

Encourager

JANUARY 2024

Mid-South District LCMS



A Message from Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, President

New Years' Resolutions? Everyone tries to set a goal or vision for what they want to accomplish when the New Year starts at the stroke of midnight captured somewhere in between 2023 and 2024. It's a time for self-examination of what we intuitively know we should do, but seldom have the hutzpah to finish it. Lose weight, get more exercise, study harder, spend more time in prayer and Bible devotions, spend more time doing community work, visiting friends and family more often... am I leaving anything out?

Just before Christmas break for our (Shelby County, Tennessee) public schools, it was announced that one of our elementary schools has accepted an application from the local Satanic temple

to allow an After-school Satan's Club! Merry Christmas! Yet, when the public is asked to allow the name of Jesus, the slightest hint of Christianity, or anything biblical, some public official will cite the separation of Church and State in order to forbid the beloved name of Jesus to cross in front of the eyes and ears of our youngsters. Is this the goal for the next year for the public? Or, can we bring the message of the Gospel through our Lutheran schools and the true biblical Church?

In 1539, Martin Luther wrote his Treatise on the Councils and the Church. He defined his understanding of what became the doctrine of what makes a church a church. We can only imagine what Luther would think of the way church has become in the

Twenty-First Century. Massive crowds, stage performances, slick-looking leaders, and the like were unheard of in the Sixteenth Century. But even back then, there were those who chose to jettison some of the fundamental elements of "church" for reasons that defy explanation.

Luther expanded on his basic understanding of the marks of the church that addressed the question for concerned Christians, "But how will or how can a poor confused person tell where such Christian holy people are to be found in this world?"¹

At the time, there were Christians who were confused because they were living in a church world with at least three competing parties claiming to be the setting of the true church.

¹...*Luther's Works*, eds. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehman, Vol. 41:148, (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg and Fortress; St. Louis: Concordia, 1955.).

Luther heard their questioning of how could they possibly tell which one of these prominent movements was the real church given to mankind by Christ Jesus. Our doctrine, somewhat surprisingly, makes it clear that Lutherans will not be the only ones in the glorious eternal Kingdom of Christ.²

Yet, always the one who was willing to tackle the difficult questions, Luther presented the marks of the church he believed are the characteristics Christians can use to identify the true Church. But Luther presented more than just simple marks of identity for the true Christian Church. He fully explained the doctrine that identifies the proper example of the church that define the visible effects of life of the Church.

There is no Church that cannot fully have its life grounded in God's Word. Luther made it clear

that the Holy Christian Church has no life whatsoever, except that which is given and proclaimed in our possession of the Holy Word of God.³ Holy Scripture – clearly proclaiming God's Law and Gospel – are the foundation of everything else that springs from that Church's foundation.

The second mark of the Church is the fundamental means of grace in Holy Baptism. This blessed sacrament is taught, believed, and administered in accordance to Christ's promise and command. Baptism is the means by which sin is forgiven, faith is offered, the dwelling of the Holy Spirit is given, and the promise of our adoption as heirs in the family of God.⁴

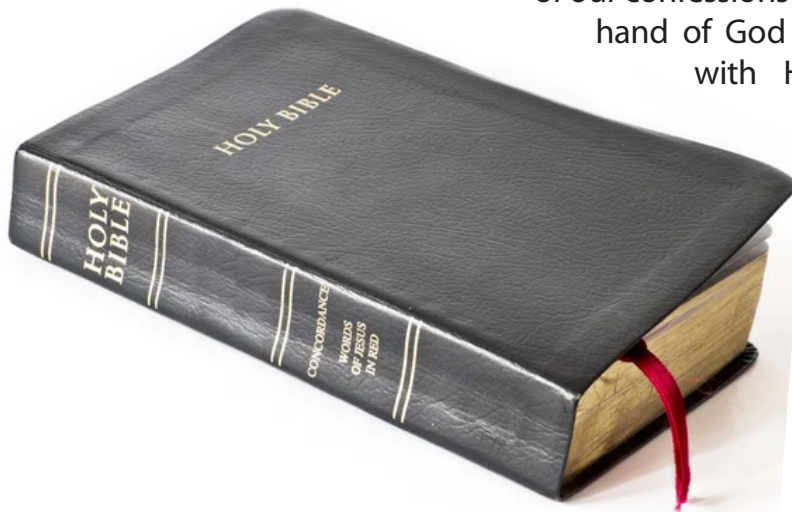
But, as the third mark of the Church, Luther noted the means by which we are sustained in our faith, offered the forgiveness of our sins, and brought into the "common union" of the doctrines of our confessions by the gracious hand of God who serves us

