

# Encourager

JULY 2022

Mid-South District LCMS



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

## SPECTATOR DISEASE!

If you've seen me for a period of time, you might come to the conclusion that I'm not very patient. I'd rather do something myself than to wait for someone else to do it. I multi-task! I can't stand waiting for water to boil, a traffic light to turn green, or paint to dry. Take for example the situation of being a person who played just about every sport offered in high school. Why did I go out for basketball, wrestling, cross country, track, tennis, baseball, hockey and football? Just so I could run right into guys as big as Moose Vasco? Nope! I went out because I enjoyed participating more than I did watching.

Growing up was a great time because I had a chance to play those sports. Golfing wasn't

something I took up until college. Then, the more I got into it, the more I enjoyed it. It's fun to even watch when there's a good tournament, like the Master's or one of the Open's. As I watched the tournaments, each day is filled with glamour and drama. The courses are in perfect shape. The fairways are lush. The trees are trimmed and the greens are as fast as lightning.

Watching Tiger Woods sink a long putt or watching Sergio Garcia smash a spectacular drive gets my adrenalin running. Like most sports, when we watch it, we go out on our own to hit a few shots or go to a putting green to sink a few ourselves. We love spectator sports. We enjoy seeing someone win. We love to cheer

for the home team. It's pretty to watch a spectacular shot or a great goal in soccer or hockey.

But the problem is, as spectators, we don't get the exercise the athletes get who play the games... unless, of course, if you count the exercise of going to the refrigerator for another beverage and snack. What's more, if we're not careful, we can turn our faith life into a spectator sport just as easily. We can find ourselves out of the game and only watching on the sidelines.

There's no place in Scripture that talks about people who are spectators in Christianity. In I Corinthians, Paul says, *"Don't you realize that in the race everyone runs, but only one wins the prize? So run to win."* Paul paints a

picture of a stadium and the running of games that were so popular back in his day. He urged his listeners to picture themselves ALL running a race - stretching out to win the prize. Notice what Paul says. He doesn't say, "Cheer them on to win!" He doesn't say, "Cheer them and encourage the runners." Nor does he say, "Give them enough money so they can build the franchise so that your team wins." No! We are ALL in the race. Each one of us is supposed to run. Each of us is supposed to run so we stretch for the prize - the goal before us.

Paul's background is that of a Jewish leader who persecuted the early Christians. He was the man who held a man's cloak in order to stone St Stephen to death. He hated Christ's followers, until one day he came face to face with Christ on the road to Damascus. Everything changed, including his name. Paul was the most prolific evangelist for the early Christian Church. His congregations dotted the coastal regions around the Mediterranean. God's grace saved a once hateful man who would eventually give his own life for the sake of the Gospel.

But Paul considered himself a well-toned athlete. He understood that his Lord and God was the one who coached and trained him in all things. But he also understood that he had a task to fulfill - a mission (a race if you wish). He knew he had to give all he had because the prize Paul was after wasn't for him. Indeed, the prize Paul raced toward... is you... and me.

The message of salvation by God's grace that we receive by faith is at the foundation of

everything Paul wrote about. His message brought to the Gentile world is for us. When we hear the message of the forgiveness of sins through the vicarious atoning sacrifice of our Savior Jesus Christ, the promise of life everlasting, and the abiding presence of God with us on this earthly journey, we become participants in the race.

We have the same mission as Paul. We're God's ambassadors - witnesses of His grace, mercy and love for all of mankind on the course laid out before us. We're called to share the truth we receive from the proclaimed Word of God when God serves us in worship. We're in the race for our lives. So, when we know the prize set before us (eternal life!), we become runners for God and no longer mere spectators.

One of the biggest thrills we can ever have on this side of eternity is to know that our lives have been a witness to someone who's been drawn to the Christian faith by the Holy Spirit working in and through us. We love seeing someone come to faith and live a life of peace with God. We rejoice. But we're not called to be spectators. We're called to be runners, the most honorable volunteering we could ever imagine so that we may share God's grace with a world gone flabby just watching.

Paul writes to the Corinthians, *"Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law, though I myself am not under the law, so as to win those under the law."* Paul became a servant to all for the sake of the Gospel.

Do we see anyone in our little world who doesn't know Jesus as Savior? Are there neighbors who struggle with the consequences of sin? Everyone in this world fits into one of two categories - saved or lost. My heart breaks and I get this empty sickening feeling in the pit of my belly when I read an obituary about a person who had no connection with a church. What's their eternal existence going to be like?

