



# DISTRICT NEWS

## MINNESOTA SOUTH

### 💡 TALKING POINTS WITH PASTOR



of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. **GEN 1:1-2**

Likewise, at creation the *Ruach* (breath or spirit) of God awakened Adam's inert physical body and enlivened him spiritually to share in God's divine life.

Then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. **GEN 2:7**

The Holy Spirit is both LORD (that is, God) and life-giver, according to the church's ancient confession in the Nicene Creed. And sure enough, that's the Spirit's role throughout the pages of the Bible. Jesus is anointed with the Holy Spirit at His baptism in the waters of the Jordan (Mark 1:10; Matt 3:16). His uttered words are Spirit-giving, He said, and therefore life-giving:

"The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life." **JOHN 6:63**

On Easter evening, as Jesus commissions His disciples to be His emissaries after His resurrection, He first breathes on them — recalling the spiration of Adam in Eden — and then authorizes and empowers them with the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." And when he had

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# The Church Goes First: BY WORD AND SPIRIT



**Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford**  
District President

In a cultural context like ours, seemingly intent on spiritual suicide, intentionally deconstructing and dismantling human identity and purpose, it's essential we keep our bearings. Doing so means we must stand upon the truth of God's Word and rest in the power of His Holy Spirit. They are what allow us to confidently and boldly go first, speaking truth and acting in love.

In fact, the very first chapters of Holy Scripture make it clear that the Spirit of God is the life-giver. In the primordial chaos, the Spirit of God — like a brooding hen — hovered to bring life from empty darkness.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face



# CELEBRATIONS



▲ **Rev. Michael Holmen** was installed as pastor at St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church and School, Fairmont. Pastor Holmen, who grew up near Conger, had served the previous 12 years in Iowa after graduating from Concordia Theological Seminary in 2010. Pictured are, from left, Revs. Greg Volbrecht, Herbert Mueller III, Alex Goodwin; (middle row) Matthew Rusert, Tim Chase, Michael Holmen, Anthony Bertram (who also serves at St. Paul), John Henry III, Sean Smith, David Buchs, David Schultz; (back row) Vicar Jeff Hagen and Revs. Mark Loder, David Fretham and Steve Wilson.



◀ Vicar Dan Thao signs the **Cornerstone Light of Light Lutheran Church, St. Paul**, constitution, on March 5, designating the congregation as a member of the LCMS. Also pictured are, from left, Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford, district president; Dr. Pangjua Xion, congregation secretary; and Patrick Thao, congregation president.



Rev. Christian Einertson and the members of Trinity, Farmington, bidded farewell and Godspeed to **Wesley Deiss** (left) and his family. Wesley will begin his studies at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind., this fall.

**Sean Martens** is celebrating 10 years as Assistant to the President, Education and



Commissioned Ministers, on June 1. We praise God for his ministry in our district! Congregations and schools are invited to share letters of appreciation for his service. Please send them to:

Minnesota South District  
Attn: Christina Krentz  
14301 Grand Ave.  
Burnsville, MN 55306

## GO FIRST

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld."

JOHN 20:21-23

Likewise, just before His ascension into heaven, Jesus tells the disciples:

"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witness in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." ACTS 1:8

And then on Pentecost, the Holy Spirit rushes upon the disciples, who then speak to the people in a manner that all hear the truth of God's Word in their own languages.

The implications are clear. Given the chaotic context of our fragmented and truth-less culture, the mission of the church is not so much about adjusting the message to fit the cultural context, but rather to bring the text of Scripture to bear upon the lives of people, shaping them through the living and abiding Word of God. If you desire to bring life to a dying world, if you sincerely hope to actually free sin addicts from their bondage and its devastating

side effects with all the hurt and heartache that it brings, you'll need to use the Word of God.

Though God could obviously bestow His life-giving Spirit any way He wants, God has limited Himself to His Word. He ties His Spirit to His Word. It is "**breathed out by God**" (2 Tim. 3:16), by His own Spirit. This means the Bible is not merely truthful and accurate in all it says, but it is God's inspired Word, filled with the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

Until the end of time, the mission of the Holy Christian Church on earth centers around the Word. By means of God's Word, and His Word alone, He bestows His Holy Spirit, who works faith wherever and whenever it pleases Him, in those who hear the Gospel. And where there is faith, there is hope. Where there is faith, sins are forgiven, lives are changed, communities are transformed, and new life begins!

