

# Encourager

JULY 2025

Mid-South District LCMS



A Message from  
Rev. Dr. Roger  
Paavola, President

## BURDEN OR BLESSING?

Have you heard about Yogi Berra's famous for Yogi-isms? The former catcher for the New York Yankees just didn't always properly express what he was thinking. His most famous line is, "It's not over until it's over." Another one was, "When you come to the fork in the road, take it!" He also suggested to his friends, "You should always go to other people's funerals, otherwise, they won't come to yours." But my all-time favorite is tells of the time a lady came up to him after a game at Yankee Stadium. She said, "Good afternoon, Mr. Berra. You certainly looked cool today." Yogi replied, "Thank you Ma'am, you don't look so hot yourself."

Proper words expressed, but a complete misunderstanding

of their meaning. St John wrote by God's inspiration to a Christian congregation near Ephesus. His opponents of true Christianity were people known as Gnostics - people who believe that a person's body is the embodiment of evil, and that only a person's spirit is good. The result of this heresy was that immorality spread like wildfire. Gnostics lived in rampant debauchery. They believed that since the body is matter and not spirit, it has no value. In other words, a person could do anything they wanted with your body since - at least by what they believed - there's no saving value to the body anyway.

This is the foundation of something that's called

licentiousness - a person's belief that they have license to do whatever they pleased. Some people who call themselves Christians believe that they can sin as much as they want because God will forgive them. St Paul and St John strongly disagrees! But for John (and for most Christians) that licentiousness is a problem! It leads to a complete misunderstanding of the Living Word of God, Jesus Christ. If the body is worthless, what would they do to Christ Jesus - God-in-flesh?

But that's what happens when words can't express the fundamentals of faith in Christ our Savior. That's John's problem he attacks in his first epistle. There's an

explicit burden uncovered, but there's an even larger blessing. We need to make sure these two principles aren't misunderstood. But, just like Yogi Berra, sometimes things stated can be confusing; not because the words are confusing, but because they're confusing in the context: "You look cool, Mr. Berra." Thanks, you don't look so hot yourself!"

So, we have to wonder, are the 3 verses in John's epistle a burden or a blessing? John tells how the person who truly has faith in Jesus Christ might act. He writes, *"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and everyone who loves the Father love his Child as well. This is how we know that we love the children of God: By loving God and carrying out His commands. This is love for God: To obey His commands. But His commands are not burdensome."* (1 John 5:1 ff) So, are Christ's commands a burden or blessing?

The evidence of our Christian faith isn't shown by just adding a little pinch of religion into our life. By the same token, our Christian faith isn't dependent on us reforming our morals. Our life in Christ by faith IS a new life. It may shock us to realize that living a new Christian life is not merely doing church, getting religious, or trying to do good to others. Those qualities are wonderful, but they are the fruits of a faith life in Christ.

In the Heidelberg Disputation from over 500

years ago, Martin Luther said that good works for a Christian are passive – something that is caused in us by God, and that all other works that may even look good to humanity, may, more likely be sinful acts. In other words, God is the one who transforms and re-orient a person in the new birth of a Christian life. He leads, directs, and guides Christians in good works He designed us to do before the time of creation... at least according to Paul's letter to the Ephesians. (Ephesians 2:8-10)

That means that only God can take our sinful life and transform it into a spiritual life, filled with righteous good works, when He has claimed us a His redeemed Children through the merits of our Savior, Jesus Christ. That happens in Holy Baptism. God's claim on us is strengthened each time His Word is preached in all its truth and purity, when He strengthens us in faith in His Supper, and when His servants declare sins forgiven in Confession and Absolution. Luther makes this clear: Where there is the forgiveness of sins... there is life! - life for today, and life for eternity. John's statements show a remarkable interplay between us and God. He transforms our lives into a loving relationship with Him. As a result of His work in us, our love goes to all people.