with His true body and blood in the mysteries of His means of grace in visible elements in His sacred meal of the Lord's Supper. Christians recognize the

holy Sacrament of the Altar as a sacred meal, that serves us with a foretaste of the victory banquet feast in Christ's eternal presence. As this Lord's Supper is treasured by the church, we receive it as Christ invites us to take and eat as He taught.⁵

Although Luther's fourth mark of the Church may sound too much like Law, godly discipline is recognized by God's people by the Office of the Keys that is heard in public worship. The true Church exercised discipline over its members. Through the authority given to His Church, Christ, through His servants, announces a penitent person's sins are forgiven by what He accomplished on the cross. This also means the authority of Church is to admonish the unrepentant as he does not mend his ways. That is the Office of the Keys proclaims forgiveness through Christ to the repentant and condemnation to the unrepentant.⁶

The fifth mark of the Church is the external recognition of the Biblical Offices, where the Church Calls and consecrates ministers through the Church's usual orders.⁷ Called and consecrated offices are recognized that the Bible established for the church, not a sacerdotal caste, but minister who faithfully preached the Word and administered the sacraments established and



²Pieper, Francis, *Christian Doctrine*, Concordia Publishing House, St Louis, 1950, Vol. 1, 32. Pieper writes, "This is the ecumenical character of the Church of the Reformation. On the one hand, the Lutheran Church does not set itself up as the *una sancta*, but acknowledges that there are children of God also in those denominations in which, besides their doctrines of men, enough Gospel is still proclaimed to produce faith in Christ as the one Redeemer. On the other hand, the Lutheran Church claims to be the Church of the pure doctrine, i.e., it claims that its doctrine agrees in all points with Holy Scripture and should according to God's will be believed and accepted by all."

³Ibid., 41:151.

⁴Ibid., 41:152.

⁵Ibid., 41:153.

⁶Ibid., 41:154.

⁷Ibid., 41:164.

proven by Scripture. The same is true for the offices that support Word and Sacrament ministries.

The pinpoint of the first five marks of the Church are most clearly exemplified in the sixth mark in Divine Worship. For Luther, God's people are externally recognized by public gathering together, prayer, and thanksgiving to God. Luther maintained a standard that where a person sees and hears the Lord's Prayer prayed and taught; that Psalms and spiritual songs are sung in accordance with God's Word and true Christian faith; where the historic Creeds are spoken and taught; the Ten Commandments taught; and catechesis is used in public, one is rest assured that God's holy Christian people are present.⁸

How the Christian's life is recognized is the seventh and final mark of the Church, according to Luther. While we bask in the Light of Christ's grace and the joy of the certainty of our eternal salvation in Christ, we know this pilgrimage will have its difficulties. Christian people are seen by the path of suffering toward and beneath the

sacred cross of Christ. The mark of the Church is that Christians, as the body of Christ will endure misfortunes, persecution, all kinds of temporal trials, and the temptations of evil from the devil, the world, and their own sinful flesh.⁹ Jesus taught that the church would suffer in this world as it served Christ faithfully.

Luther found these seven marks of the Church from the first table of the Decalogue. He also recognized that these marks will never be perfect in the Church on earth, but they were truly present where the Holy Spirit affects our daily sanctification and life in Christ. Albeit never as perfectly as Christ would desire, the Spirit leads and guides us in a sanctified life to strive be external witnesses of God's grace to a dark and decaying world. Because of our redemption in Christ Jesus we press onward toward the goal which God has laid before us; that one day we will live in His eternal presence.

