



DISTRICT NEWS

MINNESOTA SOUTH

TALKING POINTS WITH PASTOR

Ministry in a Truthless Age



Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford
District President



“That may be true for you, but it is not true for me.”

It’s a common phrase heard among people in our culture today. Truth has fallen on hard times. It echoes what Pilate said to Jesus while on trial: “So you are a king then?” He was trying to determine if Jesus was indeed a king. Jesus responds:

“For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” Pilate said to him, “What is truth?” JOHN 19:37-38

Pilate was dumbfounded by Jesus’ reply. As a politician, he was likely familiar with “truthiness” more than objective truth. Much like politicians of today

use, truthiness is the art of sounding true without actually being true. It removes logic, facts and objectivity and replaces them with emotion, pragmatism and a subjective-preferred view of the world. It’s what led our society to change the definition of marriage on the one hand, while also ironically becoming utterly tongue-tied when asked for the definition of a woman on the other. Indeed, truth has fallen on hard times.

However, as Christians we hold truth as essential to our identity, being and living. Jesus says:

“I am the way, the truth, and the life.” JOHN 14:6

In other words, we stand upon the sound teaching and objective truth of the One who is the Word made flesh (John 1:14). He is the truth, which means His word is true, good and right. It guides and directs us in a culture in which people claim there is no truth (which ironically is a truth claim itself).

That’s why it’s so important for pastors and congregations to stand on biblical truth. We affirm it and clearly confess it, but do so by speaking the truth in love (Eph. 4:5). This means we are not jerks about speaking it, and we move beyond congratulating ourselves on how right we are. Rather, we speak and act on the truth while remaining compassionate

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INSTALLATIONS

Rev. Jesse Baker was installed as pastor of Family of Christ, Holten, Wis., on March 10. Pictured are, from left, Revs. Joshua Parrish, Aaron Asmus, Richard Stadler, Bill Pieper, Vue Lee, Jesse Baker, Dr. Brent Parrish, Tom Evans, Dr. Thomas Trapp, Doug Slavens and Ted Diedrick.



Rev. Yohannes Ghebru was ordained and installed as pastor of St. Stephanus Lutheran Church, St. Paul, on March 10. Pictured are, from left, Revs. Andrew Thompson, Dr. Joshua Miller, Vue Lee, Dr. Lucas Woodford, Yohannes Ghebru, Dawit Bokre, Dr. Richard Carter, Steve Benson and Dr. Robert Holst.



Blessed to lead

Youth from St. Matthew, Worthington; Living Christ, Chanhassen; and St. John's, Buffalo, attended the LCMS YouthLead conference, held Feb. 29–March 3 in St. Louis. They learned about their identity in Christ and strengthened their leadership skills to benefit their congregations.



Financial aid **AVAILABLE**

Student aid is available for communicant members of Minnesota South District congregations. Applicants shall be preparing for a career as a professional church worker, or be a graduate student on the LCMS roster.

The amount of student aid to be provided will be determined on the basis of district policy and funds available. More information is available at mnsdistrict.org. Go to "Resources" and select "Scholarship and Financial Aid" from the drop-down menu.

PLEASE NOTE: Applications must be submitted by students to their financial aid office by June 1 each year.



‘Sisters of all nations’

Program encourages inviting multicultural women

By Coral Rose

Heart to Heart Committee

Lutheran Women in Mission — in my congregation this group includes several women I have become good friends with through Bible study, worship, prayer, servant events, and even through planning meetings and financial giving. The group also includes women I do not know so well, mostly because we have not done many of those activities together. While we have an immediate connection because of our identity as Lutheran women with a mind for mission, it takes time and shared experiences to develop real closeness.

LWML’s Heart to Heart — Sisters of All Nations asks you to increase your circle of friends within your congregation or zone by intentionally adding someone not like yourself. That might mean inviting someone from a different country, or with a different age, ability, or even religious background.

It might be a little scary, but if you have genuine interest in being a sister in Christ, it will not be difficult. Start with finding out what you have in common — parents still living, siblings, children, schooling, current neighborhood, house/

apartment, work, favorite Bible story or verse, church attendance. Find out what they know about LCMS missions and Lutheran Women in Mission. The differences will surface on their own, and should be embraced with interest.

