

Encourager

AUGUST 2023

Mid-South District LCMS



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

Our humble prayers usually begin with a greeting somewhat like, "Dear Father..." Or, "Dearest Lord, Jesus..." But the Lord's Prayer begins with a testimony to God, and with the benefit of faith, when we say, "Our Father who art in heaven..." By teaching us to pray in this way, Jesus is saying we are at the same time praying to God our Heavenly Father and commend our petitions to God, through Christ, in faith. St John wrote, *"To all who believed in his name, he gave the power to become children of God."* Our Lord Jesus oftentimes proclaimed God as OUR Father. Jesus redeemed us; God, the Father made us for His purpose (Eph 2:10), and the Holy Spirit leads us in our sanctified life by His baptismal grace.

We would never have thought to pray – that is, to ask Almighty God to do something for us, except that Jesus teaches us that our Heavenly Father invites us to speak to Him as a child speaks to our own fathers. He promises to hear us. Who would dream of such a thing... that the God who created the most intricate detail of the entire cosmos would have the time and inclination to answer our slightest cry for grace and mercy?

By human nature, we'd have no expectation that He would hear us. But God doesn't leave us mired in the sins we have all inherited from Adam's sin. He created us as His children. He adopted us into His family in our Baptisms. When our Heavenly Father sent His Son to become the atoning Sacrifice

of God to take away our sins, He joined Himself to our humanity. He sent His Son so we would become His children and eat at His table in eternal glory. St Paul wrote, *"God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'"*

The historical structure of the entire universe focuses on the centrality of God's own Son incarnate. Since we are created and redeemed to be His own children, God willingly hears our prayers. His gracious desire is for us to pray to Him as an earthly father would desire to hear his

child speak to him. Just as little children ask their parents for anything they need, we can ask for God's providence in all we need from our Heavenly Father. By the grace of God in Christ Jesus, we've gone from being enemies of God to being His dear children by His grace.

Our Heavenly Father is troubled if we don't pray. We've been called by God to help form those precious lives of our children whom He has entrusted to our care. Because we've dedicated ourselves to Christian education, we have been empowered, engaged, and equipped with all the powerful and eternally necessary tools to bring God's Word into those precious lives that they cannot get anywhere else.

As Christian parents, grandparents, and interested members of the body of Christ, we can (and should) introduce these children to a close and lasting relationship with God. We can (and should) tell them of an unending love from God in Christ. He is still the only One who suffered and died so that they can have life everlasting in Him.

Our Heavenly Father desires for us to teach the next generation about His Son's incarnation, suffering, death, and resurrection for us poor sinners. Everything that is needed to be done was done for our salvation by our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. One of the greatest gifts we can have and share in this life is the

gift of a healthy marriage, and in accordance to God's grace and will, to raise children in the Christian faith.

Recently, a group from our office went to view the movie, *Sound of Freedom*, produced by Sante Fe Films and Angels Studio Productions. *Sound of Freedom* is a powerful film based on a true story that depicts the remarkable journey of Tim Ballard, a former Homeland Security agent who begins a battle against human trafficking. His relentless pursuit of justice exposes the dark underbelly of this global crime. The true story left an indelible impact on us as viewers and a deeper resolve in the fight against human trafficking as was noted in one of the Resolutions from our 2021 District Convention. That Resolution has now made it to the Synod Convention in Milwaukee this summer.

That being said, in 2006, Tim Ballard went on his first rescue mission to find victims of human trafficking, posing as a sex tourist, in order to infiltrate a child sex trafficking ring in Colombia. His efforts were largely successful with the rescue of dozens of little children and the arrest of their traffickers. Tim Ballard eventually

left his government position and founded Operation Underground Railroad (O.U.R.) in 2013. He and his network of concerned people collaborated with law enforcement worldwide to conduct rescue missions, gather evidence, and support international efforts to bring about the prosecution of human traffickers.

The story depicting Tim's unwavering determination was to find "the one child." It is based on the true pursuit of a child named Gardy. In the film's beginning, real security camera footage shows various scenes of child kidnappings. Such incidents do occur in the realm of human trafficking. According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, reports of human trafficking have been documented in all 50 states! Predators have been documented as taking on various forms



including soccer coaches, trusted teachers, neighbors, uncles, aunts, and in some cases, parents.