In addition to these seven marks of the Church, Luther

added other outward signs that identify the true Christian church. Those signs, Luther concluded indicate: "We need the Decalogue not only to apprise us of our lawful obligations, but we also need it to discern how far the Holy Spirit has advanced us in His work of sanctification; and by how much we still fall short of the goal, lest we become secure and imagine that we have now done all that is required. Thus, we must constantly grow in sanctification and always become new creatures in Christ!"¹⁰

As we approach another calendar year, from the foundation of our place in Christ's Holy Christian Church may our resolution be to not only do church, but to be His Church here and around the world. A blessed New Year to you in Christ!


Your servant in Christ +
Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola



⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid., 41:165–166.

¹⁰Ibid., 41:166.



*And we know that all things work together
for good to those WHO LOVE GOD,
to those who are called according to
HIS PURPOSE.*

Romans 8:28

JANUARY 21-27, 2024

NATIONAL LUTHERAN SCHOOLS WEEK

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.

Please remember to keep our schools, administrators, teachers and students in your prayers during this special week of celebration.



RAISING UP THE NEXT GENERATION OF FAITHFUL CHRISTIAN DISCIPLES

- Experiencing and celebrating God's lavish gifts of love, grace and mercy
- Sharing those gifts with others
- Being transformed by God's Word
- Clinging to the cross of Jesus

EARLY CHILDHOOD > 1,677
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS > 191
MIDDLE SCHOOLS > 625
HIGH SCHOOLS > 103
TOTAL > 2,594

PROVIDING EXCELLENT ACADEMIC PREPARATION

- Developing love for and excitement about learning
- Excelling at reading, writing and effective communication
- Training minds for success at the next academic level
- Creating a strong work ethic, critical thinking skills and the ability to relate well with others

LEARN MORE

888-THE LCMS (843-5267)
lcms.org/school-ministry





 **ACTSFW**
CHRIST ACADEMY

HIGH SCHOOL

Early Registration is Open!

This is a reminder that **applications are open** for Christ Academy High School, which will be held on the campus of Concordia Theological Seminary June 16–29, 2024. If you know high-school-aged men and women interested in Lutheran theology, worship, and service to the Church, please contact a member of our Christ Academy Staff (see contact information below). We would be happy to answer any questions and look forward to hearing from you soon!

Learn more by visiting the event page links below or [click here to apply today](#).

CHRIST ACADEMY TIMOTHY SCHOOL

CHRIST ACADEMY PHOEBE SCHOOL



2024 NATIONAL LUTHERAN YOUTH WORKERS CONFERENCE

The 2024 National Lutheran Youth Workers Conference (**NATIONAL24**) is scheduled for **July 21-24, 2024 in New Orleans, LA**. NATIONAL24 is a standalone Youth Ministry practitioner conference, but also provides an opportunity to prepare for the 2025 LCMS Youth Gathering. The 4-day conference is a great opportunity for:

- Adult Leaders planning to take a group to New Orleans in 2025 and wanting to familiarize themselves with area hotels, facilities, and restaurants.
- First-time Adult Leaders desiring to connect with other new and seasoned Adult Leaders.
- Adult Leaders looking for training and networks which support your service as a youth ministry practitioner.

- Young (high school) leaders in congregations looking for an opportunity to sharpen their skills and meet other LCMS young leaders through YouthLead training.

- Young Adults (ages 18–25) looking to serve their congregation and the opportunity to serve the community of New Orleans through a Young Adult Servant event.

Adult participants will receive a complimentary registration to the 2025 LCMS Youth Gathering in New Orleans. **Registration is now open** and will remain open until the event fills or on July 1, 2024.

