



DISTRICT NEWS

MINNESOTA SOUTH

💡 TALKING POINTS WITH PASTOR

The power of a **WORD**



LCMS/Erik M. Lunsford

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

— John 1:1, 14

You have often heard the saying, “A picture is worth a thousand words.” But where did that saying come from? It first appeared in a 1921 ad in the advertising trade journal *Printer’s Ink*. Frederick Barnard, the magazine publicist, was the one who wrote it. He wanted people to think that pictures were better than words. His aim was to get people and businesses to believe this saying so that they would see the need for pictures in their



Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford
District President

ads and therefore use his advertisement company.

As one might guess, people in fact did believe “a picture is worth a thousand words.” By 1921, American society had already become so fast-paced that advertisements with pictures rather than words were found to be more appealing to consumers as well as more effective in product sales — and so continues our visual-based, consumer-oriented society today.

But this begs the question. If this is really the case, why was the Bible written with so many words and no pictures? I contend that words have far more power than any picture. In fact, just one word alone can be worth a thousand pictures. Think about the word “love.” What picture comes to your mind? Consider the picture of love painted with the words of poet Francis William Bourdillon (1852-1921):

The night has a thousand eyes,
And the day but one;
Yet the light of the bright world dies
With the dying sun.
The mind has a thousand eyes,
And the heart but one;
Yet the light of a whole life dies
When love is done.

Words can paint a powerful picture. Consider the word “hate.” Our world is full of it right now. Intense political divisions, social upheaval and racial tensions

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WORD

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all show there is plenty of hate to go around. Words definitely have power. Remember the saying from childhood: “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me”? It isn’t true. Every one of us has been hurt by words — lying words, angry words, demeaning words, cruel words. Words definitely have power. They convey thoughts, emotions, feelings and messages that can all be pictured in thousands of ways.

The Word of God is no exception. But what’s different about the Word of God is that it has power in and of itself. John’s Gospel begins with the familiar passages about the Word of God creating all things, which helps us understand this power. Ultimately, that very Word became flesh and dwelled on the earth as the man Jesus Christ to overcome hate by showing us God’s love.

He is the Word by which God spoke and brought creation into existence. Certainly, it is more powerful than any word you or I might utter, and more powerful than any picture. A picture only captures what is already there. This Word creates out of nothing. And yet as powerful as this Word is, it took the form of a humble servant in Jesus Christ, who willingly gave His life as a ransom for all.

The Gospel writers used words alone to create powerful pictures of how the Word suffered and gave His life: Mocked. Beaten. Flogged. Crucified. Indeed, the words we find in Scripture might be worth a thousand pictures. Yet the picture they portray is not more powerful than the message that they deliver. Pictures capture emotions, but words deliver them directly to us and specifically for us. And Christ’s Word to you is that He loves you wholly, unconditionally and irreversibly. He went through death to show it. He walked out of the tomb to prove it.

This world needs more of His Words. It needs more of His love, and more of our words speaking His Words of love and forgiveness. **Join me** in intentionally speaking to others with words of love about **the Word** made flesh and His love for them.



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Share your news with us!

We are always in need of more submissions for the Minnesota South District *Lutheran Witness* insert. Why should you send them in? It helps remind us of what God is doing around the district.

It is also a way to share ideas for nurturing those God has already gathered into His church and for reaching those still outside of the flock with the Good News about Jesus. It finally reminds each of us that Christ’s church is much larger than just our particular congregation.

We welcome pictures and stories of congregational events, youth events, outreach events,



installations, events from your men’s or women’s group, servant events, anniversaries,

church renovations or additions, and much more. We understand the church looks different these days, but please share with us how your church is still engaged in ministry and what your life together currently looks like.

Please send submissions to:

- ▶ communications@mnsdistrict.org
- ▶ 14301 Grand Ave. South Burnsville, MN 55306

Please ensure photos sent electronically are high resolution.

A strange time for America:

Religion and politics switch places



But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Gal. 3:25-28



For months, even years now, it has been clear that American culture is in a state of flux. The indicators of this new state are many, including:

- ▶ A recent election so contentious as to call into question the peaceful transfer of political power.
- ▶ Months of widespread social disorder, which at least in some quarters is now seen as acceptable.
- ▶ Numerous instances in which basic constitutional rights (religious liberty, free speech and association) and bedrock legal principles (innocent until proven guilty, equal justice under the law) are being openly called into question and often ignored with impunity.

Indeed, so many and so profound are these cultural distortions that many citizens, for the first time in their lives, are genuinely concerned that the foundation on which our republic rests may not have sufficient integrity and resilience to withstand whatever cultural shockwave comes next. Is there enough

common ground for the various societal factions to stand on to allow for the kind of civil conversation required to restore harmony and stability? Many Christians, including pastors and teachers of the church, find themselves at a loss to explain what's happening and how best to apply the counsel of God's Word in this new and disconcerting situation.