Paul writes, *"To the weak I became weak to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the Gospel, that I may share its blessings."* Paul found a way to relate to everyone for the sake of the Gospel. He sought a common ground - the Gospel of Christ. God has given us all something we can use to share - the Good News of Jesus Christ with someone else. When we abide in Christ, He brings His power and love through us for the sake of the Gospel. Whether it's our energy, our strengths, our wealth, or the misfortunes that have fallen on us, God's wisdom can use those gifts to strengthen us and lead us to be witnesses of God's divine provision.

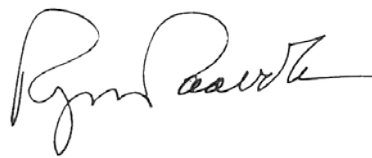
We Americans live a pretty luxurious life. But what would our life be like if our sole purpose in life was to share the message of God's grace with the lost? That's when the trip to Wal-Mart or Lowe's isn't just about making purchases. It's a mission trip! That's when golfing or quilting aren't about stitches or putting but offering a witness to someone about a God who has called, saved and strengthened you. It's an investment in another person's life... eternal life. Paul

writes, "Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it a slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize."

But, where do we find this precious gem of forgiveness and hope of eternal life? You won't find it outside of God's Word and the sacred doctrines preached, taught, and embraced within the church. With the precious Word of God and by the Holy Spirit's calling, gathering, and enlightening, we are brought to faith to apprehend God's grace that comes in overflowing abundance. Would anyone be

willing to trade an opportunity to give witness to the Gospel in exchange for not bothering because we don't want to offend anyone with religious talk? Are we spectators in the stands or runners running the race? The Gospel is too precious. Our friends, neighbors, and relatives' eternal lives are too precious for us to not share Christ with them. What race are we running, anyway?

Your servant in Christ +  
Rev Roger Paavola



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## 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. Information & Registration: [www.ascensionmadison.com/henkel](http://www.ascensionmadison.com/henkel) Both pastors and laity are invited to attend.

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## 50th Anniversary Celebration

**Faith Lutheran Church**, 310 Snead Dr, Fairfield Bay, AR will celebrate its 50th Anniversary **Oct 9th**. Former Pastor Arthur Baisch will be preaching the 11 AM service and a pot luck dinner will follow. Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola will be the speaker at the 2 PM anniversary service. Everyone is welcome to join us on this special day.





The Rite of Installation for the **Rev. Gerald Heinecke** was held on Sunday June 12, 2022 at Hope Lutheran Church in Batesville, AR. He is called as the pastor for **Hope Lutheran and Zion Lutheran Church** in Waldenburg, AR.

Participating in the Rite were (Front L-R) President Roger Paavola, Rev. Gerald Heinecke; Rev. Brad Heinecke, Horsehoe Bend, AR; Rev. Brian Pummel, Cherokee Village. (Top L-R) Rev. David Vandercook, Trinity Lutheran and Shepherd of Peace Lutheran, North Little Rock and Maumelle; Rev. Michael Diener, Grace Lutheran, Holts Summit, MO; Rev. Joshua Leigeber, All Saints Lutheran, Jonesboro; and Rev. Andrew Lehman, All Saints Lutheran.

## Welcome to the Mid-South District



The Rite of Ordination and Installation was held for **Rev. Randall Lewis** on Sunday June 19, 2022 at Grace Lutheran Church, Little Rock. Rev. Lewis has served Community of Faith Lutheran Church in Little Rock for the last 16 years as a deacon and was approved as an SMP Colloquy pastor by the Board of Pastoral Ministry of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod this past Spring. He was also installed as the Pastor and will continue to serve **Community of Faith Lutheran Church** in its new location in Southwest Little Rock.

Participating in the Rite were (Front L-R) Rev. Kent Schaaf, Grace Lutheran, Little Rock; President Roger Paavola; Rev. Randall Lewis; Rev. Dr. Roosevelt Gray, St Louis; and Rev. Kevin Conger, Hope Lutheran Jacksonville. Top (L-R) Rev. Emil Woerner, Friends in Christ Lutheran Church, Bryant; and Rev. Amos Gray, High Impact Ministries, Hot Springs.

## Ordination of Brent Berg held at home church

The partnership of the congregations in the Mid-South District continues to bring professional church workers to the harvest field of the Lord. The Rite of Ordination for Brent Berg was held on Saturday, June 25, 2022 at Faith Lutheran Church, Tullahoma, Tennessee, the home congregation for Pastor Berg. **The Rev. Brent Berg will be placed at Trinity Lutheran Church in Auburn, Nebraska.** However, he, along with several other university and seminary students have been supported in his seminary education by the tuition assistance funds from the Mid-South District. The efforts have shown us that our support of these students in professional church work has supplied much needed pastors,



teachers, principals, DCE's, and other church workers for our District and in ministries across the Synod.

