

# Encourager

Mid-South District LCMS | September 2020



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



Stewardship! When pastors dare tip their toe into the murky waters of the subject, everyone in the pew (or via Zoom and live streaming these days!) will think, “Stewardship! That’s about money again!” Unfortunately, in many places that’s not far from the truth. Stewardship in most places is spelled *Steward\$hip*. But, there is a truth that Christian stewardship and stewardship leaders should embrace to erase the fear of speaking about stewardship, and rely on the content of the subject from Holy Scripture. Stewardship is about money, life, work, relationships, and the Gospel – among other things.

Why? From the very beginning of Scripture, we learn of our existence and provision by divine love. God created all things – visible and invisible – including us. As a result, we have to acknowledge

that God owns everything! Yet, in His divine wisdom (somehow) He reasoned that those whom He created in His image could somehow manage all of that for Him. The first chapter of Genesis (1:27) says, “*God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created Him; male and female He created them.*” Moses was inspired to pen the word, *betzelem*, that roughly means “to cut out an image.” It is also meant as a “reflection.” We (all humans) were created or cut out in the image of God. This understanding gives us a footing to understand Christian and biblical stewardship.

Many years ago, Sears and Montgomery Ward retailers used to send out catalogues that featured the hundreds of items they offered for mail-order sales. So, oftentimes, instead of buying dolls at the local H. S. Kress or Ben Franklin dime stores, girls would cut out pictures from the catalogue to play “paper dolls.” Those were images cut from the Sears catalogue (last year’s version, because you couldn’t touch the new one). The paper dolls weren’t the models who posed for the pictures, but were an image of a real person.

God defined image-bearing when He said, “*Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion*

over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Genesis 1:28). It's a command to Adam and his descendants to procreate because, as images of our Creator, we, as stewards of God's creation, should be creative. Certainly, our stewardship isn't just about procreating in the narrow sense, but, in a wider sense also means caring for all of creation that has been entrusted to our stewardship.

This is stewardship! Dr. Harold Senkbeil, in his book, *The Care of Souls: Cultivating a Pastor's Heart*, uses an analogy that applies to our Christian understanding of stewardship. He writes, "It [stewardship or sanctification] is a question of proximity, you could say. Picture sitting around a campfire. The closer you are to the fire, the better you can see and the warmer you are. It is no different when it comes to sanctification; proximity to the source of our sanctification is essential. Since Jesus is our holiness, whenever He draws near to people and they to Him, they are sanctified for service to God and others. The further away they are, the more their hearts and lives will be defiled and their bodies contaminated by the influence of the ungodly world, their own sinful nature, and of course the power and influence of the Evil One."

At least for Senkbeil and for Lutheran Christians, sanctification (being made holy by the power of God's Spirit) and stewardship are synonymous terms – or are symbiotic terms. The stewards (us), are redeemed and restored through the redemptive work of Jesus. Christian stewards are sanctified and restored to the work God assigns to us that reflects the image of God to our neighbor. What Senkbeil posits is that if the Christian steward is to be a reflection of Christ, it will require being closer to God than those who offer humanitarian "good deeds".

St. Paul illustrates this point in his letter to the Ephesian congregation: *"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which*

*God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."* (Ephesians 2:8-10) Grace and faith are there, but notice the underlined words. God is even the source of any good works we do. He sends His gifts in our vertical relationship to Him while our horizontal relationship with our neighbor extends the God-given gifts through us as our rightful duty. As a result, it is still God's grace and His gift of faith to us that is at work. Understood in this manner, good deeds offered in faithful Christian stewardship isn't a command of Law, but an extension of Gospel.



That is why stewardship that is close to the Source, can only operate through the gifts God extends through His Church and the Means of His Grace! Humanitarian efforts apart from God's way, is not stewardship, as God is not connected to it on either the giving end or the extending end. So, stewardship within and emanating from the Church cannot be generated through any methods or programs. Dr. Senkbeil argues that true stewardship will only reflect the Source to Whom we acknowledge our proximity in doing the work! Christian stewardship should always clearly reflect who is the Owner of all things.

Dr. Senkbeil drives home the point: "Sanctification always revolves around proximity. Wherever Jesus is, there is actual righteousness and true holiness. By faith in Him we are to participate here on earth in His divine righteousness and holiness. His blood speaks a better word than the blood of Abel; it cleanses not merely bodies, but hearts and souls, giving them a good and clean conscience before God Himself. The presence of Jesus sanctifies the steward."

Smudged mirrors and worn out paper dolls are not a good reflection of what God wants the world to see in Christian stewardship. Stewards are to un-smudge the mirrors and reflect the love of God to all those around. Stewards should have more substance than the paper dolls cut from the Sears catalogue.

