

Encourager

AUGUST 2025

Mid-South District LCMS



A Message from
Rev. Dr. Roger
Paavola, President

"MADE GOD IN OUR IMAGE?" *Isaiah 44:6-23*

When we were little tykes, did people see you and saying something like, "You're the spitting image of your father." There's a noticeable connection when others see our expressions, hear us talk, or watch us walk. It emulates one or both of our biological parents. Oftentimes the child isn't quite as excited as the parent that others see or hear the resemblance. But it's there... the nose, the eyes, the mouth, or the voice. Some resemblances are unmistakable. Are there any similarities on your face on your kids or grandkids? If you've heard my daughter often enough, you'll hear my wife's expressions. Where does she get that gift of chatter? Where'd that come from? But, what about God? Have you ever imagined God in a way that expresses our interests or thoughts? How do we see God? If we see God by certain traits, does that feeling create a connection in our relationship to Him?

Like it or not, how we think about God tends to put Him in a box. Yet, as much as our imagination puts God in a box, it shows how we define Him by our thoughts in our activity. But God doesn't always fit in those kinds of defined boxes. He isn't hiding in order to take a sneak peek at us. We can't

adjust God into our way of thinking. If we do, we'd end up creating an idol that is probably not the God of Holy Scripture – at least not fully God as the One revealed or hidden in Scripture. We risk of missing the true character of God when we try to define Him in the finite. So, after watching all that junk on TV that tries to explain God, and listening to philosophers who try to encapsulate Him into a manageable figure, we face this question: Do we try to make God in our image?... or do we accept that we were made in His image?

There's only one true God. All religions do NOT worship the same God. God doesn't like sharing His position of Almighty God with any Tom, Dick, and Harry Wannabes. When Israel created and fashioned idols as objects of worship, God wasn't pleased. He didn't stay silent when it comes the slightest misconception about Him or anyone that tries to replace Him with another object of worship. The prophet Isaiah says, *"This is what the Lord says, Israel's King and Redeemer, the Lord Almighty: I am the first and the last. Apart from Me there is no God."* For our pseudo-religious friends who deny Christ as God in flesh, we're reminded that these are similar

words Jesus used to explain Himself in St John's Revelation.

So, what do we learn from just these few words? We discover a complex God, but a living divinity. That's key! By His means of grace, God gives us His name – Yahweh – to be His children. God Himself is King. Not just the King of some tiny Middle Eastern country, but the King of all creation. He is our Redeemer, the One who paid the price to release all His people from the bondage of sin. He is the Lord Almighty - the YHWH Sabaoth. It means all the elements of the universe submit to His Almighty power. If we meditate on just His names, we will have to wrestle with the mystery of the image of God.

God says He is the first and the last. There was nothing before Him. He is pre-existent of all creation – a mysterious, unexplainable concept. He's self-existent, present in all things, the Great I Am. But what is more, He lasts beyond all other created things – the Last. He is the end of all things, supreme, and totally fulfilling. He is so complete and perfect that nothing can be added or taken away from Him – the full revelation of His power and final authority.

He reminds us, *"Apart from Me there is no God."* So, what do we do with Jesus? He declares many times in the Gospels that He is the Great I Am. Are there two Gods? No, Jesus - the Redeemer who walked among us says, *"I and the Father are One."* He is the only begotten Son of our Heavenly Father – the visible image of God who took on our human nature in order to bring salvation to us. We explain what Jesus meant by what He said to His disciples, *"Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with Me, and I will give to everyone according to what they have done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I, Jesus, have sent My angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the bright Morning Star."*

God has Isaiah stand in witness of the One true eternal God, asking, *"Is there any God besides Me? No, there is no other Rock. I know not one."* So, we have another description for our visual references. God is a Rock, in Scripture a symbol of strength and solid footing, and unchanging steadfastness. It means God is our foundation for life. "He alone is my rock and my salvation. He is my fortress and I will not be shaken," writes the Psalmist.

