

Encourager

JUNE 2022

Mid-South District LCMS



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

The Beauty of the Gospel

There was a story about two apples in a tree, looking down at the world. One apple said to the other one, "Look at all those people fighting, stealing, rioting, and killing. You know if this keeps up, some day there won't be any one left to run the world except us apples." The second apple looked back at the first apple and asked, "Which apples... the red ones or the green ones." Prejudice versus leadership? Maybe. One of the most beautiful passages in the Bible... is the criticism leveled at Jesus by the Pharisees because He ate with and gathered sinners into His company. The hatred the Pharisees had for Gentiles and tax collectors couldn't see beyond the work they had to do to live and the person God made them.

In Mark's Gospel Jesus chose Matthew for one of His disciples. Matthew's name was Levi - indicative of the family genealogy showing that he came from a line of priests. He worked as a tax collector for the Romans. In order to make ends meet he was accused of supplementing his meager wages by extorting money from the Israelites. The Romans allowed tax collectors to take the extra money the Romans used for the operation of Roman authority.

Imagine how the Jews would have hated Matthew. He was considered a traitor and a thief. But Jesus saw him differently. He called Matthew into service for God's kingdom. Matthew accepted the call to follow Jesus.

At a farewell dinner at his home, he invited his friends to join in the celebration that night - tax collectors, sinner, the despised, the social outcasts, and Matthew's partners... kind of seedy crowd Pharisees would have never had anything to do with.

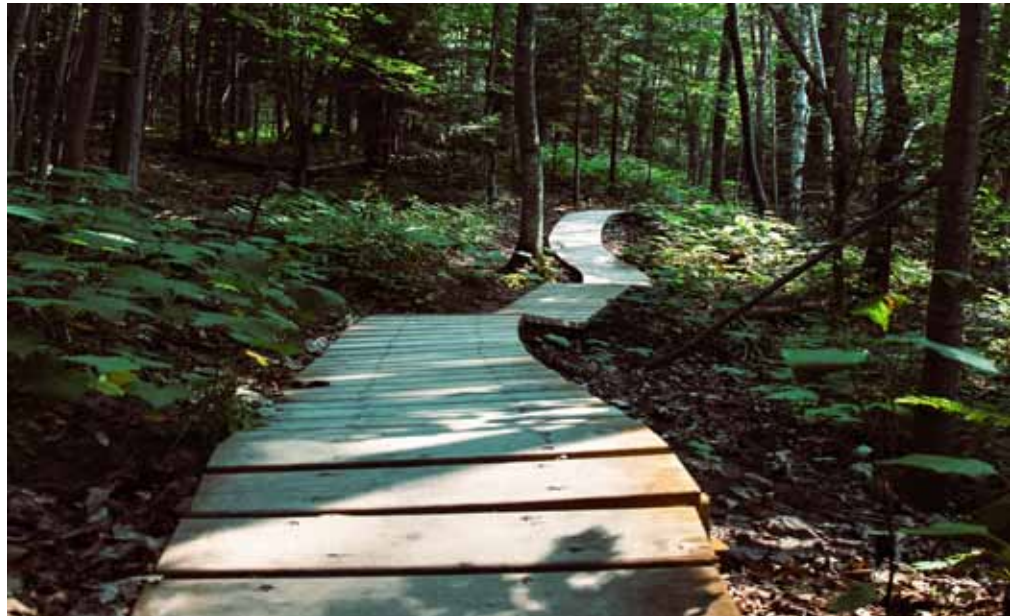
But, right in the middle of the whole mess sat Jesus - not lecturing about their sins, just reclining with the other guests - eating and visiting with them as friends. But that's the way Jesus worked. He called Simon, Andrew, and James out of their father's fishing boats and said He would make them fishers of men. Jesus didn't call men who were educated or perfect. He called disciples who knew risky business and hard work.

