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Thursday
6-12-25

NEWS OF THE 22ND REGULAR CONVENTION OF THE MID-SOUTH DISTRICT, LCMS — JUNE 12-14, 2025

Welcome...

Greetings and welcome to the 22nd Regular Convention of the Mid-South District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. The Delegates will gather under the convention theme "CHRIST: The Church's One Foundation," inspired by 1 Corinthians 3:10-11.

Many thanks are extended to our convention delegates as they share their time and consideration to glorify our Lord through their Leadership. May they be blessed by their service of the next three days. While conducting important business will be the focus of the convention, may there also be moments to relax and enjoy the fellowship of friends from throughout the District.

Opening Worship Service

Hosted by Christ the King Lutheran Church & School

5:45-7:15 pm

DINNER in the
school gymnasium
sponsored by LCEF

7:30 pm

WORSHIP SERVICE
Reverend Peter K. Lange,
LCMS First Vice-President

The offering at tonight's worship service will go toward the District's education debt fund to provide financial assistance to Mid-South pastors and commissioned church workers who are burdened with significant educational debt.

Christ the King is located at 5296 Park Avenue Memphis 38119. Bus transportation is available.

[LIVE STREAMING]

Watch
ONLINE

You can invite others to enjoy the Opening Worship Service by directing them to Christ the King Lutheran Church's livestream page at <https://ctkmemphis.com/worship/live-streaming>



WHAT'S INSIDE: Interviews with the Candidates for District President

On Friday morning, delegates to the Mid-South District convention will cast votes for the important position of District President. With six candidates allowing their names to stand for this election, providing opportunities for voting delegates to "get to know" each pastor has been crucial. The May issues of the monthly *Encourager* newsletter and the *Lutheran Witness* district supplement, as well as the convention workbook, have all shared biographies and other statements from the candidates. To offer another opportunity to learn more about the men who have agreed to run for the office of District President, our *Lutheran Witness* supplement editor, Judy Otto, interviewed each of the candidates, framing the discussion around why each candidate has allowed his name to stand and the unique attributes and experiences that may qualify each of them for the position of district president. Those interviews are included as an insert in today's newsletter. We hope you will enjoy and find value in this "closer look" at the candidates.

WE WELCOME OUR SYNODICAL REPRESENTATIVE: First Vice President, Reverend Peter K. Lange



Rev. Peter K. Lange
LCMS First Vice President

The Mid-South District is honored to have Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) First Vice President, Rev. Peter K. Lange, join us in Memphis for our 22nd Regular Convention. Elected to the First Vice President position in 2019 and re-elected in 2023, Lange has served in ministry for over 37 years, most recently as president of the Kansas

District from 2015-2019. A more complete biography in our delegates' convention workbook details Lange's journey from his hometown of Houston, Texas to seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana then to pastoral roles in Missouri and Kansas prior to his current position as a member of the LCMS Praesidium. We look forward to his

preaching at the upcoming opening worship service at Christ the King Lutheran Church, as well as his address to the convention delegation on Friday morning. Following his official report, Lange will participate in a Q&A session with attendees. If there is a topic you would like Synod's perspective on, come ready with your questions Friday morning!

CONVENTION T-SHIRTS!

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Available at Registration and In the Convention Office While Supplies Last

KEEPING ORDER: The Parliamentarian Role

For a gathering as significant as a district convention, order and proper procedures are crucial. To advise the Mid-South District in matters of parliamentary procedure and even interpretation of bylaws, Mr. Ron Stinson joins us as the convention's Parliamentarian. This is Mr. Stinson's second convention with the Mid-South District, and we are pleased to welcome him back! If at any time during the convention you have questions about meeting procedures and order, please see our Parliamentarian.

