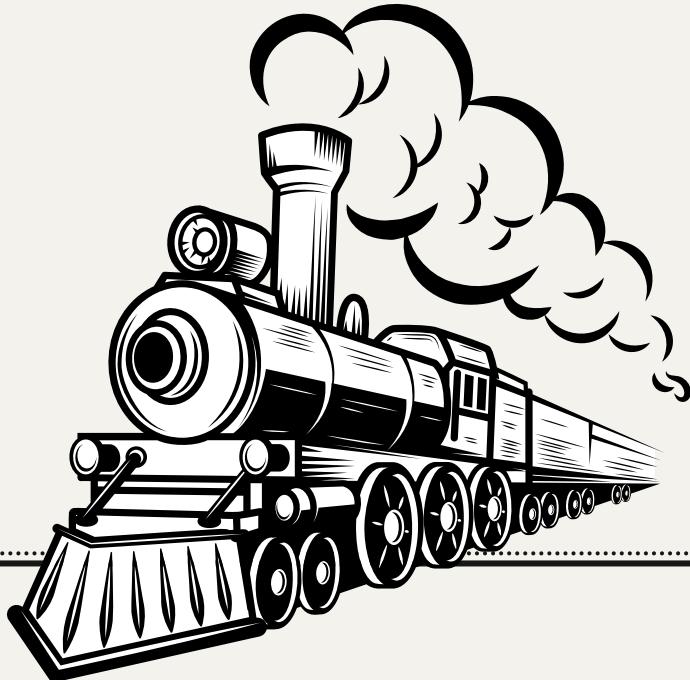


# Rocky Mountain Express

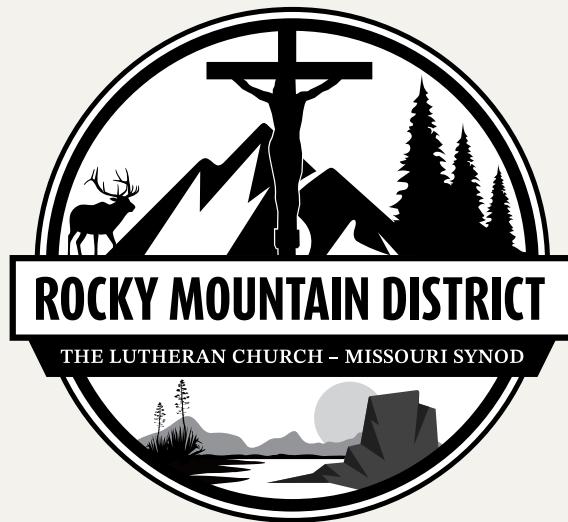
December 2025



Welcome to the LCMS Rocky  
Mountain District Newsletter!

In this issue you will find...

- A Note from the President
- Installations and Commissions
- Anniversaries
- Around the District
- Save the Date
- Gifts for Ministries
- Christmas Greeting
- Extras



FAITH TO MOVE MOUNTAINS... ONE STONE AT A TIME

# A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

December 2025

How often do you play this game: If I had [blank] then I would be happy. If [blank] happened, then everything would be ok and I'd have peace in my life? Once I do this. Once I do that. And how often does this unhelpfully also morph into: "If they would [blank], then things wouldn't be like this... Why can't they just [blank] ...?"

Enter John the Baptist stage right. A wild looking hermit of a man who wore clothing made of camels hair with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey... And this is his message: "Repent! For the kingdom of heaven is near!... You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit in keeping with repentance." (Matt. 3:2, 7b-8)

Hey snakes, you think Daddy Abraham is gonna bail you out of this one? Not likely. You know why? It's your fault. Sit down in front of the mirror and take a good look. Say it with me: "It's me. I. I'm the problem it's me."

As we find ourselves in advent, as we're hoping for peace this Christmas and thinking about how we might achieve some changes in 2026 so that life won't be quite so bad, this weird bug eating guy in the wilderness shows up and tells you the cold hard reality that the problems in your life are largely our own fault. ... and he's right.

Think about the times in your life when you had to hear a really hard truth. Worst part about hearing this? It was true. And did we need to hear it? And are we willing to hear it?

As Christmas is around the corner... As we are getting ready to celebrate the birth of our Savior, consider why we are celebrating. Consider how we'll put a lot of effort into decorating, putting up a tree, putting up lights, buying gifts, wrapping gifts, baking, etc... But will we heed the prophet in the wilderness? John the Baptist says: "Good morning snakes, how 'bout you change?" How 'bout you repent? How 'bout you turn? Do an about face and get ready not just for some peace, but the forgiveness that makes that peace a reality!

