

Encourager

MAY 2025

Mid-South District LCMS



A Message from Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, President

Good Leaders

Where do we get great leaders? Think about the Rockefellers, Kennedys, and Trumps.

Towns like Pittman Center, TN, Hodgenville, KY, Dole, France, Richford, NY, and Sand Slough, Arkansas don't jump to one's mind when we talk about great cities and great people. Yet, Pittman Center was where Dolly Parton was born; Hodgenville, KY was the birth place of Abraham Lincoln; Dole, France is where Louis Pasteur was born; and Sand Slough, AR is the birthplace of Sonny Liston, once world champion pro boxer.

Most small towns are not generally known for producing great leaders. Small towns may lack big city opportunities and aren't known as centers of power or influence. But small towns are

dotted across our district hosting most of our congregations. When it comes to the workings of God, He never operates within man's ideas that "bigger-is-better."

In the prophecy of Micah 5:2-5 we read, *"But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be Ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore He shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel. And He shall stand and shepherd His flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth.*

And He shall be their peace."

That's the least likely place for the Messiah to be born. Bethlehem would be like many towns in Arkansas, Tennessee and Kentucky – not even large enough to be placed on the map. In listing of the cities in the Old Testament, Bethlehem wasn't even mentioned, kind of like saying, "Bethlehem isn't the end of the world, but you can see it from there."

But digging a little deeper into Micah's prophecy, because Bethlehem was located in Judah (the Southern kingdom), the prophecy speaks to a "Ruler of Israel" as in the Northern kingdom. In other words, Bethlehem was on the wrong side of the tracks for this kind of prophecy to happen! God's

prophecies sometimes wreak havoc on our reasoning. This promise may have seemed impossible, but that's where God takes over.

The birth of Jesus was foretold in the Garden of Eden when God revealed His plan to save His people after Satan brought sin and death into the world. Each detail of prophecy throughout the Old Testament detailed vital signs to the fulfillment of prophecy, offering checkpoints that proved Jesus is the fulfillment of God's salvation plan. He was to be a descendant from Eve in the lineage of King David. Along the way, each detail gave witness to God's faithfulness and detail.

The Messiah would be more than a leader. He was to be the Savior of His people. Exiles would return their homes in Jerusalem. Similarly, in our natural human state we were once exiles from God's love. Only through the merits of Jesus do we have a restored relationship with our Heavenly Father. We are brothers and sisters in Christ. No matter our age, gender, or place where we were born, we are one with Christ Jesus.

But here's where it gets strange. I know it's the Christmas story and what we hear during Advent, but the angel of the Lord had this small conversation with Mary, the mother of Jesus: *"In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name*

was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be borne will be called holy—the Son of God."

Not only was Jesus to fulfill prophecy by being born in a small town, but His entrance into our world to be our Savior didn't come as a mighty warrior or stately king... at least by the way He came. He was conceived to be born of a virgin mother. He was born as a tiny, vulnerable, and small Child. He grew up in humble surroundings in Nazareth – another town not known for "anything good." Scripture tells us that He grew in size and wisdom to be our great Shepherd, Lord, Savior, and King.

Jesus Christ rules with the Lord's authority. God Word teaches us through the birth of Jesus to expect the unexpected.

God's very nature is to use the unexpected. He constantly surprises us as He moves in our lives. Jesus, the promised Messiah wouldn't fit the mold of what most people think makes a great ruler or even a Savior. He was born in a stable! Although it's been glamorized, if we were truly accurate, we'd decorate our nativity scene with fragrances of farm fresh aroma – anything but grand, regal, or royal. In other words, Jesus was just flat out born on the wrong side of the tracks. But Jesus wasn't just our Savior! He did the impossible and changed the world.

God's Christmas promise sent His Son in an unlikely way – born of a virgin – in an unlikely town, in an unlikely barn not fit for a King. Yet, this Jesus came to take away our sins and give us the gift of eternal life. Jesus died in our place to set us free to live a life that we could not attain on our own – justified and forgiven in Christ Jesus. God loved us much that gave us a small-town Boy to redeem us and give us eternal life.

What is the point of a Christmas story in May? It's a biblical illustration that lets us know that most of our congregations are small. Many of our congregations don't worship more than 100 people on a given Sunday. Our larger congregations have grown to realize the strength of small congregations – personal, close, and meaningful relationships. Watch what happens when a congregation has more than, say, 250 or 300 members: The

congregation wants to get to know people more closely, so they start “Small groups.”