To those of you who resonate with my cultural description, I would like to recommend Joshua Mitchell's new book, *American Awakening: Identity Politics and Other Afflictions of Our Time*. This book not only brings to bear important political and sociological understandings but also significant theological and biblical insights as it seeks to shed light on what can only be described as the strange inversion of politics and religion in the United States in recent years. In contrast to many cultural commentators who contend that our cultural fevers stem from the fact that "many Americans have lost their religion," Mitchell contends that Americans haven't so much lost their religion as "relocated [it] to the realm of politics."

It's Mitchell's observation that with respect to basic concepts like sin and forgiveness, guilt and innocence, "religion and politics have traded places." Using the religious concept of the Divine Scapegoat as a metaphor, Mitchell brings a level of clarity that I think both clergy and laity will find helpful and reassuring. This is especially true in that he ends his analysis by encouraging Christians to be Christians. He reassures us that the best thing for us to do in these unsettling times is simply to go on being the church, unapologetically preaching and teaching the fundamental Christian doctrines.

Of course, our primary motivation in preaching and teaching is always to advance the eternal salvation of souls. Nevertheless, it is no small thing that such faithful preaching and teaching also helps to provide the "cultural ballast" necessary to keep the ship of state from foundering. Such public Christian engagement is an important way of showing that love for our neighbor to which we were called by our baptism into Christ.



Rev. Fredric Hinz
District Public Policy Advocate

The of LMWL

February is when we celebrate Valentine's Day, which is associated with love. We express our affection with cards, candy and flowers for dear relatives and friends. We find hearts, a symbol of love, nearly everywhere we look.



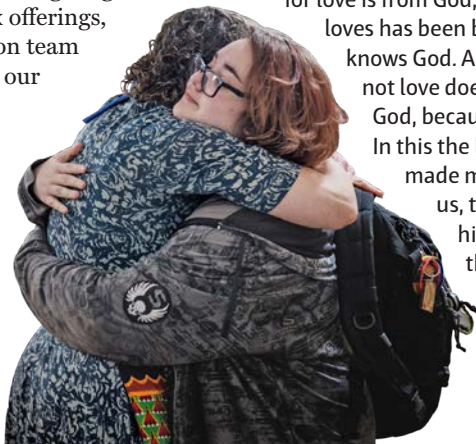
Deb Vinkemeier
LWML District President

The "heart" of the LWML is God's Word, mission, service and fellowship. The source of our LWML heart is God's heart of love for us in Jesus Christ. In the end, it is all about Him.

We begin with a **Word heart** — God's Word through Bible studies and devotions. We are nourished to grow in our relationship with Christ and with others. With prayer and Bible study, we are supported, we gain insights and inspiration, receive guidance from the Lord, and we feel encouraged as we live our lives for Jesus. LWML offers many Bible study resources at lwml.org/bible-studies.

LWML enjoys a **mission heart** by being strengthened through the power of the Holy Spirit. We enjoy a relationship with Christ by sharing God's love through Word and deed. We actively share our mission heart by praying for our mission grants, giving generous Mite Box offerings, serving on a mission team and by praying for our missionaries.

Our **servicing heart** involves being blessed to serve the Lord with gladness. Everyone has been graced with gifts and talents from God so that they can serve



where God calls. God provides every woman with opportunities to serve. It may be with money, with time, with gifts and talents, with specific skills or with people.

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men.

— Col. 3:23

LWML shares the **heart of fellowship**. We are joyful as we share our relationship with Christ with others. We are a sisterhood of believers who value each other by being in the Word, serving others and building one another up in love. We have fun getting together by valuing each other and have a desire to grow in the Lord together.

Our heart grows from our vision statement. The LWML, the leading group for LCMS women, is the place where each woman is welcomed and encouraged to use her unique, God-given gifts as she supports global missions and serves the Lord with gladness.

We also have a **heart of treasure**, in which the LWML is given the opportunity to share Christ's love with everyone.

"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

— Luke 12:34

As you reflect on the heart of the LWML, reflect on God's valentine to us:

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.

— 1 John 4:7-9

God is Love.



Prayer service written by former district VP

The 2021 Prayer Service, written by past LWML Pastoral Counselor Rev. Robert Mundahl, is "He Prayed with Them," based on Acts 20:36b.



Rev. Robert Mundahl

When was the last time you prayed with someone? Not for someone, but with someone?

We are encouraged in Scripture to be people of prayer, and prayer marks us as children of the heavenly Father. He has promised to hear us and to answer our prayers. May the 2021 Prayer Service encourage and expand our life of prayer to include praying with others.

