

# Encourager

JULY 2023

Mid-South District LCMS



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

One of the most prestigious events of the Olympics is the Marathon - 26 miles 385 yards of one of the most severe tests of human endurance. In the 1968 Summer Olympics in Mexico City, John Stephenson Akhwari of Tanzania started with all the other runners but was hurt badly when he fell. He continued to race but was left far behind the field. At the finish line, 10,000 spectators filled the Olympic stadium, cheering the winners of the race. One by one, the field crossed the finish line to the sounds of the dwindling cheers.

For most of the runners and all of the spectators, the race was essentially over. Thousands of spectators left the stadium. Yet several stayed waiting for one last runner. One lone

runner, John Stephenson Skhawari entered the stadium. At first with disbelief, the crowd watched this man, with wobbly knees, bloodied legs and arms, stumbling for the finish line. He looked like he had been in a street fight, not a marathon race. The small crowd, realizing who he was and what he was doing, began to cheer. The closer he came to the finish line, the louder the crowd became, cheering, saluting this daring young man's determination.

After the race, Akhwari was asked, what kept you going? Why didn't you quit?" Akhwari said, "My country did not send me to Mexico City to start a race, but to finish a race." And that's where we want to begin. What keeps us going when by every other standard in the

world, we should just give up and quit?

St Paul writes, *"Take up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish the flaming arrows of the evil one."* Understand the illustration Paul is describing. The shield, known to the Ephesians was an essential part of the Roman soldiers armor. Picture a piece of wood 30 inches wide and 48 inches tall, glued together, wrapped with heavy sack cloth, and then covered with a heavy layer of thick leather. Now cover the edges with solid iron and you have a Roman shield.

Romans used shields like this, linked together to form a solid wall when they went into battle. The men holding their shields became a solid wall, moving across a battlefield, carried by

strong, formidable soldiers. They could turn in any direction keeping each soldier safe behind its protective cover.

The other illustration Paul uses is “flaming arrows.” The Ephesians knew how Roman soldiers were attacked by their enemies who wrapped their arrows in cloth and tar and set their first arrows on fire toward that moving shielding wall. If a soldier was hit by one of the flaming arrows, the burning tar penetrated his body and continued to burn. So, now Paul is telling us to take up the shield of faith and Satan’s flaming arrows will harm us.

Satan is our relentless enemy. He never gives up. He keeps shooting flaming arrows, dipped in the tarry murk of sin, and enkindled with the fires of hell, as he seeks to inflame the hearts of mankind against the will of God. Satan resolved to attack mankind by craftily attacking our relationship with God.

Remember how Satan attacked Adam? God told Adam not to eat from the tree of knowing good and evil. Fine. Satan didn’t tell Adam and Eve to rebel against God. Instead he asked Eve, “Has God really said you shall not eat from any tree in the garden?” It’s the same question we’re asking still today. Doubts and fears, anxieties and blasphemies flow counter to the stream of faith

We seek in God. “How can you believe this?”, we’re asked by skeptics. “Why is all this bad stuff happening to good people?! Does God really care?” We’re attacked daily by similar thoughts, “Isn’t Christianity just a bunch of wishful thinking.” So, with the silence and swiftness of flaming arrows, Satan uses doubt to attack our faith in the faithfulness of God.

Yet, evil thoughts, hatred, envy and complacency fill our responses to lives that are less than ideally Christian. Greed, pride, vanity, and lust thump against the wall of our faith, tempting us to doubt and fear. We face the same temptations - cheating, lying and conniving because we don’t want people to know the difference between good and evil in our own lives.

“You’ve got mail,” often means Satan has found just another way to say, “You’ve got something filthy waiting for you... what’s the harm?” We’re left wondering, “What kind of Christian am I that I

can’t seem to have victory over all this?” Because we struggle with sin and temptations, (and all too often) we fail because we cannot repress our own thoughts or feelings. Doubt leads to fear; and fear leads to depression and confusion.

Beneath all this emotional storm that builds up inside us, then, suddenly erupts words and actions that we, ourselves don’t understand. The emotional strain becomes overwhelming. We become angry, defensive and depressed to keep everything inside. Yet we can’t understand what it exactly is that is causing all this. These are called “flaming arrows.” Satan’s best weapon is doubt. It’s not a lack of faith. We need to understand that we struggle with these things because Satan doesn’t NEED to attack those who have fallen into his fiery trap.