The importance of being aware of child trafficking or any form of human trafficking as a crisis is of utmost importance for us – not only in our nation, but especially for us in the Christian Church. *The Sound of Freedom* serves as a powerful catalyst, inspiring viewers to take action. This film shines a bright, laser-like light on the harsh reality of not only human trafficking, but also highlights the precious gift of the

nuclear family designed for us by our Heavenly Father and a family that is seemingly in danger of assault on many fronts.

Our prayers for preservation of the traditional nuclear family, for the protection of our children's next generation, and the end of the exploitation of any human life – especially our young children – will be heard by our Heavenly Father. God's children are not for sale! It's not only a line from the movie, *Sound of Freedom*, it is our fervent prayer in our role as parents and members of the

body of Christ, the Holy Christian Church. Pray, teach, lead, and guide our next generation in the safety and place of the family – the family in our homes and the family in our churches.

Your servant in Christ +
Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola



Welcome to the Mid-South District



The Rite of Installation was held for the Rev. Jeremy McDonald as he became the Pastor for Zion Lutheran Church, Ulm and Our Savior Lutheran Church, Brinkley/Rich, Arkansas. Rev. McDonald was originally ordained into the office of Holy Ministry as an Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) and decided to attend the residential seminary at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, receiving his Masters of Divinity (MDiv) this Spring. Pictured with him are (Front L-R): Rev. Jim Belles, Grace Celebration, Cordova, TN; President Roger Paavola; Rev. Jeremy McDonald, Rev. Kent Schaff, Grace Lutheran, Little Rock; Rev. Stewart Marshall, Trinity Lutheran, Pine Bluff; Rev. Kevin Conger, Hope Lutheran, Jacksonville. (Middle row L-R) Rev. Mark Goble, Christ the King, Memphis; Rev. Chuck Neugebauer, Christ the King; Rev. David Vandercook, Shepherd of Peace, Maumelle and Trinity, North Little Rock; Rev. Bryan Payne, Missionary to The Southeast of Lake Victoria Diocese, Tanzania; (Back Row L-R) Rev. Kory Janneke, St Matthew's Lutheran, Conway; Rev. Emil Woerner, Friends in Christ, Bryant, AR; and Rev. Donald White, St John's Lutheran Church, Stuttgart, AR.



The Rite of Ordination and Installation was held for Rev. Jacob Childers on Sunday July 9, 2023 at Grace Lutheran Church, Knoxville. Pastor Childers was Called to become the Associate Pastor for Grace Lutheran after completing his Master's of Divinity from Concordia Seminary, St Louis this Spring. Joining in the service were (Front L-R: Rev. Chase Lefort, Faith, Oak Ridge; Rev. Phil Bohlken, Emeritus, Knoxville; Rev. Jason Cashmer, Christ the King, Southgate Michigan; Rev. Jacob Childers, Rev. Terry Cashmer, Emeritus, Christ the King, Southgate Michigan; and Rev. Shea Pennington, St. Stephens, Hickory, N.C.. (Back Row): Rev. George Smith, Faith, Oak Ridge; Rev. Paul Muench, Emeritus, Knoxville; Rev. David Ziehr, St. Stephens, Hickory, N.C. ; Rev. David Graves, St Paul, Wartburg; Rev. Bill Ondracka, Christus Victor, Knoxville; Rev. David Lampman, Emiritus, Crossville; Rev. Danny Anderson, Grace, Knoxville; Rev. Steve Skov, Emeritus, Knoxville; Rev. Roger Reckling, Emeritus, Knoxville; Rev. Paul Kritsch, Chapel of the Good Shepherd, Sharps Chapel; and Rev. Richard Elseroad, Grace, Knoxville.

Welcome to the Mid-South District

The **Rite of Installation** was held for **The Rev. Clarence Martin** at Messiah Lutheran Church on July 23, 2023. Pictured are (Front L-R) Rev. Jim Belles, Grace Celebration, Cordova; President Roger Paavola; Rev. Clarence Martin; Rev. Russell Belisle, Cross of Calvary, Memphis. (Back L-R) Rev. William Zwick, Memphis; Rev. Neil Vanderbush, Emeritus, Memphis; Rev. Mark Goble, Christ the King, Memphis; and Rev. Clayton Seller, Faith, Collierville.



Lutherans Connect to Deal with Disaster!

