

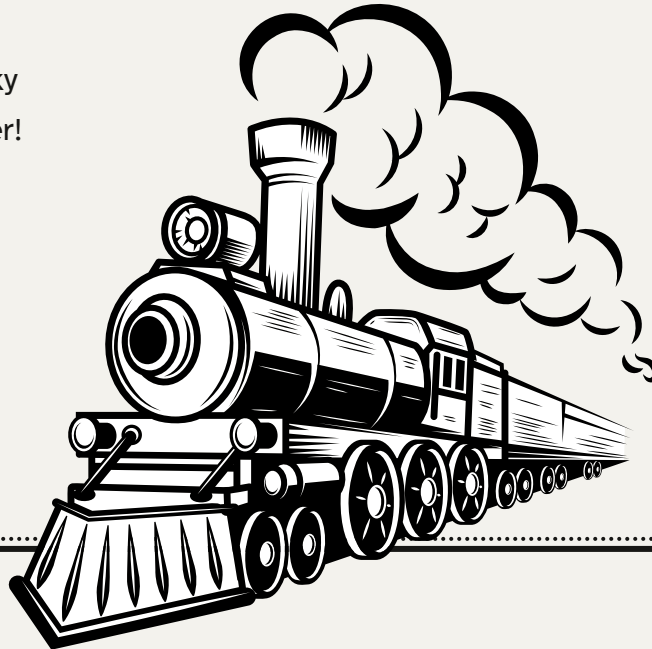
# Rocky Mountain Express

October 2025

Welcome to the LCMS Rocky Mountain District Newsletter!

In this issue you will find...

- A Note from the President
- Ministry Highlights
- 2025 Award Recipients
- Upcoming Events
- Around the District
- Extras



## A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

In the month of October, we as Lutherans celebrate that we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus as it is revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures! We remember that we are not saved because of our works, but faith in Jesus! I've never thought, however, just how much faith those in Luther's day truly had. It wasn't just that they realized they were saved because of Jesus, but in the face of all the trials and persecutions they encountered,

their faith was present in a way we don't usually consider, yet still a gift of the Holy Spirit.

In our day, as we continue to encounter much change around us, political instability, myriads of things in our personal lives that necessitate change and cause unrest, do we also have faith? And when we think about all which causes us anxiety, do we have enough faith?

Once when Luther was asked this question, "Do I have enough faith?" he responded that just by asking the question we do. May your faith and your hearts be settled today my brothers and sisters knowing that you are redeemed by Jesus. And thanks be to God that you don't contribute. He does it all.

In His service,  
James B. Maxwell



## MISSIONARY HIGHLIGHT

October 2025

**Makia Adler**

Serving the Lord in  
Latin America and  
Caribbean Region

Makia Adler serves the Lord through The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) as a missionary in the Latin America and the Caribbean region, based in Belize. As a volunteer coordinator, she provides support for all short-term volunteers serving in the country. This includes assisting with every step of the process, from recruitment to on-the-ground logistics to future ways to serve once volunteers wrap up their service. Makia also serves as a resource for any LCMS team or individual member working in Belize. Through this work, she seeks to equip all LCMS volunteers for effective service.

Makia is from Wray, Colo., where she attends Calvary Lutheran Church. In May 2025, she graduated from the University of South Dakota with a Bachelor of Science degree in sociology and psychology, with a specialization in disaster response. In college, she worked as a student ambassador for the Admissions Department and as a residence assistant. She also worked as an assistant agricultural manager at Adler Farms from 2017 until 2025. Makia's desire to serve on the international mission field developed during a variety of short-term mission experiences, including shadowing an LCMS missionary in Europe (2024) and serving on mission trips to the Dominican Republic (2022 and 2023) and Thailand (2024). In her free time, Makia loves reading, crocheting and growing plants.

Pray for Makia as she serves in the Latin America and the Caribbean region. Pray for her safety and that she would learn Spanish quickly in order to communicate effectively in her new country of residence. Give thanks to God for the faithful service of those who volunteer their time, talents and treasure in support of LCMS mission efforts in this part of the world.

