

Encourager

Mid-South District LCMS | March 2020

March Focus: YOUTH

There are amazing youth across the Mid-South District. Join us as we lift our youth, leaders and schools up in prayer this month.

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Does your ministry have a story (or picture with a caption) related to youth, please share it with readers across the Mi-South District through the Encourager. Simply email your article and photo submissions to webmaster@mid-southlcms.com.



A Message from Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, President

In his book, *The Shaping of the Parish for the Future*, (Parish Life Press, Philadelphia, 1975) Kent Gilbert researched the bewildering symptoms of the American Christian Church. Each contributor to the book indicated puzzlement over the decline in membership and attendance that began sometime around the end of the 1960's. The decline seems to be in a "free-fall" since that time, witnessed in the most recent PEW report that discovered almost half of millennials avoid worship service.

Somewhere in the middle 1970's a movement was conceived that placed some churches in the "Church Growth" movement, and placed others more deeply entrenched in more of a "Field of Dreams" mentality – "If we build it, they will come." This polarity was characterized by Anita Stauffer

when she noticed the emerging battleground for new generations was a focus somewhere between Martin Luther and Richard Neibuhr. She suggested that Luther maintained that the Church is where the Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments were properly administered. On the other hand, however, Neibuhr and his contemporaries maintained that the Church is where the people learn to "effect the increase among people of the love of God and our neighbor." She discovered the prevailing question of ecclesiastical leaders is no longer, 'What is the mission of the church,' but rather, 'How can the church effectively carry out its mission *being* the church.' Doing church, in other words, was configured to "being" the church.

As a result, our youth and the "next generations" have spoken

with their feet. They walk away from the church because they don't appreciate the dichotomy and struggles. On one hand they see attempts to engage their culture at the expense of old traditions. On the other hand, they see tradition skillfully maintained amid dwindling numbers and half-filled sanctuaries.

Our Church exists in two sorts of environments – time and space. This ecology is the study of an organism in its relationship to its environment. The time environment for the church is the more difficult to examine, but it is no less real than the spatial environment. The problem of trying to understand our changing community (space) as time plods along unheeded, our Church is faced with attempting to keep pace with the culture without throwing out the substance of our message.

The ecology of the Church's anatomy is defined by these two environments. The ecology of the Church is affected by our anatomy: Our mission, priorities, goals, physical plants, Pastors, size, statistics, organizations, laity, leadership, relationship, communications, doctrine, and Stewardship patterns. The eco-system in which these operate are the memories, hopes, economy, social problems, Synod, ecumenism, societal changes, area geography, culture, history, local politics, and customs.

But, when asked, "Why do you want more members," most of the people surveyed responded, "To raise the budget." How would young people respond to that

underlying objective? How would anyone, for that matter, respond as outsiders to the American Church? We will never be able to move beyond the budget - or into it - to discover why raising it was a worthy venture for the congregation. The Christ-led purpose of adding members is actually a concern to add new followers of Jesus Christ.

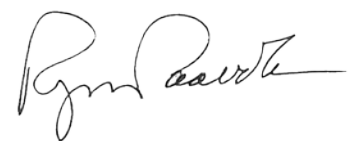
The decline in Church membership and church attendance has been a trend line that began in the 1960's. Numerous studies have indicated quantifiable reasons for the decline. If the parents in the 1950's said a family was going to go to church, the children were included. In the 1970's and 80's, parenting became somewhat less apt to insist on cooperative compliance on the part of the children. By the turn of the Twenty-First Century, the children of an earlier discipline became parents who would choose a more democratic approach to church attendance. When the subject came up, the child was able to veto the very idea, and chose not to go to church.

Subliminally, the parents acquiesced to the children reluctance to go to church, is thus telling the child that church attendance was not important enough to insist on attending. Even though this may appear to be over simplistic, the data collected by several reliable sources indicate that one generation's attitude toward church membership carries the likelihood of somewhere between 15% to 35% that the child's generation will grow up

to be active church members. An accelerated geometric decline will commence if the parent fails to offer the gracious invitation to join in worship.

