

Encourager

APRIL 2026

Mid-South District LCMS



A Message from
Rev. Dr. Roger
Paavola, President

Jesus the Good Shepherd

Because we believe Jesus is the Good Shepherd, we must resign ourselves to the fact that we are the lost sheep who were found by Him. It's not the other way around! If we were trying to find the Shepherd, then we couldn't call Him the "good." We'd be forced to call Him the lost Shepherd and we'd be the good sheep. It's completely upside down if the sheep become good and the Shepherd is the lost. It's a horrible thought! It's actually terrifying if it's put in such vivid terms. Who can tell such a ridiculous story... sheep, bleeding, dirty, and worn out coming back to its flock in the arms of the shepherd with the claim: "Look, I've found and returned our lost shepherd. I pretended to be lost so I could rescue him."

Would such a ridiculous story make sense? It's the same awful contention of people who claim to "find Jesus." God didn't declare Jesus missing! He didn't need to be rescued! Such a contention is totally contrary to God's salvation plan... sheep can't "find" the shepherd. To believe in our finding God is a breach of the First Commandment. It takes the divine task of seeking and saving the lost to the highest blasphemy, of those dead in sin finding God.

Yet, Satan, who played off of Adam and Eve's

human pride, still tries to make his way into our lives by tempting us with, "I did it my way!" Do people say, "I found Jesus"? He wasn't lost! Satan's wiles tempts our eyes away from Jesus and points to our pride-filled decisions. But God has worked His gracious will, warning of this growing cancer of works righteousness. Sheep who claim to have found Christ, turn the sinner into active and Christ into passive in the whole spectrum of salvation by grace alone, by faith alone, in Christ alone! Satan loves it! Anyone who takes pride to replace the Good Shepherd and the gift of the Holy Spirit are worshiping a very small god. It's confusing thoughts on the sheep's part. It turns Christ's Gospel of salvation on its head, turning the Gospel into law and no saving Gospel at all!

In his commentary on Psalm 23, Martin Luther wrote, "You lost sheep cannot find your way to the Shepherd yourself but can only roam around in the wilderness. If Christ, your Shepherd, did not seek you and bring you back, you would simply have to fall prey to the wolf. But now He comes, seeks, and finds you. He takes you into His flock, that is, into Christendom, through the Word and the Sacrament. He gives His life for you, keeps you always on the right path, so that you may not fall into error... No, Christ

alone is active here, merits things, and manifests His power. He seeks, carries, and directs you. He earns life for you through His death. He alone is strong and keeps you from perishing, from being snatched out of His hand (Jn 10:28). For all of this you can do nothing at all but only lend your ears, hear, and with thanksgiving receive the inexpressible treasure, and learn to know well the voice of your Shepherd, follow Him, and avoid the voice of the stranger.”

As we reach the pinnacle of our Christian faith in



the glorious Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, we keep our crucified Lord before our eyes in faith, that not only does He daily and richly provide for all the necessities of this life, but grants us His Holy Spirit to lead in the sanctified life where He leads us to the rich verdant pastures with His blessed and beloved flock. Christ Jesus is our Good Shepherd, seeking to rescue us from sin and the pride that claims to find Him. The Good Shepherd finds us, the lost sheep. We cannot tarnish the values of the Gospel with the false contention that we found the Shepherd. If the Lord is my Shepherd, this wickedness I shall want to avoid and be filled with the joy and blessed hope of our Easter message.

Your servant in Christ Jesus,
Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola

LWML MID-SOUTH DISTRICT 2026 CONVENTION

June 12-14, 2026 * Springdale, Arkansas

The LWML Mid-South District cordially invites all the women in the LCMS Mid-South District to attend our 29th Biennial convention in Springdale, Arkansas, June 12-14.

For all the details —

QR code or

[https://www.midsouthlwml.org/
district-convention-2026-main-menu/](https://www.midsouthlwml.org/district-convention-2026-main-menu/)

facebook.com/LWMLMSD

contact@midsouthlwml.org

*See you in
Springdale!*





The Mid-South District turns 60 this year! To highlight this great ministry milestone, the monthly Encourager is sharing a look at the faces, places and moments that have shaped our district over the last six decades.

