



DISTRICT NEWS

MINNESOTA SOUTH

💡 TALKING POINTS WITH PASTOR

Outreach: *Go First!*

The Christian church often talks about the importance of outreach. But what does outreach mean?



Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford
District President

Intentional outreach is one of the four tenants of the Minnesota South District *Go First* initiative. It's acting upon the conviction that Christ has called us to be light bearers and hope mongers in a broken and dysfunctional world.

The third quadrant of the *Go First!* logo shows an ichthus, the early church symbol and code used to identify hope-filled Christians living in a chaotic and dangerous world. The color is purple, used during the season of Lent. It's the symbol of Christ's royal sacrifice on the cross (at the center of the logo) for the sins of the world — and a reminder of how He reaches out with His love and mercy for all humankind.

Therefore, the Holy Christian Church reaches out to both the lost and the found with the hope and love of Jesus. But exactly what does that look like and sound like? What activities and behaviors might outreach include? The apostle Peter tells us one way:

In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect. **1 PETER 3:15**

In our individual daily stations and vocations of life, we stand ready to reach out with the hope of Christ, especially to those who ask why we live

with such hope. Many are longing for a compassionate word, a welcoming smile or a kind gesture. In a broken and chaotic world, the love of Christ in word and deed is a welcome relief for hurting and wondering souls.

In fact, Jesus told the Pharisees what outreach in God's name would look like:

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MESSAGE

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“Go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.” MATT. 9:13

Jesus quotes Hosea 6:6 as a reminder how the Old Testament Israelites thought obedience to ritual laws (making sacrifices at the temple) was more important than the practice of mercy. Likewise, the Pharisees were simply going through the motions of ritual worship while they ignored those in need of mercy. Jesus called them to reflect on the life of faith and what it means to reach out with mercy in God’s name.

For us, it’s as simple as looking around our community. What are the needs of people? Do they need food, shelter, care, an advocate, companionship, hope? The Holy Christian Church is poised to reach out with such mercy in the name of Jesus. However, we are no mere social service. We bring the mercy of Jesus Christ rooted in His sacrifice on the cross of Calvary for the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. He reaches out with love and mercy and inspires us to do the same.



A volunteer from Hats and Mittens, a nonprofit in Hopkins, delivered a gift to The New Freedom Store (at Jehovah, St. Paul), which is sponsored by the Minnesota South District.

unleash the potential of the Holy Christian Church in our local communities. We trust Jesus to inspire us to action, which allows us to trust others and inspire them to action.

Dream big! Think large. Collaborate. Try something new. One

circuit is joining together with the district to create an urban outreach center at Jehovah Lutheran in St. Paul — a safe space to meet the needs of the community, including teaching English as a second language and partnering with POBLO to house an International Friendship Center. Another congregation is beginning a food pantry. Another has recognized the opioid crisis and purchased land to build a treatment center for addiction and chemical dependency, while another simply went door to door to invite the community children to an extended Christ-centered VBS program.

The opportunities for outreach are countless. My challenge to you and your congregation is *Go First!*

So consider what resources your congregation has. Do you have people who can visit and bring a word of encouragement? Do you have space to provide a food bank or community classes? Maybe members who could house those in need? Do you have people with skill sets to show mercy and compassion in the name of Jesus — evangelists, medical professionals, carpenters, landscaping, mechanics, financial advising or housing?

Look to network with like-minded community members to enhance your outreach potential, all the while being intentional about sharing the hope you have through the shed blood of Jesus.

The *Go First* initiative is meant to

Congratulations, Pastor Krause!

Rev. Jason Krause was installed as pastor of Mount Calvary, Richfield, on Dec. 4. Pictured are, from left (front row) Revs. Dean Gade (emeritus), Jason Krause, William Hugo (St. Matthew, Columbia Heights); (back row) Kevin Tiaden (Berea, Richfield), Tom Evans (Emanuel, Inver Grove Heights), Don Schmiege (emeritus) and John Stern (emeritus).



