

Encourager

AUGUST 2022

Mid-South District LCMS



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

Church Planting

In Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*, he begins with a paradoxical statement: "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times." It kind of sounds like the situation facing the Christian Churches in this early Twenty-First Century. We're in the best of times; yet it seems to be the worst of times. Why we are even here? What's happening? Some recent reports from the Barna Group have indicated that the United States loses around 600 churches every day! In the meantime, those boarded up churches are being replaced by only 3.5 churches per day.

Amazingly, the number of churches per our population is the lowest it's been since 1906! Is the modern church even making

a statement? Now I'm not talking about why we are here as the church - at least not directly. The Church and church planting is God's work. Yet, if we want to keep up with our privilege and responsibility as the children in God's family, church planting should become a critical part of fulfilling our part in the mission of Christ. For us in the Mid-South District, church planting is not only to revitalize older congregations, but it's the best way to reach new people groups and generations and achieve diversity. What does all of this mean?

What the church does in our communities are the good things people resonate in their thoughts about a church. There is absolutely nothing wrong with this. But is

trying to figure out the needs of the community the primary role of the Church? Aren't there several other social programs that do that? If this is the only and primary focus of a church, should church planting be the primary role of the greater Church?

What seems to become apparent is that the organizational view about the Church's "mission" may not agree with the "mission" Jesus gave to His Church. What is a mission? According to Webster, a mission is "a specific task with which a person or a group is charged; a ministry commissioned by a religious organization to propagate its faith or carry on humanitarian work." There it is in that last phrase - carry on humanitarian work. It seems a

little restrictive for our definition of "mission."

Too many churches see themselves as one of the many humanitarian, social, or cultural groups designed to address the needs of the community. On some level, I can understand that by feeding people who are genuinely hungry or giving clothes to those who truly need them, we're doing what Christ asks us to do in Matthew 25. It works! But what is Christ's mission and our mission? Why are we here? Scripture reminds us, *"For the Son of man is come to seek and save that which was lost."* (Luke 19:10) Based on His statement, Christ's "mission" was twofold. First, He came to seek the lost and, second, He came to save the lost. Seeking the lost was His mission.

But the second part of His mission was to save the lost – those who were destined to spend eternity in heaven. Jesus came to save everyone. But some do not choose Him. Only those who are called by the Gospel through the Holy Spirit will be saved. Yet, according to Luke 19:10, His mission wasn't a humanitarian effort. Yes, He fed the hungry. But He did not go the villages to find hungry people or seek out for those who needed clothes. That's not what His Father sent Him to do.

In Matthew 4, Jesus was tempted by the devil. He responded to Satan for messing with His cousin, John the baptizer. Matthew records His next comments: *"From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, 'Repent! For the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"* In other words, "Repent of your evil inclinations

because the kingdom of heaven can be yours!" The people hearing this would have been shocked. They believed they were already going to heaven because they did their best trying to keep the Law of Moses and they were Israelites.

But the New Covenant belongs to Jews and Gentiles alike. Jesus came to die for the sins of ALL THE WORLD! So, when Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers casting a net into the sea. He then said, *"Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."* This is the beginning of First Century church planting. He called disciples to be about the work of the Kingdom of God.

Being His disciples means following Jesus. It means saying what He would say and doing what He would do. Peter, Andrew, James, and John were about to go on a church planting exercise. They were going to bring the message into the streets, *"For the Son of man is come to seek and save that which was lost."*

St Paul similarly wrote to Timothy (1 Tim 2:4) saying, *"Who (God) will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth."* The first disciples, Peter, James, John, Andrew, Paul, and us, as sons and daughters of the Father embrace our mission to find those who are lost because they're not yet part of our Heavenly Father's family. We can lead them to Jesus through His Word and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Let's be reminded of the definition of the word disciple. St Peter (1 Peter 1) reminds us that every Baptized person is called to be God's witness – to declare the excellencies of Him

who called us out of darkness by God's marvelous deeds. The word "disciple" means to be a follower. But it also comes from an Old English word that relates to discipline – following the disciplines of the Leader by being a faithful disciple of Christ.

This is the way Jesus plants churches. Those fishermen followed Jesus and learned that in order to "catch men," they would have to share what is totally God's work into the hearts of the people. When they followed God's guidance, they were able to put into practice, their calling for the kingdom of heaven. God would still do the work. God will still offer the grace in conversion.

Maybe this is what's missing in the Church today. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus laid out the work of the disciples: *"Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the things that I have commanded you. And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the ages."* (Matthew 28:19-20)

Based on Scripture, church planting (or making disciples) is God's primary mission work. Church planting (making disciples) is critical for fulfilling Christ's mission. Based on years of data, church planting is the best way to reach new people, groups and generations. But, in addition, sound doctrinal teaching and relational support are certainly essential for the kingdom of God!

The Mid-South District has its primary initiatives to continue church planting and making disciples for Christ. We're also called to be good stewards of

what the member congregations of the District do to support the church planting effort. Forging a partnership with a congregation, circuits, or a partnership of congregations, will be our continuing church planting efforts and keeping responsible stewardship of the support from our congregation commitments.

