

Encourager

Mid-South District LCMS | May 2021



A Message from
Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola,
President

"Live Long and Prosper!"

I haven't conducted that many marriages, but, at each one of them I'm compelled to tell the bride and groom to watch what they eat the night before the wedding, make sure they remember everything they're supposed to bring to the wedding, and (above all) don't lock the knees when standing at the ceremony. If a person locks their knees – especially when they're tense – they cut off the circulation in their legs and they faint! On a hot summer's day in Canada, I was convinced one of the attendants was going to faint because he had either had too much celebration the night before, or he failed to heed

warnings about the knees. He was a huge hockey player who didn't really want to be there anyway. Maybe he was the one who was worried because some unnamed person had printed the words, "Help me!" on the bottom of the groom's shoes.

Psalm 128 is called "The Marriage Psalm." It's written by King Solomon and still sung at Jewish weddings. It sounds like a toast given by the best man at a wedding reception. It's also the song that was sung by the travelers who came to Jerusalem for the high festivals in Judaism. Whether a person was single, or married, Psalm 128 shows what the ingredients of a

joyous and prosperous marriage must be. But as beautiful as it is, Martin Luther called it a Psalm of comfort for those who are "burdened" with the heavy cross of a difficult marriage.

How many family and friends do you know who are literally killing themselves trying to stay happy? The way they go about it practically guarantees they will never find it. The Psalm implies. *"Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in His ways..."* Being blessed does NOT mean happy! Blessedness is the faithful follower of God to have joy – even if there are troubles and sorrows. Blessedness is well-being, fullness, prosperity and

joy. The Talmud says, "We see life, not as it is, but as we are." It's a matter of perception.

Some people will never be happy! True happiness is an emotional feeling (human) but blessedness comes from God. When we look with eyes of faith, we learn what's really important in life. True blessedness isn't external or elusive. It's a quality that takes root within. Blessedness isn't measured by financial measures or fame. There are no tricks involved in it. You can't grow it yourself. Our joy remains in the fact that we are named by God (blessed) to be His own child, and that as the Creator and Redeemer of the world, His blessing remains on us by His love.

"You will eat the fruit of your labor; blessing and prosperity will be yours." Solomon didn't forget that blessing and prosperity are not synonymous. The fear of the Lord in this and most other places in Scripture is not being afraid, but rather a reverence toward God – humbly bowing in honor of our God. When we reduced blessedness to tangible "things," we're also trying to reduce God into what we can see, touch, or understand. Holding God in awe – unable to understand Him – is the idea of reverence. What this means, of course, is that the fear of God (Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom) all other human fears become meaningless. We recognize God as being fully holy. God is at the center of everything we do and for every moment we exist. He's our starting point and ending

point in understanding ourselves and our lives. *"In all things, Christ should have the pre-eminence,"* Paul wrote to the Colossians. We don't get to make plans, set them in motion, and then have God figure out how He's going to make it work. We begin with God. He's God and we're not. Joy and blessedness are the fruits of work that begins and ends with God. "Walking in His way." We can't create our own system of values, create our own reality, and discard the truth and expect it to come out perfectly. These lousy attempts to do things our way (Sinatra-isms), the most common result is when we scratch our head and wonder, "What went wrong?!"

Psalm 128 doesn't promise a bed of roses...without thorns. Walking in the Lord's way means there'll be times our lives look strangely different than most of the people of the world. Jacques Plante – the Hall of Fame goalie for the Montreal Canadiens remarked at his induction ceremony that being a goalie is the most devastating job a person could ever had. "Can you imagine yourself having a job if every time you made a mistake, a red light went on over your desk and 15,000 people started screaming at you, while the other 15,000 taunted you for being such a dolt?"

That doesn't happen when we're blessed and part of a family. Psalm 128 makes it clear that the human family is the fertile soil of all human relations. When the family disappears, all other social relationships and skills will evaporate as well. Snoops

verified this is the case: In Japan, there's a prosperous company that allows a person to "rent-a-family." The frantic pace of the Japanese industrial culture and the stress on achievement from the very earliest age has led to "karoshi", which means "death by over-work." One Japanese company rents a family for the person who wants someone to enthusiastically greet them at the front door after a hard-days work. It's not cheap, but quite popular. The company's founder says his formula for success is based on the fact that all his clients are hungry for warmth and love.