Pastor Berg will be installed at Trinity Lutheran Church in Auburn, NE on July 17.

*Pictured with Pastor Berg (Front L-R) Rev. Brian Nowak, Baldwin, Illinois; President Paavola; Rev. Berg; and Rev. David McMinn, Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, McMinnville, TN; (Back L-R) Rev. Curt Hoover, Faith Lutheran Thompson Station, TN; Rev. Erick Phillips, Concordia Lutheran, Nashville; and Rev. Marty Nutter, Faith Lutheran, Tullahoma.*

## St. Paul Celebrates 175th Anniversary!



St. Paul Lutheran Church in Wartburg, Tennessee celebrates its 175th Anniversary this year and invites all pastors, teachers, and laity to the weekend **homecoming celebration on October 1st and 2nd.**

The Keynote speaker for the Saturday (October 1st) event will

be the Rev. Will Weedon host of the *Word of the Lord Endures Forever* Bible study podcast and former director of worship for the LCMS.

More information such as times will be provided closer to the event. The congregation of St. Paul in Wartburg is the oldest congregation in the Mid-South District and is one of the historic planting congregations for many of our congregations in East Tennessee. This special and rare history will be celebrated with all in the Mid-South as it is part of the District's early history and

mission in the East Tennessee area. The 175th Anniversary logo was designed by Dr. Kristina Phillips, wife of Rev. Dr. Eric Phillips of Concordia Lutheran Church, Nashville.



Keynote speaker for the Saturday (October 1st) event will be the Rev. Will Weedon



# LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

*Uncovering the Shadow World  
of Human Trafficking*

**SAT. JULY 23, 2022  
9 AM - 1 PM**

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## **THE POINT KNOX**

211 W. FIFTH AVENUE / KNOXVILLE, TN

Representatives from  
LOCAL, STATE & NATIONAL Agencies  
will share knowledge on how to

- **IDENTIFY SIGNS**
- **REPORT ACTIVITY**
- **HELP VICTIMS**  
of Human Trafficking

**FREE EVENT • LUNCH PROVIDED**

▶ **REGISTER ONLINE**

This free community event is hosted by the Mid-South District, LCMS.



Visit this event on Facebook to share and invite others.

# DOBBS V. JACKSON

Let us give thanks to God! Friday, June 24, 2022, the United States Supreme Court issued its decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson* which overturned *Roe v. Wade's* Fourteenth Amendment Right to an abortion. June 24 certainly will be a day to remember for the protection of the unborn – maybe supplanting January 22, 1973, as a day of celebration rather than a day of mourning.

However joyous the Supreme Court ruling might be in the moment, the decision did not make abortion illegal throughout the United States. The right is reserved to the states. The reality is that most states still permit abortion on demand until a predefined time rather than conception. Abortion can (and assuredly will) be performed in almost every state. Being illegal in a state does not mean that abortions will end. Recent stories reveal a refusal of prosecutors to respect the law and protect life, funding for abortion pills, and big businesses offering transportation for out of state abortions.

*Dobbs* is not the end of our need to support life.

We need to continue declaring a Biblical view of life given by God and beginning at conception. David reminded us that we are God's creation **"13 For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb."** (Ps. 139:13). Jesus had just been recently conceived when Mary visited Elizabeth. Yet, Elizabeth confesses the presence of her Lord – as a newly conceived child. **"42 and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! 43 And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"** (Luke 1:42-43). The Fifth Commandment means that we preserve and protect the health of others, including the unborn and the mothers bearing them.

We must continue declaring the Biblical view of supporting adults and children in need through life-affirming causes like crisis pregnancy centers. These organizations know how much Christ loves these mothers in their times of emotional and financial need. The Mid-South District (and the wider LCMS)



encourages churches, pastors, and individuals to provide financial and volunteer support crisis pregnancy centers, adoption agencies, and other worthy causes that preserve life. **The Mid-South District would like to take this opportunity to remind our churches and pastors of the Life Ministry Million Dollar Life Match grant through the LCMS which will match up to \$50,000 raised by churches for life-affirming causes. More details can be found through the LCMS, here: <https://www.lcms.org/serve/grants/life-grant>**

The Mid-South District remains encouraged by the *Dobbs* decision, but the decision must be kept in perspective. The District continues looking for ways in which we can further support life-affirming programs and practices in our communities.

Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola  
President of the Mid-South District

# LCMS responds to SCOTUS decision on 'Dobbs v. Jackson'

THE LCMS

JUNE 24, 2022

On June 24, 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a ruling on *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*. The court overturned *Roe v. Wade* by asserting that the Constitution does not confer a right to abortion and returned the issue to the states.