In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, he tells of the Israelites wandering in the desert, telling of another Rock. He writes, *"They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink, for they drank from the spiritual Rock that accompanied them, and that Rock was Christ."* Notice Paul didn't say the Rock symbolized or resembled Christ, but that the Rock was Christ.

That's offensive stuff to our post-modern society. At best, we're mocked if we speak of only one true God. Secular society wants many ways to get to God. But Jesus said, *"No one comes to the Father, except through Me."* If Jesus is denied as being God with us, He's saying we have no relationship with the Heavenly Father. In other words, we don't worship the same God as all those others outside of Christianity. Denying the Triune God, denies the God of Holy Scripture.

Misguided Jews made idols out of wood, and rocks. God became jealous for His people. They made gods they could control. What are idols? We know the idols in the past. But what about today? Aren't idols simply a reflection of the frailty of its human creators? Ultimately, an idol is bound to created things... carved from wood (as a beautiful piece of art as it may be) is no more powerful than the pile of ashes that would be left behind if it burned up.

What does this all have to do with Church Planting? Everything! The Mid-South District is scattered by an estimated over 3 million people who have not heard about Jesus. They struggle with suffering, defeat, disappointments, and troubles just like anyone else. They fashion idols to deal with their reality, but their struggle has no ending but will claim them as just another fatality of a conflicted world. Secularism has wrapped its cords around the church. Teaching our youth strange immorality, spiritual decay, and manipulation of God-given gifts is commonplace. Our churches and school experience increasing repression and secular mandates.

But modern idols are not always made of wood or stone. They're things others hold as more valuable than God. Think of our society's idols: INDIVIDUALISM - my thoughts and ideas supersede what God and His Word say about Him. DEEDS - If I do good deeds and live a pious life, will God let me into heaven. OPULENCE - money, popularity, and

power that affect our decisions, rob our perspective, and move us to serve opulence over God. LEISURE - If I can't have fun doing it, it's not worth it. Do we want to go to church and Sunday School or is the Sunday paper, sleeping in, the golf course, a fishing hole, or kid's Sunday sports programs more important? Yet, these idols are nothing in comparison to the sport's stars, Hollywood actors, or business moguls we try to emulate. We even have TV shows called American Idols, right?

Isaiah pleaded with Israel, *"God save us!! Remember these things, O Jacob, for you are My servant," says the Lord. I have made you, you are My servant, O Israel. I will not forget you.*" It seems we hear God letting His people off the hook. *"Yeah, I know you're doing dumb stuff when it comes to our relationship, but I won't forget you."* But God is faithful and wants to save His people. He made us and wants to preserve us. He's not some egocentric demagogue who demands our worship. He simply wants to give us His love and serve us now and forever. He gives us everything – starting with our life and on up to all the way to eternity. God wants us in a perfect and everlasting relationship with Him. But where's the problem? We're sinners. We inherited a sinful nature from our first parents. We've looked and acted like them ever since. But it's why we have Jesus Christ that's so different from all the rest of this world's religions.

But God's love is exceptional. If we don't always put Him first on our worship list, He still loves us and wants us back. His deep love for us caused Him to send His Son to earn forgiveness for us – not only our sinful nature, but the thoughts, words, and deeds that are the actual sins we do against His command. Isaiah says it this way, *"I have swept away your offences like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you."* Our sin moves us away from God. Our honest confession and God's Absolution removes those sins and returns us to a right relationship with Him. Isaiah concludes, saying, *"Sing for joy, O heavens, for the Lord has done this. Shout aloud, O earth beneath. Burst into song, you mountains, you forests, and all your trees, for the Lord has redeemed you, as He displayed His glory in all of Israel."*

Only the God who does all this for us is worthy of our praise and worship. Our works or bank account will save us from a meaningless existence. Can our momentary pleasures bring us eternal life? For

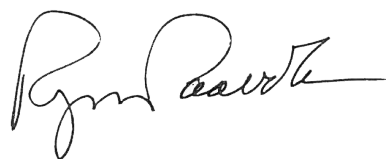
that matter, is there ANY other god that can save us from eternal death? No! Only the Christ of God, Jesus Christ won this when He became sin for us and suffered God's wrath our sins deserved. He's the One and only true and living God.