Our Lord Jesus Christ steps into our world to be born so that one day he might go to the cross and die for you. He offers you everything: Forgiveness! Life! Salvation! As you think of everything that swirls around you this time of year, and how much supposedly depends upon your "mighty power" to bring Christmas to others, don't forget that He comes into this world for you too! Don't be too proud to admit that the blood of Jesus is sufficient enough to save you too!

Merry Christmas!

Rev. James B. Maxwell



# INSTALLATIONS

December 2025

## Installation - Laurie Parton as Trinity, Franktown 7/8<sup>th</sup> grade teacher

My husband Rob and I were married in October of 1996. We met at Hope Lutheran Church in Aurora, Colorado, where he is a life-long member and I was teaching at the time. Our family increased by one in 2005 with the birth of our first daughter, Rachel. Rachel is currently a junior at Concordia University Nebraska studying to be lawyer. Tabitha, our second daughter was born in 2008, and is a junior at Lutheran High School Parker. Bingo, the dog, was adopted right before COVID and still thinks everyone should stay at home and spend time with him. Lutheran education is important to our family. Both Rob and I attended Lutheran grade schools, and Rob is a Denver Lutheran High graduate. As a family, we enjoy movie nights and playing board games. Our Fourth of July trip to the mountains is a high light of our year with time spent with family away from the everyday activities. ‘

I graduated with my Lutheran Teaching Diploma from Concordia College, Seward, in 1994. My first call lead me to Our Savior Lutheran in Houston, Texas. I moved to Aurora to marry Rob in 1996 and taught at Hope Lutheran School until it closed in 2001. Trinity Lutheran School in Franktown, Colorado, then called be to be the seventh and eighth grade teacher. I have always taught in the seventh and eighth grades. My favorite subject is math. In 2005 I asked for a peaceful release from my call to stay at home and raise my daughters. When they were old enough to attend school, I interviewed for a new position at Trinity in Franktown. I was hired as a part-time teacher in 2013 and have served in that capacity since. At the beginning of the current school year, Trinity called me to a full time teaching position in the seventh and eighth grades. It is wonderful to be in ministry at Trinity, and I am so thankful to again serve as a called teacher as part of the community there

Trinity has been an important part of my life for several years. I have taught at Trinity for 15 years, and my children attended both the ELC and grade school. The relationships I have built with the staff, parents, and students have strengthened my faith and sustained me through tough times. Each new school year is another opportunity to build those all important relationships and share the love of Jesus. This year is no exception. Every day I am excited to touch the lives of my students with the light of Christ.



# ANNIVERSARIES

December 2025

## **Pastor John Larson celebrates 20th Anniversary of Ministry at Ascension Lutheran Church in Littleton!**

Pastor John Larson has been serving as Ascension's beloved Pastor since November 15, 2005.

In the words of Elder Jim Wert:

"Congratulations, Pastor Larson, on 20 years of faithful and heartfelt service to Ascension Lutheran Church! Your steadfast leadership, compassionate guidance, and Christ-centered devotion have blessed our community in countless ways. Thank you for walking with us through joys and challenges, nurturing our faith, and reflecting God's grace in all you do. We are deeply grateful for your ministry and celebrate this milestone with heartfelt appreciation."

The congregation, along with President Maxwell, celebrated with a reception on Sunday, November 16



*Happy 20th Anniversary  
Pastor John!*



## AROUND THE DISTRICT

November 2025

# YOU WANT TO HELP. LEARN HOW.

One in four Americans has suffered from a mental health problem. That's a staggering statistic.

To put it in perspective, that's more people than effected by heart disease, lung disease and cancer combined. But there is hope. And it is you. Through our certification course, you'll become a mental health first aider. We'll teach you how to respond to someone with a mental health challenge. Challenges that include depression, suicide, substance abuse, eating disorders and panic attacks to name a few. You'll learn the signs, evidence-based actions and how to connect those in crisis to support systems that can help them recover. It's like CPR. But for mental health.



Register for our next course.

#### Peace Lutheran Church

9:00am-3:00pm, January 24, 2026

Cost: \$0

Community Room

Register Online:  
<https://www.mhfaco.org/instructors/add-attendee/1949> or email  
 Kristina Sand -  
 hksand@msn.com

5675 Field Street  
 Arvada, CO  
 80002

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)



## First Aid for Mental Health Certification Course

Location:  
 Peace Lutheran Church  
 5675 Field Street,  
 Arvada, CO 80002

Date: January 24, 2026  
 9:00am-3:00pm

## FIRST AID FOR MENTAL HEALTH



Think of it like CPR, but for mental health issues.

