

Encourager

MARCH 2023

Mid-South District LCMS



A Message from Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, President

In his essay, "Why LCMS Schools Are Struggling and What To Do About It," Rev. Stephen Kieser brings a bright light of understanding the decline of many of our Lutheran schools. It doesn't take more than a casual observer to recognize our Lutheran schools are struggling. Finances, teacher shortages, and declining enrollments are common across our Synod and all denominations. It's not because of tuition or curriculum. It's not because private education is undesirable to the general public. Our Lutheran schools face a multifaceted issue that can and will be solved.

Kieser notes that the report on Lutheran education to the 2019 Synod convention stated, "Aging population, family size,

lack of denominational loyalty, younger families leaving for non-denominational churches, weakened catechesis, ineffective leadership, lack of strategic planning and decreased funding [are the conclusive causes of decline]. increase divorce, breakdown of the family, weakened economy, a substantial increase of educational alternatives during the last two generations of students, secularization of America, and increased funding for public education [add to the decline]."

The Blue Ribbon Committee on Lutheran Schools (2019) also noted that only one-third of the teachers in our Lutheran schools are actually rostered teachers, making it necessary

for the Lutheran schools to contract non-Lutheran teachers to cover the other two-thirds of the teaching faculty. In some locations, there are only one or two LCMS rostered teachers on the entire teaching staff.

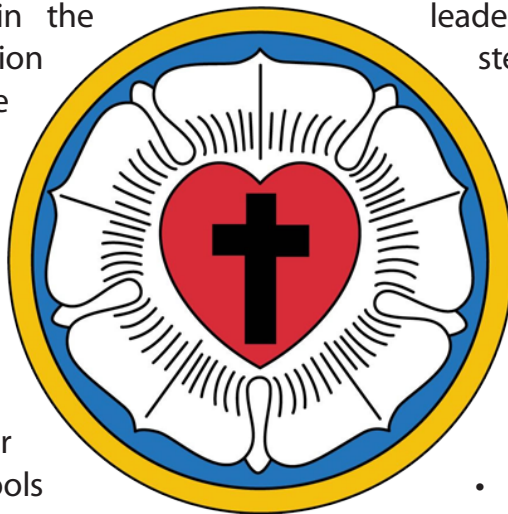
Kieser points out that the Blue Ribbon Committee also noted that many Lutheran schools "...have abandoned robust Lutheran catechesis. They have forgotten the best part of their orthodox Lutheran history. Some have taken "Lutheran" out of their name in order to bolster a marketing scheme that attempts to name a Lutheran school according to the non-Lutherans they serve, rather than identifying themselves as Lutherans... "In an effort to be all things to 56 million children in

the US, they have not sought first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33)".

Martin Luther was concerned about public education in his time, and even shared his distress with parochial education. He was convinced unbridled educational systems drove people away from the Gospel of Christ – trick of Satan (AE45:347, ff.) In Luther's Large Catechism he writes, "therefore let all Christians regard their baptism as the daily garment that they are to wear all the time. Every day they should be found in faith and with its fruits, suppressing the old creature and growing up in the new. If we want to be Christians, we must practice the work that makes us Christians, and let those who fall away return to it." (LC 4 Part 84-86, KW, p, 466).

Luther and his compatriots in the Reformation supported education of the youth from the perspective that their education is a doctrine of biblical theology. When our beloved Synod was founded in 1847, the leaders made provisions that catechesis and a well-rounded general education was an essential part of our Christian duty and privilege. Teacher candidates for the Lutheran schools were examined for their knowledge in Scripture, Lutheran doctrine, church and world history, and the "...German language, arithmetic, penmanship, geography, history, and music (Wayne Schmidt, *The Lutheran Parochial School*, p. 56).

Kieser cites an example where, in the early Twentieth Century, Horace Mann, Maria Montessori, Benjamin Bloom and Lev Vygotsky led public schools toward a more modified means of general liberal arts education. In his book, *Serpents in the Classroom*, Rev. Dr. Thomas Korcok explains how rejection of the doctrines of original sin, Godly authority, Christian catechesis, and other foundational teachings of the church were jettisoned "...the theological premises upon which their pedagogical ideas were built and still remain." (Thomas Korcok, *Serpents in the Classroom*, p. 7).



In his essay, Kieser makes an observation of what the LCMS and its member educational ministries strive to accomplish in our schools. He notes, "On the LCMS webpage under 'School Ministry,' a number of reasons are given for sending your child to a Lutheran 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 the stewardship of resources, building 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?
- Have educators who model spiritual leadership. They study God's Word, share their personal faith story, apply Law and Gospel appropriately, exhibit passion for ministry, act courageously, equip God's people for service, care for others, demonstrate integrity, and pray."