Is there a god we worship that is so small that it can fit inside our tiny, little heads? Or is our God the historic, revealed God of Scripture? Philosophers, TV producers, and modernists have fashioned a god that has an uncanny resemblance to the most common members of our human race. Unfortunately, the god most people want is a god who will give them everything they want without limitations – health, money, sex, power, fame, or all of the above.

Pray for church planting and education ministry planting. Spread of the Gospel of Christ to be a new reality so the blood bought news of life, forgiveness, and eternal salvation can be heard. Share the Gospel of Christ where it can have free course and understanding brought to the hearts and ears of those whom God would place along our paths we travel. Do you want to plant a church? How about a school, a virtual school, or an early childhood center? Let's do it together. Let's do it the right way, with the right efforts for the sake of Christ Jesus who gave His life for us and entrusted our work to our Spirit-guided duty, privilege, and mission. God offers us the "seed." He will provide the growth.

The God most of the world doesn't want, amazingly, still wants them. He spared no limits. He spread His arms across a rough wooden beam of the cross we deserved and had His hands and feet nailed to a piece of His creation, just so He could win us back with Himself forever! This is the mysterious God of glory, our God who cannot be fully known by the carnal mind. Yet, He comes in mystery in His Word... to give us His true body and blood in, under, and with a tiny sip of wine and small piece of bread for the forgiveness of our sins. This is our God in flesh who gave everything for us to be like Him and be with Him onto life everlasting. Share His message.

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





The Rite of Installation was held on Saturday, July 5, 2025 for the **Rev. Andrew Abraham** as Senior Pastor of **Emmanuel Lutheran Church**, Hermitage, TN. Pictured are (Front L-R) Rev. David McMinn, McMinnville, TN; Rev. Phillip Young, Bellevue, TN; President Roger Paavola; Rev. Timothy Hunze, Hermitage; Rev. Andrew Abraham; Rev. Nathan Jensen; Burns, TN; Rev. Keith Knopp, Emeritus, Crossville, TN; Rev. Randy Sakach, White House, TN. Back (L-R) Rev. Eric Phillips, Nashville; Rev. Alan Thoe, Murfreesboro; Rev. Curt Hoover, Thompsons Station, TN; Rev. Teshome Alebachew, Makane Yesus, Nashville; Rev. Ken Shaw, Gallatin, TN; Rev. Keith Enko, Emeritus, Hermitage; Rev. Carl Wenck, Emeritus, Murfreesboro, TN; Rev. Chris Decknatel, Emeritus; Rev. Gregory Bauch, Madison, TN.

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>

Back to School:

Growing in Grace and Knowledge

As summer draws to a close and the familiar sounds of school bells begin to echo through hallways once again, Lutheran schools across our nation prepare to welcome students back into environments where faith and learning unite in beautiful harmony. This new school year brings with it fresh opportunities, new challenges, and countless moments for growth in both wisdom and grace.

A Foundation Built on Faith

Lutheran education stands on the solid foundation that all truth belongs to God. As we prepare our students for another year of discovery, we remember that education is not merely about filling minds with facts, but about nurturing hearts that seek to understand God's world and their place within it. Our classrooms become sacred spaces where academic excellence meets spiritual formation, where questioning is encouraged, and where faith grows alongside knowledge.

Embracing New Beginnings

Every new school year represents a fresh chapter in the story God is writing in each student's life. Whether welcoming kindergarteners taking their first steps into formal education or high school seniors preparing for their final year, we celebrate the unique gifts and potential that each child brings to our school community.

The nervousness of new beginnings is natural, but we can find comfort in knowing that God goes before us, preparing the way. He has equipped each student with unique talents and abilities, and He has placed caring teachers and staff members in their paths to guide and encourage them.

