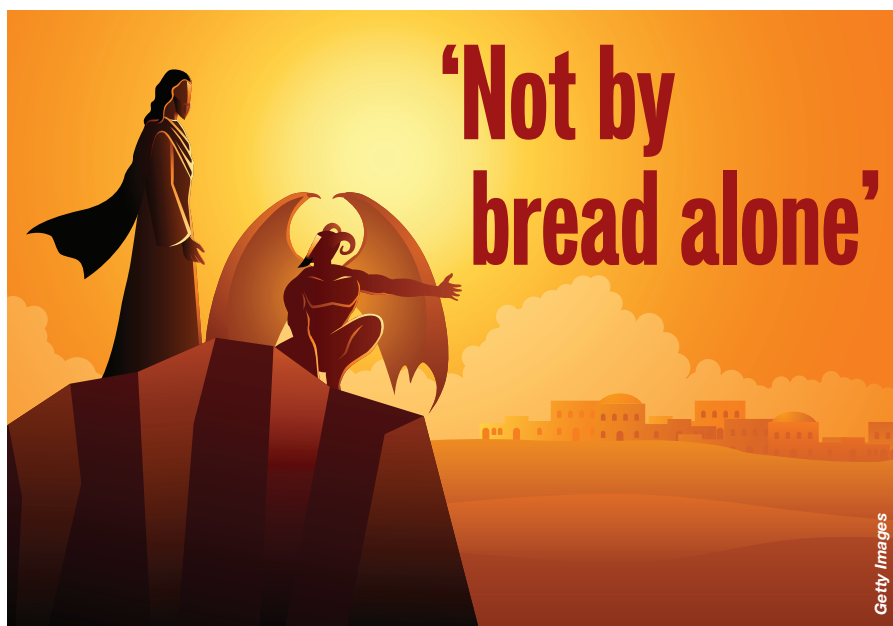




DISTRICT NEWS

MINNESOTA SOUTH

💡 TALKING POINTS WITH PASTOR



The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him.

Mark 1:12-13

This Scripture account is one that traditionally ushers us into the season of Lent. Jesus was led by the Spirit to the wilderness. There, He was tempted by the devil for 40 days. This should tell us something about the tenacity and determination of Satan. Not even the Son of God, just baptized in the Jordan and full of the Holy Spirit, stops Satan from carrying out his tempting intentions.

The parallel Gospel accounts of this event (Luke 4:1-13 and Matt. 4:1-11) note that Jesus went without food for 40 days



Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford
District President

during this time. Physically weakened, feeling hungry, and at a moment of weakness, Satan comes to tempt Him. This should also be a warning for us. As baptized Christians, filled with the Holy Spirit, we should expect to be afflicted with the constant temptations of Satan. Whether we are hungry, tired, overworked, overwhelmed, sick or dying, Satan will not relent. In fact, he will only intensify his efforts for us to abandon our faith.

However, when we follow Jesus into the wilderness, He reveals to us how to make Satan's temptations crumble. With every temptation of Satan in this account, let's note how Jesus responds.

TEMPTATION #1

"If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread."

— **Luke 4:3**

First, Satan tempts Jesus' pride by way of His hunger. Every playground bully knows this trick, "Oh yeah, if you are so tough, then prove it!" But notice how Jesus promptly and even courteously responds: "It is written (in Deut. 8:3), man shall not live by bread alone" (Luke 4:4). He immediately rebuffs Satan with the Word of God.

TEMPTATION #2

And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has

See **LENT**, Page 2

LENT (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.” — **Luke 4:5-7**

Satan knows our weaknesses and our desires. He is a sly fellow. He sees the life you live — your habits, your tendencies and your inclinations. And then he pounces on you. He tries to do that to Jesus with the second temptation. Satan tries to get Jesus to worship him by tempting Jesus with power and prestige. But once again, Jesus answers with the Word of God (from Deut. 6:13): “It is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.’”

This is rather instructive. Satan loves to attack our worship of God. If he doesn’t hesitate to tempt Jesus in His worship, he sure won’t hesitate to tempt us to disorder our worship life. Power, prestige, money and materialism — all things our society worships. Jesus again reminds us to be fortified with the Word of God against Satan’s temptations.

