



**CONCORDIA**  
Lutheran Church

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**CONNECTION**

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**9.22**

# “Be Strong and Take Heart, All You Who Hope in the Lord.”

Have you ever had the experience of reading along in the Bible and all of sudden you come across something that relates directly to you? The Bible is powerful that way. God uses these ancient words to speak life and peace and forgiveness into our lives, especially at times when we're facing unforeseen challenges.

I recently had a powerful experience of God's love while reading Psalm 31. Here it is:

Psalm 31:21-24

21 Praise be to the Lord,  
for he showed me the wonders of his love  
when I was in a city under siege.  
22 In my alarm I said,  
“I am cut off from your sight!”  
Yet you heard my cry for mercy  
when I called to you for help.  
23 Love the Lord, all his faithful people!  
The Lord preserves those who are true to him,  
but the proud he pays back in full.  
24 Be strong and take heart,  
all you who hope in the Lord.



The original writer of this Psalm may have actually been in a real siege – where a foreign army was trying to choke the life out of an entire city with a blockade of some sort. I don't know about you, but in some ways in recent years and months it feels like Concordia has been under siege – not from a foreign army, but from that ancient one who's always trying to discourage God's faithful people. Emerging from pandemic. Unforeseen and hard-to-understand challenges with fully staffing our ministry. The Psalmist cried out to God, “I am cut off from your sight.” We might begin to question what God is up to among us at Concordia. Alarmed? Does God notice us here at Concordia, Kirkwood, we might wonder? Yet, just as God heard the Psalmist, so he hears me and you. God is merciful in the midst of the challenges we face.

I see God's mercy in many parents and a fourth-year seminarian stepping up to help with youth ministry. I see God's mercy in sending us talented new staff – Deaconess Kris, and, hopefully soon, Caroline Rusnak. I see God's mercy in how Pastor Meggers, Karen Allman, and Jodi Carlson, among many others, took the lead and pulled off an amazing All Youth Retreat on very short notice. I see God's mercy in in-person readers in worship and live children's messages returning. I see God's mercy in the perseverance of our Youth Director Search Committee. I see God's mercy on the faces of our musicians as they lead us in worshipful song. I see God's mercy on the faces of the 9th graders working on their Witness Weekend statements. I see God's mercy on the faces of our Building Committee members as we near some final plans for the amazing facility God has entrusted to us. God's mercy abounds here at Concordia!

God is still calling us to Emerge with One Heart to Renew, Grow, and Go. He never promised us that it would be easy, only that He hears our cries, shows us more mercy than we can fathom, and calls us to "be strong and take heart and keep on putting our Hope in Him."

What Bible passage have you encountered recently that really spoke to you? Let me know. I'd really love to hear about it. Or, better yet, share your encounter with a family member or friend. Because that's how the power of God's Word works to speak Christ's life into our lives.

Serving Christ with you,  
Pastor Steve Bongard

**PASTOR  
BONGARD**

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# Who?

Picking up on a recent sermon and aligning with our current theme, "Remaining Faithful in a Troubled World", a question is "Who?".

One of the tactics of Satan in his constant, though ultimately futile, spiritual battle against us is diversion (though it is closely allied with division). And a goal of his diversive and divisive tactics is that of isolation. He knows God's people are better together so he tries to isolate us and pick us off one by one. Thus, the question of "Who?" And a challenge to inventory your "Who's".

It may be a formal "Who" situation. I took a writing class from Rev. Dr. Travis Scholl a few summers ago. Travis is a member of Concordia, is a theologian and a gifted writer. I benefited greatly from his mentorship.

Our recent All Youth Retreat was abundantly blessed with "Who's". Staff and volunteers were on hand to guide and mentor our youth in this season of their spiritual journey.

More "Who's": Bill and Tina Hillebrandt will be sharing their years of experience and growth through 12 step programs with our Older Adults. Our men's ministry will be gathering for a "Shine" service event. These kinds of events allow us to mentor and be mentored by brothers and sisters in the faith.