The people of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) have always advocated for the value of human life, which is made in the image of God. Thus, the church rejoices in this ruling while also praying for those who are hurting and afraid.

For more information on the Synod's response, read:

- A statement from LCMS President Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison (below and page 9);
- A statement from LCMS Life Ministry (pages 9-12); and
- A joint letter to U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland from Harrison and the presidents of the WELS and ELS (pages 12-13) regarding increased violence against churches, pregnancy resource centers and pro-life organizations.

Also, LCMS Worship provides prayer petitions for congregations to use following the ruling (page 13).

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## LCMS President Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison addresses SCOTUS decision

"This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it" (Psalm 118:24).

Today is a monumental day, a day on which we simultaneously rejoice, pray, give thanks, lament, repent and weep. The Supreme Court reversed *Roe v. Wade* and returned the responsibility for protecting life to the states. "*Held: The Constitution does not confer a right to abortion; Roe and Casey are overruled; and the authority to regulate abortion is returned to the people and their elected representatives*" (SCOTUS, *Dobbs v. Jackson*, 1).

"[The Lord] has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate" (Luke 1:52).

Today is also the Church's feast day, the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ. These two events are a happy convergence.

Today we celebrate the birth of the one who, before he was born, leaped in joyful Spirit-inspired confession when his mother met the mother of his unborn Lord. Today we take comfort in our Lord's unborn forerunner and in the unborn Savior. We also rejoice at the resounding victory for life in the United States. Many of us long doubted it would ever come. The Lord has had mercy upon us, even us, sinners all, even in these times.

Today we continue to speak out against the evil of abortion, which many will continue to practice and advocate in states bent on death. Many who have been misled by the father of lies and the culture of death greet this day with weeping and gnashing of teeth. Today we continue to sing that the Lord "has visited and redeemed his people" (Luke 1:68).

Today we pray for unborn children who remain unprotected in many states. Today, in many places,



the abortion industry continues to kill unborn children and welcomes those from states where such killing is illegal. Today we take comfort that by the Lord's hand "we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us" (Luke 1:71).

Today we repent of our own lack of love for the least, the last and the lost, for mothers in need and families facing crises. Today we celebrate God's gift of the one He sent to "go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins" (Luke 1:76–77).

Today we recommit to love all, unborn and born. Today we receive the sunrise from on high, "to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death" (Luke 1:79).

Today we proclaim: Repent and believe the Good News that Jesus Christ, conceived by the Spirit, formed in the womb and born of the virgin Mary, died and rose for sinners. That includes all of us. Today we give thanks for John who preached repentance and pointed to the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29).

Today we lovingly invite all to listen to Jesus' call, "repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). If you have caused an abortion, the taking of life, there is forgiveness in Jesus! Don't be hardened in sin or advocate for more sins. Today you have hope in the One whose way John the Baptist prepared. Jesus is for sinners. Come join the rest of us forgiven sinners! Jesus is for you! You need not have a bad conscience! Repent and believe the Good News of God's love for you in Jesus.

Today we lament that the U.S. Supreme Court continues to deny the unborn the legally recognized right to life. Even though Roe v. Wade has fallen, states can still allow the killing of unborn children. Today we pray that more unborn will leap for joy in the womb, as St. John did.

Today, even as we rejoice, we weep that U.S. policy continues to promote abortion globally. Today we bend our knees in prayer.



O Lord, "let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:24). The Lord preceded His Son, our Savior, with a forerunner. We pray that today's decision points ahead to the day when every state advances the cause of life and expands protections for unborn children.

Lord have mercy upon us.

Matthew C. Harrison

President

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

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## **A statement from LCMS Life Ministry**

Life Ministry of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) applauds the action of the U.S. Supreme Court to correct the egregious and mortal error codified in Roe v. Wade. We now encourage each state government to follow suit by passing and administering laws that protect human life. The people of the LCMS will continue to pray for the government and all in authority, that we might all live peaceful and quiet lives (1 Tim. 2:1–2).

We rejoice that the truth of God's desire for His creation was reflected in the court's consideration and decision issued in Dobbs v. Jackson. God's Word and natural law together teach that life is precious and death is the enemy of all living things. Killing violates our being as humans and cannot be sought as a solution or option for individuals. The lie

of abortion has caused immeasurable harm to our society and reinforced a utilitarian view of life at the expense of our children. God sent His Son, Jesus, to be born as a human. His baptism, perfect life, death and resurrection on behalf of every sinner gives eternal life to all who believe and drives Christians to love and treasure our neighbor with the same love from the heavenly Father.

