

Engaged in Mission

magazine



SUMMER 2020



Stories about God’s people intentionally engaged in loving the Lord, people, and our Lutheran theology to make disciples of all nations in the Minnesota South District and beyond.

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COVER IMAGE

Tyler and Allison Collins, students at Rochester Central Lutheran School, shared the school’s theme, “Be Bold,” based on Joshua 1:9, in their neighborhood during Minnesota’s stay at home order.

Photo courtesy Sharon Frederickson

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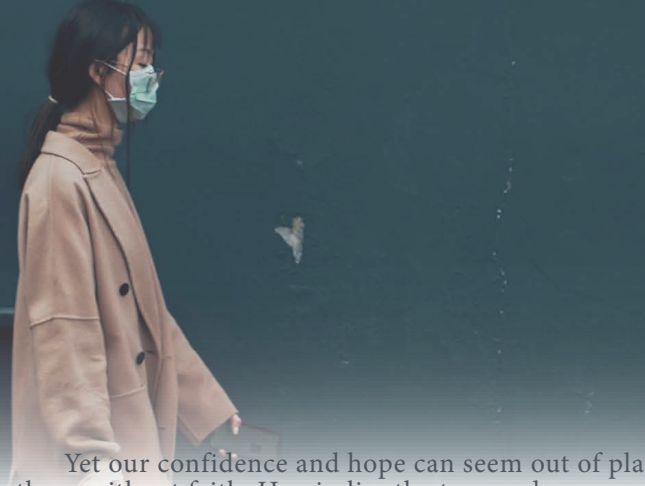
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WE THE CHURCH

Reminders of mortality, wisdom, & hope

by Lucas Woodford



Throughout human history, pestilence, disease, plague, and pandemic have regularly occurred. The Holy Christian Church has long been a witness to human suffering and misfortune. The Church has had many chances to embody the message of love and mercy given to us through the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ.

In just the last 100 years, we have seen the Spanish Flu (1918–1919), the Asian Flu (1957–1958), the Hong Kong Flu (1968–1970), HIV/AIDS (1981–present), the Swine Flu (2009–2010), and now COVID-19. Each affliction has brought its own challenges, fears, and heartaches. Our current global pandemic and the accompanying suffering, anxiety, and dread, as well as social distancing and government restrictions, are ample testimony to this.

We the Church number our days

So what do we, the Holy Christian Church, have to say to a people in the midst of affliction? Such potent diseases thrust our own mortality directly into our faces. Whether we like it or not, they are stark reminders of what Psalm 90:12 calls us to do: “So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.”

Numbering the days of being under government restrictions to “stay at home” was a burden many of you endured with plenty of ups and downs. Sharing space and time with your family was a blessing and a curse: you loved being with them but got on each other’s nerves more quickly. Or if you have been alone, numbering your days of lonely isolation has taxed you emotionally and mentally. Yet the next verses of Psalm 90 teach us what to pray in such circumstances: “Return, O Lord! How long? Have pity on your servants! Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days” (Psalm 90:13-14).

The work of staying at home for the good of our neighbors and allowing our health care field to prepare to better fulfill their vocations was a noble and important endeavor. Our vocation as Christian neighbors has its joys and inevitable burdens, yet the Lord faithfully carries us through it all.

We the Church have an unexpected hope

This pandemic has thrust upon us a deeper spiritual opportunity. It is the universal understanding that death is the great leveler, that numbering our days means sooner or later death will come to us. But thanks be to God that we have the hope of the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting through Jesus Christ to bolster our timid hearts and sustain our faith, frail as we may feel. Our faith is what helps the body of believers encourage and build one another up during these difficult days.

Yet our confidence and hope can seem out of place to those without faith. Herein lies the tremendous opportunity for us, the Holy Christian Church, to let the light of Christ shine all the more. In the face of fear and death, we have the joy of sharing this eternal confidence with those who do not believe in Jesus Christ and who are being compelled to assess their own mortality.

The Apostle Peter has some profoundly fitting words for us right now: “but 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).

When people are frightened and scared, they long for a word of hope—spoken not in arrogance or conceit, but given as a gentle declaration and invitation to believe the Good News to which we so passionately cling and hold.

We the Church have risen to the challenge

Numbering the days you had to “stay at home” was not always easy. But this put you in more regular proximity to your family and neighbors, creating new opportunities to share the hope of Christ. This has been a time of refining for the Church: putting faith into action by encouraging one another in hope and giving witness to a world that is watching and in desperate need of that hope.