Christian stewardship will not jump out from that perfect stewardship program. Senkbeil says, "There is no such thing." The Mid-South District has used many programs that assist in Christian stewardship study, such as Consecrated

Stewards and Financial Peace University. Some others have more glaring weaknesses that prevent us from using them. But, none of these tools build stewardship. People use tools to build. As Dr. Senkbeil notes, "Faithful steward leading is really a matter of cultivating a steward's heart. No program can change a heart. It is only God's Word of Law and Gospel rightly distinguished and applied, that changes hearts." Stewards of God's gifts are faithful members of the body of Christ who reflect Him to the world. This axiom leaves us with the obvious question: Is one's stewardship of any and all of God's gifts a "barometer" of that person's proximity to the Chief Steward who offered His life for us all?

Your servant in Christ +  
Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola



## 2020 Fall Pastors Conference Registration Deadline September 8

The Mid-South District will host the 2020 Fall Pastors Conference in Memphis October 19-21 at the Hilton Hotel. The registration deadline is September 8. Online registration (<https://mid-southlcms.org/2020-fall-pastors-conference/>) for the conference is now available on the District website, along with more details about the event. Please note the conference dates in your calendar and register to attend this special gathering!

## Mid-South District Students Receive \$81,000 in Financial Aid

*By: Angela Fowler, Executive Director for Business and Finance*

One of the highlights of the year is the awarding of financial assistance to Mid-South District students who are preparing for full-time church work. Our District is blessed to have financial resources to help with tuition while these students are attending one of the seminaries or a Concordia University.

The number of applicants this year was both exciting and challenging—exciting that 11 individuals from the Mid-South District are attending a seminary or university during the 2020-21 school year with an additional 4 students pursuing degrees through alternate route programs. The good news is that these students will receive \$81,000 in awards this school year!

What's challenging is the limited available funds. The District's Financial Aid Committee is challenged to carefully allocate funds so that every dollar is awarded in a responsible and fair way.

There are three sources within our District that make it possible for this many students to receive financial aid:

- Generous LWML grants;
- Endowment funds provided by faithful servants of God for the sole purpose of scholarships; and
- District budget made possible from congregational monthly mission commitments.

The District gratefully acknowledges the generous support of these individuals and organizations.

May God bless these gifted and faithful students as they work toward their goals of serving our congregations and schools!

## Welcome Pastors

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The **Rite of Installation** was held on Sunday, August 16, 2020, for The **Rev. Joshua Leigeber at Pilgrim Lutheran Church, Jonesboro, AR.** Those attending the service included (Top L-R) Rev. John Busmann, Rev. Paul Leigeber, Rev. Joel Krogen, and Rev. Jeffery King. (Bottom row L-R) Rev. Brian Pummel, President Roger Paavola, Rev. Joshua Leigeber, Rev. A. J. Neugebauer, and Rev. Kirk Neugebauer.



The **Rite of Installation** was held at **Faith Lutheran Church, Thompson Station, TN** for The **Rev. Douglas DeWitt** on Saturday, August 15, 2020. Pastor DeWitt will be the Associate Pastor for Faith Lutheran Church, and work as a Church Planter in Hohenwald, TN. Pictured are (Bottom Row L-R) Rev. Curt Hoover, Rev. Douglas DeWitt, President Paavola; (Top row L-R) Rev. Alebachew Teshome, and Rev. Craig Fiebiger.

## New Principal Welcomed

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### Immanuel Lutheran School, Memphis



*Pastor Gregory Prauner, Pastor of Immanuel is pictured with Michelle Fischer.*

Immanuel Lutheran School in Memphis welcomes new principal Michelle Fischer. Michelle began her teaching ministry in 1994 and has taught in California, Alaska, Missouri, and now in Tennessee. Michelle is starting her eleventh year as a principal.

Michelle was quoted, saying, *"I am honored to serve as Principal at Immanuel Lutheran School. I have worked in Education since 1994, serving in Lutheran Schools for 15 years. Through the years I have been blessed to work in a variety of educational settings."*

Welcome to the Mid-South District, Michelle.

## Construction News

Chapel of the Good Shepherd , Sharps Chapel, TN

In mid-August we met with our builder and electrician at the building site in order to choose the placing of outlets and where lighting fixtures will be installed. (See the attached pictures taken by Tom McCaffery, co-President of our church.) In the first picture our builder Chris Rutherford of Foot by Foot Construction is in the orange shirt, and the electrician is talking to him. Representing the congregation are Kevin & Karen Kitts and Dorothy and myself. In the second picture we are gathered around the building plans. I am so thankful for the wonderful people God has been gathering to be our congregation. We are truly blessed!