Our lives demonstrate this in the way we treat others, serve others, and love others in the name of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the text of Holy Scripture is not just impetus for mission, but the very heart and center of the life of Christ's church. This is why the church always goes first with the power of the Word and Spirit.



LCMS/Erik M. Lunsford



# Almost time for national convention!



Photos: LCMS/Erik M. Lunsford

Delegates sing during opening worship of the LWML 39th Biennial Convention in Lexington, Ky., in 2021. The 40th convention is June 22–25 in Milwaukee.

Spring is in full swing and flowers are blooming. People are planting gardens and flower beds, cleaning up their lawns and welcoming life back into their yards.

Winter this year seemed to last forever, especially with the massive amounts of snow we received. Luckily for us, even in those dark winter months there was light.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. **JOHN 1:5**

The Easter season reminded us of the light that Christ is to the world after the darkness of Lent. Because of Jesus Christ's life, death and resurrection, we are children of the light.

For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light. **EPH. 5:8**

Remember during these bright and warm months to share the light of Christ with those around you.

As Lutheran Women in Mission, we joyfully proclaim Christ, support missions and equip women to honor God by serving others. You can support this mission through mites, fellowship and simply sharing the Gospel with those around you. Both [mnskwml.org](http://mnskwml.org) and [lwml.org](http://lwml.org) offer Bible studies, devotions, crafts, leadership and group development, and mission grant resources for you to share and shine your light. Our LWML district Facebook page ([facebook.com/mnskwml](https://facebook.com/mnskwml)) shares uplifting and informational posts.

Additionally, your zone and district offer various fellowship opportunities. Attend the LWML 40th Biennial Convention, to be held June 22–25 in Milwaukee. For registration information, visit [lwml.org/2023-convention](http://lwml.org/2023-convention). If you can't attend, all convention sessions and worship services will be streamed live.

**Submitted by Wendy Sjoblom**

VP of Communications, LWML Minnesota South District

# Life grants again available

The fourth phase of the 1 John 3 Initiative Million Dollar Life Match is underway, with applications due by June 30.



The initiative, which began in early 2022, seeks to support LCMS congregations involved in providing beginning-of-life care in their local communities. Any LCMS congregation is eligible to apply.

The three-part process, which takes place over a period of months, consists of an application, an award and a follow-up report. The initiative was originally planned to have three phases, but a fourth phase was added to allow a greater window of opportunity for congregations interested in applying.

To date, grants have been awarded to help congregations:

- ▶ Care for families experiencing challenges at the beginning of life;
- ▶ Partner with an LCMS Recognized Service Organization in support of life;
- ▶ Collaborate with local agencies on foster care and adoption; and
- ▶ Collaborate with local pregnancy resource centers and maternity homes.

Awards range from \$1,000 to \$50,000. Grant recipients are selected via a process that considers a variety of factors, including:

- ▶ Whether the grant is for a new or existing project (both are eligible, but new projects receive more weight);
- ▶ Whether the proposal is complete, clear, specific, feasible and sound;
- ▶ How closely the project is connected with the Word and Sacrament ministry of the congregation; and
- ▶ How well the project provides spiritual, emotional or physical care for families vulnerable to abortion or facing challenges.

Grants will be awarded in September, and reports are due by March 1, 2024.

For more information, or to begin the application process, visit the Million Dollar Life Match webpage at [lcms.org/life-grant](http://lcms.org/life-grant). Address questions to Kris Freeman, manager of LCMS Life Ministry, at [lifeministry@lcms.org](mailto:lifeministry@lcms.org) or 314-996-1217.

# LCMS presidential candidates announced



1 Cor. 1:18-25

July 29-Aug. 3 • Milwaukee

The 2023 candidates for the positions of President, First Vice-President, and regional vice-presidents of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) have been officially announced! Those named on the ballots are the Synod clergymen who received the most nominations from Synod member congregations and who have agreed to serve, if elected.

