

Encourager

APRIL 2022

Mid-South District LCMS



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

We are still His disciples

What a difference a week makes. After Easter we're filled with smiles and excitement. We packed everyone into a couple of services, with the songs, the music, the smell of lilies that filled our sanctuary with the aroma of a festival. Is the next Sunday? The tiny baskets filled with cellophane straw will be gone. Toy chickens will have lost their pipe cleaner legs. Chocolate bunnies will be eaten or ground into the carpet. The only jelly beans left over are the ones no one likes.

Gone will be the stirring contrast between Good Friday and the beauty of the decorated altar for Easter. The hymns that we wanted to sing become a distant memory along with another Easter morning breakfast, and the pleasure of being with old friends

we haven't seen for a long time. Easter will have come and gone.

It seems as if we're right back where we were, fighting familiar frustrations and carrying our secret fears and burdens, just because Easter will be over. But, this is exactly why we need to grab a hold of the message of every Sunday after Easter that parallels the excitement of the Resurrection of Christ. Easter always gives us the blessed hope that Christ gives power to the incapacitated... because Easter is real every day.

In the Gospels, Jesus extends peace, power, and hope to defeated and hopeless people. The day after Jesus rose from the dead... late in the afternoon... Peter and John had already run to the empty tomb to verify the

story the women had told them. Their race to the place of the dead confirmed the fact that Jesus was no longer dead but was alive. Yet, the disciples **STILL** went to the Upper Room and locked the doors for fear of their lives.

The little band of cowering disciples behind locked doors, were condemned by their consciences for running out on Jesus in the time of His greatest need. They locked the doors for fear of the High Priest and the Romans. Their minds were trying to sort out everything they had seen over the last week.

Their self-respect was scraped, rubbed, and banged around so much that their consciences were raw. They had boldly gone from their former lives when everything was going along

smoothly. They had witnessed miracles. One of them even walked on water. Others saw food multiplied to feed thousands. Yet when the REAL showdown hit, all but one of them melted into the darkness.

Maybe they were trying to hide from themselves. Maybe it was just another repeat of what we do when we've betrayed God's trust. Remember, Adam hid himself from God because he did exactly what God told him not to do. How often do we see someone wanting to pull up everything they have to run away from a situation, only to find out they've packed their emotional baggage and taken it along with them.

The perplexity of the demoralized disciples disintegrated. Jesus stood in the middle of their frightening, and quiet secretive meal. Jesus said to them, "Peace be with you." He showed them the credentials of a living God... pierced hands and feet, a pierced side, yet He spoke grace: "Peace be with you."

When people are in trouble and don't go to Jesus, will He come to

them? The evidence shows He showed them that He still loved them. Even though they showed through their actions that they didn't trust Him, His love was not diminished. Those disciples drenched in their own fears and guilt were covered by Christ's divine love. He was willing to let them see that His love is greater than any human failure... His grace greater than any sin.

Have we ever shared this same kind of hopelessness as those disciples in the Upper Room? We may be just as confused over the events that happen in our days as they were, right? Jesus Christ gave the power of His grace to those confused disciples 2000 years ago, and He hasn't stop bringing Himself into our locked away fears today.

We've been confronted with confusion, disappointments, defeats, and despair. We've seen the miracles, the multiplication, and the victories of God over the junk that happens in our lives. But, with one set back – WHAM – do we lock ourselves behind the locked doors of our heart and

minds, fearing the next day, week or month?

Then it happens - the conscience begins to turn and grind away itself inside our bellies. Memories of past sins make us wonder whether we've been faithful enough to grab God's attention in this crisis. The list of failures goes under the microscope of our memory, so that every aspect of our secret screams at our guilt-ridden conscience.

We can't escape the preoccupation of our guilt, and find running away from an empty tomb easier than trust in what it means to us. Who was it that said, "Peace to you"? The scars on His hands and feet identify Him. What does He mean, "Peace to you"? Do you see what we've done? Do we know what we're doing when we lock ourselves up within ourselves? He comes... He walks right through the barriers we've around our fears and blows away our fears like a feather in the wind. He makes our mistakes and stumbles meaningless in His mercy. Even though we've made mistakes, Jesus says, "Peace be with you"! It's as if nothing ever happened! He gives us another opportunity and new chance to make a new life.