Some of us will bless and be blessed with the presence of members of Lutheran Church of Uganda, including their president Rev. Charles Bamaka on Sept. 21-23. Partner churches and organizations will also be on hand as we host those who walk together in mission with Lutheran Church Uganda. This may not be mentoring in the strictest sense but there will be tremendous encouragement, collaboration and celebration of one another in the faith. A troubled world needs that!

A final thought that flips the script a bit as you take inventory. Who is it that you might mentor and help remain faithful in a troubled world? Who is God putting into your life in order that you might pour into them?

Concordia means together with one heart. We are better together! Paul wrote to Timothy and he means it for us. "But God had mercy on me so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of his great patience with even the worst sinners." How is God using you as that prime example?

JOYfully

PM

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# Financial Matters

Thank you Concordia for your ongoing support to propel our EMERGE initiative forward. As of July 2022, we are 29% of our way into our two year \$8.5M EMERGE journey. Our EMERGE gifts through July including gifts from 2021 total \$2.16 Million. Our current July year-to-date giving is 25.4% to goal representing a shortfall of nearly \$270,000. Our generosity journey is rooted in our faith.

“And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work”

2 Corinthians 9:8

Your generosity is making a difference: strengthening urban mission through Bethlehem Lutheran, funding essential design work for removing the old school, funding a video upgrade in the Sanctuary and ongoing support for the Uganda school.

We need your prayers and support to help us achieve our EMERGE journey goal especially as we head into the final months of 2022. We will continue to communicate our progress going forward as we EMERGE with One Heart in Christ to Renew, Grow and Go as a congregation.

Through EMERGE One Fund, our budgeted operating offerings are funded first, followed by outbound mission support then emerging ministry investment. Below are our year-to-date July 2022 financial results.





## FINANCIALS: JULY 2022 YEAR TO DATE

<b><u>OPERATIONS:</u></b>	<b>ACTUAL</b>	<b>BUDGET</b>	<b>VARIANCE</b>
<b>INCOME</b>			
Emerge Offerings	\$1,208,826	\$1,207,273	\$1,553
Receipts	\$123,540	\$142,607	-\$19,067
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$1,332,366</b>	<b>\$1,349,880</b>	<b>-\$17,514</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>			
Personnel	\$687,942	\$759,509	-\$71,567
Program	\$97,032	\$138,680	-\$41,648
Property	\$188,556	\$181,537	\$7,019
Education	\$402,917	\$405,033	-\$2,116
Debt	\$70,916	\$71,167	-\$251
<b>TOTAL EXPENSE</b>	<b>\$1,447,363</b>	<b>\$1,555,926</b>	<b>-\$108,563</b>
<b>SURPLUS(DEFICIT)</b>	<b>-\$114,997</b>	<b>-\$206,046</b>	<b>\$91,049</b>
<b><u>YTD OUTBOUND MINISTRIES:</u></b>	<b>\$58,433</b>		
<b><u>YTD EMERGING MINISTRY INVESTMENT:</u></b>	<b>\$537,474</b>		

On a year-to-date basis, our Emerge One Fund offerings totaled \$1,802,597 through July allowing us to fully fund \$1,206,690 operations budget while adding \$58,433 for outbound missions and \$537,474 for emerging ministry investment. We budgeted our One Fund revenue at \$2,158,535 through July. Including early Emerge giving carryover from 4Q 2021 of \$87,400, our shortfall is \$267,250. We do anticipate increased Emerge One Fund giving as a result of our recent One Fund newsletter outlining personal giving to date.

July year-to-date expenses totaled \$1,447,363 compared to a budget of \$1,555,926. Our \$108,563 favorable position is due to personnel delayed expenditures and timing of youth program expenditures.