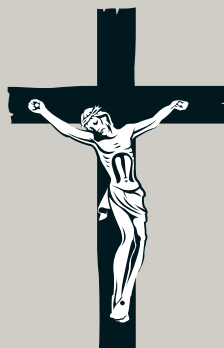
TEMPTATION #3

And [Satan] took Jesus to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’” — **Luke 4:9-11**

Being bested twice, the devil finally tries to use the Word of God against the Son of God. “OK Mister. It is written. Chew on this.” Satan quotes Ps. 91:11-12 in order to tempt Jesus into proving He was the Son of God. He tries to twist and turn God’s Word — to use just enough of it so that it can make a lie seem true. “Come on Jesus. If you are really the son of God, prove it!”

What does Jesus do? Once again, He lets the power of God’s Word blast away. He quotes Deut. 6:6. “It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test’” (Luke 4:12). Jesus was not going to prove that He was the Son of God on Satan’s terms. He was going to do it on His terms — terms that would come by way of the cross and empty tomb. He had come to fulfill the Word of God.

The Word of God saves us. Satan cannot bear up under the power of God’s Word, but he will still try every angle to get us to doubt God’s Word. It started in the Garden of Eden when he said to



“**Christ goes with us. He is ours and we are His. Through the water and the word of baptism, He has claimed us as His very own, given us His Holy Spirit, washed us with His love and grace, and promised never to leave us nor forsake us.**”

Eve, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” (Gen. 3:1). Today, his sinister temptations and sly words continue to afflict us. “Did God really say marriage is only between a man and a woman? Did God really say life begins at conception? Did God really say the love of money is the root of all evil? Did God really say Jesus is the only way to eternal life?”

Like Jesus, we need the Word of God upon our hearts, in our minds and on our tongues as we bear up under the daily temptations we face. It is only the Word of God that can guide us in the way of truth.

WE FOLLOW JESUS THROUGH ALL SEASONS

Throughout those 40 days, Jesus was tempted to doubt God’s Word. It’s from these 40 days of temptation that we get the 40 days of Lent. And just as we can follow and learn from Jesus during His 40-day temptation, our Lutheran tradition has created a rhythm and routine for the whole church year that centers around the life of Christ. The life and movement of Christ’s life shapes the cycle of our yearly worship still today. Advent leads to Christmas — Christmas to Epiphany — Epiphany to Lent — Lent to Easter — Easter to Pentecost — and Pentecost back to Advent. Each season emphasizes a particular part of the life of Christ and His message of salvation.

The joy of our church seasons is that they wrap us in the life of Christ even as we travel the various seasons of our own lives. In other words, we are not alone as we journey through the ups and downs, the hurts and heartaches, the joys and sorrows and the failures and successes that come during the varying seasons of our lives.

In fact, as we are wrapped into the life of Christ through the church season, we are sacramentally united to Christ and His life when we are baptized. That means you and I are truly never alone. Christ goes with us. He is ours and we are His. Through the water and the word of baptism, He has claimed us as His very own, given us His Holy Spirit, washed us with His love and grace, and promised never to leave us nor forsake us.

We are in the season of Lent. Thus we focus our eyes on Jesus’s journey toward the cross, which readies us for the celebration of Easter. But as we do, we journey through all the other seasons of life, along with this season of Lent, when Satan is sure to tempt us and society taint us, keeping our eyes set on the cross of Christ, the forgiveness He has won for us, the hope He has achieved for us and the life He gives to us.



Good Shepherd
**WELCOMES
NEW PASTOR**

Rev. LeRoy LaPlant was installed as pastor of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, North Mankato, on Jan. 10. Pictured are, from left (front row) Revs. Dave Hormann, St. John, Winsted; Martin Teigen, emeritus; Dennis Heiden, Hosanna, Mankato; LeRoy LaPlant; Tyson Mastin, St. John, Plato; Adam Matheny, Our Savior, Mankato; John C. Hendrickson, St. John–Rapidan, Mankato; (back row) Michael Omtvedt, Hosanna, Mankato; Adam Finney, St. Peter, Vernon Center; Adam Parvey, Hosanna, Mankato; Dr. Lucas Woodford, district president; Adam Gless, Zion, Mayer; Travis Loeslie, Bethlehem, Morristown; Mark Triplett, St. John and St. Mark, Rushford; and Gregory Volbrecht, Salem and Trinity, Madelia.



**District
convention
postponed**

On Jan. 11, Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford, Minnesota South District president, sent a letter to all district congregations notifying them that the district convention, originally scheduled for June 17-19 at Concordia University, St. Paul, would be postponed as a result of uncertainties from the COVID-19 pandemic.

