



A Message from Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, President

"God Will Provide"

Christians today call our Old Testament lesson Abraham's Sacrifice of Isaac. My Jewish Rabbi friend says his lectionary calls it the Binding of Isaac. What's the difference? The difference comes down to an understanding of what takes place on Mt. Moriah.

Here's what I mean: Do you like tests? I don't think anyone really likes them. Essays, True or False, fill in the blank, or multiple choice, they're just not fun. I once took an essay test that took over 6 hours. Those True and False questions require a person to dissect every word in the sentence to make sure it was true or false. I hated them. But, what's the point?

We are all faced with some kind of test every day—at least in varying degree. What clothes should I wear today, right on up to the bigger tests like, "Do I change jobs, do I get married, do we have another child or go to college." Those kinds of tests pose a real question: Do people—grown adults—really pass the tests for every station in life? Or are we so self-centered that we ignore responsibilities, or just plain common sense?

Why did God test Abraham's common sense? What difference does it make that God's plan for

Abraham's purpose in life wasn't about Abraham, but rather about God's plan of salvation?

Even before God created our universe, He made provisions for the way to redeem fallen mankind. The redemption of the world would require a perfect sacrifice: a perfect Lamb, cradled in the womb of all of the Old Testament. All of the Old Testament typological references point to One Person: the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, the only One able to pass God's test.

The twenty-second chapter in Genesis happened long after the Flood. After that time, God called this man, Abraham to become the father of faith in the promise that, through his offspring, the Seed of redemption promised to Adam and Eve would continue through Abraham until the perfect fulfillment of all prophesies in the birth of Jesus Christ.

God promised Abraham he would become the father of a great nation as numerous as the stars in the heavens or the grains of sand on the seashore. But, in order to do so, God also promised Abraham that he and his wife Sarah would have a son who would carry on that lineage.

That promise was going to be a huge test, because the fulfillment would happen in the birth of Isaac; but, it would happen when Abraham was around 100 years old and Sarah was way past her child-bearing age—probably over 80 years old.

So, here comes the test: In Genesis 22, God instructs Abraham to take his son, Isaac, to the top of Mt. Moriah—to offer him as a sacrifice to God... a burnt offering. If Isaac was Abraham's only son, and God wanted him to sacrifice him, how would God accomplish the salvation plan if Isaac was dead? The trek to the mountaintop took three days. I can imagine the torment that must've run through Abraham's head! Each day came closer to the time he'd have to sacrifice his son.

Then, Isaac asked the haunting question, *"Father, the fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"* I love Abraham's answer: *"God, Himself, will provide the lamb."* They prepared the altar and the wood. Then Abraham bound Isaac on top of the wood and began to complete the task God commanded.

However, as Abraham reached over his head with the knife to sacrifice his son, God spoke to him, *"Do not lay a hand on the boy. Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from Me your son, your only son."* Then, Abraham looked and saw a ram, caught in thorn bushes. He substituted the ram for His son. Abraham called the place YHWH-Jireh, which means, *"God will provide."*

Notice the future perfect verb: God WILL provide. Didn't He already provide the ram for the sacrifice? What gives? We've heard the Sunday School stories about this event. If we read it too quickly we'd miss some details that are going to explain why this Mt. Moriah and the place called "God will provide" are still important for us today.

Mt. Moriah eventually becomes the location of Jerusalem the Holy City. YHWH-Jireh is the exact location where the Temple with its Holy of Holies would eventually stand. Coincidence? I don't think so! YHWH-Jireh, God Himself will provide points to another future perfect event that takes place on that mountain. Yes, God would offer the sacrifice. He'll offer the Lamb of Sacrifice. It's no accident

that God caused a ram to be the substitute. Just as God tells of Abraham's faith in the divine will and providence of God, He sees Abraham's unquestioning faith offer his only son, Isaac.