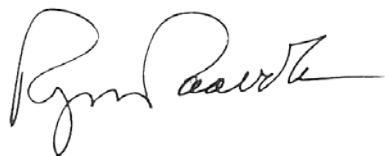
But, can warmth and love be purchased? If it's "feel good" love or give-and-take love - maybe. But the kind of love that makes a family and makes a marriage is a love that is totally giving – unconditional – the best (though imperfect) kind of love Christ has for us. Blessedness is from God. Agape love – the totally giving, unconditional love that Christ has for us is how God intended the family and marriages to work. When some other gratification is sought in marriage or outside of the family, it's an effort that goes beyond the vocation God ordained when He created marriage as the union between a man and a woman. Legal definitions of the marriage estate came about in practically every state in America. But can Christian marriage be reduced to a legal contract? The laws require action and accountability on the part of the parties to a contract. Marriage to God and according to His Word

is a blessing where He creates the mystery of two separate persons to become one flesh. No contract can accomplish that.

Martin Luther called marriage "The mask of God," that is the closest evidence we have an understanding of our Triune God – immutable, unconfused, Triune, yet One God – comes when we see a marriage blessed by God. Christ joined Himself to our human family when He humbled Himself to become a Man, dying for His holy Bride – the Holy Christian Church – and preparing a place for Her in His eternal and glorious kingdom.

If you attend a wedding this summer, take a moment to watch the miracle. Watch God take two precious lives and makes them one flesh for the purpose of His blessings: *"Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your sons will be like olive shoots around your table. Thus is a man blessed who fears the Lord. May the Lord bless you from Zion all the days of your life; may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem, and may you see your children's children. Peace be on Israel."*

Your servant in Christ +
Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola



Grace Lutheran, Little Rock Commissions and Installs New Deaconess



Left to right: Pastor Kent Schaaf of Grace, Little Rock, Deaconess Rachel Fruge of St. Paul Lutheran, Fort Worth, Texas, Deaconess Esget, Deaconess Intern Linda Strubbe of Salem Lutheran Church Jacksonville, IL and Pastor Christopher Esget of Alexandria, VA, who is Eileen's son and the 5th Vice President of the LCMS.

Grace Lutheran in Little Rock Commissioned and installed their first ever Deaconess. **Deaconess Eileen Esget** lives in Hot Springs Village, Arkansas and has begun service to Grace. Her primary duties will

be women's ministries that will include Bible study, visitation as well as a new grief support group and working with various mercy ministries in the Little Rock metro area.

2021 District Convention Updates

July 1 - July 3, 2021



The latest updates can be found on the dedicated event page on the District website (mid-southlcms.org/resources/convention).

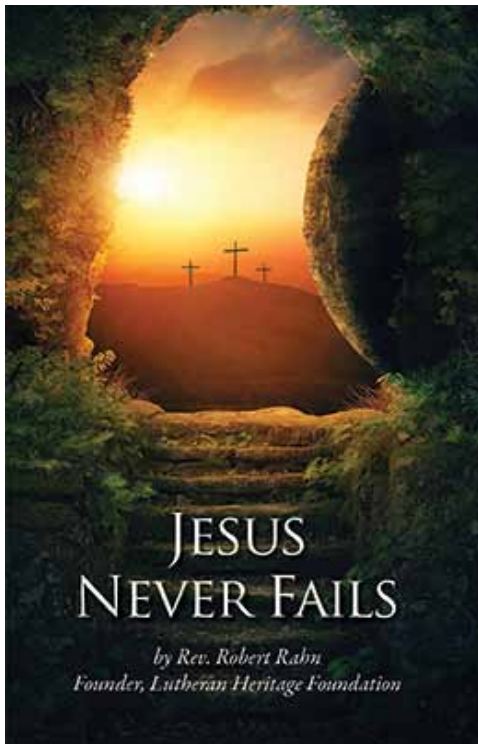
New Church Dedicated



Above: Rev. Paul Kritsch, President Roger Paavola, and Rev. Robert Portier the Circuit Visitor for the Knoxville Circuit. Below: Interior of The Chapel of the Good Shepherd



On Sunday, April 25, the members of The Chapel of the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church dedicated their new church building to the service of Christ Jesus the Good Shepherd. Over 75 people attended the worship service that culminated four years of work to create a Lutheran presence in the community. Rev. Paul Kritsch has led the congregation that started with interested people in his community-wide Bible studies.



