

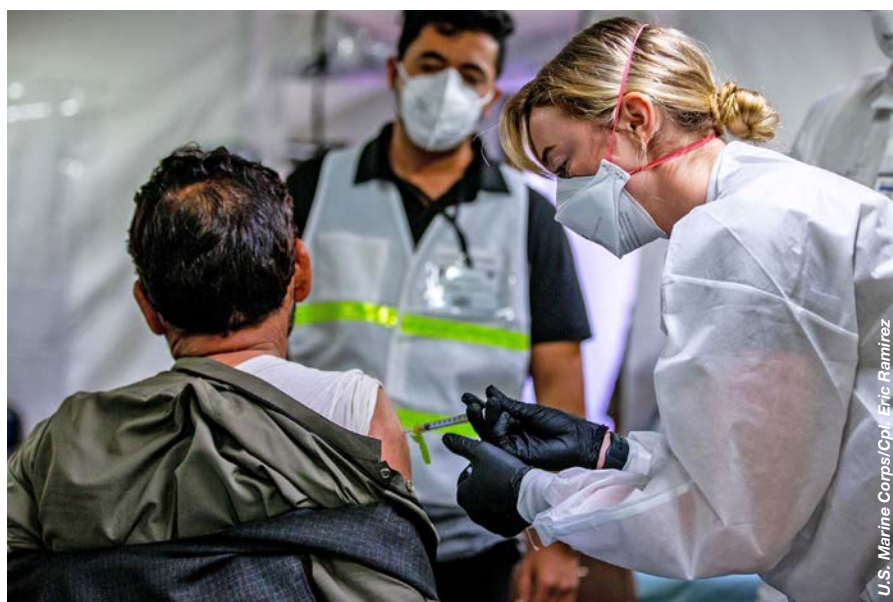


/ NOVEMBER 2021

DISTRICT NEWS

MINNESOTA SOUTH

💡 TALKING POINTS WITH PASTOR



On vaccine mandates, **CHRISTIAN LIBERTY** *and* **CHRISTIAN DUTY**

Lutherans have seldom, if ever, taken a public position on vaccinations one way or the other. We are thankful for every valid advancement in modern medicine to prevent and treat terrible diseases and sicknesses. But we tend to see vaccinations as a private matter of Christian liberty, just like everything else pertaining to personal health. Of course, we know all medical tools are imperfect and certainly no substitute for our ultimate hope and confidence in Jesus Christ alone.



Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford
District President

Lutherans hold a range of opinions on vaccines. Some resist any and all vaccinations on the grounds that God will protect us from every evil of body and soul. Others are adamantly opposed to COVID-19 vaccinations in particular. Some object on moral grounds because they were developed using aborted fetal cell lines. Others are opposed on political grounds or various other reasons. Despite official assurances about the safety of the COVID vaccines, some highlight concerns being raised by respected medical professionals, virologists and researchers. Others insist it is our Christian duty to love our neighbor by receiving a COVID-19 vaccination.

Amid the polarized positions, do we walk together in the name of Jesus? More importantly, how will we guard ourselves against slandering our neighbor, thus giving the devil a foothold to begin to destroy our faith? (Eph. 4:27)

Thus says the Lord

To begin with, where we have no “thus says the Lord,” it’s important to be clear about that and say nothing more than the Bible says. Admittedly, this is hard to do when tempers flare and panic grows.

Our nation’s severely politicized climate intensifies the question. For many, rather than simply a matter of personal health, taking the vaccination is a badge of honor and an act of moral duty toward our neighbor. Others take

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an equally strong moral stand against it and endure the subsequent consequences. This quickly creates divisions of “us” and “them,” where those who hold the opposing position now become our enemy. We may feel we need to demean them because they disagree with us. This is to Satan’s delight. Remember, each of these people is a blood-bought precious souls for whom our Lord bled and died. He loves them dearly, even as He loves you!

On the freedom of a Christian

The liberty of the individual conscience lies at the heart of our Lutheran theology. Luther wrote powerfully about this in his treatise *On the Freedom of a Christian*:

A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.