Eastern Heights rejoices over 75 years

The saints of Eastern Heights Lutheran Church, St. Paul, celebrated its 75th anniversary with a special service on Nov. 13. Before the service, members and friends gathered for refreshments and fellowship, and to learn about the congregation's history. A luncheon was held following the service.

God is working through the members of Eastern Heights! Glory be to God for His infinite blessings!

In the photo above, pictured are, from left, DCE Bradley Asmus, Rev. Steven Benson (senior pastor), Dr. Phillip Johnson (Minnesota South District Assistant to the President, Mission Formation), DCE Tim Germain and Rev. Chuck Fenton (associate pastor).



The Minnesota South District office will be closed Dec. 30 and Jan. 2.

Best Practices reflections

The Best Practices in Ministry (BPM)

conference is an annual event hosted by Christ Church Lutheran, Phoenix. This congregation has hosted the FREE conference for over 10 years “to encourage ministry support workers as we reach out with the Gospel of Christ.”

Registrants can choose from 250 sessions to gain information and ideas to best suit the needs of their congregation. Everything on site is free of charge: meals, shuttles, snacks, activities, speakers and registration. Participants need only provide transportation to and from Phoenix and secure lodging.

This year’s BPM will be held Feb. 16-18. For more information and to register, visit cclphoenix.org/bpm.

Following are reflections from 2022 conference participants from our Minnesota South District.



From left, Dana Raabe, Laura Rand and MaryEllen Wunrow of Eastern Heights Lutheran Church, St. Paul, celebrate the 75th anniversary of their congregation.

Eastern Heights, St. Paul

In the wake of a global pandemic, when one often felt alone, Best Practices for Ministry conference is there to remind you that you are not. “We are not alone” in many ways — we have our family and friends, our church family, our BPM family, and Christ is always with us. I didn’t know what to expect when returning to BPM. I knew it would be different than the last time, and I knew I would learn a lot, eat a lot and have a good time. What I didn’t expect was to grow so much with the other two ladies on my team, Dana and Laura, and realize how disconnected I had become from some of my church family simply because we couldn’t gather for so long.

Since returning from BPM, I have developed relationships with many members of our church and grown closer with Dana and Laura. These growing relationships have been a support system for my personal and church life. I know I am not alone and that these ladies are always with me. The three of us grew in our faith and leadership confidence because of Best Practices, and that led us to leading and organizing the 75th anniversary celebration for our church (see page 3).

For us it was important to get as many groups as possible from our church involved in some way. We asked our partner churches

to be part of the service. The children of the childcare, preschool and elementary youth group created special art pieces. The senior high youth served at the luncheon. Some of the older members helped with decorations. A member cooked for the lunch. We tried to showcase members’ talents and share how we are all special and blessed with different gifts, and we are not alone.

I learned many things at BPM, but the thing I hold closest to my heart is the dear friendships I made while there. For me, this conference was about reconnecting with old friends and creating new friendships. The bond I now have with Dana and Laura is one that has given me strength, focus, confidence and peace. I know I am not alone, and that God has placed these wonderful women and myself in this place at this time for a reason. I have a renewed passion and desire to share God’s love and to get to know His people, making sure we all know “we are not alone.”

I would encourage any congregation considering the conference to take a leap of faith and go. It is an experience like no other. You will be amazed at what you learn and how it will affect your ministry in big and small ways, personally and professionally, and in the short and long term.

MaryEllen Wunrow

Assistant Director of Early Childhood Ministries, Eastern Heights Lutheran Church, St. Paul

St. Peter's, Vernon Center

We were blessed to receive a grant from the Minnesota South District, allowing six of us from St. Peter's to attend the Best Practices conference last February. This was the second conference for my wife, Paula, and me, and it was great to attend a second time.