Faith isn’t what we believe. It’s, rather in whom we believe. In other words, be steadfast in faith! Remain in the strength of your God-given faith which is in the faithfulness of our gracious God. Notice how Paul repeats the idea to put on the gifts of God: “*Put on the armor of faith, put on the belt of truth, put on the breastplate of righteousness, put on the shoes of the Gospel of peace.*” All of these are given freely by God, because of our faith in Jesus Christ, and what He is to us. Jesus is truth. He is our righteousness. He is our Gospel of peace.

Remember the Tournament of Roses Parade on New Years Day last January. How many of us remember one Rose Bowl Parade on the year when one of the floats - completely covered in elaborate floral arrangements came to a standstill. The float had run out of gas. Everything was held up until someone could find gasoline to get it started again. It had happened before. But this year the dubious honor of running out of gas belonged to the Standard Oil Company’s float.

“*Submit yourself to God,*” writes the Apostle James. “*Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*” When we have put on Christ over our own weaknesses Satan has no power over us; no authority in our lives. We don’t have to buy what he’s saying. Rather than allow him to lead us away from God, we take action and steps toward Jesus, by choosing the shield of faith. Satan will flee and his arrows will sputter out harmlessly.


Jesus resisted Satan in the wilderness... by quoting Scripture. Joseph of the Old Testament did it, by staying with Scripture. David did it by prayer and worship. Jeremiah and Zechariah did it by reading Scripture. The writer of Hebrews resisted doubt by living in Scripture. Do we have that kind of relationship with God that nothing will distract us from God's will for our lives. *"God is my faithfulness,"* wrote Jeremiah.

What source of strength do WE use to combat the wiles of Satan? Faith shapes our actions: What we do each day, how we live in each circumstance, what we choose to accept into our lives is driven by faith. St. Peter wrote, *"Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeals among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you."* When we choose to act in faith, Satan will continue to shoot flaming arrows. *"But to the degree that you share in the sufferings of Christ,"* St. Peter concludes, *"keep rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exaltation."*

God never intended for us to go through life alone in some sort of free fall. He never intended for us to feel trapped in our circumstances, fearful and depressed, over the outcomes, struggling with sin, but hoping, somehow to make it into heaven by the skin of our teeth. Faith trusts in Jesus. He is with us, even to the end of the age.

How can we fight against forces we cannot see? How can we make choices that will be God-pleasing and spiritually healthy for ourselves? St Paul gave us this advice and we can wear it with confidence: *"Put on Christ... He is our forgiveness, our righteousness, our strength. He is the Author and perfecter of our faith. We live in Him through this day and on to life everlasting. Amen."*

Your servant in Christ +  
Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola



## Results of LCMS Presidential Election



**Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison**

**The Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison has been elected to his fifth term as LCMS president — a position he has held since 2010.**

The Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, having received 52.32% of the votes cast, is the president-elect of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) for a fifth term of office, 2023–2026.

The nominations process for the position of Synod president began last fall. The resulting candidates were the five ordained ministers who received the highest number of votes in the nominations process and who consented to serve if elected.

The election took place, according to Bylaw 3.12.2.4, starting June 17 (six weeks prior to the convention) via internet balloting provided by YesElections (formerly Election-America).

For more information about the election or candidates, see <https://www.lcms.org/convention/national/elections>.



# Welcome to the Mid-South District

The Rite of Installation for **Rev. Joshua Reifsteck** was held at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Murray, KY on Sunday, June 18, 2023. Pictured, joining Pastor Reifsteck were (L-R) Rev. Trae Fistler, Faith Lutheran, Hopkinsville, President Roger Paavola, Rev. Reifsteck, Rev. Andre Frandle, Grace Lutheran Clarksville, and Rev. David Appold, St Paul Lutheran, Paducah and Circuit Visitor. Not pictured, Rev. Dr. Mark Press, Holy Trinity, Bowling Green.



The Rite of Installation of **Rev. Michael Meyer** was held Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Rogers, AR on Sunday, June 11. Rev. Michael Meyer will serve as the Associate Pastor of Youth and Families.