Early Mission Efforts in the New Mid-South District

Upon its establishment in 1966, the newly-formed Mid-South District included 77 congregations in its 1,000-mile wide territory. However, “Lutherans” were somewhat of a minority in the region. A number of other denominations were considered to represent the majority of the Christian population in this collection of states often referred to as the “Bible-belt.” While this did present a challenge, the new District’s leadership embraced it as an opportunity. Driven by this mindset, the District began to work with existing congregations to start new ministries in their respective communities. By 1979, an impressive 17 congregations had been established through these partnerships.

While the successful planting of new churches was a significant achievement for the new Mid-South District, it also presented a great financial challenge. A key part of addressing this challenge in the district’s earliest days was its Church Extension Fund (CEF). The new district’s CEF was established with a few assets that were transferred from the Western District’s CEF when the two districts were divided. To grow the Mid-South’s new CEF, there was a significant push to spread the word and encourage individuals to invest in this important resource.



Al Behnke, the Mid-South District’s first Executive for Business & Finance.

The new district’s Executive for Business and Finance, Al Behnke, undertook the challenge of building the Mid-South’s CEF investor base. He began a vigorous campaign for new investors, built largely on regular updates in the monthly *Lutheran Witness* district insert. By the end of 1967, total assets for the Mid-South District’s CEF broke the \$1,000,000 mark and 1,018 new investors were added. By April of 1971, new deposits reached \$1.5 million!

The success of those early appeals was a benefit not only for the mission expansion efforts of the Mid-South District, but also in offering some financial flexibility for existing ministries in the District. Simply put, CEF Funds placed a variety of the new district’s ministry needs within reach. Later this year, you’ll learn about the CEF’s incorporation into Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF)—and how the organization has continued to help build ministry in the Mid-South District.

ANNOUNCE NEW INCREASED INTEREST RATES

NOW PAYING

5 1/4 to 6%

PER ANNUM EFFECTIVE APRIL 1st

Your Mid-South District Church Extension Fund takes great pleasure in announcing these outstanding new interest rates. It is being done to generate the revenue that is urgently needed to complete new building projects across the district. This new commitment will assure that our Lord's Gospel will continue to be spread in an even greater measure.

Open a new account or add to your present account NOW so that these new projects will not be delayed further.

The application at the right is for your convenience. Fill it out NOW and mail today.

MULTI-PURPOSE APPLICATION FORM
MID-SOUTH DISTRICT CHURCH EXTENSION FUND
CHECK WHICH PLAN YOU DESIRE:

SAVINGS PLAN

30/30 BOND PLAN

FIVE YEAR INCOME BOND

DRAFT-TO SAVINGS

WHAT TYPE OF ACCOUNT?

Individual

Joint

Member's

Organization

NAME OF NAME TO BE LISTED ON THE ACCOUNT (If accept minors—see below)

(1) _____ OF _____

(2) _____

MINOR'S ACCOUNT

Trustee for: _____

V.O.J.R. MAILING ADDRESS

Street _____ City _____

State _____ Zip Code _____

NAME OF YOUR CONGREGATION

YOUR SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER

(This number applicable to (1) or (2) above)

AMOUNT OF INVESTMENT

\$ _____

Signed _____ DATE _____

YOUR C.E.F. NOW PAYING: 5.25% Regular Savings
5.25% Draft-to-Savings
5.50%/5.75% 30/30 Bond
6% Five Year Income Bond

THE MID-SOUTH DISTRICT OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD
1006 BROOKFIELD ROAD • MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE 38117

Appeals in the Lutheran Witness monthly “district insert” were a cornerstone of the early campaigns to attract investors to the new Mid-South District’s Church Extension Fund (CEF), which served as a vital financial resource for starting LCMS ministries in the territory covering Arkansas, Tennessee and southwestern Kentucky.

Watch for more District history in the May Encourager. If you missed the April installment on the formation of the Mid-South District, visit our website to see the collection of monthly history features: mid-southlcms.org/category/60-anniversary/.

Mark your calendar for the District’s 60th Anniversary Oktoberfest celebration in Memphis on Saturday, October 24, 2026. See details in the May Encourager!