Remember the Pharisees who came to Jesus trying to

trap Him? They asked Him, *"Which of the commandments is the greatest?" Jesus replied, "The greatest commandment is this: Love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind. And the Second is like unto it: Love your neighbor as yourself."*

We cannot separate true Christ-like love in us from God's love FOR us! St John says that our love for ALL our neighbors shows the barometer of our love FOR God. But the difficulty for us Christians is that this sort of understanding turns this to be a burden. It militates against our dislike of hearing words as "commandments" as if this has something to do with our salvation. But we believe, teach, and confess that we are not saved by our works. We are fully and exclusively saved by the suffering, death, and Resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Let's put it this way: Do the Ten Commandments really enable us to produce a loving lifestyle? Yet, we have a nation in the civil realm that is bent on the idea that we can legislate or command loving our neighbor. We confess that God's perfect Law has three uses – the mirror show us our sin, a curb to prevent us to further sinning, and a guide lead us on a godly life. But Scripture tells us that God's Law condemns and pushes us to seek peace in the Gospel won for us through our Savior Jesus Christ. Yes! God's

commands are meant to be a light burden to bear. But that's not what St John wants to leave with us.

He overflows with Gospel, the good news: John writes, *"Everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world!"* That's us here in Christ's Holy Church. John gives us this absolute truth: *"**This** is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith."* In other words, our faith is a victory over the world. Logic and human reason cannot explain why God chose to come to share in our humanity for the single purpose of dying for our sins. Logic and human reason cannot explain how this Man could suffer, be crucified, die and yet, rise again in victory. Logic points to death and reasons that death is final, therefore Jesus should not have been raised from the dead.


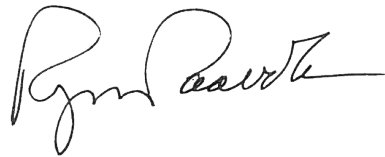
But our faith in Christ rests on this truth, that even though Jesus – true God and true Man, indeed died for our sins. Nevertheless, death held no power over Him. The grave could not hold Him. He is no longer dead. He is risen! Our God-given faith as a free gift, grabs hold of that truth, that, by the death and resurrection of God-with-us; God, in His grace, has justified everyone who is joined together with Christ by God's means of grace. That's our victory by faith. St John writes, *"This is He who came by water and blood – Jesus*

*Christ; not by the water only [in Baptism], but by the water and the blood... And this is the testimony that God has borne concerning His Son. And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Whoever [everyone] has the Son, has life."*

This is God's good news for us. This is our hope and this is our privilege to share with a world that does not yet know our Savior, Jesus. We need to continue to be faithful in our embrace of God's Word as you celebrate His continued blessings. Faithful and dedicated Pastors, church workers and every Christian of all ages are sent to His Church to maintain a ministry where we are guided and strengthened at every week and every opportunity God's Will offers you.

In this we rejoice. St John gives us this conclusion: *"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you... have... eternal life."* May God grant this to us all for the sake of our Lord, Jesus.

Your servant in Christ Jesus,  
Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola



We share a prayer of gratitude  
for our freedoms!



# Highlights

## from the 22nd Regular Convention of the Mid-South District LCMS



The 22nd Regular Convention of the Mid-South District took place June 12-14, 2025, at the East Memphis Hilton in Memphis. Over 160 voting delegates representing 88 Mid-South District congregations gathered under the convention theme “CHRIST: The Church’s One Foundation,” inspired by 1 Corinthians 3:10-11. In all, just over 260 delegates, guests and exhibitors attended the convention, accomplishing much during their brief time together. The Mid-South District is most grateful for the time and attention given by all who participated in the various aspects of the convention, as well as those who volunteered their time to help ensure the event ran smoothly. Below are highlights and key election results from the 2025 Convention —



### Paavola Retains District Presidency

Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola was re-elected to a fifth term as President of the Mid-South District. “God be praised,” Paavola shared with the delegation following the announcement of the voting results. Selected from among a slate of six candidates following two rounds of voting, President Paavola thanked the men who had also allowed their names to stand, acknowledging the fellow candidates as “...good friends, great pastors, and that’s what makes this district great.”