On July 18, Jan Simko, Mid-South District Disaster Relief Coordinator, was shocked by what she saw on a weather channel. Mayfield, Kentucky, was flooded—a community she and her Lutheran Early Response Team (LERT) had served in the aftermath of a devastating tornado in December of 2021, forming lasting friendships with those they met.

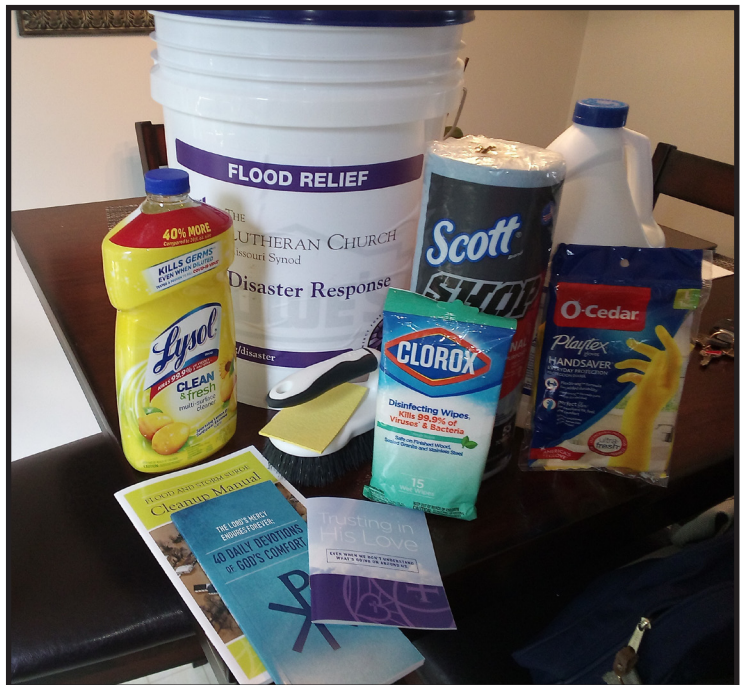
Jan remembered Bryce Cramer, LERT chainsaw trainer, telling her about an LWML member in Illinois who had 80 flood buckets—thoughtfully packed with essentials like bleach, rubber gloves, sanitizer, Lysol cleaner, a scrub brush and other cleaning supplies. Jan jumped into action, contacting Bryce, who asked Pastor Stephen at his House Ministry in Mayfield if the buckets would be welcome. They would—but were needed within 24 hours.

Lutherans quickly connected with Lutherans, forming a chain from Mary Hamilton, the bucket lady in Red Bud, IL, through Bryce, and from Jan through Pastor David Appold, St. Paul LCMS in Paducah, KY, who assembled his LERT crew to unload the buckets Bryce delivered next morning—and distribute them where most needed: 51 buckets to grateful Mayfield residents, and 25 buckets to families in Fancy Farm, KY, where His House Ministry has a school.

And along the way, the LERT team also cleaned up some tree damage for their Mayfield friends and neighbors.

Later, Jan connected the dots and marveled: “I live in Crossville, TN, Bryce lives in southern Illinois, Mary works at the International Center in St Louis, MO, and of course St. Paul members from Paducah and Mayfield, KY—and all of us came together to help! To God be the Glory!”

What’s in the bucket? Picture right: Bleach, rubber gloves, Clorox sanitizer, scrub brush, sponge, Lysol cleaner, shop quality paper towels, 3 Devotionals and the bucket. Not pictured is glass cleaner.





LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

*Uncovering the Shadow World
of Human Trafficking*

**SAT. SEPT. 30, 2023
9 AM - 1 PM**

HOLY TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH

1101 W. HUDSON / ROGERS, AR

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.

District and Thrivent Send Hundreds to See *Sound of Freedom*

The recently released film *Sound of Freedom* has opened eyes and stirred hearts across the nation regarding the horrific reality of human trafficking, especially for the most vulnerable victims: innocent children. The film's overriding message that "God's children are not for sale" comes at a time when the Mid-South District is actively engaged in raising awareness about human trafficking, following a resolution passed by the delegation of the 2021 District Convention. In conjunction with this ongoing awareness effort, the Mid-South District, in partnership with Thrivent, set aside grant funds to reimburse our LCMS congregations that coordinated groups

to see the film *Sound of Freedom* throughout the month of July. Just as the public response to the film was overwhelming, the response to the District's offer was very positive. Over 350 people from 20 Mid-South congregations went to see the film through the District's promotional offer. A few of those groups shared photos, as shown here.