BoardEffect
a Diligent brand

Robert's Rules of Order
Cheat Sheet

Action	What to Say	Can Interrupt Speaker?	Need a Second?	Can be Debated?	Can be Amended?	Votes Needed?
Introduce motion	"I move that..."	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Second a motion	"I move to second the motion by: if you'll or unless you'll or don't!"	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Move item to committee	"I move that we refer the matter to committee."	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
Rescind item	"I move to rescind the motion just made."	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
End debate	"I move the previous question!"	No	Yes	No	No	Two-thirds
Object to consideration	"Point of order!"	Yes	No	No	No	Majority
Recess the meeting	"I move that we recess until..."	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Adjourn the meeting	"I move to adjourn the meeting!"	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Request information	"Point of information!"	Yes	No	No	No	No vote
Conclude the meeting	"I move to conclude the church's calling!"	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Majority

Each delegate to the 2025 convention has been provided a quick reference page for Robert's Rules of Order.

FUN FACT —

The first edition of Robert's Rules of Order was published in 1876. The "rules" were developed by Colonel Henry Martyn Robert, who developed them after being asked to lead at meeting at his church.



The Mid-South District Invites
Pastors' Wives to
Enjoy Food & Fellowship
at the
Pastors' Wives
LUNCHEON

Friday, JUNE 13 @ NOON
in "Directors 3" Meeting Room

Pastors' Wives will not want to miss this special event!

Who's In the Exhibitor Hall?

Exhibits open in the Tennessee Grand Foyer (just outside the convention hall) at 11:00 a.m. on Thursday and 7:30 a.m. on Friday and Saturday. The Mid-South District is pleased to welcome over twenty exhibitors to the 22nd Regular Convention:

- Alliance Defending Freedom
- Amro Music
- Concordia Historical Institute
- Concordia Plans
- Concordia Publishing House
- Concordia University - Nebraska
- Concordia Seminary - St. Louis
- Concordia Theological Seminary-Fort Wayne
- David's Harp Music
- "Job" the Comfort Dog
- Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF)
- LCMS Foundation
- LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces
- LifeWise Academy
- Luther Classical College
- Lutheran Heritage Foundation
- Lutheran Hour Ministry
- Mid-South District Disaster Relief
- South District LWML
- Stoles Created
- Thrivent Financial
- Trinity Hope



Rev. David Appold

MEET OUR CHAPLAIN OF THE DAY: Rev. David Appold

Today's Chaplain is Rev. David Appold from St. Paul Lutheran Church in Paducah, Kentucky. Pastor Appold has been part of the Mid-South District family of pastors since 2014, when he was called to St. Paul after graduating from Concordia Theological Seminary. He also holds an undergraduate degree in Mathematics from Concordia University - Ann Arbor, where he met his wife, Elizabeth. The two have been wed since 2010 and have six children. We thank Pastor Appold for leading us in prayer and devotions today!

*Thank
You!*



LUTHERAN CHURCH EXTENSION FUND

FINANCIAL SOLUTIONS. **TOGETHER IN FAITH.**

The Mid-South District is grateful to our friends at Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) for their generous contribution of convention bags and USB drives for delegate materials, as well as costs for the opening worship dinner. Be sure to stop by the LCEF display in the exhibit hall to learn about their latest news and offers!

Stay Connected with Convention News

The Mid-South District Convention is live via ZOOM at
mid-southlcms.com/convention-2

[LIVE STREAMING]



Scan the code for
2025 Convention Coverage

Looking Ahead...

In FRIDAY'S Edition —

An interview with Mid-South District
Disaster Relief Co-Coordiators

In SATURDAY'S Edition —

Catching up with our local Comfort
Dog, Job

Meet the Candidates for District President

Interviews by Judy Otto, Editor of the Lutheran Witness Mid-South District Supplement

Guiding, shepherding, mentoring and directing the LCMS Mid-South District is a difficult and demanding job, even with the help of God—as anyone who has ever accepted that position will tell you.

Even receiving and prayerfully considering whether or not to accept a nomination to be a candidate for the District Presidency can be stressful, as we learned from conversations with five candidates as well as the candidate/incumbent.

And while their previously prepared and published bios and statements are again referenced here, there's more to know about each candidate than his official profile; e.g. what he stands for; why he agrees to stand, what he believes is important, and what within himself he feels might make him an appropriate tool for God to use in working His will in our District.