To sign up for Makia's newsletter, click [here](#)

To support Makia in her ministry, click [here](#)



# EDUCATOR HIGHLIGHT

October 2025

## Gwen Marshall

### Early Childhood Director at Trinity-Greeley RM District Early Childhood Consultant

My name is Gwen Marshall. I'm originally from western Nebraska, but my family moved to Fort Collins in the late 70's. Colorado became my summer home when I was in college.

I'm a graduate of St. John's College, Winfield, KS and this is my 44th year as an educator (40 of them have been in Lutheran schools). My first call was to First Lutheran in Ponca City, OK, then I became part of the start-up staff at Tulsa Lutheran School.



In 1985, I moved to the Rocky Mountain District. My next call was to Mt. Zion in Boulder. While I was there, I became part of the RMD School Ministry Committee and have served with that group for all but 5 of the past 37 years. I have the privilege of representing our District at synodical events as the Early Childhood Consultant. I have also been very involved as a captain and consultant for National Lutheran School Accreditation.

I was director/teacher at Trinity Lutheran in Denver for 25 years. In my final years there, I had the privilege of having "grand-students" – children of my former students. I also had over a dozen former preschool students come work for me when they were in high school or college.

In 2018, I moved to Greeley to be nearer my family and joined the staff of Trinity Lutheran Church & School. I'm still a teaching director – so there are still lots of challenges to keep me fresh and engaged. My current big project is getting Colorado Shines to recognize National Lutheran School Accreditation as an alternate method of getting a quality rating. As soon as that happens, I will lead my school through the latest version of the NLSA early childhood instrument.

Shortly after I moved to Greeley, all of my family members moved away. I still love Colorado and have a wonderful circle of friends here and want to stay forever. I fill any free time with cooking or following my favorite sports teams. In homage to my childhood home, I still wear red most Saturdays and follow the football and volleyball teams. I was a Rockies season ticket holder for 25 years. I love the Colorado Avalanche and have been to all three Stanley Cup Champion parades (and I need another one in 2026).

## 2025 AWARD RECIPIENTS

October 2025

**Called Upward**  
Rocky Mountain District Conference 2025  
Phil. 3:12-14



EARLY CHILDHOOD  
DIRECTOR  
**SAMI WHITE**

Beautiful Savior - Broomfield



### Attributes of Sami:

Sami is always present with kind and gentle words of encouragement. Sami uses the Word of the Lord in her conversations and is always helpful and encouraging to those she supports. She is very involved in the Broomfield Early Childcare Council

EDUCATOR

**CONNIE JOHNSON**

PWC- Aurora



### Attributes of Connie:

Connie is able to weave prayer, scripture and faith into conversations she has with both her students and their families. She is tireless in her pursuit of excellence and invests far beyond her teaching role. She is a loving mentor and strives to reflect Christ's love in both word and action.

SCHOOL SHEPHERD  
**PASTOR MICHAEL REDEKER**

Lutheran Church and School of Messiah at  
Grand Junction, Colorado



ADMINISTRATOR

**CHERYL GILBERT**

Immanuel - Loveland



### Attributes of Cheryl:

Cheryl provides spiritual leadership in countless ways. She points students, staff, and families to the truth that they are loved children of God. She is a strong encourager and is a welcoming presence.

DCE

**CASSIE SCHERMBECK**

Our Father - Centennial



### Attributes of Cassie:

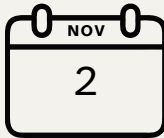
Cassie strives for excellence in numerous ways, through faithful service and care for those she serves. Cassie engages both in her church family and the broader community to share the love of Jesus.



# UPCOMING EVENTS

October 2025

## Grace Lutheran's 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Organ Service of Thanksgiving and Praise



Date: Nov. 2, 2025 at 4:00 pm  
(fellowship reception to follow)

Location:

Grace Lutheran Church,  
11135 Newlin Gulch Blvd.  
Parker, Colorado 80134  
303-840-5493

Grace Lutheran Church, Parker is blessed to feature Dr. Jeffrey Blersch of Concordia University at our second annual organ concert on the four-manual Rodgers Infinity 480. Dr. Blersch will be playing some of his original hymn introductions and interpretations as well as various organ literature. You won't want to miss this wonderful opportunity to listen and worship with this gifted composer and organist IN PERSON in our area, on the bench of a fantastic instrument!!!