### Delegation Selects Mission & Ministry Directives for Synod

In addition to numerous elections and consideration of about twenty resolutions, delegates of the 22nd Regular Convention of the Mid-South District chose three recommended areas of focus to present to Synod for the 2026-2029 triennium. On the final day of the Convention, following voting on all Floor Committee resolutions, delegates were given seven mission and ministry initiatives, put forth by the Circuit and Advisory Forums. The following three initiatives received the most votes and will therefore be advanced for consideration at the next Synodical Convention in 2026:

- FOCUS #1 -** *To encourage young families and encourage the health of marriage and the vitality of the devotional life in the home.*
- FOCUS #2 -** *Work to resolve human trafficking and raise awareness to address the challenges of a world that does not respect the value God has given to male and female.*
- FOCUS #3 -** *Formation and spiritual strengthening of Elders and Lay Leaders in the congregation.*



Visit our Vimeo page for Mid-South District videos shared during the Convention! <https://vimeo.com/midsouthlcms>

More Convention *Highlights* ►

# *Highlights* from the 22nd Regular Convention of the Mid-South District LCMS (cont.)

## New Board of Directors

The Mid-South District's Board of Directors, which includes six newly elected members, was installed at the conclusion of the District Convention on Saturday morning, June 14. The 2025-2028 Board includes (pictured left to right) Rev. Philip Young, Heidi Davidson, John Hofman, Karilyn Brown, Tim Hanusa, Jack Ficken, Jeff Pittman, Aaron Jackson, David Topp, Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, Rev. Larry Peters, Rev. Joshua Willadsen, Rev. Kevin Conger and Rev. David Graves. The new Board will have their first full meeting at the District Office in November.



## Beautiful Opening Worship Service

On the evening of Thursday, June 12, convention delegates, guests and other attendees gathered for a beautiful and inspiring opening worship service, hosted by Christ the King Lutheran Church and School. Guest preacher, LCMS First Vice President, Rev. Peter K. Lange shared a message echoing the convention theme, "Christ, the Church's One Foundation." The worship offering for the evening was designated for the Mid-South District's fund to assist current pastors and commissioned workers burdened with education debt. The resulting total of just over \$4,045 included special offerings collected by the delegates' congregations prior to the convention. Before worship, Christ the King also hosted a wonderful meal in the church's fellowship hall, sponsored by Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF).

## The 2025-2028 Praesidium

Newly re-elected Mid-South District President, Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, will rely on the counsel of his four regional Vice Presidents for the next triennium. The 2025-2028 District Praesidium includes (left to right) 2nd VP from Region 2, Rev. Kevin Conger; President Paavola; 1st VP from Region 1, Rev. Joshua Willadsen; 3rd VP from Region 3, Rev. Philip Young; and 4th VP from Region 4, Rev. David Graves. Both Rev. Young and Rev. Graves will be serving their first terms as Regional Vice Presidents.



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More Convention *Highlights* ►



# *Highlights* from the 22nd Regular Convention of the Mid-South District LCMS (cont.)

## Delegation Adopts Nineteen Resolutions

Over the course of their short time together, convention delegates reviewed and carefully considered just over twenty resolutions, covering an array of issues that are important to the ministries of this District, and their many members. By the close of the convention on June 14, delegates had voted to adopt the following resolutions:

