



/ AUGUST 2025

DISTRICT NEWS

MINNESOTA SOUTH

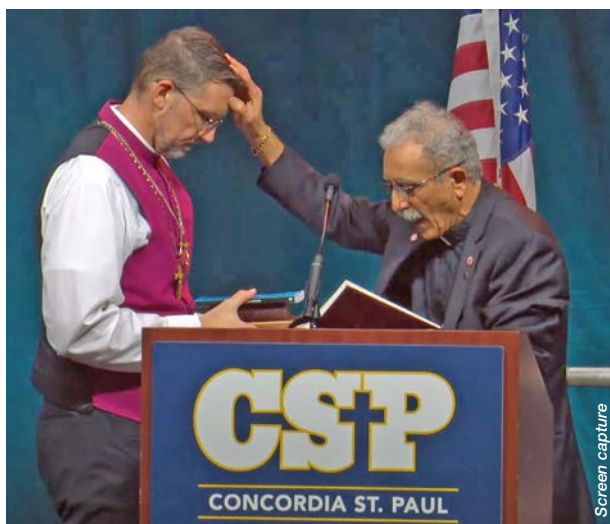
Convention WRAP-UP

By Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford
District President

The 80th convention of the Minnesota South District is in the books. It was one of special note, certainly because of all the amazing people who attended, the outstanding festival choir and worship services, the Bible studies and essayist, and our incredible host, Concordia University, St. Paul (CSP). But even more so for how efficiently and quickly the convention delegates finished their work. They basked in the convention theme “...So That...” based on John 15:16-17, emphasizing how we have been chosen in Christ Jesus “so that” we may “go” and bear abiding fruit. This the delegates took to heart!

Scheduled to meet June 12-14, the delegates wrapped up all voting and resolution debate by Friday night and voted to amend their agenda and end early with closing worship on Friday night, June 13. That is the first I have heard or seen of such action! I believe it is a testament to the proficiency and preparedness of the delegates, but also to all the hard work of those who put together and enacted the convention. Thanks be to God!

Day 1 of the convention began and ended with the highlights of the day. It kicked off with numerous interest



Rev. Dr. Nabil Nour (right), LCMS fourth vice-president, installs Pastor Woodford into his fourth term as president of the Minnesota South District.

centers to help orient delegates to their work, including a well-attended session on “How a District Convention Works.” An inspiring close to the day was the opening worship service led by Rev. Chou Vang, who served as convention chaplain, and Dr. David Mennicke, our convention music and choir director. Dr. Mennicke put together a wonderful choir, a tremendous ensemble of brass musicians, and a delightful handbell choir to accompany the beautiful singing of the convention. LCMS President Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison shared with us the Good News of Christ crucified and raised from the dead.

The work of the convention took place on Day 2. Elections were held to fill the district’s officers, board members,

and the CSP Board of Regents, and resolutions were debated throughout the day. Some of the significant resolutions delegates adopted include two financial resolutions:

- ▶ 2-01 adjusts the percentages of giving to district and Synod, and;
- ▶ 2-02A encourages congregations to add a line item to their budgets to increase giving to the district.

There were also two significant resolutions regarding the governance of the district (resolutions 4-01 and 4-02) — to update the governance model for the Minnesota South Board of Directors to fall in line with the practice of the Synod Board of Directors.

Our time together was not only work. A reception sponsored by CSP and Lutheran Church Extension Fund allowed for wonderful fellowship and networking in a new and well-received layout of the convention and vendor floor plan. Along the way, when there was a rare lull in the action, I was able to keep everyone’s spirits lively with a bevy of dad jokes, complete with groaners and sighing.

Indeed, we are chosen in Christ “so that”

See **SO THAT**, Page 5

ORDINATIONS/INSTALLATIONS



Dr. Kathryn Rolf was installed as director of Parish Music at St. John, Chaska, on June 1.



Rev. Michael Harman was installed as pastor of St. John's, Gaylord, on June 8. Pictured are, from left, (front row) Revs. Eric Rapp, Michael Harman, Fred Hinz; (back row) Karl Grant, Craig McCourt, Tyson Mastin and Harold Storm.

