

Encourager

SEPTEMBER 2026

Mid-South District LCMS



A Message from
Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola,
President

Observing Feast Days

One of the lesser known (unfortunately) Feast Days we set aside in the Lutheran Church happens on September 29 – the Feast of St Michael and All the Angels. Not to be minimized in its importance, we read of St Michael in several Old Testament Scriptures, but especially in Daniel 10:10 and following (ESV) where it's recorded: *"And behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. And he said to me, 'O Daniel, man greatly loved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for now I have been sent to you.' And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood up trembling. Then he said to me, 'Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words.' 'The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia, and came to make you understand what is to happen to your people in the latter days. For the vision is for days yet to come."*

In Hebrew, the name Michael or Mikhel means "one like God." He was an Archangel sent by God to proclaim the life and death of Christ for sinners like him. Based on that premise, it would seem

that every preacher is part of the proclaiming the Gospel message as do the angelic armies. Unlike storybooks and Christmas stories, the word "angel" means messenger. We' incorrectly assume that angels are creatures with "angelic faces" who look like winged women in gorgeous flowing robes levitating around some "holy" scene. But, as Scripture describes and lists the heavenly host, angels are some of God's messengers that He who wants to bring the Gospel, defend the Elect, and let the world to know that He has redeemed it through the suffering, bloody sacrifice, and death of Christ for us sinners.

Scripture describes of this great company of the church's preachers that is included among those who are these heavenly messengers of God. He uses some of them to proclaim His word, as all who hold office in His name serve His purposes. Even if the world doesn't recognize the real presence of angels, they continue to serve God's Elect in His stead.

At some family gatherings, brought on by the death of a loved one, we may occasionally (and hopefully only on very rare occasion) hear that the dearly departed has gone to heaven to be one of God's

angels. While that is a gigantic misunderstanding, in a real sense every Christian among us can be angelic like St Michael. No – it's not getting a pair of wings to fly around strumming on a golden harp. But we can be like Gabriel, Michael, and the whole company of the heavenly host to tell a dark and frightened world about Jesus, His grace, and eternal salvation. We can protect the loved ones in our families and in our church community from the assaults of Satan and his unholy band of fallen angels. These heavenly angelic beings are, from our perspective, of our earthly realm, realizing we have an entire army of God's angels watching over us, bringing us the Gospel, and keeping us in the safety of God's grace.

Martin Luther of blessed memory stated, "[C]onsider that you have been born and called by God to serve your neighbor. And surely among the punishments for original sin the holding of civil office is not the least; it is easily second only to death. Indeed, some of the heathen, like Demosthenes, considered death less bitter than the administration of the state. And Augustus, who was a very successful and wise emperor, thought of laying aside his power. But others, like Nero and Caligula, became completely effeminate by reason of satanic madness and relaxed the curb on their desires.

By nature, of course, and because of original sin we are eager for domination, and we have imbibed this poison by the inspiration of Satan in Paradise. 'You will be like God,' he said, 'when you eat this fruit' (Gn 3:5). There God said: 'Well, I will fulfill your desire, since you are striving for a position equal with God's and wish to preside and rule over others. I will make you sick of ruling.'

Accordingly, holding civil office is really a kind of punishment—not light and small but very severe and cruel—against original sin, in order that we may learn how great the malice of men who are ruled is, and how great Satan's malice is. For no one understands or believes this except the magistrate, whom the devil resists with all his might. And Michael fights with the bad angels not only in the church but also in the state; for plunderings, thefts, frauds, and murders are works of the devil, which the

magistrate cannot remove from the hearts of men. Yet in one way or another he restrains outward crimes with punishments and the sword, which he bears for this use by the command and authority of God. [Emphasis added.]

"Therefore, let them remember their duty and show themselves men; for God loads them with dignity, purple, gold, and adornments to terrify the devil and scoundrels, since original sin rages and Satan drives men to crimes of every kind.

"This indeed is what God says: 'Behold, the man has become like one of us' (Gn 3:22). The word 'one' is set aside. All indeed are delighted with purple, gold, and titles; but when questions arise, cases, and troubles, then at last we see the magnitude of the burden. Then indeed there is need of courage that is not weak and effeminate but is great and manly—courage with the knowledge that it is bearing the burden and punishment of original sin." [Luther's Works, Vol. 7, AE, Lectures on Genesis, p. 195, CPH, 1965.]