Jesus had told His disciples about the events that were going to happen to Him in Jerusalem. But they tried to divert Him. He explained it again, and again, but they tried to get Him away from the city. They were supposed to watch and wait with Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, but they fell asleep, not paying much attention to what it was that Jesus was going through.



Easter Blessings

*Jesus stood among them and said
Peace be with you
Luke 24:36*

They were powerless. He gave them peace. They couldn't make themselves do the things Jesus gave them to do. They couldn't rest their faith on the simple message, "He is risen; He is risen indeed." Jesus knew they were powerless within themselves. He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." Power to the incapacitated... Divine power to the powerless.

The Lord of Life breathed life into the incapacitated disciples with the power of His new kingdom. The banishment was broken. The barrier between God and man was gone. Scared, helpless, and scattered men were given divine power to build, raise and enlarge His Holy Christian Church.

Today, we are still His disciples. We live in the evidence of our own post-Easter demoralization. We share the disciple's sin-caused fears, locking ourselves from the work and witness He has called

us to do. We know we're called to bring others to Christ, but we'd rather lock ourselves away for fear of what others might say. We lock ourselves away, showing the rest of the world that our lips declare, "He is risen indeed," while our hearts worry about how much work it will be to win souls for Christ.

The Gospel is all about: We are incapable of responding to the miracles and even the call connected to the Gospel. Jesus comes through our barriers and breathes His Holy Spirit on the powerless and incapacitated people. More magnificent than the peace and power Christ gives, is that the power He gives, gives us a second chance, third chance... to be the disciples of God. Not only does He bring us this divine power of change, He gives us the Holy Spirit to grasp it.

If you are NOT one of those who agonizes over failures and stumbles in being the perfect

disciple of Christ, God bless you. But, others can take complete solace knowing Jesus is going to come to walk right through my barriers built around my life, to give me His peace. He gives the power of the Holy Spirit to apprehend every blessing and omniscience of almighty God.

How can we do anything less than to live in the Easter truth – not only on Easter but every day since Easter? Shouldn't we share His divine peace that invited us to come into His presence every day... especially to share that with those who don't have a clue about Him and His power?

Your servant in Christ +
Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola



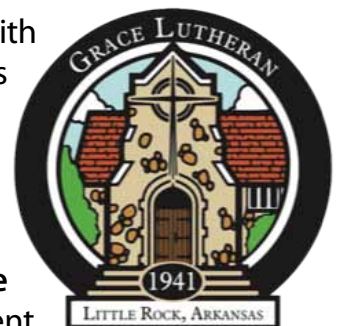
Ascension Lutheran Hosting the Henkel Conference

Ascension Lutheran in Madison, TN is pleased to host The Henkel Conference, coming up August 22, 2022. The Henkel Conference is devoted to Christian theology and cultural engagement by hosting the best Lutheran theologians and Christian subject matter experts possible. Although all presenter topics have yet to be submitted, Ascension expects the following topics to be addressed: worship, the mystical union, gender theory, race theory, religious liberty, bioethics, children's rights, and Christian education. Please visit www.ascensionmadison.com/henkel for registration and more information; your greatest support for this new endeavor is your attendance! Both pastors and laity are invited to attend.

Grace Lutheran is Hosting Seminary Extension Class

Grace, Little Rock will be hosting a seminary extension class from June 8-10th. They will be welcoming the Prof. Scott Steigemeyer from Concordia University in Irvine and the topic is "What It Means to be Human". Registration is open now.

Grace will be able to help with lodging, meals or other costs involved for attendees, but on a limited basis. A detailed introduction to the speaker and course is included [here](#). For more information contact Rev. Kent Schaaf at 501-663-3631 or kent.schaaf@glclr.org





LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

*Uncovering the Shadow World
of Human Trafficking*

**SAT. APRIL 30, 2022
9 AM - 3 PM**

IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH

6325 RALEIGH LAGRANGE RD. / MEMPHIS, TN

Representatives from
LOCAL, STATE & NATIONAL Agencies
will share knowledge on how to

- **IDENTIFY SIGNS**
- **REPORT ACTIVITY**
- **HELP VICTIMS**
of Human Trafficking

FREE EVENT • LUNCH PROVIDED

▶ **REGISTER ONLINE**

This free community event is hosted by the Mid-South District, LCMS.