New free resource from Lutheran Heritage Foundation

During these turbulent times, a central message that everyone needs to hear is "Jesus Never Fails!" And now, the Lutheran Heritage Foundation (a recognized service organization of the LCMS) has this short devotional booklet available at no cost to you in a variety of languages, for outreach to immigrants in your community or for short-term mission trips. To read the English edition (great for shut-ins and hospital visits), click here: <https://media.lhfmissions.org/file/lhf-missions/pdfs/English-LHF-Jesus-Never-Fails-booklet-1.pdf>. This booklet is also available in languages like Haitian Creole, Spanish, French, Swahili, Russian and Vietnamese. PDFs are available at LHFmissions.org/publications; email your order for printed copies to info@LHFmissions.org.

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 on the [District's website](#).

Application deadline June 15, 2021

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

[District Financial Aid Application](#)

[Financial Aid Letter 02.03.21](#)

[Pastor's Eval Form 2021-2022](#)

[Scholarship Guidelines for 2021-2022](#)

[Agreement of Repayment for 2021-2022](#)

[SMP Scholarship Fund Application 2021-2022](#)



Photo courtesy of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Mission Trip 2021

Tanzania

We are making plans for a mission trip to Tanzania from the Mid-South District in 2021. We have a mission team from Christ the King Memphis who will be leaving at the end of May 2021 returning home on June 10. A second team from the Nashville area will be leaving on June 10 returning home on June 24th. The trips will consist of outreach and church planting in rural villages of the Southeast of Lake Victoria Diocese (SELVD) and safari into the Serengeti and Ngorongoro Crater National parks after the mission.

For more information contact the District office or Bob Allen - rjallen@prodigy.net • 270-535-7370



Children's Choir Robes

We have children's choir robes available in various sizes. They are red with gold collars. Sizes: 31 small, 15 medium, and 8 large.

If interested please contact

Julie Bobbitt at

Immanuel Lutheran Church and School. Phone: 901-373-4486

God's Plan Clearly Confirmed

By Keith Logan

I just returned from Haiti March 21st, after a trip to seek God's plans for the upcoming 2021-2022 school year. The primary purpose of this trip was to evaluate the island of LaGonave (see map) and try to discern whether God's will was for us to expand our feeding programs to Christian schools on this very poor, remote island. Before leaving for Haiti, I asked God to make His plans clear by showing us at least three things...

1) Bring to us one qualified candidate that lived on LaGonave and we could hire as a Haitian Feeding Program Director; 2) Bring to us at least eight Christian schools that would qualify and be interested in a feeding program; and 3) Allow us to find a food

vendor on the island that would sell us food for prices that were at least close to the prices we pay in Port au Prince. If all three of those items could line up, we felt God was clearly telling us to expand to this new area. Maybe because God knows I can sometimes be a little slow, He made sure it was super clear to us. Instead of providing ONE qualified Feeding Program Director, He brought us TWO excellent and extremely competent candidates, both of which could soon be leaders within the entire Haitian team. Instead of bringing us eight qualified and interested schools, He allowed me to speak at a community meeting where 84 schools gathered with interest to participate in our programs. And instead of finding a food vendor that would sell us food at prices close to those in Port au Prince, He led us to a Christian vendor that said he wanted to partner with us to help the people of LaGonave and his current prices were lower than what we are currently paying in Port au Prince. PRAISE BE TO GOD!



Monal with his children



After a trip like that, our decision was easy. We will be starting 16 new feeding programs at Christian schools in LaGonave this September. We hired both Feeding Program Directors and currently have them visiting each of the 84 schools, praying for God's guidance to lead us to which 16 schools we should feed first. God has proven once again that when you ask for something that aligns with His plans, you will receive His blessings in abundance. (Luke 11:9). All glory goes to God, and we give Him thanks!!



Call to Help SSELc Ministries Impacted by Flooding

The Mid-South District is a ministry partner of the South Sudan Evangelical Lutheran Church in Africa. Recently, the region was devastated by floods, impacting many of the ministry structures that are part of the SSELc. In a letter seeking assistance from LCMS brothers and sisters, Rev. Nathaniel Bol Nyok, SSELc Leader, explains:

"South Sudan Evangelical Lutheran Church is a brand new Lutheran Church body in South Sudan, and as a

new church body it has myriads of needs to let her run her mission effectively. Some of her needs were almost met but the ongoing devastating floods in Bor area including Bor town have made a major setback to this Church's progress. The floods have destroyed the physical development which had been put in place during the past 9 years of her establishment. The floods have created so many urgent needs to enable

the church adjust to the new situation which the ongoing floods have caused."

Please [read the complete letter](#) from Rev. Bol, which explains the situation in detail and includes a list of specific needs for the SSELc. Gifts for the SSELc flood recovery effort can be sent to the Mid-South District (1675 Wynne Road / Cordova, TN 38016), designated for "SSELc Flood Recovery."