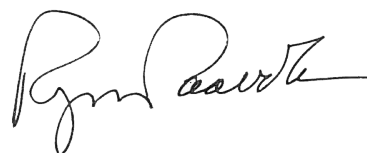
Later, in his commentaries on the Catholic Epistles, concerning verse 9 of Jude, *[But when the Archangel Michael, contending with the devil, disputed about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a reviling judgment upon him but said: the Lord rebuke you.]* Luther states, "This is one reason why this letter was rejected in times past; where it refers to an example not recorded in scripture, namely, how the angel Michael and the devil disputed over the body of Moses. It is said that this came about because so much is written about Moses in Deut. 34:6, that God buried him and that no man knows the place of his burial to this day, and because scripture bears witness that, "there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face (Deut. 30:10). Concerning this text, it is also stated that Moses' body remained hidden to prevent the Jews from using it for the purpose of establishing idolatry, and that for this reason the angel Michael is said to have resisted the devil, who wanted the body to be revealed in order that it might be worshipped by the Jews. And although Michael was an Archangel, says Jude, he was not so bold as to curse the devil himself."

It is also interesting to note, however, that the Reformers noted in Article III of the Smalcald Articles, saying, "Although angels in heaven pray for us as Christ himself also does, and the book Saints on earth, and perhaps also in heaven, do likewise, it does not follow that we should invoke angels and Saints, pray to them, keep fasts and festivals for them, say masses or offer sacrifices to them, established churches, altars, and services to them, serve them in still other ways, regard them as helpers in time of need, and attribute all sorts of help to them, assigning each to them a special function, as papists teach and practice period this is idolatry. Such honor belongs to God alone. [Book of Concord, 297:26]

So, in keeping with our Lutheran Confessions, can it be proper for us to observe Feast Days, such as the Feast of St Michael and All the Angels? Yes, but for a very specific and focused purpose: We honor and observe these Feast Days not because of the created beings named for that day, but because of what God has offered us through His

appointed Apostles, angels, Archangels, and the whole company of the heavenly host – life, salvation, comfort, and guidance from God. In our role as witnesses of God's grace, peace, and mercy, we are encouraged, equipped, and entrusted to join in their ranks to reach a fallen world with the Gospel, as St Paul, himself, states, *"For I resolved to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God."* (1 Cor. 1:2-5) This is our charge, opportunity, and privilege as God's own people.

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



Welcome to the District, Rev. Michael Saxton



The Ordination and Installation of Rev. Michael Saxton to Grace Lutheran Church, Knoxville, TN took place on July 19, 2026. **Pastor Saxton will serve as an Associate Pastor and Church Planter.**

Pictured, Beginning left back row: Rev. Phil Bohlken (Emeritus), Rev. Derek Roberts (Praise, Maryville,

(Missionary-Texas District)

Left Front row: Rev. David Graves (St. Paul, Wartburg, TN), Rev. Jake Childers (Associate Pastor - Grace, Knoxville, TN), Rev. Michael Saxton (Associate Pastor - Grace, Knoxville, TN) Rev. Danny Anderson (Senior Pastor, Grace, Knoxville, TN), Rev. Seth Kunze (The Dwelling, New Caney, TX).

TN), Rev. Roger Reckling (Emeritus), Rev. Seth Korte (St. Paul, Sevierville, TN), Rev. William Ondracka (Christus Victor, Knoxville, TN) Rev. Ed Maanum (First, Knoxville, TN) Rev. Chase LeFort (Faith, Oak Ridge, TN), Rev. Matthew Beaty (Emmaus, Dorsey, IL), Rev. Daniel Bueckman

Mid-South District Announces New Executive Assistant to the President for Education



The Mid-South District is pleased to announce the expanded role of **April Jones as Executive Assistant to the District President for Education**. April joined the District staff in July of 2025 as Administrative Assistant for Education, Youth

& Family. A seasoned education professional and commissioned worker, April taught in Lutheran schools for over 16 years, teaching and serving as the Admissions Director for Immanuel Lutheran School in Memphis prior to joining the District staff.