Hope Lutheran Church



(L-R) Dawn Vaughan, FLP coordinator; District President Paavola; Brian Luetschwager, Congregation V.P.; Rev. Gerald Heinecke

The Mid-South District Grow Grant program continues to support new ministry start-up for our member congregations. Hope Lutheran Church, Batesville, Ar, is the most recent recipient for its Family Pantry that began in 2026 for families in the Batesville area. The weekly distribution of necessities of young and growing families has provided goods for as many as 67 families per week.



If your congregation has a great ministry idea to share the Gospel within your community, consider applying for a GROW Grant.

Visit the Mid-South District website today for details on GROW Grants and how to apply: mid-southlcms.org/grow-grants/

Grace Lutheran Church

Grace Lutheran Church, Little Rock, was the latest recipient of the Mid-South District Grow Grant, given to the congregation on March 22, 2026. The grant was for their Gideon's Sword, men's ministry initiative. Gideon's Sword was designed by



to engage the men of the congregation to be a part of the faith formation of their families using Bible studies and interaction with the youngsters of their family and the congregation.

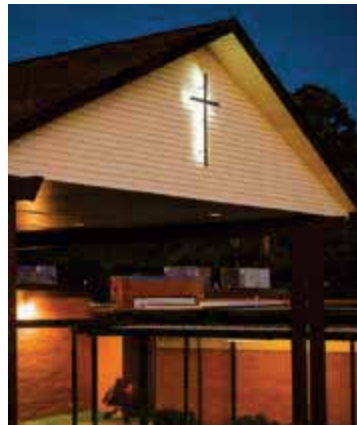


The following article appeared in the MARCH 2026 *Lutheran Witness* as the "Walking Together" feature, highlighting Concordia Lutheran Church in Jackson, TN. It is being shared in the *Encourager* with permission. Please enjoy reading about this Mid-South ministry!

BY STACEY EISING

Boldly Lutheran in Western Tennessee

Concordia Lutheran Church is offering undiluted Lutheranism in the heart of the Bible Belt.



Nestled near the outskirts of Jackson, Tenn., a city of just under 70,000 residents along the I-40 corridor between Memphis and Nashville, sits Concordia Lutheran Church.

Concordia's pastor, the Rev. Eric Rudsenske, was 16 years old when his family started attending an LCMS church. A conversation with the pastor there changed the course of his life.

"The man opened the Scriptures to me. I started to see that salvation wasn't a guessing

game. ... For the first time in my life, I actually knew that the Gospel applied to me, that my Baptism meant something, that my calling as a Christian was something I could be sure of."

While he initially attended college for international business, Rudsenske kept being pulled in another direction. Finally, he called his LCMS pastor back home.

"I told him, 'I want to make the lights come on for other people like you did for me,'" said Rudsenske.

After college, he enrolled in the Fort Wayne seminary and was eventually called to Concordia, Jackson. Having grown up in Mississippi, Concordia was a great fit.

"West Tennessee is kind of an extension of the Deep South as far as culture. ... I want to keep

these people excited about being Lutheran, especially here on this little island in the Bible Belt.”

‘Full of the Word of God’

Rudsenske had a strong foundation to build on — when he came to the congregation eight years ago, he found it full of rock-solid Lutherans.

“We like having a strong Lutheran identity here, we want to stand out in that way,” said Rudsenske. “We believe that Law-and-Gospel preaching, and those good old Lutheran hymns — no matter how stodgy they may sound — are actually full of the Word of God ... and they’ve been an amazing tool in reaching out to the people around us. Being in the Bible Belt, people love Jesus, they love the Bible — if you can argue from the Scriptures, they will listen to you,” said Rudsenske.

Will Forester, a student at Union University in Jackson, was raised Baptist, but started reading Scripture and researching different denominations in college. “It seemed to me that Lutherans fit best with what the Bible said. So I checked it out here and I really liked it.”

“Baptists tend to focus more on ‘what does the Word say and how does that apply to us, how do we need to live that out?’” said Forester. “While Lutheranism says, ‘What does the Scripture say, and what does this tell us about what Christ has done for us?’”

While doctrine brought him to Concordia, Forester said that what “kept [him] there was the liturgy.” “It really makes you feel involved in the worship,” he said.

Of course, the liturgy can be a big transition for some.