Can we see the typology? The ram was the substitute offered by God: a clear reference to a Substitute God, Himself would offer for the sins of all the world, a vicarious sacrifice whose benefit we can only receive by faith. Isaac asked Abraham, *"Where is the lamb?"* Throughout the Old Testament, God continues to reveal specific Messianic prophesies. The animals sacrificed for Temple worship had to be free from all defects, not some old or crippled animal, as if the animal was going to die anyway.

But jump forward in history when God gave specific instructions to Moses for the people to offer an unblemished lamb in preparation for the Passover of the angel of death. Do you think for a second that someone took an old crippled goat, knowing full well that if they didn't follow God's instructions perfectly, they'd chance suffering the death of the first-born male in every household and every stable? Of course not! It was a test!

God spared the firstborn of the Israelites because they followed His instruction. When the blood of the lamb was spread on the door post, and the people ate the first Passover meal of the flesh of the lamb, God spared the lives of those within the walls of that household.

It had to be a perfect lamb. It had to be a male lamb in its prime—without blemish. Remember St. Peter's first epistle says that Jesus was the perfect Lamb of God without blemish? Remember Pontius Pilate saying, that after examining Jesus, He found no fault in Him? God's instructions to Moses were for the Israelites to avoid breaking the bones of the lambs of sacrifice. Even in His crucifixion, the bones of Jesus were not broken—a passive fulfillment of the Psalms that speak of God's sacrifice that no bones were broken.

But the Pascal lamb offered as sacrifice, nor its blood, saved the Israelites. It was God's Promise that spared those who lived inside the doors of the blood-soaked doors. The death angel passed over the houses of those who obeyed and believed

God's instruction. Loud wailing and cries of agony came from the houses of the Egyptians, but the book of Exodus says the households of the Israelites were calm and quiet, that not even a dog barked.

Can we see the typology of the Lamb of God? Jesus is God's Lamb offered for the sins of the world. God gives us His own true blood and the flesh of His sacrifice to eat as the angel of death passes over us and lets us live by God's grace.

Yes, Isaac asked, "*Where is the Lamb?*" It was a test. The ram was the right answer—the first substitute given by God. The perfect Lamb of the Passover is the second substitute that delivers from death. The next typology of the Lamb happened 800 years later, in the prophecy of Isaiah. The Lamb of God is prophesied, where God says, "*Surely He took our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered Him stricken by God, smitten by Him, and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed.*"

We can't miss the picture of Christ on the cross from that description. "*He was led as a Lamb to slaughter.*" Jesus is the sinless, perfect Son of God. He was led to His death as our Passover Lamb. Isaiah answers the question of Isaac and expands on the answer given by Abraham, "*The Suffering Lamb will become our sin-bearer and take our sins and iniquities upon Himself.*" That's the ultimate test of all time. No one could pass this test except the perfect Lamb of God.

Can we pull all of these together? First, Jesus is the Lamb of God. He's the only Person who fits all the hundreds of Messianic prophecies. He's the only One who passed the test of living a perfect life. He was marked from before the foundation of the world to become the Lamb of God. Even from His birth, we read of the sacrifice God will offer through His only Son, Jesus the Christ.

The writer of Hebrews reminds us, that without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin. Unless the Lamb dies, His blood is no good for forgiveness. But, in God's economy, only His blood that is shed can bring forgiveness and offer eternal life.

Here the test: St. Peter reminds us, we're not redeemed by perishable, temporal things. We're redeemed by "*the precious blood of Christ, a Lamb without blemish,*" the Christ of whom John the Baptizer declared, "*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the whole world.*"

Where is the Lamb the ultimate substitute? He's the sacrificial Lamb of our Passover. He's the promised Servant from God who suffers and dies in our place. Where do we find this perfect Lamb, that we may be spared from the angel of death? Look at the cross! See the lifeless Son of Man hanging in humility, His side pierced to spill His blood to set us free.

Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. There is the difference. Was the time on the top of Mt. Moriah a demonstration of the faith of Abraham? Or is it Isaac's consent by faith to observe his father's will and will of God? My Jewish Rabbi friend told me, "That's why we call this passage the Binding of Isaac. Because if we were to believe this was a willing sacrifice by Abraham of his son, we'd eventually have to acknowledge God's sacrifice of His only begotten Son, Jesus as the Savior."

Thanks be to God that it's His Promise and fulfillment in the lifeblood of Christ that He saw fit to save us to the glories of His eternal kingdom, through the merits of Jesus Christ. No one else could pass the test—only the Lamb of God, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Welcome to the Lenten Season that brings us to the foot of the cross to behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of all the world.

Your servant in Christ Jesus,



Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola

DISTRICT DISASTER RESPONSE

Helping Winter Storm Victims in the Mid-South

As Winter Storm Fern moved across the Mid-South District and much of the country in late January, millions were impacted with everything from heavy snow to devastating accumulations of ice. Areas in middle Tennessee and north Mississippi were hit especially hard with freezing rain that caused widespread damage and power outages—followed by a days-long punch of bitter cold temperatures. In the Nashville area alone, 175,000 were without power. Icy roads, downed trees and other hazards added to the difficulties, including for pastors and other ministry leaders hoping to determine the status of their church facilities.

The Mid-South District's Lutheran Early Response Team (LERT), Faith In Action, closely monitored the situation in the Nashville area, awaiting clearance to deploy and help with tree removal for both individuals and congregations. That work is now underway. They have also been in contact with LERTs in the Southern District, ready to offer assistance in hard hit areas of north Mississippi.

To resource the work of the Faith In Action LERT and help meet immediate needs of those impacted by the storm, the District's Disaster Relief Fund is accepting donations for the current response effort. To make a gift to this fund, please visit mid-southlcms.org and click "GIVE NOW." Gifts can also be shared by check. These gifts should be made payable to Mid-South District LCMS with "Disaster Relief" noted in the memo area. Please send donations by check to:

MID-SOUTH DISTRICT / 1675 WYNNE ROAD / CORDOVA TN 38016

Recovery from such a widespread disaster will take time. As the response process unfolds, we ask that you join us in praying for all those impacted by this disaster, as well as those who are taking part in the recovery.

For timely updates on the activities of the District's primary LERT group, be sure to follow [Faith In Action Disaster Response](#) on Facebook.



District Now Accepting Applications for STUDENT FINANCIAL AID

To support the education efforts of individuals pursuing a full-time career in church work, the Mid-South District is pleased to once again offer opportunities for student financial aid. To be considered for financial assistance, a student must:

- **Be a member in good standing** in a Mid-South District congregation.
- **Be enrolled in a seminary or university** to prepare for full-time service to the Church as a rostered worker.



Rostered workers are pastors, teachers, deaconesses and Directors of Christian Education. To be considered for the student financial assistance program, you must first inform the Mid-South District Office that you are or will be a student enrolled at a synodical school. All related forms, including the financial aid application, are on the District's website at mid-southlcms.org/student-financial-aid/.

The application deadline is June 15, 2026. Completed forms and applications may be submitted by email to **Lisa Pennington** (lpennington@mid-southlcms.com) or by mail to:

Mid-South District LCMS / Attn: Lisa Pennington / 1675 Wynne Road / Cordova, TN 38016

Get Ready for Summer Camp!

It may be chilly now, but it's never too early to make plans for a great summer camp experience for your kids! For friends in Arkansas, west Tennessee and middle Tennessee, two great camp options are available and already taking applications for this summer. **Camp Trinity, the Lutheran Camp at Petit Jean Mountain in Arkansas**, has a full schedule of options

coming up for kids of all ages—and their families. In addition to Camp Trinity, **Camp Clark Williamson in Humboldt, Tennessee** will host a week-long Lutheran Summer Camp for rising 3rd-7th grade students in June. Information on both camps is shared below. Simply click on the images for more information and online registration.