Jeffrey Blersch is a nationally recognized organist, choral conductor, and composer of music for the church. He serves as Professor of Music at Concordia University, Nebraska, a position he has held since 2002, where he teaches organ, courses in music theory, composition, arranging, and is the conductor of the Cantamus Women's Choir. He is a graduate of the Oberlin College Conservatory of Music where he received degrees in organ performance and music education, and of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, where he earned the Doctor of Musical Arts in Organ Performance. His principal teachers have included Roberta Gary, Garth Peacock, and Marilyn Mason.

Best known for his creative hymn interpretations, he regularly performs hymn festivals and recitals across the United States. Performances have included conventions of the American Guild of Organists, Association of Lutheran Church Musicians, and National Association of Pastoral Musicians, as well as the Meyerson Symphony Center, Dallas, and the Kauffman Center, Kansas City. His performances have been featured on American Public Media's Pipedreams, and The Lutheran Hour.



Blersch has been an active church musician since being appointed organist of Peace Lutheran Church, Cincinnati, Ohio at age eight. His organ, choral, and piano compositions and collections, which number over 300 titles, are published with Concordia Publishing House and Northwestern Publishing House, and his original hymn tunes have been included in three hymnals, including Lutheran Service Book. He has released two compact disc recordings of his own compositions and arrangements, Resounding Alleluias, and On Christmas Night, and two Eps, Piano Duets for Christmas and Piano Duets for Easter on major streaming services.

Prior to his appointment at Concordia, Dr. Blersch served as Cantor of Trinity Lutheran Church, Peoria, IL, Associate Professor of Music and Director of Choral Activities at Concordia University, Ann Arbor, MI, and as an elementary music specialist in the Brunswick City Schools, Brunswick, Ohio. Jeff has served as a national director at large on the board of the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians and currently serves as Dean of the Lincoln Chapter of the American Guild of Organists. Jeff and his wife Carla, also an organist, have three grown children, Aaron, Ryan, and Jenna.

For more upcoming events please  
visit the [RMD Events website](https://www.rm.lcms.org/events)



## AROUND THE DISTRICT

October 2025

# CHURCH WORKER APPRECIATION

On Oct. 12, we begin our year of church worker appreciation by thanking God for our pastors, who stand in the stead of Christ as they bring us His gifts of Word and Sacrament.

On Oct. 25, we continue our year of church worker appreciation by thanking God for four commissioned (auxiliary) offices that support the work of the Holy Ministry: Deaconess, Director of Family Life, Director of Christian Outreach and Director of Church Ministries.

## OCTOBER 2025

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
28	29	30	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	1

Click [here](#) for more ways to show appreciation for those who serve our church or school community



## AROUND THE DISTRICT

October 2025



**LUTHERANS  
FOR LIFE**

Since its humble beginnings in 1979, God has richly blessed the work of Lutherans For Life (LFL) and expanded its outreach efforts to include three vital ministry departments:

Word of Hope  
Y4Life  
Volunteer Relations

Through the dedication of our amazing teams and the tireless efforts of our executive and support staff, LFL has empowered thousands of congregations and tens of thousands of youth and adults to become Gospel-motivated voices For Life.

This year, financial donations and ministry gifts for Lutherans For Life are down. So, the development department of LFL created a friendly and "somewhat competitive" Lutherans For Life National Conference fundraising campaign—Changing Hearts Together—to raise \$10,000 for the vital work of LFL.

Participants were divided into four teams and assigned a color, name, and LFL director to foster a sense of camaraderie and competition.

Team Faith (yellow) was led by Michelle Bauman, Director of Y4Life.

Team Hope (purple) was under the guidance of Chrissie Gillet, Director of Word of Hope.

Team Love (red) was led by Michele Hartshorn, Assistant Director of Volunteer Relations, and Marie Fenske.

Team Life (blue) was represented by David Probst, Director of Development.