As in the past, when pestilence and pandemic ravaged countless thousands, we the Church have always been here, preaching and proclaiming a message of love and hope through Jesus Christ. We continue doing so today.

The articles and stories in this issue are examples of how the congregations and ministries of the MN South District have continued to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom and so share the hope we have with others in both word and deed.

You the Church have been hard at work throughout this pandemic, growing in wisdom, hope, and joy. In this issue, we celebrate you the Church in action. I’d like to leave you with these words from Paul to the Thessalonians, which seem especially fitting today:

“We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.”

(1 Thessalonians 1:2-3)



Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford is president of the MN South District. View his latest blog posts and what he’s reading at mnsdistrict.org/presidents-office. Email him at lucas.woodford@mnsdistrict.org.



THE CHURCH HAS LEFT THE BUILDING

by William Utech

“SO THEN YOU ARE NO LONGER STRANGERS AND ALIENS, BUT YOU ARE FELLOW CITIZENS WITH THE SAINTS AND MEMBERS OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD, BUILT ON THE FOUNDATION OF THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS, CHRIST JESUS HIMSELF BEING THE CORNERSTONE, IN WHOM THE WHOLE STRUCTURE, BEING JOINED TOGETHER, GROWS INTO A HOLY TEMPLE IN THE LORD. IN HIM YOU ALSO ARE BEING BUILT TOGETHER INTO A DWELLING PLACE FOR GOD BY THE SPIRIT.”

(EPHESIANS 2:19-22)

When the COVID-19 pandemic and panic burst onto the scene in our state, all of us found our daily lives and our weekly routines knocked all topsy-turvy wherein just about all of our “standard operating procedures” could no longer be standard and were no longer operating. Our Minnesota South District congregations and pastors were thrust into the unenviable and unwelcome reality of not being able to gather together for Sunday morning corporate worship.

As more than one learned commentator has observed, “All of a sudden, we Christians were like chess players who had to play chess without a Queen. Our biggest, best, and most powerful piece, Sunday morning worship and Bible study, had been removed from the game board and taken away from us. Now we had to operate with only the pieces that remained. We had to learn, maybe for the first time, how to be the church without Sunday corporate worship!”

An opportunity for innovation

But the Church is resilient, and her leaders can be very innovative, and almost immediately we looked for ways to be the Church for such a time as this. This has led to online worship via Facebook, YouTube, and other digital platforms. It has led to pastors writing and delivering daily devotions to their flocks in the same manner. It has led to the purchase of AM transmitters and “drive-in” or “parking lot” church. It has led to the formation of “phone trees” and “email check-ins” and all kinds of electronic messaging whereby God’s people can stay in touch, stay informed, and stay connected. And better than this, it has facilitated the Church being the Church beyond the walls of the church building.

And, far more than most of us expected, the Lord has blessed these efforts! Our pastors, for the most part, have seen an increase in worship participation. When they have counted the number of “hits” their Sunday morning broadcasts / podcasts have gotten, it has almost always been a bigger number than their average Sunday worship attendance!

Likewise, as pastors have invested time and effort in writing, producing, and sharing Sunday morning worship services that families can follow along with in their homes, the results have been similarly positive and surprising. Our pastors have been receiving affirming texts and Facebook posts that show fathers actually leading their families in prayer, praise, and thanksgiving—and

children highly engaged with, and maybe even acting out, the Gospel reading for the day.

In other words, our homes are becoming (perhaps more now than they have been in a long, long time) centers for prayer, for worship, for discipleship, for fellowship, and for Christian community!

Efforts that God is blessing

Since day one of our national battle against COVID-19, we have been hearing about the importance of “flattening the curve.” What this initially meant was that we wanted to behave in ways that spread out the impact of the virus on our society.

Our response to the pandemic has had a similar impact on the way that we, the people of God, are the Church. Now, we’re being the Church in way more ways, and at way more times, and in way more places than just on Sunday mornings!

For example, Vicar Martin Cornes, at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, almost immediately organized his people to leave contact cards (pictured below) on the doors of everyone living in their immediate neighborhood.

HELLO! I AM YOUR LOCAL NEIGHBOR.
IF YOU ARE SELF-ISOLATING, I CAN HELP.