This issue went to press on Feb. 15, just hours before the congregational vote on permitting the LCMS to delay its scheduled 2022 convention to 2023 was to be concluded. Postponing the LCMS convention one year gives the 35 districts an extra year to hold their conventions.

In his letter, Pastor Woodford wrote: “It has become obvious that the Minnesota South District will not be able to continue adequately planning for a meaningful District Convention ... In fact, the likelihood the state of Minnesota would even permit the size of gathering we need to hold our convention at that time is minimal.”

Pastor Woodford called a single-issue district Board of Directors meeting, in which the board unanimously passed the measure to postpone the district convention. The new date was to be determined at the Board of Directors meeting on Feb. 20. All congregations will receive the new date and updated timelines for committee nominations, circuit forums, delegate forms and overtures.

Read the full letter at mnsdistrict.org/convention. The new convention date will also be posted at this link.

The unknown 'WHAT IF'

It is almost a year ... and COVID-19 is still here. Our lives have been consumed with it every day, on the news and wherever we go. It's like a "Creeping Charlie" that has taken over our lawn, and it takes time to get rid of it.



Deb Vinkemeier
LWML District President

A COVID-19 vaccine has been developed and has been distributed throughout the United States. Some of us may have received the vaccine, though most of us are still waiting. So as we wait, the "what-ifs" of what might happen cause our heart to become anxious and lose sight of Christ.

In the Old Testament, we read of Queen Esther and her "what-ifs." She could cling to her crown, or she could go before the king with her plea to revoke his order and help her people — and in so doing face the possibility of death. Esther had a vital choice to make.

We read her "what-if" reply in Esther 4:16:

"Then I will go to the king, though



it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish."

Also in Esther 5:8:

"If I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my wish and fulfill my request, let the king and Haman come to the feast that I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king has said."

Esther gave her situation to God, to create a plan to keep the worst from happening, even if she would have to die.

The fear of the unknown and those things that we cannot control can be frightening. God knows the times we are facing better than we do.

This month we are in the midst of the Lenten season. Jesus came to live, suffer and conquer death for us. Christ's love is solid and will help us to conquer all our life's unknowns. He is well capable of handling our "what-ifs."

When those "what-ifs" creep up on you, spend time in His Word, take it to the Lord in prayer and check out *Encountering "What Ifs" on the Expressway of Life*, a new Bible study from LWML. Find it at thelc.ms/what-ifs.

May the Holy Spirit help us to overcome all our "what-ifs." Let us place our faith in the Lord God in every area of our lives. Trust God, who is in control, and who will provide peace amidst all of our "what-ifs."

LWML 39th Biennial Convention June 24-27 • Lexington, Ky.

Deb Vinkemeier, LWML district president, attended the national LWML Board Meeting Jan. 21-22 and shares that the 39th Biennial Convention for now will still be held. The national LWML Board of Directors and the Presidents Assembly will meet on March 19 to make the final call on whether the convention will be canceled or if it will go on as planned.

Should the convention be held, sanitizing stations will be set up throughout the Lexington Center and masks will be required. Convention attendees will be seated six feet apart. The convention center is very spacious, and the national board and convention staff will work diligently to keep all attendees safe.

The convention will be livestreamed,



giving our members opportunities to watch safely with your LWML sisters. The registration deadline has been changed from March 15 to April 15.

Updated information is available at lwml.org/2021-convention.

MISSION GRANT PROPOSALS

Get yours started!



Rev. Stephen Oliver, LCMS career missionary in the Asia region, holds his daughter, Virginia, as he preaches during worship at Mission Central, Mapleton, Iowa, in 2015. Mission Central, a current district Mission Grant recipient, supports missionaries around the world with funding for various needs.

Plans are already being made for the 2022 LWML Minnesota South District Convention, scheduled for June 16-18, 2022, at the Willmar Conference Center. The theme is “Rejoice in HOPE!” At the convention, a new mission goal will be set for the 2022-24 biennium to support the mission grants chosen by the convention delegates.

Now is the time to begin thinking about submitting a Mission Grant Proposal for 2022. You can obtain the application and instruction forms at mnslwml.org. Click the “Missions” tab, and then click “Mission Grant Proposal” to access both forms. The completed proposal must be sent by email or by postal mail prior to the Jan. 7, 2022, postmark deadline. The Mission Grants Review Committee will recommend placement of the proposal on the convention ballot based on whether:

- ▶ The ministry shares the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- ▶ It has a governing unit, such as a partner church, LCMS district, or Recognized Service Organization (RSO) to which the ministry project regularly reports.
- ▶ The ministry has provided a financial statement as part of its mission grant proposal.
- ▶ There is specific or continuing partnering for the project from other sources.
- ▶ The project is able to sustain service to the people it serves following completion of the grant.