Pictured Front Row (L-R): Rev. Scott Bruick (St. John, Seward, NE, Regional VP Nebraska District), Rev. Michael Meyer (Holy Trinity, Rogers, AR), Rev. Eric Longman (Holy Trinity, Rogers, AR), Rev. Richard Mayer (Messiah, Pea Ridge, AR)

Back Row (L-R): Rev. Lynn Spencer (Emeritus), Rev H.L. Bernthal (Emeritus), Rev. Albert Quoss (Emeritus), Rev. Duncan Cox (Emeritus), Rev. Joshua Willadsen



(Bethel, Fort Smith, AR and Trinity, Sallisaw, OK, Regional VP Mid-South District), Rev. Brandon Martin (Salem, Springdale, AR),

Rev. Paul Hass (Bella Vista, Bella Vista, AR)



The Rite of Installation was held for The **Rev. Vincent Shemwell** at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Johnson City, TN, on Sunday June 25, 2023. Attending the Rite included:

Front Row (L-R) Rev. David Graves, St Paul Lutheran, Wartburg; Rev. Ed Maanum, First Lutheran, Knoxville; President Roger Paavola; Rev. Vincent Shemwell; Rev. Chase Lefort, Faith Lutheran, Oak Ridge; Rev. Roger Reckling, Emeritus  
Back Row (L-R) Rev. Paul Becker, Concordia Lutheran, Kingsport; Rev. Dennis Bennett, Emeritus; Rev. Mark Kophamer, Redeemer



Lutheran, Elizabethton; Rev. Steve Harmon, Emeritus, Bethlehem Lutheran; Rev. Michael Thurau, Emeritus, Rev. Adam Woldt, The Point Lutheran, Knoxville.

## 50th Ordination Anniversary



On Sunday, June 18, Chapel of the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Sharps Chapel, TN celebrated the 50th Anniversary of Pastor Paul Kritsch's Ordination into the Holy Ministry. Area Vice President Michael Miller preached, and Knoxville Circuit Visitor David Graves served as liturgist. Pictured L-R: Pastor David Graves, Pastor Michael Miller, Pastor Paul Kritsch, Pastor Ray Krieg, Pastor Dennis Bottoms, Pastor Chase Lefort.

## Congratulations to Rev. Paul Hass!

Rev. Paul Hass, who serves as pastor of Bella Vista Lutheran Church in Bella Vista, Arkansas, graduated from Concordia Seminary for a second time! Almost twenty years to the



day after completing the Master of Divinity Program in May of 2003, he graduated again on Friday, May 19, 2023, after concluding the Doctor of Ministry Program in Missional Leadership. The Graduation was in celebration of his Degree, granted on January 20, 2023, awarded following the final approval of his dissertation, "Discovering the Means to Provide Mentorship for Post-Seminary Pastoral Formation: From Apprentice to Craftsman; A Pastoral Journey." Congratulations to Pastor Hass!



# CHRIST ACADEMY HIGH SCHOOL 2023



This year's 24th annual Christ Academy High School at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana took place from June 18th through July 1st. Fifty-seven young men participated in Christ Academy: Timothy School, while thirty-five young women participated in Christ Academy: Phoebe School. This two-week discernment program serves to aid high-school-aged men and women who are interested in theology in considering pastoral and diaconal work.

At the Seminary, they were immersed in the daily life of Christ-centered worship, confessional catechesis, and fun time together with their

peers. They worshipped with the seminary community in Kramer Chapel four times a day, learned from seventeen professors from the Seminary and abroad, and welcomed one guest lecturer and a panel of local pastors and deaconesses. They had opportunities to form lasting friendships through group activities like bowling, various team sports throughout the Academy, and a formal banquet dinner followed by English country dancing! Lastly, the Christ Academy students participated in service projects on campus and around Fort Wayne.

This year we were blessed to have six students from your

district: Gabriel and Andrew Abraham; Sarah Gebhardt; Vivian Marshall; Allyssa and David Vandercook.

We thank you for your dedication in praying for these students and supporting them as they discern future work in the church. We especially thank and praise God for keeping these young men and women steadfast in the true faith. We pray that the Lord would continue to work through the pastors, teachers, and workers of our Church to continue to send out laborers into his harvest. To God be all the glory!