This latest SCOTUS decision encourages each person to reconsider the importance of every life, and to see each person as a blessing from God. The issue of life has never been primarily focused on laws, and thus changed laws do not mitigate the need to remind everyone of the inherent value of life. Being pro-life does not begin or end with politics. Life's origin and definition remain in God. The value of life cannot and should not ever form the content of debate. Every living creature knows the value of their life and that of their offspring.

Laws to curb evil can only do so much. While we rejoice in this latest move away from federal abortion rights, the law does not outlaw the killing of the unborn, but leaves the choice to each state. The effort to encourage our government (now at the state level) to govern according to reason and natural law must continue. States that have already decided to protect the unborn should be encouraged by their citizens to stand firm. People who live in states where the killing of the unborn is advocated as a right need to be vigilant and steadfast in expressing the fact that the government is to protect the innocent and punish the evil. The protection of the unborn is one of the most important roles of the government. Children's lives are not a matter of choice or individual rights.

No court decision or government mandate establishes individual morality. Laws cannot change people's hearts and minds. Instead, each person must learn from God's Word the true importance of life in His creation. Sadly, most people in our world care neither for God nor the truth of His Word. No government action or decision will change that.

Killing children is wrong. This basic and fundamental truth should not require a law or a statement from

the government. Laws exist to guide society to protect the innocent and punish the wrongdoer. Laws against killing should not be necessary. The abortion debates and contentions in our country have revealed the depravity of a people who explicitly chose their own rights over the lives of their children. Adults must care for children, not kill them. It is time to repent of the evils of abortion and for our sins of self-centered godless living.

The people of God must continue to believe and confess the truth of Holy Scripture, reflecting God's gift of life and His priorities to protect and engender life. We are to not kill, but instead to support life. Though many may argue that everyone has the basic right to decide for themselves concerning their own body, this selfish and shallow view of humanity fails to take seriously our basic role in caring for others.

The first story in the Scriptures after humanity fell into sin involves a person killing another to improve their own situation. Cain killed Abel because Abel was Cain's problem. When God confronted Cain with his sin, Cain's response was telling. "Am I my brother's keeper?" And the rest of Scripture screams "Yes." Each person is placed in community and is called to serve others in all things. Other humans are not an avenue through which we seek gain for ourselves. Humans are not obstacles for what we want. God's love in Christ drives us to love and care for all people as God does. That love is sacrificial and gracious.

The sacrificial and gracious love of God is poured out through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. All who trust in Jesus Christ and repent of their sins receive full and free forgiveness (1 John 1:8-9) and the promise of eternal life (John 3:16).

The church seeks not the kingdom or rule of this world. The church rejoices in the gracious and eternal reign of Jesus, who conquered sin, death and the power of the devil. The church rejoices in the eternal kingdom of God in Jesus Christ, delivered in forgiveness of sins and justification of sinners by God's grace. This kingdom exists and comes through God's holy Word and Sacraments. All is in Christ and

all is because of Jesus. Just as the church is His body and He is the church's head, so the church learns from Him to be as she is to be. Even as Christians see in faith, so Christians also learn to view all things in and through the work of Jesus Christ.

The church, however, exists and remains in this world, the blessed provision of the loving Creator. Until our Lord Jesus' return, the church lives in this world, obeys the authorities God has established and loves those God has placed around us. The church bears witness of the Creator and His great love for His creation, especially His love for each human, in whom remains the echo of Adam and Eve, our first parents, created in the image of God.

"In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). Jesus is the source and example of the love His church is called to have for each person. Even as the whole law is fulfilled and summarized in love, so also the Gospel revolves around love. And love, in both cases, is found in Jesus. The Law is fulfilled and the Gospel composed through Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. Thus, there is love and there is the understanding of how God would have us live.

The Creator redeems His creation, and thus teaches His creation how to live and how to love. The incarnation of Jesus reflects the Creator's love for His creation and sanctifies every Christian life. As the incarnate Son of God is the image of God, so God created humans in His image. And in Christ all humanity reaches its climax and height. The death of Jesus is the goal of history and the defining event of all time. His resurrection stands as the Father's final Word to exalt Jesus as Lord and Christ. Now, all creation is marked by the gracious attitude of God toward the creation on behalf of Jesus. Even those who do not believe, those who are not adopted sons of God, still receive God's gracious favor. The rain falls on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Now, all creation is to reflect its Creator. And even the kingdoms of this world, the societies and nations, are called to emulate their Creator, the unknown and hidden God seen in the creation and known by the



law written on every human heart. The church does not expect the government to seek the kingdom of Christ, but to protect the innocent and to curb the evil present in society. Though the law is not our hope, it is within proper law that God's will is seen and lived.