My name is: _____
I live locally at: _____
My phone number /email address is: _____

If you are self-isolating due to COVID-19 I can help with:

<input type="checkbox"/> Picking up shopping	<input type="checkbox"/> Posting mail
<input type="checkbox"/> A friendly phone call	<input type="checkbox"/> Urgent supplies

Just call, text or email and I'll do my best to help you (for free!)

Note to those handing out cards: Coronavirus is contagious. Please take every precaution to ensure you are spreading only kindness. Avoid physical contact (3-6 feet), and wash your hands regularly. Items should be left on the doorstep.

Those who can offer help, fill our their contact details and leave the cards with their neighbors. Thank you for spreading a little love at this time.

Contact card used by members of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church to stay in touch with their community during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Correctional ministry coordinator Dr. James Seemann outside a grocery store with carts of food to support those in need thanks to generous donations.

Vicar Joshua Miller and Dr. James Seemann (pictured above), along with a host of other District correctional ministry volunteers, started handing out emergency packets for newly released prisoners so that these men and women could continue to live in their transitional housing units until such time as they could be called back to their jobs. Likewise, Dr. Seemann has opened a “New Freedom Store” that has been helping anyone and everyone who shows up and is in need!



Volunteers receive instructions for safely distributing food during the monthly Esperanza food distribution in early May.

Meanwhile, Pastor Craig McCourt and Vicar Jorge Gomez at New Creation Lutheran Church, Shakopee, re-organized their Esperanza / Hope monthly food giveaway (pictured above) so volunteers and needy recipients could

safely and efficiently disperse and receive vast amounts of food in just a short amount of time. On one Saturday morning in May, over 600 families were blessed with free food!

And on Easter Sunday, I organized a neighborhood sunrise devotional service (pictured below) for anyone and everyone in my sub-division who wanted to show up and celebrate Christ’s victory over death and the grave. This out-in-the-open, outdoor service allowed for proper social distancing as well as small group / family discussion time and ample opportunities for singing praises and reading Scripture. It’s amazing how unchurched neighbors will show up to hear the Gospel and to share prayers and prayer requests when the Church is away from her building!



Neighbors from my subdivision gather for an Easter morning service.

We the Church serve as we’re able

There’s an old, oft-told story about a boy walking along a sandy beach tossing starfish that had been washed ashore by high winds and waves back into the surf. Thousands and thousands of starfish surrounded him, and there was no way he could save them all. “Why bother?” asked a passerby. “Try as you might, you won’t make a difference!” Looking down at the starfish in his hand, the boy flung it back into the ocean. Turning to the man who questioned his efforts, he responded, “I made a difference to that one.”

During these COVID-19 days, God has given His Church an increased and invaluable opportunity to make a difference one person at a time. It may feel like we’re playing chess without our Queen, but actually, we’re each one of us being the Church as God opens doors for conversations and service and prayer with the unclaimed people around us.



Rev. Dr. William Utech is Assistant to the President for Missions. Find more missions updates at mnsdistrict.org/missions. Email him at william.utech@mnsdistrict.org.

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Your mission gifts at work

We invite you to use this list in your personal and corporate prayers, that these leaders would be strengthened in their efforts to reach people with the good news of Jesus.

2020 District-supported missions & outreach

MN South / CALMS Exploratory Trips to Central America

Rev. Dr. William Utech

District Correctional Ministry

Dr. James Seemann & Vicar Joshua Miller

Holy Cross & Our Savior Lutheran Churches (Austin & Brownsdale) & East Austin Immigrant Outreach

Pastor Gemechu Olana

LINC Twin Cities

Pastor Ben Griffin & Pastor Demelash Yoseph

New Creation Lutheran Church (Shakopee)

Pastor Craig McCourt & Vicar Jorge Gomez

POBLO (People of the Book Lutheran Outreach)

Nader & Georgette Alaraj, Bloomington

John & Mariam Gayed, Rochester

ReDO / Shepherd of the Valley (Hastings)

Pastor Chad Kirchoff

St. Matthew's & Gloria Dei Lutheran Churches (Columbia Heights & Minneapolis) & NE

Minneapolis Outreach

Vicar Martin Cornes

Sudanese Evangelical Lutheran Mission of Southern Minnesota (Faribault)

Pastor Gatluk Reat

UpWorks Christian Community Development (Minneapolis)

Lisa Peterson

Woodbury Lutheran Church (Liberty Ridge)