Blessings,  
Larry



# All.The.Things!

What? All the things! It seems like all the things are on their way back! In-person gatherings, in-person childrens' messages, fall sports, and more. There have been so many things we have been longing to return to - faces we have missed, less complex preparation, fewer Covid cancellations of best-laid plans. It seems like the first fully normal school year since 2019, and things are rolling at Concordia again, and it is exciting stuff!!

And yet...as a community, even as we are all excited to see these things return, there is this sense of hesitation, and some budding questions. Do we...do we really want all the things to come back? And even if we want them, are all the things really needed? Is it possible that there are some things that should stay paused for longer, or even fade away completely? As a community, but also as individuals and families, it's going to be important that in the grand rolling back in of all the things, we don't allow ourselves to become rolled over, even steam-rolled by all the things crowding in at once.

I'm not sure what's true for your family, but one thing we found to be a blessing during Covid was stretches of intentional home time, or intentional together time. Sure, it was forced upon us, but...that didn't stop it from being a good thing.

As a staff, we are taking very seriously the programming that is being planned. There is a gorgeous eagerness to return to all the things, and we are thrilled for so much fellowship and Bible study and servant events and more to return! But there is wisdom in taking advantage of transition -

to pause, and reflect, and refine as we move forward. Fall is a natural time of transition, and it seems this fall even more so. Our Emerge initiative is showing so much promise as it is leafing out, may the Lord bless our efforts as we continue to grow fruitfully, intentionally, and joyfully through this coming season!

## Ministry Notes and Needs

Train Up a Child Training Pants Drive is chugging away! Thanks to all who have donated! Final day is Sep 25!

Sunday KidsMin and Wednesday KidsNight are off and running! Volunteer roles needed (all serve on rotation, goal is 1-2 times per month):

Sunday - Kindergarten lesson leader (have 2, need 2 more!)

Wednesday - Lesson leader for 1-2 (have 1, need 2-3 more!), Lesson leaders for 3-5 (have 1, need 2-3 more!), Games leader (have 1, need 2 more!). Lesson and games leaders are "on" for about 20 minutes per night and then simply assist with transitions the rest of the time. All materials and plans provided!

Women's Ministry Fireside Friday is set for Oct 7th, 7-8:30pm. Bring a lawn chair, bring a beverage and enjoy some fellowship on our very own campus.

**KRIS  
PAUL**

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Connections Coordinator



# Looking Forward to Fall

Oh how I love September... kids are in school, the air is getting cooler, Pumpkin Spice is back at Starbucks, and it's just a few weeks until my birthday. But the most exciting thing for me is the congregation's vote to extend a Call to Carolyn Rusnak to serve as our Director for Sanctuary Worship. Please keep her in prayer in the coming weeks!

I had the opportunity to help with music at the All Youth Retreat a few weeks ago and it was wonderful to serve 'behind the scenes' rather than upfront. We had 2 groups leading worship this year: a group of Junior High kids from Concordia and a group of young adults, most of whom grew up at Concordia. It was a great picture of what it means when we talk about "Grow and Go" with Emerge. The young adults who led were just like the junior high kids 8 years ago. The examples of faith and service that they experienced at home and at Concordia has prepared them to be worship leaders of their generation. It was awesome to connect the dots between them Growing through youth and worship ministry and now Going as leaders themselves. There is much to be thankful for!



**BRENDAN  
KNORP**

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Director for the Worship Arts





# Pumpkin Spiced Latte... and Kids Ministry; I Love Fall!

Children's ministry is first and foremost about Jesus. It's helping children know Jesus as their King and how to be citizens in His Kingdom. Of course, there are so many ways to equip children with this knowledge but my focus is how the Holy Spirit works through music to teach and encourage Christians. Each week for Sunday KidsMin and Wednesday Kids Night, I will choose songs to share with the children.

You can find these songs on our website at [CKhome.org/worship-arts](http://CKhome.org/worship-arts)

I am looking for volunteers (8th - adult) to be song leaders (you don't have to be a rock star).. Please contact me soon if you'd like to be a part of this team; [kkillian@ckhome.org](mailto:kkillian@ckhome.org). The more helpers I have, the less the commitment will be for all.