— *Christ Academy High School at Concordia Theological Seminary*



# SEEK GOOD AND TURN FROM EVIL: MAKE AMERICA GODLY AGAIN!

— Rev. Paul Becker, Concordia, Kingsport, Tenn.

In 1983, President Ronald Reagan gave a speech to the annual convention of the National Association of Evangelicals where he said in part, "a commitment to freedom and personal liberty that, itself is grounded in the much deeper realization that freedom prospers only where the blessings of God are avidly sought and humbly accepted. The American experiment in democracy rests on this insight. Its discovery was the great triumph of our Founding Fathers, voiced by William Penn when he said: **"If we will not be governed by God, we must be governed by tyrants."** Explaining the inalienable rights of men, Jefferson said, **"The God who gave us life, gave us liberty at the same time."** And it was George Washington who said that **"of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports."** And finally, that shrewdest of all observers of American democracy, Alexis de Tocqueville, put it eloquently after he had gone on a search for the secret of America's greatness and genius -- and he said: "Not until I went into the churches of America

and heard her pulpits aflame with righteousness did I understand the greatness and the genius of America. America is good. And if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great."

40 years after Reagan's speech reminding us of the need to be good, we have heard many speeches about the desire to make America great again which could mean just about anything. For those of us whose thinking is shaped by the Word of God, we sense that something is missing, namely the need to be good, and going back even one step further, how we might become good by turning to God and changing the way we think and act, that is, by becoming godly again. How that might be done? *"My son, if you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you...then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God; for the LORD gives wisdom, from His mouth come knowledge and understanding. He is a shield to those who walk uprightly"* (Proverbs 2:1, 5-6, 7b).

On 18 May 2023, Justice Neal Gorsuch (in *Arizona v. Mayorkas*) described the results of not receiving God's words and treasuring His commands, what has indeed happened in our own country. He has the honor of being the only person of whom I am aware to describe what has

happened to the liberties we hold dear. As in the practice of medicine, until an accurate diagnosis is made, proper treatment and an eventual cure will remain hidden. Gorsuch writes:

"Since March 2020, we may have experienced the greatest intrusions on civil liberties in the peacetime history of this country. Executive officials across the country issued emergency decrees on a breathtaking scale. Governors and local leaders imposed lockdown orders forcing people to remain in their homes. They shuttered businesses and schools, public and private. They closed churches even as they allowed casinos and other favored businesses to carry on. They threatened violators not just with civil penalties but with criminal sanctions too. They surveilled church parking lots, recorded license plates, and issued notices warning that their attendance at even outdoor services satisfying all state social-distancing and hygiene requirements could amount to criminal conduct. Federal executive officials entered the act too. Not just with emergency immigration decrees. They deployed a public-health



agency to regulate landlord-tenant relations nationwide. They used a workplace-safety agency to issue a vaccination mandate for most working Americans. They threatened to fire noncompliant employees and warned that service members who refused to vaccinate might face dishonorable discharge and confinement. Along the way, it seems federal officials may have pressured

social-media companies to suppress information about pandemic policies with which they disagreed. While executive officials issued new emergency decrees at a furious pace, state legislators and Congress – the bodies normally responsible for adopting our laws – too often fell silent. Courts bound to protect our liberties addressed a few – but

hardly all – of the intrusions upon them.”

So the next time you hear talk about how good or great America is or might be once again, let it slip off your tongue that in order to arrive at that desirable goal, we must first seek good and turn from evil, and thereby make America godly again.

## CENA ARTIST, HAITI

In America, we often take for granted the access our children have to education, housing and food. But in Haiti, access to an education is precious. Attending a school that allows your natural artistic talents to flourish is a true gift.

CENA is a large school in the Arcahaie District north of Port-au-Prince. Trinity HOPE has been providing lunch for the students at CENA since February 2021. The school is surrounded by tall, lush green trees that shade it from the hot sun. As beautiful as the sky and trees are above, the true gems are within the walls of this school.

A hidden gem is one of the students who is quite a talented artist, Kimberly. She shared with us a sketch she did of her principal, Mr. Destravil. When Kimberly wanted to send her sketch to the USA to thank Trinity HOPE for the food that's provided daily, Mr. Destravil asked her to not send the original. He kept the original, which he now has framed in his office.