Plan on some time together, even if it means scheduling to stay longer at church after worship. Invite them to your home. Invite them to attend an LWML meeting or servant event. Invite them to some outside community event, maybe something that is new for both of you. Outdoor parks, music, art and food are everywhere in the Twin Cities.



With immigrants, have a movie night and share an American classic like, for example, “The Wizard of Oz,” “Forrest Gump,” or “Star Wars.” Be willing to share how that movie either reflects what the United States was like at the time or helped to shape it.

The South Wisconsin District Heart to Heart group recently held a multicultural day of celebration, which is now an annual event. It included a worship service with songs and blessings in several languages. If you had your “passport” stamped by a certain number of exhibitors, you were entered into a drawing. Hmong and Karennis dancers and singers performed in costume. Nigerian women showed us how to make a headdress, and a German woman showed how to make a dip, which was added to the lunch choices, and shared other information on Germany. Everyone seemed open to learning, tasting new things and asking questions.

Our Minnesota South District Heart to Heart committee is working toward such a district event by starting with area activities and events. Look for the Heart to Heart display at the June LWML district convention. In the meantime, ask God who He wants you to get to know in your congregation. Maybe if you start now, you can ask them to join us at the convention.

The LWML Minnesota South District 30th Biennial Convention will be held June 20–22 at the Mayo Clinic Health System Event Center in Mankato. The convention theme is “Walk in Love,” based on Eph. 5:1-2:

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

The convention message is, “As we ‘talk the talk,’ may we be encouraged to ‘walk the walk’ as God’s beloved children, sharing the love of Christ with others.”

For more information, go to mnskwml.org/2024_district_convention.

Coral also serves as NW Suburban Zone President.

Youth test Bible knowledge at CSP



◀ The first-place team from Trinity, Faribault, includes, from left, Nevaeh Weeg, Martha Kuehnel and Janessa Franklin.

▲ Individual winners were, from left, Jean-Pierre Erasmus, Braxton Weeg and Lillian Lovejoy.

By Rev. Rudy Maurer, emeritus
District Bible Bowl Coordinator

Thirty-four youth from six congregations made up the nine teams that competed in the Bible Bowl, held April 6 at Concordia University, St. Paul (CSP). The youth were from the Minnesota North and South districts.

The book of Acts was the Bible Bowl topic as youth shared their knowledge at the boards and on a written test. Dozens of parents, drivers, counselors, pastors, chaperones and coaches joined the youth.

The team tournament is a double-elimination format with 15 questions per game. Winners were:

First place: Trinity, Faribault, Team A
Janessa Franklin, Martha Kuehnel, Nevaeh Weeg (Philip Simonson, coach)

Second place: First, Grand Rapids
Lillian Lovejoy, Kate Clairmont, Jack Clairmont, Reagan Lattimore (Jessica Pellinen, coach)

Third place: Trinity, Faribault, Team C
Gabriel Giacomini, Nicolai Reindl, Braxton Weeg (Philip Simonson, coach)

Fourth place: St. Paul's, Perham, Team B
Avallee Brown, Ashley Schultz, Jacqueline Holzer, Sam Brown (Jeff and Tracy Brown, coaches).

Fifth place: Trinity, Waltham
Zoe Ehlers, Otto Ehlers, Jude Krusemark, Scotch Emde, Ian Krusemark (Jason Emde, coach)

Sixth place: St. Paul's, Perham, Team A
Peter Brown, Bryce Brown, John Steeke, Chase Bicondoa (Jeff and Tracy Brown, coaches)

Also competing were:

St. John, Aitkin, Team B: Natalie Crowther, Ben Crowther, Braden Wagner, Adah Williams (Tony Flerlage, coach)

St. John, Aitkin, Team A: Jace Novotny, Linzy Beaufaux, Quinn Crowther (Tony Flerlage, coach)

Trinity, Faribault, Team B: Giovanni Giacomini, Maggie Reindl, Lydia Schreck (Philip Simonson, coach)

The individual competition consisted of 45 written questions. The winners were:

First Place

Jean-Pierre Erasmus, Rose of Sharon Lutheran Church, Cottage Grove (Jean-Pierre competed just as an individual.)