Even now, we have new sites and new partners working with the District offices to look at the feasibility of church planting and re-planting of new ministries. Does it work? Only by the Will of God will our efforts be blessed to bring the Gospel message into the hearts of more people in our District and around the

world. Thank you, again, for our partnership together for the Kingdom of Christ.

Your servant in Christ +
Rev Roger Paavola



Million Dollar Life Match, \$25K granted to Knoxville Circuit churches for Pregnancy Resource Center

"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," 1 John 3:16-18. These verses are the foundation of the LCMS Life Ministry initiative that includes the Million Dollar Life Match.

Congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) responded to the call to love women vulnerable to abortion, and families facing challenges at

the beginning-of-life stages of their children, demonstrating this love through many acts of mercy in their communities. In just the first phase of the Million Dollar Life Match they have received over 50 applications requesting over \$500,000.

The LCMS Office of National Mission awarded [the joint effort between Praise Lutheran, St. Paul Lutheran, and Christ Our Savior Lutheran *and other area churches joining this effort*] for the sake of the Pregnancy Resource Center according to the grant] the Million Dollar Life Match Grant #6944 Training &

Medical Expenses in the amount of \$25,000.00.

Please rejoice and give thanks today for the good news of the gift match. We pray the Lord bless the efforts of PRC to bring help to moms and dads and encourage them to make decisions for life and to know Him who is for them, Christ Jesus. We also pray that our congregations will be encouraged by the LCMS Life Ministry's Million Dollar Life Match to have generous hearts in order to give funding soon for the valuable need for PRC in training staff at the new Sevierville office.

— Pastor Roberts

VBS IN RECORD TIME



Did you know that Vacation Bible School can be successful with only a month's planning time? It's not recommended, but it's totally possible, especially if the director has an excellent team of volunteers who step up to make VBS an exciting, fun-filled, faith-filled adventure.

With the theme "Food Truck Party: On a Roll with God," the children and staff were awed by decorated mini-food trucks,

miles of flags and a bazillion balloons festooning the hallways, and craft, science, Bible story-time, and recreation sessions all built around the daily specials: "God is great! God is good! Let us thank God for our food. By His hand we all are fed, Give us, Lord, our daily bread!" Top Chefs Jacques and Marcus (Pastors Chuck Neugebauer and Mark Goble) taught us that as God provides for us, we are to provide

for others, and with that in mind, the VBS participants brought in canned goods to share with the Mid-South Food Bank.

VBS Week ended with enthusiastic, energetic music from all the kids, and a visit from Mempops mobile food truck. We pray that the week made a lasting impression on our children, knowing that God provides for us as He loves us dearly.



Ascension Lutheran Hosting the Henkel Conference

Ascension Lutheran in Madison, TN is pleased to host The Henkel Conference, coming up **August 22-23, 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 Both pastors and laity are invited to attend.

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.

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.



Celebrate the history and work of the LCMS

Considering a trip to St. Louis? We invite you to join us **April 27-29, 2023, for Lutheran Days STL**, a celebration of the history and work of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Explore St. Louis — a city rich in the history and present work of your church — and participate in activities and learning opportunities at area Lutheran sites and institutions, including the LCMS International Center.

Designed for student groups, youth and adults, this event will have something for everyone! At the end of Lutheran Days STL, join fellow Lutherans in standing for life at the annual March to the Arch life march on Saturday, April 29, in St. Louis.

As plans are finalized, more information will be posted on the event page. <https://calendar.lcms.org/event/lutheran-days-stl-2023/>

**LUTHERAN
DAYS STL**

April 27-29, 2023

Making Disciples for Life
activities for student groups,
youth and adults in St. Louis, Mo.





Thank
you



We Thank the LCMS Mid-South District

from
LIME



Lutheran Institute of Management and Entrepreneurship (LIME) deeply thank the LCMS Mid-South District for the continuous and faithful support for its ministry through education. We, at LIME, are happy to send you, our supporter, these few photos showing students having successfully passed the oral defense of their theses as part of the requirements to obtain the Licentiate Degree. They were fifteen students, girls and boys in total. They were of different tribes: Merina and Betsileo of the highlands, Betsimisaraka and Antesaka of the eastern region, Antanosy and Antandroy of the southern one and one from the northern one.



15
degrees

bright
future



We take this occasion to thank the LCMS Mid-South District under the leadership of its President, the Reverend Doctor Roger PAAVOLA for this wonderful outcome of the partnership between LIME and the LCMS Mid-South District. You have opened a horizon of future for these young Malagasy students. Now they have a better chance to find a job by obtaining this Diploma. Thank you very very much.



faithful
partners

Thanks to Jesus Christ, the Good Teacher, for your steady and faithful support.