Our youth are precious gifts from God. The wisest man to ever live once wrote, *"Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it."* (Proverbs 22:6 ESV) The ecology and economy of our church existence is staring us in the face. While the Church built on Christ Jesus will never decline (Matthew 16), what happens to the American Christian Church needs us to review our responsibility of the stewardship of the church God has entrusted to our care. We have a growing generational examination that is looking for a community that truly believes what they say they believe. That is the fabric of our Church – speaking the Word of truth to build up the God-given faith for the next generation, so that we may be God's *"chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."* (1 Peter 2:9)

Your servant in Christ –
Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola





Faith IN THE Home FORUM

BUILDING FAITH • STARTING AT HOME

A SPECIAL EVENT FOR FAMILIES & FAITH LEADERS

FAITH IN THE HOME FORUM is a unique event focused on nurturing faith in families from the most important starting point: *the home*.

Attending laypeople, pastors and youth leaders/volunteers will acquire powerful knowledge and skills through both speaker-led presentations and interactive break-out sessions.

FEATURED SPEAKER: Lutheran Educator and Educational Psychologist **Dr. Kim Marxhausen**

2 DATES & CITIES

SAT - 3.21.2020, 10a-2:30p

in Nashville TN

@ Our Savior Lutheran Church



SAT - 4.25.2020, 10a-2:30p

in Little Rock AR

@ Christ Little Rock Church

Catered Lunch to be Served / \$10 Per Person

FAITH IN THE HOME FORUM IS ABOUT BEING

EQUIPPED

EMPOWERED

ENCOURAGED

AS A FAITH LEADER FOR THE FAMILY

Learn More and Register to Attend at
mid-southlcms.org

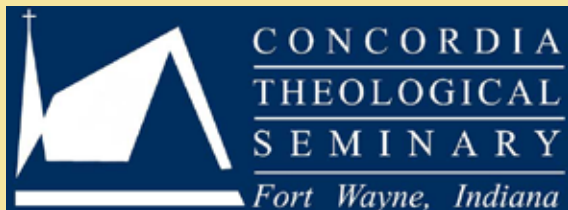
*Faith in the Home Forum is a learning event
presented by the Mid-South District of the
Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod*



Good Shepherd Lutheran Church Welcomes New DCE

February 16, 2020 Good Shepherd Lutheran Church (Chattanooga, TN) installed their new DCE, Miss Katie Baumann. A brunch followed the service as everyone welcomed Katie to Good Shepherd.

Laying of hands by Assistant Pastor Rev. Edward Rosser (L), Officiant, Rev. Mark Rhoads and Head Pastor, Rev. Christopher Sheets (R)



A continuing education class coming this summer, open to both church workers as well as lay people.

July 27-29 in Madison (Nashville), TN

(Ascension Lutheran Church)

Apologetics for the 21st Century

Dr. Adam Francisco

Scripture enjoins us to always be prepared to make a defense when non-Christians ask us why we believe what we believe and, sometimes, why they, too, should consider Christian belief. This course is an introduction to this particular aspect of the apologetic task. It covers the historical Christian apologetic tradition, assesses the various methods employed by apologists, and especially focuses on the various charges made against and challenges posed to Christian belief today.

Register online:

www.ctsfw.edu/ctsfw-events/continuing-education/madison-tennessee



3L Summit

May 16

Last year, the Mid-South District introduced a dynamic evangelism event for lay people called 3L Summit. The one-day conference encouraged lay people in their personal evangelism efforts through practical talks on LIVING their faith, LOVING God's people and LEARNING to disciple (the 3L's).

This year's 3L Summit is set for Saturday, May 16 at Immanuel Lutheran Church & School in Memphis, TN.

More details in the coming weeks.

Seltz to lead religious liberty conference at Camp Trinity



Rev. Dr. Gregory Seltz is the scheduled speaker for a Champions of Religious Liberty conference March 28 at Camp Trinity, the Lutheran Camp on Petit Jean Mountain. Seltz was the Lutheran Hour speaker from 2011 until 2017, when he became the first executive director of the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty in Washington, D.C. Seltz said the Center exists to “serve all of our churches, schools and universities by ensuring that their voices continue to be heard, serving the cause of religious liberty for all of our people so that God’s Word will indeed not be bound, but go forth and bear much fruit.”