The future of the Lutheran education ministries is a vital ingredient in making positive steps in the direction of securing teachers, pastors, DCE's, deaconesses, and many other vital professional church workers for the next generations. Understanding the unparalleled value of Lutheran educational ministries is our responsibility to future generations. Training, supporting, and honoring our valued educators is essential. This is an effort that is not to just have a school; but to have a school

that fully embraces the doctrines of the Lutheran Confessions, reach into the community it serves with the Gospel message, and bring about the teaching of the values of our church – *Pro Deo et Patria* – For God and for our Country. Kieser concluded with a remark from Johannes Bugenhagen about Lutheran catechetical distinction: “If you know Jesus well, it is sufficient, if you do not know other things. If you do not know Jesus, it is nothing, if you learn other things.”

Thanks be to God for our faithful Lutheran educators and the congregations committed to

supporting high quality Lutheran education for our members and to the communities they serve. [Copies of Kieser's essay can be acquired from the Association of Confessing Evangelical Lutheran Congregations.]

Your servant in Christ +
Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola



Student Financial Aid — Apply Now

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.

All related forms, including the financial aid application, are listed below. **The application deadline is June 15, 2023.**

This information may be sent via email to Julie Tyler or by regular mail to: Mid-South District LCMS / 1675 Wynne Road / Cordova, TN 38016. Forms can be found on the [District website here](#).

MARCH 18—The Bible in a Day Workshop



Dr. Ryan Tietz
Professor, Concordia Theological
Seminary

FREE WORKSHOP 9am-3:15pm Shepherd of the Hills

Old Testament professor from Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Dr. Ryan Tietz, will be offering a wonderful workshop on Biblical history at **Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church (1461 Sparta Hwy, Crossville, TN)**. The date is Saturday, March 18th. The workshop will begin at 9AM and it will end at 3:15PM. There will be plenty of breaks and a period for lunch. We are happy to provide box lunches for all participants. Donations are welcome but not required. Anyone who attends

this FREE workshop will grow tremendously in their knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures.

Dr. Tietz specializes mainly in the Book of Isaiah, but he has developed a technique for educating groups on the basics of the **WHOLE BIBLE STORY**, which is incredibly useful to Christians who desire increased understanding of Jesus the Messiah and the purpose of His coming.

Please register by calling Chris, the church secretary at Shepherd of the Hills: 931-484-3461.

June 5-9 Summer Youth Retreat in TN Mountains



A summer youth retreat is being planned by a Lutheran congregation in the Southern District—and **Mid-South youth groups are invited!** The retreat is planned for June 5-9, 2023 on the beautiful campus of Sewanee, just outside of Chattanooga.

General information on the retreat follows:

- Dates: June 5-9 (arrive the PM of 5th, depart after breakfast the 9th)
- Room cost: \$52.15 per person per night (Double Occupancy); \$208.60 for 4 nights; \$67.15 for a single room per night; \$268.60 for 4 nights
- Meal costs: Breakfast is \$6.70 per person, Lunch is \$9.65 per person, Dinner is \$9.65

Headcounts and deposits for this retreat will be due soon. Please contact Pastor William Parsons (w.a.parsons.3@protonmail.com) at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Fairhope, Alabama for details and registration information.

2 Family Camps Coming In 2023

A family camp designed especially for families of LCMS pastors and church workers has been added to the 2023 summer camp schedule at Camp Trinity, the Lutheran Camp on Petit Jean Mountain in Arkansas. The summer schedule also has two weekend family camp sessions, which is more convenient for most families, but because pastors who have attended family camp in previous years have had to leave early to lead worship on Sunday, it became apparent that a mid-week session would better serve church worker families.

Family Camp starts at lunch on Wednesday, July 5, and runs through Friday afternoon, July 7. Families are welcome to stay another day to spend time exploring Petit Jean Mountain. The first six families who register will be able to stay in the newly completed retreat lodge at the camp.

Camp Trinity is cutting camp fees in half for families of LCMS church workers as a means of serving the servants. Additional financial aid is available on request.

Family Camp for church workers is for all ages. Camp staff will lead a sampling of summer camp activities – hiking, swimming, canoeing, large-group games, and a visit to the petting zoo (with horseback riding available for a separate fee). Each



day begins with First Word (quiet devotional time), with Bible study after breakfast. Both evenings end at a campfire with lots of singing and message about God's love in Christ.