Move information available here: <https://www.lcmsgathering.com/national24>



PLANNING UNDERWAY FOR 2025 LCMS YOUTH GATHERING

The LCMS Youth Gathering (Gathering) provides thousands of youth and adults the opportunity to come together as a community of God's people to learn more about Jesus Christ, the Christian faith and their Lutheran identity. During the 5 days of the Gathering, youth spend time together in God's Word, worship, service, and fellowship with others from across the synod. This event is organized by LCMS Youth Ministry in Saint Louis, MO. **The next LCMS Youth Gathering will be July 19–23, 2025 in New Orleans, LA.** The theme for the

2025 LCMS Youth Gathering is "ENDURE" and is centered around Hebrews 12:1–3.

The Gathering office has been very busy planning for the 2025 event. There is already a tremendous amount of information on the Gathering website for Adult Leaders, Volunteers, Participants, and their families. To see the latest news and information for this essential LCMS youth event, visit the Gathering website at <https://www.lcmsgathering.com/> or follow the event on Facebook at LCMS Youth Gathering.

Mid-South District Wall of

HONORED WORKERS



Donors Share Gifts to District Ministry In Honor of Professional Church Workers

In October of 2023, the Mid-South District observed “District Ministry Month,” with an emphasis on Professional Church Workers and the numerous ways they are supported and encouraged through the ministry of the district. From recruiting efforts to tuition assistance, and from professional development to valuable grants for outreach, the ministry of the Mid-South District is strongly invested in its workers—both current and future. As such, Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod members across the district were invited to also invest in our workers by sharing a gift to the IMPACT Fund of the Mid-South District. Where so moved, donors were invited to give those gifts in honor or memory of a cherished Professional Church Worker—or even a future worker. The Mid-South District thanks all those who shared gifts in support of district ministry. As gifts were received in honor of specific workers, those names were displayed on a virtual “Honored Worker Wall” on the Mid-South District website. The following Professional Church Workers were honored or memorialized through donor gifts:

In HONOR of —

Rev. Robert Benke
Rev. David Callies
Mr. John Carpenter (*Seminary Student*)
Rev. Kevin Conger
Rev. Paul Donner
Rev. Dan Elkins
Rev. James Evers
Mrs. Alane Evers, *Music Program Director*
Mrs. Michelle Fischer, *Principal*
Rev. Mark Goble
Rev. Tim Henning
Rev. Kenneth Lampe
Rev. Ed Maanum
Rev. Charles Neugebauer
Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola
Rev. Larry Peters
Rev. George Smith
Rev. Andy Toopes
Rev. Philip Young
Rev. JD Zischke

In MEMORY of —

Judith Bailey, *Director of Parish Music*
Rev. Al Boysen
Rev. Dr. Wilbert E. Griesse
Rev. Norman Groteluschen
Rev. Clarence Helmich
Rev. Paul Martens
Rev. and Mrs. John Reimold
Rev. Henry Stoll
Rev. Bruce Zagel

*Thank You for your generous
and prayerful support of
District Ministry!*



Treasurers' Workshops

Mid-South District

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH - MISSOURI SYNOD

The Mid-South District's annual Treasurers Workshops have become a popular way for Congregational Treasurers to connect and expand their knowledge.

These free educational workshops are beginning this month! Register ASAP to reserve your seat.

The Presenter for the Treasurer's manual (Volume 1) session will be Mr. Charlie Rhodes, Executive Director of Synod Accounting (Retired). Angela Fowler will be the presenter for the afternoon Church Treasurer Best Practices session.

REGISTER ONLINE NOW

January 6, 2024

9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Treasurer's Manual – Volume 1
11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Lunch (provided)
11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Church Treasurer Best Practices
Grace Lutheran Church
9076 Middlebrook Pike
Knoxville, TN

January 13, 2024

9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Treasurer's Manual – Volume 1
11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Lunch (provided)
11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Church Treasurer Best Practices
Our Savior Lutheran Church
5110 Franklin Road
Nashville, TN

January 20, 2024

9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Treasurer's Manual – Volume 1
11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Lunch (provided)
11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Church Treasurer Best Practices
Hope Lutheran Church
1904 McArthur Blvd.
Jacksonville, AR