Small groups start getting relationships going to get things done in the larger congregation. Small groups study the Bible together and enjoy outings with fellowship in mutual interests. Small groups share the joys and sorrows of what the small group members are experiencing in their lives. Come to think of it, larger churches see the marvelous things of being small! Small groups become what has made small and rural ministries great – we get to know each other and work closely together.

You may recall that the Mid-South District was the first LCMS District in three decades to record an increase in its communicant membership in 2018. How did that happen? The people of our congregations – particularly engaging people in every small and rural congregation shared the Gospel of Christ Jesus with their neighbors, co-workers, classmates, and even strangers. The

LWML co-sponsored nearly a dozen locations across the District for people from small, rural, and large congregations to hear how we, as disciples of Christ, could pronounce the Gospel of Christ to the unchurch and de-churched people in our cities, small towns, and rural farms.

But it’s not about numbers. It’s all about Jesus and His message of peace, grace, forgiveness, and eternal salvation. It’s about a close and personal relationship that is just there, waiting to happen when an unsaved sinner is led by the Holy Spirit to be saved by that small-town, tiny Child born in Bethlehem.

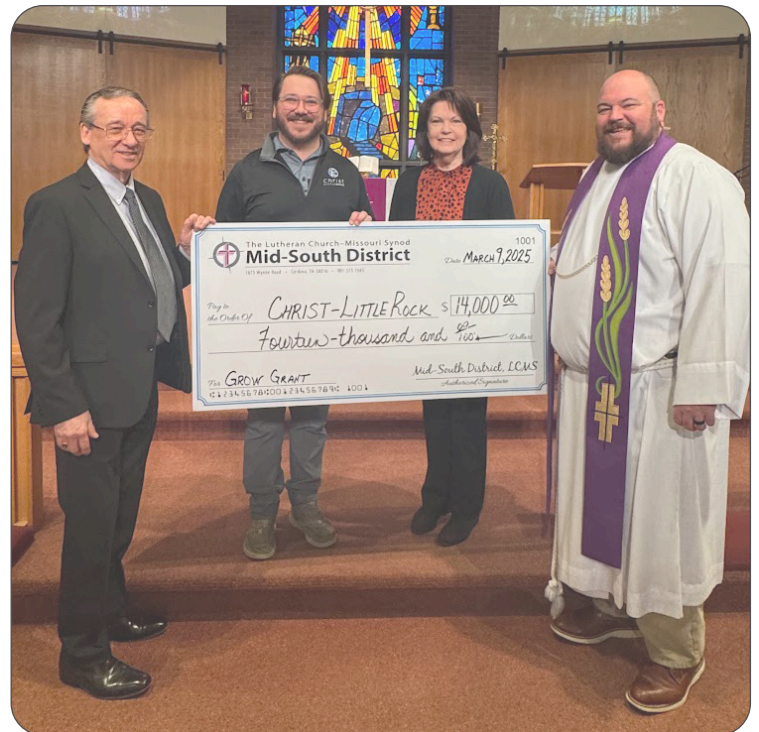
Your Servant in Christ +
Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola



10:2 Ministry Receives Grow Grant

In mid-March, Christ Lutheran Church and School in Little Rock, Arkansas was presented a \$14,000 GROW Grant check for the congregation’s “10:2 Ministry.” Inspired by Luke 10:2, which says, *“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest,”* the engaging new ministry seeks to increase the reach of the gospel through outreach integrated into community festivals and fairs. Mid-South District President, Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola (far left) is shown presenting the grant funds to (L to R) Logan Brown, Christ Little Rock’s Director of Worship Arts & Music Education; Cara Steely, the school’s K-8 Principal; and Rev. Matt Albright, Sr. Pastor of Christ Little Rock. We pray for God’s blessings on the congregation’s 10:2 ministry—and look forward to sharing more on how Christ Lutheran is connecting with the Little Rock community through this exciting concept!

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



GROW
Grants



Meet District President Candidate

Rev. Curtis Hoover

Each candidate was asked to describe the challenges, opportunities and priorities that face the Mid-South District over the next five years and to limit their answers to 300 words or less.