Sadly, that's what seems to happen in the Church these days. Some people are afraid or unwilling to go to work in the Kingdom of Christ. Remember the Pharisees were not religiously ignorant. They studied in Scripture, God fearing men - who cared deeply about their beliefs and practices of the Jewish faith. They lived very religious, pious lives. Their focus was on rules and regulations; traditions and prejudices toward people outside God's Old Testament's covenant.

Jesus constantly led His disciples to go outside their comfort zone. He challenged the traditions and status quo. And, why not? As human beings, we need to be pushed outside our comfort zones in order to grow. It would be easier to come to church, to worship in our own way, to visit only our friends or family, spend our time doing the things we think are important and never, ever, ever really accomplish what God wants us to do for the kingdom of God.

The Pharisees asked Jesus, *"How can He eat and be with those who are sinners and tax collectors?"* His answer should be the greatest comfort our ears, *"I came to seek and save the sinners."* That's me! Jesus came to save me and everyone else who has ever sinned. He joined Himself to us who were separated from God by our sin. He came to heal us not to work with the righteous, but to heal the sinners.

So many Christians hear about Jesus every day. They call on Him in times of trouble and even thank



Him sometimes for His blessings. The number one reason people don't get excited about Church and about Jesus is that they can't see any reason to follow Him. They don't know they're sick and dying without Him. Their lives are just fine if they're healthy, wealthy and wise.

The Pharisees were actually in greater need of healing than those they criticized. They were caught up in the intellectual arguments and religious traditions, while they were avoiding Jesus. Sinners realize their emptiness without Jesus and yearn for a way to follow in His footsteps. Jesus took the questions of the Pharisees and made it the most beautiful statement we seek in Holy Scriptures. The Pharisees were self-proclaimed righteous people but needed Christ's healing just as much or more than those obvious sinners.

There's a tremendous comfort in the answer Jesus gave them. He didn't come looking for righteous people by the righteous actions, or by their own inflated idea of

their righteousness. He came for the sick and wounded people - hurting people - people who have no place to turn to - sinners desperate for a way out of their sinful mess. Isn't it wonderful that He came to offer healing, forgiveness, and grace when we are also called to follow Him? Jesus calls us to follow Him and will lead us to the brightness of new life in Him.

There's a story about a speaker at a seminar who once held up a \$10 bill. "Who wants this \$10 bill," he asked the crowd. As hands began to go up, he crumpled it up and asked again, "Who wants this \$10 bill... I'm going to give it away to one of you." More hands went up. "Well, what if I do this," he asked as he dropped the \$10 on the floor, crushed it with his shoe and ground it into the floor. "How many of you still want this \$10 bill?" Not one hand came down. "We've learned a valuable lesson tonight," the man said. "No matter what happened to this money, you still wanted it, because it didn't decrease in

value by what happened to it. It's still worth \$10."

Many times in our lives we may feel as though we've been crumbled, crushed and ground into the dirt. Our decisions and the decisions of others around us bring about circumstances that hurt us and make us sick. We may feel as though we are worthless, but no matter what has happened to us, or what will ever happen, we will never lose value in the eyes of God. To our Almighty Father - dirty, crumpled and stepped on... or sparkling clean, we are still priceless to God.

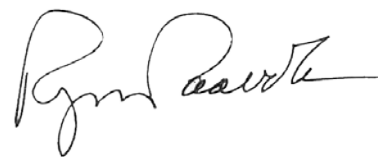
We were created in the image of God witnessed in the Book of Genesis, *"Let us make man in Our image, according to our Likeness.*

And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created Him, male and female He created them." Look at your spouse or your children. Turn to your friends or neighbors at your next chance and see those who are formed in the image of God. Jesus Christ gave us His rich and abundant mercy, that indeed, we are no longer crushed and crumpled sinners, but wonderfully new and alive children of our heavenly Father.

He created you! He died for you! Who are we to isolate ourselves from the privilege and the calling of Jesus to share this Gospel of grace from those who are dying to hear its message of peace and comfort? Who are they - out there

- who challenge our comfort zone, but need the Great Physician for their healing too. Look who is leading: That is the beauty of the Gospel: It is powerful to save despite the sinners who share its message.