We seek to love others just as Christ loves us. Nevertheless, this is not out of compulsion, but the free choice of hearts made new in Jesus. To act against conscience, Luther reminds us, “is equivalent to acting contrary to faith and sinning grievously.” Therefore, both sides in any controversy must remember that we should not be forbidden from following a probable moral course of action in good conscience — in this case, whether to take the vaccine or not.

So when it comes to vaccine mandates, practical reason implies that vaccination is not ordinarily a moral obligation or Christian duty. It should never be coerced by guilt or shame but must be voluntary because one believes it is good for self and neighbor.

If we dare to suppress the faculty of reason in other people by invoking Christian duty — despite reasonable, legitimate and valid concerns to the contrary that burden their conscience — and replace it with our own, we risk committing spiritual abuse. Therefore, I urge caution on how we speak as



“I urge caution on how we speak as Christians regarding vaccine mandates. ... Be champions of **calm, informed, reasoned** conversation. Be advocates for Christian liberty — freedom of conscience — which always seeks to serve the neighbor in love and charity.”

Christians regarding vaccine mandates. Faith is never coerced but is the willing fruit of the Gospel. It acts out of love and not coercion. Instead, be champions of calm, informed, reasoned conversation. Be advocates for Christian liberty — freedom of conscience — which always seeks to serve the neighbor in love and charity.

What about letters of exemption?

The COVID-19 vaccine is not the only product developed using aborted fetal cell lines. Unless one objects to all such products and acts accordingly, objections to COVID vaccines on these grounds would appear to be disingenuous. Rather than making their pastors arbiters of what is right for them, conscientious objectors would be better served exercising their own personal freedoms by writing their own letters. Individual conscience has

long been a principle of our Christian faith and Lutheran theology as well the right of American citizens.

Take your stand on the truth of Christ and the good conscience He gives to those who love Him. Do your best to be patient, always caring for others — especially those who disagree with you. But above all, guard your own soul against the assaults of the evil one, who stalks about like a roaring lion, always seeking to destroy Christian love and give you a bad conscience (1 Peter 5:8).

Above all, always be confident and full of hope. Christ Jesus will lead us through this difficult time; He is the light no darkness can overcome!

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all.

**Your brother in Christ,
Pastor Woodford**

Ladies learn, serve at retreat

Women from all across the Minnesota South District gathered Sept. 17-18 for the 2021 Fall Retreat, held at Good Shepherd, Owatonna. The Bible study, “God’s Quilt of Comfort: Wrapping Up in the Psalms,” written by Diane J. Grebing, was led by Revs. Wayne Bernau (Immanuel, Courtland) and Matt Lehman (Zion, Albert Lea). With Pastor Bernau’s extensive knowledge of the Psalms and Pastor Lehman’s talent as a quilter himself, they provided connections and leadership for the studies. In attendance were 110 people, hungry to hear God’s Word and be in fellowship with one another.

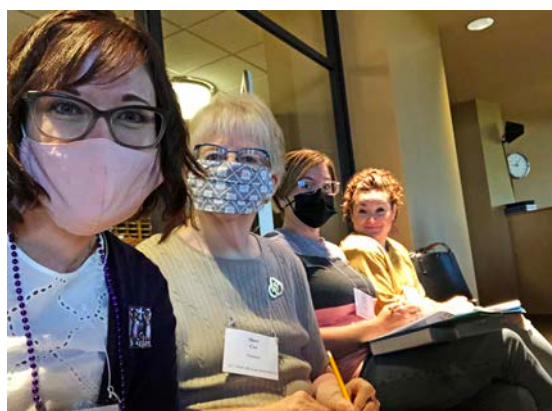
The weekend was also filled with hugs, fellowship, food, treats, hugs, coffee, coloring, faith journaling, hugs, a service project ... and a few more hugs! First and foremost, attendees were wrapped up and comforted in the promises and truths of God’s Word. They viewed incredible hand-sewn quilts beautifully displayed all around the sanctuary and learned of different quilting patterns and styles.

