



Mission Action Team

Looking Back and Looking Forward in 2025

Greetings in this New Year in the name of our Newborn King and Savior, Jesus Christ!

We would like to present you a series of updates on the recent activities and the bigger learnings of your District's Mission Action Team during this current triennium. God has been busy, His people have been active, and we are thankful and praising Him!

In particular, we want to share some background with you on missions in our District and Synod, since lessons learned in the past can so effectively impact our future. You may have read our synodical Office of National Mission's recent report on Church Planting in the LCMS. Perhaps you've not read it, and in any event we wish to reflect upon it in light of how God works in our District, to His own glory. We will share this story with you joyfully in four parts over these first four months of 2025. In so doing, we look back AND look forward as a District that actively supports, equips, and encourages new missions wherever it pleases the Lord of the Harvest to plant them.

Part 1: The Earliest Church Planting in Missouri

Our premise from the start is that the LCMS, and by extension her districts, *are actually church planting bodies by nature*, and it's been woven into our DNA from very, very early on. You may think of church planting as a new idea in the church, or some entrepreneurial endeavor that you feel ill-equipped to take on, but the reality of our Synod's history in church planting is much more simple, more practical, and more historical than that!

Did you know? The LCMS, founded in 1847, established a Board of Missions already in 1848! It took her less than a year to organize this continental effort, and continental it was, indeed. You plant the church where the people are, and thus the earliest LCMS mission efforts focused around serving those arriving at Ellis Island in New York, NY. *Your church has been a hospitable neighbor to immigrants, newcomers, and those outside the Christian faith from her earliest days.* Praise the Lord!

Did you know? The idea of "planting teams" that plant new churches, which we still use in our communities today, is not a new idea but in fact a key strategy from 19th-century LCMS church planting. It went something like this: Churches that had been established on the East Coast would partner with groups of families that were drawn to the West by the Homestead Act. Send a missionary along with them, and you've got a recipe for a new mission to spring up wherever the group settles! *Sending the*

Lord's harvest workers out along with those tilling the soil was a way to help see to it that wherever God's people settled, a church would be raised up to serve them and to serve that place.

Did you know? We in the English District are a result of adaptable mission strategies, too. The LCMS went to new immigrants (newcomers to the United States), emigrants (those going from the East to the West), and also to those of different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. LCMS Lutherans identified massive opportunities when it came to worshipping in the English language AND in ministry among the often-ignored southern states of the U.S., planting new congregations in African American communities – and that work was carried out cooperatively with multiple Lutheran bodies assisting. *So often we joke about the resistance of Lutherans to “change”, but in reality LCMS Lutherans have been remarkably innovative and forward-thinking when it comes to missions on this continent.*

We are grateful and thankful to God for the opportunity to serve you as your Mission Action Team. Many of you are in congregations and circuits where new churches are being planted. Many others are in places where new missions are being explored and considered. Still others are supporting the local and global work of those planting new churches, all to the Glory of God. May He bless you richly as you serve Him with joy!

In Jesus,

***Rev. Justin Laughridge
On Behalf of the English District LCMS Mission Action Team***