We invited candidates and the incumbent District President to share their thoughts on the office of the District Presidency, their perspective regarding what's most vital to the leadership role, and their insights on how best to address the District's most pressing needs. Here's what we learned:



REV. CURT HOOVER

*Faith Lutheran,
Thompson's Station, TN*

A longtime friend who originally nominated Dr. Paavola for his role as District President, Hoover has supported many of President Paavola's successful plans and

programs and expresses his continued appreciation and admiration:

"He has done so many things very well...but I'm confident that the District can do much better. I think that it's time for change. As long as we can keep the same kind of steadiness and advance it in other ways, I'd make most of the same decisions, excepting a few things that I would do a little differently," Hoover explains.

"I've accepted nomination to help our District to be better by moving our mission dollars and decisions through groups closer to where they would be used, with these groups overseeing the process. We as District could then encourage and help what's group-decided regionally and collegially through local governing units like Circuit Forums and Mission Action Councils.

"There are talented under-utilized and 'not-at-all utilized' people among us who could make huge and wonderful differences when they're recognized, emboldened, and equipped," he believes.

"I've been pushing this for some time: The funds that congregations send to the district don't all need

to go to the district. I think that we could put the mission dollars to better use locally, with local decisions determining where the need is the greatest, rather than applying for a district grant to return needed funds to the district from which they were originally gathered."

His experience from a prior career as well as his nearly 20 years in ministry have provided a strong and varied background and foundation that prepared him for the role and responsibilities of District President, Hoover believes. He points also to a collection of District challenges he has faced alongside President Paavola:

"I've been with him in all the planning and meetings with deacons and Seminary Professors as we developed the specific ministry colloquy. I served as a member of Synod's Regional interview committee under Vice President Herb Mueller and also authored our District's white paper on continuing Lay Ministry training; and then, with President Paavola, negotiated with Synod's college curriculums for that.

"With President Paavola, I've interviewed, evaluated, and encouraged SMP, pre-seminary, and colloquy candidates. I have been on his process team for this purpose throughout his time as District President.

"As President Paavola prepared for the CAR software program development and then a COMPASS process, I've been on ministry teams for 6-8 consultations with congregations."

Hoover and his wife have two children who have both made them grandparents, which encourages him to continue writing music—and even to record (in studio) a Mississippi blues arrangement of a traditional hymn. As District President, he would continue his commitment to being a pastor and friend first and

foremost, and looks forward to prioritizing circuit winks and continuing education gatherings, as well as enjoying “porch sitting” time for deep discussions, brainstorming and encouragement with those in our district.

REV. ERIC LONGMAN

*Holy Trinity Lutheran,
Rogers, AR*

“To me, the role of the District Presidency is a calling,” says Longman. “I don’t feel that’s something that one should ever pursue. So I chose not to pursue it, but to allow my name to stand when nominated; because I don’t want to get in the way of whatever the Holy Spirit might be up to! It’s a humbling honor to be nominated, and I think it’s important to allow my name to be there and ultimately leave the choice up to God through the delegates at the convention.”

From a lay person’s perspective, the calling can seem to be a great mystery: How does one recognize a calling—making yourself available to serve the will of God without actually becoming active in the process?

“Normally,” Longman explains, “the discernment process begins after you receive a call, rather than in anticipation of a call. You take some time after the call has been issued to consider your current call as well as the call that is coming to you—and spend some time in prayer and think about what God might have in mind, and how you can best serve in the kingdom. But this is a case where, once the election happens, the expectation is that you accept that calling right away, so that discernment happens ahead of time.”

“For me, it’s a case of loving where I am and where I’m serving; I have no desire to be anywhere else. But I also don’t know what the Holy Spirit might be planning—and so leaving that door open was probably the wisest choice.”

A second career pastor, Longman previously owned his own company in Atlanta where he offered web hosting and design services and acted as computer programmer, systems administrator, and internet service provider for clients.

“So I do bring administrative skills and financial skills from my previous life that I feel would be beneficial in the District Presidency role.”



