

Rocky Mountain Express

January 2026

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
- Extras

A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

I still remember when I did an Epiphany devotion with my Elders before our monthly meeting. Usually, my elders quietly listen with little participation. Not so with the wise men! It was as if half of them had gone back to kindergarten and had very important things to share with their teacher: "Teacher, teacher, teacher! Suddenly half of them wanted to share with me all that they knew about the wise men and about the star - what the star could have been, how the planets could have aligned just right, how one planet dances around the other, etc...

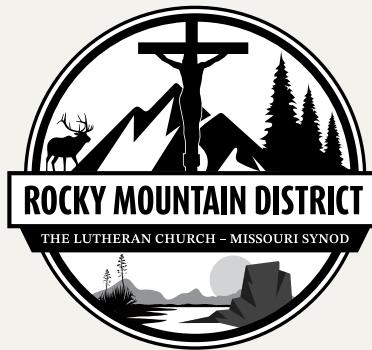
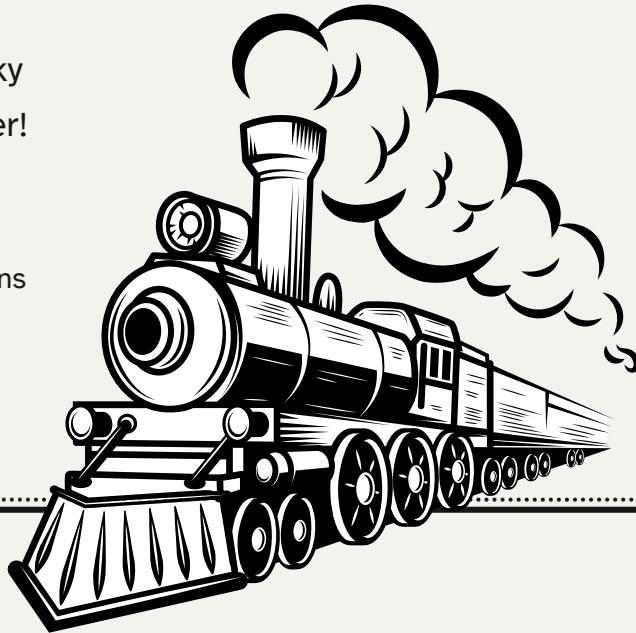
And then to watch them admit that, no, we don't really know what that star was especially since it came to rest over the place where the child was. How does a star stop over one particular house? There are so many unknowns... And what suddenly became my new theme for that devotion was how mysterious the visit of the magi really is. We don't know if there were three. We just know that there were three gifts. And three kings at that? We know that they were of great importance, probably of wealth based upon the gifts they brought. But they are figures who are enshrouded in a great deal of mystery.

Are we "okay" with this? I would suspect not very, and yet this forces us to trust that there are indeed things we cannot comprehend and to have faith that God does indeed work all things for the good of those who love Him. And when we compare what is unknown to what is revealed to us by God in the salvation given to us by His Son, Jesus, trust comes much more easily. Even mystery can be okay when we know that Jesus is behind it!



In Christ,
Rev. James B. Maxwell

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



INSTALLATIONS

January 2026

Rev. Joel Luckemeyer

**Installed at Concordia, Lakewood
on November 23, 2025**



Concordia, Lakewood

Pastor Joel earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Nevada, Reno in 2007. After spending several years working with disadvantaged youth, he began his pastoral formation at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri. He graduated in 2016 with a Master of Divinity and was ordained as a pastor in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. His first call led him to serve a congregation in California.

In 2025, Pastor Joel joined Concordia Lutheran Church in Lakewood, bringing with him nine years of pastoral experience. He is deeply committed to serving God's people and walking alongside them in faith. Outside of ministry, Pastor Joel treasures time with his family and enjoys sports, reading, and movies. He is excited to explore the beauty of the Rocky Mountains and discover all that Colorado has to offer.

INSTALLATIONS

January 2026

Vicar Joshua Cody

**To be ordained and installed at
St. Peter's, Monta Vista on Jan 17**

Joshua and Sarah have been married for 21 years and have been blessed with 7 beautiful children. Their oldest, Thaddaeus, is an Airman First Class in the USAF stationed in Rapid City, SD. Their oldest daughter is a Senior and Honor Student at Alamosa High School. She has been awarded as a Micah Scholar at Concordia University Nebraska and plans to attend in the fall. Their next son, Theodore, is an Honor Student and sophomore at Alamosa High School and plays varsity football. Titus, their fourth child, is an 8th grader at Ortega Middle School in Alamosa and also plays football, is in science fair, and loves Bible Study. The last three children Joshua and Sarah were given by God's grace were all daughters! Thessaly is in 6th grade at Ortega Middle School in Alamosa and was Anne in the school musical. Tilde is in 4th grade and plays the Oboe and loves her teacher this year. Tabitha, the baby, is in first grade and together with her sister is at Alamosa Elementary.