Second Place

Braxton Weeg, Trinity, Faribault

Third Place

Lillian Lovejoy, First, Grand Rapids

We wrapped up the day with a closing prayer and the singing of the Common Doxology. Participants in the Bible Bowl and guests celebrated, "Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed. Alleluia!" Not only are we the Lord's saved people on the way to our heavenly home. Having faith in Jesus as our Savior, we are also privileged to be His chosen instruments and witnesses beginning at home and going to the ends

of the earth. Bible bowlers wore shirts with crosses and God's Word on them:

"Salvation is found in no one else, there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." ACTS 4:12

"And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." ACTS 2:21

The event started with devotions and a welcome from Breana Winnes, CSP admissions counselor, who helped throughout the day and even gave out gifts. Thank you, Breana, and all who helped, including quizmasters; scorekeepers; timekeepers; promoters Paula Paulson and Nadine Meyer; question writer Janelle Breitbarth; and runners Autumn, Brittany and Becky. Your efforts contribute to the growth of brothers and sisters in Christ throughout Minnesota.

God blessed us with a beautiful day to have the Bible Bowl and to travel. Concordia University provided the participants and fans with a great facility and a very delicious lunch. Thank you, Concordia University!

All praise and glory be to the Father, who created us; the Son, our risen Savior Jesus who redeemed us; and the Holy Spirit, who enables us to believe and live our faith!

Everyone in the Word is a winner! The 2025 Bible Bowl topic will be made public in September. Please keep this event in your prayers.

Your District Mission Gifts at Work



The joy of Camp Omega

By Bob LaCroix
Camp Omega Director

Thanks be to God — 2024 marks 60 years in which Camp Omega has served the congregations of the Minnesota South District and other Christian and community groups in an outdoor setting. What did the founding fathers envision? What could possibly evolve from an alfalfa field, some grazing acreage and a scenic tree-lined lakeshore? God had a plan, which He continues to carry out.

Every year, Camp Omega provides ministry services to nearly 6,000 adults, youth and children. Events like family camps, childrens’ summer camps, mens’ and womens’ retreats, family reunions, servant events, older-adult ministries and more provide people from all walks of life, backgrounds and geographic locations a chance to learn more about Jesus.

In addition to the opportunity for all to experience the beauty of God’s creation and be nurtured in their relationship with Him, the camp is fulfilling another aspect of mission and ministry that is so vital to the growth of God’s Kingdom. Over the years, camp has made available to about 1,500 college-age men and women an opportunity to

prepare themselves for a life of service. A large percentage of those have chosen to become professional church workers.

Summer camp counselors gain an experience that the classrooms in our colleges and seminaries cannot provide. Serving both youth and adults at camp, their faith is strengthened and their awareness of the need for Christian mentoring is made clear. They leave their summer calling better prepared to serve the Shepherd through their service to His sheep and lambs at camp.

A guest says: “I wanted to say again, because it bears repeating, your staff is just amazing. I have had the opportunity this year to get to know many of them

well and they are truly genuine, good people.”

The recent addition of the Omega Lodge, a venue designed and used exclusively for the nurturing of families and adults, has opened up opportunities for camp to more broadly carry out its mission. Omega Lodge is a hotel-style, five-star lodging and conference facility, meeting the needs of adults and families for getaways or business and congregational conferences and gatherings.

A key passage in Camp Omega’s mission statement is “dedicated to assisting congregations and other organizations of the Minnesota South District.” Too often the various mission arms of a district are viewed as entities existing unto themselves, and their roles as providers of an aspect of ministry, which the congregations are not able to offer, is lost or misinterpreted. Camp Omega takes very seriously its charge to fulfill exactly what its mission statement asserts.

Please continue to pray for and support this vital ministry in our district.

What are guests saying about Camp Omega?

“My child loved camp and has already asked to return again next year. My child now has a better understanding of his Christian faith and how he can worship the Lord.”

“It was a life-changing week for my daughter! I wish every child could attend camp! It is a week of learning and experiencing the true meaning and importance of having God in our lives. She’s already talking about coming back next year!”



