



## GO FIRST! MINISTRY CONFERENCE

APRIL 19–20, 2024

# SESSIONS

### **10 PRACTICAL TIPS FOR MARKETING YOUR SCHOOL** - Kendra Gilmore

In this session, participants will be given practical advice on ways to promote their school, increase the school's visibility in the community, and how to smoothly move families through the recruitment and enrollment process.

### **5 KEYS TO VIBRANT VOLUNTEERS!** - Michael Harvey

Christ is the foundation of the church. Volunteers are the load-bearing walls! From the volunteer who has dependably served for decades to the volunteer who has just come to your church and wants to find a purpose, we want to equip and empower volunteers as God works through their service. Whether you have worked with volunteers for years or are just starting, The Karpenko Institute for Nurturing and Developing Leadership Excellence (KINDLE) has 5 simple and powerful keys that will bring your volunteers to the next level.

### **A MODEL FOR OLDER ADULT MINISTRY** - Mark Schoepp

This session will outline a plan for a robust older adult ministry in a local congregation. Designed to minister to and with the older adults in the congregation and also in the community.

### **BE A GOSPEL-MOTIVATED VOICE FOR LIFE** - Virginia Flo

God loves life and shares that love throughout scripture. He created us, redeemed us and calls us into an eternal relationship with Him through baptism. This session will share how to develop on-going life-affirming ministry in our churches by establishing a Life Team, becoming a Life Advocate or creating a Life Chapter of several churches working together to assist the churches' pastors in educating our fellow Lutherans in supporting the sanctity of human life and using their voices to share God's plan For Life. Learn about how to start a Life Team and use the LFL training materials available to become a productive member of your churches' ministry team, serving your congregation and community with life-affirming messages and programs.

### **CARING FOR THE HEALTH OF OUR CONGREGATION** - Joan Ewald/Karen Gensmer/Sharon Haberkamp

When was the last time you had your blood pressure taken at church or were offered a healthy snack with your Sunday morning coffee, or received a warm visit from a fellow member bringing you a meal and warm prayer shawl to wrap yourself in as you recover from a recent surgery? These are just a few of the many activities that Our Savior's Lutheran Church Caregiving/Health Ministry group conducts as they work to improve the overall health of their members.

### **CELEBRATING RECOVERY: IS IT RIGHT FOR YOUR CHURCH** - Rev. Dale Hedstrom

Celebrate Recovery is an explicitly Christian Twelve Step program that benefits anyone struggling with any kind of addiction or issue... with life's hurts, habits and hang-ups. We believe that Celebrate Recovery is an excellent tool to help people inside and outside of the church to receive freedom through the love and power of Jesus Christ. Learn the philosophy behind the ministry, and the resources needed to launch a Celebrate Recovery group in your church or community. Various CR materials (including leader's guides) will be available to view.

### **CHURCH PARTNERSHIPS FOR KINGDOM GROWTH** - Rev. Ryan Alvey

Pastors from Hosanna, St. Michael's and Woodbury will lead this session on how to prayerfully and strategically build partnerships among congregations that lead to invigorated or more unified ministry. Each of these groups have different approaches or are at different stages. The focus of the presentation is not to present a cookie cutter approach, but to guide thinking around questions to ask and how to build trust among groups.

### **CONNECTING YOUR CHURCH TO YOUR COMMUNITY** - Rev. Monte Meyer

If we want to have the opportunity to reach people with the Gospel, it's important that we connect with our community. But how do we make those connections? In this session, you will come away with ideas to connect your church to the community in every month of the year.

### **CREATING & EDITING VIDEOS FOR YOUR CHURCH & SCHOOL** - Cory Nelson

(Visual Ministry Mastery: A Professional Development Session for Church and School Leaders on Creating and Editing Videos)

The professional development session for church and school leaders about video creation and editing is an opportunity to learn about the power of video as a communication tool. During the session, attendees will learn how to create and edit high-quality videos for their organizations using affordable and accessible tools.