We trust in Jesus Christ as we walk by faith and not by sight. As we thus walk in His light, we walk with many who are in darkness. Death, which is sin's wages, has been defeated. Jesus Christ is risen from the dead and lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true, and this instructs and informs our lives in this world. We join with God, and we seek life.

The people of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod have always supported life and the surrounding issues beyond mere words and statements. We take seriously our Lord's command to love our neighbor. To that end, and in reflection of God's love for us, the congregations and people of the LCMS have always worked with those affected by needs at the beginning of life, the end of life and all of life in between. Most of this work happens in private conversations and Christians serving quietly without notice from others. We also organize our congregations and other organizations to serve in their communities officially and locally.

We recently inaugurated the 1 John 3 Million Dollar Life Match grant program to encourage and enable the congregations of the LCMS to serve their communities specifically in the arena of life issues. The LCMS will grant matching funds totaling \$1 million to LCMS congregations who serve their communities through pregnancy centers, diaper



drives, supporting families, adoption services and other ways the church can support those precious lives in our communities. This grant initiative is based on 1 John 3:16–18: “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.”

All of this reflects the central reality of our life — “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Christ laid down His life for us. We love in deed and truth.

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## **Joint letter from LCMS President Harrison and Presidents of WELS and ELS to U.S. Attorney General**

June 24, 2022

Attorney General Merrick Garland  
Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Kristen  
Clarke  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Ave. NW  
Washington, D.C. 20530-0001

Dear Attorney General Garland and Assistant  
Attorney General Clarke:

As presidents of three Lutheran Christian church bodies that vigorously support the rule of law, justice and legal protection for all people—especially the least, the weakest, the unborn—we are writing about the increased violence that has occurred following the leaked draft of the Supreme Court opinion concerning *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*. These acts of violence against churches, pro-life organizations and pregnancy

centers are clearly terrorist attacks: they use violence designed to intimidate in order to achieve political ends.

Such attacks are sadly well documented: Pro-life organizations in Wisconsin and Oregon were attacked. A pregnancy care center in New York was also attacked. Vandals defaced 17 churches or pro-life organizations with pro-abortion or anti-religious slogans, including the phrase “abort the church.” These terrorist attacks aim to intimidate through the slogan “If abortions aren’t safe, then neither are you.”

One extremist group is advocating violence in response to the final Supreme Court decision on *Dobbs*, while another group published the home addresses of the Supreme Court Justices and encouraged people to show up at their homes, churches, and their children’s schools in an attempt to coerce the Justices and influence their final decision. A couple of weeks ago, there was an alleged attempted assassination of a sitting Supreme Court Justice at his home.

These continued terrorist assaults on religious and pro-life groups, because of their beliefs, are manifest crimes against citizens of the United States. These attacks call for a prompt, comprehensive, governmental response. Please publicly condemn these unlawful attacks, investigate them, fully prosecute those responsible, commit to providing security for the victims and other community service organizations, and employ vigorous efforts to prevent similar future attacks.

We continue to pray for you and all those whom God has placed in authority over us. May God bless you in your tasks and guide you to govern according to His will.

Sincerely,

Rev. Glenn R. Obenberger  
President of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod  
Mankato, Minn.

Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison  
President of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod  
St. Louis, Mo.

Rev. Mark G. Schroeder  
President of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran  
Synod  
Waukesha, Wis.



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## Prayer

Prayer:

Gracious Father, we solemnly thank and praise You for the judgment of the court this day in reversing decisions that have given open sanction to the destruction of human life. Curb wickedness in every heart and place. For the sake of Christ, spare us those punishments that we have deserved. Restore compassion and the desire for life among all, and lead Your Church to show Your love to the vulnerable, to the despised and to those whose hearts have turned cold. Your Son has taken up our fragile flesh to free us from the bonds of sin by His death. Draw every heart to Yourself, Holy Father, that believing in Christ Jesus, we would not perish but have everlasting life; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Responsive Form:

Gracious Father, we solemnly thank and praise You for the judgment of the court this week in reversing decisions that have given open sanction to the destruction of human life. Curb wickedness in every heart and place. For the sake of Christ, spare us those punishments that we have deserved. Restore compassion and the desire for life among all, and lead Your Church to show Your love to the vulnerable, to the despised and to those whose hearts have turned cold.

Your Son has taken up our fragile flesh to free us from the bonds of sin by His death. Draw every heart to Yourself, Holy Father, that believing in Christ Jesus, we would not perish but have everlasting life. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Ektene Form:

For the judgment of the court this week in reversing decisions that have given open sanction to the destruction of human life, let us give thanks to the Lord; and that by it, wickedness may be curbed in every place and heart, let us pray to the Lord: Lord, have mercy.