*Rev. Curtis Hoover
Senior Pastor
Faith Lutheran Church
Thompson's Station, TN*

A pastor once expressed concern that “his people had much too much of the world in them”. I believe that’s our challenge, too. We struggle to reach the lost partly because the Church no longer feels distinct. If friends and family see no difference, why would they be drawn in?

Much of this comes down to communication. We need to express boldly and clearly what “confessionally appropriate” means. Let’s help both our members and the world understand what it looks like to stand for historic orthodoxy and catholicity—not vaguely, but with conviction and clarity.

Our priorities must include helping people know why Lutheranism matters. Young people should leave confirmation with confidence, ready to profess their faith in schools and universities. Neighbors should know what we believe—and why. And strangers should be seeking out LCMS congregations, aware that there’s something different, something solid, something lasting there.

Before seminary, I worked in communications, focused on crafting concise, strategic messages. Our District is full of skilled communicators, and it’s time to put those gifts to work. We were once known as the Church of the Lutheran Hour. That was a great beginning.

It’s time to surpass it.



Meet District President Candidate

Rev. Eric Longman

Each candidate was asked to describe the challenges, opportunities and priorities that face the Mid-South District over the next five years and to limit their answers to 300 words or less.



*Rev. Eric Longman
Senior Pastor
Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Rogers, AR*

The challenges faced by the Mid-South District are in large part shared by every Christian church in this country. We must adapt to a cultural shift toward secularization that has eroded religious engagement, particularly among our youth. Our congregations skew a bit older, and declining membership creates financial challenges. And we can already see a leadership gap as the number of retiring pastors outstrips the number of rising church workers. None of this is unique to the Mid-South District, of course, but it demands our attention and focus.

We have opportunities to do better at outreach activities, reaching out across cultural lines where we haven't always been active. COVID revealed the benefit of digital tools for engagement, and we should continue to explore this while emphasizing the importance of in-person worship and fellowship. Emphasizing the value of parochial schools can help with the process of discipleship for our young people, and continued activity in Community Service initiatives like our Lutheran Early Response Teams for Disaster Relief will improve our visibility in a region of the country where people often don't even know what the term "Lutheran" means.

I believe our priorities over the next five years should include emphasizing the development of leaders through mentorship, seminary support, and information campaigns; providing tools for congregations to undertake more intentional outreach efforts taking advantage of digital platforms; strengthening education by prioritizing Lutheran schools and youth discipleship; and ensuring financial stability through stewardship education and partnerships between congregations. Above all, we must remain true to the Biblical truth of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone, confessing boldly the Gospel message that all need to hear.



Meet District President Candidate

Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola

Each candidate was asked to describe the challenges, opportunities and priorities that face the Mid-South District over the next five years and to limit their answers to 300 words or less.



*Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola
District President
2012-Present*

The challenges, opportunities, and priorities that face the Mid-South District the next five years.

Challenges:

- Increasing the number of educational ministries (micro-schools)
- Bringing our next youth generation to be active church members as adults
- Providing resources to assist returning congregations to pre-COVID membership and church attendance
- Keeping a low vacancy rate for professional church workers
- Keeping District mission/ministry support with limited fiscal support
- Finding support for small and rural congregations that can no longer support ministry with pastoral ministry
- Recruiting and retaining teachers, principals, DCE's
- Assisting congregations in new ministry and mission activities with Grow Grants

Opportunities:

- Provide supportive materials assisting congregations in maintaining Scriptural and Confessional ministries
- Provide resources and training for Generational Faith Formation focused on family foundations, optimizing opportunities for today's young members to become active church members as adults
- Provide regional Best Practices forums for sharing of successful ministry ventures
- Provide pastoral staff for congregations in long-term vacancies
- Provide Regional church planting team to optimize identifying church plant opportunities
- Provide resources for training laity to support missions and ministries

Priorities:

- Supporting local and international missions, church planting, educational ministries
- Enhance and expand CAR and COMPASS to strengthen strategic position of ministries
- Continue increasing close relationships with seminaries for recruitment of pastoral graduates
- Create close relationships with Concordia University System for auxiliary campus in the Mid-South
- Continue support of congregations offering stewardship training for members
- Expand support of disaster response relief
- Continue providing resources to assist victims of human trafficking
- Provide a full complement of healthcare wellness for church workers
- Develop arrangements for social service access for church workers and church members
- Establish regional post-seminary cohorts for new graduates
- Expand Grow Grants to encourage growing ministries and missions.
- Continue full transparent disclosure of fiscal management of District
- Engage professional church-workers (SAS) to identify potential future church workers



Meet District President Candidate

Rev. Lane B. Reuter

Each candidate was asked to describe the challenges, opportunities and priorities that face the Mid-South District over the next five years and to limit their answers to 300 words or less.