Finally, any youth interested in learning more about sharing musical talent in worship (both in the Sanctuary and Concordia Center), please reach out to me. It was great to have some Jr. Youth led the Friday night worship at the All Youth Retreat on August 26. We are very excited about the future of youth in worship, especially as we move toward Advent.



**KATIE  
KILLIAN**

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Director for Youth Worship Arts



# Fall is the Start of Changes...

Changes in the weather. We are not quite in the Fall weather yet, however, many events around St. Louis remind us of the changes. Events like the Japanese Festival at the Missouri Botanical Gardens, art shows, Cardinal games, and so much more that moves us out outside. How do you note the changes of Fall?

Fall also brings celebrations!

\* As the Ageless Generation Ministry Action Team, we celebrate our team member's weddings this September! Don and Carolyn (Brewington) Wolfinger on September 10th and Jerry and Pam (Holly) Schmidt on September 17th! Congratulations and the Lord's blessings to them!

Annual Oktoberfest Celebration at Concordia!

\* Traditional German food. (You don't need to be German to enjoy) Brats, beer and other drinks too, pretzels, potato salad, homemade beans, and so much more!

\* Entertainment with traditional German music and dance that will have you tapping your feet or singing along!

\* Wonderful fellowship with friends and joy of meeting new ones!

\* Share any memories of Germany or Fall events around your table

\* Wear your Lederhosen and Dirndl if you desire (not required)

\* Bring a friend to join in the fun!

Mark your calendars for October 20th at 11:30am. Suggested offering \$10.

Go! Community ingathering for Feed My People and Kirk Care of non-perishable food donations to be placed in the bins as you arrive.

An event you don't want to miss!



**SHARON  
EMA**

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Director for the Healing Arts



# Welcome New Faces!



## **Dave & Cindy Bunte**

Dave and Cindy live in Chesterfield. Dave is the CFO for Waterway. Cindy is a retired Registered Dietitian Nutritionist and has worked at Concordia Seminary Food Bank. They have two grown children, Jared and Nicole. Jarad is married to Sara and they are expecting their first child in October. Everyone lives in St. Louis. They enjoy cooking, hiking, traveling, and spending time with their children and dogs.



## **Roger & Kerry Holmes + Issac, Jacob**

Roger and Kerry have been married for nine years. Roger is a police officer for St. Louis County. Kerry is the Assistant Director at the Goddard School in Rock Hill. They have been blessed with two boys. Isaac is five and will be starting kindergarten at CCLS. Jacob is three and attends preschool at Goddard. We have three dogs, all of which are rescues. As a family, they enjoy spending time together. They love camping, going to the park and going out for ice cream.





### **Stephenie Koester & Kevin Voges + Colby, Alexis, Gavin**

Stephenie and her children will be joining Kevin Voges as new members. Kevin has been a member at Concordia since 2011. Kevin is employed as President of The Material Works, a steel processing company and innovator of steel processes. Stephenie recently left employment as the Athletic director and substitute teacher at a junior high school in southern Illinois. She is working on her master's in social work and hopes to work as a school social worker when she completes her program. Kevin has two children. Clayton and Hannah. Stephenie has three children. Colby attends Southeast Missouri State studying Business Management, Alexis is a Junior in high school and Gavin is attending CCLS this year as a seventh grader. Kevin and Stephenie will be married on October 2, 2022. They love to travel and spend time with their children.



### **Justin & Molly Phelps + Wilhemina, Owen**

Justin, Molly, Wilhemina, and Owen Phelps transferred to Concordia from Salem, Affton. Wilhemina is a sixth grader and Owen is a third grader; both are new students at CCLS this year. Justin is a Social Media Specialist at Lutheran Church Extension Fund, and Molly teaches preschool at the Crestwood Campus of CCLS. As a family they enjoy hiking, exploring different state and national parks, and spending time with family, friends, and their dog, Gerty.