By: Rev. Paul Kritsch, Pastor



## URGENT: A Special Appeal on Behalf of Lutheran Institute in Madagascar

Over the last several years, the Mid-South District has been blessed to get to know and support the Lutheran Institute of Management and Entrepreneurship (LIME) in Madagascar. Led by the Rev. Dr. Joseph Randrianasolo, who addressed the delegation of our District's 2018 Convention, LIME offers Malagasy adults (both lay and clergy) the opportunity for advanced studies as part of a three-year curriculum which includes Biblical courses. But like many organizations, businesses and individuals, LIME has been hit especially hard by the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Graduating its last class in January of this year, the Institute's doors have now been closed for six months. With no tuition coming into the school, Rev. Dr. Joseph Randrianasolo has shared that the six staff members of LIME and their families now face a dire situation: the very real possibility of starvation.

In a recent message to Mid-South District President Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, Rev. Joseph noted that the staff have stretched their resources as far as they can, but that the coming month will be marked by extreme hunger—or worse—without the help of outside aid. In response to this critical need of our Lutheran brothers and sisters in Madagascar, the Mid-South District is sending support and inviting ministries and individuals across the district to do the same. Donations to benefit the staff of LIME and their families can be made on the [Mid-South District website](#) or by check. When making an online gift, choose the "Restricted Gift" field and designate the funds for "LIME Staff COVID-19." Gifts by check should be made payable to the Mid-South District with "LIME Staff COVID-19" in the memo line. Please mail any check donations to: The Mid-South District LCMS, 1675 Wynne Road, Cordova, TN 38016

All funds directed to the Mid-South District will be wired promptly to LIME in Madagascar. In the past, ministries and individuals across the Mid-South District have shown tremendous support for the Institute, its staff and students by funding significant technology and facility upgrades. We pray for another overwhelming response to help our Lutheran friends in Madagascar face this new difficulty.

# Youth Discipleship, Summer 2020

Salem Lutheran Ministries Springdale, AR)



Even as the Coronavirus crisis shut down most of our usual ministries, we were able to maintain our summer youth discipleship, called Leaders in Training. Due to our unique context this summer, we had three unique themes:

- Praying the Psalms – how to understand the Psalms and use them as a guide for our own prayers, especially in the midst of suffering and uncertainty
- Youth Anxiety: how to identify and respond to our own anxiety, as well as help others who are suffering
- Racism and Racial Justice: how to respond as a Christian

Four teenagers participated. In addition to study and conversation, we also had lots of fun together and concluded the summer with a game of laser tag!

Written by Pastor Brandon Martin

*Top photo: Laser Tag*

*Left photo: Studying the Psalms*



# Good Stewardship Feeds More Kids



**As** Trinity HOPE starts a new school year in Haiti, we are tremendously blessed to be able to add an additional 2,185 children, teachers, and cooks to the feeding programs we administer in Christian schools throughout the country. Through God's grace, we are now serving over 33,000 meals each school day to these hungry children in 160 schools. That is over 6,000,000 meals per year. Beyond receiving a nutritious noon meal each day to sustain their life, each child is now also better equipped to hear and retain the Gospel message their teachers and pastors are sharing with them at school. Feeding a child for a day is absolutely critical, but feeding a child the True Bread of Life that gives them eternal life in heaven with Jesus is the real goal. That is exactly why every school Trinity HOPE feeds is required to be a Christian school. We thank and praise God for allowing these

additional children to now be part of our programs.

As you can imagine, providing over 6,000,000 meals per year takes a lot of money. But when each meal costs just over a quarter (\$0.26), every dollar can make a huge difference. Most of us are familiar with the verse in Luke 12:48, where we are

told "To whom much is given, much will be required." God continues to bless Trinity HOPE with "much", and we understand He expects us to do "much" with those blessings. We take good stewardship very seriously and work hard at stretching every dollar as far as it can go. For the last five years an independent auditor has meticulously evaluated Trinity HOPE's financial records and determined that over 95% of every dollar received goes to Program Costs, while less than 5% has gone to Administrative and Fundraising costs. Within the non-profit world, the standard to which most organizations shoot for is 80% Program costs. However, we know that with thousands of children on our waiting list, hoping to one day also receive a meal at school, 80% is simply not good enough. God deserves better and through many dedicated volunteers and a focused effort on efficiency, He

has blessed us with the ability to keep our operating expenses to a minimum. Thanks be to God!