“It was a culture shock,” said Casey Fiscus, a member and Sunday school teacher who also came from a Baptist background. When she first visited Concordia with her Lutheran fiancé, she was highly unimpressed.

But week by week, she grew to appreciate the liturgy. “I really began to like the structure and the consistency of it. Baptist worship is more about, do you feel close to God? How does the music make you feel? It’s all based in emotion. ... But what if I didn’t feel close to God? Here, I realized it’s not about me. God did everything for me, and that’s it,” said Fiscus.

‘A Tremendous Way to Reach Out’

Concordia’s roots trace back to the late 1920s, when the LCMS sent a domestic missionary to West Tennessee. In 1934, the congregation was officially established in a building in downtown Jackson. The congregation worshiped there until 1963, when the current church building was constructed.

Almost a hundred years later, Concordia remains a thriving congregation — faithful both to God’s Word and to one another.

There is plenty to keep members busy at church, including a flourishing Sunday school program (Concordia’s Sunday-school-age population has grown from one young child in 2017 to around 22 today, mostly under the age of 4), an active LWML chapter, a Matins service each Wednesday morning, a TrailLife troop and a music conservatory.

Concordia started the conservatory, an offshoot of David’s Harp (an LCMS Recognized Service Organization), in 2020 to reach out to the community through music education. Currently, Concordia Conservatory offers piano, organ, violin, cello, voice and guitar lessons to its students (between 40 and 70 of them, depending on the year). Students are required to play in the Divine Service occasionally.

“Being exposed to what we do on Sunday mornings is a tremendous way to reach out,” said Alex Lobo, Concordia’s music director. “It creates curiosity: Why do you have the altar? Why is the choir in the back of the church? It creates opportunity for us to explain these things to them.”

Lobo, who originally came to the U.S. from Brazil as a Baptist minister, can speak to this power of the Divine Service firsthand: “My conversion to the Lutheran church is due to the theology and doctrine of the Divine Service.”

Lobo was hired part time years ago to play organ for services. He recounts a conversation he had with Concordia’s pastor at the time. “I asked, ‘Tell me why you call this “Divine Service”?’ And he answered, ‘It’s because when we gather together to worship, it is God Himself who comes to us to serve us.’” Lobo said

he knew he wanted to become a Lutheran in that moment.

Carrie Braun said that her six children all started piano lessons through the conservatory. Her 12-year-old son, Michael, now takes organ lessons from Lobo and accompanies Matins every Wednesday morning and at least one hymn during the Sunday Divine Service each week.

‘The Lord Has Been Gracious’

Even outside of official church events, the congregation is a true community.


“It’s not just here at church. We go to each other’s birthday parties, Easter dinners, other holidays. ... We’re constantly together,” said Ryan Fiscus, Casey’s husband.

On a Wednesday night in Advent 2025, Concordia welcomed us into their midst as they gathered for a potluck dinner. Lively conversation carried on unbroken, except when Pastor led a pre-dinner prayer and, finally, gathered the congregation for the service.

“Church time!” said Rudsenske, motioning to us make our way into the sanctuary.

In Concordia’s warm brick sanctuary, a different spirit prevailed — reverent silence before the service, punctuated only by the small noises of many children.

Rudsenske continued an Advent series on canticles, preaching on the song of Zechariah.

“Zechariah’s song, sung by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, proclaims this great truth: that the Lord has been gracious to His people, and He has visited us with redemption. For He has sent Jesus to redeem us, to buy us back from our sin. He sent John as the forerunner ... and the Lord has been gracious to us in continually preaching to us, as He still sends ministers, as He still administers His grace to us, from the day we were baptized in His name until the day of our death.” 



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH
LITTLE ROCK



SWORD OF GIDEON RETREAT FOR MEN & BOYS

MAY 1-2

FRIDAY EVENING & SATURDAY
(full schedule online)

A unique retreat for men and boys featuring:

- Worship & Bible Study
- Brotherhood & fellowship
- A strength competition
- Food and camaraderie

Whether you are young or old, feel strong or weak -
THIS IS FOR YOU!

LEARN MORE AND REGISTER AT
gracelutheranLR.org/gideon

Seminary CALL DAYS

“Call Day” is coming up for both Concordia Seminary St. Louis and Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne. It’s an exciting time as new workers receive their first call to ministries eagerly awaiting their service and partnership. Call Day details are shared below. Where possible, please make plans to join the livestream of the these important events—and join the Church in giving thanks for these new workers!