Your servant in Christ +
Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola



CANDIDATE AND VICAR PLACEMENTS ANNOUNCED

The Mid-South District is blessed to have received a Candidate and Vicar during April Placement Services. We welcome Pastor-Elect Chase Lefort to serve Faith Lutheran Church in Oak Ridge, Tennessee and Vicar Dakota Monday, who is assigned to Faith Lutheran Church in Tullahoma, Tennessee. Both are from Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne.

The annual Placement worship service for pastoral and deaconess students was held at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne on Wednesday, April 27, 2022.



Pictured (L-R) Chase Lefort, President and Patricia Paavola, and Dakota Monday.

Welcome to the Mid-South District Pastor Jannecke



The Rite of Installation for The Rev. Kory Jannecke at St Matthew Lutheran Church, Conway, AR was held on Sunday, May 15, 2022. Participating in the Installation were (Front L-R) Rev. Kevin Conger, Hope Lutheran, Jacksonville, President Roger Paavola, Rev. Kory Jannecke, Rev. Alan Jannecke, Rev. David

Vandercook, Shepherd of Peace, Maumelle and Trinity, North Little Rock. (Top L-R) Rev. Dr. LeRoy Leach, Peace Lutheran, Conway, Rev. William Zwick, Mid-South District, Rev. Peter Ave-Lallemant, Faith Lutheran Church, Fairfield Bay, Rev. Don Hefta, Emeritus, Hot Springs Village.

APPLICATION DEADLINE JUNE 15

STUDENT FINANCIAL AID

To be considered for the student financial assistance program, you must first inform the Mid-South District Office that you are or will be a student enrolled at a synodical school.

All related forms, including the financial aid application, are available the [District website here](#). Email all forms [Julie Tyler](#)



LIFE REFLECTIONS

In the aftermath of yet another senseless mass shooting (Buffalo, NY) and tragic loss of human life, many voices have attempted to answer the question: "Why?" Most of the answers deal with symptoms and avoid the root cause. Explanations I've heard include -- he is a white supremacist, a racist, and thus has committed a "hate" crime; or, he has a mental illness or is on mind-altering drugs; or he used weapons that, if banned, would not have been used to commit such evil. These are but symptoms of a greater underlying problem.

That problem, to quote *Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn* -- explaining why such calamities befell Russia in the 20th century -- "Men have forgotten God; that's why all this has happened." We can think about what we have forgotten in two ways. First, the 10 Commandments, specifically "You shall not murder" (Exodus 20:13) have not been taught in our government schools for at least 60 years. Martin Luther explains in his Small Catechism: "We should fear and love God so that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body but help and support him in every physical need." Absent the fear and love of God, wickedness will run wild.

The second way we can think about what we have forgotten was beautifully expressed by Pope John Paul II (*The Gospel of Life*, 1995), "By his incarnation the Son of God...reveals to humanity not only the boundless love of God who "so loved the world that he gave his only Son" (Jn. 3:16), but also the incomparable value of every human person." A society that forgets this incomparable value j—from the moment of conception until natural death – will reap the whirlwind of increasing violence and disrespect of human life in ever more alarming actions. Our public servants owe us the truth: that we no longer fear God nor tremble at His Word.