Rev. Bradley Zerkel was installed as Transitional Interim Pastor of Zion, Mayer, on June 8. Pastor Zerkel (center) is pictured with Revs. Stefan Wismar (left) and Andrew Mussell (Zion associate pastor).



Rev. Kenneth Hsu was installed as pastor of Lutheran Church of Our Savior, Rosemount, on June 29. Pastor Hsu (center) is pictured with Revs. Stephen Link (left) and Pat Simmons.

Rev. Michael Ewert was ordained and installed as assistant pastor of First Evangelical Lutheran Church, Glencoe, on June 22. Pictured are, from left (front) Revs. Michael Harman, Joshua Arndt, Dan Welch (First senior pastor), Michael Ewert, Mark Loder, Tyson Mastin; (back) Joseph Barlau, Jon Niebuhr, Craig McCourt, R. Allan Reed and Jeff Miller.



ORDINATIONS/INSTALLATIONS

Rev. Eric Obermann was installed as pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church and School, Lakefield, on June 22. Pictured are, from left, Revs. Noel Herr, John Schuetz, Jeff Sage, Adam Jacobsen, Joshua Obermann (Eric's brother), David Petrich, Eric Obermann, Shawn Ethridge, David Hahn, Dale Hedstrom, Paul Sajban and Glenn Bohmer.



Rev. Mark Esser was ordained at Zion, Mayer, his home congregation, on June 28. A recent Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, graduate, Rev. Esser will serve as pastor of New Thing Lutheran Church, Towson, Md. Pictured are, from left (front row) Revs. Dr. Peter Meier, Dr. Ryan Tinetti, Benjamin Leeper, Mark Esser, Stefan Wismar, Andrew Mussell; (middle row) Thomas Evans, Dean Mahlum, Aaron Beckman; (back row) Bradley Zerkel, Joseph Eggerman, Peter Couser and Joshua Parrish.



Rev. Dylan Meyer was ordained at St. John's, Buffalo, his home congregation, on June 29. A recent Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, graduate, Rev. Esser will serve as associate pastor of St. Andrew, West Fargo, N.D. Pictured are, from left, Revs. Mark Loder, Andrew Mussell, Aaron Beckman, Ryan Clark, Dylan Meyer, Dave Taylor, Clark Jahnke, Kyle Johnson and Chris Ryan.

Welcome to the staff!

Meet **Jolene Peterman**, the new district treasurer/business manager

In this role, Jolene maintains accurate books of the properties and finances and disburses corporate funds in the name of the district as ordered by the Board of Directors. Jolene is a graduate of Marian University in Fond du Lac, Wis., and has a degree in accounting, with a minor in Spanish (2000). She also holds a Master of Business Administration from Keller Graduate School (2006) and is a Certified Public Accountant in Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Jolene is wife to Kyle, and mother to Henry and Raina. She enjoys watching Henry participate on the St. John's Lutheran School, Corcoran, cross county, soccer, basketball and bowling

teams, and watching Raina participate on the volleyball and basketball teams. In the spring, summer and fall, you will find Jolene coaching Raina's travel softball team. Aside from watching sports, Jolene enjoys hiking, biking, cooking, spending time with friends and family, and traveling within the United States and in Europe.

We're excited to have Jolene join our team! Please pray for God's blessings upon her and her family as she begins this new role.



Rev. Dr. David Preuss celebrated his 60th ordination anniversary at Our Savior's, Eyota, on May 18. His actual ordination date is June 6. We thank and praise God for his many years of service in His Kingdom!

Pictured are, from left, (front) Rev. Bill Pieper, Bette and Rev. Dr. David Preuss, Rev. John Fuchs; (back) Rev. Jon Vollrath (Our Savior's pastor), Rev. Dr. James Heining and Rev. Vue Lee.



LEFT: **Melissa Lamkin** was recognized as Minnesota's Outstanding School Administrator and Outstanding High School Teacher. She serves Good Shepherd Lutheran High School, Otsego. RIGHT: **Rev. Timothy Lamkin** (Melissa's father-in-law) was recognized as the Outstanding School Shepherd. He serves Zion, Crown. They are pictured with Sean Martens, district Assistant to the President for Education.