Over the last year, April has worked closely with our District's school administrators, teachers and early childhood ministries, building key relationships that have prepared her for the expanded role of Executive Assistant to the District President for Education. April transitioned to the new position following the recent departure of the District's Executive Director for Education, Youth & Family, Michelle Fischer. Michelle accepted a Call to serve in the Southern District as Executive Assistant for Congregation and Educational Services. The Mid-South District is grateful for Michelle's time and contributions while serving here. We wish her much success in her new District home. Likewise, we pray for blessings upon April as she continues to serve our education ministries and workers of the Mid-South District!



Fall Pastors Conference - Pickwick Landing
Register Online Now

Get Ready for the Mid-South District Fall Pastors Conference

The Mid-South District looks forward to welcoming attendees and guests to the 2026 Fall Pastors Conference, coming up October 11-14 at Pickwick Landing State Park in Counce, TN. Registration for the conference and complete event details are now available on the District website. If you are ready to register, [CLICK HERE](#) to visit the online registration page.

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO A

Celebration Banquet

Giving Thanks for 60 Years of Mid-South District Ministry!

The Mid-South District of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is blessed to celebrate 60 years of ministry this year! To mark this blessed milestone, the Mid-South District will host Celebration Banquets this fall, in partnership with congregations across the District. The banquets will be an opportunity for us to gather as a faith family, give thanks for 60 years of ministry together, and prayerfully support the mission of the Mid-South District! There is **no cost** to attend these events, which will include:



- Hors d'oeuvres and Fellowship Time
- An Elegant Dinner
- District Greetings and Updates on the “Blueprint for Ministry”
- Inspiring Local Ministry Impact Stories
- An Opportunity to Share Financial Support for District Ministry
- A Keepsake to Commemorate the District’s 60th Anniversary

UPCOMING BANQUET DATES & LOCATIONS

- **Sunday, SEPTEMBER 27** (5-7:15 PM) in Rogers, AR
at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
- **Monday, SEPTEMBER 28** (5:45-8 PM) in Fort Smith, AR
at First Lutheran Church
- **Tuesday, SEPTEMBER 29** (5-7:15 PM) in Mountain Home, AR
at Redeemer Lutheran Church
- **Thursday, OCTOBER 1** (5:30-7:45 PM) in Jacksonville, AR
at Hope Lutheran Church

Please Join Us!

RESERVE YOUR SEATS by clicking the event in your area.

Watch for More Banquet Dates in the October Encourager!

LERT UPDATE

*"And let us not grow weary of doing good..."
(Galatians 6:9 ESV)*



Our disaster response teams (AKA Lutheran Early Response Teams) across the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod have remained busy serving communities affected by disasters. The Mid-South District saw less storms than they have in previous years. That allowed our Mid-South District teams to work on local mercy work for our neighbors in need.

Our District Disaster Response Coordinators (DDRC), Kurt Ludwig and Rev. Trae Fistler, traveled to Belvoir Christian Academy in Chattanooga, TN late in June to teach a Basic LERT and LERT Basic Chainsaw Training for the congregations within that circuit. We had a great training welcoming new LERT volunteers to our ranks.

Rev. Trae Fistler has been working in coordination with LCMS Disaster Response Training and six chosen senior chainsaw instructors from across the LCMS to update and expand the chainsaw curriculum. We now offer three different levels of chainsaw instruction: The LERT Basic Chainsaw Training, Intermediate Chainsaw Training, and a 3 Day Advanced Chainsaw Training. The basic course focuses on introducing new sawyers

to the LERT chainsaw program, focusing heavily on how to safely operate and maintain a chainsaw. The Intermediate Chainsaw Training treads into the mechanics of safely felling (cutting down) a standing tree. Each operator has the opportunity for more saw time and they get to fell a tree with one on one instruction. Our 3 Day Advanced Chainsaw Training dives deeper into bucking, limbing, and felling storm damaged trees. Storm damaged trees are significantly more dangerous than standing trees and that's why tree services charge emergency rates. The trees these companies see after storms are what our volunteers work on every time they deploy to disasters.

Thank you for all prayers and support as we continue to serve in Jesus' name those affected by storms.



LCMS Disaster Response and Training Conference

Sept. 23-25 in St. Louis

Registration is now open for the 2026 LCMS National Disaster Response and Training Conference, which will be held September 23-25 at the LCMS International Center in St. Louis.