The session will cover the basics of video creation, including how to storyboard, shoot, and edit videos, as well as how to add music, sound effects, and other elements to enhance the final product. Attendees will also learn about different video formats, such as social media videos, promotional videos, and event coverage videos, and how to tailor their content to each format.

### **CREATIVITY IN CATECHESIS** - Jessica Blocker

No matter the size of your congregation or where you are located, it seems like we're all constantly trying to reinvent the process leading up to the Rite of Confirmation. I'll present St. John-Luverne's current structure (3 1/2 year program including a Bible Survey year, two years in the Small Catechism, and two months of an apologetics intensive) along with the resources used and how they can be adapted to different settings. I'll also share and emphasize how what works at one congregation might not work at another, and that's okay! Let's get creative and serve our youth to help equip them with a Christian life toolbox they can use far beyond Confirmation Day.

### **DISABILITIES IN THE GENERAL EDUCATION CLASSROOM** - Tracie Salgado

More and more children are being diagnosed with some sort of learning difference, whether it be a math, reading, or writing disability, giftedness, a behavior concern, or something else. It can be overwhelming for schools and classrooms to manage all the different needs of children. In this session, we will walk through the various learning differences and disabilities and learn how to work through them and with them to the benefit of the student, teacher, classroom, and school. Participants will leave with a greater understanding of how to address learning concerns in the school environment.

### **EMBRACING LIFE'S CHAPTERS: LIVING WELL, DYING WELL** - Terri Albrecht

Living WELL, and Dying WELL go hand in hand.

By taking time to process and prepare for life's final chapter we can live more abundantly and honor God in both life and death. Whether seeking personal guidance or ways to support others, this workshop offers a compassionate approach to navigating life's end. We'll examine how we can navigate this important life transition as we consider questions and engage in meaningful conversation about emotional aspects, faith perspectives and practical preparations. Throughout the workshop we will also explore ways the church can support and help prepare people for the last chapter of life.

### **EMBRACING TOMORROW: AI (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE) INTEGRATION IN MINISTRY & EDUCATION FOR LUTHERAN LEADERS** - Dr. Laurie Friedrich

Join us for a forward-thinking sectional as we address the growing importance and possibilities of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the context of ministry and education. In this age of technological advancement, it is helpful for Lutheran leaders to explore the best practices of incorporating AI tools into their ministries. The session will provide hands-on experience, allowing participants to engage directly with AI tools and understand how they can serve as valuable assets in ministry, saving time for more people-centered duties of ministry. We will focus on practical aspects such as how to utilize AI as a tool for brainstorming, writing, teaching, and administrating; evaluate the results; and harness its capabilities as a time-saving mechanism for educators and those in ministry. By showcasing specific AI tools with potential applications in ministry, we will offer insights into ways they can be effectively employed. Seeing the practical uses will help demystify AI as you learn more about this transformative technology and where it might be effective for you. Embrace the future with confidence and learn how to leverage the transformative potential of AI for the betterment of your ministry.

### **EXPANDING MINISTRY THROUGH REAL ESTATE** - Thomas Campbell/Rev. Tom Eggebrecht

With worshiping attendance significantly down over the past ten years and many congregation struggling with declining membership, how can we be good stewards of underutilized real estate? This session will discuss concepts on how to leverage excess real estate to meet human need and enhance communities while pouring ministry into the lives of people that normally would not attend church. We will discuss financially sustainable case studies and explore future possibilities together.

### **GENERATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS IN CHURCHES & SCHOOLS: DEVELOPING A PRAYER PARTNER AND PEN PAL PROGRAM** - Rev. Josh Bernau

The church at it's best is a multigenerational family. In a society that is increasingly segmented and siloed and the ages are separated, St. John's has taken intentional steps to bring together the generations. This session will explore the power of intergenerational components in both churches and schools, and share practical steps you can take to implement both a "Confirmation Prayer Partner" program and a "Student Pen Pal" program.

### **GOING WHERE JESUS WENT** - Rev. Gregory DeMuth

One of the calling cards for the Great Commission is from Matthew 25:40: "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." When we look at Jesus' ministry, we see him constantly among widows, orphans, the poor and hungry, outcasts and prisoners. These are dear ones of Jesus whom he specifically names.

