our best to be viable for them."

The urban setting of the church offers up its own set of challenges. Bender said they consider themselves the last viable LCMS church in the

"Next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise. The gift of language combined with the gift of song was given to man that he should proclaim the Word of God through Music."

– Martin Luther

urban core.

Despite the diversity around the church, Bender said music could be a doorway for all of local communities to be part of their ministry.

Finding a new mission

After the closure of the church's preschool this spring, a committee was formed to consider options for a new era in their congregation. They wanted to be involved in mission and ministry in their neighborhood, but they had to include parameters with whatever new venture they would develop.

The focus was to find something that wouldn't financially strap the congregation, nor take up the full capacity of the servanthood of the congregation's members.

They had specific aims for whatever they decided to pursue. They wanted something relational, encouraging a journey into Word and Sacrament ministry; something unique and notable; it should meet a need in the community and be considered a blessing; it should be churchly, Christ-centered, and something secular institutions cannot contribute; it was to be culturally redeeming.

The church has a very active food pantry, but the question was asked, what can the congregation bring to the community that would create an interaction to share the Word on an ongoing basis?

Likely not by coincidence, the same seed for a music conservatory was planted independently in the minds of two of the committee members. (Was this the Holy Spirit at work?)

During this process, Pastor Bender said he ran into a colleague who had developed a music program with the assistance of David's Harp, whom Pastor Bender ended up calling for more information. The ensuing conversation led Bender to believe this could be a good fit for Our Saviour's.

The David's Harp program is still relatively new, but Bender said there are up to 27 congregations who were trying to launch this year. The LCMS is known for its commitment to youth and education through its support of Lutheran schools, but as some of those schools are closing, Bender thought music could be a new manifestation of how the LCMS continues to leave a mark.

For youth specifically, Bender wondered if a focus on music could be part of a cultural turn for something that is true and communal and "maybe just a little bit more beautiful" than the current state of frantic achievement and adrenaline rushes and things that keep people not bored.

Youth and music was something that resonated personally for Our Saviour's member Marty Scott, who

Continued on page 20

A statement of mission and vision was created for the conservatory

"Our mission is to invite people from all ages into praise by teaching music utilizing the rich heritage of Lutheran music. Our vision is that Our Saviour Lutheran Church be noted for its excellent music academy, and warm community, with the hope that we provide thick community – international students in a new land, empty nesters in a new season, children needing a creative outlet, and parents needing support – pursuing the beauty of music and invited into eternal community of Christ."

Continued from page 19

chaired the oversight team for the development of the conservatory.

She wasn't historically connected to music, but she was exposed to it through her grandson's growing involvement in playing an instrument. He developed an interest in playing the violin in school and he really connected to it. Scott supported him as he found this niche and she said he is now involved in the youth symphony in Kansas City.

This made her think about other young people who might have had an interest in music, but who didn't have access to an opportunity to learn and develop a musical skill.

Our Saviour's has long created a special connection to the nearby grade school and through a music conservatory, they would be able to collaborate with teachers and the music program there to make this new program available to students. Scott said the school has a variety of after-school clubs and she'd like to see if the conservatory could help create an after-school guitar club as an option for students.

This is part of the vision, according to Scott. Not only would the conservatory contribute to the lives of the congregation's families and the circuit, and share music with them, but also a way to support the local public school and the musical aspirations of their students.

What do lessons at the conservatory look like?

The conservatory promotes its lessons as professional private instruction in a safe, faith-rooted environment. After a meet and greet between a teacher and student, the instructor will gauge the situation to determine an instruction style. A typical lesson is 30 minutes long, once a week, including warmups (scales, techniques and finger exercises, for example), then work on mechanics and new concepts.

Once a student is ready after that kind of basic structure, the lesson would begin implementing hymn integration. That phase could feature a hymn of the season or an easy prelude or a specific piece of sacred music.

Outside of the lesson, the student would be expected to review and practice the music.

Growing their own musicians

A music conservatory could also be a venue to grow musicians for the church on their own rather than depending on students from the Concordia universities to supply any needs they might have. Our Saviour's is blessed to have three organists now, but as the congregation celebrates its 100th anniversary, they'll need to

continue to look ahead at the next hundred years.

Scott referenced a statistic on the David's Harp website that claimed it would take about 100 years to replace all the church musicians if they depended on the current rate of students graduating with music degrees from the Concordias. So churches aspiring to grow their own future musicians needs to be a priority.

Integrating hymns of our Lutheran heritage into the lesson plans was a way to create a foundation of Lutheran music with the students, but because of the Scriptural focus of so many hymns, it also works as a ministry to these students.

"We're using it as outreach ministry," said Bender. "If we raise church musicians, great. But we are using it as an entryway into our neighborhood."

David's Harp integral for development of conservatory

To get the ball rolling, a business plan was developed, four rooms were modified to be used as individual music studios, and a professional website was launched at www.oursaviourmusic.com.

Working with David's Harp turned what would've been a three-year creation process for the Our Saviour Music Conservatory to a three-month startup, according to Bender. David's Harp assists with all of the questions

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How can you help with this musical mission?

Looking for ways to support the musical ambitions of LCMS churches and schools? Donations can be made to Our Saviour Music Conservatory to help the program get off the ground, or to David's Harp to help start new musical efforts.