- Resolution 01-01-25: To Reaffirm Church Planting
- Resolution 01-02-25: To Continue a Relationship with the Southeast of Lake Victoria Diocese (SELVD) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania
- Resolution 01-03-25: To Continue a Relationship with the Confessional Malagasy Lutheran Church in Madagascar
- Omnibus Resolution 01-04-25: To Commend Trinity Hope
- Resolution 02-01-25: To Maintain Accountability and Transparency for Financial Gifts from God's Stewards
- Resolution 02-02-25: To Encourage Financial Support for Professional Church Workers
- Resolution 02-03-25: To Propose LCMS Men's Ministry
- Resolution 02-04-25: To Establish Locum Tenens Ministry for the Mid-South District
- Omnibus Resolution 02-06A-25: Ten Commandments
- Resolution 03-01-25: To Shape the Faith Formation Paradigm from Generation to Generation Ministry
- Resolution 03-02-25: To Encourage Generational Ministry
- Resolution 03-03-25: To Evaluate, Study, and Use Biblically-based Stewardship Resources
- Resolution 03-04-25: To Encourage Personal Evangelism
- Resolution 04-01-25: To Encourage Further Consideration of Successful Completion of SMP Coursework Before Ordination and Placement on Ordained Roster
- Resolution 04-02-25: Regularizing Specific Ministry Pastoral Classification
- Resolution 04-03-25: Extend an Overture to the 2026 LCMS Convention Concerning Specific Ministry Pastoral (SMP) Training
- Resolution 04-06-25: To Amend the District Bylaws so that the District President may Accept a Call to a Congregation as Assistant Pastor
- Resolution 04-07A-25: To Direct The Office of the National and International Mission to Decline Applications for Recognized Service Organization Status from Organizations Currently Supporting, Advocating, or Otherwise Promoting the LGBTQIA+ Agenda and Lifestyle and to Direct The Office of National Missions and The Office of International Mission to Revoke RSO Status of the Same
- Resolution 04-08-25: Participating in Building a Culture of Church Work Formation and Recruitment

*The complete resolutions, both adopted and declined, are available at*  
**[mid-southlcms.org/convention-2/](https://mid-southlcms.org/convention-2/)**

## Circuit Visitors for 2025-2028

Circuit Visitors for the 2025-2028 triennium were determined by Circuit Forums prior to the Mid-South District convention, then ratified by the delegation of the convention on Saturday, June 14, 2025. Shown left to right:



Rev. Thomas Bartzsch - FORT SMITH CIRCUIT  
Rev. Brandon Martin - FAYETTEVILLE CIRCUIT  
Rev. Chase LeFort - KNOXVILLE CIRCUIT  
Rev. Stewart Marshall - STUTTGART CIRCUIT  
Rev. Clayton Sellers - MEMPHIS CIRCUIT  
Rev. Donald Welmer - CHATTANOOGA CIRCUIT  
Rev. David McMinn - MIDDLE TENNESSEE CIRCUIT  
Rev. David Appold - PADUCAH CIRCUIT  
Rev. Kenneth Shaw - NASHVILLE CIRCUIT  
Rev. Robert Herring - JONESBORO CIRCUIT  
*Circuit Visitors Not Pictured —*  
Rev. David Vandercook - LITTLE ROCK NORTH CIRCUIT  
Rev. Emil Woerner - LITTLE ROCK SOUTH CIRCUIT  
Rev. Charles Shemwell - JOHNSON CITY CIRCUIT



For Convention photos, newsletters & more, visit <https://mid-southlcms.org/convention-2/>

# A Tribute to Rev. Gilbert H. Pingel and His 60 Years of Ministry!

Greetings in the name of Christ to the Mid-South District.

My father, the late Rev. Michael F. Welmer, wanted to be a professional baseball player when he was playing ball in high school. The Red Sox were scouting him as a catcher. Unfortunately, he slid into second base during an intense game and busted up his knee during an important game that determined his future. Thankfully, at Trinity Lutheran in Indianapolis, there was a vicar by the name of Gil Pingel. He told my father, "You know Mike, maybe baseball isn't in your future. Have you thought about church work?"

Last month, Friday June 20th, we at First Lutheran Chattanooga celebrated the ministry of the Rev. Gilbert H. Pingel. A faithful steward of God's Word, and one who served First Lutheran from 2002 to 2008. My grandparents, Lester and Mary Welmer, supported and cared for Gil and his wonderful wife Linda during his vicarage. My grandparents knew how important the ministry is.

Pastor Pingel has cared for those who seek Christ on Sunday, comforted those who were distraught, preached Christ and Him-Crucified. He knows how to care for God's beloved.

He has also walked the halls of the Pentagon and stood with soldiers as a faithful chaplain of the LCMS and delivered the Sacrament to them. Most importantly, he continues to encourage men to serve in the ministry. He encourages all those who are considering church work to look at how God has set them apart to serve.