Visit this event on Facebook to share and invite others.

Peace Lutheran Church (Cherokee Village AR) CELEBRATES MORTGAGE BURNING CEREMONY

The Holy Spirit inspired King David to write in Psalm 122:1,
"I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord."

As Peace Lutheran Church family, we had the joy of sharing this sentiment as God allowed us to "go to the House of the Lord" together on Feb. 13 and celebrate the blessing of retiring our mortgage on our blessed church facility! A once - in - a - lifetime event for many of us, we were blessed to share this moment together in our church's history as we are celebrating our 50th anniversary as an LCMS congregation. Our current facility was built in 1994, located at a central spot in the community, and it has allowed us to provide many community service and outreach projects in addition to our Word and Sacrament ministry.

As part of our experience together that Sunday, we each filled out a "Certificate of Indebtedness... and Freedom"; the Bible reminds us that we each owe an eternity worth of suffering in hell for our sins— a debt we can never pay off! But thanks be to God, for Jesus came as our Savior and paid the whole price for us on the cross, declaring, "It is Finished— "TETELESTAI!" on the cross (John 19:30): a specific business- world term for "DEBT IS PAID— IN FULL!" So we each acknowledged our sin debt and rejoiced in Christ's payment on our behalf by signing our "debt certificates" and marking them with the cross of Christ as His signature declaring them paid off, and then depositing them into the bin to be burned up along with the church mortgage note. Praise God for His marvelous gifts!

It is our prayer that this celebration of a significant milestone together will be a powerful motivation for our church family to press forward in serving the Lord and our community in His precious Name— while He grants us time and opportunity! Thank you for a brief prayer for us as we share our District's work together in the Lord's Harvest field!

—Brian Pummill, Pastor, Peace Lutheran



L-R: Congregation President, Victor Karvelius, Pastor Brian Pummill and Facility Team Leader, Jim Leible.



LIME UPDATE — Madagascar

February 19 the Lutheran Institute of Managerial Enterprise (LIME) staff administration and LIME teaching body met together at Tombontsoa, Fianarantsoa with the objective of expanding the mission through education undertaken by the Mid-South District and LIME.

Firstly, it gives a glimpse to the partnership between the LCMS Mid-South District and LIME.

Secondly, I also intended it for you and the LCMS Mid-South District. It contains the wishes about the partnership between the Mid-South District and LIME and the dream about the future of LIME as outcome of this partnership.

Finally, we still hope that a visit from the Mid-South District will come to LIME one day in the future. We pray for that to realize.

May Jesus Christ the Head of the Church bless you, your ministry, your staff, the Mid-South District and the LCMS as a whole!

- Pastor Dr. Joseph Randrianasolo
LIME – Fianarantsoa
Madagascar

The article summary of the meeting can be found on the [District website here](#), as written by Pastor Joseph.



Above: students and Pastor Randrianasolo at the floor of LIME.

Below: participants in the February 19th meeting at Tombontsoa.



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 available the [District website here](#).

The application deadline is June 15, 2022.

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.



Professional Church Work An Incentive from Concordia St. Paul

Concordia University, St. Paul's (CSP) [church work tuition guarantee](#) ensures eligible students enrolled in church work programs will pay no more than \$6,000 in tuition each academic year. This move further supports CSP's commitment to preparing more workers for the church as the most affordable church work option in the Concordia University System of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS).

Full-time students enrolled in a church work program will receive a minimum of \$18,400 in combined institutional, state and federal financial aid each year. Scholarships and grants from a student's home congregation, LCMS District and local communities may be stacked on top of this guarantee to further reduce the cost of tuition and living expenses. If you know a student who is considering a career in professional church work, be sure to share this exciting program!

2022 Tanzania Mission Trip

We are making plans for a team from the Mid-South District to return to Tanzania, Africa in May of 2022. To communicate to the people of Tanzania the life-changing power of Jesus Christ in a practical and understanding way; to develop them into responsible, productive, successful Christians, and equip them for their ministry in the church and world.