The Mid-South District was pleased to make this opportunity available as an encouragement for Lutherans to see this important film. For those who have not been able to see the film in theaters, it will be available for streaming on the Angel Studios app this fall.



Trinity Lutheran in Mena, AR



Grace Celebration in Cordova, TN



Ladies Bible Study from Bethlehem Lutheran
in Johnson City, TN



Redeemer Lutheran in Nashville, TN



Mid-South District Staff and Families

FAITH IN ACTION

Disaster Response Team Is Ready to Roll!

Communities across the Mid-South District have certainly experienced their share of natural disasters over the last few years. From tornadoes in Kentucky, to deadly flash floods in middle Tennessee and another round of tornadoes in Arkansas and west Tennessee, lives have been forever touched by nature's devastating power. As Christians, we see those tragic moments as opportunities to touch lives in a positive way: through love, compassion and acts that exemplify the hands and feet of Jesus at work. That is why numerous congregations across the Mid-South District have formed Lutheran Early Response Teams (LERT). For the LERT at Faith Lutheran Church in Hopkinsville, Kentucky—aptly named Faith In Action—a unique arsenal of equipment is giving their response capabilities a huge boost!

Equipped with a Bobcat MT100 Mini Skid Steer with bucket and root grapple (and a trailer to transport it), the Faith In Action team can take on a variety of heavy-duty jobs. Following unusually strong storms this summer, the team has already assisted numerous homeowners with removal



A Bobcat MT100 Mini Skid Steer with bucket and root grapple allows the Faith In Action team to take on a variety of heavy-duty jobs.

of trees downed by high winds. In May, the team received a disaster response trailer from the Mid-South District, which was generously donated by Christ the King Lutheran Church & School in Memphis after several years of use. The Team Leader, Rev. Trae Fistler, immediately filled the trailer with an array of supplies and equipment

so it would be ready for action at a moment's notice. Everything from chainsaws and tree rigging to yard tools and a generator can now be quickly moved on-site when disaster strikes. These important resources were made possible through a variety of generous grants, including District funds, a Lutheran Disaster Relief grant and assistance from the Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML) for Christ the King's original purchase of the trailer.

Pastor Fistler's Faith In Action Team, with its powerful tools, stands ready for deployment under the guidance of the Mid-South District's Disaster Response Coordinator, Jan Simko. Now when disaster strikes, the District can quickly mobilize not only people, but also important equipment, where they are needed most.



The team recently received a disaster response trailer from the Mid-South District, which was previously donated by Christ the King Lutheran Church & School in Memphis after several years of use.

TANZANIA MISSION TRIP 2023

Church Planting is more than a word in the Southeast of Lake Victoria (SELVD) Lutheran Church of Tanzania, it is a priority. The SELVD area is in two large Governmental Regions, Shinyanga and Simiyu.

Bishop Yohana Nzelu told me *"We have a vision of reaching all wards in these two regions by 2025 and all villages by 2030. It is also a goal and strategy that every district (similar to our circuits) will have a mission week each year to unreached wards and villages."*

Each year the SELVD identifies villages or wards within the two regions that have had little evangelism exposure because of their remote locations and schedules the mission team from the Mid-South District LCMS to go to those areas.

This year the Mid-South District mission team was sent to the Simiyu region. The Simiyu District is made up of five governmental Districts, (like our county system here in the

USA), they are, Baria di, Busega, Itilima, Maswa and Meatu.

Each District is divided into wards. This year the Diocese chose to do their mission week in the

Meatu District, specifically in the Mwabusalu and Mwandoya wards and specifically in villages of Mhumunu, Mwakipugila and Mwaukoli.

The District Pastor in the Meatu District is our old friend Frank Mdindi and joining him from the Meatu District were Pastors Innocent Kimaro, Deus Peter and well as evangelist Hosea Malundu, Vicar Dominic Mmbwambo.



From the Diocese office, Bishop Yohana Nzelu and Assistant Bishop Daniel Mono joined us on this mission along with Pastor Mathias Mesele, and Missionary with Lutheran Bible Translator Tiffany Smith and many others.

Each day we drove to these very remote areas on gravel and dirt roads for 45 minutes to an hour to the location of the day's evangelism. Joining us was the area Pastors and laymen from each of the villages who would lead us to the homes in the area.

