

# Encourager

Mid-South District LCMS | April 2020

## VOLUNTEERS

This month we focus on Volunteers. The past month has presented many challenges to all of us across the Mid-South District. From tornados to a pandemic, life has been turned upside down for many.

For Christians our feet stand on solid ground, and as many people across the District volunteer their time, talent and financial support we thank you. Serving one another is the light that will bring the lost to Him. Volunteering and helping others who cannot repay the gift can be the best way to introduce the lost to Jesus.

Thank you to all the volunteers across the District for all you do to support others and the ministry.

## Message from Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, *President*



While I was in seminary, I had the privilege to serve as a student in a field congregation that was going through a large building program. One of the artifacts that was placed in the beautiful new sanctuary was a life-sized crucifix over the top of the altar. The crucifix was made in Italy and was quite a wonderful piece of work. However, it wasn't as graphic as Mel Gibson's movie on the Crucifixion of Christ, but caused some reactions from some of the less-than-appreciative members of the congregation. The corpus of Christ was both pitiful and magnificent. His head was lowered with His chin resting upon his chest and His long hair hung down, concealing either side of His calm but sorrowful face. The face was turned slightly to

the right side, not peering in any particular direction. But, looking directly at the eyes of the Man of sorrow, made me ponder what the artist who fashioned the corpus was thinking. What moment of Christ's passion was he trying to capture? The eyes were opened meaning the death of Christ had not yet happened. Was the artist trying to capture the moment when He was looking at His mother? Or, was it the moment when Jesus looked at the crowd, asking the Heavenly Father to "Forgive them, for they know not what they do"? What meaning could be drawn from His silent gaze?

Perhaps you may have heard this critique that the crucifix with the corpus of Christ isn't what we Lutherans should have in our sanctuaries. It is criticized

as being too “Catholic.” Or, the other side of the coin’s criticism is that the empty cross on our walls, on our pendants, and other objects shows that Christ’s work is done. Yet, the bottom line is that seeing the corpus of Christ on the cross tells us too much truth about the consequences of our sin and what it cost the Lord of our salvation to return us to God’s favor.

Martin Luther once wrote, “So today when the whole world persecutes us, cruelly damns and kills us, we should glory and exult in this. For we are not undergoing all this on account of our misdeeds as thieves, robbers, etc. (I Peter 4:15), but because of Christ, our Savior and Lord, whose Gospel we teach purely.” He was speaking about the cross – whether it is empty, or it has the corpus of Christ on it.

The cross can be removed or covered or ignored, but it will still tell us about how we can understand our own suffering. The reality of the cross – empty or filled – is the figure of what we, as Christians, will bear. We’d rather hide it away so we didn’t have to face it. But, the centrality of the Cross of Christ and His glorious Resurrection can never be hidden from its message splashed throughout the New Testament. Jesus suffered horribly for us on the cross. His death on the cross is the penultimate event, leading to God’s judicious decision to raise Christ Jesus from the dead in human flesh – the guarantee of our justification in God’s grace. That is why St

Paul declares in I Corinthians, “[Christ sent me to preach the Gospel]... lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.” Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, and is ever after described as the Crucified One.” (I Corinthians 1:17-24, ESV)

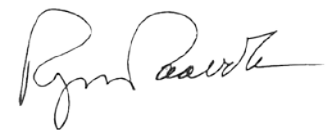
Then, Paul appeals to the Galatians because he has publicly portrayed Christ as crucified before them (Galatians 3:1). There is no way to capture the essence or improve upon the picture that the New Testament draws of the suffering Servant, Jesus Christ.

We sinners deserved to suffer what Jesus suffered. Yet, God in His infinite mercy had Him suffer for us. He suffered, not because He was compelled, but out of sheer grace and His unconditional love for us. My dear friend and sainted churchman, Rev. Dr. Herb Mueller posits in the book he was unable to finish before going to be with the risen Christ,

that the Cross of Christ and His Resurrection is the centrality of and sum of our faith. We can live in the assurance that God’s Son took our place on His cross. His suffering on the cross is our sufferings by faith. We may take up our own crosses – not because we ought to, but because it is His for us.