Joshua was approached by DP James Maxwell about the opportunity to pursue ordination through SMP. Joshua already held a Masters of Science in Art Education from Concordia University Wisconsin and was a faculty member there before coming home to help run the family business. Joshua has served on numerous church boards in LCMS churches in Wisconsin, South Dakota, and Colorado. Joshua has pursued the SMP through Concordia Theological Seminary in Ft. Wayne. Further, prior to deciding to pursue ordination through the SMP, Joshua was enrolled in a PhD program in Biblical Studies and Organizational Leadership. He is currently ABD and writing a dissertation on the embodied Theology of the Lutheran worship space.

Joshua is excited to show the love of God to the people of St. Peter's and the community of Monte Vista by working hard at Word and Sacrament ministry. Properly dividing Law and Gospel is an important part of the pastoral work and Joshua very much enjoys the Biblical studies. Further, he firmly believes that home visitations and spending time with those in the community which are shut-ins and unable to come, is a critical part of ministry. Joshua hopes that through the power of His Word and Spirit, God will bring healing and community in the historic parish of St. Peter's in Monte Vista.



ANNIVERSARIES

January 2026

Gail Black celebrated 25 years as

Director of Parish Music at Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church & Early Learning Center

Personal Information:

I was born in Milwaukee, WI, baptized 10 days later in Wauwatosa, WI, and have lived in Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Nebraska, Indiana, and Colorado. I am the daughter, mother, sister, sister-in-law, niece, cousin, granddaughter, grandniece, and great-granddaughter of a bunch of pastors and Christian teachers, so I can be good for nuthin'. I am married to Dave and am mama to Stephanie, Susannah and her husband Dillon, and Carrie. After graduating from Concordia College (now University) Wisconsin, I was Called to Calvary Lutheran Church and School, Indianapolis, IN, as the 3rd grade teacher and school music department coordinator.

In 2000, our family moved to the Denver area to partner with Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church and School. In serving the Master Musician and growing in knowledge of and excitement for His Divine Service, I have been the Worship and Music Coordinator since the Fall of 2000, as well as liaison to the school music program. From 2006-2021, I took on the additional role of Assistant to the Senior Pastor. In 2007, I was Called by Shepherd of the Hills as Director of Parish Music. I am also a member of Shepherd's Communication Team.

Enjoys:

I delight in laughing with my family and friends and I love sharing God with His people through music, Divine Service, Bible Study, prayer, altar service, games, and conversation over good food! I love to sing, listen to my girls sing, sing with my siblings, and sing to babies while I hold and rock them. When God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work—this is a gift of God. He seldom reflects on the days of his life, because God keeps him occupied with gladness of heart. Ecclesiastes 5:19 & 20



Fun Facts:

Two of my daughters and I share something unusual: we have all sung the National Anthem for a sports event! And I have not yet met a deviled egg I don't like!

What I love about my position:

- I love writing thematic Divine Services! I love doing the same thing every week in different ways—sometimes called Divine Service preparation—finding new ways to express God's timeless truths. Ascribe to the LORD the glory due His name. Bring an offering and come before Him; worship the LORD with the splendor of His holiness. 1 Chronicles 16:29
- I love working with people who are mentors, prayer partners, Christian friends, and good folks. A friend loves at all times. Proverbs 17:17
- I love sharing in others' milestones through baptism/funeral/wedding preparations. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 1 John 4:11
- I love being a part of raising the next generation of Christian musicians while also enjoying the fruits of the present set. All these were under supervision for the music of the temple of the LORD...all of them trained and skilled in music for the LORD...young and old alike. 1 Chronicles 25:6 & 7
- I love working and being in God's House!!! For zeal for Your house consumes me. I was glad when they said to me, "Let's go to the house of the Lord!" Psalm 69:9; Psalm 122:1
- I love that God called me to be His baptized and beloved child, loves me no matter what position I'm in, and will carry me through every valley and over every mountain until I get to serve the Master Musician in heaven! Psalm 121—all of it!



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

AROUND THE DISTRICT

January 2026



National Lutheran Schools Week provides more than 1,800 preschools, elementary schools and high schools with the public opportunity to proclaim and celebrate God's work among us in schools of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

We thank God for the opportunity to provide excellent academic preparation for the children we serve. We are most grateful for the opportunity to share Jesus' amazing love with children and their families.

National Lutheran Schools Week gives us an opportunity to proclaim these great blessings within the communities we serve.

Our schools are amazing incubators for faithful witness of God's love for us through Christ by teachers and students alike.

Click [here](#) to see more resources for National Lutheran Schools Week



AROUND THE DISTRICT

January 2026

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



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

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

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



Lutheran Heritage Foundation

Free Lutheran Resources: Do you have a friend, neighbor or family member who doesn't speak English as a first language?

LHF is a recognized service organization of the LCMS, has translated and published books like Luther's Small Catechism, A Child's Garden of Bible Stories, God's Word For You, and more into nearly 190 languages like Spanish, Hmong, Swahili and Chinese.