Tom Marcsisak, principal and teacher at Zion Lutheran School, Cologne, was the recipient of the FOX 9 Top Teacher award. He has taught at Zion for 44 years!

SO THAT

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

we may “go” and bear abundant fruit. To that end, the *Go First!* initiative was set forward, highlighting the upcoming *Go First!* conference to be held Sept. 26-27 at Redemption, Bloomington (mnsdistrict.org/go-first-initiative). I encourage everyone to attend — it is an example of how we can collaboratively *Go First!* I hope to see you there!

At the conclusion of our time together, I received numerous wonderful compliments from many first-time convention goers about their experience, some even saying they had “loads of fun” rejoicing in the camaraderie and their overall experience. For all of this and so much more, I give thanks to God!

What a joy it is to have the privilege and honor of serving this beloved district for another three years as district president. We have some challenges ahead, to be sure, including struggling congregations, closing congregations, and an increasing unbelieving culture that is hostile to the faith. But we are in this together. Don’t lose heart! We have so many wonderful church workers and congregations standing firm, proclaiming the Gospel, caring for souls, and reaching the lost.

In other words, we are a *Go First!* people because we have a *Go First!* Lord. He promises the gates of hell will not prevail against His church (Matt. 16:18). Jesus goes first! He went first — from heaven to earth, from death to life, from servant to Savior — to win for us the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. And because He *goes first*, He inspires us to do the same so that we may bear abundant fruit.

Election results

District President—Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford

Vice-Presidents

- Rev. Dr. Joshua Miller (Region 1, 3rd VP)
- Rev. Dr. Brent Parrish (Region 2, 2nd VP)
- Rev. Jonathan Vollrath (Region 3, 4th VP)
- Rev. Mark Loder (Region 4, 1st VP)

District Secretary—Rev. Brian Thorson

Board of Directors

Ordained Ministers

- Region 1: Rev. Kurt Klaus
- Region 2: Rev. Matthew Johnson
- Region 3: Rev. Greg Schlicker
- Region 4: Rev. James “J.J.” Stefanik

Commissioned Ministers

- Michael Harvey, Jay Schutte

Lay Members

- East Metro North: Alfrieda Baldwin
- East Metro South: Open
- West Metro East: Calvin Kuhlman
- West Metro West: Bill Lindig
- Southeast MN East: Open
- Southeast MN West: David Ruhnke
- Southwest MN East: David Koosman
- Southwest MN West: Daniel Uttech

Board Of Regents,

Concordia University St. Paul

Ordained Minister—Rev. Keith Grimm

Commissioned Minister—Dr. Marilyn Reineck

Lay members—Dr. Lori Utech, Roger Lindahl

2028 District Nominations Committee

Ordained Ministers

- Rev. Dr. Christian Einertson,
- Rev. Dr. Lowell Sorenson, Rev. Dr. Joshua Miller,
- Rev. Greg Volbrecht

Commissioned Minister—Kristi Bauer

Lay Members—Christian Preus, Ben Hagemann, Paul Gehlbach, Thomas Koch

Adopted Resolutions

Floor Committee 1, Theology and Missions

- Resolution 1-03: To Open Access to the Lutheran Confessions.

Floor Committee 2, Finance and Stewardship

- Resolution 2-01: To Amend the MN South District Donation Distributions.
- Resolution 2-02: To Encourage Each Congregation to Review and Look to Strengthen its Financial Commitment to the MN South District, as Synod of this place, of the LCMS.

Floor Committee 3: Life Together

- Resolution 3-01: To Support Our Faithful Minnesota Teachers and Parents of School-Age (K-12) Children.
- Resolution 3-02: To Celebrate Progress and to Encourage Increasing Faithfulness in Offering Every Sunday Communion.
- Resolution 3-03A To Recruit and to Promote Church Musicians.

Floor Committee 4, Governance and Administration

- Resolution 4-01: To Amend the MN South District Articles of Incorporation.
- Resolution 4-02 To Amend the Bylaws of the MN South District.
- Resolution 4-03A To Support and Clarify the Prior Approval Process for Theological Faculty and Presidential Candidates for the Concordia University System.