As I write this, the whole world is moving toward shutting down because of the COVID-19 pandemic. There is no panic, no confusion, or fear. We fear not, but become diligent to confront this faceless enemy of Satan. But, this is how the children of the church face the persecutions, famine, and plagues. Our hope and comfort comes when the Gospel is proclaimed – the truth and peace that passes our human understanding, no matter how the devil rages against us – the Gospel is still the truth. Nothing can separate us from the love of God that is ours in Christ Jesus, who died for sinners like us, and rose again, victorious over sin, death, and Satan. That’s why He was and must remain our Crucified and risen Savior.

Your servant in Christ –  
Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola



## Emmanuel Lutheran shares their story on adapting

Emmanuel (Hermitage, TN) has had a crazy spring, but **God is good and we're making lemonade out of lemons.**

We're doing a lot of the same things other churches are doing (because of COVID-19) - live streaming our services on YouTube and Facebook. We're also having Bible study, board meetings, and youth meetings through Zoom.

We're making phone calls to all members to check on everyone, assess needs, and offer assistance. Information is being sent via snail mail, email, our website, Facebook, and text messages to try to keep everyone abreast of things.

We're doing something else we hope will be interesting.

As a Generation to Generation church our Midweek Lenten services had a family style worship with kids doing the Scripture readings, followed by the family craft as part of our emphasis on strengthening families.

Our members were in the process of staining crosses and making symbols to put on the cross. Week 1 was the week of the tornado and there was no power at church so we did weeks 1 and 2 together at church on week 2.

Then came COVID-19, so to keep this going, we made "to-go" bags with materials and instructions for the remaining weeks of Lent that families could pick up or have delivered. We

put a video with instructions on YouTube for everyone to see how to make the crafts. Members are encouraged to post their pictures with their crosses and symbols on our Facebook page for everyone to see so we can all stay connected.

Videos on youtube: Week 3  
<https://tinyurl.com/vegfqz6>

There's no video for week 4. There was a written instruction sheet in the to go bags.

Week 5 video  
<https://tinyurl.com/tdhxc9e>

There was no craft planned on Ash Wednesday.

— Sarah Baker



## Connect Class



*The Connect class, composed of new and prospective members, gathered for a picture at the final session.*

When becoming a new member of a congregation, it may be a little daunting finding your way around, not only through the physical buildings, but through the labyrinth of ministries and fellowship opportunities that are offered to you. Who do you contact? Where do you go? How do you find the latest information and RSVP or volunteer? And why is there a dog in the narthex?\*

To answer these questions and others that new and prospective members might have, Genie and Dave Swan of Christ the King Lutheran Church developed the Connect Class, a three-week class for new members and those considering membership who want to know more about how things “work” at CTK. After their daughter-in-law joined CTK, they realized from her perspective how overwhelming it can seem to a new member, and they determined to create an informational class to answer questions and encourage participation in worship, service, and fellowship activities.

During February of this year, more than twenty people, both new and prospective members, gathered on three consecutive Sunday mornings to learn about the history of Christ the King, the communication networks available both to and from the church office, the ministries offering opportunities for service and fellowship, CTK’s social media outlets, and the worship schedule for the year. They enjoyed the church’s 50th anniversary video (available on YouTube), guest speakers from various ministries, a visit from \*Job Comfort Dog, demonstrations of CTK’s App and Mobile Directory, and even “insider” info on the embroidered kneeler cushions.

Most importantly, new bonds of friendship were created and strengthened as they navigated all the information shared. Each class member went home with a packet of information as well as a Time and Talent Survey to be completed and returned.

The class is offered twice a year and will continue to be a part of welcoming new members into the family of forgiven at Christ the King Lutheran Church.