In this workshop you will learn a simple, reproducible approach to mercy ministry. We will look at collaborating with existing ministries and community organizations and outline steps toward starting a ministry of mercy. Most recently, Pastor Greg has used this approach to work with men transitioning out of prison.

### **HOW THE CHURCH MINISTRY CAN SUPPORT CANCER FAMILIES** - Deb Vinkemeier

There will be times when cancer patients need to hear that the pressure of uncertainty is not a sign that God is not with them. In truth, the uncertainty is an invitation to focus on God's certainty. The church can help equip the cancer patient to cope with their journey by turning their focus to Christ-filled things.

### **HOW TO KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOR'S CULTURE (MUSLIMS & IMMIGRANTS)** - Rev. Issa Safadi

There are 160 mosques in the Twin Cities, and about 216 thousand Muslims in our neighborhood, street, city and grocery stores. We'll meet at least one of them. How do I take the initiative to start a conversation and how do I build the bridge between me and that person? I don't know this neighbor's thought processes, interests, or culture. We will start to discuss all of this in this session.

### **HOW TO MAKE BOARD MEETINGS LESS STRESSFUL** - Kevin Mathew/Keith Kamrath

Our Savior's Lutheran Church has an early learning childcare center with about 90 children. The church council and the early learning childcare center committee have learned much about processing all the business decisions of a growing early learning childcare center. This session will include techniques for making your council/board/committee meetings more productive and efficient.

### **HOW TO RAISE A MILLION DOLLARS** - Joel Landskroener

How can we raise more money to fund our ministry? Is there anything we can do to increase giving among our stakeholders? How can proven fundraising principles be used to fund our mission? These questions and many more will be addressed in this session. While the basics of fundraising will be explored in a lively and fun environment, be prepared to ask lots of questions. Funding your mission for sustainability is a key element we all need to know about and this session will help to address that vital need.

### **IS THE MISSION FIELD IN YOUR SCHOOL OR CENTER?** - Sean Martens

Have you been wondering lately if those signs at the end of the parking lot that say, "You are Entering the Mission Field," should be placed on the doorway between the church and the school? Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the Minnesota South District schools and early childhood centers have experienced significant changes in the faith profiles of their student populations. According to current MNS stats, 20% of our early childhood center students are from LCMS member families, while 21% are from unchurched families. Elementary school stats are similar, with 36% member student families and 11% unchurched student families. This session will help congregation leaders and laypeople rethink how they engage with the families of their school/center in this changed reality and create a plan to intentionally engage the families of the school or center.

### **IT TAKES A VILLAGE: A NEW APPROACH TO YOUTH MINISTRY** - Rev. Nickolas Kooi

Being the pastor of a small to midsized congregation has many blessings, but can also bring along with it a unique set of challenges. One of those challenges can be youth ministry. How is one able to do youth ministry with only a few youth, or even just one? How can one even meet weekly, or even bi-monthly, with such numbers?

This presentation tackles that problem with a unique answer: partnering together with sister LCMS congregations (collaborative youth ministry) to provide youth with such opportunities.

Over the past five summers, the speaker has done a weekly youth event with other local LCMS congregations to have a small worship, service project, and "fun" event. This presentation will show the participant how to implement this way of doing youth ministry with sister congregations that can be adapted for any setting (rural, suburb, or inner-city).

### **LCMS DISASTER RELIEF MINISTRY** - Rev. Kristian Bjornstad

For many years the LCMS has been facilitating the work of volunteers from across the nation to serve and show mercy to those who suffer the affects of natural and man-made disasters. Minnesota is not a state especially prone to disasters, however, there are always wonderful opportunities to share God's mercy in other areas of the nation. If you are looking for an amazing ministry your church (or even individuals on their own) can participate in, make sure you attend "LCMS Disaster Relief: A Primer On Mission Opportunities for Your Congregation." In this session you will learn about what is involved, its difficulties and its joys, as well as any specific steps that need to be taken to participate in disaster relief work.