Work weekend: May 24–26
Free! Join for all or part of the weekend.
campomega.org/event/annual-work-weekend-2

Camp Omega Day: June 8 (10 a.m.)
Free activities and a free barbecue.
campomega.org/event/camp-omega-day





Manning up

Rev. Dr. Richard Carter leads a study at the recent Man Up! retreat.

By Rev. Elliott Malm
Pastor, Grace, Dodge Center

More than 50 men attended the 2024 Man Up! Mens' Retreat, held March 15–16 at Camp Omega. Rev. Dr. Richard Carter, Concordia University, St. Paul professor emeritus, led several studies of the Scriptures and Small Catechism. He talked with the group about one of the hallmarks of Lutheran theology: freedom in Christ for service to neighbor.

Joining Carter were myself and Revs. Daniel Borkenhagen (Good Shepherd, Owatonna), Kurt Klaus (Messiah, Lakeville), Gregory Schlicker (Good Shepherd, Owatonna). Each pastor took turns addressing the men with messages of spiritual encouragement and helped lead daily prayer offices.

During the free time on Friday night and Saturday morning, men engaged in a variety of activities. Inside the Omega Lodge, men enjoyed friendly conversation and sat together at tables for board games and cribbage. Outside, people walked the trails, biked around the area, played disc golf, and took part in target shooting. Nobody complained that ice fishing was out of the question this year!

After breakfast on Saturday morning,

Pastor Schlicker gave a thoughtful message about laying foundations, which was based on 1 Cor. 3:10–15. He shared a few humorous stories about the shoddy construction he had seen in some of the homes where he had lived, pointing out the importance of building a good foundation and honoring God in our lives with quality work.

When the retreat ended, more than one attendee observed that there appears to be a good foundation for the time spent together. Undoubtedly, that solid foundation in which we build our lives upon is Jesus Christ. We give Him our thanks and praise. To Him be the glory.

Go First! Tie-in: Life Together:

Through Jesus' life, death and resurrection, the Holy Christian Church is bound together in a community of faith and love expressed in word and deed. Life together centers upon the remission of sins won by Jesus and delivered to us through Word and Sacrament worship. Together we are discipled and then dispersed out into our daily vocations to serve our neighbor, love the Lord, encourage one another and give witness to His mercy.



Congregation mission receipts

For the period ending March 31, 2024

Actual receipts.....	\$128,307
Budget receipts	\$170,832
Over (under) amount	(\$42,525)

Year-to-date receipts

Actual receipts.....	\$483,612
Budget receipts	\$512,496
Over (under) anticipated amount.....	(\$28,884)

Use of mission receipts (year to date)

50% designated to district and Synod.....	\$372,584
100% designated to district.....	\$94,668
100% designated to Synod operations.....	\$16,360
Total receipts	\$483,612

Mission receipts—2024 vs. 2023

Mission receipts — YTD 2024	\$483,612
Mission receipts — YTD 2023	\$477,519
Over (under) last year	\$6,093

2024 congregational receipts budgeted — \$2,050,000 (does not include designated to Synod)

MINNESOTA SOUTH DISTRICT LCEF

February 2024

New investments	\$2,559,026
Withdrawals.....	\$3,454,719
Net increase (decrease).....	(\$895,693)

Year-to-date July 1, 2023–Feb. 29, 2024

New investments	\$20,604,593
Withdrawals.....	\$20,741,950
Net increase (decrease).....	(\$137,357)

Garuna school is Hearts for Jesus project

Looking to grow a love of missions with students this summer? Check out the **free** downloadable resources Garuna Ministries has for your church or school that share what God is doing in Lutheran schools on the other side of the world! With easy-to-prepare scripted lessons, engaging activities, colorful slideshows, and informative videos, children will connect with your mission offering partners in meaningful ways. Choose from Group's SCUBA theme or CPH's Celebrate theme. Email liane@garuna.org for more information!

Garuna Christian (Lutheran) School #8 in Siem Reap, Cambodia, is this year's Minnesota South District designated mission outreach project for Hearts for Jesus. Check out the ad on the next page, and visit mnsdistrict.org/hearts-for-jesus.