Think of it like CPR, but for mental health issues. Through our certification course, you'll become a mental health first aider. We'll teach you how to respond to someone with a mental health challenge. Challenges that include depression, suicide, substance abuse, eating disorders and panic attacks – to name a few. You'll learn the signs, evidence-based actions and how to connect those in crisis to support systems that can help them recover.

Learn how you can help.  
[www.MHFACO.org](http://www.MHFACO.org)



FAITH TO MOVE MOUNTAINS... ONE STONE AT A TIME

[rm.lcms.org](http://rm.lcms.org)

# AROUND THE DISTRICT

November 2025

The CTSFW Kantorei, under the direction of Kantor Kevin Hildebrand, will be traveling to New Mexico for their January 2026 tour. The final stop for the tour will be an Epiphany Evening Prayer Service in Kramer Chapel at CTSFW on January 22, which will be livestreamed.

## TOUR STOPS

- Santa Fe, NM: Monday, January 5, 6:30 p.m., Immanuel Lutheran Church
- Albuquerque, NM: Tuesday, January 6, 7:00 p.m., Grace Lutheran Church
- Roswell, NM: Wednesday, January 7, 7:00 p.m., Immanuel Lutheran Church
- Las Cruces, NM: Thursday, January 8, 7:00 p.m., Mission Lutheran Church



The poster features the CTSFW logo at the top, followed by a photograph of the Kantorei members in a church setting. Below the photo, the text "KANTOREI SOUTHWEST TOUR" is displayed in a large, bold, blue font, and "JANUARY 5–11, 2026" is in a smaller, white font at the bottom.

The Rev. Jeffrey Kazmierski, CTSFW admission counselor, will serve as preacher on the tour. Associate Kantor Matthew Machemer will serve as organist.

The Kantorei represents the Seminary on tours and sings for daily chapel services, seasonal Choral Vespers, and other events. The choir has also recorded several CDs of sacred music, which are heard regularly on Lutheran Public Radio, and recordings are streaming on [Apple Music](#) and [Spotify](#). If you live near one of the tour stops, attend if you're able and spread the word to others who might be interested. For full details and a media kit, click [here](#) or visit [ctsfw.edu/kantorei-tour](http://ctsfw.edu/kantorei-tour).



FAITH TO MOVE MOUNTAINS... ONE STONE AT A TIME

[rm.lcms.org](http://rm.lcms.org)

## AROUND THE DISTRICT

December 2025

Deaconess Sara Smith visited Deaconess Melissa DeGroot in Colorado to pass the baton on to her with District Life Coordinator materials. Deac Smith steps back from the position into semi-retirement after faithfully serving the district for four years. Sara and Melissa also worked on a podcast interview during the visit which will likely launch some time in 2026.



Check out [Affirming Life News](#) on our District Website



FAITH TO MOVE MOUNTAINS... ONE STONE AT A TIME

[rm.lcms.org](http://rm.lcms.org)

# AROUND THE DISTRICT

December 2025

## Utah Mission

The Rocky Mountain District adopted Utah as our mission effort for the triennium 2025-2028.

Our congregations and schools in Utah are working wholeheartedly to faithfully proclaim the Gospel in a region of our District where the proclamation of the Truth faces more opposition than in most areas of our country, and pastors, teachers and laity alike identify the mission field in Utah as unique and of critical importance, and at our “front door” and we are blessed to have established congregations, faithful pastors and teachers, and Godly laity established in the field who labor.

To donate to the Utah Mission, please click [here](#).



FAITH TO MOVE MOUNTAINS... ONE STONE AT A TIME

[rm.lcms.org](http://rm.lcms.org)

## SAVE THE DATE

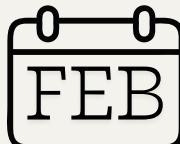
December 2025

ULTIMATE  
QUESTIONS

Real Answers. Real Hope.

## NURTURING THE FAITH

FEBRUARY 2026

nurturing  
**the faith**

"Nurturing the Faith" Gatherings are designed for pastors, preschool, elementary and high school staffs, DCEs, church leaders, Sunday school teachers, youth workers, and others who are involved in the ministry of children, youth, and adults. Bring your Bible with you!

**SCRIPTURE BASIS:** "...to equip the saints for work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ." Ephesians 4: 12-13.

**MISSION STATEMENT:** Nurturing the Faith Workshops provide opportunities to be refreshed and renewed in the Word for all saints ministering to children, youth, and adults.

**OBJECTIVE:** To promote personal spiritual growth and develop faith-filled relationships through encountering God's Word.

**GUEST SPEAKER:** REV. SCOTT ABEL,  
Lead Pastor, Our Father Lutheran Church, Centennial, CO.

Rev. Scott Abel has served as a Lutheran pastor for over 20 years and currently serves as the lead pastor of Our Father Lutheran Church in Centennial, Colorado. He is deeply passionate about helping Christians step back from the noise and assumptions of contemporary culture and see life clearly through the lens of God's Word.