The completed proposal can be mailed to: Carol Hubert, Vice-President of Gospel Outreach, LWML MN South District; 2269 Silver Leaf Trail; Cologne, MN 55322.

For more information, contact Carol at carolhubert@live.com.



Help love grow

Frank and Katherine were raised to be thrifty, hard-working, God-fearing children of God. They raised their children in the faith as well and enjoyed sharing Bible stories with their grandchildren.

Frank and Katherine were known to not waste a thing, washing and reusing disposable items, and ripping off the bottom half of a piece of mail that came to use for scrap paper. They had been diligent savers, putting a portion of weekly income into an investment account.

Years ago, their advisor had directed them to put investments in annuities. Since that time, all growth on their investments had grown tax deferred. They never planned on spending any of it. They planned on giving it all to their children as inheritance. Little did they know that a large portion of that inheritance would simply be paid in taxes.

An LWML Gift Planning Counselor had made a presentation at their church and raised the topic of wise tax planning. They brushed it off. They did not see the value. This couple that rejoiced about saving pennies at a time by reusing old things threw away tens of thousands of dollars in taxes that could have enriched their children's inheritance or created a nice bequest to their church, enabling more people to hear about Jesus.

We often put off such work because it intimidates us as we venture into topics that we have never discussed before. Yet the story of Frank and Katherine illustrates for all of us that a few hours of conversation and planning could potentially magnify the effect of a lifetime of careful stewardship of God's gifts.

Your LWML Gift Planning Counselor can help. For more information, please feel free to contact:

- ▶ Your knowledgeable Minnesota South District Gift Planning Counselor, **Carol von Soosten**, at Carol.vonSoosten@lfn.org; 800-741-4138; or lwmlgiftplan.org; or
- ▶ Our own Minnesota South District Gift Planning Advocate, **Mary Kay Mages**, at marykay_schuft@hotmail.com or 507-276-9015.

(Photo above is a stock photo and not of couple mentioned.)

Congregations: Take a stand for life

As you well know, the LCMS has spoken out publicly for many years about life issues in general, and abortion in particular. In more recent years, our Synod's focus has expanded to include an active opposition to physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia (PAS/E). Several years ago, that led our Minnesota North and South districts to join with other like-minded organizations in forming a new coalition, the Minnesota Alliance for Ethical Healthcare.



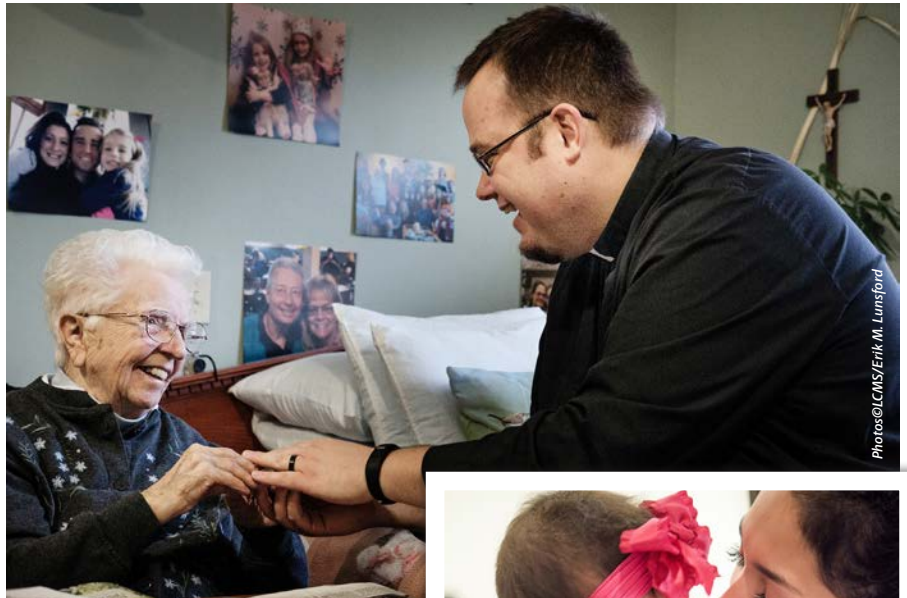
Rev. Fredric Hinz
District Public Policy Advocate

This coalition is dedicated to opposing the legalization of PAS/E and to helping improve palliative (pain management) care here in Minnesota. It consists of church bodies (primarily Lutheran and Catholic), elder care organizations, disability rights groups and various professional medical organizations. Currently, 60 organizations have formally affiliated themselves with Ethical-CareMN, and we are hoping to increase that number to 100 by the end of 2021.