### **LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FOR MORE ENGAGEMENT** - Rev. David Hormann

Come and hear what St. John is intentionally doing to prepare the next generation of congregational leaders. This isn't a one day seminar, but developing a culture that equips the saints to do what God has planned for them to do.

### **MINISTRY OF THE WORD THROUGH LIKES, COMMENTS, AND SHARES** - Rev. Karl Grant/LeAnn Miller

Divine Service on Sundays and memes, reels, and podcasts during the week! How a small, traditional, country church led by millennials has leveraged social media to strengthen congregational life, reach those outside our walls, and even provide soul care! We'll share our journey and the tools and strategies we've developed along the way. Our model may not be right for every church; it does however, show that even a small church without dedicated social media staff or budget can be relevant in today's social media landscape.

### **MINISTRY PARTNERSHIP - THE FUTURE OF THE LCMS** - Rev. James King

Partnership and cooperation are a beautiful thing. From time to time, churches, ministry organizations, and individual Christians find it useful to partner with other churches, organizations, and Christians for some shared purpose or to meet a specific need.

A biblical example of a ministry partnership can be found in Paul's partnership with the church at Philippi, a church he planted earlier in his ministry. When he writes his letter to the church approximately ten years later, he speaks in Phil. 1:5 of the Philippians' "partnership in the gospel" – a partnership that we learn later involved the sharing of personnel (Phil. 2:19-30) and financial resources (Phil. 4:10-20). It was also a partnership that had existed since the church was initially founded (Phil. 1:5; 4:15).

Come and find out what's happening at St. John's Lutheran Church of Gaylord, MN (Mountville), and Immanuel Lutheran Church of Gaylord, MN as they PARTNER together to further God's Kingdom.

### **MN SOUTH GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE CHANGE PROPOSALS** - MN South Board of Directors

Over the past year and a half the Board of Directors for the Minnesota South District have been learning about the advantages of a hybrid policy governance structure. This is the model and structure the Synod Board of Directors uses to conduct its work. Making a change to this governance model clarifies the fiduciary responsibility of the Board and the Ecclesiastical Supervision of the District President and aligns it with the Synod's governance practices. A change would primarily impact how the Board goes about its fiduciary business, however doing so would require changes in the MNS District's Bylaws. This breakout is the first of multiple opportunities to learn about these proposed changes in advance of the June 2025 convention and the impact these changes will have on how we work together.

### **MISSION IGNITION!** - Liane Henkell

Join Garuna Ministries as we visit about international mission opportunities that make a huge impact on the kingdom of God! Our focus is on missional work in Southeast Asia where we focus on Bible training, church planting, and school ministry as an effective way to share the Gospel with those who have never heard or understood God's message of salvation. As the current Hearts for Jesus project for the Minnesota South, Garuna hopes to further this partnership with individual church and schools across the district. We'd love to hear from you and share about ways in which we might connect!

### **MY OWN HOME. CRITICAL DECISIONS LATE IN LIFE** - Mark Schoepp

This session will introduce a 7-part video series designed for aging parents and their adult children. It is designed to help navigate the later years of life, focused on where the aging parents will live, on the three main plan destroyers, and how to minimize the impact those have on their own plans.

### **NO ONE GRIEVES ALONE: LAUNCHING A GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP IN YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY**

- Rev. Josh Bernau

Grieving is a universal experience, yet so often we can feel isolated in our grief. Throughout this session, you'll hear people share their personal stories of grief and how, through that experience, they were able to form a community Grief Support Group that now regularly gathers over 20 people each week. It focuses around opportunities to find hope and healing while experiencing the love of others who have and are traveling the path of grief.

### **OUTREACH THROUGH CAREPORTAL** - Tim Heroff

Did you know that every year, 15,000 children in Minnesota are removed from their homes because of concerns for their well-being? It's not abuse that is fueling this crisis, but rather neglect, stemming from poverty. It doesn't need to be that way; the Church has been called to serve the least of these! We can prevent children from being placed into foster care. We need to support women who choose life over abortion. We should support foster and adopted children and families, and those young adults who are transitioning from foster care to a life on their own, having never been adopted.