We don't know what our Lord has planned for Kimberly's future. We are reminded several times in the Bible that we are given different gifts to serve God. Romans 12:4-6 says, *"For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function...having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them..."* Kimberly has been given the gift of artistic talent. Let us pray that she uses it to serve others and God. At Trinity HOPE, we are blessed to get to know these students and the gifts God has given them. We are delighted to share with them about the God that loves them so. Children like Kimberly are the future of Haiti; they are Haiti's missionaries.



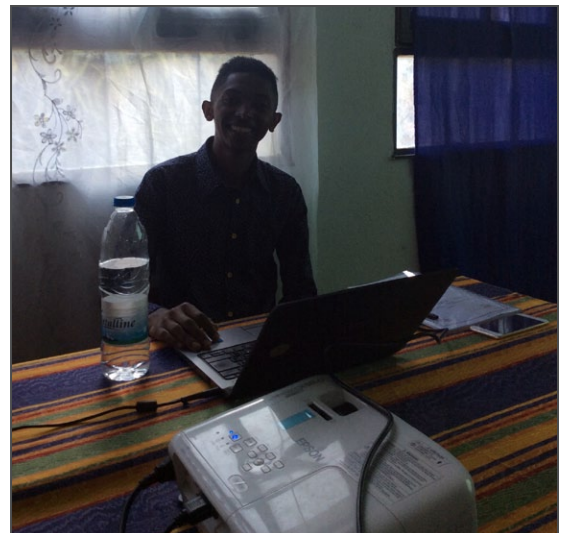


# LIME GRADUATES

Pictures from the graduates of the LIME in Madagascar. These are young people now prepared and educated to be future leaders in their country – including young women who would not have a chance to even live outside their homes because of religious restrictions by the Eastern religions.

Thanks to God and our Mid-South District partners for making this possible.

Your brother across the ocean,  
Pastor Joseph Randrianasolo  
*Lutheran Institute of  
Management and Entrepreneurship (LIME)*



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

The Take Heart Scholarship program was developed for Lutheran Church Extension Fund's (LCEF) Young Investors (Y.I.) Club members who are high school seniors and will soon advance to the next level of higher education. As students begin this new journey, LCEF wants to assist their transition by offering financial support through this scholarship opportunity with up to three awards of \$3,000, \$1,000 and \$500. The application period for this year opened in March and closed in early May, with students from across the U.S. taking part by submitting essays.



Congratulations to the following students on their outstanding submissions and selection as 2023 Take Heart Scholarship recipients:

- 1st Place - Samuel Simmons of Orlando, FL
- 2nd Place - Grace Ann Roth of Elgin, TX
- 3rd Place - Amelia Gillard of Cambridge, MN

You're invited to learn more about the Take Heart Scholarship opportunity at [lcef.org/scholarship/](https://lcef.org/scholarship/).

## Limited Time Offers from Lutheran Church Extension Fund



**Lutheran Church Extension Fund**  
> where investments build ministry

Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) currently has two limited-time offers available to both individuals and congregations. LCEF has served as the financial extension of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) since 1978, offering funding and resources in support of the

church. If you are not already investing funds with LCEF, now may be a great time to join with nearly 60,000 investors across the Lutheran Church body. And if you are currently investing, one of the limited-time term note offers shown below may be an attractive way to invest

further. Visit <https://lcef.org/get-started/start-investing/> today to learn more or open your account online. For more information on either offer, please contact Paul Reaves, your Mid-South District LCEF Vice President, at [paul.reaves@lcef.org](mailto:paul.reaves@lcef.org) or 901.395.7051.

### 4% One-Year Fixed Rate Term Note

- Minimum \$500 Investment
- Available to LCMS Congregations, as well as Individuals
- Limited Time Offer

### 4.5% Six-Month Fixed Rate Term Note

- Minimum \$500 Investment
- New Money Only
- Available to LCMS Congregations, as well as Individuals
- Limited Time Offer



## Early Childhood Conference July 17-18, 2023

The Mid-South District is excited to offer this year's **ECC Conference July 17-18, 2023**, at Faith Lutheran Church in Collierville, TN. This educational event is designed for educational hours (up to 8 total credit hours) with your states.

The Agenda is available on the District website.