The team will be accompanied by local ministers and lay persons who will act as translators. We will be using simple techniques such as: an Evangcube or Bible story telling. So, if you can share a 4th-grade level Sunday school lesson in your own words, **you are qualified!** Please contact, Bob Allen for more information 270-535-7370 or rjallen@prodigy.net

78TH TENNESSEE LLL DISTRICT CONFERENCE 2022



SATURDAY
April 30, 2022

St. Paul Lutheran Church

211 S. 21st Street • Paducah, KY

9:30 am - Registration opens

10:00 am - Convention begins

4:45 pm - Meet & Greet with Dinner to follow

Lunch and Dinner included with registration

HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE



GUEST SPEAKER
Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler
*Speaker of **The Lutheran Hour**[®]*

- Lutheran Braille Workers
- L.E.R.T. Lutheran Early Response Team
- Hands-on activities

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Registration is free, but necessary for accurate counts for seating, lunch, and dinner. Childcare available for children up to 13 – please indicate number of children on registration form.

Register Online by Thursday, April 27, 2022 at:
<https://lll-tennessee-district-conference.eventbrite.com>

AREA HOTEL

Auburn Place Hotel & Suites • 3994 Hinkleville Rd. • Paducah, KY 42001 • (270) 444-7667
Group Rate - \$189.00 per night + 17.66% taxes; limited rooms available through March 28

Please call the phone number provided, ask for the reservation/front desk, and let them know you want the Group Rate for the **Lutheran Laymen's League Annual Tennessee District Convention (LLL TN Dist)**.

The first 5 LHM Ambassadors to register for the conference and make a reservation at the hotel will be reimbursed \$50 per night (2 nights) by the TN LLL District. Details will be shared at the conference on the reimbursement process.

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND QUESTIONS, CONTACT: Ray Musgrave, TN LLL District President
155 Misty Lane, Paducah, KY 42003 • 270-217-3223 • rymusg@yahoo.com



Trinity HOPE Virtual Auction

SHARE THE HOPE

APRIL 20TH-27TH



Trinity HOPE's 2nd Annual "Share the HOPE" auction is an online, national event. Items include weekend getaways, athletic events, extravagant vacations, authentic Haitian art, and much, much more! Visit us at <https://trinityhope.schoolauction.net/sth2022> for a complete catalog. Bidding will begin April 20th and will end April 27th. Every dollar raised will provide 4 meals for malnourished children in Christian schools in Haiti. Thank you for your support!

PRAYERS AND RELIEF FOR THOSE AFFECTED BY RECENT STORMS AND WILDFIRES

Once again, people across the Mid-South District are facing the aftermath of disasters. On the western end of the district, residents of Springdale, Arkansas are dealing with destruction following a tornado spawned by strong storms that traveled across the entire Mid-South region on March 30. On the opposite end of the district, the Gatlinburg and Sevierville areas face a dangerous and growing wildfire—a disaster that has already claimed numerous homes, including that of Rev. Larry Rockemann, a retired LCMS pastor.

In Springdale, Rev. Brandon Martin of Salem Lutheran Ministries has shared that a

number of business and homes were destroyed or heavily damaged, including the home of one church member. The church is reaching out to those affected by providing both food and gift cards.

On the eastern end of the district, the wildfire that has already burned over 3,700 acres continues to grow. Mid-South District congregations in the immediate area (Sevierville, Maryville and Knoxville) are standing ready to meet needs as the situation evolves.

As LCMS congregations in the impacted areas provide assistance to both members and others in their communities, the Mid-South District will support

those relief efforts through its Disaster Relief Fund. If you or your members would like to share a gift to the Disaster Relief Fund in support of the current aid effort, you may:

MAIL gifts designated for "Disaster Relief Fund" to the Mid-South District, 1675 Wynne Road, Cordova TN 38016

DONATE ONLINE through the Mid-South District [website](#)

Please lift in prayer those impacted by the recent storms and ongoing wildfire, as well as the ministries that will serve as Christ's hands and feet to help those in need.

PRAYER SUMMARY, MARCH 2022

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 March 2022.