That God would spare us those punishments that we have deserved, let us pray to the Lord: Lord, have mercy.

For the citizens of our nation, that compassion and the desire for life may be restored among us, let us pray to the Lord: Lord, have mercy.

For Your Church and her members, that we would show Your love to the vulnerable, to the despised and to those whose hearts have turned cold, let us pray to the Lord: Lord, have mercy.

For the world, that the Father would draw every heart to believe in Jesus Christ, who has taken up our fragile flesh and died to free us from the bonds of sin, let us pray to the Lord: Lord, have mercy.

For the world, that the Father would draw every heart to believe in Jesus Christ, who has taken up our fragile flesh and died to free us from the bonds of sin, let us pray to the Lord: Lord, have mercy.



## Congratulations to Recipients of LCEF's Take Heart Scholarship!

The Take Heart Scholarship was developed for Lutheran Church Extension Fund's (LCEF) Y.I. Club members who are high school seniors and will soon advance to the next level of higher education. The application period opened in March and closed in early May, with students from across the U.S. taking part by submitting essays in response to the following question: "Think of the relationships that will be created as you enter this new chapter. How do you plan to show your love for your neighbor through each of these specifically? Think about the following: professors, classmates, roommate, etc."



Congratulations to the following students on their outstanding submissions and selection as 2022 Take Heart Scholarship recipients:

- \$3,000 Award - Nora Schell Podoll of Tuckahoe, NY
- \$1,000 Award - Ella Hildebrand of Fort Wayne, IN
- \$500 Award - Laura Karamitis of Claremore, OK

You're invited to read the recipients' essays at [lcef.org/scholarship/](https://lcef.org/scholarship/). You can also learn about LCEF's Y.I. Club at [lcef.org/young-investors-club/](https://lcef.org/young-investors-club/).

## TRINITY HOPE RECOGNIZED

Since 1999, Trinity HOPE has had one goal: Feed children in Haitian, Christian schools a noon meal each school day so that their tummies are full and their ears are open to hear the Good News of the Gospel. In the last 23 years we have strived to be careful stewards of every dollar God provides so that the maximum number of students in the schools of all Lutheran Churches and other Christian Churches in Haiti have a meal each day. Because of our efforts to be transparent, accountable, and fiscally responsible, Trinity HOPE has received the highest possible rating from the top Charity rating sites in the U.S. We currently feed about 52,000 meals per day, but right now, there are over 20,000 hungry

Trinity HOPE has received the highest ratings possible from the nations most trusted non-profit evaluation organizations because we are:

- Transparent
- Fiscally Responsible
- Highly Accountable

97% of every dollar donated goes directly to the Haitian feeding program.

souls on our waiting list looking for hope. To help learn more about this ministry, or to make a donation, visit us at [www.trinityhope.org](https://www.trinityhope.org). Follow our Facebook Page [www.facebook.com/trinityhopehaiti](https://www.facebook.com/trinityhopehaiti).



## TWO LLL DISTRICT MERGE

The Tennessee District Board of the Lutheran Laymen League (LLL) unanimously voted on April 29th, 2022 to merge with the Mid-South LLL District. On April 30, 2022 the Tennessee District LLL held their Annual Conference at St Paul Lutheran Church in Paducah, Kentucky where this merger was formally announced. This merger will help strengthen these two LLL Districts and allow us to work with all the congregations within these two districts. Please pray for the success of this merger and the growth of all LLL Districts.

Rev Dr. Michael Zeigler from Lutheran Hour Ministries was our keynote speaker in Paducah. Pastor Zeigler explained how we as Christians are a family and how as a family we were brought in to the Church and how we should spread the Gospel within our neighborhoods. Pastor Zeigler reminded us that Lutheran Hour Ministries has many resources to help congregations, families and individuals to start a "Spiritual Conversation". Such resources are the new "Better Together Kit" with the "Hopeful Neighborhood Book". These resources explain what happens when Christians pursue witnessing to

others. Pastor Zeigler shared several success stories regarding the use of these tools. Pastor Zeigler also provided the message in both services on Sunday.

LWML District President Candy Habich was in attendance in Paducah. She shared many of the projects in which LWML members were and still are involved. Rev William F. Zwick Executive Director for Missions and Ministry for the Mid-South District of the LCMS also presented information from the Office of the LCMS Mid-South. He told us how they are planning on helping churches grow in their outreach. Jan Simko, the new Mid-South District Disaster Response Coordinator also spoke. Jan was and continues to be a great asset in helping people in our area who suffered through the devastating tornadoes which tore through Northwest Tennessee and Western Kentucky on Dec 10, 2021. Her stories were heart-breaking, but yet very heartwarming because of the Christian Witnessing they provided.