The Rev. Gilbert H. Pingel has seen more than most of us in the ministry as pastors. His wisdom is a treasure. His wife Linda has been his devoted wife in Christ since his vicarage.

I give thanks to Christ for the Rev. Gilbert H. Pingel. He encouraged my father, who eventually encouraged me to serve Christ and his beloved.

Servant of the Lord,  
Rev. Donald N. Welmer



At a special "60 Years in Ministry" celebration on June 20 in Chattanooga, Rev. Gil Pingel was presented a certificate on behalf of the Mid-South District by President Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola.



Many who have been touched by the ministry of Pastor Pingel were in attendance for his special "60 Years in Ministry" celebration. Pictured are (L to R) Rev. James Watson, Chattanooga-area pastor emeritus; Beverly Jacks and husband, Rev. Joseph Jacks of St. Philip Lutheran in Chattanooga; Rev. Gil Pingel and his wife, Linda; Mid-South District President, Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola and his wife, Pat; and Rev. Donald Welmer, Sr. Pastor of First Lutheran in Chattanooga.





## REV. BENJAMIN HEINZ

The Ordination of Rev. Benjamin Heinz took place at his home congregation, Trinity Lutheran in Lowell, Indiana, where his father, Rev. Rich Heinz, is the pastor. Rev. Heinz will be serving at Athens Lutheran, in Athens, TN and will be installed next month.

(L-R Front) Ian Heinze, Rev. Rich Heinz, Trinity Hope, Lowell, Indiana, Benjamin Heinz, D. Richard Stuckwisch, District President, Indiana District, and Julian LaMie. (L-R Back) Patrick Bayens, Concordia, Chicago, Ronald Rock, Lothar Thielke, and Chris Truelsen

## *Welcome to the Mid-South District!*



## REV. JAMES "BROCK" STOCKLAND

The Rite of Ordination was held on Sunday, June 22, 2025 for the Rev. James "Brock" Stockland at St John's Lutheran Church, Fayetteville, AR, his home congregation. He is one of the four graduates from the Mid-South District who received Calls into the Holy Ministry this Spring.

(L-R Front) Rev. Duncan Cox, emeritus; President Roger Paavola; Rev. Brock Stockland; Rev. Dr. David Schmitt, Concordia Seminary; Seminarian Dane Arbuckle, crucifer; the Rev. Mark Krause, emeritus. (Top L-R) Rev. Kyle Fittje, Immanuel Lutheran, Lockwood, MO; Rev. Robert Herring, Holiday Island; Rev. Joshua Willadsen, Fort Smith; Rev. Hubert Bernthal, Emeritus; Rev. JD Ziescke, Fayetteville; Rev. Eric Longman, Rogers, AR.



# THANKSGIVING FOR NEW MEMBERS

## St. Matthew in Conway, AR

We thank the Lord of the Church for blessing His flock at St. Matthew Lutheran in Conway, AR with several new members. On Sundays, March 2 (right) and May 25, 2025 (below), St. Matthew welcomed a combination of 24 new members, including transfers, professions of faith, and adult confirmands. We are grateful for how the Lord has helped our congregation to rebuild over the past several years!



## The Henkel Conference

August 21-22, 2025

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

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

# Evaluation of MinistrySafe as a Child Protection and Anti-Trafficking Resource

Greetings President Paavola,

This is the evaluation I previously mentioned I would provide, of MinistrySafe as a resource for child protection and human trafficking prevention within Mid-South LCMS congregations and schools. As stated in your previous e-mail, the national LCMS agreement with MinistrySafe will end on July 1, 2025. Although the Office of National Mission still identifies MinistrySafe as a highly valuable resource. While MinistrySafe has begun reaching out to LCMS districts to establish local agreements and is temporarily extending access for existing users until October 1, 2025, I thought it was important to evaluate the need for MinistrySafe in comparison to self-help or in-house programs, to determine whether the benefits would justify the cost and provide added value that individual congregations may not achieve on their own.