Pastor John Kuehne

MN South District LCMS career and GEO missionaries



Rev. Dr. Thomas & Mary Aadland

Theological educator, Kenya



Rev. Vance & Linda Becker

Theological educators, Kenya



Johanna Heidorn

Photographer / communication outreach specialist, Latin America & Caribbean



Kayla Hoem

Communications specialist, Spain



Rev. Dr. Daniel & Dr. Joan Jastram

Asia theological education manager, Asia



Missionaries in their own words

Stories from your District-supported missionaries

“The absolute highlight of my ministry this month was the first in-person visit I have made to any of the men since the start of COVID-19. It was a socially distanced visit I made to Wes at the Magnolia St. house. I was delivering a gallon of hand sanitizer and some gift cards to the house. Wes was home. He is on I.S.R. parole, which means that under the present circumstances, he is unable to leave the property of the house.

Although the ‘cover story’ for my visit was dropping off ‘essential supplies,’ I really wanted to check in on Wes in person. We had the deepest conversation we have had to this date.

As he stood on the porch, and I stood on the sidewalk, we talked about fear, death, eternity, and—most importantly—how Jesus has overcome death for us through His death and resurrection. There was also a little bit of talk about Wes’ Ford Mustang that he is restoring in the garage of the house while he is stuck at home. As I left, Wes told me, ‘I wouldn’t be able to make it through this right now without Him (pointing up).’”

Vicar Joshua Miller, District correctional ministry

“I WOULDN’T BE ABLE TO MAKE IT THROUGH THIS RIGHT NOW WITHOUT HIM [GOD].”

“God works whether we gather formally or meet online. I was able to do a baptism privately with a young family in our congregation.

I’ve been teaching a live Bible

study online on Sunday where people have been able to interact and ask questions. We’ve had many phone calls and Zoom calls where we’ve prayed and interacted.

My favorite part is that this pandemic has caused many disciples of Jesus to think about what it means to live out their faith: praying for neighbors, picking up groceries, serving in some other way.

Just because we’re not gathering formally doesn’t mean we stop being the Church. God is still working. How can we join him on mission?”

Pastor Jon Kuehne, Woodbury Lutheran Church, Liberty Ridge Campus

“THIS PANDEMIC HAS CAUSED MANY DISCIPLES OF JESUS TO THINK ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO LIVE OUT THEIR FAITH.”

“Reaching out to nonbelievers did not stop because of the virus pandemic. As more people we knew were restricted to their households, the Holy Spirit was at work. Georgette had many Muslim friends added on our Facebook account. As we were sharing encouraging stories and biblical passages about plagues and God’s protection and goodness, one of the more vocal Muslim women Georgette had as a former college classmate started following Georgette closely, posting some Quran and Hadith verses from Islamic perspective to counter what Georgette was sharing from a Christian perspective.

They both ended up dialoguing about Christianity and Islam, and it was such a powerful witnessing tool

to stay home yet be able to reach out with the Gospel to nonbelievers. We pray this medium of communication honors God and brings folks to the saving knowledge of the Savior.

Nader & Georgette Alaraj, POBLO, Bloomington

“AS MORE PEOPLE WE KNEW WERE RESTRICTED TO THEIR HOUSEHOLDS, THE HOLY SPIRIT WAS AT WORK.”

“Gifts go out. Thanks come in. The New Freedom Store is as simple as that. There is a certain denomination which paves the way. It is joy: joy of giving, the joy of receiving, too. There is no such thing as rich and poor where grace combines with gratitude. Everyone walks away feeling blessed.

The ‘store’ was founded to serve the needs of the most needy, those recently released from prison, but since then its mission has expanded to the homeless and those unemployed in COVID-19 times. Please feel free to read these letters. You might also agree. The New Freedom Store is a special place.

Working at the store is a special privilege, a joy akin to Christmas even in these dark times. Everyone, especially me, feels richly blessed when gratitude and grace combine. Their thanks and mine are all for you! We welcome you to feel the joy.”

Dr. James Seemann, District correctional ministry

“THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS RICH AND POOR WHERE GRACE COMBINES WITH GRATITUDE.”



A Mother's Day surprise

How Gloria Dei Lutheran Church shared love with their neighbors and local care homes



Photos by Martin Cornes & Sandy Westling

“Sharing the love of Jesus with the community—that’s what we’re trying to do here,” said Vicar Martin Cornes, who helped mobilize the congregation of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, for Mother’s Day this year. They found a way to reach outward to their community and inward to their congregation members to show them the love of Christ during this difficult time.