One of my favorite things is the networking that goes on during the whole conference. We were able to share the story of St. Peter's journey with others and let them know that even though their church might be struggling, God has a plan if you just let Him be your guide.

There were educational opportunities on about every topic you can imagine. Paula and I attended a session led by a pastor and his wife, who was in advertising and talked about promoting your church by making the outside of the church as inviting as the inside. As a result, we decided to decorate the outside of our church by adding outside lights for the Christmas season. We are currently looking at having a billboard on the edge of town and trying to come up with a cost-effective sign to invite people to our church.

Two of the young women from St. Peter's attended the conference and brought back great ideas for Christian education and our youth ministry.

We attended a session on caring for caregivers who are tending family members with



Pictured are, from left, Will Purvis, Mary Reinke, Paula Purvis, Karyn Riewe, and Melisa and Rev. Adam Finney.

dementia and other memory issues. That session made me more aware of the stress caregivers are under and, since then, I have been taking a friend's father for afternoon outings to give his wife a few hours to herself. I also have a friend who is just beginning to have memory issues, and I am more aware of interacting with him and his family and the importance of helping their family as well.

(St. Peter's) Pastor (Adam) Finney and his wife, Melisa, also attended and they were able to network with other church professionals and share ideas. I think it is important for our pastor to interact with church workers from around the country. I know he came home with some new ideas.

My goal is to encourage as many of our younger church leaders to attend this conference to help them guide our congregation in the years to come.

Will Purvis

St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Vernon Center

Sudanese Mission

I was privileged to attend the Best Practices Ministry Conference thanks to the generous support of the Minnesota South District. The conference encouraged participants to share the love of God in Christ Jesus with people around the world, so it was very encouraging to me as I seek to share the love of God with the Sudanese immigrants in southern Minnesota, who I am called to serve. As Jesus promises us in the Great Commission, we are not alone as we carry the Gospel to those around us.

We were reminded that the church in America is in decline. Reaching out cross-culturally is one of many ways that the church can be revitalized. It is also important to reach out to young people with the Gospel because they will carry out the mission of the church in the future. I am very thankful to have had this opportunity to attend the Best Practices conference and look forward to using what I have learned in my ministry.

Rev. Gatluk Reat

Sudanese Evangelical Lutheran Mission Church of Southern Minnesota

Minnesota STATE BIBLE BOWL 2023

Get your teams together for the Minnesota State Bible Bowl, to be held April 1 at Concordia University, St. Paul.

The competition is open to students in grades 7-12 who attend an LCMS church or school in the Minnesota North or Minnesota South districts. The topic will be "The Life of Moses," based on Ex. 1-20 and 32-34 (ESV).

The team competition, made up of 3-4 players, is a double elimination, verbal, fast-paced quiz format. The individual competition is a written 50-question,

multiple-choice test. There are no limits for four-person teams per church, but there is a limit of 3 three-person teams per church.

The cost is only \$40 per team! Send the registration fee (checks payable to MN State Bible Bowl) and the names of each participant **by March 15** to Rev. Rudy Maurer; c/o St. John Lutheran Church; P.O. Box 37; Good Thunder, MN 53037-0037.

For more information, contact Pastor Maurer at 507-278-3169 or visit mnbiblebowl.org.



Have you ever noticed that it can be easy to get someone to smile if you first smile at them? I will stand in the check-out line at a store, watching people while I wait for my turn. When someone looks at me, I will smile at them. They almost always return the smile, regardless of their age.

I challenge you to adopt this new year’s resolution: Smile! My challenge comes from the 2022 LWML Assembly of Leaders session, “Venturing Out of Our Comfort Zone: Listening to Other Ideas and Learning to Do Things Differently.”

Think of the word SMILE.

S is for share and share stories. Sharing is a two-way conversation. We are all unique with different backgrounds and upbringings. Spend time learning about each other.

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count other more significantly than yourselves.

Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. **PHIL. 2:3-4**

M is for mentoring, which is giving advice or teaching someone. In Christian mentoring, not only will the person being mentored grow in their faith, but the person doing the mentoring will also grow.

Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another. **PROV. 27:17**



Lisa Kamrath
LWML District President

I is for invite or involve. When you invite someone, make it a verbal invitation and offer a ride to the one you invited.

Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. **ROM. 15:7**

L is for listen. There are five listening techniques to help you listen well. They are pay attention, pay close attention, provide feedback, defer judgment and respond appropriately.

Mark 4:24 says:

And he said to them, “Pay attention to what you hear; with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you.”

And Col. 4:6 says:

Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may

know how you ought to answer each person.

L also stands for love. When we see each other as people God has lovingly made, and we love each other, then embracing our differences will be easy. Love each other as fellow creations of God.

And finally, **E is for encourage.** Use your words and your smiles.

Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. **1 THESS. 5:11**

So smile! Use the gifts God has given you to meet other people He has made, celebrate your similarities and differences, and love each other. Rejoice in the rich tapestry of the people in your life, created by God for His pleasure.

Register for convention

“Celebrate the Lord of the Nations” is the theme for the 40th Biennial LWML Convention, to be held June 22-25 at the Wisconsin Center in Milwaukee.

Early registration will be from Jan. 9 to March 14 and the cost is \$160. Registration is \$180 from March 15 to May 10. Late registration (May 11–June 10) is \$205.

Information is available in the winter edition of *Lutheran Women’s Quarterly* and at lwml.org/2023-convention.

Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage! The Lord looks down from heaven; he sees all the children of man. **PS. 33:12-13**



CarePortal

‘God’s hand at work’

In every community, there are children and families in crisis who need help. In those same communities, there are congregations and people who care, who want to take action. But what they need is a connection point.

CarePortal is connecting technology which drives action for children and families in crisis. Child-serving professionals see needs every day and submit them to CarePortal, which then shares those needs with local churches to make meaningful connections — serving as the hands and feet of Jesus.

When you join CarePortal as an individual or as part of your congregation’s CarePortal Team, you will be equipped for opportunities to serve local children and families through prayer, giving and serving. You will be provided with quick training videos that will guide you to prepare your response and to make meaningful connections in your community.

Here’s a sample of the impact of CarePortal in the Minnesota South District:

“It has been truly amazing to see God’s hand at work at Holy Cross Lutheran in Rochester. Holy Cross came to realize it needed to make more of an impact on the community, outside of the four walls of the church. After much consideration, Holy Cross decided to implement an outreach ministry to serve children and families in crisis by launching CarePortal in Rochester/Olmsted County in early 2021. More than 75 of the 320 members of Holy Cross signed up to serve as CarePortal responders.

“In the last 20 months, CarePortal churches in Olmsted County have served over 475 children with an economic impact of over \$150,000. Holy Cross has stepped up to serve as the hands and feet of Jesus in a big way, providing



With a referral from CarePortal, members of Holy Cross, Rochester, provide living necessities for a family in need.

about 70% of that support. Beds have been the most requested items, as many children sleep on the floor.

“The impact in the community has been significant. Real needs, identified by child-serving professionals, have been met in real time. Families have been strengthened. People who have never crossed the threshold of a church have witnessed the love of Jesus in action. The impact on the church has been significant, as well. Members who have wanted to serve their neighbors but didn’t really know how, or felt uncomfortable, have made meaningful connections through a simple process.

“And the spirit of service has expanded the outreach ministry of Holy Cross to now include a monthly food distribution program in partnership with Ruby’s Pantry. To God be the glory!”

CarePortal was launched in 2015 by Global Orphan Project, a Christian, nonprofit organization, and is currently used in 31 states. In Minnesota, CarePortal was implemented last year and is currently expanding in the Twin Cities. Please consider joining!