— Pastor Paul Becker
Lutherans for Life Coordinator for the MDS

Grace Lutheran is Hosting Seminary Extension Class

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

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



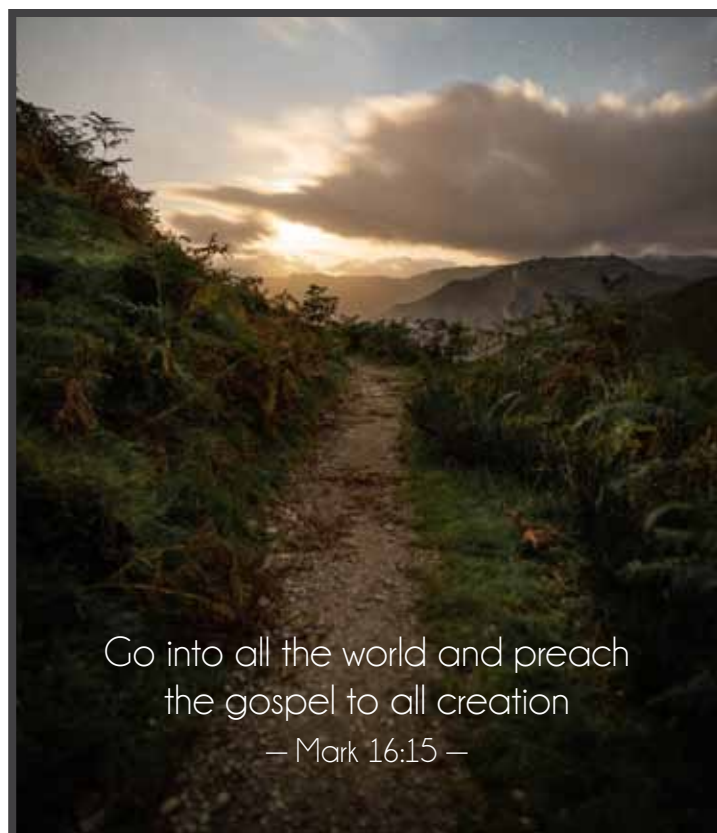
Ascension Lutheran Hosting the Henkel Conference

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

Professional Church Work An Incentive from Concordia St. Paul

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

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



Go into all the world and preach
the gospel to all creation
— Mark 16:15 —

PRAYER SUMMARY, MAY 2022

Following is a list of all the people that have appeared on the Mid-South District website prayer list www.mid-southlcms.com during the month of May 2022.

PRAYER CONCERNS

REV. RON BACIC and family (First, Little Rock, AR)
MRS. SUSANNE ELSEROAD (wife of Rev. Richard Elseroad, Grace Lutheran Church, Knoxville, TN)
KNOX (3-year-old son to the cousin of Sabrina Gunderson, Early Childhood Director, Crossville, TN)
REV. RONALD HALAMKA (Waxahachie, TX)
MRS. ALISON HAWKINS (Mid-South District Office)
MRS. MARY ANN HERD (wife of Rev. Clifford Herd, Hixson, TN)
MR. MARC HIGGINS (Treasurer, Mid-South District Board of Directors) Maumelle, AR
MRS. DONNA MARSHALL (wife of Rev. Stewart Marshall, Trinity, Pine Bluff, AR)
REV. CHAD PHILIPP (Pastor, St. Luke Lutheran & St. Paul Lutheran, DeWitt/Gillett, AR)
REV. GIL PINGEL (Emeritus, Chattanooga, TN)
MR. CHARLES TAYLOR (husband to Pat Taylor, Church Administrator, Our Savior Cabot, AR)
REV. ALAN LUDWIG, (father-in-law to Rev. Derek Roberts, Praise, Maryville, TN) Missionary serving in Siberia.

We lift up in the families and friends of the nineteen young students and two teachers whose lives were lost and all those wounded at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas in the tragedy that took place on May 24th.

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

Our deepest sympathies to Rev. Greg Bearss and family on the passing of his sister, Kim.

Our deepest sympathies to the family and friends of REV. DONLEY HESSE (Emeritus, Mena, AR) who passed away Saturday, May 21st, 2022. Visitation for Rev. Hesse is scheduled for 2:00PM Sunday, May 29th, 2022, at Trinity Lutheran Church, Mena, AR with funeral services to follow at 3:00PM.

CALL UPDATE

ORDAINED MINISTERS

PENDING: **Rev. Chris Waldvogel**, Pastor, Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church, Fargo, ND has been issued a Call to serve as *Pastor to Peace Lutheran Church, Conway, AR*.
ACCEPTED: **Rev. Gerald Heinecke**, Pastor to Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Buffalo, Wyoming, has accepted the Call to serve as *Pastor to the dual parish of Hope Lutheran Church, Batesville & Zion*

Evangelical Lutheran Church, Waldenburg, AR. Installation date planned for June 12th, 2022.

