

Encourager

Mid-South District LCMS | December 2020



*For unto you
a child is born*

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



“Why Shepherds?”

Everyone has heard the story. Even *Charlie Brown’s Christmas* takes the lines from the Gospel of Luke. Recent movies

that mock our Christianity include these verses as part of the spoof on Christians. The Hallmark Channel seems to be stuck on snowball fights, improbable matchmaking, and Christmas carols. But as much as those Hallmark love stories are presented against a “Silent Night” backdrop, does this annual repetition of those familiar lines tend to have people overlook the significance of God’s Word? After unwrapping this precious gift of Christmas, we begin to hear a story of love and hope that comes from God in an unsurpassed way. Despite the backdrop

of Christmas carols and recitation of a few Bible verses, who gets to tell the story of the Christ Child?

Who did God choose to first tell of the coming of our Savior? It wasn’t Charlie Brown or Hallmark, it was shepherds! They were a rag-tag bunch of society’s misfits. Scripture records only one announcement about the birth of the Christ Child - it came from shepherds - uneducated, smelly, low-class, religious outcasts. Shepherds – the last people we would have chosen to tell anything as important as the birth of the Savior. Back then, shepherds couldn’t participate in the festivals of the church, or bring sacrifices to the Temple. They were hirelings who offered their work for the sake of dumb sheep. They didn’t have time to worship because they could lose their lives if something bad happened on their watch over the flock.

Sheep were more valuable than shepherds. Shepherds were social outcasts, always on the move, finding a new place for pastures for the sheep. Their work demanded them to always be there. During the day they would watch the sheep graze and drink water. At night, they became the “gate” at the opening to the sheep pens. A shepherd was so much a part of the sheep that he could identify each one of the sheep and lambs and keep them safe. It was lonely work. Many shepherds learned to play flutes or lyres because there was little else to do than to watch sheep graze. Their work was also dangerous, fending off wolves or lions that saw sheep as an easy tasty treat. But, would the average Israelite want their

daughter to marry one of them? Not very likely.

But, if you, for a second could imagine God's thinking, what kind of person would you guess He would want to announce the birth of His One and only Son who was to come to bring life and salvation into this world? Who would bring this great news to the countless generations who anxiously awaited the coming of the King of Kings? Finally, the night of His coming would be here. The announcement shouldn't be missed. We'd call a press conference to have every news network broadcast the good news. We'd hand-deliver announcements to every head of state and every dignitary everywhere in the world. But not God!

Would we send invitations to cab drivers or garbage collectors? We'd at least have some high religious leaders make the announcement. If we were God, we'd want to let the Scribes and Pharisees have a shot at getting the people out, right? But... thankfully we're not God. He chose shepherds! What would the conductor of the angelic chorus have thought that night?! It'd be worse than the Mormon Tabernacle Choir preparing for months to sing the entire Handel's Messiah to a few garbage collectors on their lunch break. But, God chose shepherds to hear that first angelic choir announce the coming of the Savior. "Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to all men with whom He is pleased!" Why did God do it this way? Were they more pious or unusually holy than anyone else? Were they the ones who prayed the hardest to have God send His Messiah?

So, why'd God do it this way? One of the explanations is that later Jesus would call Himself the Good Shepherd - a way of letting us know how He knows His sheep and His sheep know Him. Maybe it's because there were no other people

awake the night when Christ was born. But, the whole idea of the coming of the Christ in flesh is the power of God's Word. God doesn't discriminate on the basis of class, or wealth, or social status. He doesn't hold kings and world rulers higher than common laborers. God's love is for everyone on the same basis... faith in Jesus Christ, and faith alone in His grace. It's no different than how Jesus chose His disciples. The message of life and salvation comes in the power from the Holy Spirit, not from those who have the privilege of bringing the good news.

God put an exclamation point on the message of life and salvation when He made the Good News the most important thing, not His messengers. Intelligence, education, wealth, profession, political power, or social standing stand for nothing to God. Everyone has sinned and fallen short of His glory. But, the gift of God's grace through Christ Jesus is His gift of love for us all. So, what does this all mean to us? If you can identify with lowly shepherds, that's great! They looked over the villages, heard the laughter and singing, but felt left out. Their names never appeared in the newspaper or were considered as one of the beautiful people in the city. Their job kept them away from regular worship.