For more info, visit careportal.org or contact Tim Heroff, who serves as CarePortal Minnesota-area director, at tim.heroff@careportal.org.

Congregation mission receipts

For the period ending Nov. 30, 2022 (unaudited)

Actual receipts.....	\$162,095
Budget receipts	\$170,832
Over (under) amount	(\$8,737)

Year-to-date receipts

Actual receipts.....	\$1,835,689
Budget receipts	\$1,879,152
Over (under) anticipated amount.....	(\$43,463)

Use of mission receipts (year to date)

50% designated to district and Synod ..	\$1,420,402
100% designated to district operations ...	\$355,552
100% designated for Synod operations	\$59,735
Total receipts	\$1,835,689

Mission receipts—2022 vs. 2021

Mission receipts — YTD 2022	\$1,835,689
Mission receipts — YTD 2021	\$1,935,679
Over (under) last year	(\$99,990)

2022 congregational receipts budgeted at \$2,050,000 (does not include designated to Synod operations)

MINNESOTA SOUTH DISTRICT LCEF

October 2022

New investments	\$995,466
Withdrawals.....	\$1,822,648
Net increase (decrease).....	(\$827,182)

Year-to-date July 1, 2022–Oct. 31, 2022

New investments	\$4,954,199
Withdrawals.....	\$6,039,838
Net increase (decrease).....	(\$1,085,639)



DISTRICT OFFICE

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March for Life

Many lives are being saved since the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, allowing states to protect unborn children. In Minnesota, however, abortion on-demand continues. This is why Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life (MCCL) March for Life is so important.

The 2023 March for Life will be held on Sunday, Jan. 22, the anniversary of the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision that legalized abortion. It will be held at 2 p.m. at the Capitol in St. Paul, followed by a brief program on the Capitol steps at 2:30 p.m. The March for Life commemorates the lives lost to abortion (including almost 700,000 in Minnesota) and the women and families that have been wounded. Your presence is encouraged and will send a strong message in support of the rights of unborn children and their mothers.

For more information, visit mccl.org/march.

'Advocating for Life is not political'

In November, LCMS Life Ministry hosted a District Life Ministry Coordinators Conference in St. Louis. Rev. James Kroonblawd, district Life Ministry



Coordinator, attended the conference along with life ministry coordinators from across the Synod. The objectives of the District Life Ministry Coordinator include supporting congregations in direct support of pregnancy centers and providing resources to help members learn about the issues and get involved.

"Our district churches have a unique place in the community to focus ministry on life issues," Pastor Kroonblawd says. "No individual, congregation or circuit can do everything. Pick one or two ministry areas and advocate for life."

During the conference, topics discussed included abortion, adoption, drug issues, euthanasia, homelessness, human trafficking and suicide.

At the conference, Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, LCMS President, encouraged the coordinators.

"Advocating for life is not political," he said. "This is a humanitarian issue. Bear witness to Christ. Bear witness to the sanctity of life."

"The idea abortion is a woman's issue is false. The majority of marchers are women!"

Congregations are encouraged to invite as many people as possible to attend the National March for Life on Jan. 20 in Washington, D.C., or join with other congregations and attend the March for Life in St. Paul. The marches are joyful and hopeful. Come to the party!

Farm families appreciated at Camp Omega



The new Adult and Family Retreat Center at Camp Omega (Omega Lodge) is rapidly becoming a popular venue for a variety of events. For example, the camp recently hosted the annual ACRES for Omega Harvest Banquet. Shown in the photo are some of the farm families enjoying the meal served by Faribault-based Arna Farmer Caterers in the Conference Center of the new retreat center. Each year, more than 50 farm families throughout southern Minnesota are visited and encouraged to designate the proceeds from their acreage to the camp as a gift. These families are then invited to the camp for the banquet. Howard and Kathy Bode and Al and Audrey Oehlke (from the Grand Meadow area) are the remaining two charter members of the program, which began in 1986.