A gifted speaker, Seltz will present in the morning and afternoon, with a break for lunch served by Camp Trinity staff. Following the conference Pastor Seltz will lead a worship service. Guests who want to stay overnight at camp Friday or Saturday night in either cabins or the RV campground can make separate arrangements with the camp by emailing director@lutherancamp.org.

The mission of the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty is to “ignite and fuel a uniquely Lutheran response to increasing intrusions, limitations and challenges by the government in the life of the Church, while educating, encouraging and equipping LCMS members and organizations to take informed action in support of marriage, life and religious freedom.”

Although there is no charge for the conference, preregistration is required to enable organizers to plan for seating, lunch and conference materials. A free-will offering will help defray the costs of the conference. Details, including registration information, can be found at the website of Camp Trinity: lutherancamp.org.

Contributed by
David Cox
Director, Camp Trinity



It always warms my heart to see children follow Jesus when they see a need and give everything they have to care for other children less fortunate. God has commanded us to *“train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it.”* Proverbs 22:6. In my experience, this begins at home and continues in school and is brought together when we unite at church to “refill our tanks”. But in Haiti, a country where Voodoo is the country’s main religion, this process often begins at school, where these young students receive a warm bowl of rice and beans daily from Trinity HOPE. This meal helps them better retain the Gospel message taught by their teachers and gives them a physical reminder that God always loves them and ensures them a perfect life for eternity in heaven. They are so excited about what they are learning that they become young missionaries, helping bring their families to know Christ and inviting them to church to learn more.

Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 6:5-9 that we should *love the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our might, and we should diligently teach the commandments to our children.* Even though I do love God with all my heart, body and soul, I sometimes don’t always live out that faith and take action immediately. This is totally opposite of what I experience with children. When I’ve had the opportunity to share how difficult life is for a child in Haiti with the kids in the U.S. attending a chapel service or VBS programs, they get it right

Kids Feeding Kids

away. They immediately begin thinking of ways they can help the Haitian children, including walking door-to-door in their neighborhoods filling a jar with donations, emptying their piggy banks, and forgoing ice cream at school to instead give those quarters to feed a child in Haiti who is hungry. Praise God for Kids feeding kids!

So I encourage all of you to love God as Moses taught us, putting Him first in your life. Help teach that diligently to the children and grandchildren you may have in your homes, in your neighborhoods, at your church, and even to the children in Haiti. Follow the examples of children who are on fire for the Lord and immediately take action to share the Gospel and help those less fortunate.

Contributed by
Denise Gudlin



Faith IN THE Home FORUM

SATURDAY, MARCH 21, 2020

10 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Our Savior Lutheran Church

Nashville TN

5110 Franklin Pike

Nashville TN 37220

[Register online now](#)

SATURDAY, APRIL 25, 2020

10 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

Christ Little Rock Church

Little Rock AR

315 S. Hughes St.

Little Rock AR 72205

[Register online now](#)



More information can be found on the [Mid-South District website](#) or contact Tessa Brasher at brashert@csp.edu

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 and 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. This information may be sent via email to Julie Tyler (jtyler@mid-southlcms.com) or in a



written letter (Attn: Julie Tyler / 1675 Wynne Road / Cordova, TN 38016). All related forms, including the financial aid application, are on the District's website. **The application deadline is June 15, 2020.**

Prayer Summary, February 2020

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 February.

PRAYER CONCERNS

MRS. TERRI DEHNING (eldest daughter of Rev. Dan Elkins and his wife Geneva)
MS. EVELYN DOUGLAS (friend of Julie Tyler, Mid-South District Office)
MRS. SARA FEUERSTEIN (daughter of Pastor Donley Hesse, Emeritus, Mena, AR)
MR. MARK GUDLIN (wife Denise is with Trinity Hope)
MRS. ALISON HAWKINS (Mid-South District Office)
MRS. SUSAN JONES (volunteer, Mid-South District Office)
REV. DR. HERBERT MUELLER (Former 1st Vice President of the Synod)
MRS. CINDY NEWMAN (Spouse of District President Michael Newman, Texas)
REV. MERLIN SEPMAYER (Crossville, TN)
REV. HERBERT SWANSON (River Valley Grace, Lamar, AR)
REV. NEIL VANDERBUSH (Chaplain * U.S. Army with the Board of International Missions * Our Savior, Searcy, AR)
MISS ANASTASIA WILLADSEN (daughter of Rev. Joshua Willadsen, Ft. Smith, AR)

Our deepest sympathies to:

Rev. Neil Vanderbush and Family on the loss of his mother, Mitzi Minkler, who recently passed away.