January 27, 2024

9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Treasurer's Manual – Volume 1
11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Lunch (provided)
11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Church Treasurer Best Practices
Mid-South District Office
1675 Wynne Road
Cordova, TN

February 3, 2024

9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Treasurer's Manual – Volume 1
11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Lunch (provided)
11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Church Treasurer Best Practices
St. John Lutheran Church
500 N. Cumberland Avenue
Russellville, AR

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND REGISTRATION

- Additional information found on the [District website](#).
- Contact Angela Fowler by [email](#) or telephone (866-373-1343, ext. 3105)
- [REGISTER ONLINE](#)

GRACE HOSTS OUTREACH EVENT

Grace, Little Rock hosted an outreach event on Saturday, December 2nd with Rev Dr. Leroy Leach. People from around central Arkansas joined us, including some from other denominations. Dr. Leach emphasized that the great commission is to “love your neighbor as yourself”, all in light of the work of the Holy Trinity. Thank you to LCEF for assisting us in hosting this conference.

— Rev. Kent R. Schaaf, Pastor



Life and Work of Bo Giertz

Short course Jan. 3-16, 2024

If you want to give your brain a workout in the new year, sign up to audit the Winter Short Term course, “The Life and Work of Bo Giertz,” being offered by Concordia Theological Seminary Fort Wayne in January. Prepare to be awestruck by Eric Andrae, the Master of all things Giertz. That may be a bit of an overstatement, but he is a leading authority on Giertz. This course will delve into one of the 20th century’s most influential Lutheran theologians. Not only will you gain valuable insights, but you’ll also discover timely and practical applications for your parish ministry.

Location: Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary
(Available online and in-person)

Information, Fees, Register here:
<https://concordia-seminary.ca/admissions/audit>

Pilot Project Limited Space

April 2024

This coming April, the Synod will offer a retreat for parents of children who have experienced difficulties related to sexual orientation and gender identity. Details are still being confirmed, but the retreat will serve as a pilot project for developing materials for the Synod’s Created Male and Female project, an outgrowth of 2019 Resolution 11-03A.

Interested parents should fill out the questionnaire at <https://www.lcms.org/parents-retreat>
For questions & information contact
Deaconess Dr. Tiffany Manor
Tiffany.manor@lcms.org
314-996-1085

Seminary Extension Class

June 26-28, 2024

Grace, Little Rock is pleased to host another seminary extension class next summer. The class will be held from June 26 to June 28th. Grace will be hosting Rev. Dr. Jim Bushur from Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne.

Mark your calendars if you would like to attend; more information will come out next year.

2024 Institute on Liturgy Preaching and Church Music

July 9–12, 2024

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod will host the 2024 Institute on Liturgy, Preaching and Church Music, set for July 9–12, 2024, at Concordia University, Nebraska, Seward, Neb.

More information, including how to register, will be available soon at lcms.org/2024-worship-institute.

Prayer Summary, December 2023

Following is a list of all the people that have appeared on the Mid-South District website prayer list www.mid-southlcms.com during the month of December 2023.

PRAYER CONCERNS

REV. RONALD HALAMKA (Waxahachie, TX)
MRS. ALISON HAWKINS (Mid-South District Office)
MRS. MARY ANN HERD (wife of Rev. Clifford Herd, Hixson, TN)
REV. ED MAANUM (First, Knoxville, TN)
REV. TOM SAYRE (Emeritus, St. John's, FL)
REV. TOM MOORE (Emeritus, Cordova, TN)
REV. HENRY THOMPSON (St. Luke, Malvern, AR)
REV. NEIL VANDERBUSH (Immanuel Lutheran Church, Memphis, TN)
MRS. NORMA MOORE (wife of Rev. Tom Moore, Emeritus, Cordova, TN)
MR. ZAC ENKO (son of Rev. Keith Enko, Emeritus, Lebanon, TN)
MR. MARC HIGGINS (MDS Board of Directors, Maumelle, AR)
MS. IRENE LOPEZ (mother of Ann Laury, Principal, Christ the King Lutheran School, Memphis, TN)
MS. LOIS SCHULTZ (mother of Rhonda Schultz, MDS Webmaster)
MS. LINDA SIMKO (stepdaughter of Jan Simko, MDS Disaster Relief Coordinator)
MRS. AMY YOUNG (wife of Rev. Philip Young, Redeemer, Nashville)
MR. BRUCE THOMPSON (son of Jan Simko, MDS Disaster Relief Coordinator)
MRS. NANCY SHEWMAKER (wife of Rev. Russell Shewmaker, Christ Lutheran Church, Siloam Springs, AR)