An entire church building collapsed due to flooding



Flooding washed away walls of this church structure

Prayer Summary, April 2021

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 April 2021.

PRAYER CONCERNS

REV. NATHANIEL BOL (of the SSELCC) and daughter, **APAR BOL**

REV. NORM GROTELUSCHEN (Emeritus, Mid-South District)

REV. RONALD HALAMKA (Waxahachie, TX)

MRS. ALISON HAWKINS (Mid-South District Office)

REV. DONLEY HESSE (Emeritus, Mena, AR)

MRS. SUSAN JONES (Volunteer, Mid-South District)

MS. MICHELE LAYNE (Director, St. John Lutheran Child Care, Fayetteville, AR)

MRS. MEGAN NAVRATH (daughter of Rev. Carl and Gwen Wenck, Grace Lutheran Church, Murfreesboro, TN)

REV. NEIL VANDERBUSH (Chaplain*U.S. Army through the Board of International Missions*Our Savior, Searcy, AR)

We pray for all those affected by COVID 19 and the continuing work to distribute the vaccine.

OUR DEEPEST SYMPATHIES TO:

The family and friends of Betty Krohn, (Christ the King Lutheran Church, Memphis, TN) who recently passed away. Visitation followed by the service is Saturday, May 1st beginning at 1:00PM.

CALL UPDATE

IN THE CALLING PROCESS – CONGREGATIONS ORDAINED MINISTERS

PENDING: **Rev. Dan Hawkins**, Pastor to *GracePoint Lutheran Church*, Munford, TN has received a Call to serve as Pastor to *St. Paul Lutheran Church and School*, in the *Indiana District*.

Rev. Andrew Lehman, Associate Pastor to *Redeemer Lutheran Church*, Fairhope, AL, has received a Call to serve as Associate Pastor and Head Master to *Pilgrim Lutheran Church (and School*)* in Jonesboro, AR.

DECLINED: **Rev. Dan Hawkins**, Pastor to *GracePoint Lutheran Church*, Munford, TN has returned the Call to serve as Pastor to *Our Redeemer Lutheran Church*, Clinton, MS.

VACANT CONGREGATIONS & MINISTERIES

Mid-South District – Executive Director for Mission and Ministry

Christ Lutheran Church, Little Rock, AR – Pastor

River Valley Grace Lutheran Church, Lamar, AR – Pastor

Trinity Lutheran Church, Columbia, TN – Pastor

Zion of Avilla Lutheran Church, Alexander, AR – Pastor

IN THE CALLING PROCESS- COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

Avilla Christian Academy, Alexander, AR – Teacher for lower grade

Belvoir Christian Academy, Chattanooga, TN – Teacher

First Lutheran School, Knoxville, TN – Teachers for middle school

First Lutheran School, Fort Smith, AR- Teacher for lower grade

Immanuel Lutheran School, Memphis, TN – Teacher *A Designation for a Call

St. John's Lutheran School, Stuttgart, AR – Teacher for lower grade

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

CONGREGATIONAL MISSION COMMITMENTS

Mission Commitment Receipts as of 3/31/2021 (3 Months)

Anticipated Amount (25% of budget)	\$368,404
Actual Receipts	<u>358,371</u>
Over (under) anticipated amount	(\$10,033)

Use of Mission Commitment Receipts (3 Months)

Allocated to Synod for World Missions	\$101,261
Allocated to Tanzania	6,250
Retained for District Mission/Ministry Support (70% of receipts)	<u>250,860</u>
Total Receipts	\$358,371

Mission Commitment Receipts Prior Year Comparison (3 Months)

Actual Receipts as of 3/31/2021	\$358,371
Actual Receipts as of 3/31/2020	<u>\$349,034</u>
Over (under) prior year receipts	\$9,337

Encourager Topics in 2021

The monthly Encourager features news from across the Mid-South District. If your congregation, school or ministry group has a story to share please email the articles and photos to webmaster@mid-southlcms.com by May 20, 2021. Here's a look at the upcoming topics for 2021

- 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@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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Paul Reaves,

Executive Director for Development & LCEF Vice President

Allen Piepenbrink,

Executive Director for Schools and Early Childhood

Missy Washburn,

Administrative Assistant to the District President

Renae McElwain,

Communications & Marketing Specialist

Julie Tyler,

Administrative Assistant for Missions and Education

Contact the Mid-South District

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Cordova, TN 38016

PHONE: 866.373.1343 / 901.373.1343

FAX: 901.373.4826

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ON TWITTER - "@midsouthLCMS"