Meeting under the theme "Equipped to Serve," LCMS District Disaster Response Coordinators (DDRCs), Lutheran Early Response Team (LERT) trainers and others interested in disaster response

will attend sessions exploring how the church can respond in crisis situations by providing the physical and spiritual care that those affected so desperately need.

Attendees will also hear practical advice and guidance from pastors, disaster response coordinators and others who have responded to significant disasters.

The general conference days will include case studies, practical breakouts and presentations on the theology of mercy.

Visit the [registration webpage](#) for more information, including a schedule, and to register online.



MID-SOUTH DISTRICT DISASTER RESPONSE

LERT volunteers have been busy over the last 5 years helping families and individuals in neighborhoods of LCMS congregations. Our volunteers carry with them the Good News of Jesus Christ and provide practical help after disasters.

Faith In Action

BY THE NUMBERS (SINCE DECEMBER 2021)



175

NEW LERT
VOLUNTEERS
TRAINED



15

DIFFERENT
AREAS
DEPLOYED TO

Responding to
flooding, tornadoes,
hurricanes, ice, and
providing meals
with Forged by Fire
(an LCMS RSO).



14

BASIC LERT
TRAININGS
HOSTED



9

LERT BASIC
CHAINSAW
TRAININGS
HOSTED



1,282

VOLUNTEER
RESPONSES



10,000+

VOLUNTEER
HOURS

EQUIPMENT & GROWTH

2023

The first LERT
team was
outfitted with
a Bobcat mini
track loader.



2024

A dedicated
Ford F250
pickup was
acquired.



2025

A 62-foot
arborist spider
lift was added.



2025

Added a
second Bobcat
mini track
loader and an
enclosed skid
steer trailer.



2025

A dedicated
flood clean-up
trailer was
added.



MAKING A TREMENDOUS IMPACT



500

Teams cut and
remove about 500
trees per year.



315

During 5 weeks in
Summer 2024, volunteers
removed 315 trees in one
development to Holy
Trinity Lutheran Church
in Rogers, AR.



\$2,000+

Tree removal after a
catastrophic event can
cost homeowners about
\$2,000 per tree and
sometimes much more.



\$4.5 MILLION

Over the last 4.5 years,
our LERT volunteers
have assisted with about
\$4.5 million in free tree
removal following
disasters.

GRANT SUPPORT (2021 - 2025 YTD)



\$1,230,303

AWARDED TO MID-SOUTH DISTRICT
DISASTER RESPONSE



\$1,010,745

AWARDED TO DISASTER VICTIMS
BY MID-SOUTH DISTRICT

For those we have helped, it's not just about a tree. It's about bringing hope and healing. It's about witnessing the goodness of our God, that in Christ, God is reconciling the world to Himself. They see in our deeds that God loves them and cares for them, even through the storms of life.

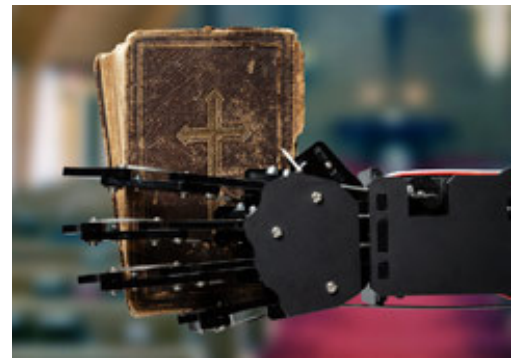


Register for the Next LFS Webinar: *Artificial Intelligence & Authentic Wisdom*



Presented by Rev. Jonathan Conner
Thursday, September 10, 2026 • 9:00 AM CT

As AI increasingly influences ministry and daily life, church workers face new opportunities and challenges. Grounded in Scripture and Lutheran theology, this presentation explores how Christians can approach artificial intelligence with wisdom, discernment, and faithful stewardship. Together, we will consider vocation, truth, and human dignity while keeping Christ, not technology, at the center.



REGISTER TODAY!