Several volunteers (some pictured at right) gathered on the Wednesday afternoon before Mother’s Day to assemble 100 rose gifts. They placed each of the roses, purchased from a local florist, into its own plastic container. Then they attached cards with a short message and the church’s contact information. The message on the cards may have been brief, but it was beautiful:

“Just for you, on Mother’s Day with blessings. May this flower of love, fill your special day with joy. You are like a ray of sunshine brightening the day.”

Once the rose gifts were assembled, Vicar Cornes and other congregation members delivered the rose gifts to members and other names given to the church as well as to local care homes (pictured left). Care was taken to wear gloves and face masks as they delivered the roses to many deserving mothers.

The inspiration for the neighborhood outreach came from Jesus’ words in John 13:35, where Jesus give His disciples a new commandment of love.

“BY THIS ALL PEOPLE WILL KNOW THAT YOU ARE MY DISCIPLES, IF YOU HAVE LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER.”

(JOHN 13:35)

The feedback from rose gift recipients has been very encouraging!

“Yesterday I received the beautiful Mother’s Day with blessing rose flower. What a beautiful way to surprise your neighbor (me)—I loved the card and message. The rose is one of the prettiest I have ever had. Thank you so very much. Blessings to all of you!”

“I want to say a big ‘thank you’ for the beautiful red rose delivered to me yesterday. That was so thoughtful of your church. It brightened my day!!”

“I just want to thank [name removed] for dropping off a rose and telling me about the services on Facebook. Happy Mother’s day to all.”

And the rose gift deliverers were perhaps just as impacted while they made the deliveries.

“God even helped me deliver [name removed]’s rose. I Googled her address so I had a general idea . . . but the numbers weren’t adding up to her location . . . I really feel God got me where I was supposed to go. She was so happy to see me and invited me to visit when we CAN visit. I think I drove 40 miles yesterday, but it was certainly worth it. The smiles alone!”

“My friend at Legacy (care home) called me today and she was SO pleased! She is grateful for her rose, too.”

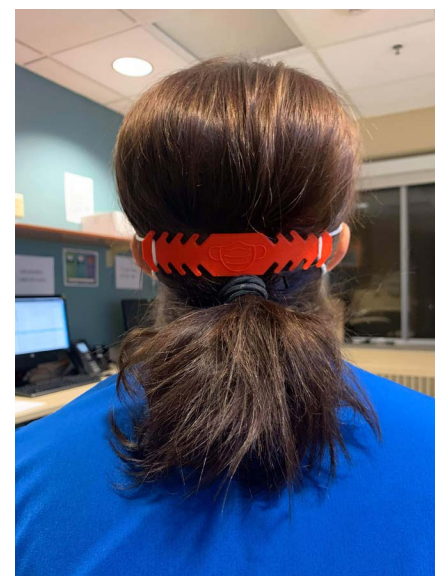
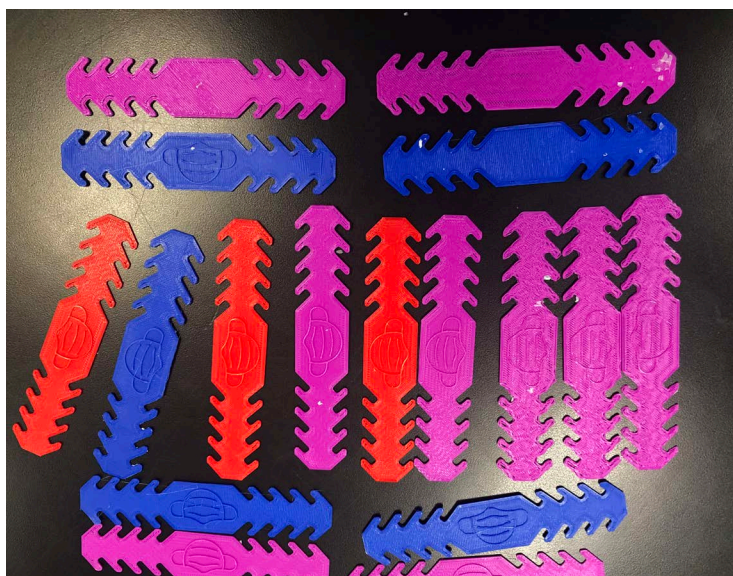
“I think the roses were a really great idea and I KNOW they were a great success. Even the ones I gave to strangers . . . two going past GDLC and one at my house. A worthwhile endeavor. If nothing else, it was definitely a day brightener!”