*Rev. Lane B. Reuter
Senior Pastor
Our Savior Lutheran Church
Nashville, TN*

Five Commitments:

1. A commitment to unchanging Biblical and Confessional Truth in a changing world. I will never waver on our Biblical and Confessional Truths. This is our strength and it will not be watered down.

2. A commitment to all of our congregations to focus on reaching unchurched and dechurched people. Jesus said it best in Luke 19:10, "For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost."

3. A commitment to recruiting the best possible pastors and church workers from our seminaries, colleges, and the field. We have many gifted workers and future workers out there. We should not just settle for who can fill a spot. Our District, churches, and schools deserve the best!

4. A commitment to being a Pastor, not a church politician. I want to lead with humility and to admit when I'm wrong. I never want to fall into the trap of forgetting what our church workers go through everyday out in the field and in real life. It will be very important for me to stay close to our workers and churches so I never lose sight of the daily challenges and struggles they face. I will be a pastor first and foremost in how I conduct my role.

5. A commitment to utilize our District Vice Presidents and Circuit Visitors with great frequency. We have a very deep bench of talented and gifted people within our District. I don't want to operate in a leadership silo where I only look to myself for the answers and guidance. In addition, we also have a very large geographical District. We have to work smart and use more players on the field so we optimize our effectiveness.



Meet District President Candidate

Rev. Clayton Sellers

Each candidate was asked to describe the challenges, opportunities and priorities that face the Mid-South District over the next five years and to limit their answers to 300 words or less.



*Rev. Clayton Sellers
Associate Pastor
Faith Lutheran Church
Collierville, TN*

Ours is not the first era to have a shortage of pastors, declining attendance, being behind on church planting, all in the shadow of political discord and technological shifts. I am persuaded that the first answer to these questions is to be unabashedly Lutheran. The Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions are our great heritage to wrestle with the opportunities set before us. The fun of course is moving from principles to plans. In nearly every case the first step will be individual congregations, pastors and people, taking care of the basics where they are. Being unabashedly Lutheran, shoring up financial situations, tending to the physical plant, engaging the neighborhoods and people around are all straightforward first steps. We each have a tendency to give the most attention to the things we have the least influence over, and give least attention the things we have the most influence over.

I understand the role of District President to be two fold. First, supporting pastors and congregations with all of the resources available so they can be unabashedly Lutheran. Second, to listen the thoughts, reflections and opinions on long term concerns with the goal of addressing those concerns within the Synod. Those issues certainly include training and raising up new pastors, planting new congregations, or tending to small congregations in declining regions. What does it look like for a growing area to support a declining area? How should the Mid-South District relate to other Districts? Especially Districts that are struggling? How does the rise in streaming many aspects of congregational life lead to enhanced evangelism? Through it all the words of St. Paul "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth." remind us of our trust in God to bless the work of our hands.



Meet District President Candidate

Rev. Joshua Willadsen

Each candidate was asked to describe the challenges, opportunities and priorities that face the Mid-South District over the next five years and to limit their answers to 300 words or less.



Rev. Joshua Willadsen

Pastor

Bethel Lutheran Church

Fort Smith, AR

Trinity Lutheran Church

Sallisaw, OK

*(Dual Parish to Bethel Lutheran
Church, Fort Smith, AR)*

Challenges, Opportunities, & Priorities

Demographics— congregational membership, the number of congregations able to support a full time pastor, and men available to serve as pastors— challenge the Mid-South District and every LCMS district and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. Yet these are only symptoms of greater challenges pressing upon every baptized believer in Christ. Internally the temptation to be worldly, to be formed by the culture rather than the Word of God, threatens every Christian. Many of our people do not know the Holy Scriptures, nor do they daily live in them. Rather than devoting ourselves to the Word of God and the Lord's Day, we focus our attention upon powerful influencers such as the main-stream media, the propaganda of public schools, sports, social media, television, movies, and other entertainments. In this way the mind of Christ is replaced with the thoughts and concerns of man. Externally the disordering of our society away from God's orders of creation threatens all human life. Humanism and the Sexual Revolution have spawned a world where reality, truth, and identity are now thought to be whatever a person makes of them—male and female, husband and wife, fathers and mothers are fluid and treated as interchangeable. Holding fast to the teaching of the Bible with Christ at the center and the Lutheran Confessions as the proper exposition Holy Scripture, baptized believers have the daily opportunity to confess the hope we have in Christ. We must catechize all ages in the Faith and godliness, strengthen existing congregations in faith, hope, and love, and start new Lutheran congregations where the voice of Jesus is heard and followed. There is only one thing needful— the Word of God— which must always remain our priority, for apart from Christ and His Word, we can do nothing.