He admits that he still dabbles a bit, “serving as ‘the primary IT guy at our congregation. I’ve been able to get some pretty neat computer systems in place to help support the ministry.”

“We’re empty nesters,” he adds, “with both kids out of the house; and my wife is supportive if this is where it takes us. But we love where we’re serving now—our community and congregation are just stellar! I’m trusting God and the process and praying for all the delegates who are involved—and trust that they’re going to be led to do whatever is pleasing to God.”

**REV. DR. ROGER
PAAVOLA**

*Incumbent District
President*

The choice to remain in office as District President would, of course, be the decision of the convention, in accordance with God’s will, he points out, while noting that “There are things that have come to my attention that need to be continued and strengthened—particularly being able to engage all of the members of our congregations to be ambassadors for the faith.”

“We need to have more congregations strengthen their missions and ministries through engaging all the people in outreach ministry; and gaining a strong Lutheran identity and confessional position requires all of us to understand what it is that we as Lutherans believe, particularly down here in the Bible Belt.”

That the Mid-South District is the first district in 35 years to show an increase in the number of congregants in our district, Paavola attributes to “our people working together, being able to be bold in our Confessions and doctrines of the Lutheran Church, and in addition to that, working to bring more church workers into the ministry.”

“This year we had four graduates from the Mid-South District who are now going to be pastors; we have 14 people who are still in church work tracks in our universities and seminaries. It’s necessary for us to find ways to improve the ability of our young people and second career people to consider church work as a means of continuing to provide essential ministerial services to our District’s schools and congregations.”

He notes that although we have the lowest pastoral proportionate vacancy rate in the Synod, it takes a



tremendous amount of work to continue to fill vacancies of our professional church workers.

He identifies church planting as a related continuing priority, part of the need to bring ministries to areas of new population growth like Little Rock, Knoxville, Memphis, and Nashville, reaching these individuals with the message that the strength of doctrine of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is that we are saved by grace through faith, and this is not our work, it is what Christ Jesus has done for us.

While parishioners have been uncomfortable—even afraid to say they are Lutheran, Paavola points to experience that shows a dramatic increase in congregation membership growth when members were simply able to answer the question of ‘what do Lutherans believe’.

“The Each One Reach One approach takes away the angst of what it is that people are afraid of in sharing their faith,” he points out, “and demonstrates that it’s really quite easy for us to share what it is that we believe and confess.”

The most surprising thing Paavola discovered that comes with the presidency is “the question of Lutheran identity—what does it mean to be a confessional Lutheran?

“This is a varying and widely differing kind of understanding as we go from one place to the next,” he reflects. “I think that’s why strengthening our congregations not only in their fiscal and business operations, but also making sure that we have very strongly catechized individuals is important—so that people who are being disenfranchised by other church affiliations, or have never understood the Christian faith, can rely on our members to provide them with a good solid understanding of what it is that we embrace; and we can offer that as a reason for our people to be bold.”

He points out that “across all mainline denominations, there is a decline of young people that continue in the church as adults. So we initiated this project called ‘Generation 2 Generation’, which identified that faith formation in the family as well as in the field is an absolute necessity for us to be able to retain the next generation to become active in our churches.”

The 2018 Generation 2 Generation project was unfortunately disrupted by the Pandemic, as was the Each One Reach One project, he explains. “That’s what happened with church attendance nationwide; it has not yet returned to pre-Pandemic times.

“So we must get ourselves back to the understanding of the need to engage the membership, because

they are indeed the collective body of Christ, to bring the message of life and salvation through the forgiveness of sins that Christ won for us. It’s all about bringing Christ to our world, our communities, and most particularly, inside of our homes.”

REV. LANE REUTER

*Our Savior Lutheran,
Nashville, TN*

“I was nominated by several congregations in our district and I wanted to honor that,” Reuter explains concerning his acceptance of the nomination. “I’m placing it in the Lord’s hands, and His will be done.

“I have ideas that I think will help our district grow in mission and outreach as well as revitalize existing congregations; we need to challenge ourselves more on reaching lost and disconnected people. I also think we have the right doctrines and teachings and foundations—but we don’t always do a good job of putting them into practice, so I think we could improve some of those things.”