Printing for a cause

Lutheran high schools use 3D printers to create face shields and ear guards



“SO THEN, AS WE HAVE OPPORTUNITY, LET US DO GOOD TO EVERYONE, AND ESPECIALLY TO THOSE WHO ARE OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH.”

(GALATIANS 6:10)

“We do a lot better when we pool our resources together,” said Nate Watt, science and technology teacher at Martin Luther High School in Northrop. Watt and Marge Thiesse, Director of Development and Recruitment, have collaborated together in creating and distributing over 500 ear guards since April 3.

You may be wondering: what are ear guards? Well, a problem that many health care workers and others have encountered is immense ear pain from the friction and tension against the back of their ears from the elastic loops on their face masks. Multiply that pain over extended shifts and it becomes a big problem. That’s where Canadian Boy Scout Quinn Callander stepped in with a solution: 3D-printed ear guards that would pull the elastic ear loops away from the back of wearers’ ears to better distribute the pressure across the back of their head. Callander’s mom posted his solution on Facebook, and it went viral.

That post prompted a former Martin Luther student’s parent to ask Thiesse what the high school was doing with their 3D printers. Thiesse in turn shared the idea with Principal Paul Steinhaus and Watt. As it turned out, Watt had seen the same Facebook post and was already toying with the idea. He downloaded the ear guard template from Thingiverse, an open-source 3D printing community, and got to work. Within 30 minutes, they had six ear guards printing.

At a small high school like Martin Luther, collaboration happens frequently among the teachers and staff. This was no different. “You can really tell the difference when we work together—that’s kind of what Jesus wants us to do,” Watt said.



Martin Luther student Tyson Kube printed ear guards as part of a distance learning project for his 3D printing class.

So Watt focused on producing the ear guards while Thiesse used her community connections to distribute them. Watt even got one of his students involved! As part

of Watt’s 3D printing class, students build and take home a fully functioning 3D printer, so for student Tyson Kube, printing ear guards at home was a fun project.

“We’re just glad to be able to do something,” said Thiesse. From a traveling nurse alum in Chandler, Ariz., to several area hospitals and senior living facilities, to a Red Cross blood drive organized with help from Martin Luther’s National Honor Society students (which amazingly exceeded their donation goal by seven units!), many have been helped by Martin Luther’s ear guards.



Mayer Lutheran Executive Director Joel Landskroener delivers a batch of face shields to local care home.

A couple hours north of Martin Luther, several of the staff and teachers at Mayer Lutheran High School, Mayer, were up to something similar. Two local senior care facilities—Auburn Home-Waconia and The Glenn Hopkins—were looking for alternative personal protective equipment to keep their staff and residents safe given the N95 mask shortage. The care facilities were looking for something to supplement the cloth masks staff were already wearing.

Enter face shields. The plastic helps block airborne virus particles that manage to travel through cloth face masks.

Mayer Lutheran science teacher Ben Schulteis designed and manufactured the face shields with help from Heidi Pawelk (student support) and Nathaniel Jeffries (P.E. and athletic director) at Trinity Lutheran School in nearby Waconia. They split the work: Mayer Lutheran manufactured the main portion of the shields while Trinity Lutheran produced the portion that attaches to the bottom of the shield to give it rigidity. Over the last two months, they have given over 150 face shields to Auburn and Glenn.

Plus, Mayer Lutheran has also been producing ear guards and giving them away for free. As the CDC has increasingly recommended the general public wear face masks, many of Mayer Lutheran’s neighbors have been stopping in on a regular basis to pick up ear guards.

This has been “a wonderful partnership of Lutheran schools and the community to help everyone in the fight against COVID-19!” said Mayer Lutheran Executive Director Joel Landskroener.

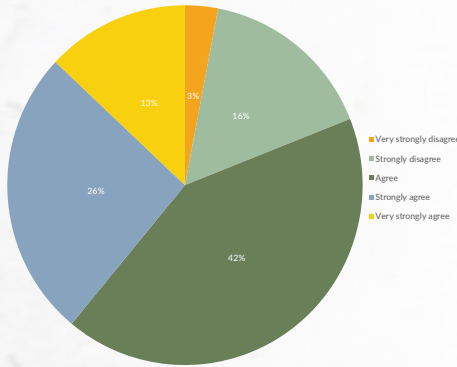
[WHERE WE GO FROM HERE]



We
THANK
God for
YOU!