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

Rev. Alan Thoe, Assistant Pastor, Grace Lutheran Church, Murfreesboro, TN has accepted the Call to serve as *Pastor to Grace Lutheran Church, Murfreesboro, TN. Installation was May 1st, 2022.*

Rev. Daniel Ulrich, Associate Pastor, Grace Lutheran Church, Clarksville, TN has accepted the Call to serve as *Pastor to St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Mattoon, IL.*

Pastor-Elect Chase Lefort, Candidate CTSFW 2022, accepted the Call to serve as *Pastor to Faith Lutheran Church, Oak Ridge, TN. Ordination is planned at his home congregation on July 17th, 2022, with an Installation date of August 7th, 2022, at Faith Lutheran Church.*

DECLINED: **Rev. Aaron Unseth**, Candidate, Roseville, MN has returned the Call to serve as Senior Pastor to Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Hermitage, TN.

Rev. Leo Astrowski, Pastor, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Rock Island, IL has returned the Call to serve as Associate Pastor to Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Johnson City, TN.

Rev. Lee Hopf, Assistant Pastor, Trinity Lutheran Church, Spring, TX has been issued a Call to serve as Associate Pastor to Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Rogers, AR.

Rev. Lee Hopf, Assistant Pastor, Trinity Lutheran Church, Spring, TX has been issued a Call to serve as Pastor to Trinity Lutheran Church, Columbia, TN.

COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

ACCEPTED: **Mr. Charles Russell**, Director of Parish Music, Grace Lutheran Church, Little Rock, AR has accepted the Call to serve as Director of Traditional Music to St. Peter Lutheran Church, Macomb, MI.

VACANT CONGREGATIONS & MINISTRIES

First Lutheran Church, Harrison, AR – Pastor
Messiah Lutheran Church, Memphis, TN - Pastor
Peace Lutheran Church, Conway, AR – Pastor **Pending Call
Trinity Lutheran Church, Columbia, TN – Pastor

IN THE CALLING PROCESS-

COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

Christ the King Lutheran School, Memphis, TN – Teachers (Middle School English/Language Arts)
First Lutheran School, Fort Smith, AR – Part-time Early Childhood Assistants
First Lutheran School, Knoxville, TN – Teachers (1st grade teacher; Middle School Math/Science; 4th/5th grade teacher)
Belvoir Christian Academy, Chattanooga, TN - Teacher

CONGREGATIONAL MISSION COMMITMENTS

Mission Commitment Receipts as of 4/30/2022 (4 Months)

Anticipated Amount (33.33% of budget).....\$504,964
Actual Receipts 472,409
Over (under) anticipated amount..... (\$32,555)

Use of Mission Commitment Receipts (4 Months)

Allocated to Synod for World Missions \$133,389
Allocated to Tanzania 8,333
Retained for District Mission/Ministry Support (70% of receipts)..... 330,686
Total Receipts\$472,409

Mission Commitment Receipts Prior Year Comparison (4 Months)

Actual Receipts as of 4/30/2022.....\$472,409
Actual Receipts as of 4/30/2021\$486,531
Over (under) prior year receipts (\$14,122)



Share your news with us!

Encourager

Topics in 2022

We invite you to share your stories with us please email stories by 20th to Rhonda, webmaster@mid-southlcms.com. [Here's a look at the upcoming topics for 2022](#)

- July – Veterans
- August – Stewardship
- September – Church Planting
- October – Celebrating Lutheran Heritage
- November – Thankfulness
- December – Highlights 2022

Lutheran Witness

Supplement

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

Email: LW@mid-southlcms.com

phone: 662-252-1004. Judy will always acknowledge receipt of your submission if it is sent directly to her.

Mid-South District, Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod

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