The following five candidates received the highest number of nominating votes (in parenthesis) for the office of president and consented to serve if elected:



**Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison**  
(1,193)

**Rev. Dr. Patrick T. Ferry**  
(511)

**Rev. Richard L. Snow**  
(228)

**Rev. Peter K. Lange**  
(119)

**Rev. Benjamin T. Ball**  
(113)

Of those receiving the highest number of nominating votes for the offices of regional vice-president (which is the second through sixth vice-presidents, as will be ranked by the convention), the following have consented to serve if elected in the Great

Plains Region, which includes the Minnesota South District:

- ▶ Rev. Nabil S. Nour (245)
- ▶ Rev. David C. Mumme (58)
- ▶ Rev. Dr. Robert R. Lessing (15)
- ▶ Rev. Byrene Keith Haney (11)
- ▶ Rev. Dr. Russell L. Sommerfeld (11)



The Minnesota South district office will be closed on Monday, May 29, in observance of Memorial Day.

# Teaching heart and mind

The Minnesota Early Childhood Educator's Conference was held March 3–4 at Concordia University, St. Paul. Over 200 attended the conference, which supports early childhood educators by instructing them on best practices and strategies to implement in the classroom with regard to child development and learning.

Attendees included teachers from the Minnesota South District along with teachers in other Christian programs across the state.

Early childhood is considered from birth through age 8. While this extends into the lower elementary grades, most of our educators are serving in either child care programs or preschools. This profession has a significant amount of professional training requirements and responsibilities. We work to recognize how the world around us is ever changing and strive to meet the needs of our educators.

The conference featured a keynote speaker each day. On Friday, Raelene Ostberg, founder of Thriving Together LLC, shared about finding joy in the work we are doing with children. Saturday's keynote was given by education leader Tosca Grimm, who shared strategies for connecting and maintaining relationships with families. Participants also chose two additional sessions to attend each day. The conference offered a wide variety of sessions to appeal to various age groups and meet required training needs for early childhood professionals.

Our early childhood programs act in line with the Great Commission, that all would know and share the love of Jesus Christ. God daily uses the teachers in our early childhood programs to affect the lives of others for eternity. The teachers may be the only reflection of Jesus some ever see.

Teachers in early childhood programs create an environment that is inviting and make parents feel comfortable. Teachers build relationships with the students and their families with God's love at the center. Through those relationships, teachers can help parents make spiritual nurturing a priority in their families.

We are excited to continue to host the conference and reach more and more early childhood professionals. The 2024 conference will be held March 1–2. For more information, email [mnecec@gmail.com](mailto:mnecec@gmail.com)

**Submitted by Sara Mulso**  
Director, Woodbury Lutheran Preschool





# 'MANNING UP' AT CAMP OMEGA

The 2023 Man Up! Mens' Retreat was held March 3-4 at Camp Omega with 40 men from around the Minnesota South District in attendance. More than simply providing a short break from the regular routines and burdens of daily life, the goal of the retreat was to have the mens' faith strengthened and spirits renewed by God's Word.

The retreat featured Bible studies and prayer services led by four district pastors: Rev. Daniel Borkenhagen (Good Shepherd, Owatonna); Rev. Kurt Klaus (Messiah, Lakeville); Rev. Elliott Malm (Grace, Dodge Center); and Rev. Brian McQuiggin (River of LIFE, Saint Peter). The Bible studies focused on the psalms of David, acknowledging both his flawed nature as well as his kingly faith in the almighty God, who gives salvation to His people. The theme verse was Ps. 16:8, "I have set the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken."

In addition to the time spent together in study and prayer, the men enjoyed hearty meals prepared by the camp staff, leisurely conversation around the

fireplace of the beautiful new Omega Lodge, and a couple hours for snowshoeing, walking and target shooting on the grounds of the camp on Saturday morning. Our camp hosts, Bob LaCroix and Russ Schwichtenberg, contributed to the planning and helped the pastors during the event, making it an all-around great experience for everyone.

During the retreat and at its conclusion, many men expressed their appreciation for this event. Though many did not know each other prior to the retreat, the opportunity for conversation and fellowship with other believers in Christ was a true blessing. For, as Martin Luther and his fellow reformers recognized: the "mutual conversation and consolation of the brethren" is one of the ways the Gospel comes to us.

The intention is to organize another one of these mens' retreats for March 2024. For the men who were unable to attend this year, we look forward to having you join us next time!