CarePortal will present an opportunity to connect your church to children and families in distress living in your neighborhood. The CarePortal platform makes caring practical, by providing your response team with an easy on-ramp to serving as the hands and feet of Jesus. You can help stabilize families by simply shining the love of God and providing hope to those who are without hope.

### **PARTNERING WITH OUR ETHNIC FAMILY** - Rev. Martin Cornes

How can we work with another (ethnic) congregation who needs a worship space so that it is more than just a rental agreement, but becomes a multi-congregation - sharing fellowship time, education opportunities and even worshipping together?

Working through a real-life situation, what are some of the challenges Gloria Dei in northeast Minneapolis had to overcome? How did we start, and then keep momentum going in the process as we looked to be Good Neighbors to our brothers and sisters in Christ? What might we have done differently? What did we learn which can help another congregation as they move forward in this process?

### **PARTNERS FOR THE KINGDOM** - Rev. Adam Finney

There's a fear and despair that overwhelms small or declining congregations from reaching out and asking for help from their bigger "brothers and sisters in Christ" up the road. But what if we looked past our fears and asked how we can grow God's Kingdom together? And then what if...*it actually happened*, we all grew together! Find out how congregations became partners in the Gospel and recaptured what a joy it is to worship and serve a Savior together. (Warning this is not about forming dual or tri-parishes, or even about forming satellite worship sites, but about finding joy in Jesus as He grows His Kingdom through us, together).



### **PASTOR, WE'RE NOT DOING SUNDAY SCHOOL** - Rev. David Hormann

We do a Wednesday evening kids ministry that went from 4 on Sunday morning to over a hundred in a couple of years. We'll share our story in the hope that your ministry finds some good stuff.

### **PUT YOUR OXYGEN MASK ON FIRST** - Terri Albrecht

You have probably heard the famous phrase from airline attendants as they are going through safety procedures before take off, "Put your oxygen mask on first before helping others." What if we took those words to heart in light of our ministry and self care? We'll discover what rhythms of rest and refreshment can mean for our well-being and explore answers to:

Why do we need self care?

What is holy self care?

How can we practice self care?

You'll go home equipped with tools and ideas to help you thrive in your personal and work life. We will also consider ways you could begin a self care ministry in your congregation.

### **REACHING RECENT IMMIGRANTS WITH THE GOSPEL** - Rev. Nathaniel Schwartz

Pastor Schwartz and his EIT Vicar, Desalegn Gamme, will describe their ministry to, with, and among East African immigrants since January of 2022. They will discuss the joys and challenges of working with immigrants and describe effective strategies and approaches God has blessed them with as they have faithfully shared the love of Christ. They will outline how the Lutheran Heritage Foundation has helped them to develop effective Word and Sacrament ministry among recent immigrants. They also will describe the steps they took to develop a cross-cultural Vacation Bible School in Rochester that reached 120 American kids and immigrants from Ethiopia and South Sudan.

### **SAINTS ALIVE, GROWING, EVER SERVING (S.A.G.E.S.)** - Stan Tordsen

*They still bear fruit in old age; they are ever full of sap and green. Psalm 94:14*

SAGES is organized to enhance the Older Adult Ministry of the Minnesota South District by providing experiences in Christian fellowship, service, and life enrichment. In this session, participants will be actively involved as they: 1) Learn more about S.A.G.E.S. 2) Share information about Older Adult Ministry in their congregations and 3) Receive practical/useful information to start or enhance their ministry.

### **ST. PAUL OUTREACH CENTER** - David Mennicke/Rev. Joshua Miller

Inspired by an innovative proposal in Concordia Journal that the LCMS Circuit holds potential for a cooperative urban/suburban outreach and ministry hub, local pastoral and lay leaders in the St. Paul Circuit of LCMS congregations are pioneering a new approach to outreach. The St. Paul Outreach Center's goal is to welcome and invite the needy neighbors, new immigrants, and international students of the diverse Midway area to its faith community partners. This welcome/introduction is achieved through activities to help these needs. The SPOC began with three prongs of ministry: 1. friendship groups connecting SPOC members with new immigrants and international students; 2. After school activities (sports, crafts, music, homework help) and free meals for youth and families; 3. Being a resource center for families by sharing/distributing clothing, diapers, baby formula, food, and referrals to family and pregnancy resource centers.