Thus far, this coalition has been very successful in its efforts in large part due to the number and variety of its supporting organizations. It is the kind of strong coalition which quickly and effectively conveys to our elected leaders two key items:

- ▶ The depth and breadth of the opposition that exists among the people of Minnesota to life-threatening PAS/E proposals
- ▶ The high degree of support there is for better and more accessible palliative care

Recently, EthicalCareMN has also begun to solicit the formal endorsement of individual congregations. It is in that regard that I'm writing, namely, **to encourage each congregation in the Minnesota South and North districts to consider raising this issue among its members and adding its name to**



Photos@LCMS/Erik M. Lunsford

the list of “officially supporting congregations.”

Even though no new states legalized PAS/E in 2020 (largely due to the preoccupation of state legislatures with the COVID-19 pandemic), we know that advocates for PAS/E have been very active in preparing their deadly proposals for introduction into many state legislative agendas (including Minnesota) during the 2021 legislative session — which has just begun. This, of course, adds urgency to our efforts!

No doubt, you and many members of your congregation will have questions regarding this issue and what obligations, if any, there may be in placing your congregation's name on such a list. To answer these questions, we have an infographic, documentary and video resources that will provide the kinds of basic information needed to make such a decision. In addition, speakers from the district and Lutherans For Life will be available to speak to your congregation on the topic, especially as COVID-19 restrictions loosen.

And so, if you are interested in exploring this avenue of service to your neighbor and perhaps lending your



congregational voice to the chorus of those opposing this latest manifestation of “the culture of death” (and we hope many of you will), please contact me at fred.hinz@mnsdistrict.org or 507-317-9634. You may also reach out to Virginia Flo, regional director for Lutherans For Life at vflo@lutheransforlife.org or 651-333-0337.

Also, make sure to check out the Minnesota Alliance for Ethical Healthcare coalition website at ethicalcaremn.org.

At this time of great national turmoil, I cannot think of a better way to demonstrate the love of Christ to our neighbors than by standing up for the sanctity of life and against the encroachment of a seductive philosophy which advocates “death as the way to solve the problems of life.”

To live by God's Word

By Dr. Mike Rodewald
Executive Director,
Lutheran Bible Translators

Missionaries Martin and Joan Weber retired in January 2021 after 38 years in Cameroon, where they served in translation ministry through Lutheran Bible Translators (LBT). The Webers leave a legacy that will stand as an example and inspiration to those they served as well as for future LBT missionaries.

The Webers first traveled to Cameroon in 1982 to live and work among the Kwanja language community. "Our goal always was for people to not only have a book in hand, but to use, share and live by God's Word," said the Webers. At that time, the Kwanja had been oppressed for generations by a more dominant tribe. They had no sense of self-worth.

When the translation project began — as people realized they were precious to God — they developed a renewed sense of pride in themselves, their language and their culture. People came to faith and the church grew. As one pastor stated, "Now we think of ourselves as free. We pray this relationship which God has established between us can continue so that we can continue to cooperate as children of God, as people freed by God Himself."

After the dedication of the Kwanja New Testament in 2006, Martin and Joan continued to collaborate with the Evan-



Martin and Joan Weber at the dedication of the Kwanja lectionary. From left, Martin, M. Jerome Yuare and Joan.

gelical Lutheran Church in Cameroon (EELC) — an LBT partner organization — to enable, equip, encourage and empower Cameroonians in several language groups to bring Scripture to their people in a language they understand. The result: audio Scripture recordings, additional New Testament translation work, Old Testament translation in Kwanja, the publication of several lectionaries, worship songs, Bible apps, literacy programs and the dedication of a Bible House that will further advance God's work in Cameroon.

The Webers have retired, but the work they began continues. Elliot and Serena Derricks serve with the Subula Translation and Literacy Project in Cameroon while the Department of Bible Translation in the EELC administers and promotes several language programs.

To learn more about these and other LBT missionaries and programs visit lbt.org.