Attendees then used the patterns as a new way to learn and praise God: faith journaling. In the passages of the Psalms, God uses many creative writing techniques and images to comfort us. We all can see different images in our heads as we hear God’s truths and how we personally react and journal them is uniquely beautiful. There’s no wrong way to journal — just follow your heart!

For the service project on Friday, giving hearts and working hands put together 140 pony bead cross necklaces to be distributed in Operation Christmas Child boxes. Also, \$879 was collected for missions in a Mite Box, and another \$152 was raised for mites from a quilt auction for a grand total of \$1,031.

Attendees laughed, listened, learned, cried, gave, sang and praised God. It was a weekend that will be present in the hearts of many for years to come.

If you would like to do the study, it is available for free at thelc.ms/lwml-bible-study-psalms.



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.



Please send submissions to:
 ▶ communications@mnsdistrict.org
 ▶ 14301 Grand Ave. South
 Burnsville, MN 55306

Please ensure photos sent electronically are high resolution.



DISTRICT OFFICE

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CAMP TRINITY



'On your mark!'

The 42nd Annual Minnesota South District Cross Country Race was held at Camp Omega on Oct. 1. Over 250 runners from 14 Lutheran elementary schools competed. The race included divisions for both boys and girls from fifth through eighth grades.

Runners from Eagan, Roseville, Cologne, Norwood Young America, Rochester, Winona, Waconia, St. Francis, Hamburg, Corcoran, Lewiston, Chaska and Wayzata ended their conference seasons running on the trails under the canopy of the fall-colored leaves.

The girls team from Rochester Central took first place, with the team from Trinity, Waconia, finishing second. In the boys division, first place went to St. John, Chaska, while Rochester Central, and Redeemer, Wayzata, finished tied for second.



'Fore!'

Fourteen teams participated in the 18th Annual Camp Omega/Jim and Barb Kelm Memorial Campership Benefit Golf Tournament at Rich Valley Golf Club near Rosemount on Aug. 21.

In recent years, the camp has annually awarded over \$25,000 to families who need financial assistance in providing a week-long, Christ-centered camping experience for their children.

Every year since the tournament's beginning, the Ray and Rosie Rahn and Ron and Cindy Rahn families have hosted this event at Rich Valley Golf Club. This is the last year that the course will be in operation, so Camp Omega and the Minnesota South District thanks the Rahns for their support all these years.

Pictured is a father-son team, from left, Ken Anderson and his son, Jeff, and Mark Stoltenow and his son, Nathan.

Congregation mission receipts

For the period ending Sept. 30, 2021

| | |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| Actual receipts..... | \$174,710 |
| Budget receipts | <u>\$166,666</u> |
| Over (under) amount | \$8,044 |

Year-to-date receipts

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Actual receipts..... | \$1,603,290 |
| Budget receipts | <u>\$1,499,994</u> |
| Over (under) anticipated amount..... | \$103,296 |

Use of mission receipts (YTD-year to date)

| | |
|--|------------------|
| 50% remitted to Synod (YTD) | \$598,485 |
| 100% remitted to Synod (YTD) | \$67,658 |
| 50% for district operations (YTD) | \$598,485 |
| 100% for district operations (YTD) | <u>\$338,662</u> |
| Total receipts | \$1,603,290 |

Mission receipts—2021 vs. 2020

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| Mission receipts — YTD 2021 | \$1,603,290 |
| Mission receipts — YTD 2020 | <u>\$1,476,490</u> |
| Over (under) last year | \$126,800 |

2021 congregational receipts budgeted at \$2,000,000

LCEF

August 2021

| | |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| New investments | \$1,187,999 |
| Withdrawals..... | <u>\$1,906,772</u> |
| Net increase (decrease)..... | \$(718,773) |

Year-to-date July 1, 2021–Aug. 31, 2021

| | |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| New investments | \$3,359,427 |
| Withdrawals..... | <u>\$3,580,853</u> |
| Net increase (decrease)..... | \$(221,426) |