CAMP TRINITY 2026

Trailblazers: (5th-8th), June 7-12
Adventure: (9th-newly graduated), June 14-19
Explorers: (4th-6th), June 21-26
Pathfinders: (2nd-4th), June 28- July 1
Voyagers: (7th-10th), July 5-10
Wilderness: (6th-9th), July 12-16
Family Camp 1, July 17-19
Family Camp 2, July 20-22
Family Camp 3, July 24-26
— Visit lutherancamp.org —

Lutheran Children's Camp - Summer 2026



Who: Rising 3rd -7th graders

When: Monday, June 15 - Friday, June 19

Location: Camp Clark Williamson, Humboldt, TN

Cost: \$350

**Get Info &
REGISTER at**

lutheranchildrenscamp.com

69TH REGULAR CONVENTION

CHRIST IS RISENINDEED.....

1 corinthians 15

OFFICIAL
BUSINESS

NOMINATIONS for President,
First VP and Regional VPs

2.18.26 DEADLINE

SUBMISSION of Reports and
Overtures

2.28.26 DEADLINE

REGISTRATION for
Presidential Election Voters

3.8.26 DEADLINE

2026 LCMS SYNODICAL CONVENTION: Is Your Congregation Prepared for the Upcoming Deadlines?

The 69th Regular Convention of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod will take place July 18-23, 2026 in Phoenix, AZ. Several important convention processes are now underway, with crucial deadlines fast approaching, as shown above. Key among these is the March 8 deadline for electronic registration of a pastoral and a lay voter from each congregation, who will vote for Synod President in June 2026. The LCMS Presidential election will take place by electronic ballot between June 6-9, 2026, with run-off elections, if required, June 13-16, June 20-23 and June 27-30, 2026. Congregations were informed of the registration process and deadlines in October of 2025, with registration for presidential voters opening on October 18. **Currently, just 11.7% of Mid-South District congregations have completed registration for the LCMS presidential election.**

Congregations that do not have their president voter registration letter, mailed in mid-October, should contact the LCMS Office of the Secretary at lcmspresidentvote@lcms.org or (314)996-1417. The Mid-South District endeavors to have 100% congregational participation in the upcoming LCMS presidential election. Please make sure that your congregation is taking part. For more on the upcoming Synodical convention, please visit <https://www.lcms.org/convention/national>.

Join the WORKER WELLNESS GROUP on Facebook!

A new Worker Wellness Group is now available on Facebook! **Who should join this group?** **Those who serve—and those who care about those who serve: wellness is for everyone!** The Worker Wellness ministry exists to support our pastors, church workers, teachers, and all servants of the Mid-South District through physical, mental and spiritual awareness and care. The new Facebook group is a great way to connect, encourage and share information on wellness topics and events. Take a quick moment to join at:



<https://www.facebook.com/groups/workerwellnessmidsouth>

Have questions or input to share regarding Worker Wellness in the Mid-South District? Please reach out to Deaconess Robin Moyer (rmoyer@mid-southlcms.com) at the District Office.



Lutheran Summer Music Key Deadline Coming Up March 1

Youth musicians from across the country are headed to St. Olaf College this year for the 2026 Lutheran Summer Music Academy & Festival (LSM). Students in grades 8-12 will be immersed in a supportive community that nurtures their musical growth, and invites them to share their musical gifts in performance and in worship. **The Standard Enrollment deadline is March 1**, and spots are filling fast. Do you know

young musicians who would thrive at LSM? Nominate them today at LSMacademy.org/nominate, or remind them to submit a free application by March 1 at LSMacademy.org/apply.