*Genie Swan, Coordinator of Community Relations at CTK and long-time member, shares a wealth of information with the Connect class.*

Chris Cardona, Choral Director at CTK, awards a member with bottled water for answering the riddle: "How many sopranos does it take to change a light bulb?" (Answer: One. She holds the bulb while the rest of the world revolves around her.)





# Volunteers - The True Power Behind God's Kingdom



Shortly before 1 am on the morning of March 3rd, an EF-3 tornado struck Nashville. It was on the ground for 60.13 miles, traveling for almost an hour from Nashville to Cookeville. The tornado destroyed homes, churches, schools and businesses along its path. The path of the tornado came within a 1/2 mile from Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Hermitage. Thankfully there was little damage to the church building and no loss of life of our members, but there was considerable damage throughout our community in Donelson, Hermitage, Mt. Juliet, and Lebanon. The homes of two families that attend our school were completely destroyed and several members had property damage from fallen trees.

At the request of President Paavola, Lutheran Church Charities Disaster Relief Team came to assist us. They brought 50 members of the L.E.R.T. (Lutheran Early Response Team) chainsaw crew. They crew slept each night and ate dinner and breakfast at Emmanuel before going out

into the community to cut down and clear trees at members' homes and throughout the community. Through Lutheran Church Charities, Emmanuel was able to offer help, care, comfort and hope to our community. God turned this disaster into a way to be a witness of the love of Christ to our neighbors. God is good!

— Sarah Baker  
Emmanuel Lutheran Church



Prayers for Volunteers





## **LCC and LERT crews deployed to the Mid-South District in March**

Kathy O'Day, LCC Director of Disaster Response, LCC Staff and forty-eight L.E.R.T. chainsaw certified team members completed their deployment in mid-March, serving 25 families affected by tornadoes in Hermitage, Mt. Juliet, Lebanon and Donelson. They worked with Pastor Keith Enko at Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Hermitage. The church intends to continue to assist the two families who were attending Emmanuel's Early Childhood Center and lost everything in the tornado. They will continue to provide spiritual and emotional support to the community as they prepare for a long-term recovery

Read more at <https://www.lutheranchurchcharities.org/articles/category/disaster-response>



## **Stewardship in Uncertain Times**

So many changes are impacting congregations today as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. To do our part in the fight against an enemy we cannot even see, we've had to temporarily give up something that is central to our identity as Christians: the joy of coming together in worship and fellowship. But thanks to technology and the creativity and innovation of many in the church, we are not completely separated from the blessing of worship and fellowship with our faith families. Online tools are connecting thousands across the Mid-South District to worship, Bible study and friends. What a blessing!

But another challenge facing many congregations at this time may take a greater effort to address. **That**

**challenge is a fluctuation or decrease in giving.** If you are able, please continue to financially support your church. Many faithful supporters of ministry will have their incomes disrupted by the current crisis. If you are fortunate enough to be spared such loss, prayerfully consider helping to "fill in the gap" by increasing your giving over the coming weeks. As the COVID-19 crisis continues to unfold, ministries will work diligently to maintain their financial stability—but for some, this will be a true struggle. Using online giving tools or simply continuing to mail a check to the church each week can be a significant help to your congregation as we all work through this crisis together.

## Pastor Ordained and Installed



Amid the pandemic and uncertainty of the times, the Church acted in bold faith to ordain Vicar Richard Neely Owen to the Office of the Holy Ministry and to install him as Pastor of Faith Lutheran Church, Hopkinsville, KY. The ordination had been planned for several months -- long before the changes to our life together and the challenges to the Church were pressed upon us by the coronavirus. When the Governor of Kentucky prevented Faith from hosting the ordination, the service was moved to Grace Lutheran Church, Clarksville, TN. A little more than 50 years ago, Grace had daughtered Faith Lutheran Church and the two parishes have had a long and close history.