Welcome Pastor Holmes

The Rite of Installation was held on Saturday, March 29, 2025 at St Paul Lutheran Church, Gillett, AR for The Rev. Jonathan Holmes. He will be serving St Paul Lutheran Church and St Luke Lutheran Church, DeWitt, AR.

Front (L-R) Rev. Stewart Marshall, Trinity Lutheran, Pine Bluff, AR; Rev. Sean Smith, Senior Pastor, Grace Lutheran, Clarksville, TN; Rev. Jonathan Holmes; Rev. Dr. Lannan Martin, Senior Pastor, King of Glory Lutheran Church, Williamsburg, VA; Rev. Kevin Conger, Hope Lutheran, Jacksonville, AR. Back (L-R) Rev. Gerald Heinecke, Hope and Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Churches, Batesville and Horseshoe Bend, AR; President Roger Paavola, Rev. Steven Teske, Immanuel Lutheran, Alexander, AR, Rev. Emil Woerner, Friends in Christ Lutheran Church, Bryant, AR; Rev. Don White, St John Lutheran, Stuttgart, AR.



26 NEW MEMBERS WELCOMED!

On March 16th, 2024, after completing the required catechetical instruction, Our Savior Lutheran Church in Spring Hill, TN, is pleased to take in its inaugural class of 26 new members. Our Savior Lutheran Church in Spring Hill is a second campus that was planted out of

Our Savior Lutheran Church in Nashville just under one year ago, with its first service on Easter Sunday. It is exciting to see God's word alive and active in the mission field of Spring Hill, one of the fastest-growing cities in the country! To God be the glory!

District Now Accepting Applications for Student Financial Aid

DEADLINE JUNE 15, 2025

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. The application deadline is June 15, 2025.

This information may be emailed to Lisa Pennington (lpennington@mid-southlcms.com) or submitted by regular mail to:

Mid-South District LCMS
Attn: Lisa Pennington
1675 Wynne Road
Cordova, TN 38016

The Henkel Conference

August 21-22, 2025

Rev. Gregory Bauch and the members of Ascension Lutheran Church in Madison, TN are pleased to announce the dates of the 2025 Henkel Conference: August 21-22. The Henkel Conference is a gathering devoted to Christian theology and cultural engagement. The purpose of the conference is to provide the best theological and cultural speakers within the Christian faith in order to educate and encourage in the midst of the present assaults on God's eternal truth. With this in mind, the event seeks to host a strong mix of clergy and laity. Pastor Bauch requests your aid in reaching friends, family, and congregation members who may wish to attend.

For complete details and online registration, please visit <https://www.ascensionmadison.com/henkel.html>.

Christ Academy Summer Program

Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne

More than ever, now is the time to pray that God would raise up pastors and deaconesses to share God's grace and mercy in our increasingly secular culture. You have a part to play in our Lord's life-giving ministry by encouraging high-school-aged men and women to attend Christ Academy High School at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana (CTSFW), June 15–28, 2025.

Christ Academy High School is a two-week program focused on worship, confessional catechesis, and fun times together. If you know a young person who would benefit from this experience, encourage them to register today! Details and online registration are available [HERE](#).



FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP FACILITATOR TRAINING

What is Family Discipleship?

*Christ's gifts nurturing
faith in God's children
through the partnership of
home and congregation.*

Building on our Lutheran heritage, Concordia Center for the Family (CCF) is training **pastors**, other **church workers**, and qualified **lay leaders** to help us ignite new zeal for Family Discipleship in our LCMS. As homes and congregations work together to disciple the next generations, our LCMS and **Christ's Kingdom will flourish!**

Would you like more **training and resources** to support this vision? CCF would love to have you join us! Scan the QR Code to learn more!