Some say that Lutherans seem less willing than other religions to evangelize and share our faith with others. Is that true?

“I have seen that and I think there are a number of reasons for it. I think one of the reasons is that we’re trained as pastors at the seminary to be theologians, to be almost like professors, and that’s great—we need that solid foundation!

“But once we’re there in our parishes and our communities, it takes more than just writing a sermon— it’s basically living one out and encouraging God’s people to be about mission and outreach. We all have gifts from our Lord that we can use to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ crucified and risen. It starts with the pastor—the tone that he brings across to the congregation, what he does about evangelism and outreach in sermons and in Bible class, so it takes that intentionality.

“The pastor needs to model that to the people in the congregation. At Our Savior, we have our version of that; it’s called ‘Living, serving, and giving for the Lord’ —that’s our missional mantra. That basically means that all of us are on mission together. When we were baptized, God also made us missionaries for Him, and that’s not just for the church staff and the pastor, but that’s for the congregation as well.



"We're all living stones built around the chief cornerstone, and that's Christ."

While Reuter believes that no one is ever fully prepared to take on the incredible job of district president, which comes with a lot of expectations, he acknowledges the advantage of his nearly 30 years in the ministry and the experience he has garnered.

"I've served on the board of directors of the Mid South District as secretary and most recently as the first Vice President. As a pastor my track record shows my churches and congregations doing very well, and reaching new people, demonstrating growth and missional impact, with a focus on outreach locally and globally.

"Our church just planted a second campus to intentionally reach unchurched and de-churched people, and it's already averaging close to 100 in attendance. We partner with some 501(c)(3) organizations in the area, as well as just getting to know and build relationships with people in the community by performing acts of kindness and service that leave a footprint.

"Even the name of Lutherans is strange; many people don't know exactly what that means. My belief is that you go into the community to show them what a Lutheran is by helping to feed the hungry, clothe those in need, and just make a positive difference, in the hopes that they see Jesus Christ as the one who loves them and is their Savior."

One key reason that prepares him to serve as District President is his faith, Reuter believes.

"I firmly believe in God's Word and our Lutheran confessions; and those are our greatest strengths, regarding which there will be no compromise on my part. These great strengths will be those unchanging truths that will be our anchor in changing times. But in the end, we confess Jesus, we share Jesus; it's all about Him."

REV. CLAYTON SELLERS

*Faith Lutheran,
Collierville, TN*

"When I saw that I was nominated, my first thought was that somebody sees or considers something about me that was worth nominating, and I took that as a very humbling compliment," Sellers reflects.

Initially, he felt that since the nominating congregation



took the time and trouble to go through the formal nomination process, he'd just see how things would go. But since then, with time to contemplate, he began to consider and question his course: "'Well, AM I qualified? Should I let my name stand?' So I guess there's humility tempered by uncertainty that flows from it!"

Consideration led him to a review of his experiences, and a recognition that during his time as pastor, he's been involved in a number of different aspects of life at the district level.

He cites remembered experiences detailed in his bio: "I've been the LWML zone pastoral counselor; I've been on the seminary interview committee; I was part of the Generation 2 Generation program—a special initiative within the district office; I've been a circuit visitor, I chaired a floor committee at the previous district convention, and I've been tuned in to many of the things that are going on district-wide. The congregation that I serve has one of the largest preschools in the Synod, so that aspect of life within a congregation has been another valuable experience.

"So as I contemplate what's happened within the timespan of my ministry, I've been exposed to and involved in a number of important aspects of service at the district level—even if not every circumstance or situation that might come up in the District President's term of office!"

As parents of a 14-year-old son and 12-year-old daughter, Sellers and his wife are well-established members of the Collierville community, and are pleased that if the privilege of serving as District President should come his way, no uprooting would be necessary, due to the proximity of Collierville to the District Office.

"In fact," says Sellers, "I would hope to maintain a pastoral ministry at Faith, where my family would continue to be members of that congregation."