The Rev. Larry A. Peters, senior pastor of Grace, was the vacancy pastor of Faith and the supervising pastor for Vicar Owen and he served as ordinator in place of District President Roger Paavola who could not be there. Participating in the ordination and installation were the Rev. Daniel Ulrich, associate pastor of Grace, the Rev. David Appold, pastor of St. Paul, Paducah, KY, and the Rev. Gregory Bauch, pastor of Ascension, Madison, TN. Dr. Jonathan Rudy, Cantor of Grace, was the organist, and Rachel Crook was the flutist.

Forty people, most of them from Faith, Hopkinsville, were in attendance to the ordination and installation. Both congregations rejoiced that the Lord provided

a pastor to shepherd the good people of Faith Lutheran Church through the uncertainties and changing circumstances unfolding for all of us. The Rev. Larry A. Peters served as preacher for the ordination and installation and presented the Rev. Neely Owen with a staff as sign and symbol of the ministry conferred upon him and the call of God to faithfully shepherd the flock entrusted to his care. The service was livestreamed via Facebook and was videoed by Gene Wilken and is available on his YouTube channel, the Flaneur Record.

— Rev. Larry A. Peters  
*Senior Pastor, Grace Lutheran Church*

# FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS: Lutheran Church Extension Fund Is Here

In the face of difficult circumstances resulting from the current global health crisis, Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) wants to assure you that our commitment to our LCEF family remains steadfast and uncompromising.

LCEF has employed numerous financial tools to help our borrowers, including several specifically put in place by our COVID-19 Response Team. Needs are unique. So are the remedies. And we continue to look for more.

LCEF is also blessed to partner with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) to provide financial assistance through our Synod's Soldiers of the Cross program to church workers in crisis situations. Our LCEF funds, administered by each LCMS district office, will help ordained or commissioned ministers and laity serving congregations, schools and Recognized Service Organizations who find themselves with immediate unmet financial needs stemming directly or indirectly from the spread of the pandemic.

LCEF's ability to assist ministries and workers during these turbulent times is made possible through the blessing of many faithful investors. Through the decades, our investors have helped ministries build, grow and flourish. **But our partnership is truly made for such a time as this.** Thanks be to God for our investors.

LCEF is providing frequent updates for borrowers and investors at [lcef.org](https://lcef.org). Most recently, **LCEF President & CEO, Rev. Bart Day, shared a short update** on the resources we have for our borrowers and investors, as well as assurance that we are going to get through this rough patch—together.



## Your Mid-South District LCEF VP is here for you!

For loan or investment questions—or information about setting up online giving for your congregation—contact Paul Reaves.

**901.395.7051 | [paul.reaves@lcef.org](mailto:paul.reaves@lcef.org)**



## Lutheran Church Extension Fund

> where investments build ministry

**[lcef.org](https://lcef.org)**



## Resources and Activities for Families



The Mid-South District is pleased to share a variety of resources and ideas to help families build their faith—together! Check the [District website page](#) frequently for new additions to our resource list:

### Activities for Children:

- <https://www.luthed.org/reformation-a-z-coloring-book/>

### Activities for the Whole Family:

- “At Home” Scavenger Hunt” ([link to PDF](#))
- Free downloads from [Concordia Publishing House](#), including a family devotion

### Encouragement for Parents:

- <https://thrivingkidsconnection.com/>
- <https://www.seedsfamilyworship.com/steps-to-finding-peace-for-your-family-during-coronavirus/>

## Resources on the District Website

The Mid-South District has several webpages dedicated to COVID-19. This information is updated frequently, so please check back often.



Messages from President Paavola, Resources for Congregations, Individuals and Church workers.