DISTRICT OFFICE

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‘For such a time as this’

The Fine Arts Center at Mayer Lutheran High School was transformed into a stage of biblical proportions as Emanuel Lutheran School, Hamburg, students and staff presented “Esther Teen Queen God Used to Redeem” on April 7. The musical, which has been a labor of love since its inception in 2002, was originally written for Trinity First Lutheran School, Minneapolis, by Rev. Tom Gundermann and Terri Bentz. Terri is now the choir director at Emanuel, and she gave the script a fresh edit for the 2024 audience.

The story of Esther, the young queen chosen by God to help save her people, was brought to life by a talented cast of 31 students. The production was further enriched by the harmonious voices of the tiniest preschoolers to the most senior students.

The original soundtrack, recorded by Pastor Gundermann, provided a soul-stirring backdrop to the evening’s performance, ensuring that the message of faith, bravery and divine wisdom was felt by all in attendance.

The updated script preserved the core message of the biblical narrative. It was an afternoon to remember, for the quality of the performance and the unity it fostered within the school and community.

Parents and guests departed with hearts full of pride and admiration for the young performers and staff. The school’s dedication to nurturing talent and faith in Jesus’ salvation through such creative endeavors was evident in every aspect of the production.

Article by Debbie Heldt • Photo by Chris Roth



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For more information, contact us:
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MINISTRY

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

and approachable to those awash in untruth and lies.

The apostle Paul especially reminds pastors to guard the truth (doctrine) and teaching that is set forth in God's Word. Not once, but twice he exhorts the young pastor Timothy:

Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers. **1 TIMOTHY 4:16**

I give you this charge: Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. **2 TIMOTHY 4:1-3**

With these exhortations to uphold the truth, it's important that clergy and laity alike have opportunities to discuss these things together, that we may be sure, certain and clear in our convictions.

To that end, the Minnesota South District is sponsoring four public theological convocations, open to all pastors and all laity. You are invited to participate in these discussions, that all may be sharpened for the spiritual battle in which we are engaged. As the Scriptures say, "iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another." (**PROV. 27:17**). The convocations are at four different locations across the four regions of our district.

The schedule is located above. Please register at mnsdistrict.org/theological-convocations-2024 so we can have a count for food preparation.

Hope to see you there!

THEOLOGICAL CONVOCATION SCHEDULE

 **ALL TIMES 9 A.M.—NOON**

**Region One | Friday, May 31
Emanuel, Inver Grove Heights**

Topic: Ecclesiology and the Future of the LCMS

**Region Two | Friday, Sept. 20
Glory of Christ, Plymouth**

Topic: Worship Theology and Practice

**Region Three | Friday, Oct. 18
Trinity, Rochester**

Topic: Office of the Ministry and Routes to Ordination

**Region Four | Friday, Oct. 25
St. Paul, Fulda**

Topic: Theology of the Practice of the Lord's Supper



Orphan Grain Train UPDATE

Greetings in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Minnesota South Orphan Grain Train (OGT) continues to take your boxes of donated items to Norfolk, Neb. We also continue to wait for the opportunity to sponsor a shipment to Haiti, which is currently in turmoil. Please pray for the country to stabilize politically and get a hold of the drug dealers who are causing havoc.

Thanks to volunteers in the Rochester and West Concord area who spent two days packing Mercy Meals last fall. Nearly 35,000 meals were packed those two days. May God be praised for His love!

We also decided to sponsor a shipment from Norfolk to Ukraine. This is an expensive shipment and couldn't be done without all of your donations, prayers and support. Each batch of (24,000) Mercy Meals costs \$4,000 for the food and another \$7,000–\$15,000 to ship the container.

OGT still uses 98.2 percent of donations toward its programs. Please send your Minnesota South OGT donations to Darlene Fretham: 611 First Ave. NW, Winnebago, MN 56098.

Our next meeting is at 4 p.m. on June 30 at Grace, Rochester. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Thank you to everyone for reflecting our Savior Jesus Christ to others!

Submitted by Doyle Benson, OGT Branch Manager