Our next training events:

~~April 22-26 - Concordia Seminary, St. Louis - Completed~~

May 12-16 - Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne



CCF is an
LCMS RSO



concordiafamily.org



1-888-553-5133

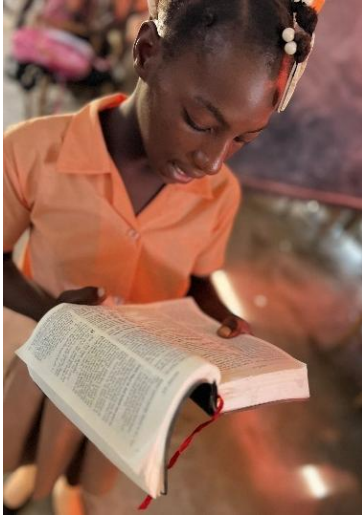


toddbiermann
@concordiafamily.org



CONCORDIA
CENTER FOR THE
FAMILY

THE GOSPEL—IN OUR WORDS AND DEEDS



One of my favorite evangelistic quotes is, “Share the Gospel in everything you do, and only use words when absolutely necessary.” This saying is such a strong reminder that, most times, our actions speak louder than words. 1 John 3:18 says, **“Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.”** The ears of the skeptic are opened when they know we sincerely care for them in our deeds.

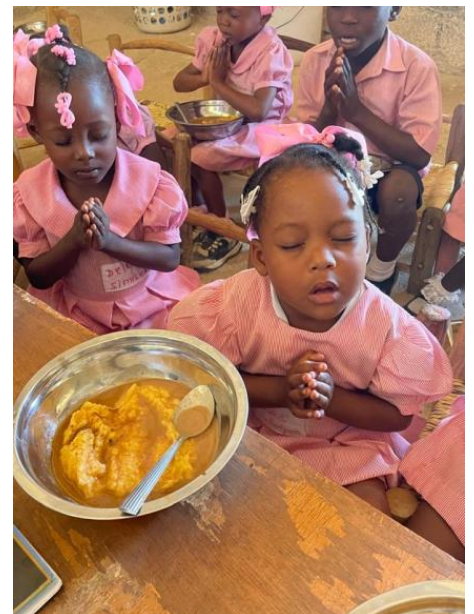
This idea is the basis of how God created Trinity HOPE. As children are often coming to school from homes where the parents are practicing voodoo, the food Trinity HOPE provides initially shares the love of Jesus Christ with them through a nutritious bowl of beans and rice. This satisfies their hunger and opens their ears to the education the teachers are providing. However, as Jesus told Satan when He was being tempted in the wilderness, **“It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”** (Matthew 4:4). Because every school Trinity HOPE feeds is a Christian School, the teachers combine their lessons of reading and math with lessons of forgiveness and redemption from God’s Word.

Although each of the Trinity HOPE Feeding Program Directors (FPDs) have been directed to share Bible stories with the children during their school visits, over the last year, we have been asking ourselves; “How can we do even more?”

Through prayerful guidance, and the help of numerous pastors both here and in Haiti, we have now developed a structured Gospel teaching program where all 35 of our FPDs are dedicating one of their school visits each month to formally sharing God’s word around one specific Biblical topic. In addition, to help prepare our FPDs who are not ordained pastors, our Haitian supervisor, Pastor Willy Dieudonne, records a 5–10-minute sermonette on the topic-of-the-month and sends it to each FPD at the beginning of each month. This allows for continuity and Biblical accuracy in the message that all 280+ schools are hearing each month. The team of pastors that generated these materials developed lessons for 45 different Biblical topics, enough to create a 4-year educational cycle. This school year a few of the 10 topics include lessons on: The Bible, Sin and Salvation, Children in the eyes of Jesus Christ, Prayer, and Eternal life.

Over the course of the 40+ lessons from our FPDs, and in combination with the faith lessons from their classroom teachers, **the children will be far better equipped to grow into the missionaries God has called them to be.** With their bellies full, and their hearts and minds prepared, they will be able to expand God’s Kingdom by going home to their families, friends and communities, sharing the truth of God’s love and redemption with others. We thank God for blessing Trinity HOPE with this Gospel teaching program. **God is good!**

To learn more about what we do, visit is at www.TrinityHOPE.org



Prayer Summary, April 2025

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.