**Submitted by Rev. Elliott Malm**  
Grace Lutheran Church, Dodge Center

## Congregation mission receipts

**For the period ending March 31, 2023 (unaudited)**

Actual receipts.....	\$189,831
Budget receipts .....	<u>\$170,832</u>
Over (under) amount .....	\$18,999

**Year-to-date receipts**

Actual receipts.....	\$477,519
Budget receipts .....	<u>\$512,496</u>
Over (under) anticipated amount.....	(\$34,977)

**Use of mission receipts (year to date)**

50% designated to district and Synod .....	\$364,869
100% designated to district operations ...	\$104,393
100% designated for Synod operations .....	<u>\$8,257</u>
Total receipts .....	\$477,519

**Mission receipts—2023 vs. 2022**

Mission receipts — YTD 2023 .....	\$477,519
Mission receipts — YTD 2022 .....	<u>\$549,512</u>
Over (under) last year .....	(\$71,993)

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

## MINNESOTA SOUTH DISTRICT LCEF

**February 2023**

New investments .....	\$1,990,286
Withdrawals.....	<u>\$1,350,103</u>
Net increase (decrease).....	\$640,183

**Year-to-date July 1, 2022–Feb. 28, 2023**

New investments .....	\$15,887,725
Withdrawals.....	<u>\$13,364,080</u>
Net increase (decrease).....	\$2,523,645



### DISTRICT OFFICE

- ▶ 14301 Grand Ave. S.  
Burnsville, MN 55306
- ▶ 952-435-2550
- ▶ [mnsdistrict.org](http://mnsdistrict.org)

# Register for summer camp

When the Camp Omega ministry began almost 60 years ago, the intent was to provide a site where the youth of Minnesota South District congregations could gather in the summer to experience the beauty of God's creation, and grow spiritually, emotionally, physically and socially. This beautiful and important mission remains the same today as congregations continue to look to Camp Omega for assistance in nurturing the lives of their youth.

What has changed is the scope of opportunities through which that growth is achieved. At one time, congregation leaders brought their youth *and* their programs to Camp Omega. Now, qualified college-age men and women are selected each year to serve as camp counselors and facilitate most of the programming at camp. These dedicated young-adult Christians devote their summers to leading campers in a wide variety of exciting and purposeful programs and activities.

Many congregations throughout the district also take advantage of the Camp Omega Traveling Day Camp Program, which uses the energy and dedication of the camp's trained counselors to enhance VBS programs at their churches.

During the summer, Camp Omega offers both week-long and weekend camp opportunities for preschool through high-school ages. A full list of events is available at [campomega.org](http://campomega.org), and in brochures



available at your congregation. Camp Omega also offers family camps and parent-child/grandparent-grandchild camps which create special moments for strengthening family bonds. One of the unique family oriented opportunities occurs during the Memorial Day weekend (May 26-28), when families are invited to spend the weekend at camp for no cost and volunteer alongside other families to help prepare the camp for its summer ministry.

In addition to the many summer camps, Camp Omega is now able to host family gatherings and events in the new Omega Lodge. There are openings for week-long and weekend stays, which give the participants access to the many activities the summer campers enjoy. If you are planning a family reunion, wedding or anniversary reception, or any group-oriented event, please call the camp for information and registration procedures at 507-685-4266. The Camp Omega team looks forward to serving you!

**Submitted by Bob LaCroix**  
Camp Director

## Meet the newest staff

**Andrew Crist** is director of Retreat and Summer Ministries. He loves people, spending time outdoors, and the Lord! He has had a variety of experiences in outdoor ministry, volunteering and working with some wonderful people, including two summers at Camp Omega during his college years.



Coming back to serve at camp is a dream come true! Andrew has lived with his cat, Fitzwilliam, in the suburbs of Chicago for nearly five years while serving as a director of Christian education. He's excited to be joining the Camp Omega team in mid-March! God is good — all the time!

**Lisa Ingebrand** is director of Guest Services. She is the proud mom of two Camp Omega campers and now is excited to join the camp team. For the past 20 years, she has worked as a journalist and an editor of a small-town newspaper. It was a grand adventure, one she will always treasure.



Lisa currently resides with her husband, two daughters, three cats and four houseplants. She enjoys reading, writing, volunteering at church and spending time with her family and friends. Lisa is looking forward to getting to know everyone at Camp Omega, as well as the camp's benefactors, friends and guests.



Concordia Plans has a new way to assist lay leaders who share similar ministry roles to connect with each other across the Synod. Shareboard provides an online platform to engage in conversations, access resources and discuss a variety of topics, such as:

- Human resources issues
  - Supporting ministry workers
  - Ministry finances
  - Board mentorship and training
  - Fundraising and development
- Learn more at [cpshareboard.org](http://cpshareboard.org).