All those affected by the recent tornados from the December 9 storms in the Tennessee and Kentucky.

The Mid-South District Disaster Relief teams deploying to assist those affected by the recent tornados.

CALL UPDATE

PENDING: **Rev. Joseph Arthur, IV**, Pastor to Zion Lutheran Church, Bogalusa, LA has received a Call to serve as *Pastor to Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, Horseshoe Bend, AR.*

Rev. Adam DeGroot, Pastor to Calvary Lutheran Church, Rio Rancho, NM has received a Call to serve as *Pastor to Heavenly Host Lutheran Church, Cookeville, TN.*

DECLINED: **Rev. Thomas Chryst**, Pastor to Messiah Lutheran Church, Keller, TX, has returned the Call to serve as *Pastor to Grace Lutheran Church, Clarksville, TN.*

Rev. Peter Burfeind, Pastor to the dual parish of Agnus Dei Lutheran Church, Marshall, MI and Our Savior Lutheran Church, Union City, MI has returned the Call to serve as *Pastor to Christ Lutheran Church, Paris, TN.*

VACANT CONGREGATIONS & MINISTRIES

Heavenly Host Lutheran Church, Cookeville, TN- Pastor ** Pending Call

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Memphis, TN – Pastor

Shepherd of the Hills, Horseshoe Bend, AR – Pastor **Pending Call

Christ Lutheran Church, Paris, TN – Pastor

Our Savior Lutheran Church, Cabot, AR – Pastor

St. John's Lutheran Church, Russellville, TN - Pastor

IN THE CALLING PROCESS- COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

Christ Lutheran School, Little Rock, AR – 7th/8th Grade Math Teacher

First Lutheran School, Fort Smith, AR – 3rd Grade Teacher

Our Savior Lutheran Academy, Nashville, TN – Part time teachers ECC and After Care Program

Holy Trinity Lutheran Preschool, Bowling Green, KY – Teacher

Shepherd's Little Flock Daycare & Early Childhood Learning Center, Crossville, TN – Director



Congregational Mission Commitments

Mission Commitment Receipts as of 11/30/2023 (11 Months)

Anticipated Amount (91.67% of budget).....\$1,434,373
Actual Receipts 1,430,538
Over (under) anticipated amount **\$3,835**

Use of Mission Commitment Receipts (11 Months)

Allocated to Synod for World Missions \$406,245
Allocated to Tanzania22,917
Retained for District Mission/Ministry Support (70% of receipts) 1,001,377
Total Receipts\$1,430,538

Mission Commitment Receipts Prior Year Comparison 11 Months)

Actual Receipts as of 11/30/2023\$1,430,538
Actual Receipts as of 11/30/2022 \$1,403,669
Over (under) prior year receipts\$26,869

SHARE YOUR NEWS WITH US!

Encourager Topics in 2024

We invite you to share your stories with us please email stories by **20th** to Rhonda, webmaster@mid-southlcms.com. Here's a look at the upcoming topics for 2024

- February - Outreach
- March - Youth

Lutheran Witness Supplement

The monthly deadline is the 15th. Please email your original high resolution digital photo (.pdf or .jpg files only) and a short paragraph, to The Lutheran Witness Supplement editor, Judy Otto.
Email: LW@mid-southlcms.com
phone: 662-252-1004. Judy will always acknowledge receipt of your submission if it is sent directly to her.

Mid-South District, Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod

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