CALL UPDATE

IN THE CALLING PROCESS – CONGREGATIONS ORDAINED MINISTERS

ACCEPTED: **Rev. Erik Christensen**, Associate Pastor, Our Savior Lutheran Church, Nashville, TN, has accepted the Call to serve as **Associate Pastor at Grace Lutheran Church, Wayne, NE.**

DECLINED: **Rev. Nathaniel Hill**, St. Michael's Lutheran Church, Winchester, TX has returned the Call to serve as **Pastor at First Lutheran Church, Chattanooga, TN.**

Rev. Todd Peperkorn, Senior Pastor, Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Rocklin, CA has returned the Call to serve as **Pastor at First Lutheran Church, Knoxville, TN.**

Rev. Jason Zirbel, Pastor, Grace Lutheran Church, Greenwood, AR, has returned the Call to serve as **Pastor at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Pleasant Prairie, WI.**

COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

ACCEPTED: **Ms. Katie Baumann**, Concordia Irvine Candidate, has accepted the Call to service as **DCE at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Chattanooga, TN** **Commissioning and Installation was February 16, 2020

IN THE CALLING PROCESS – CONGREGATIONS

First Lutheran Church, Chattanooga, TN – Pastor
First Lutheran Church, Knoxville, TN – Pastor
Mid-South District – Executive Director for Missions and Ministry
Redeemer Lutheran Church, Mountain Home, AR – Pastor

IN THE CALLING PROCESS-COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

Zion Lutheran Church if Avilla, Alexander, AR – Director of Parish Music
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Chattanooga TN – DCE
Christ Lutheran School, Little Rock, AR – Principal
Immanuel Lutheran School, Memphis, TN – Principal

Congregational Mission Commitments

Mission Commitment Receipts as of 1/31/2020 (1 Month)

Anticipated Amount (8.3% of budget) \$128,248
Actual Receipts 122,342
Over (under) anticipated amount (\$5,906)

Use of Mission Commitment Receipts (1 Month)

Allocated to Synod for World Missions \$34,619
Allocated to Tanzania 2,083
Retained for District Mission/Ministry Support
(70% of receipts) 85,639
Total Receipts \$122,342

Mission Commitment Receipts Prior Year Comparison (1 Month)

Actual Receipts as of 1/31/2020 \$122,342
Actual Receipts as of 1/31/2019 \$118,127
Over (under) prior year receipts \$4,215

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.

Encourager Topics in 2020

The 20th is the monthly deadline.

- **April – Volunteers**
- May – Small Town & Rural Ministry
- June – Leadership
- July – Veterans
- August – Stewardship
- September – Church Planting
- October – Celebrating Lutheran Heritage
- November – Thankfulness
- December – Highlights of 2020



Mid-South District, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

Staff

Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, *President*

Angela Fowler, *Executive Director for Business & Finance*

Paul Reaves, *Executive Director for Development & LCEF Vice President*

Allen Piepenbrink, *Executive Director for Schools and Early Childhood*

Missy Washburn, *Administrative Assistant to the District President*

Renae McElwain, *Communications & Marketing Specialist*

Carolyn Metzger, *Finance Assistant*

Julie Tyler, *Administrative Assistant for Missions and Education*

Contact the Mid-South District

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

Stay Connected With Us

ON THE WEB - "mid-southlcms.org"
ON FACEBOOK - "[Mid-South-LCMS](https://www.facebook.com/Mid-South-LCMS)"
ON TWITTER - "[@midsouthLCMS](https://twitter.com/midsouthLCMS)"

Contribute

If you would like your article or event published in the next *Encourager*, please email it by **March 20, 2020** to Rhonda, webmaster@mid-south-lcms.com