Concordia Seminary St. Louis:

Tuesday, April 28 —

- 3 PM - Assignment of Vicarages and Deaconess Internships
- 7 PM - Assignment of Calls

Visit csl.edu/event/call-day-2026/ for details.

Concordia Theological Seminary Fort Wayne:

Tuesday, April 28 —

- 7 PM - Assignment of Vicarages and Deaconess Internships

Wednesday, April 29 —

- 7 PM - Assignment of Calls

Visit ctsfw.regfox.com/2026-call-day for details.

Christ Little Rock to Host TRIVIA NIGHT for Camp Trinity

Enjoy a night of laughter, fellowship and friendly competition at the annual Trivia Night spring fundraiser for Camp Trinity. **The event is April 25 at Christ Little Rock** (315 S Hughes St, Little Rock, AR 72205). Teams of up to eight people will compete for bragging rights, restaurant gift certificates and the coveted Dinner Bell Trophy. In addition to the trivia competition are contests for best costumes, best table decorations and most clever team name. Concessions will include burgers, hot dogs, nachos and snacks. The night also features both silent and live auctions, with great items up for bid including luxury lodging.

Doors open at 4:30 PM. Teams who arrive before 5 will have plenty of time to decorate their tables, go over trivia contest

rules, place bids on silent auction items and get something to eat from the concessions. Announcements will begin at 5:45, with the first trivia round beginning at about 6. It just takes one person to register a team, whose members can be recruited between now and the contest.

To learn more and register, visit the camp website at lutherancamp.org/trivia-night.



Wendysue in Concert



When

Tuesday, April 21 @ 6pm
A Ladies' Night Out Celebrating
Music and Miracles
FREE event! Bring a friend!

Where

Christ the King Lutheran Church
5296 Park Ave, Memphis, TN
RSVP: bit.ly/WendySueatCTK
Enjoy appetizers and desserts

wendysue.com



WHERE PRAISES NEVER END



A Hymn Festival featuring
Rev. Dr. Stephen Starke

MAY 17, 2026
3:00 p.m.

Praise Lutheran Church
315 Southdowne Dr.
Maryville, TN 37801



LHF SEEKING CANDIDATES

Due to LHF Executive Director Rev. Dr. Matthew Heise's upcoming retirement, the Lutheran Heritage Foundation has begun the search for a new LHF Executive Director. As an LCMS recognized service organization, qualified candidates must be an ordained LCMS pastor who is passionate about LHF's work of translating and publishing the good books of our Lutheran faith for churches in nearly 100 countries around the world. To learn more about this position AND to submit your name (or the name of a person you believe would be qualified) for consideration of this Call, please go to www.LHFmissions.org/lhf-executive-director-search.



OKTOBERFEST CLASSIC

- Mark your calendar -

We are excited to announce the first Oktoberfest Classic as a fundraiser for the **Hope Lutheran Church Family Life Pantry, Batesville AR.**

Date: Friday, October 2, 2026

Completed form and payment are due by September 25, 2026

Where: The Course at Eagle Mountain, 800 Gap Rd, Batesville, AR Registration and questions: David Goodwin, email: dtgood1990@gmail.com
Dawn Vaughn, email: hopelutheranfamily-lifepantry@outlook.com

35 LIME Graduates this Spring 2026

The Lord be with you!

LIME is sending you some photos from last March 15th Graduation Day at the Lutheran Church of Imasombahoaka, Fianarantsoa.

All of these good news are the fruits from the partnership between the Mid-South District (LCMS) and LIME. Glory be to God the Father, to His Son Jesus Christ from Nazareth and to the Holy Spirit!

May the grace of God the Father, the love of Jesus Christ and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all!

*Rev. Joseph Randrianasolo
LIME*



The Professor of the English language and also the President of a NGO for Youth, an international NGO. He landed at Ivato airport, Antananarivo, two days before the graduation day from an international committee held in Kenya.