Mid-South District Treasurers' Workshops Continue to Grow

For well over a decade, the Mid-South District has provided free workshops for congregational treasurers, pastors, and ministry lay leadership to help keep them informed not only of current Synod standards as outlined in the LCMS Treasurers' Manual, but also of best practices for church finance. Interest in this resource has grown each year, with just over 65 attending the workshops in 2025 and around 70 expected to take part in the 2026 sessions. These important educational events are made possible through partnership with hosting congregations across the District, which include Grace Lutheran in Knoxville, TN; Our Savior Lutheran in Nashville, TN; Hope Lutheran in Jacksonville, AR and Salem Lutheran in Springdale, AR. One workshop opportunity remains for 2026: **Saturday, February 7** at the District Office in Cordova, TN. To register, visit mid-southlcms.org/2026-treasurers-workshop/.



CALLED TO SERVE?

Concordia University, St. Paul Expands Church Work Tuition Guarantee!



In early January, Concordia University, St. Paul (CSP) announced that it is strengthening its commitment to the church through an expanded Church Work Tuition Guarantee, **offering \$0 tuition for all students preparing for full-time church work vocations.** This initiative affirms CSP's long-standing mission to prepare workers for the church wherever and however they are called to serve. CSP is now the most affordable church work option in the Concordia University System of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). The Church Work Tuition Guarantee is available beginning fall 2026 to all incoming and current full-time students enrolled in the following programs:

- *Director of Christian Education*
- *Director of Christian Outreach*
- *Director of Parish Music*
- *Lutheran Classroom Teacher*
- *Pre-Deaconess*
- *Pre-Pastoral*

Through this commitment, CSP ensures that financial barriers do not prevent students from responding to God's call into church work. Whether graduates serve in congregations, schools, mission settings, or other ministries of the church, CSP remains focused on forming faithful, well-prepared leaders rooted in Lutheran theology.

"This commitment reflects who we are and what we value—affordable tuition, outstanding faculty, and a robust, confessionally Lutheran curriculum," says the Rev. Dr. Mark Koschmann, Chief Mission Officer at Concordia St. Paul. "Our prayerful hope is that this removes financial barriers so that more students can joyfully prepare for lives of service in the Church, strengthened by the gifts God has entrusted to them."

If you or your student are currently contemplating a full-time career in professional church work, you are encouraged to learn more about this opportunity and Concordia University, St. Paul at www.csp.edu/news.



The Mid-South District is

It is hard to believe, but the Mid-South District of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is celebrating its 60th year in 2026! That is 60 years of gratefully serving, supporting and encouraging LCMS ministries, workers and members across Arkansas, Tennessee and southwestern Kentucky. Throughout the year, watch the *Encourager* for more on the District's history—and how you can be a part of the future of District ministry. Be sure to watch for announcements about a special 60th anniversary Oktoberfest celebration taking place later in the year!

*Celebrating
60 Years*





The Book of Concord

Explore the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church

Preface to the
Christian Book of
Concord

The Three
Universal or
Ecumenical Creeds

The Augsburg
Confession

The Apology of the
Augsburg
Confession

The Smalcald
Articles

Treatise on the
Power and Primacy
of the Pope

Explore the Book of Concord Online

New from Concordia Publishing House

Concordia Publishing House (CPH) is pleased to offer the text of the *Book of Concord* for free on its brand-new website, bookofconcord.cph.org. This easy-to-use resource lets you navigate through all the major documents of the *Book of Concord*. Features of this new resource include:

- **Copy and Paste** capability, with automatic carryover of citations.
- **Easy Navigation**, allowing the user to quickly find documents and sections.
- **Search Feature**, allowing search by word, phrase, or article/paragraph number.
- **Inline References**, providing ESV translation of any scripture reference instantly.

Try the new online tool from CPH today!

[View the Book of Concord
Online](http://bookofconcord.cph.org)

Why Send Your Child to a Lutheran School?

Here is why you should send your child to a Lutheran elementary school.