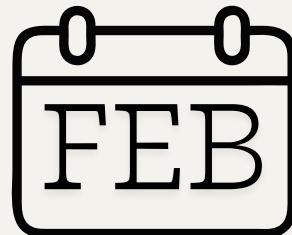
Much of Scott's teaching centers on the ultimate questions of life – identity, purpose, truth, freedom, and hope – and how people today often answer these questions by mixing cultural ideas with biblical truth. With a heart for both theological clarity and pastoral care, he seeks to equip church workers, educators, and families to recognize these influences and engage thoughtful, Christ-centered conversations with confidence and compassion.



FAITH TO MOVE MOUNTAINS... ONE STONE AT A TIME

## SAVE THE DATE

December 2025

nurturing  
**the faith**

Continued:

Many Christians today are forming their understanding of life by blending cultural messages, personal experience, and biblical truth. When these influences go unexamined, faith can become jumbled and uncertain. At the same time, many who do not identify as Christian still live by ideas about love, dignity, justice, and hope that ultimately come from the biblical story – often without recognizing their source.

In both cases, the same deep questions remain, shaping how people live.

Who am I?

Why am I here?

Where did I come from?

Where am I going?

Who decides what is true?

For this year's Nurturing the Faith, Pastor Scott Abel will help those who attend step back from the confusion of competing voices and see that only the Bible – centered on Jesus Christ – offers real, beautiful, and hope-filled answers to life's ultimate questions.

Nurturing the Faith 2026

**Registration cost - \$35/per person**

Feb. 23 New Mexico - Christ Lutheran School, Albuquerque, NM

Feb. 24 North Denver - Trinity Lutheran School, Greeley, CO

Feb. 26 South Denver - Peace With Christ Christian School, Aurora, CO

Feb. 27 Utah - Concordia Elem. and Learning Center/Holy Trinity, Riverton, UT

Registration opens January 16th.

Any questions, please contact the [Education office](#).

FAITH TO MOVE MOUNTAINS... ONE STONE AT A TIME

# GIFTS FOR MINISTRIES

December 2025

As we come to the end of the year, we look back on all of the ways God has provided and blessed this district and all the ministries within it. We daily remember the gift given to us in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. If it is on your heart, we ask that you or your congregations prayerfully consider giving to any of the District Ministries

To see the full list of giving opportunities, please visit  
[Designated Gifts for District Ministries](#)



[Click here to see Pastor Cody's Year End Opportunity to Support RMD's Mission in 2026 Letter](#)

# CHRISTMAS BLESSINGS

December 2025



# MERRY CHRISTMAS

May the divine peace of our Lord Jesus Christ fill your heart and home with peace and love this Christmas season. As we celebrate the birth of our Savior, may His light guide you, His love envelop you, and His joy uplift your spirit.

For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given;  
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,  
and his name shall be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
Isaiah 9:6 (ESV)

Blessings,  
From the  
Rocky Mountain  
District Staff

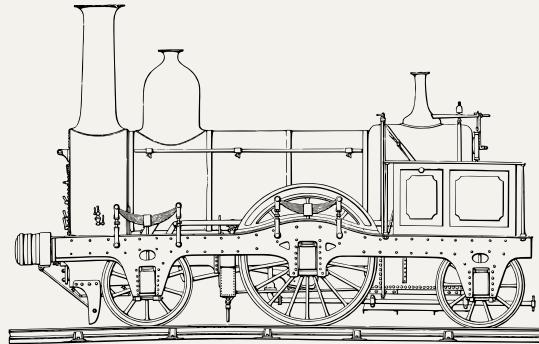
FAITH TO MOVE MOUNTAINS... ONE STONE AT A TIME

# EXTRAS

December 2025

To update your roster paperwork, or if you have any other questions, please contact  
Ms. Monique Hjalmquist  
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](mailto:communications@rm.lcms.org)

To contact the Rocky Mountain District, please email  
[info@rm.lcms.org](mailto:info@rm.lcms.org)

## **Note to Treasurers:**

[Click here to see the  
2026 Church  
Remittance Voucher](#)



## District Employee Contacts

[Dcs. Melissa DeGroot](#); Assistant to the President for Mission & Mercy

[Rev. Jason Cody](#); Assistant to the President for Mission & Advancement

[Naomi Moon](#); Assistant to the President for Communications

[Monique Hjalmquist](#); Administrative Assistant to the President

[Jim Kuehnert](#); Business Office

FAITH TO MOVE MOUNTAINS... ONE STONE AT A TIME