## Henkel Conference — Second Annual

August 7-8, 2023  
11am-3pm  
Ascension Lutheran Church

— Links —  
[More Information](#)  
[Questions Contact](#)  
[Register Online](#)

The second annual Henkel Conference, devoted to Christian theology and cultural engagement will be held August 7-8, 2023 at Ascension Lutheran Church, Madison, TN.

The forum provides the best theological and cultural speakers within the Christian faith in order to educate and encourage in the midst of the present assaults on God's eternal truth. This conference welcomes everyone, clergy and laity.

**Our lineup this year, the following distinguished presenters:**

Carl Trueman, Aaron Kheriaty, Jack Kilcrease, Matthew Eppinette, Peter Scaer, Jordan Cooper, Adam Koontz and David Fowler.

## Bits and Pieces

### Bible Translation Sunday is back with a new toolkit!

Lutheran Bible Translators has created an event toolkit that equips congregations with simple, effective resources to organize and host an event that inspires and energizes your church. Celebrate your partnership in God's mission! More information can be found online here: <https://lbt.org/bts/?vcrmeid=r68eRgAJUAGz3gp3MvA&vcrmiid=eK33OhwZeECL-qMtMLf4UQ>

### Chapel Talks is now online

The Chapel Talks is produced by the LCMS School Ministry. Permission is granted to reproduce "Chapel Talks" for use in LCMS school worship services. Learn more here: <https://www.lcms.org/how-we-serve/education/elementary-schools#chapel-talks>

### Petal Pushers® 2024

The Rose Parade theme for 2024 is: CELEBRATING A WORLD OF MUSIC and the Lutheran Hour Ministries float entry is: MAKE A JOYFUL NOISE UNTO THE LORD. The Lutheran Hour Ministries Float has been a continuous participant for 73 years! Signup to help decorate in 2024 by going online to <https://www.petalpushers.org/volunteer>

# Prayer Summary, June 2023

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 2023.

## PRAYER CONCERNS

**REV. PETE AVE-LALLEMANT** (Faith, Fairfield Bay)  
**REV. RUSSELL BELISLE** (Cross of Calvary Lutheran Church, Memphis, TN)  
**REV. RONALD HALAMKA** (Waxahachie, TX)  
**MRS. ALISON HAWKINS** (Mid-South District Office)  
**MRS. MARY ANN HERD** (wife of Rev. Clifford Herd, Hixson, TN)  
**REV. ED MAANUM** (First, Knoxville, TN)  
**REV. DAN OTTO** (Emeritus, Murfreesboro, TN)  
**REV. CHAD PHILIPP** (St. Luke, DeWitt, AR & St. Paul, Gillett, AR)  
**REV. GIL PINGEL** (Emeritus, Chattanooga, TN)  
**REV. TOM SAYRE** (Emeritus, St. John's, FL)  
**REV. BILL WAGNER** (Trinity Lutheran Church, Columbia, TN)  
**MRS. NORMA MOORE** (wife of Rev. Tom Moore, Emeritus, Cordova, TN)  
**ZAC ENKO** (son of Rev. Keith Enko, Emeritus, Lebanon, TN)

**Our deepest sympathies to Rev. Russell Belisle and family** (Cross of Calvary Lutheran Church, Memphis, TN) on the recent loss of his brother Eric Belisle.  
**Our deepest sympathies to the family and friends of Rev. Erwin Lueker, Jr.** (Elizabethton, TN) who recently passed away. *A Memorial Service is scheduled for July 8, 2023, 3:00PM, Redeemer Lutheran Church, Elizabethton, TN.*

## CALL UPDATE

### IN THE CALLING PROCESS – CONGREGATIONS ORDAINED MINISTERS

**ACCEPTED:** **Rev. Jerome Leckband, Pastor** to Golgotha Lutheran Church, Wausa, NE, has accepted the Call to serve as *Associate Pastor and Teacher to All Saints Lutheran Church and School, Jonesboro, AR. Installation planned for July 2, 2023, 4:00PM.*  
**Rev. Joshua Reifsteck, Associate Pastor** to Calvary Lutheran Church, Indianapolis, IN has accepted the Call to serve as *Pastor to Immanuel Lutheran Church, Murray, KY. Installation took place June 18, 2023.*  
**Pastor-Elect Jacob Childers**, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis has accepted the Call to serve as *Associate Pastor to Grace Lutheran Church, Knoxville, TN. Ordination and Installation planned for July 9, 2023, 3:00PM.*