The objective of our Changing Hearts Together fundraiser campaign was for each team to raise the highest total donations of all four teams before the end of the banquet on Thursday evening. To encourage participation, members of the winning team would receive an LFL gift bag with life-affirming resources. Plus, our Executive Director, Rev. Dr. Aric Fenske, agreed to eat breaded and deep-fried Rocky Mountain Oysters if the \$10,000 fundraising goal was met.

Thanks to the generosity of our conference participants, the Changing Hearts Together fundraising campaign was an amazing success! In total, 215 conference attendees contributed 85 gifts, exceeding our initial \$10,000 goal by Wednesday afternoon and surpassing \$15,000 by Thursday afternoon. By the end of the conference on Friday morning, we had reached an incredible total of over \$22,400! To top things off, the President of the LCMS Rocky Mountain District, Rev. James Maxwell, and David Probst, Director of Development for LFL, joined Rev. Dr. Fenske in eating the Rocky Mountain Oysters!



The Changing Hearts Together fundraising campaign was a tremendous success because of the ministry partnership and unwavering commitment our participants had to Lutherans For Life and our mission to equip Lutherans and their neighbors to be Gospel-motivated voices For Life.

Your support of thoughts, prayers, and generous gifts are allowing us to continue our efforts to proclaim the truth that all human life is created by God, redeemed by Jesus Christ, and called by the Holy Spirit.

You can still help by clicking on [this link](#).  
Or you can mail a donation to:

Lutherans For Life  
1101 5th Street  
Nevada, IA 50201-1816



# AROUND THE DISTRICT

October 2025



## Two Podcasts. One Goal.

Stronger Church Workers and Ministries



**Ministry Moments Podcast**  
Real conversations about vision,  
planning and ministry health.  
[lcef.org/forward](https://lcef.org/forward)



**Grace Place Podcast**  
Candid stories and spiritual  
encouragement for church workers.  
[lcef.org/listen](https://lcef.org/listen)



## Lutheran Church Extension Fund

### Podcasts Links

[Ministry Moments Podcast](#)

[Grace Place Podcast](#)



Back in July, Pr. Gary Piepkorn celebrated his retirement. He served in New Mexico and was on the Board for the District many years ago. We give praise to God for his ministry!



Left to right: Bill Schneider, Warren Graff, Jason Rust, Bill Heithold, retiree Gary Piepkorn, Tom Reeder, Scott Blazek, Will Rose, Brian Flamme



God gives His church pastors and church workers for the sake of the Gospel. Pastors proclaim Christ and administer the Sacraments, means through which people receive Christ's saving work. Church workers assist the pastoral office in service to the Word, witnessing to Christ daily in various roles. Christ's church will continue until He returns, and that church will continue to need workers.

Parents/grandparents, pastors, professional church workers, Sunday school teachers and others in your congregation help influence children to consider serving the church in these sacred and joyful vocations. **Set Apart to Serve (SAS)** is an initiative of the LCMS to recruit church workers. Since church work is rooted in Baptism and a lifetime of hearing the Word, SAS encourages young people to consider church work vocations primarily through their continued and faithful involvement with their congregation.



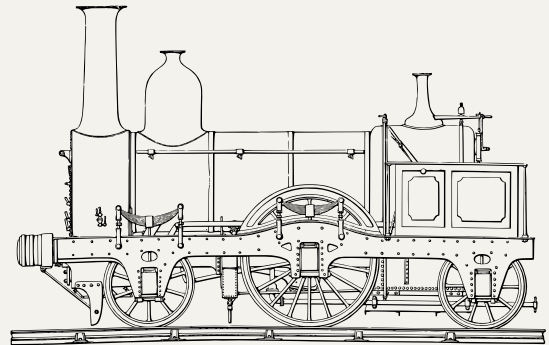


# EXTRAS

*October 2025*

To update your roster paperwork, or if you have any other questions, please contact  
Ms. Monique Hjalmsquist  
monique@rm.lcms.org  
Administrative Assistant to  
Rev. James Maxwell, District President  
Rev. Paul Albers, District Education  
Executive

To see any current vacancies within the District, please click [here](#)



## Contact Information

### **Newsletter Deadline - First of Each Month**

Send news to  
communications@rm.lcms.org

To contact the Rocky Mountain  
District, please email  
info@rm.lcms.org