Two of these small startup congregations Mhumunu and Mwakipugila had no permanent

building or land to meet in, they were meeting under a tree or in a rented location. In fact, Mhumunu was meeting in a rented cotton warehouse but now could not because cotton was being harvested.

During our week of evangelism 903 were baptized in the villages of Mhumunu, Mwakipugila and Mwaukol during the mission outreach event and Sinema Leo

The District Pastors are making plans to purchase land for the two startup locations.

— Bob Allen



Second Annual Henkel Conference — Aug. 7-8

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.

4.5%

6-MONTH FIXED-RATE TERM NOTE

Minimum \$500 to invest. New money only.

This limited-time offer is available for
Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod:

- ✓ INDIVIDUALS
- ✓ CONGREGATIONS
- ✓ ORGANIZATIONS

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→ where investments build ministry

LCEF is a nonprofit religious organization; therefore, LCEF investments are not FDIC-insured bank deposit accounts. This is not an offer to sell investments, nor a solicitation to buy. LCEF will offer and sell its securities only in states where authorized. The offer is made solely by LCEF's Offering Circular. Investors should carefully read the Offering Circular, which more fully describes associated risks. Rates as of August 2023. Balance restrictions apply. Rates subject to change. Visit lcef.org for details.

2024 Institute on Liturgy Preaching and Church Music

July 9–12, 2024 • Seward, Neb.

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod will host the 2024 Institute on Liturgy, Preaching and Church Music, set for July 9–12, 2024, at Concordia University, Nebraska, Seward, Neb.

The institute returns under the theme, “Songs of Deliverance: Psalms in the Great Congregation.” With the Psalter as its focal point, this conference will feature fresh and perennial topics on music, leadership, preaching, pastoral care, art and spiritual growth in Lutheran worship.

Participants will be able to choose from a variety of instructive and interactive sessions addressing practical topics of interest to musicians, pastors, teachers, interested laypersons and many others. We'll also take up a challenge together: pray all 150 psalms.

More information, including how to register, will be available soon at lcms.org/2024-worship-institute.
<https://calendar.lcms.org/event/2024-institute-on-liturgy-preaching-and-church-music/>



PRAYER SUMMARY, JULY 2023

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 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. 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 the family and friends of Rev. Chad Philipp (Pastor to St. Luke Lutheran Church, DeWitt, AR and St. Paul Lutheran Church, Gillett, AR) who recently passed away.

CALL UPDATE

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 took place 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.
Reverend Jacob Childers, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis has accepted the Call to serve as Associate Pastor to Grace Lutheran Church, Knoxville, TN. Ordination and Installation took place for July 9, 2023.
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 took place 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.

PENDING: **Rev. Donald Hefta**, Emeritus (Hot Springs Village, AR) has received a Call to serve as Pastor to Faith Lutheran Church, Fairfield Bay, AR.

Rev. Dr. Brian Kachelmeier, Pastor to Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church, San Antonio, TX has received a Call to serve as Pastor to Heavenly Host Lutheran Church, Cookeville, TN.

Rev. Adam Gless, Senior Pastor, Zion Lutheran Church, Mayer, MN as received a Call to serve as Senior Pastor to Salem Lutheran Ministries, Springdale, AR.

Rev. William Ringer, Pastor, St. John's Russellville, AR has received a Call to serve as Pastor to St. Paul Lutheran Church, North East, PA.

COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

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

VACANT CONGREGATIONS & MINISTRIES

Heavenly Host Lutheran Church, Cookeville, TN- Pastor ***Pending Call*

Immanuel 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

CONGREGATIONAL MISSION COMMITMENTS

Mission Commitment Receipts as of 6/30/2023 (6 Months)

Anticipated Amount (50% of budget).....\$782,135
Actual Receipts 734,954
Over (under)
anticipated amount (**\$47,181**)

Use of Mission Commitment Receipts (6 Months)

Allocated to Synod for World Missions \$210,070
Allocated to Tanzania 10,417
Retained for District Mission/Ministry
Support (70% of receipts)... 514,468
Total Receipts \$734,954

Mission Commitment Receipts Prior Year Comparison (6 Months)

Actual Receipts as of 6/30/2023.....\$734,954
Actual Receipts as of 6/30/2022.....\$722,329
Over (under) prior year receipts\$12,625

What's New With You?

Encourager Topics in 2023

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.

- 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 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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President
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Executive Director of Mission & Ministry & Executive Director for Schools and Early Childhood
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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

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