CHRIST
IS RISEN

1 corinthians 15

..... INDEED

Preparing for the 2026
Synodical Convention:
REGIONAL CIRCUIT MEETINGS
FOR DELEGATES SCHEDULED

LCMS 69th Regular Convention JULY 18-23, 2026

Regional Circuit Meetings Set for Mid-South Delegates to the Upcoming Synodical Convention

The 69th Regular Convention of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod will take place July 18-23, 2026 in Phoenix, AZ. In preparation, Circuit meetings have been scheduled for all Mid-South delegates to the Synod Convention. At these meetings, Mid-South District President, Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, will review the Synod Convention process and workbook overtures, as well as answer questions regarding the role of a delegate. Delegates may choose from the following meeting dates and locations:

- **Tuesday, May 12, 2026; 7-9 PM in Knoxville** - Grace Lutheran Church (9076 Middlebrook Pike / Knoxville TN 37923)
- **Wednesday, May 20, 2026; 7-9 PM in Memphis** - Mid-South District Office (1675 Wynne Rd / Memphis TN 38016)
- **Thursday, May 21, 2026; 7-9 PM in Little Rock** - Grace Lutheran Church (5124 Hillcrest Ave / Little Rock AR 72205)
- **Wednesday, June 10, 2026; 7-9 PM in Russellville** - St. John's Lutheran Church (500 N Cumberland / Russellville AR 72801)
- **Thursday, June 25, 2026; 7-9 PM in Nashville** - Ascension Lutheran Church (610 W. Old Hickory Blvd / Madison TN 37115)

Delegates to the upcoming Synodical Convention are asked to contact Missy Washburn at the District Office (mwashburn.contact@mid-southlcms.com) regarding which Circuit Meeting session they will attend.

Widows & Widowers
Support Community

Mid-South District Launches New Online Community for Widows and Widowers

As part of the Mid-South District's ongoing wellness initiative, an online support community for widows and widowers is now available on Facebook. This private group provides a safe and comforting space for people across the Mid-South District who are learning to navigate life after the loss of a spouse or loved one. Established through our partnership with Lutheran Family Service, the online community will be part of a larger effort to connect and minister to widows and widowers across our district. To join the group, visit facebook.com/groups/midsouthwwcommunity.

LEANING ON HIS EVERLASTING ARMS

A Walk of HOPE: Cleciantha's Story



Each morning, fifteen-year-old Cleciantha Compere begins her day with simple responsibilities at home. She sweeps, washes the dishes, prepares for school, and leaves her house. "Every day I walk to school, it takes me about 30 minutes."

That daily walk leads her to something far more than a classroom. It leads her to hope.

Life outside of school requires hard work. After classes end, Cleciantha returns home to help her family. She studies, does her housework, and on "tub days," makes two trips to collect water as she prepares for a bath. When the opportunity arises, she also helps her mother prepare a meal.

Yet even in the midst of these responsibilities, she still finds moments of joy. In the afternoons she jokes with her friends, and sometimes they play games together. Cleciantha dreams of cooking. She says she loves preparing food and enjoys hearing people say that what she has made is delicious.

School itself is important to her because it allows her to learn something new each day. Like many students, she admits that, at times, learning can be difficult when lessons are hard to understand, but she continues to try.

For Cleciantha, one of the most meaningful parts of the school day is the meal she receives through the Trinity HOPE Feeding Program. She explained, "I receive school meals. Food is very important to me because the food is good and sometimes, I don't eat at home. I don't worry because I know I will get food at school." The Trinity HOPE Feeding Program provides not only nourishment for her body, but also peace of mind that allows her to focus on learning.

At school she is also learning about Jesus. In her own words she explained that Jesus died for us so our sins could be forgiven, and that He performed miracles, healing the sick and making the lame walk. Through the daily meal and the Gospel message shared alongside it, children like Cleciantha are being fed both physically and spiritually.

For students like Cleciantha, the Trinity HOPE meal is more than food. It is stability, encouragement, and a reminder that God sees them and provides for them each day.

"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat..." Matthew 25:35

Her story is one example of the thousands of children whose lives are touched every school day through a Trinity HOPE Feeding Program.

To learn more about the ministry visit us at www.TrinityHOPE.org.



Trinity HOPE
P. O. Box 2910
Lebanon, TN 37088
615-394-4950
admin@trinityhope.org
www.TrinityHOPE.org



Prayer Summary, March 2026

Following is a list of all the people that have appeared on the Mid-South District website prayer list www.mid-southlcms.com during the month of March.