— Ray Musgrave Tennessee LLL District President.



Jan Simko the new Mid-South District Disaster Response Coordinator; Rev Dr. Michael Zeigler Speaker of the Lutheran Hour; Rev William F. Zwick Executive Director for Missions and Ministry for the Mid-South District of the LCMS



Rev Dr. Michael Zeigler Speaker of the Lutheran Hour talking about the Hopeful Neighbor



Conference group assembling over 90 School kits for the CARE-VAN project for Lutheran World Relief

# CONGREGATIONAL MISSION COMMITMENTS

## Mission Commitment Receipts as of 5/31/2022 (5 Months)

Anticipated Amount (41.67% of budget)..... \$631,204  
Actual Receipts ..... 610,995  
Over (under) anticipated amount..... (\$20,209)

## Use of Mission Commitment Receipts (5 Months)

Allocated to Synod for World Missions.....\$172,882  
Allocated to Tanzania ..... 10,417  
Retained for District Mission/Ministry Support (70% of receipts)..... 427,697  
Total Receipts .....\$610,995

## Mission Commitment Receipts Prior Year Comparison (5 Months)

Actual Receipts as of 5/31/2022 .....\$610,995  
Actual Receipts as of 5/31/2021 .....\$612,119  
Over (under) prior year receipts .....(\$1,124)



## 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](mailto:webmaster@mid-southlcms.com). [Here's a look at the upcoming topics for 2022](#)

- 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](mailto: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

### Staff

**Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola,**  
*President*

**Rev. William Zwick,**  
*Executive Director of Mission & Ministry & Executive Director for Schools and Early Childhood*

**Angela Fowler,**  
*Executive Director for Business & Finance*

**Paul Reaves,**  
*Executive Director for Development & LCEF Vice President*

**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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### Stay Connected With Us

ON THE WEB -  
"mid-southlcms.org"

ON FACEBOOK -  
"Mid-South-LCMS"

ON TWITTER -  
"@midsouthLCMS"

# PRAYER SUMMARY, JUNE 2022

Following is a list of all the people that have appeared on the Mid-South District website prayer list [www.mid-southlcms.com](http://www.mid-southlcms.com) during the month of June 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)  
**REV. RONALD HALAMKA** (Waxahachie, TX)  
**MRS. ALISON HAWKINS** (Mid-South District Office)  
**MRS. MARY ANN HERD** (wife of Rev. Clifford Herd, Hixson, TN)  
**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 the family and friends of Ms. Jean Legge** (4th grade teacher, Christ the King Lutheran School, Memphis, TN) who recently passed away.

## CALL UPDATE

### ORDAINED MINISTERS

**PENDING:** **Pastor-Elect Chase Lefort**, Candidate CTSFW 2022, has been issued a Call to serve as Pastor to Faith Lutheran Church, Oak Ridge, TN. (Official Call acceptance is expected soon).

**ACCEPTED:** **Rev. Gerald Heinecke**, Pastor to Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Buffalo, Wyoming, accepted the Call to serve as Pastor to the dual parish of Hope Lutheran Church, Batesville & Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, Waldenburg, AR. Installation took place June 12th, 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 Randall Lewis** accepted the Call to serve as Pastor to Community of Faith Lutheran Church. Ordination and Installation took place on June 19th, 2022.

**DECLINED:** **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 returned the Call to serve as Associate Pastor to Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Rogers, AR.

**Rev. Lee Hopf**, Assistant Pastor, Trinity Lutheran Church, Spring, TX has returned the Call to serve as Pastor to Trinity Lutheran Church, Columbia, TN.

**Rev. Chris Waldvogel**, Pastor, Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church, Fargo, ND has returned the Call to serve as Pastor to Peace Lutheran Church, Conway, AR.

## 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.  
**Mr. Benjamin Kuefner**, Graduate of Concordia, Seward has accepted the Call to serve as a Middle School teacher and Athletic Director to Christ the King Lutheran School, Memphis, TN. Commissioning, and Installation is planned for July 31st, 2022.

**Ms. Gracie Griffin**, Graduate of Concordia, Seward has accepted the Call to serve as a PreK-4 teacher at Christ the King Lutheran Early Childhood Center, Memphis, TN. Commissioning, and Installation is planned for July 31st, 2022.

## VACANT CONGREGATIONS & MINISTRIES

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

## IN THE CALLING PROCESS- COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

**Christ the King Lutheran School, Memphis, TN – Teachers** (1st Grade; 5th Grade & Middle School)  
**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**