Omnibus Resolution C (these six overtures were declined)

- Overture 1-01: To Encourage our Seminaries to Make Available a Non-Residential Master of Divinity Degree.
- Overture 1-02: To Fill Pastoral vacancies
- Overture 2-04: To Establish and Fund the Strategic Initiative Grant Program for Lutheran Elementary and High Schools of the Minnesota South (MNS) District of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod.
- Overture 2-05: To Discontinue Maddens.
- Overture 3-02: To Assess and Evaluate the Effectiveness of the Synod’s Triennial Mission and Ministry Emphasis.
- Overture 3-04: To Memorialize the Synod to Call Retired Pastors for Who Regularly Administer the Word and Sacrament Tasks.

The Circuit Visitors who were previously elected and then ratified at the convention for the next triennium are:

- Circuit 1, Northeast Suburban—Rev. Paul Strawn
- Circuit 2, St. Paul East Metro—Rev. Steven Bielenberg
- Circuit 3, St. Croix River—Rev. Tim Heinecke
- Circuit 4, Southeast Suburban — Rev. Joel Vano
- Circuit 5, Northwest Suburban — Rev. Steven Jones
- Circuit 6, Minneapolis Metro — Rev. William Hugo
- Circuit 7, Southwest Suburban — Vacant
- Circuit 8, Lake Minnetonka—Rev. Randall Neal
- Circuit 9, North Carver County—Rev. David Hormann
- Circuit 10, South Carver County—Rev. Toby Schmidt
- Circuit 11, Lake Pepin—Rev. Lowell Sorenson
- Circuit 12, Winona—Rev. Ryan Eden
- Circuit 13, Rochester—Rev. Justin Kumfer
- Circuit 14, Austin—Rev. Jesse Krusemark
- Circuit 15, Waseca—Rev. Weslie Odom
- Circuit 16, Faribault—Rev. Dr. Brent Klein
- Circuit 17, Litchfield—Rev. Michael Trask
- Circuit 18, McLeod—Rev. Russell Reed
- Circuit 19, Arlington—Rev. Karl Grant
- Circuit 20, Mankato—Rev. Adam Finney
- Circuit 21, Blue Earth—Rev. Anthony Bertram
- Circuit 22, Sherburn—Rev. Rick Bremseth
- Circuit 23, Worthington—Rev. Adam Jacobsen
- Circuit 24, Pipestone—Rev. Shawn Ethridge

The mission offering taken at the Opening Worship service will go toward the Educator Faithful Formation Fund, which will assist non-rostered educators in our Lutheran schools, especially our early learning centers, in receiving appropriate Lutheran-centered training that will put them in a position to pursue colloquy and be an LCMS rostered church worker. The total mission offering was \$4,090! Thank you for your generosity!

Congratulations!

The first- and second-place winners of the Lutherans For Life 2025 national essay contest in both grade categories are from Minnesota South District Lutheran schools. Kudos to our students, parents and teachers for their encouragement on life issues!

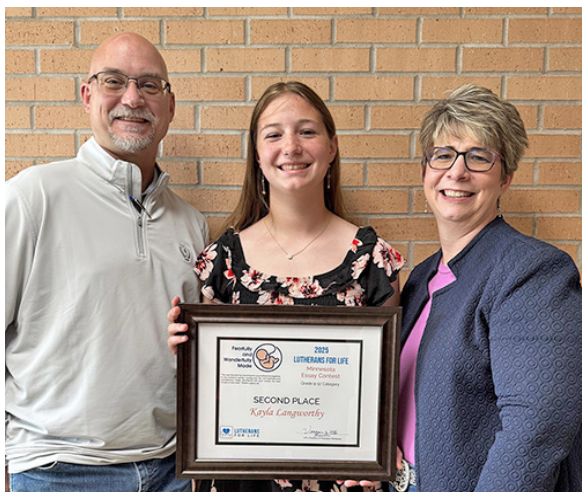
This annual contest provides students in grades 6-8 and 9-12 with the opportunity to affirm and express their belief in the sanctity of life. The theme for 2025 was “Fearfully and Wonderfully Made,” based on Psalm 139:13-14: “For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.”



Casey J. Steiner, a freshman at Mayer Lutheran High School, Mayer, is the national first-place winner in grades 9-12. Casey’s essay is titled “A Chance to be Knit,” in which she wrote about a relative’s blessing of embryo adoption. She is pictured with her parents, Matt and Bethany Steiner.