Lutheran schools:

- Are **driven by a commitment to the Gospel** and focused on a mission of bringing hope and healing to students and families.
- Are **governed by board members who clearly understand their roles** and focus on the vision and board policies that effectively govern the operation of the school.
- **Meet or exceed state and national academic standards** at all grade levels.
- Have **educators who model visionary leadership**. They practice stewardship of resources, build up others and empathize with others.
- Have **educators who model servant leadership**. Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? (*Robert Greenleaf*)
- Have **educators who model spiritual leadership**. They study God's Word, share their personal faith story, apply Law and Gospel appropriately, exhibit a passion for ministry, act courageously, equip God's people for service, care for others, demonstrate integrity, and pray. (*LCMS.org*)



The Mid-South District is home to 30 Lutheran schools—20 preschools and 10 elementary schools. If you or someone you know is exploring schools, take a look at your local Lutheran education ministry options first! [CLICK for our school locator tool.](#)



2026 Is a Great Year for Your Ministry to Apply for a GROW Grant

The Mid-South District encourages innovative and creative new ministry initiatives of its existing congregations and schools through the GROW Grants program. A GROW Grant is a financial contribution from the Mid-South District to support an innovative ministry program or initiative to reach new hearts with the Gospel. Examples of such programs/ initiatives include new ethnic ministries, outreach to college students, a community food pantry or clothing closet, a ministry for the homeless, or any ongoing program that provides opportunities for Gospel-sharing with the community at large. A GROW Grant is a one-time financial outlay of up to \$15,000 for a ministry or program that will be on-going and self-sustaining after its initial launch phase.

Since launching the program in 2022, the Mid-South District has awarded over \$225,479 in GROW Grants to qualifying congregations and schools. Could your ministry be a recipient in 2026? Find out by visiting the district website at <https://mid-southlcms.org/grow-grants>. If you have questions about the GROW Grants process or program, please contact Angela Fowler (aowler@mid-southlcms.com) at the District office.

Since launching the program in 2022, the Mid-South District has awarded over \$225,479 in GROW Grants...

Ash Wednesday is February 18.

May the ministries, workers and members of the Mid-South District be blessed in their Lenten journey.