A CELEBRATION OF THE MID-SOUTH DISTRICT'S
60TH ANNIVERSARY

OKTOBERFEST



SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2026
11 AM - 3 PM

Immanuel Lutheran Church in Memphis
6325 Raleigh Lagrange Road • Memphis TN 38134

GERMAN FOOD FAVORITES & BEER from GHOST RIVER BREWERY
OOMPAH MUSIC • LIVE AUCTION of THEMED BASKETS*
BALLOON ARTIST • BOUNCE HOUSE • FACE PAINTING

* Live Auction Proceeds Benefit Neighborhood Christian Centers, Inc. of Memphis

\$10 ADULTS (13 & UP)
Includes German meal
& 2 craft beers/beverages

\$5 KIDS 4-12
Includes meal & beverage
FREE admission under age 4

CLICK
FOR TICKETS!



CALLING ALL MURRAY STATE FOOTBALL FANS —

Zion Lutheran Church of Stillwater, OK invites you to park with us for the football game at OSU on September 19! Parking is only \$20 and supports our youth group, community benevolence and other ministries. We are located at 504 South Knoblock. We also invite you for Sunday Services, which are at 8:00 AM and 10:30 AM. Please visit our website at zionlutheranstw.com. If you have any questions, contact Chuck Willoughby at 405-614-0087 or pacisbac@gmail.com.

The Next Wellness Challenge for Church Workers Is Underway!

Pastors, principals, teachers, DCEs and ***all*** who work in our District's congregations and school ministries are invited to take part in the Worker Wellness BINGO Challenge! **This fun challenge is happening now through September 28** and focuses on simple wellness activities that encourage church workers to care for the body, mind, and vocation God has entrusted to them. **The Worker Wellness BINGO Challenge is coordinated through the District's partnership with Concordia Health Plans—but workers don't have to be Concordia members to participate.**

For those who are part of Concordia Health Plans, the BINGO Challenge is a great way to earn Vitality points. All participants earn entries in a grand prize drawing that will take place at the end of the challenge (prize announcement coming soon!).

Of course, you can't play BINGO without a card! So, the first step for church workers participating in this wellness challenge is to **visit the Mid-South District website to download a BINGO card** and see complete details on the BINGO Challenge. If you have questions about the Challenge, please contact the District's Wellness Coordinator, Deaconess Robin Moyer, at rmoyer.contact@mid-southlcms.com.



Make Plans to Join LBT for the 2026 BACK TO THE BIBLE SUMMIT

According to recent research, approximately 74 million Americans are open to exploring Scripture, creating an unprecedented opportunity for churches and ministry leaders to engage people who are spiritually curious and searching for truth.

That's why Lutheran Bible Translators is hosting the **Back to the Bible Summit 2026: Empowering Your Church Through Scripture**, a free virtual event on **September 30, 2026, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. CST.**

For more than 60 years, LBT has helped communities gather around God's Word. Through this year's Summit, you'll hear from trusted Lutheran voices, gain insights into current trends shaping Scripture engagement, and leave with practical, ready-to-use ideas that can strengthen Bible engagement in your congregation, classroom, ministry, or community.

Whether you attended last year's Summit or are joining us for the first time, we hope you'll be part of the conversation. **Registration is free, but required.**

Register to Attend

Join Us for the
FAMILY MINISTRY
Workshop



SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2026
8:30 AM - 4:00 PM

Hope Lutheran Church | Jacksonville, Arkansas

This workshop will be a valuable opportunity for **pastors, teachers, youth leaders, parents**, and anyone passionate about growing family ministry!

NO COST TO ATTEND • LUNCH INCLUDED

FEATURED PRESENTERS



Mr. Larry Yochum

Associate Director of Coaching and Implementation, Concordia Center for the Family

- TOPICS:**
- “It Starts with Me!”
 - Shifting the Paradigm Through Tweaks
 - Proven Tweaks Toward Family Discipleship



Rev. Andy Becker

Director of Family Ministry, Office of National Mission

- TOPICS:**
- Developing a Culture of Family Discipleship
 - The Mission Field of the Family

CLICK HERE!

Presented by the Mid-South District, LCMS

Register Today!