<https://mid-southlcms.org/coronavirus-preparedness/>

Dial-In Worship Wednesday & Sunday <https://mid-southlcms.org/mid-south-district-hosting-dial-in-worship-devotions/>



Listing of churches with Online Worship Services <https://mid-southlcms.org/mid-south-congregations-offering-online-worship-lenten-services/>

The District Facebook page is posting encouragement and news <https://www.facebook.com/MidSouthDistrict>

## 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](mailto: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.**

## Congregational Mission Commitments

### Mission Commitment Receipts as of 2/29/2020 (2 Months)

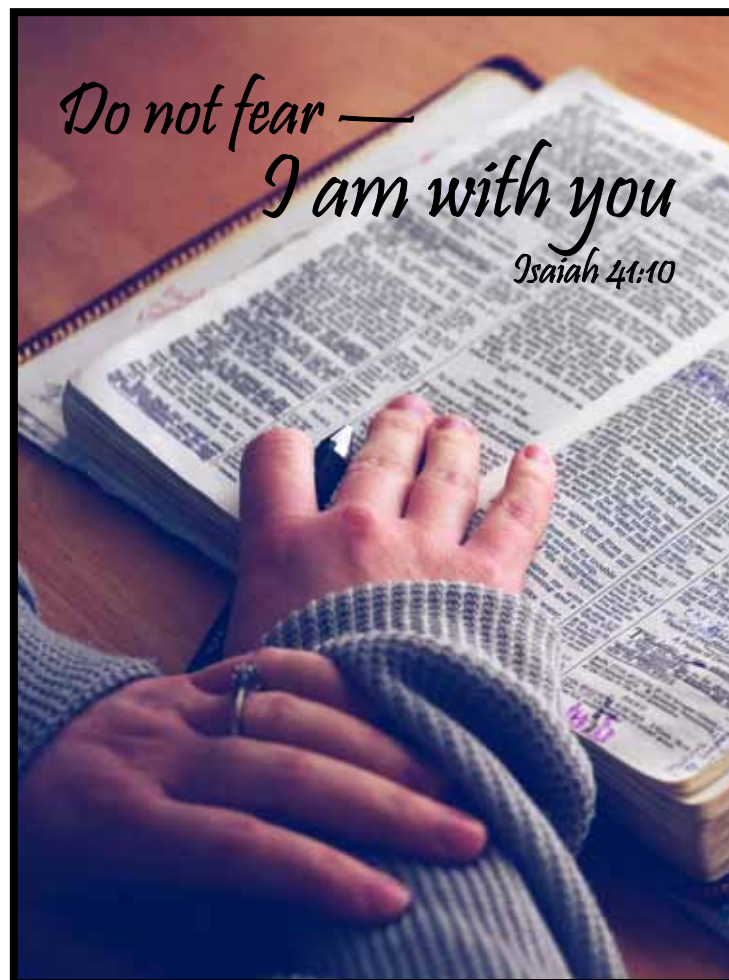
Anticipated Amount (16.67% of budget)	\$256,495
Actual Receipts	239,870
Over (under) anticipated amount	(\$16,625)

### Use of Mission Commitment Receipts (2 Months)

Allocated to Synod for World Missions	\$67,794
Allocated to Tanzania	4,167
Retained for District Mission/Ministry Support (70% of receipts)	167,909
Total Receipts	\$239,870

### Mission Commitment Receipts Prior Year Comparison (2 Months)

Actual Receipts as of 2/29/2020	\$239,870
Actual Receipts as of 2/28/2019	\$266,218
Over (under) prior year receipts	(\$26,348)





## LIME Students' Studies Trip at Soatanàna (Madagascar)

*Ed. note- This is an excerpt from a letter and photos from Joseph Randrianasolo to President Paavola, sharing the latest about the students of LIME. Additional photos and trip details can be found on the district's website <https://mid-southlcms.org/lime-students-studies-trip/>*

We are very happy to send you photos of the students' studies trip at Soatanàna. We chose Soatanàna as the first students' first studies trip both for study and for building their faith and their self offering to Jesus and their neighbor.

These photos stand as testimonies of your mission through education in Madagascar. Some of the students are not Christians. They are either Muslim or just ancestors worshippers. Through this studies trip (under the rubric of religious tourism), they have learnt a lot about Jesus Christ. Some of them, even Christians, said that the trip was a revelation about Jesus for them. Jesus was not a Jesus of a book called New Testament, a story of thousands years ago. Jesus is the Son of God and the Son of man, written in the Bible, but alive, healing at Soatanàna, sending apostles from Soatanàna, crisscrossing Madagascar through them and saving people for the Kingdom of God through their preaching and teaching of Jesus Who died for us and Who was resurrected for us.