Pastor Randrianasolo Joseph

BREAD OF LIFE *Campaign*

New Recurring Donations
Matched for a Lifetime

*Then Jesus declared, "I am the **bread of life**. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." John 6:35*

Help us share the Gospel with Children in Haiti Through a Bowl of Rice and Beans

Trinity HOPE shares the mercy of Jesus Christ with over 52,000 Haitian children in Christian Schools each school day. However, there are currently over 20,000 children on our waiting list looking for HOPE. Thanks to a very generous donor, we have kicked off the "Bread of Life" Campaign. Between now and February 2023, every new, recurring donation will be matched for a lifetime! Please contact us through our website www.trinityhope.org/match or through mail at Trinity HOPE, P.O. Box 2910, Lebanon, TN 37088 to establish your recurring donation today.



615-394-4950

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Platinum
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Candid.

PRAYER SUMMARY, JULY 2022

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

PRAYER CONCERNS

REV. DAVID CALLIES (Emeritus, Brentwood, TN)
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)
REV. GIL PINGEL (Emeritus, Chattanooga, TN)

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 REV. WILLIAM (BILL) COUCH (Emeritus, Knoxville, TN) who recently passed away.

CALL UPDATE

ORDAINED MINISTERS

ACCEPTED: **Rev. Chase Lefort**, Candidate CTSFW 2022, accepted the Call to serve as *Pastor to Faith Lutheran Church, Oak Ridge, TN*. Ordination took place at his home congregation in Raleigh, North Carolina on July 17, 2022; Installation is planned for August 7, 2022, 3:00PM at Faith Lutheran Church, Oak Ridge, TN.

PENDING: **Rev. Myles Schultz** (Emeritus, Holiday Island, AR) has been issued a Call to serve as *Pastor to Grace Lutheran Church, Holiday Island, AR*.

Rev. Mark Tooley (Candidate serving as Vacancy Pastor to First Lutheran Church, Harrison, AR) has been issued a call to serve as *Pastor to Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Easton, MD*.

COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

ACCEPTED: **Mrs. Andrea D. Kilpatrick** (Candidate, Little Rock, AR) has accepted a Call to *teach Third Grade at Christ Lutheran Church & School, Little Rock, AR*.

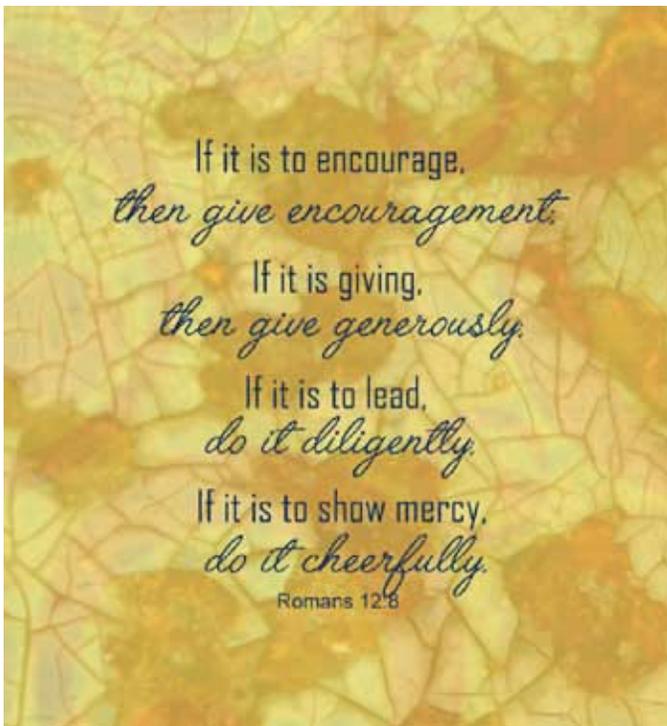
PENDING: **Ms. Linaya Kolke**, (Graduate, Concordia University, Irvine, CA) has been issued a *First Call to serve as DCE at Christ Lutheran Church, Little Rock, AR*.

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
St. Paul Lutheran Church, Sevierville, 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



CONGREGATIONAL MISSION COMMITMENTS

Mission Commitment Receipts as of 6/30/2022 (6 Months)

Anticipated Amount (50% of budget).....\$758,945
Actual Receipts722,329
Over (under) anticipated amount.....**(\$36,616)**

Use of Mission Commitment Receipts (6 Months)

Allocated to Synod for World Missions\$204,199
Allocated to Tanzania 12,500
Retained for District Mission/Ministry Support (70% of receipts).....505,630
Total Receipts \$722,329

Mission Commitment Receipts Prior Year Comparison (6 Months)

Actual Receipts as of 6/30/2022..... \$722,329
Actual Receipts as of 6/30/2021\$735,660
Over (under) prior year receipts **(\$13,331)**



Share your news with us!

Encourager

Topics in 2022

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

- September – Stewardship
- October – Celebrating Lutheran Heritage
- November – Thankfulness
- December – Highlights 2022

Lutheran Witness Supplement

The monthly deadline is the 15th. Please email your original high resolution digital photo (.pdf or .jpg files only) and a short paragraph, to The Lutheran Witness Supplement editor, Judy Otto.
Email: LW@mid-southlcms.com
phone: 662-252-1004. Judy will always acknowledge receipt of your submission if it is sent directly to her.

Mid-South District, Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod

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