Those interested in this or any other sessions of summer camp can learn more and register at the camp website: [Lutheran Camp on Petit Jean](#)



Henkel Conference — Second Annual

August 7-8, 2023

11am-3pm

Ascension Lutheran Church

The second annual Henkel Conference, devoted to Christian theology and cultural engagement will be held August 7-8, 2023 at Ascension Lutheran Church, Madison, TN.

The forum provides the best theological and cultural speakers within the Christian faith in order to educate and encourage in the midst of the present assaults on God's eternal truth. This conference welcomes everyone, clergy and laity.

Our lineup this year, the following distinguished presenters:

Carl Trueman

Professor of Biblical & Religious Studies at Grove City College

Aaron Kheriaty

Fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center for Bioethics and American Democracy

Jack Kilcrease

Associate Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at the Christ School of Theology

Matthew Eppinette

Executive Director of The Center for Bioethics & Human Dignity

Peter Scaer

Chairman and Professor of Exegetical Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary

Jordan Cooper

President of the American Lutheran Theological Seminary

Adam Koontz

Pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church

David Fowler

President of Family Action Council of Tennessee

Follow links for-

[More Information](#)

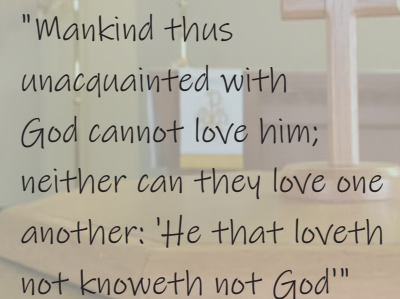
[Questions-Contact](#)

[Register Online](#)

- Additional evening dinner plans for August 7
- Lunch provided August 8
- Local bookstore on site selling the works of the speakers and other items

*We ask for your support
through registration/
attendance.*

[More Information](#) || [Questions Contact](#) || [Register Online](#)



"Mankind thus unacquainted with God cannot love him; neither can they love one another: 'He that loveth not knoweth not God'"

LWR Mission Prepares Shipment For Turkey



THANK YOU

We extend our deep gratitude to the Mid-South District quilters and kit-makers. Because of your commitment to making quilts and kits year-round, Lutheran World Relief is sending these valuable resources and bringing hope to our neighbors who have lost everything. Watch the movie (<https://youtu.be/SROBE75v4J4>) as our warehouse team prepares a shipment of LWR Mission Quilts, Personal Care Kits and Baby Kits to be delivered to Turkey.

FINANCIAL GIFTS

At this time, financial gifts <http://www.lwr.org/quake> are the number one need to assist our neighbors who are injured, hungry and displaced from multiple earthquakes. Your congregations' generosity will ensure that we are able to deliver quilts, kits and urgently needed aid to hard-to-reach places as quickly as possible, and expand our response into the future. Gifts can be made now at [lwr.org/quake](http://www.lwr.org/quake) or by mailing a check to the address below.

Your quick and faithful response is reaching earthquake survivors and ensuring that Lutherans are at the front lines to share God's love with our neighbors when they need it most. Thank you.



LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF

Grains of Rice and Seeds of Faith

— Pastor John Gierke, *St. Paul Lutheran Church & School, West Point, Nebraska*



How many grains of rice are in a Trinity HOPE lunch bowl? Honestly, I never saw the cooks, teachers, or feeding program directors count the exact number of grains of rice in a bowl. My answer would be - "A bowl-full!" Or "Enough to adequately feed the child for lunch." I have never counted the number of grains of rice or cereal pieces in my own meal, but I know that "God has provided me with what I need to sustain this body and life." (Luther's explanation of the First Article)

Jesus' parable of the Sower (Luke 8) and the multiplication of seeds harvested from each planted seed in good soil comes to my mind. Ponder now how many grains of rice are multiplied when a seed of rice is planted. Some estimates indicate that each seed can produce multiple bloom stalks, with each bloom stalk capable of producing over 300 new grains! That's a lot from just one seed! While the grains of rice in the lunch bowl will not be used to grow more rice, they are used to feed the children. By God's grace, the Seed of Faith is planted, nurtured, grown in the children as they learn about Jesus and His eternal life and love in their school, just as it has been planted, nurtured, and grown in us. And then, the Seed of Faith is multiplied as more Seeds of Faith are planted as the children share Jesus' love and life with their family and neighbors - all because God works His miracles in the grains of rice and the Seeds of Faith! With each Quarter you donate from what God put into your pocket, you are part of God's miracle of feeding and Faith!