Rev. Robert L. Mundahl recently retired after 40 years of service as a parish pastor in Missouri and Minnesota. Beginning as a zone pastoral counselor in 1983, he concluded many years of service to the LWML as a pastoral counselor in 2019. He was also an LCMS Minnesota South District vice-president.

Pastor Mundahl writes, "I am enjoying worshiping again alongside my wife, Peg. God blessed us with two children and, at present, three grandchildren. The theme of this year's Prayer Service is one in which I'm currently engaged — praying with everyone God places in my path. I am still 'Serving the Lord with gladness!'"

The Prayer Service is available for download at lwml.org/prayer-service.

Thank you!

Following is an e-mail from Monica Schmidt, the senior director of Operations at the new Bethesda Cornerstone Village in Victoria, which provides housing for independent adults with disabilities and active seniors. The LWML Minnesota South District is supporting the mission grant “Connecting People in an Inclusive Christian Housing Community” for the 2020-22 biennium.

One of the things I am most grateful for this year is Bethesda’s relationship with LWML Minnesota South District and especially the wonderful ladies at Our Savior’s Lutheran in Excelsior.

This group of ladies has provided quilts to Bethesda before, but this year we are especially grateful. Last week I picked up 20 beautiful handmade quilts. This could not have come at a better time



From left, Joyce Pettit, Elaine Taggatz and Pamela Illies, all members of Our Savior’s, Excelsior, are pictured with handmade quilts to be delivered to Bethesda Cornerstone Village in Victoria.

while we were struggling to find Christmas gifts for the people we support. We also plan to set some of the quilts aside as a welcome gift to new people moving into our facilities.

The blessing over the quilts was powerful and I also learned about Dorcas!

We could not be more grateful for this tremendous gift. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

God’s blessings to all of you. You truly are doing the Lord’s work.

Monica Schmidt



Outreach – and inreach – at Redeemer

The LWML at Redeemer Lutheran Church, Rochester, has not been meeting during the pandemic and canceled its Christmas event.

However, the Sarah Circle continues to set up a “Christmas Sharing Tree” for gifts to local charities. For 2020, Caroline Ferdig made cards with gift suggestions for two local Christian-focused charities: Project Legacy and Childhood Cancer Community.

Despite limited numbers attending in-person services at Redeemer, the response to the sharing tree was gratifying — more than \$1,500 in gift cards were donated, along with many household items that were on the wish lists from the two organizations. Blessings!

Redeemer is also using the *Luther-*

an Woman’s Quarterly magazine to encourage its members. Redeemer subscribes to the *Quarterly*, with an ample number of issues delivered for each of the Circle members and anyone else who requests a copy. In addition, there are plenty of extras, and everyone is encouraged to take one. During the pandemic, Delores McGillivray noticed there were many copies waiting for new homes, so she set up a beautiful display rack to help women pick up a copy with their name on it.

The hope is that this type of encouragement will serve as motivation for other societies to continue to “Serve the Lord with Gladness,” while at the same time remaining safe and healthy — physically, spiritually and mentally — during this pandemic.

WITNESS, MERCY, LIFE TOGETHER



Jehovah helps get food to those in need

Members and friends of Jehovah Lutheran Church, St. Paul, have been serving their neighbors in the Midway neighborhood with food distributions. Since the rioting that took place in the neighborhood following the murder of George Floyd, grocery stores have closed and options have narrowed for the poorest residents of the neighborhood as they seek to feed themselves and their children. Moved by this need, the congregation has sought to move nutritious food into the hands of those who need it most in the safest way possible during the pandemic.

Congregational president Erica Dalager Reed worked with nonprofit organizations to bring food on semi-trucks into the church parking lot on Sept. 11 and Oct. 24. On these dates, parishioners from Jehovah and volunteers from other congregations in the St. Paul-Metro Circuit of LCMS churches, staff of the New Freedom Store and community residents helped unload the trucks, direct cars into the parking lot and load trunks and pick-up beds with boxes of food. At the event on Oct. 24, Jehovah was blessed to have students from the football, track and women's soccer teams from Concordia University, St. Paul, lend their hands in this effort.



Devotional booklets and information on area LCMS churches were also handed out with the food.

Rev. Dr. Joshua Miller, who was installed as pastor of Jehovah on Sept. 6, is excited to see the members of the congregation and people in the community serving their neighbors during these trying days. Pastor Miller sees the church's works of *mercy, witness and life together* all merging in events like these.

"Hunger, a lack of daily bread," says Pastor Miller, "can cause anxiety, fear and

doubt in God's care. When we serve our neighbors through food distribution, we become daily bread to them. We become the means through which God the Creator feeds and sustains His human creatures. Doing this in close proximity to witnessing to the Gospel brings hope to continue on in this temporal life and also opens the door for us to share the hope of eternal life."