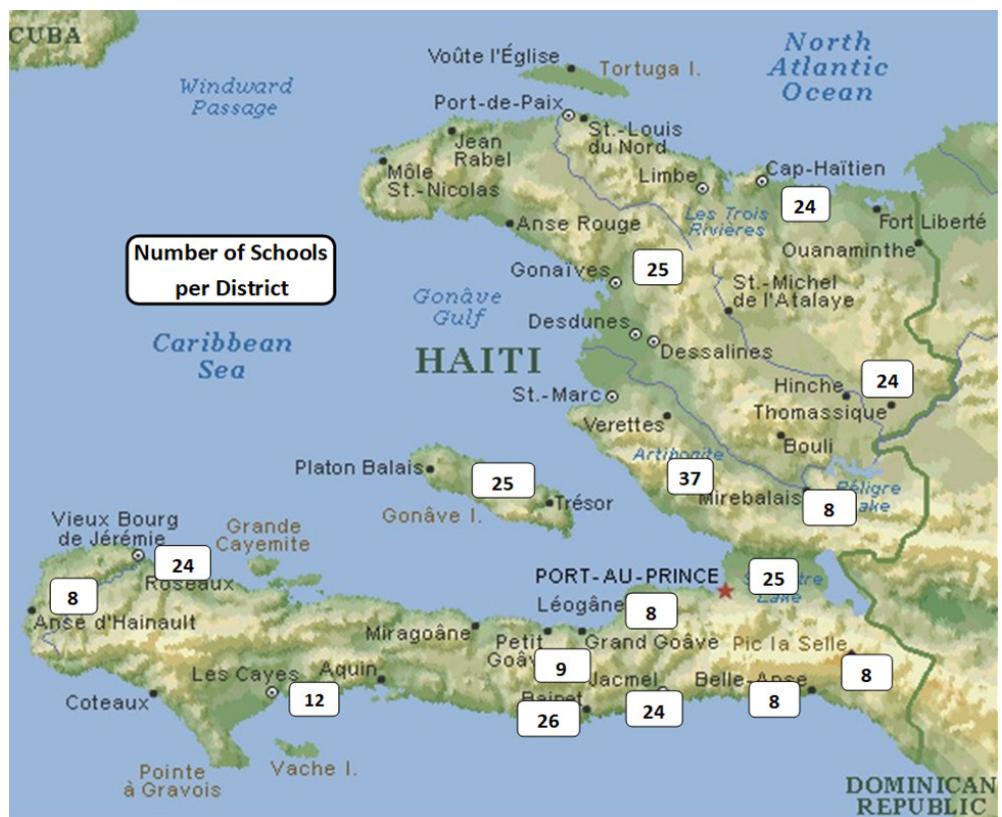
Sustained by God, Serving with Hope



Across Haiti, children wake each morning facing hunger, fear, and uncertainty that no child should ever have to endure. For many, the meal they receive at school is the only reliable food of the day, and the Gospel they hear there is the clearest message of hope speaking into their circumstances. In these classrooms, native Haitian Feeding Program Directors not only ensure children are fed, they also help teach Gospel-centered lessons through our evangelism program, reminding each child that they are seen, loved, and cared for by God.

Even in the midst of ongoing unrest, Trinity HOPE continues its work because God prepared this ministry long before today's challenges. What began more than 20 years ago as a practical way to manage growth has become a clear example of God's provision and foresight. As Scripture declares, **"And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus"** (Philippians 4:19, ESV).

Today, Trinity HOPE operates throughout Haiti in 16 autonomous districts, each led by native Haitian Feeding Program Directors who live and work within their own communities. This structure allows food to be purchased locally, resources



to be stewarded wisely, and children to be fed safely and consistently, even as much of the country faces instability. Through this model, more than \$3.5 million in economic impact is shared across local communities each year.

We give thanks to God for His ongoing protection and guidance. While many organizations have been forced to withdraw, the infrastructure God led Trinity HOPE to build allows us to remain present and continue feeding children, one bowl of beans and rice at a time. Thank you for your prayers and faithful support as we give God

all the glory for the hope being
shared across Haiti every single
day.

To learn more about the Trinity HOPE ministry, visit our website at www.trinityhope.org.



Prayer Summary, January 2026

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 January.

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. TOM SAYRE (Emeritus, St. John's, FL)
REV. ALBERT EICHELBERGER (Emeritus, Knoxville, TN)
REV. MYLES SCHULTZ (Pastor, Grace Lutheran Church, Holiday Island, AR)
REV. DR. LEE HAGAN (District President, Missouri District)
MRS. NANCY CALLIES (wife of Rev. David Callies, Emeritus, Former District President MDS)
MRS. FLORENCE EICHELBERGER (wife of Rev. Albert Eichelberger, Knoxville, TN)
MRS. NORMA MOORE (wife of Rev. Tom Moore, Emeritus, Cordova, TN)
MRS. JUNE WIESE (wife of former MDS Pastor, Rev. Ron Wiese)
MS. STEPHANIE ELSEROAD (daughter of Rev. Rich Elseroad (EM) Knoxville, TN)
MR. ROBERT NERGER (Former Mid-South District Board of Directors, Wartburg, TN)

Prayers for all those affected by the winter storm that moved across the Mid-South in late January.

Deepest sympathies to the family and friends of Miss Jessica Woldt (sister of Rev. Adam Woldt, The Point Lutheran Church, Knoxville, TN) who recently passed away.

Deepest sympathies to the family and friends of Rev. William Thomas Moore (Emeritus, Cordova, TN) who passed away on January 4, 2026.

CALL UPDATE

VACANT CONGREGATIONS & MINISTRIES

ACCEPTED —

REV. GERALD HEMMINGSON, Emeritus, Joplin, MO accepted the Call to serve as pastor to First Lutheran Church, Harrison, AR. *Installation planned for 2.1.26 at 3 PM.*

CALL UPDATE (cont.)