Best of all, these books are FREE to any church or individual who needs them.

Simply visit the [LHF website](#) to search by language and send an email with your request.



SAVE THE DATE

December 2025

ST. GEORGE, UTAH THEOLOGICAL CONFERENCE

FEBRUARY, 9-11, 2026
TRINITY LUTHERAN
CHURCH AND SCHOOL

Presenter: Professor James Voelz - Dr of Philosophy – Cambridge, Master of Divinity. He has served on the faculty of both our seminaries. His areas of focus are Greek, hermeneutics and Synoptic Gospels.

Topic: An Introduction to the Gospel of Matthew with preaching helps on series A pericopes from transfiguration through Holy Week.

Special Monday night presentation on the Nature of Holy Scripture.

What to Bring: Family, Bible, and Golf Clubs. Temperature: 40 – 70.

Cost: \$135 Covers everything except golf. Please make your check to 'Trinity Lutheran Church' and send your check to Trinity:

2260 Red Cliff Dr. St. George UT, 84790

Schedule:

Monday 6:30 pm: Dinner at Church (family members welcome)

Monday 7:00 – 9:00 pm: Presentation 'The Nature of Scripture'

Tuesday 8:00 – 11:30 am: Presentation

Tuesday 11:30 am: Break for afternoon Golf or Zion N.P. Tour

Tuesday 7:00 pm: Fellowship and Wine tasting at Manweiler's

Wednesday 8:00-11:30 am: Presentation, Chapel, Presentation

Wednesday 11:30 Prayer to Depart

GOLF: To insure your tee time on Monday morning, Tuesday or Wednesday afternoon, please contact Rev. John Manweiler with your intent to golf by January 10. (additional cost)

Contact: Rev. John Manweiler, pastor at Trinity
Church - 1 435 628-1850 ext.12
Cell - 1 435 669-9012
Email - coyotej@infowest.com

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

SAVE THE DATE

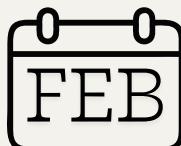
January 2026

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.

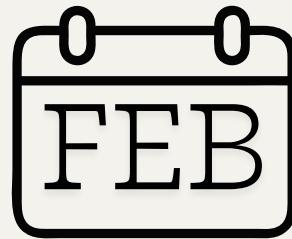


FAITH TO MOVE MOUNTAINS... ONE STONE AT A TIME

SAVE THE DATE

January 2026

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?

Registration
opens
January 19th!

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

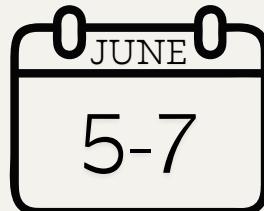
Feb. 26 South Denver - Peace With Christ Christian School, Aurora, CO

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

Any questions, please contact the Education office.

SAVE THE DATE

January 2026



All women are invited to join with Lutheran Women in Mission in attending the
2026 LWML Rocky Mountain District Convention,
June 5-7, 2026.

Theme: Faith that Can Move Mountains, based on Matthew 17:20b.

We have planned a Spirit-filled gathering of women from all walks of life! Join us for a weekend of worship, fellowship, renewal, and inspiration as we seek to grow deeper in our faith and shine brighter in our daily lives. Come and play Bingo for Mites, participate in servant events for MOST Ministries and Operation Gratitude, and enjoy the incredible voice of Bri Jones on Saturday night.

Mark your calendar now to join together at The Antlers, Colorado Springs this summer. Come expecting God to move in your heart and in your life! For more information and to register visit our [website](#)



EXTRAS

January 2026

A Note from the Business Office

FREQUENTLY REQUESTED FORMS



Don't see what you're looking for here? Please reach out to business@rm.lcms.org

2026 Church Remittance Voucher (Full Size) | [PDF](#) | [Microsoft Word](#)

2026 Church Remittance Voucher (1/2 Page Size, Two Vouchers per Page) | [PDF](#) | [Microsoft Word](#)

2026 Travel Expense Voucher | [PDF](#) | [Excel](#)

EMERITUS MEMBERS

It's that time of the year for Annual Reporting.
Letters will be mailed in the coming week!

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

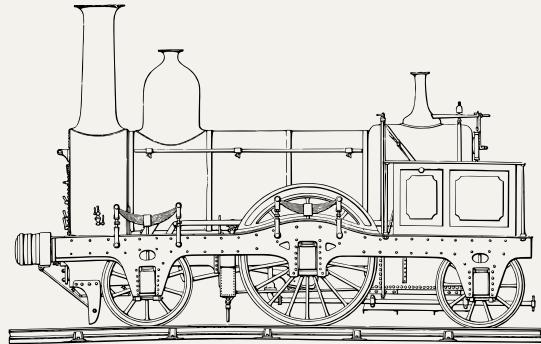
rm.lcms.org

EXTRAS

January 2026

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

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

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

rm.lcms.org