Growing in Wisdom and Stature

Lutheran education recognizes that true education involves the whole person - mind, body, and spirit. As students engage with challenging coursework, participate in extracurricular activities, and build friendships, they are growing in wisdom and understanding, just as Jesus did in His youth.



Our teachers serve as more than instructors; they are mentors who model Christ's love while challenging students to reach their full potential. They create environments where it's safe to ask difficult questions, where mistakes become learning opportunities, and where every student is valued as a beloved child of God.

Building Community and Character

The relationships formed within our school walls extend far beyond the classroom. Students learn to work together, to support one another, and to celebrate each other's successes. They discover that true leadership means serving others, and that the greatest among us are those who love most deeply.

In our Lutheran schools, character development is woven into every aspect of education. Students learn not just what to think, but how to think with integrity, compassion, and wisdom. They are encouraged to use their gifts not for personal gain alone, but for the betterment of their communities and the glory of God.

Facing Challenges with Courage

The path of learning is not always smooth, and students will face challenges that test their resolve and character. In these moments, Lutheran education provides more than academic support - it offers the assurance that God walks with us through every difficulty.

When assignments seem overwhelming, when friendships face strain, or when the future feels uncertain, students can draw strength from their faith community. They learn that perseverance is a virtue, that seeking help is a sign of wisdom, and that their identity is secure in Christ, regardless of their performance.

Teachers as Servants and Leaders

Our dedicated teachers and staff members deserve special recognition as they prepare for another year of service. They have answered God's call to shape young minds and hearts, accepting the sacred responsibility of education. Their work extends far beyond lesson plans and grade books - they are planting seeds of knowledge, faith, and character that will bear fruit for generations to come.

To our teachers: You are loved, appreciated, and supported. Your dedication does not go unnoticed, and your influence reaches far beyond what you may ever realize. God has placed you in these positions for such a time as this.

A Prayer for the New School Year

As we embark on this new academic journey together, let us join in prayer:

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the gift of education and the opportunity to grow in knowledge and wisdom. Bless our students as they begin this new school year. Fill them with curiosity, courage, and compassion. Help them to see learning as a way to better understand Your creation and their purpose within it.

Bless our teachers and staff members. Give them strength, patience, and wisdom as they guide and nurture our students. Help them to be instruments of Your love and grace in the classroom and beyond. Bless our families as they support their children's educational journey. Strengthen the partnership between home and school, and help us all to work together for the good of every child.

May this school year be filled with growth, discovery, and joy. May our students not only excel academically but also grow in their relationship with You. Guide us all as we seek to serve You through the ministry of education. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Looking Forward with Hope

As we stand on the threshold of a new school year, we do so with hope and anticipation. We know that God has good plans for each student who will walk through our doors. We trust that He will provide the wisdom, strength, and resources needed for every challenge that lies ahead.

Lutheran education is not just about preparing students for careers or college - it's about preparing them for life. It's about helping them discover their unique calling and equipping them to serve God and others with excellence and integrity.

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.'" - Isaiah 55:8-9

The new school year awaits with all its possibilities. Let us embrace it with faith, hope, and love, knowing that God will bless our efforts and use them for His glory. Welcome back to school - may this year be filled with growth, discovery, and the joy that comes from learning in the light of God's love.

— Michelle Fischer

Executive Director for Education, Youth & Family



New Podcast from Faith Lutheran in Thompson's Station

Rev. Curt Hoover of Faith Lutheran Church in Thompson's Station, Tennessee invites you to listen in and share the new podcast, *Anchored in Christ*. Launched in May, the podcast was announced in a press release that explains the program's mission is "to offer the depth, clarity, and comfort of confessional Lutheran theology in a format accessible to anyone—from lifelong LCMS members to those who've never heard the term before." A recipient of funding through the Mid-South District's GROW Grant program, the *Anchored in Christ* podcast is hosted by Pastor Hoover and veteran radio personality Doug Hannah. The podcast is available now on all major platforms, with new episodes planned for regular release. To learn more and listen to the trailer, visit anchoredpod.org.



OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE WITH LCMS INTERNATIONAL MISSION

Is the Lord calling you to serve in Africa? LCMS International Mission is looking for people from all walks of life to join our team as volunteer coordinators, business managers, theological educators, and more. To help you discern, consider joining the [Missionary Formation Trip](#), November 4-14, 2025, to explore ongoing international mission work in Kenya and Tanzania and prayerfully consider the opportunities to serve. To make it accessible to potential missionary candidates, the total cost for both ground expenses and airfare is \$1,000. If this is of interest to you, please apply today at servenow.lcms.org – the deadline to start the application process is **August 17, 2025**.

SAVE THE DATE!

3L SUMMIT

LIVING YOUR FAITH
LOVING GOD'S PEOPLE
LEARNING TO DISCIPLE

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 20
@ GRACE LUTHERAN IN LITTLE ROCK

A FREE MINISTRY EVENT
Watch for more in the September Encourager
and at mid-southlcms.org

District Welcomes New Staff Member to Education, Youth & Family Ministry Department

The Mid-South District is pleased to welcome **April Jones** as its newest staff member! April is stepping into the role of Administrative Assistant, working with Michelle Fischer, the District's Executive Director for Education, Youth and Family Ministry. A seasoned education professional, April taught in Lutheran schools for over 16 years, most recently teaching and serving as the Admissions Director for Immanuel Lutheran School in Memphis. For her first days on staff, April worked alongside former Administrative Assistant, Julie Tyler, who is now enjoying full-time retirement. We are excited to have April join our team—and grateful to have had Julie re-join for the last year after retiring in late 2023. May both April and Julie be blessed on their new paths!





2025 Mission Trip to Tanzania

The last week of May 2025 we left our hotel in the small town of Maswa for an hour drive to the small village of Mwanghonoli consisting of 30 to 40 mud homes. It was a rough drive on gravel, dirt roads and trails. We drove to a large open field in the village and met up with the rest of our team; Pastor Elibariki Nathaniel and an old friend and SELVD worker, Ruben Lanza. Ruben runs the mobile movie van called Sinema Leo which means movie today. This wonderful ministry goes into remote areas and sets up a screen made up of tarp and hangs from two metal poles. It is powered by a generator. They set up in the open areas and show a movie of the life of Jesus in Swahili. They had arrived the night before our visit and started showing the movie. They continued to show it during our ministry time there.

Our group formed into 4 teams, my wife, Susie, was with assistant Bishop Odolous Gyunda and a young doctor who was a member of the local church, Emmanuel Stephen. He knew the area and was our guide. I was teamed with Maswa District Pastor Damiano Makala and a local guide. The other teams were the Sinema Leo team and the last team was Pastor Wilson Francis from the Malapaca community congregation that was partnering to plant this congregation. For three days we went from boma to boma, home to home, in the village and the surrounding areas. We shared the good news wherever we went, on the trails, and in the public areas. At the end of 3 days in the village we had baptized 353 men, women and children. They were invited to join the local church being planted.

The small congregation of 10 to 15 families was so happy. They had begun working on a church building in the few months before our visit. They cleared the land, dug and laid the foundation. They made mud bricks and build the walls themselves. It is important to have a place to worship during the rainy season. From donations we were able to help them purchase wood for the rafters and steel for the roof. A month after leaving them, I was sent picture showing their church building with a new roof. This church was built by the members of the new Lutheran Church in Mwanghonoli in partnership with the Mid-South District. Thank you for your support in planting this new church. We moved to another area village, Mwabulimbu, for the remainder of the week and worked with a small group of believers. They are hoping to find a location for a church building. Over 300 were baptized.

We are making plans for next years Mid-South District mission trip to Tanzania. Come join us! If you have questions contact Bob Allen at 270-535-7370.