We are pleased to announce that Trinity HOPE has now also been evaluated by Charity Navigator, the largest and most-utilized independent charity evaluator in America. They evaluate non-profits on financial health, accountability, and transparency. We received a score of 97.1, resulting in a 4-Star rating, the highest rating available. If you would like to learn more about Charity Navigator's findings, go to their website ([www.charitynavigator.org](http://www.charitynavigator.org)) and enter "Trinity HOPE" in the Charity Search box. If you would like to learn more about Trinity HOPE, please visit our website at [www.trinityhope.org](http://www.trinityhope.org). As we all strive to be good stewards with the gifts and talents we have been given, may we always remember the words in Colossians 3:23, "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men". Thank you for your continued support of Trinity HOPE and God's Blessings to each of you.



# Prayer Summary, August 2020

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 August 2020.

## PRAYER CONCERNS

**MS. EVELYN DOUGLAS** (friend of Julie Tyler, Mid-South District Office)  
**MR. MARK GUDLIN** (spouse of Denise with Trinity Hope)  
**REV. RONALD and CLAIRE HALAMKA** (Waxahachie, TX)  
**MRS. ALISON HAWKINS** (Mid-South District Office)  
**REV. DONLEY HESSE** (Emeritus, Mena, AR)  
**MRS. SUSAN JONES** (volunteer, Mid-South District Office)  
**MRS. NANCY LEE** (Retiree, Mid-South District Office)  
**REV. TIMOTHY SCHARR** (District President, Southern Illinois – LCMS)  
**REV. MERLIN SEPMEYER** (Crossville, TN)  
**REV. NEIL VANDERBUSH** (Chaplain\*U.S. Army through the Board of International Missions\*Our Savior, Searcy, AR)  
**REV. DR. ROGER WINGER** (Former LCC District President)  
**ERIC** (Grandson of Rev. Peter Ave-Lallemant and wife, Elizabeth)

**Our deepest sympathies to: The family and friends of Nancy Hugo**, one of the original and longest serving “Incredible Volunteers” at the Mid-South District office who passed away August 28, 2020.

**We lift up in prayer** Rev. Donley Hesse (Mena, AR) and family on the loss of Rev. Hesse’s daughter, **Sara Feuerstein**, who passed away on August 30th.

**We pray for all affected worldwide by the Coronavirus as we continue to navigate within this ever changing pandemic.**

## CALL UPDATE

### IN THE CALLING PROCESS – CONGREGATIONS ORDAINED MINISTERS

**ACCEPTED: Rev. Kevin McReynolds**, Pastor, St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, Central City, NE, has accepted the Call to serve as **Pastor to Redeemer Lutheran Church, Mountain Home, AR.** \*Installation planned for September 20, 2020.

**Rev. Donald Welmer**, Associate Pastor, Messiah Lutheran Church, Plano, TX has accepted the Call to serve as **Pastor to First Lutheran Church, Chattanooga, TN.**

### COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

**ACCEPTED: Mr. Matthew Fischer**, *Principal, Faith Lutheran Academy, Las Vegas, NV*, has accepted the Call to serve as **Director of Family Life Ministries, Our Savior Lutheran Church & Academy, Nashville, TN.** Installed August 23, 2020.

### CONGREGATIONS-IN THE CALLING PROCESS

**Mid-South District** – Executive Director for Missions and Ministry

### COMMISSIONED MINISTERS-IN THE CALLING PROCESS

**Zion Lutheran Church of Avilla, Alexander, AR** – Director of Parish Music  
**Our Savior Lutheran Church & Academy, Nashville, TN** – Director of Children and Youth Ministries



# Congregational Mission Commitments

## Mission Commitment Receipts as of 7/31/2020 (7 Months)

Anticipated Amount (58.33% of budget)	\$897,733
Actual Receipts	<u>868,627</u>
Over (under) anticipated amount	(\$29,106)

## Use of Mission Commitment Receipts (7 Months)

Allocated to Synod for World Missions	\$246,005
Allocated to Tanzania	14,583
Retained for District Mission/Ministry Support (70% of receipts)	<u>608,039</u>
Total Receipts	\$868,627

## Mission Commitment Receipts Prior Year Comparison (7 Months)

Actual Receipts as of 7/31/2020	\$868,627
Actual Receipts as of 7/31/2019	<u>\$887,080</u>
Over (under) prior year receipts	(\$18,453)

## Encourager Topics in 2020

We invite you to share your stories with us please email it by **September 20, 2020** to Rhonda, [webmaster@mid-southlcms.com](mailto:webmaster@mid-southlcms.com)

- October – Celebrating Lutheran Heritage
- November – Thankfulness
- December – Highlights of 2020

## 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

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