Our Saviour Music Conservatory oversight team member Marty Scott said funding is important for upstart music programs like theirs. She said they were fortunate to start with some financial gifts and a grant.

<https://oursaviourmusic.com/donate>

<https://davidsharpmusic.org/donate>

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and issues associated with starting a music program, including such key issues such as creating a business plan, website development, marketing and outreach materials, recruiting and screening prospective teachers, billing and invoicing, and many other associated tasks.

David's Harp has worked with churches and schools in Kansas and across the nation. After working with David's Harp to start the conservatory, Scott said she thought the David's Harp program was something a lot of churches could use to start music programs. She said they can just help with the development phase, or they could continue to advise with ongoing marketing and promotion work. Scott said David's Harp almost has a recipe for opening up a conservatory.

With the help of David's Harp, marketing the new conservatory to area LCMS churches was the first phase of the effort. Organizers tapped into the local LCMS churches with bulletin announcements and postcards. Bender said there were about 77 people from about seven different churches who came to the conservatory's hymn festival and launch event on Aug. 17. Music at the event included participation from students and teachers from another David's Harp program at St. John Lutheran Church & School, Topeka, as well as a special first performance from the Our Saviour Music Conservatory's first student.

The second phase was outreach to the surrounding neighborhood. A new sign was to be erected outside and the area was blanketed with flyers for the conservatory. The principal and music teachers at the local schools were approached in hopes the conservatory could fill a gap in the community. That effort could also help draw in new instructors for the conservatory.

Bender said they're always pro-

moting the conservatory through word-of-mouth and using the network of music leaders in the area to find more people interested in teaching or learning.

"The music conservatory gives our church a product that might come up in conversation," said Bender, "As opposed to solely an invitation to come to worship services."

Ready to grow the ministry

The conservatory's work got underway with one teacher, one student and one instrument. Pastor Bender's wife Sally is the instructor and is offering piano lessons.

Bender said they have a few others who are investigating the effort and interested in getting involved, including a guitar teacher. He said the prospective teachers need to be interviewed by the pastor to make sure they're on the same page as far as having a missionary mindset and what they believe as a congregation.

They want Christians with the mission in mind, because though it is a music conservatory, Bender said the Our Saviour's Music Conservatory is more than just music.

A specific outreach element of the conservatory is not just education of musicians. That is the service they will provide and will get people into the building. When using the David's Harp materials, students will learn and practice hymns and Lutheran liturgical pieces as part of the curriculum.

At some point as part of their lessons, students are asked to come into the congregation and use their new musical skills to participate in a service, whether it be leading a hymn stanza, a prelude or an offertory, for example. The goal is to get them used to leading the musical element of a worship service.

"Then of course mom and dad will follow them, and then maybe they experience the church," said Bender. "And when it is warm and welcoming, they might come back."

This angle is a key to the outreach. It's not just music lessons and renting out building space. Bender said it is a strategy to get people into the church and a way to invite them into Word and Sacrament ministry.

It is a unique juxtaposition – music is both the catalyst of mission and ministry, but also the result of the mission and ministry.

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2026 Congregational Treasurers Workshop

Saturday, October 24, 2026 • 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Christ Lutheran Church, 4592 Green Valley Road, Manhattan, KS 66502

Why Attend?

Practical help! This workshop provides simple, straightforward help relating to clergy tax and church treasurer issues, plus resources to help you serve your congregation and avoid costly mistakes.

Make connections! Connect with presenter and District Business Manager Heather Williams, LCEF Vice President Jeff Maltz, Concordia Plan Services, and fellow church servants.

Free lunch! Lunch will be sponsored by the Lutheran Church Extension Fund.

Who Should Attend?

New and returning treasurers, bookkeepers, financial secretaries, office managers, stewardship leaders, pastors, church members and/or staff who have financial or administrative responsibilities.

Topics Covered

- Reviewing the Congregational Treasurers Manual and learning about LCEF borrowing and investment opportunities.
- Exploring district dollars at work, narrative budgets, salary guidelines, board governance, internal control, and planned giving.
- Discussing clergy taxes, document retention, employer resources, and employees vs. contractors, with dedicated time for your most frequent questions.

Registration & Contact Info

To Register: Sign up online at <https://forms.gle/Tuohm278eZeyieUW8>

Questions? Contact Heather Williams at 785-357-4441 or heather@kslcms.org



LCMS Kansas District





2026 Pre-Retirement Lunch & Learn

Friday, October 23, 2026 • 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Christ Lutheran Church, 4592 Green Valley Road, Manhattan, KS 66502

Join us for a free Lunch & Learn! Workers enrolled in the Concordia Retirement Plan pension—especially those age 50 or older who are thinking about retirement—are invited to attend this in-person or virtual workshop provided by Concordia Plans.

What will we cover?

- The social and emotional aspects of retirement
- Sources of retirement income
- Health care in retirement
- How to initiate your CRP pension benefit

*Spouses are welcome
to attend as well!*

Registration & Contact Info

To Register: Sign up online at <https://forms.gle/YyS5UFigZdDSfu5U9>

Questions? Contact Heather Williams at 785-357-4441 or heather@kslcms.org

Join us for this valuable opportunity to learn more about preparing for retirement!



LCMS Kansas District