## The Strengths of MinistrySafe:

- Child Protection Training: Covers grooming behaviors, legal responsibilities, reporting procedures, and prevention strategies specific to ministry settings.
- Human Trafficking Awareness modules are included that educate leaders and volunteers on the red flags of human trafficking, this helps ministries identify and respond to risks in their communities.
- Policy Development & Compliance Tools: Offers ready-to-use policy templates, tracking tools, and documentation systems that help ministries maintain best practices and legal compliance.
- The Ministry-Specific Style is designed to aide churches and schools by offering a faith-sensitive, legally informed policy that is more robust than piecemeal or free alternatives.

## Without Ministry Safe

- Congregations may need to assemble training, background checks, and policy tools from multiple providers, increasing complexity and the risk of legal or procedural gaps.
- Free resources typically lack the depth and specialization provided by MinistrySafe, especially in the areas of grooming prevention and trafficking awareness. Background checks require payment, which can sometimes be prohibitive.
- Without a centralized system, congregations may lack consistency, documentation, and oversight.

## Pricing Options (As Provided by MinistrySafe)

- Individual Congregation Membership: Starts at approximately \$250–\$500/year depending on size and usage.
- District-Level Agreement: Custom pricing available based on number of participating congregations; potential for 20–30% discount.
- Optional Add-ons: Background check integration and advanced policy review tools may carry additional fees.

If the need for this type of service has been assessed within the district, I believe the district should consider entering into a district-level agreement with MinistrySafe. Doing so would reflect the District Office's commitment to safeguarding those most vulnerable—particularly children and victims of human trafficking—by equipping our congregations with the resources and training necessary to recognize, prevent, and respond to abuse.

Please let me know if further documentation or cost analysis is needed.

Living in Christ,

Deaconess Robin Moyer



# Prayer Summary, June 2025

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.

## PRAYER CONCERNS

**REV. RONALD HALAMKA** (Waxahachie, TX)  
**REV. PAUL DONNER** (Emeritus, Paducah, KY)  
**MRS. ALISON HAWKINS** (Mid-South District Office)  
**MRS. MARY ANN HERD** (wife of Rev. Clifford Herd, Hixson, TN)  
**REV. TOM SAYRE** (Emeritus, St. John's, FL)  
**REV. TOM MOORE** (Emeritus, Cordova, TN)  
**REV. ALBERT EICHELBERGER** (Emeritus, Knoxville, TN)  
**REV. DARRELL KOBS** (Emeritus, Russellville, AR)  
**REV. LUTHER HASZ (EM) and wife BARBARA** (Jackson, TN)  
**MRS. DONNA LONGMAN** (wife of Rev. Eric Longman, Rogers, AR)  
**MRS. FLORENCE EICHELBERGER** (wife of Rev. Albert Eichelberger, Knoxville, TN)  
**MRS. NORMA MOORE** (wife of Rev. Tom Moore, Emeritus, Cordova, TN)  
**MRS. JUNE WIESE** (wife of former MDS Pastor, Rev. Ron Wiese)  
**MS. STEPHANIE ELSEROAD** (daughter of Rev. Rich Elseroad (EM) Knoxville, TN)  
**MR. ROBERT NERGER** (Former Mid-South District Board of Directors, Wartburg, TN)

**Our deepest sympathies to the family and friends of Rev. John Lindner**, Emeritus (Bella Vista, AR) who passed away, June 7, 2025

**Our deepest sympathies to the family and friends of Rev. Paul Muench**, Emeritus (Knoxville, TN) who passed away June 15, 2025.

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

Prayers for safe travel for all those attending the LWML National Convention in Omaha, NE.