Alexa Ulanoski, an eighth-grade student at St. John’s Lutheran School, Chaska, is the national first-place winner in grades 6-8. Alexa’s essay is titled “God’s Choice, My Story,” in which she wrote about her story of being adopted from China. She is pictured with her parents, Stephen and Tracy Ulanoski.



Kayla Langworthy, a freshman at Mayer Lutheran High School, Mayer, won second place in grades 9-12 for her essay titled “Unwanted to Love.” Kayla wrote about her adopted cousin who overcame disabilities. Kayla is pictured with her parents, Tom and Kris Langworthy.



Jacob Bouma, a seventh-grader at Zion Lutheran School, Mayer, won second place in grades 6-8 for his essay, “God’s Plan for Us.” The essay focused on choosing life for the baby. Jacob is pictured with his mother, Shannon Bouma.

NOT PICTURED: **Alyssa Hahn**, a high school senior from Messiah Lutheran Church, Lakeville, won third place in grades 9-12 for her essay, “Fearfully and Wonderfully Made: Abortion Lies and Truth.”



Growing in Grace

By Wendy Sjoblom

Vice-President of Communication,
LWML Minnesota South District

I live in a tiny rural town in southwest Minnesota. All around I see fields of green as the corn and soybeans are growing. Due to some chilly weather and a lack of precipitation, the crops seem to be a bit shorter than usual. However, the crops are still growing despite the less than stellar conditions.

In March, I gave birth to my second child. He has been growing so fast and changes almost daily. My toddler also seems to have recently gone through a growth spurt and I find myself constantly switching clothing sizes to accommodate all the physical growth happening in my house.

In June, I was busy preparing to attend the 41st Biennial LWML Convention, “Growing in God’s Grace,” in Omaha, Neb. The focus verse was 2 Peter 3:18 — “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.” I look forward to continuing to grow in grace and faith as the days seem to spin by faster and faster.

It is comforting to know that God is responsible for all of the growth around me and always will be. The LWML convention was a fulfilling experience, and I am grateful to be able to grow in God’s grace with all of my fellow LWML sisters and support the wonderful mission work being accomplished to joyfully proclaim Christ around the world through our mite offerings.

Speaking of mite offerings, the Lutheran Women in Mission of the Minnesota South District received \$31,439 for mites in the fourth quarter of the 2024-2026 biennium. Of that amount, \$7,860 will support the national LWML Mission Grants. The LWML Minnesota South District disbursed \$23,580 to 12 Mission Grants, completely funding Bibles and Catechisms for Haitian students (#10). The 11 remaining Mission Grant recipients received \$990 to \$4,000. The next mite distribution will be in August.

If you need some encouragement or tools to help you grow in grace, please check out the free resources available to you at mnskwml.org and lwml.org.

WANTED:

Mission Grant Proposals

By Beth Schuster

Vice-President of Gospel Outreach,
LWML Minnesota South District

Now is the time to submit a Mission Grant application for the 2026-2028 biennium.

Who should consider applying for a Mission Grant? Individual LWML members, groups, zones, conferences or LCMS-affiliated organizations are welcome to submit a proposal.

As you prayerfully consider whether to apply on behalf of an organization, school, church, missionary or another entity, ask yourself if the following criteria can be met:

- Is it mission in emphasis, extending the ministry of God’s Word? The Gospel must be the focus of any mission project we support.
- Does it fit into the plans and projections of the LCMS? Is there a Lutheran identity in the teachings, materials and work?
- Does it have a governing unit, such as a partner church, LCMS district, or Recognized Service Organization to which the ministry project regularly reports?
- Is it current and ready for implementation? Is the project able to sustain service to the people it serves following completion of the grant?