Trinity HOPE has an opportunity like never before! New school sponsors, and new, recurring donations will be matched TWICE this year and matched dollar for dollar every year thereafter "Matched for a LIFETIME!". For more information, send an email to admin@trinityhope.org.



"And Jesus answered them, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.'" (John 12:23-26 ESV)



615-394-4950

Trinity HOPE
P.O. Box 2910
Lebanon, TN 37088
www.TrinityHOPE.org

admin@trinityhope.org

Platinum
Transparency
2022
Candid.

Prayer Summary, February 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 February 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. DAN OTTO (Emeritus, Murfreesboro, TN)

REV. CHAD PHILIPP (St. Luke, DeWitt, AR & St. Paul, Gillett, AR)

REV. GIL PINGEL (Emeritus, Chattanooga, TN)

All those affected by the earthquakes in Turkey and Syria

Our deepest sympathies to the family and friends of Mr. Rick Poll (Gillett, AR) who recently passed away.

CALL UPDATE

IN THE CALLING PROCESS – CONGREGATIONS ORDAINED MINISTERS

ACCEPTED: **Rev. Thomas Boeck**, Senior Pastor to Marco Island Lutheran Church, Marco Island, FL, has accepted the Call to serve as *Pastor to Peace Lutheran Church, Conway, AR. Installation date is March 19, 2023 at 3:00 pm.*

Rev. Matthew Albright, Associate Pastor to Messiah Lutheran Church, Mounds View, MN, has accepted the Call to serve as *Pastor to Christ Lutheran Church, Little Rock, AR. Installation April 2, 2023, at 3:00PM.*

PENDING: **Rev. Jonathan Crawford**, Pastor to St. Paul Lutheran Church, Dubuque, IA has received a Call to serve as *Pastor to St. Paul Lutheran Church, Sevierville, TN.*

DECLINED: **Rev. Steven Andrews**, Associate Pastor to St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Lees Summit, MO, has returned the Call to serve as *Pastor to Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Johnson City, TN.*

Rev. Jason Zirbel, Pastor to Grace Lutheran Church, Greenwood, AR has returned the Call to serve as *Pastor to Heavenly Host Lutheran Church, Cookeville, TN.*

VACANT CONGREGATIONS & MINISTRIES

Heavenly Host Lutheran Church, Cookeville, TN- Pastor

First Lutheran Church, Blytheville, AR - Pastor

First Lutheran Church, Harrison, AR – Pastor

Messiah Lutheran Church, Memphis, TN – Pastor

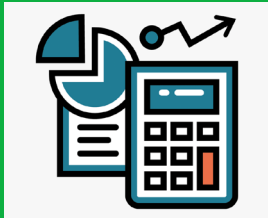
St. Paul Lutheran Church, Sevierville, TN – Pastor
**Pending Call

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Murray, KY – Pastor

IN THE CALLING PROCESS- COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

Christ the King Lutheran School, Memphis, TN –
Preschool Teachers

First Lutheran School, Knoxville, TN – Teacher for
4th/5th grade



CONGREGATIONAL MISSION COMMITMENTS

Mission Commitment Receipts as of 1/31/2023 (1 Month)

Anticipated Amount (8.3% of budget)	\$130,356
Actual Receipts.....	<u>77,469</u>
Over (under) anticipated amount	(\$52,887)

Use of Mission Commitment Receipts (1 Month)

Allocated to Synod for World Missions	\$21,157
Allocated to Tanzania	2,083
Retained for District Mission/Ministry Support (70% of receipts).....	<u>54,228</u>
Total Receipts	\$77,469

Mission Commitment Receipts Prior Year Comparison (1 Month)

Actual Receipts as of 1/31/2023.....	\$77,469
Actual Receipts as of 1/31/2022.....	<u>\$73,876</u>
Over (under) prior year receipts.....	\$3,593

What's your latest news?

Encourager Topics in 2023

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.](#)

- April – Volunteers
- May – Small Town & Rural Ministry
- June – Leadership
- July – Veterans
- August – Stewardship
- September – Church Planting
- October – Celebrating Lutheran Heritage
- November – Thankfulness
- December – Highlights 2023

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
- Rev. William Zwick,**
Executive Director of Mission & Ministry & Executive Director for Schools and Early Childhood
- Angela Fowler,**
Executive Director for Business & Finance
- Paul Reaves,**
Executive Director for Development & LCEF Vice President
- Missy Washburn,**
Administrative Assistant to the District President
- Renae McElwain,**
Communications & Marketing Specialist
- Julie Tyler,**
Administrative Assistant for Missions and Education

Contact

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"

ON TWITTER -
"@midsouthLCMS"