The Jehovah congregation hopes to find an ongoing and sustainable avenue to serve their neighbors through food distribution for the long-term future.

True or not so true?



By Dr. Mike Rodewald
Executive Director,
Lutheran Bible Translators

I found the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website and started crunching numbers — 37.4 percent of COVID deaths in the United States are age 65-74. Using the same set of statistics, I calculated differently — 99.92 percent of U.S. population age 65-74 have not died from COVID. Same pandemic, different perspectives.

So where's the truth? When I use only parts of a whole, I make conclusions that are less than comprehensive.

Not grasping our spiritual relationship with God occurs when we pick and choose in Scripture. Human nature quickly exchanges spiritual truth for the not so true. It is what we do! Referenced in Rom. 1:25 — "...they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator" — it is natural to exchange God's truth for our own spiritual understanding. God loves everyone (true), so be what you want to be (not so true).

The good news is that the truth about my relationship with God is

not dependent upon me. Scripture interprets Scripture and spiritual truth becomes comprehensively revealed through God's message to us in the Bible.

Jesus' words:

"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." — **John 14:6**

And again:

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son so that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." — **John 3:16**

The gift of Jesus as my Savior is the truth expressed in God's story of salvation in the Bible. God gives that gift to all. Not all believe. Some choose to exchange truth for their own ideas of truth. That serves the creature rather than the Creator.

I rejoice in the reality through Jesus expressed through the words of Scripture. I am thankful that God has called me into His story of salvation through Jesus. That is a truth to which to point and share.

God's Word reveals truth. It is what the Word does!

Congregation mission receipts

For the period ending
Dec. 31, 2020

Actual receipts.....\$310,688
Budget receipts\$175,000
Over (under) amount \$135,688

Year-to-date receipts

Actual receipts.....\$2,142,109
Budget receipts\$2,100,000
Over (under) anticipated amount.....\$42,109

Use of mission receipts (YTD-year to date)

50% remitted to Synod (YTD)\$822,189
100% remitted to Synod (YTD).....\$81,044
50% for district operations (YTD)\$822,189
100% for district operations (YTD)\$416,687
Total receipts\$2,142,109

Mission receipts—2020 vs. 2019

Mission receipts — YTD 2020\$2,142,109
Mission receipts — YTD 2019\$ 2,129,637
Over (under) last year\$12,472

2020 congregational receipts budgeted at \$2,100,000

MINNESOTA SOUTH DISTRICT LCEF

November 2020

New investments.....\$914,967
Withdrawals.....\$984,127
Net increase (decrease).....(\$69,160)

Year-to-date July 1–Nov. 30, 2020

New investments.....\$9,702,443
Withdrawals.....\$7,539,537
Net increase (decrease).....\$2,162,906



DISTRICT OFFICE

▶ 14301 Grand Ave. S.
Burnsville, MN 55306

▶ 952-435-2550

▶ mnsdistrict.org

State of the Synod now online

lcms.org/news/publications/state-of-the-synod

It's been a year that no one could have predicted. But as 2020 comes to an end, the church continues its work.

What is The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) up to these days? Perhaps you had planned on reading about that in the November issue of *The Lutheran Witness* (LW), but when you opened the magazine and checked the Table of Contents, you didn't find the "State of the Synod" commentary that has typically appeared in prior November issues.

That's because State of the Synod content has taken on a new delivery form this year, available to a wider online audience in downloadable form at the LCMS website. (A briefer State of the Synod summary was included in

the November print issues of *Reporter* and *LW*.)

The State of the Synod this year includes "look back" reviews and "what's next" summaries shared by key leaders in the Synod's administrative team. These articles describe how the work of the LCMS continues during COVID-19 despite most Synod staff operating as a deployed workforce. The forward-looking portions of the report — presented in brief summary format — are meant to:

- ▶ Connect the Synod's key priorities with operating unit goals and plans, and
- ▶ Demonstrate the Synod's fervent desire to use Christ's abundant gifts effectively to care for God's people

and witness to His saving and sustaining work.

Finally, readers will also want to take note of the LCMS Mission Advancement unit's 2020 "Annual Report," which had been previously published within and alongside the *LW* November State of the Synod issue. The 2020 Annual Report, meant especially to inform the Synod's contributors and constituents of financial gifts received and their various uses in LCMS domestic and international work, also has been moved online alongside the 2020 State of the Synod.

"We pray that these summary documents will well serve the people of the LCMS as we strive to transparently inform all of the marvelous impact of their participation in the Synod's mission and ministry, which is Christ's mission and ministry," said LCMS Chief Mission Officer Rev. Kevin D. Robson.