REV. DR. HAROLD RISTAU, Luther Classical College, accepted the Call to serve as Senior Pastor to Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Bowling Green, KY. *Installation planned for 2.15.26 at 4 PM.*

REV. DANIEL GRAY, Pastor to Martin Luther Chapel, Pennsauken, NJ, accepted the Call to serve as Pastor to Concordia Lutheran Church, Kingsport, TN. *Installation planned for 2.15.26 at 3 PM.*

REV. NICHOLAS BELCHER, Candidate, Cabot, AR accepted the Call to serve as Pastor to St. Titus Lutheran Church, Maumelle, AR. *Installation planned for 2.7.26 at 3 PM.*

REV. KEITH KNUPP, Emeritus, Sparta, TN, accepted the Call to serve as Associate Pastor (Part-Time) to Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, Crossville, TN. *Installation took place 1.11.26.*

PENDING —

REV. KEVIN MCREYNOLDS, Pastor to Redeemer Lutheran Church, Mountain Home, AR, received a Call to serve as Pastor to Grace Lutheran Church, Wayne, NE.

REV. JD ZISCHKE, Pastor to Restoration Lutheran Church, Fayetteville, AR has received a Call to serve as Pastor to Resurrection Ministries, Brentwood, CA.

DECLINED —

REV. TOM BOECK, Pastor to Peace Lutheran Church, Conway, AR, returned the Call to serve as pastor to Trinity Lutheran Church of Southwest Florida, Port Charlotte, FL; **additionally**, Pastor Boeck returned the Call to serve as pastor to Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, Onalaska, WI.

REV. KEVIN MCREYNOLDS, Pastor to Redeemer Lutheran Church, Mountain Home, AR, returned the Call to serve as Pastor to Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Crete, NE.

VACANT CONGREGATIONS & MINISTRIES

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Chattanooga, TN — Sr. Pastor

IN THE CALLING PROCESS - COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

Our Savior Lutheran Academy, Nashville, TN — Full-time PreK Teacher; Full-time & Part-time Preschool Teachers & Aides

Christ the King Lutheran School, Memphis, TN — Director of Christian Education

First Lutheran School, Knoxville, TN — Middle School Math; Several part time teaching positions



Congregational Mission Commitments

Mission Commitment Receipts as of 12/31/2025 (12 Months)

Anticipated Amount (100% of budget).....	\$1,628,696
Actual Receipts	<u>1,642,156</u>
Over (under) anticipated amount.....	\$13,460

Use of Mission Commitment Receipts (12 Months)

Allocated to Synod for World Missions	\$467,647
Allocated to Tanzania	25,000
Retained for District Mission/ Ministry Support (70% of receipts).....	<u>1,149,509</u>
Total Receipts	\$1,642,156

Mission Commitment Receipts Prior Year Comparison (12 Months)

Actual Receipts as of 12/31/2025	\$1,642,156
Actual Receipts as of 12/31/2024	<u>\$1,682,132</u>
Over (under) prior year receipts	(\$39,976)

Share your news with us!

Encourager

Topics in 2026

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 2026.

March — Youth

April — Volunteers

May — Small Town & Rural Ministry

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

Staff

Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola,
President

Angela Fowler,
Executive Director for Business & Finance

Michelle Fischer,
Executive Director for Education, Youth & Family

Scott Roberts,
LCEF Vice President

Missy Washburn,
Executive Assistant to the District President

Renae McElwain,
Communications & Marketing Specialist

April Jones,
Administrative Assistant for Education, Youth & Family

Lisa Pennington,
Finance Assistant

Robin Moyer,
Deaconess

Contact

1675 Wynne Road
Cordova, TN 38016
PHONE: 866.373.1343 / 901.373.1343
FAX: 901.373.4826

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