MISSION POSSIBLE DAY

September 15

LWML Mission Possible Day is September 15. This special day is set aside for a special effort to raise funds for missions, including a matching grant. Mark your calendars and join us to transform lives and spread His love. Together, we can make a difference. Learn more here <https://www.lwml.org/givingday>

Lutheran Church Charities & CTK Spiritual First Aid™

September 18-19



Scan the QR code
to sign up and select
Christ The King LC
Memphis TN

Join Lutheran Church Charities and Christ the King Lutheran Church, Memphis to discover how to become a spiritual first responder by learning Spiritual First Aid™. Attend 2-day training workshop and earn SFA certification.

CHRIST THE KING LUTHERAN CHURCH

5296 Park Ave. / Memphis 38119

Friday, September 18 (6-9 PM) *Light dinner before provided.*

Saturday, September 19 (9 AM-4 PM) *Lunch & refreshments provided.*

Registration fee is \$25. Scan the QR code to sign up, select Christ The King LC Memphis TN. [Email Genie Swan at CTK with any questions](mailto:gswan@ctkmemphis.com)
gswan@ctkmemphis.com.



Continuing Education Course

September 22-24

First Lutheran Church in Chattanooga, TN is pleased to welcome Rev. Prof. John Pless for the CTSEW **Continuing Education Course "Lutheran Missions Lead to Lutheran Churches: Keeping Confession and Mission Together,"** coming up **September 22-24**. This course will look at the theology of mission from the perspective of the Lutheran Confessions with an eye toward how this linkage works out in evangelical outreach both locally and globally. Registration for this event is \$175 (1.5 CEU for Pastors & Prof. Church Workers) and \$125 for retired Pastors and laypersons. For the complete course **description and registration**, [visit the course page HERE](#).

Grace Lutheran Church 5th Annual Hymn Festival

September 27

All are invited to attend the 5th annual hymn festival at Grace Lutheran Church in Little Rock on **Sunday, September 27 at 3:00 PM**. This year the program will walk through the Church Year, featuring a hymn from each season. We are pleased to welcome **Dr. Samuel Eatherton** from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, as our guest organist. Commentary will be given by Rev. Kory Janneke of St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Conway. Come and sing with us, and hear how our hymns help us to sing the life of Christ.

There is no cost to attend, and a light reception will follow the hymn festival. www.gracelutheranlr.org

Grace Lutheran Church | 5124 Hillcrest Ave | Little Rock, AR 72205.



REGISTER NOW!

Mid-South & Southern District LCMS Educators Conference is October 8–10 in Shalimar, Florida

The conference will feature speaker Ted Neitzke, a dynamic educator and leader who has dedicated his career to helping individuals and organizations grow stronger, more compassionate and more effective. Educators are encouraged to check out Ted's podcast, "The Smart Thinking Podcast."

Find the conference agenda & registration at

<https://midsouthdistrictlcms.regfox.com/2026-ed-conference-mid-south-southern>.

CTK's New Director of Youth and Family Ministries

The members of Christ the King Lutheran Church, Memphis, are pleased to **welcome their new Director of Youth and Family Ministries, Ms. Paige Mielke**. In this newly created position, Ms. Mielke, a recent graduate of Concordia University Wisconsin, will focus on developing, planning, and leading youth programs, providing spiritual guidance and mentorship to youth members, and empowering youth leaders to actively participate in worship, service, and outreach. She will partner with parents in faith formation and offer resources for strengthening family ministry. Her passion and skills to work with middle- and high-school youth and their families will bring an exciting dimension to CTK's youth ministry. Welcome to the Mid-South District, Paige!!



Lutheran Women
in Mission

LWML SUNDAY IS OCTOBER 4

This special Sunday celebrates the LWML and is an opportunity to share and celebrate the work of Lutheran Women in Missions. Learn more and download materials here: <https://www.lwml.org/lwml-sunday>

Join Us

75th Anniversary Celebration

Faith Lutheran Church • October 18

Faith Lutheran Church

101 Bragg Circle, Tullahoma, TN 37388

Worship 8am & 10:30am~Banquet to follow 2nd service

RSVP by September 20th

email: faithsecretary@lighttube.net call: 931-455-3510



Don't Miss Hope Lutheran's OKTOBERFEST CLASSIC Golf Scramble

Hope Lutheran Church in Batesville, AR invites you to be a part of their OKTOBERFEST CLASSIC Golf Scramble on **Friday, October 2** at The Course at Eagle Mountain in Batesville. The event will raise funds for Hope's growing Family Life Pantry ministry. There are several ways to get involved, from team entries to formal sponsorships and high-impact in-kind donations. Player entry is \$600/team or \$150/individual. Sponsorships range from \$500 "Hole Sponsorships" to \$5,000 "Ace Sponsorships." The event will also feature "Prost" Mulligans for players and a "Fill the Stein" donation challenge to drive further support for the Family Life Pantry on the course. **For details and registration information, see the event's page on the Mid-South District website:** <https://mid-southlcms.org/oktoberfest-classic/>