PRAYER CONCERNS

REV. RONALD HALAMKA (Waxahachie, TX)
MRS. ALISON HAWKINS (Mid-South District Office)
MRS. MARY ANN HERD (wife of Rev. Clifford Herd, Hixson, TN)
REV. TOM SAYRE (Emeritus, St. John's, FL)
REV. DR. MARK PRESS (Emeritus, Bowling Green, KY)
REV. RON BACIC (First, Little Rock, AR)
REV. ALBERT EICHELBERGER (Emeritus, Knoxville, TN)
REV. MYLES SCHULTZ (Pastor, Grace Lutheran Church, Holiday Island, AR)
REV. DR. LEE HAGAN (District President, Missouri District)
MRS. NANCY CALLIES (wife of Rev. David Callies, Emeritus, Former District President MDS)
MS. JUDY OTTO (Holly Springs, MS - MDS Editor Lutheran Witness Supplement)
MRS. FLORENCE EICHELBERGER (wife of Rev. Albert Eichelberger, Knoxville, TN)
MRS. NORMA MOORE (wife of Rev. Tom Moore, Emeritus, Cordova, TN)
MRS. JUNE WIESE (wife of former MDS Pastor, Rev. Ron Wiese)
MS. STEPHANIE ELSEROAD (daughter of Rev. Rich Elseroad (EM) Knoxville, TN)
MR. ROBERT NERGER (Former Mid-South District Board of Directors, Wartburg, TN)
MRS. DONNA MARSHALL (wife of Rev. Stewart Marshall, Trinity, Pine Bluff, AR)
Mr. JEREMY HOWE (Huntsville, AL)

CALL UPDATE

VACANT CONGREGATIONS & MINISTRIES

ACCEPTED: **Rev. Jon Bischof, Emeritus**, Paragould, AR accepted the Call to serve as *Assisting Pastor to the dual parish of Hope & Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Churches, in Batesville/Horseshoe Bend, AR*. Installation took place March 22, 2026.

PENDING: **Rev. Matthew Albright**, Pastor to Christ Lutheran Church, Little Rock, AR received a Call to serve as *Senior Pastor to St. Martin Lutheran Church, Birch Run, MI*.

Rev. Thomas Boeck, Pastor to Peace Lutheran Church, Conway, AR received a Call to serve as *Pastor to Trinity Lutheran Church, Summerfield, FL*.

DECLINED: **Rev. Kevin McReynolds**, Pastor to Redeemer Lutheran Church, Mountain Home, AR, returned the Call to serve as *Pastor to Grace Lutheran Church, Wayne, NE*.

Rev. Hebert Mueller, III, Pastor to Immanuel Lutheran Church, Lewiston, MN returned the Call to serve as *Senior Pastor to Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, Crossville, TN*.

VACANT CONGREGATIONS & MINISTRIES

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Chattanooga, TN – Senior Pastor

IN THE CALLING PROCESS - COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

Our Savior Lutheran Academy, Nashville, TN – Full-time PreK Teacher; Full-time and Part-time Preschool Teachers and Aides.

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



Congregational Mission Commitments

Mission Commitment Receipts as of 2/29/2026 (2 Months)

Anticipated Amount (16.67% of budget).....	\$275,020
Actual Receipts	<u>245,638</u>
Over (under) anticipated amount.....	(\$29,382)

Use of Mission Commitment Receipts (2 Months)

Allocated to Synod for World Missions	\$69,525
Allocated to Tanzania	4,167
Retained for District Mission/ Ministry Support (70% of receipts).....	<u>171,947</u>
Total Receipts	\$245,638

Mission Commitment Receipts Prior Year Comparison (2 Months)

Actual Receipts as of 2/28/2026	\$245,638
Actual Receipts as of 2/28/2025	<u>\$228,991</u>
Over (under) prior year receipts	\$16,647

Share your news with us!

Encourager Topics in 2026

We invite you to share your stories with us please email stories by 20th to Rhonda, webmaster.contact@mid-southlcms.com. Here's a look at the upcoming topics for 2026.
 May — Small Town & Rural Ministry
 June — Leadership
 July — Veterans

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.contact@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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