PRAYER CONCERNS

REV. BOB BENKE (Faith Lutheran Church, Hot Springs Village, AR)
REV. RONALD HALAMKA (Waxahachie, TX)
REV. PAUL DONNER (Emeritus, Paducah, KY)
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. TOM MOORE (Emeritus, Cordova, TN)
REV. ALBERT EICHELBERGER (Emeritus, Knoxville, TN)
REV. ROGER STERLE (Living Savior Lutheran Church, Springdale, AR)
REV. DARRELL KOBS (Emeritus, Russellville, AR)
MRS. DONNA LONGMAN (wife of Rev. Eric Longman, Rogers, AR)
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)
MRS. ALICE MAYER (wife of Rev. Richard Mayer, Messiah Lutheran Church, Pea Ridge, AR)
MR. ROBERT NERGER (Former Mid-South District Board of Directors, Wartburg, TN)
MR. SAMUEL FISHBURN (Principal, First Lutheran School, Fort Smith, AR)
MRS. RACHEL PREUS (wife of Mr. Samuel Preus, Director of Development, Lutheran Classical College, Wyoming District)

All those continuing to recover and rebuild from the flooding and damage of Hurricane Helene and Hurricane Milton.

All those affected by the recent tornadoes in NE Tennessee, Arkansas and Mississippi.

Rev. Trae Fistler and Kurt Ludwig, Mid-South District Disaster Relief Coordinators and all teams deployed in recovery efforts.

CALL UPDATE

IN THE CALLING PROCESS – CONGREGATIONS ORDAINED MINISTERS

PENDING: **Rev. David Baumgarn**, Pastor to Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, Onalaska, WI has received a Call to serve as *Pastor to St. John's Lutheran Church and School, Stuttgart, AR*.

DECLINED: **Rev. Brennick Christiansen** (Candidate) Menomonee Falls, WI returned the Call to serve as *Associate Pastor to All Saints Lutheran Church and School, Jonesboro, AR*.

COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

ACCEPTED: **Ms. Sarah Morris**, DCE, serving Crown of Life Lutheran Church, Colleyville, Texas has accepted the Call to serve as *Family Life Minister to Bella Vista Lutheran Church, Bella Vista, AR. Installation planned for May 4, 2025.*

Ms. Claire Hall, Commission Minister (Teacher) to Concordia Christian Academy, Tacoma, WA has accepted the Call to service as *Middle School Math and Science teacher to Belvoir Christian Academy, Chattanooga, TN. Installation date pending.*

Ms. Kelly Moore (Candidate, Midland, TX) has accepted the Call to serve as *Director to Grace Lutheran Early Childhood Center, Little Rock, AR. Installation date pending.*

Mr. Samuel Fishburn, Principal to First Lutheran School, Fort Smith, AR has accepted the Call to serve as *5th Grade Teacher and Vice-Principal, to Immanuel Lutheran School, Brandon, FL.*

VACANT CONGREGATIONS & MINISTRIES

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Bowling Green, KY – Senior Pastor
Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Hermitage, TN – Senior Pastor
Grace Lutheran Church, Little Rock, AR – 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
Christ the King Lutheran School, Memphis, TN – Director of Christian Education; 3rd Grade Teacher; PE/Athletic Director; Art Teacher (Part-time)

Immanuel Lutheran School, Memphis, TN - 5th grade Teacher
1st Lutheran School, Knoxville, TN- Middle School Math; Several part time teaching positions

Grace Lutheran Church, Knoxville, TN – Director of Christian Education



Congregational Mission Commitments

Mission Commitment Receipts as of 3/31/2024 (3 Months)

Anticipated Amount
(25% of budget).....\$407,174
Actual Receipts 392,673
Over (under) anticipated
amount.....(**\$14,501**)

Use of Mission Commitment Receipts (3 Months)

Allocated to Synod for World
Missions \$111,552
Allocated to Tanzania6,250
Retained for District Mission/
Ministry Support (70% of
receipts)..... 274,871
Total Receipts\$392,673

Mission Commitment Receipts Prior Year Comparison (3 Months)

Actual Receipts as
of 3/31/2025\$392,673
Actual Receipts as
of 3/31/2024\$392,364
Over (under) prior
year receipts\$309

Share your news with us!

Encourager Topics in 2025

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 2025

- June — Leadership/District Convention
- July — Veterans
- Aug – Church Planting

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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