Congregation mission receipts

For the period ending Jan. 31, 2020

Actual receipts.....	\$211,220
Budget receipts	\$166,666
Over (under) amount	\$44,554

Year-to-date receipts

Actual receipts.....	\$211,220
Budget receipts	\$166,666
Over (under) anticipated amount.....	\$44,554

Use of mission receipts (YTD-year to date)

50% remitted to Synod (YTD)	\$80,216
100% remitted to Synod (YTD).....	\$5,918
50% for district operations (YTD)	\$80,216
100% for district operations (YTD)	\$44,870
Total receipts	\$211,220

Mission receipts—2020 vs. 2019

Mission receipts — YTD 2020	\$211,220
Mission receipts — YTD 2019	\$235,459
Over (under) last year	(\$24,239)

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

MINNESOTA SOUTH DISTRICT LCEF

December 2020

New investments	\$1,848,959
Withdrawals.....	\$2,070,825
Net increase (decrease).....	(\$221,866)

Year-to-date July 1–Dec. 31, 2020

New investments	\$11,551,402
Withdrawals.....	\$9,610,361
Net increase (decrease).....	\$1,941,041

Free Spanish resources available

Great news! The Lutheran Heritage Foundation (an LCMS Recognized Service Organization) has a variety of **free** new resources available in Spanish, including *Luther's Small Catechism*, *The Bible with Small Catechism* (combined volume), *A Child's Garden of Bible Stories*, and *Jesus Never Fails* devotional tract.

These materials are available to any LCMS church, mission or individual who wants to share the Good News with their Spanish-speaking neighbors. To order, send an email to info@LHFmissions.org or call the LHF office at 800-554-0723.



DISTRICT OFFICE

- ▶ 14301 Grand Ave. S.
Burnsville, MN 55306
- ▶ 952-435-2550
- ▶ mnsdistrict.org

LCMS offering technology grants

By Stacey Egger
LCMS Reporter

The LCMS Office of National Mission (ONM) has announced a new grant opportunity to assist congregations in funding technology, software, equipment and training that will help them fulfill their mission to proclaim the Gospel to their members and the world.

Under the Esther 4:14 National Grant Program, approximately 100 grants of up to \$1,500 each will be awarded to LCMS congregations seeking to advance their technological capacity in “such a time as this” (Esther 4:14). Grants may be used to fund:

- ▶ Technology (cameras, mixer boards, etc.);
- ▶ End-user equipment (tablets for shut-ins, etc.);
- ▶ Software or software subscriptions (Microsoft Teams, Zoom Pro accounts, editing software, etc.); and
- ▶ Other equipment or training to meet congregational needs.

Deaconess Maryann Hayter, manager of LCMS Grants Administration, said the grants are especially needed during a time when physical gatherings have been severely limited due to COVID-19.

“This grant is not the large-dollar award that would fund a state-of-the-art film studio or other leading-edge professional technologies,” Hayter said. “However, we hope to encourage congregations to fill the need of the church to proclaim the Gospel in new ways and to creatively increase ‘people contact’ in a meaningful way during such times as these.”

In recent months, many LCMS churches have experienced an increased need for technology to carry out their mission. Such technology can be expensive, however, and many churches — especially smaller churches and those that were already struggling prior to the pandemic — have been limited in their efforts by financial concerns. This grant



LCMS/Errik M. Lunsford

opportunity is designed to ease those limitations.

Grant recipients will be chosen by a grant committee, with preference given to congregations that:

- ▶ Demonstrate financial need;
- ▶ Show the ability to meet an unmet need with grant funds;
- ▶ Provide evidence of thoughtful planning; and

▶ Document the actual costs of desired equipment or technology.

Applications for Esther 4:14 grants will be accepted through April 5, with awards announced in May.

Visit [lcms.org/esther4-14](https://www.lcms.org/esther4-14) for more information and to submit an online application.

Synod releases statement on vaccines

On Jan. 21, LCMS President Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison sent an email to all workers on the Synod roster addressing questions and concerns about the COVID-19 vaccines that are being distributed and dispensed.

Harrison’s letter and the vaccine document are now available at [lcms.org/president](https://www.lcms.org/president) for churchwide reading and download. They address such topics as:

- ▶ Whether the currently available vaccines contain aborted human fetal tissue.

- ▶ Whether the currently available vaccines were tested using human fetal cell lines.
- ▶ Whether there is an official LCMS position on the use of COVID-19 vaccines.



In addition to providing factual information about the vaccines, Harrison’s letter offers pastoral counsel on deciding whether to receive the vaccine and talking to those with whom one disagrees.