PRAYER CONCERNS

MRS. SUSANNE ELSEROAD (wife of Rev. Richard Elseroad, Grace Lutheran Church, Knoxville, TN)
KNOX (3-year-old son to the cousin of Sabrina Gunderson, Early Childhood Director, Crossville, TN)

REV. RONALD HALAMKA (Waxahachie, TX)

MRS. ALISON HAWKINS (Mid-South District Office)

MRS. MARY ANN HERD (wife of Rev. Clifford Herd, Hixson, TN)

REV. DONLEY HESSE (Emeritus, Mena, AR)

MR. MARC HIGGINS (Treasurer, Mid-South District Board of Directors) Maumelle, AR

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

REV. GIL PINGEL (Emeritus, Chattanooga, TN)

REV. JOSEPH RANDRIANASOLO; the city of Fianarantsoa (Madagascar) and LIME as they deal with the devastating floods from nonstop rain in the area followed by a cyclone.

MR. CHARLES TAYLOR (husband to Pat Taylor, Church Administrator, Our Savior Cabot, AR)

REV. ALAN LUDWIG, (father-in-law to Rev. Derek Roberts, Praise, Maryville, TN) Missionary serving in Siberia.

We lift up in prayer all those assisting in the rebuilding efforts from the devastating December tornadoes in Arkansas, Tennessee and Kentucky; especially lifting up Ms. Jan Simko, District Disaster Relief Coordinator and Rev. David Appold of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Paducah, KY.

Our deepest sympathies to the family and friends of Reverend Clarence Helmich (Emeritus – Mid-South District) who passed away on March 27th, 2022.

CALL UPDATE

ORDAINED MINISTERS

PENDING: **Rev. Aaron Unseth**, Candidate, Roseville, MN has been issued a Call to serve as Senior Pastor to Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Hermitage, TN.

ACCEPTED: **Rev. Robert Portier**, Pastor to St. Paul Lutheran Church, Sevierville, TN has accepted the Call to serve as *Senior Pastor to Immanuel Lutheran Church, Bossier City, LA.*

Rev. Gerald Heinecke, Pastor to Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Buffalo, Wyoming, has accepted the Call to serve as *Pastor to the dual parish of Hope Lutheran Church, Batesville & Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, Waldenburg, AR.* Installation date planned for June 12th, 2022.

Rev. Kory Janneke, Pastor to St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Warren, WI has accepted the Call to serve as *Pastor to St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Conway, AR.* Installation date planned for May 15th, 2022.

DECLINED: **Rev. Andrew Smith**, Pastor to Heavenly Host Lutheran Church, Cookeville, TN, has returned the Call to serve as *Pastor to St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Wildwood, MO.*

COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

ACCEPTED: **Mr. Lucas Gerlach** of Good Shepherd Lutheran in Watertown, WI has accepted the Call to serve as *4th Grade Teacher to First Lutheran School, Fort Smith, AR.*

Mrs. Michelle Gerlach of Good Shepherd Lutheran in Watertown, WI has accepted the Call to service as *Director of Early Childhood Education and Family Life to First Lutheran Church & School, Fort Smith, AR.*

DECLINED: Mr. Charles Russell, Director of Parish Music, Grace Lutheran Church, Little Rock, AR has returned the Call to serve as *Director of Traditional Worship* to Trinity Lutheran Church, Elkhart, Indiana.

Miss Jennifer Lutz of Immanuel Lutheran Church / Martin Luther School in Joplin, MO has returned the Call to serve as *3rd Grade Teacher* to First Lutheran School, Fort Smith, AR.

VACANT CONGREGATIONS & MINISTRIES

First Lutheran Church, Blytheville, AR – Pastor

First Lutheran Church, Harrison, AR – Pastor

Peace Lutheran Church, Conway, AR - Pastor

Trinity Lutheran Church, Columbia, TN – Pastor

IN THE CALLING PROCESS- COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

Avilla Christian Academy, Alexander, AR – Principal

Christ the King Lutheran School, Memphis, TN – Teachers (Pre-K; 1st grade and P.E./ Athletics)

Christ Lutheran Church & School, Little Rock, AR – Director of Christian Education

First Lutheran School, Fort Smith, AR – Teachers for 3rd

First Lutheran School, Knoxville, TN – Part-Time Teacher (Early Childhood)

Grace Lutheran Early Childhood Development Center, Little Rock, AR - Early Childhood Teachers and Aids