LERT Assists in Aftermath of Storm Hitting Concordia

May 15-16, 2025 significant storms wrecked havoc across Midwestern and Southeastern United States. These storms spawned 60 reported tornadoes. One of which hit Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. LERT volunteers quickly jumped into action to clear dangerous and downed trees across campus so they the seminary could reschedule their commencement exercises for the following day. Our LERT volunteers jumped into action and made the property safe and accessible to move forward with commencement. Over the next week, LERT teams cleared over 150 trees from the property.

The following was shared by Concordia Seminary: *In the immediate aftermath, students, staff and volunteers worked side by side to clear debris, reopen walkways and prepare the campus for the rescheduled celebration. Support also came from beyond the campus. Lutheran Early Response Teams (LERT), in partnership with LCMS Disaster Response, quickly mobilized to assist in the cleanup. These teams are part of a national network organized by The Lutheran*

Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) to train and deploy volunteers in response to disasters across the country.

“We do this because we’re blessed, and we believe we are called to be the hands and feet of Jesus. We really take that to heart,” said Kris Schuldt, leader of the LERT team on campus. “We serve out of joy and gratitude, and we travel across the country to help wherever we’re needed.”

As the cleanup efforts continue in these next days and weeks, the Seminary community is deeply grateful for the LERT teams, for one another and for the clear evidence of God’s provision in challenging times.

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” (Psalm 46:1 ESV)

In Christ,
Rev. Trae Fistler

Editors note: more photos online at <https://mid-southlcms.org/lert-update/>

Prayer Summary, July 2025

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.

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 KOBBS (Emeritus, Russellville, AR)
REV. PAUL KRITSCH (Chapel of the Good Shepherd, Sharps Chapel, TN)
REV. DR. LEE HAGAN (District President, Missouri District)
JERRY SCHEER (Lafe, AR)
MRS. NANCY CALLIES (wife of Rev. David Callies, Emeritus, Former District President MDS)
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)

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 took place July 5, 2025.*
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 took place July 13, 2025.*
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 planned for August 18, 2025, 7:00PM*

PENDING: **Rev. Wille Grills**, Pastor to Zion Lutheran Church of Avilla, Alexander, AR, has received a Call to serve as Pastor to Immanuel Lutheran Church, Waterloo, IL.

Rev. David Vandercook, Pastor to Shepherd of Peace Lutheran Church, Maumelle, AR & Trinity Luther Church, North Little Rock, AR has received a Call to serve as Pastor to a four-point parish in the North Dakota District and a second Call to a dual parish in the Nebraska District.

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

Rev. Timothy Sheridan, Pastor to St. Luke Lutheran Church, Harrison, MI, returned the Call to serve as Pastor to Concordia Lutheran Church, Kingsport, TN.

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 planned for August 10, 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 took place June 29, 2025.*

Ms. Kayla Johnson (Graduate, Concordia Nebraska) accepted the Call to serve as a teacher to the Early Childhood Center at Christ the King Lutheran Church & School, Memphis, TN. *Commissioning and Installation is planned for August 3, 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

Christ Lutheran School, Little Rock, AR – Early Childhood Director

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 6/30/2024 (6 Months)

Anticipated Amount
(50% of budget)\$814,348
Actual Receipts 783,925
Over (under)
anticipated amount .. (\$30,423)

Use of Mission Commitment Receipts (6 Months)

Allocated to Synod for World
Missions\$222,678
Allocated to Tanzania12,500
Retained for District Mission/Ministry
Support (70% of receipts) ... 548,748
Total Receipts \$783,925

Mission Commitment Receipts Prior Year Comparison (6 Months)

Actual Receipts as of
6/30/2025.....\$783,925
Actual Receipts as of
6/30/2024.....\$776,448
Over (under) prior year
receipts \$7,477

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. Here's a look at the upcoming topics for 2025
Sep. — Stewardship
Oct. — Lutheran Tradition
Nov. — Thankful Hearts
Dec. — Highlights of 2025

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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