### **SET APART TO SERVE - LCMS CHURCH WORK RECRUITMENT INITIATIVE** - Rev. James Baneck

Come and hear about the collaborative Synod-wide church work recruitment initiative, Set Apart to Serve. Come and hear how you play a critical role in church work formation and recruitment in your congregation and/or Lutheran school. Come and hear about the many Set Apart to Serve congregation and school resources for recruiting youth and adults for full-time church work.

### **SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING IN THE CHRISTIAN CLASSROOM** - Dr. Tracie Salgado

As children grow and learn, one of the areas teachers have been tasked with developing in children is their sense of understanding self and others. It can be a daunting task. In Matthew 22:37-39, Jesus declares, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it. Love your neighbor as yourself." Beginning and maintaining a social emotional learning (SEL) program in your school can be tenuous as many available programs are focused on secular learning, not a Christian environment. There are options, however. In this session, we will explore several options, including Zones of Regulation. At the end of the session, participants will be able to discern what might work in their school environment and leave with some possible implementation ideas.

### **THE BE-ATTITUDES OF EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND MINISTRY** - Sara Mulso

Working with young children and their families is a rewarding opportunity! We have the privilege of providing high quality care and education as well as walking alongside these families as they raise up their children to know Jesus. But like any ministry, there are pitfalls and challenges along the way. In our time together you will be reminded of best practices, refreshed with new ideas and affirmed in the ways that your program uses important "be" attitudes of early childhood ministry.

### **THE CROSS-CULTURAL PARTNERSHIP SURVIVAL GUIDE** - John Yoder

In this practical workshop we will discuss:

- Two barriers preventing most churches from forming cross-cultural partnerships
- Three reasons we must break through those barriers
- Six benefits of cross-cultural partnerships
- The line in the sand between success and failure in cross-cultural partnerships
- Three people indispensable to the long-term health of a cross-cultural partnership
- A simple process to launch a healthy cross-cultural partnership

### **TRUNK OR TREAT & CAR SHOWS!** - Rev. Tom Evans

At Emanuel, Inver Grove Heights, the community has two major opportunities to meet on our church campus each year. The first is our Annual Car Show and Chili Feed and the second is our Annual Trunk or Treat. These events have grown significantly over the years to over a 1000 people coming through the campus for Trunk or Treat. This session will describe how this outreach began and how it continues to grow.

### **USING STEWARDSHIP TO GROW MATURE DISCIPLES** - Eric Kennaugh

Stewardship and giving are challenges for most congregations. In this session I will present the difference between "stewardship" and generosity," how they work powerfully together, and offer a strategy for helping churches move their members forward toward stewards of God's gifts to greater giving and maturity.

### **WALKING THE JESUS WALK** - James Seemann

The Jesus Walk is based on what the Bible tells us: that Jesus traveled from town to town, seeking out the poor and the sick, the least, the last, and the lost. We can do the very same today, helping the needy: the homeless, those who have been recently released from prison, and those in various treatment programs right here in Minnesota. The New Freedom Store, sponsored by the District, provides a structured conduit for every Christian who wished to walk the same "Jesus Walk" today.



## **WHAT'S A COMMISSIONED CHURCH WORKER ANYWAY?** - Shelly Schwalm

Is your congregation considering calling a Commissioned Minister (DCE, DCO, DPM, Deaconess)? Maybe you need to know more about those roles before knowing if it would be a good fit for your congregation. Could you see yourself or someone you know in a church work role and want to hear more about what it entails? There are many types of Commissioned Ministers in the LCMS who are trained and called to serve congregations and ministries with various specializations. DCEs, DCOs, DPMs, Deaconesses, and more are trained to strengthen the ministry of a congregation in areas of education, outreach, music, and beyond! Come learn about these areas of ministry and the blessing they can be for God's Kingdom!