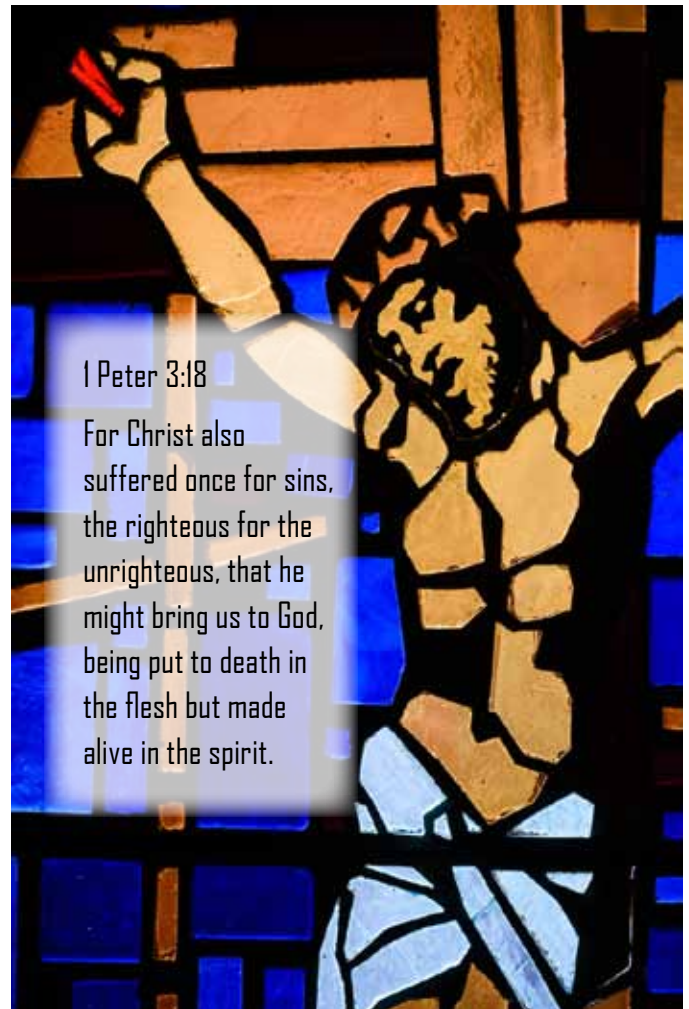
Heavenly Host Lutheran School, Cookeville, TN – Principal

Holy Trinity Lutheran School, Bowling Green, KY – Teachers (Preschool) and Classroom Aids

Immanuel Lutheran School, Memphis, TN – Kindergarten and Middle School Teachers

St. John's Lutheran School, Stuttgart, AR – Teachers (Early Childhood and Extended Care)

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



1 Peter 3:18

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.

PHOTO CREDIT: ERIK LUNSFORD, LCMS. IGLESIA LUTERANA CRISTO EL SALVADOR IN DEL RIO, TEXAS

CONGREGATIONAL MISSION COMMITMENTS

Mission Commitment Receipts as of 2/28/2022 (2 Months)

Anticipated Amount (16.67% of budget)\$252,482
Actual Receipts..... 218,691
Over (under) anticipated amount..... (\$33,791)

Use of Mission Commitment Receipts (2 Months)

Allocated to Synod for World Missions \$61,441
Allocated to Tanzania 4,167
Retained for District Mission/Ministry Support (70% of receipts)153,084
Total Receipts\$218,691

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

Actual Receipts as of 2/28/2022\$218,691
Actual Receipts as of 2/28/2021 \$219,451
Over (under) prior year receipts(\$760)



Share your news with us!

Encourager Topics in 2022

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 2022](#)

- May – Small Town & Rural Ministry
- June – Leadership
- July – Veterans
- August – Stewardship
- September – Church Planting
- October – Celebrating Lutheran Heritage
- November – Thankfulness
- December – Highlights 2022

Lutheran Witness Supplement

The monthly deadline is the 15th. Please email your original high resolution digital photo (.pdf or .jpg files only) and a short paragraph, to The Lutheran Witness Supplement editor, Judy Otto.

Email: LW@mid-southlcms.com
phone: 662-252-1004. Judy will always acknowledge receipt of your submission if it is sent directly to her.

Mid-South District, Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod

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