New Free Sheet Music from Lutheran Summer Music

Download *Kingsfold*, a new set of theme-and-variations for solo instrument and keyboard by Anne Krentz Organ. The third offering in the LSM Hymn Tune Project, *Kingsfold* is based on the beloved English folk tune associated with a wide range of hymn texts. Available for a variety of solo instruments and keyboard, the work may be performed in its entirety or as individual movements.

Preview and download for free at LSMacademy.org/lsmprss

Heart Language Books Available

Do you have immigrants living in your area or attending your church or school who need books about Jesus in their heart languages? Contact the Lutheran Heritage Foundation for FREE books about Jesus available in over 180 languages. LHF just received a huge new shipment with books in languages like Japanese and Haitian Creole (Luther's Small Catechism), Farsi [Iran] and Korean (A Child's Garden of Bible Stories), Spanish (prayer books), Arabic and Urdu [Pakistan] (devotion booklets). Visit LHFmissions.org to request your free books today!



WHAT DOES “BACK TO SCHOOL” MEAN?

*“Cast your burden on the LORD, and He will sustain you;
He will never permit the righteous to be moved.” Psalm 55:22, ESV*

Back in the day, when you were in elementary school, were your class photos in black and white? Mine were. Were you jumping for joy when you were told it was time to get new clothes for school? I wasn't. After eating home-cooked meals all summer, were you excited to go back to eating school food? It wasn't high on my list.

The 4 Haitian children in this photo have a very different reason to be excited about going back to school. They are excited about the Confidence of a noon meal.

Take a closer look at that black-and-white photo. The 4 children are sitting at their desks in a building that is about the same temperature inside as it is outside. They are eating a hot meal of beans and rice, most likely their only substantial meal of the day, using spoons they brought from home. During my time in Haiti, I saw siblings sometimes share the same spoon as they sat next to each other enjoying their meal.



During my visits, I've been blessed to spend time in many Haitian schools, and none of them had yearbooks filled with individual and class photographs. Many of the children wear hand-me-down uniforms and shoes. During the summer, when school is not in session, food can be especially scarce.

So, yes, these children are happy to go back to school. They are returning to their classrooms, their friends, and a hot lunch provided through Trinity HOPE.

Thankfully, when they return, the fire under the cooking pot will be burning again. We serve an incredibly awesome God.

As another school year begins, imagine the joy on the faces of children sitting down to that plate of food, the warmth in their hearts, and the sincere thankfulness in their mealtime prayers. Through the generosity of people like you, children are being fed, prayed with, and reminded that God has not forgotten them.

They place their trust in God. We place our trust in Him, too.

Thank you for going back to school with them. **Ain't God Good?**

To learn more about what we do, visit is at www.TrinityHOPE.org



Prayer Summary, August 2026

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 August.

PRAYER CONCERNS

REV. RONALD HALAMKA (Waxahachie, TX)
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. ALBERT EICHELBERGER (Emeritus, Knoxville, TN)
REV. RICHARD MAYER (Messiah Lutheran Church, Peas Ridge, AR)
REV. LAURENCE KEIM (SMP, Chapel of the Good Shepherd, Sharps Chapel, TN)
REV. PAUL LEIGEBER (Faith Lutheran Church, Union City, TN & Trinity Lutheran Church, Dyersburg, TN)
REV. STEWART MARSHALL (Trinity Lutheran Church, Pine Bluff, AR)
REV. MICHAEL CROOM (Candidate, Bartlett, TN)
REV. GERALD HEMMINGSON (First Lutheran Church, Harrison, 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)
MS. STEPHANIE ELSEROAD (daughter of Rev. Rich Elseroad (EM) Knoxville, TN)
MR. ROBERT NERGER (Former Mid-South District Board of Directors, Wartburg, TN)
MR. JEREMY HOWE (Huntsville, AL)
MRS. JODICE BELISLE (wife to Rev. Russell Belisle, Cross of Calvary Lutheran Church, Memphis, TN)
FRANK ADCOCK (father of Renae McElwain, Mid-South District Office)

A prayer of thanksgiving for the arrival of Ruth Eliana Ralston, born August 10, 2026, to Rev. Joshua and Rachel Ralston.