Here are several other things to consider:

- ▶ The Mission Grant application process is only the first step. Once all applications are received on or before Jan. 5, 2026, the Gospel Outreach Committee meets to prayerfully consider each application that meet the criteria. Input from our district and Synod mission leaders, our district pastoral counselors, District President Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford, and District LWML President Lisa Kamrath help guide the process as well.
- ▶ Those applications that pass this first step will be placed on the ballot at the 31st Biennial LWML Minnesota South District Convention, to be held June 18-20, 2026. Voting delegates will select the Mission Grants to support, based on input from their groups and zones.
- ▶ Finally, those Mission Grants with the most votes, which fit within our approved Mission Grant goal (dollar amount) for the next biennium will be funded over the course of two years by our mite offerings.

You can obtain the application and instruction forms at mnskwml.org. Click the “Missions” tab, and then click “Mission Grant Proposal” to access both forms. The completed proposal must be sent by email or postal mail prior to the Jan. 5, 2026 postmark deadline.

For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift! **2 COR. 9:12-15**

Go first for Go First!

By Dr. Phillip Johnson

Assistant to the President, Mission Formation, Minnesota South District

Here is your chance to *Go First!* As many of you already know, Sept. 26-27 are the dates of our Minnesota South District *Go First!* Ministry Conference. The congregations of the SW Metro Circuit are joining together to host this event. Redemption, Bloomington, will be the site of the conference, but congregations from Bloomington, Edina and Prior Lake will work together to make this a truly special event.

In preparation for the conference, Cross View Lutheran Church, Edina, is coordinating a servant event titled “Taking Care of the Twin Cities (TC),” to be held on Sunday, Aug. 24. For more than seven years, Cross View has invited its own members and those of other congregations to join together for a day of service to the surrounding communities. This year a primary focus of (TC)2 will be focused on helping prepare Redemption



Lutheran Church to prepare its site for the *Go First!* Ministry Conference, and you are invited to be part of the fun!

Opening worship and lunch will be provided at both Cross View and Redemption. Then, from 12:30 to 5 p.m., teams of volunteers will work together to get Redemption’s building ready to host the big event. There will be opportunities for all interests and skill levels, from painting to cleaning and washing to gardening, people from all across the SW Metro Circuit and beyond are invited!

After all the work is done, we will share

a picnic meal together along with a closing devotion. This is your opportunity to get to know brothers and sisters from other congregations as you work together to host people from all across the district. The event is open to all ages. Youth who are entering ninth grade and above may register without an adult, while younger volunteers must register with an adult.

Please register by Aug. 17. Scan the QR code for more information about the event.



We look forward to seeing you on Aug. 24 as together we *Go First!* — for the *Go First!* Ministry Conference!

Congregation mission receipts

For the period ending June 30, 2025 (unaudited)

Actual receipts.....	\$136,610
Budget receipts	<u>\$170,833</u>
Over (under) amount	(\$34,223)

Year-to-date receipts

Actual receipts.....	\$936,087
Budget receipts	<u>\$1,024,998</u>
Over (under) anticipated amount.....	(\$88,911)

Use of mission receipts (year to date)

50% designated to district and Synod.....	\$684,060
100% designated to district.....	\$216,416
100% designated to Synod operations.....	<u>\$35,612</u>
Total receipts	\$936,088

Mission receipts—2025 vs. 2024

Mission receipts — YTD 2025	\$936,087
Mission receipts — YTD 2024	<u>\$922,833</u>
Over (under) last year	\$13,254

2025 congregational receipts budgeted — \$2,050,000 (does not include designated to Synod)

Novelli to present at First



Rev. Germán Novelli is pictured preaching at the LCMS Hispanic national convention in 2022.

You are invited to attend a presentation by Rev. Germán Novelli, speaker of the Spanish Lutheran Hour, “Para el Camino,” on Saturday, Sept. 27, at First Evangelical Lutheran Church, Glencoe. Doors open at 4:15 p.m.; a “light meal” will be served at 5.

The event is free, and all are welcome. Your freewill offering will support the 2026 Lutheran Hour broadcasts on KDUZ (1260 AM) in Hutchinson. RSVPs by Sept. 19 are appreciated (in order to have enough food ready), but not mandatory.

Contact First Lutheran at 320-864-5522 or office@firstglencoe.org to make a reservation. For more information, contact Rich Streufert at 320-864-6884 or richstreufert@embarkmail.com. First Evangelical is located at 925 13th St. East.

And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness.

ACTS 4:29

DISTRICT OFFICE

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