“Where we go from here” is an ongoing series that helps congregations brainstorm ways to address specific ministry concerns discovered during a 2015 District-wide survey.

This month’s column is a bit different—we are celebrating you! The majority surveyed in 2015 felt that their congregation was generous in supporting mission work. We have been blessed to see this ring true even in the midst of a pandemic. So we thank God for you!



Survey responses to the statement “My congregation is generous in support of mission work locally and globally (e.g., District / Synod mission work, missionaries, Christian education, etc.).”

When Christ was preparing His disciples for their upcoming leadership role, He displayed a superb training method. It wasn’t the latest memorization technique, the newest high-speed reading system, or even intensive classroom preparation. Christ taught His followers by example and modeling!

Now certainly this was not to the exclusion of specific times of instruction, but all the character qualities He wanted them to learn and develop were first lived out before them. In the process, they were educated in the laboratory of life rather than in an isolated classroom. Christ, the master teacher, knew they could not impart what they did not possess and so He first demonstrated those qualities that were to be taught. He received what He had been provided with thanks to the Father, and then He blessed others. His leadership demonstrated thankfulness.

In all honesty, it has been challenging over the course of the past three months to develop and demonstrate an attitude of thankfulness. Life has been disrupted. People are hurting. Relationships are distanced. But thankfulness is a barometer of the

soul. Without it, the heart grows cold and calloused. Without thankfulness, we quickly become insensitive to others.

In conversations among our team here at the Minnesota South District, so many amazing stories have been shared—stories about the response by the congregations of our District to these challenging times. As leaders, we have been blessed by the stories that come from the people we serve, and through them we have gained several important lessons about thankfulness.

1. Thankfulness acknowledges the privilege of leadership.

We are so thankful for the blessing of being able to serve the congregations of the Minnesota South District! As leaders, we have been entrusted with the responsibility and opportunity to cultivate leaders who are intentionally engaged in the mission of God, and we have learned over and over again how your energy and creativity have impacted people in the congregations and in the communities that you serve.

Our thanksgiving acknowledges the blessing of leadership, and we give thanks to our Lord for the privilege of leadership even when circumstances are less than ideal. With each new challenge, it is a joy to see how our Lord continues to work through His people.

2. Thankfulness recognizes the contributions of others.

We have been so blessed as we visit with the pastors, DCEs, DCOs, teachers, and lay leaders in our District. You have generously shared story after story showing just how creative and joyful ministry can be even in the midst of uncertainty. Thank you!

Thinking back to the early days of this pandemic, questions swirled around how ministry could continue when we were physically separated from one another. There was uncertainty regarding how these changes in ministry would impact the financial support individuals and families would be able to provide for their congregations, and how that uncertainty might impact the ability of congregations to provide for the work of the District and Synod. As days have turned into weeks, and weeks into

months, what we have learned is that generosity knows no season! The congregations of the MN South District have continued their financial support and, beyond that, they have reached out to us with words of encouragement and prayers of support.

Your generosity has allowed the mission and ministry of the MN South District to continue strong and uninterrupted. Mission projects and the leaders who rely on the support of MN South District congregations have been able to continue the ministry to which they have been called at a time when they are needed more than ever. We give thanks to God for your partnership in the Gospel!

3. Thankfulness demonstrates dependence upon God.

We have also been reminded that thankfulness ought to turn our heads upward in acknowledgment of our Lord’s grace and mercy in our lives. We are reminded again and again that we should place our trust not in the things of this world but in the strong promises of our God. It is His Spirit that moves us to acts of service, and it is His strong promise that provides hope and strength. Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

“JESUS TOOK THE LOAVES, GAVE THANKS, AND DISTRIBUTED THEM TO THE PEOPLE WHO WERE SITTING THERE. HE DID THE SAME THING WITH THE FISH.”

(JOHN 6:11)


We pray that our Lord will continue to enable His people to live lives of thankfulness. We pray also that this “attitude of gratitude” will compel our conduct, keep our pride in check, heighten our love of and devotion to others, and increase our passion for reaching those who are living without saving faith in the Lord Jesus, all to the Glory of our Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

With sincere thanks,
The staff of the MN South District



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May the LORD
give **STRENGTH**
to his people!

May the LORD
BLESS his people
with **PEACE!**

Psalm 29:11