Our deepest sympathies to Rev. Darrell Kobs and family on the loss of his brother Harland Kobs, who passed away July 31, 2026.

Our deepest sympathies to Rev. Joshua Ralston (Zion Lutheran Church, London, AR) and family on the loss of his father, Jeff Ralston who recently passed away.

CALL UPDATE

ORDAINED MINISTERS

ACCEPTED: **Rev. Mark Bushuiakovish**, Associate Pastor to Our Savior Lutheran Church, Nashville, TN accepted the Call to *serve as Pastor to Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, Birmingham, MI.*

Rev. Dr. LeRoy Leach (Emeritus, Conway, AR) accepted the Call to serve as Assistant Pastor to St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Conway, AR. *Installation took place August 16, 2026.*

Rev. Matthew Albright, Pastor to Christ Lutheran Church, Little Rock, AR accepted the Call to serve as *Senior Executive Pastor to Redeemer Lutheran Church, Peoria, IL.*

Rev. Andre Frandle, Chaplain US Army Reserve, Clarksville, TN accepted the Call to serve as *Pastor to St. John's Lutheran Church, Stuttgart, AR. Installation date pending.*

PENDING: **Rev. David Reedy**, Pastor to Immanuel & Trinity Lutheran Churches, Cooperas, TX, received a Call to serve as *Pastor to Peace Lutheran Church, Cherokee Village, AR.*

DECLINED: **Rev. JohnDavid Zischke**, Pastor to Restoration Lutheran Church, Fayetteville, AR returned the Call to serve as *Pastor to St. Paul Lutheran Church, Albion, MI.*

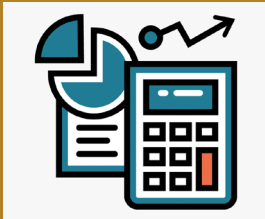
Rev. Matthew Albright, Pastor to Christ Lutheran Church, Little Rock, AR returned the Call to serve as *Pastor to St. Paul Lutheran Church, Beatrice, NE.*

VACANT CONGREGATIONS & MINISTRIES

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Chattanooga, TN – Senior Pastor
Peace Lutheran Church, Cherokee Village, AR – Pastor
Trinity Lutheran Church, Columbia, TN – Pastor

IN THE CALLING PROCESS - COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

Pending update for the upcoming academic year.



Congregational Mission Commitments

Mission Commitment Receipts as of 7/31/2026 (7 Months)

Anticipated Amount
(58.33% of budget)..... \$962,571
Actual Receipts 944,290
Over (under) anticipated
amount..... (\$18,281)

Use of Mission Commitment Receipts (7 Months)

Allocated to Synod for World
Missions \$268,704
Allocated to Tanzania 14,583
Retained for District Mission/
Ministry Support
(70% of receipts)..... 661,003
Total Receipts \$944,290

Mission Commitment Receipts Prior Year Comparison (7 Months)

Actual Receipts as
of 7/31/2026 \$944,290
Actual Receipts as
of 7/31/2025 \$926,719
Over (under) prior
year receipts \$17,571

Share your news with us!

Encourager Topics in 2026

We invite you to share your stories with us! Please email stories by the 20th of the month to Rhonda at webmaster.contact@mid-southlcms.com.

Here's a look at the upcoming topics for 2026:

- October — *Lutheran Heritage*
- November — *Thankful Hearts*
- December — *Highlights of 2026*

Lutheran Witness Supplement

The monthly deadline is the 7th, 2 months prior to production. Please email your original high resolution digital photos (.pdf or .jpg files only) and a short paragraph to *The Lutheran Witness* Supplement editor, Judy Otto at lw.contact@mid-southlcms.com or by calling 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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Missy Washburn,
Executive Assistant to the District President

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Executive Assistant to the District President for Education

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