Again thank you for all help the LCMS Mid-South District through you has provided to the LIME.

So thank you. May Jesus bless you all!



# Prayer Summary, March 2020

Following is a list of all the people that have appeared on the Mid-South District website prayer list [www.mid-southlcms.com](http://www.mid-southlcms.com) during the month of March 2020.

## PRAYER CONCERNS

**MR. TODD BARINGER** (former Principal at Immanuel Lutheran School, Memphis, TN)

**MS. AMY BROWN** (eldest daughter of Rev. Dan McDougall and his wife Lucy)

**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)

**REV. DONLEY HESSEE** (Emeritus, Mena, AR)

**MRS. SUSAN JONES** (volunteer, Mid-South District Office)

**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)

## Our deepest sympathies to:

The family and friends of **REV. DR. HERBERT MUELLER**, Former 1st Vice President of the Synod, who passed away on March 21, 2020.

## CALL UPDATE

### ORDAINED MINISTERS

**ACCEPTED: Convertible Vicar, Richard Neely Owen**, Faith Lutheran Church, Hopkinsville, KY, accepted the Call to serve as **Pastor at Faith Lutheran Church, Hopkinsville, KY**

**Rev. Paul Leigeber**, Pastor, Shepherd of the Bay Lutheran Church, Lillian, Alabama has accepted the call to serve as **Pastor to the Dual Parish of Faith Lutheran Church, Union City, TN & Trinity Lutheran Church, Dyersburg, TN**

**Rev. Edward Maanum**, Pastor, Our Savior's Lutheran Church (Dual Parish with Bethany Pueblo) Pubelo West, CO, has been issued a Call to serve as Pastor at **First Lutheran Church, Knoxville, TN**

### COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

**ACCEPTED: Ms. Michelle D. Fischer**, Principal, Calvary Lutheran School, Kansas City, MO has accepted the call to serve as **Principal of Immanuel Lutheran School, Memphis, TN.**

### IN THE CALLING PROCESS - CONGREGATIONS

**Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church, Olive Branch, MS**

– Pastor

**First Lutheran Church, Chattanooga, TN** – Pastor

**First Lutheran Church, Knoxville, TN** – Pastor \*\* A Call has been issued

**Mid-South District** – Executive Director for Missions and Ministry

**Pilgrim Lutheran Church, Jonesboro, AR** - Pastor

**Redeemer Lutheran Church, Mountain Home, AR** - Pastor

### IN THE CALLING PROCESS – FOR COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

**Zion Lutheran Church if Avilla, Alexander, AR** – Director of Parish Music

**Our Savior Lutheran Church, Nashville, TN** – Director of Christian Education

**Christ Lutheran School, Little Rock, AR** – Principal

**Christ the King Lutheran School, Memphis, TN** – Kindergarten Teacher

**First Lutheran School, Ft. Smith, AR** – Kindergarten Teacher

**Immanuel Lutheran School, Memphis, TN** – 1st Grade Teacher



## Encourager Topics in 2020

The May focus for the Encourager is Small Town & Rural Ministry. We invite you to share your stories with us please email it by **April 20, 2020** to Rhonda, [webmaster@mid-southlcms.com](mailto:webmaster@mid-southlcms.com)

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

## 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](mailto: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

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**Angela Fowler**, *Executive Director for Business & Finance*

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

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### Contact the Mid-South District

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### Stay Connected With Us

ON THE WEB - "[mid-southlcms.org](http://mid-southlcms.org)"

ON FACEBOOK - "Mid-South-LCMS"

ON TWITTER - "@midsouthLCMS"

### Contribute

If you would like your article or event published in the next *Encourager*, please email it by **April 20, 2020** to Rhonda, [webmaster@mid-southlcms.com](mailto:webmaster@mid-southlcms.com)