Another point he stressed was that he does not regard the election as a competition:

"I didn't let my name stand to be in opposition to anybody. If Dr. Paavola is re-elected, or whomever is elected, the Lord be praised! I know everybody; and in some way, shape or form I've met and conversed with all of the candidates, so I'm not running in opposition to anybody.

"We're not all the same—there are distinctions and differences in personalities and attitudes. So I have differences of practice and preference, but I know that I share the same confession with all of the men that are standing and I wish them well."

JOSHUA WILLADSEN

Bethel in Fort Smith, AR & Trinity in Sallisaw, OK

"Being a District President was never a personal aspiration of mine," Willadsen observes, "but I know that we always need good men to fill that position, and since my brothers in the ministry nominated me, I'm willing to let my name stand. I'm always willing to serve in whatever way the Lord and the church would have me serve—so I'm open to it. The Lord's will be done."

With over 20 years' experience as a pastor, all of which have been served in the Mid-South District, Willadsen thinks and acts like a pastor, which would be an advantage to a District President who serves as a pastor to pastors as well as all the congregations in the district, he points out; but admittedly this is not a unique advantage.

"The only unique thing about me is my own experiences in the ministry, and the other brothers who are nominated also have their unique experiences. I suppose my strengths would be that I love talking with people, listening and giving them counsel from God's Word—whether it's people that are already part of the church or part of no church."

The results are evidenced in additions to the Bethel congregation, including a young couple catechized and confirmed before Christmas, followed by her parents, catechized and confirmed at the Easter vigil.

Willadsen and his wife homeschool their daughter, almost 15, through Wittenberg Academy, which offers a classical Lutheran education which he recommends highly; their curriculum begins at the 6th grade level.

If elected as District President, what would his priorities be?

"Things that our district can continue to do as an initiative include encouraging all people to spend time in God's Word, which is essential," he believes. "If we're not in the Word, if we're not being formed by the Word of God, then we have no wisdom; we don't have life in Christ, we can't do anything. Sadly, I think that often, for many and varied reasons, our people and even pastors don't spend nearly enough time in the Word of God, being formed by the Word. As a result, we are then formed instead by the culture; and if we're formed by the culture, of course we become more worldly and think and act like the culture instead of



thinking and acting like God.

"We need to do everything we can to strengthen and encourage congregations and pastors and all people to be in the Word and to be formed by the Word of God in everything. That's what I see as our greatest need. The best way to do this is congregation by congregation and family by family—pastors are the shepherds of their particular congregations."

Does he have additional initiatives in mind?

"Well, when our Lord calls a man to the Office as Pastor, or to a particular congregation, or raises him to be District President, he rarely arrives with all the answers or abilities. But the Lord is faithful and gifts us with the wisdom and the energy to learn and to do what's necessary.

"Certainly I would seek the wisdom of those who have gone before me. I'm very thankful for President Paavola and his service to our district. He's done a tremendous job of getting good and faithful pastors in our congregations and making sure that our district is sound financially. If elected, I would seek to continue in that direction, ensuring that our congregations and pastors are grounded in Christ, grounded in God's Word and our Lutheran Confessions, and putting into practice our doctrine that we confess.

"I'd also want to start more congregations wherever we can, in such a way that the congregation can continue and grow. LCMS National Mission has put together a helpful process for church planting with certain objectives to be accomplished at each stage, crucially involving the laity on the ground at every stage so that it doesn't all fall on a church planting pastor. It's designed so that we can get congregations that will grow to support the mission in their own midst, and as they grow, can combine with others to start more congregations soon.

"Before Dr. Paavola, many church plants were started, but in a year or two were no longer in existence. The challenge with church planting is ensuring that newly planted congregations continue to exist as Lutheran congregations confessing Christ in their communities, and are catechizing their people. Since Dr. Paavola's time, the church planting process in our district has become significantly more organized, and I would aspire to continue and advance that trend."

Read more about the Candidates in the May *Encourager & Lutheran Witness* district supplement. (SCAN ➔)
Hear from the Candidates Friday morning.