## CALL UPDATE

### IN THE CALLING PROCESS – CONGREGATIONS

#### ORDAINED MINISTERS

**ACCEPTED: Rev. Andrew Abraham**, Pastor to Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, Crossville, TN accepted the Call to serve as Pastor to Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Hermitage, TN. *Installation is schedule for July 5, 2025, 4PM.*

**Rev. Benjamin Heinz** (Seminary Graduate, Concordia Seminary St. Louis, accepted the Call to serve as Pastor to Athens Lutheran Church, Athens, TN. *Ordination took place June 7, 2025, at his home congregation. Installation is planned for July 13, 2025, at Athens Lutheran Church, Athens, TN.*

**Ordained Accepted continued: Rev. Robert McCanless**, IIM, accepted the Call to serve as *Intentional Interim Pastor* to St. John's Lutheran Church, Stuttgart, AR. *Installation date is pending.*

**Rev. Daniel Suelzle**, Pastor to Wittenberg Lutheran Chapel, Grand Forks, ND accepted the Call to serve as *Associate Pastor and Teacher* to All Saints Lutheran Church, Jonesboro, AR. *Installation planned for August 3, 2025, 4:30PM.*

**Rev. David Buchs**, Pastor to Concordia Lutheran Church, South Haven, MN accepted the Call to serve as *Pastor* to Grace Lutheran Church, Little Rock, AR. *Installation date is pending.*

**PENDING: Rev. Timothy Sheridan**, Pastor to St. Luke Lutheran Church, Harrison, MI, has received a Call to serve as *Pastor* to Concordia Lutheran Church, Kingsport, TN.

**DECLINED: Rev. Aaron Schian**, Pastor to Grace Lutheran Church, Auburn, MI, has returned the call to serve as *Senior Pastor* to Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Bowling Green, KY.

## COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

**ACCEPTED: Ms. Claire Hall**, Commission Minister (Teacher) to Concordia Christian Academy, Tacoma, WA has accepted the Call to service as Middle School Math and Science teacher to Belvoir Christian Academy, Chattanooga, TN. *Installation date pending for July 2025.*

**Ms. Kelly Moore** (Candidate, Midland, TX) has accepted the Call to serve as Director to Grace Lutheran Early Childhood Center, Little Rock, AR. *Installation date pending for July 2025.*

## VACANT CONGREGATIONS & MINISTRIES

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Bowling Green, KY – Senior Pastor**

### IN THE CALLING PROCESS - COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

**Our Savior Lutheran Academy, Nashville, TN** – Full-time PreK Teacher; Full-time and Part-time Preschool Teachers and Aides

**Christ the King Lutheran School, Memphis, TN** – Director of Christian Education; 3rd Grade Teacher; PE/Athletic Director; Art Teacher (Part-time)

**Immanuel Lutheran School, Memphis, TN** – 5th grade Teacher

**1st Lutheran School, Knoxville, TN** – Middle School Math; Several part time teaching positions

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



## Congregational Mission Commitments

### Mission Commitment Receipts as of 5/31/2025 (5 Months)

Anticipated Amount  
(41.67% of budget) ..\$678,623  
Actual Receipts .....656,584  
Over (under) anticipated  
amount..... (\$22,039)

### Use of Mission Commitment Receipts (5 Months)

Allocated to Synod for World  
Missions ..... \$186,559  
Allocated to Tanzania .... 10,417  
Retained for District Mission/  
Ministry Support (70% of  
receipts)..... 459,609  
Total Receipts .....\$656,584

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

Actual Receipts as of  
5/31/2025 .....\$656,584  
Actual Receipts as of  
5/31/2024 .....\$512,621  
Over (under) prior  
year receipts ..... \$143,963

Share your news with us!

### Encourager Topics in 2025

We invite you to share your stories with us please email stories by 20th to Rhonda, [webmaster@mid-southlcms.com](mailto:webmaster@mid-southlcms.com). Here's a look at the upcoming topics for 2025  
Aug – Church Planting  
Sep. — Stewardship  
Oct. — Lutheran Tradition

### 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*

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

**Michelle Fischer,**  
*Executive Director for Education, Youth & Family*

**Scott Roberts,**  
*LCEF Vice President*

**Missy Washburn,**  
*Executive Assistant to the District President*

**Renae McElwain,**  
*Communications & Marketing Specialist*

**Julie Tyler,**  
*Administrative Assistant for Education, Youth & Family*

**Lisa Pennington,**  
*Finance Assistant*

**Robin Moyer,**  
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### Contact

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