**Rev. Charles Vincent Shemwell**, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne has accepted the Call to serve as *Pastor to Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Johnson City, TN. Ordination took place June 11, 2023. Installation took place June 25, 2023.*

**Rev. Jeremy McDonald**, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne has accepted the Call to serve as *Pastor to Our Savior Lutheran Church/Zion Lutheran Church, Brinkley/Ulm, AR. Installation planned for July 8, 2023, 11:00AM.*

**Rev. Michael Meyer, Associate Pastor** to The Rock Lutheran Church, Seward, NE, accepted the Call to serve as *Associate Pastor to Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Rogers, AR. Installation took place June 11, 2023.*

**DECLINED:** **Rev. Jerrell Simmerman**, (Candidate – Indiana) has returned the call to serve as *Pastor to Christ Lutheran Church, Paris, TN.*

**Rev. Dr. David Schultz**, Pastor to St. Paul Lutheran Church, Wood River, IL, has returned the call to serve as *Pastor to Immanuel Lutheran Church, Memphis, TN.*

## COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

**ACCEPTED:** **Mrs. Shelli Haynes** accepted the Call to serve as *Director of Christian Education to Praise Lutheran Church, Maryville, TN.*

**PENDING:** **Mr. Aaron Jackson** (Candidate) has received a Call to serve as *Director of Parish Music to Redeemer Lutheran Church, Mountain Home, AR.*

**DECLINED:** **Mr. Scott Ibe** (Teacher, Central Illinois District) has returned the Call to serve as *Director of Worship to Christ of Savior Lutheran Church, Loudon, TN.*

## VACANT CONGREGATIONS & MINISTRIES

**Heavenly Host Lutheran Church, Cookeville, TN**- Pastor  
**First Lutheran Church, Blytheville, AR** - Pastor  
**First Lutheran Church, Harrison, AR** – Pastor  
**Messiah Lutheran Church, Memphis, TN** – Pastor  
**St. Paul Lutheran Church, Sevierville, TN** – Pastor  
**Shepherd of the Hills, Horseshoe Bend, AR** – Pastor  
**Christ Lutheran Church, Paris, TN** – Pastor

## IN THE CALLING PROCESS - COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

**Grace Lutheran Church Early Childhood Center, Little Rock, AR** – Early Childhood Director



Christ the King Lutheran School, Memphis, TN – Pre K-3 Teacher  
Christ Lutheran School, Little Rock, AR – 7th/8th Grade Math Teacher  
First Lutheran School, Knoxville, TN – Teacher for 4th/5th grade  
First Lutheran School, Fort Smith, AR – Teachers  
Redeemer Lutheran Church, Mountain Home, AR – Director of Parish Music  
\*\*Pending Call



## CONGREGATIONAL MISSION COMMITMENTS

### Mission Commitment Receipts as of 4/30/2023 (4 Months)

Anticipated Amount (33.33% of budget) .....	\$521,423
Actual Receipts.....	<u>483,956</u>
Over (under) anticipated amount .....	(\$37,467)

### Use of Mission Commitment Receipts (4 Months)

Allocated to Synod for World Missions .....	\$136,853
Allocated to Tanzania .....	8,333
Retained for District Mission/Ministry Support (70% of receipts).....	<u>338,769</u>
Total Receipts .....	\$483,956

### Mission Commitment Receipts Prior Year Comparison (4 Months)

Actual Receipts as of 4/30/2023	\$483,956
Actual Receipts as of 4/30/2022	<u>\$472,409</u>
Over (under) prior year receipts .	\$11,547

## What's your latest news?

### Encourager Topics in 2023

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.](#)

- August – Church Planting
- September – Stewardship
- October – Celebrating Lutheran Heritage
- November – Thankfulness
- December – Highlights 2023

### 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

1675 Wynne Road  
Cordova, TN 38016  
PHONE: 866.373.1343 /  
901.373.1343  
FAX: 901.373.4826

### Stay Connected With Us

ON THE WEB -  
"mid-southlcms.org"

ON FACEBOOK -  
"Mid-South-LCMS"

ON TWITTER -  
"@midsouthLCMS"