Does any of the shepherd's life and work strike a chord with you? But, the Good News is that God considers you important enough, worthy enough, chosen enough to hear the Good News about the coming of the Savior. God gave this incredible privilege to shepherds - the first ones to see the Christ Child. They were the first to see Mary's baby, lying in a manger... humble, ordinary, and lowly people with no high opinions of themselves. These were simple people who didn't reason away what the angels told them. They simply accepted everything at its Word -

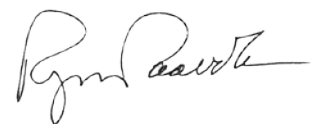
no debate, no asking for a second opinion, just simple God-given faith that brought them before the face of Jesus.

God sent us His Word, proclaimed in all its power - the Holy Spirit speaking to us as God's messenger to send us His love in the Person of Jesus Christ. He simply asks us to believe. He asks only that we receive the forgiveness of sins and promise of everlasting life without debate or asking for a second opinion. It doesn't take a genius - only humble, lowly people chosen by God to receive His Son, Jesus Christ.

If you don't identify with lowly shepherds, you can rejoice too. God chooses to bring the same message He gave to the shepherds. They came first - kings and educated wise men came later. God offers His salvation to you, just as He does to the cab drivers, the garbage collectors, and street people. He sent Jesus Christ who came to take away all of our sins. He gave us peace from God through Christ's sacrifice and humiliation, suffering and dying on the cross and rising again from the dead.

Come to think of it, those shepherds who were outcasts of society - shepherds who even laid down their lives to protect the sheep. They sound like Jesus. Understand why shepherds were the first to hear about the coming of the Christ Child. It simply signals His work among us so we may be brought to the verdant green pastures He gives us, because He became one with us, God in flesh, to lead us to life everlasting. That should make Christmas a little more important for you.

Your servant in Christ +
Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola



Final Service for Former Sanctuary of Peace, Conway, AR

Right before Reformation Day 2020, Peace Lutheran Church, Conway, Arkansas had a reformation of its own. On October 28th the former sanctuary, which had stood on the corner of South Donaghey Avenue and Dave Ward Drive since 1966, was brought down to the ground, together with the former office building. In the summer of 2017, the congregation transitioned its Family Life Center into a temporary sanctuary for worship, and in 2019 moved its offices into the Family Life Center as well. The two buildings were demolished to eventually make way for future facilities, and the congregation is in the midst of its "Inside/Out" Capital Campaign. Before the demolition, however, the sanctuary provided a final service for the community. The two buildings were used by the Conway Fire Department firefighters to practice building

entry, roof ventilation, and search and rescue. One of the new firemen, Chase Coleman, is also a member of Peace.

This year of COVID-19 has made it difficult to see the road ahead, yet Scripture says *God has a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens*, including a time to tear down and build. Seeing the old buildings which served well over the last 50 years come down saddens many, but the good memories of lives that have been changed by God and relationships developed within and without can't be taken away. The church's buildings may come



and go, but the Church is truly the people of God who trust that even though our bodies may return to dust in death, Jesus will raise us again to eternal life!

— Rev. John P. Gierke
Peace Lutheran Church



Mid-South District Receives Generous Grant

The Mid-South District applies for two grants from the LWML every two years for their delegates to consider at the biennial Mid-South District LWML Convention. The last convention took place this past summer. For as long as I can remember, the delegation has selected the Mid-South District's Financial Aid for Professional Church Workers grant for funding. This year, it was one of the first grants chosen and they awarded a grant of \$15,000 over the next biennium. The grant will be paid in four installments over the next couple of years, in the amount of \$3,750 each payment. This picture was of Diane Reimold, former President of the Mid-South District LWML presenting the first installment payment to President Paavola. With the generous grant from the LWML, the Mid-South District is able to fund \$81,000 annually to those attending LCMS Seminaries and Universities and preparing to be professional church workers.



— *Angela Fowler*
Executive Director for Business and Finance

Mid-South District Preparing to “Declare His Marvelous Works” at Upcoming 2021 Convention

When delegates to the Mid-South District's 2021 Convention gather in Memphis next summer, they will "Declare His Marvelous Works." This is the theme chosen for the District's 21st Regular Convention, which will take place **July 1-3, 2021** in Memphis. The theme is derived from I Chronicles 16:23-24, which says, "Sing to the Lord, all the earth! Tell of His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the nations. His marvelous works among all the peoples." Important Convention news and updates will be shared in the Mid-South Minute as the event approaches.



OFFICIAL NOTICE

The 21st Regular Convention Mid-South District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Memphis, Tennessee

Dates: Thursday, July 1, 2021 (mid-afternoon) to Saturday, July 3, 2021 (mid-afternoon)

Location: The Hilton Hotel
939 Ridgelake Blvd., Memphis, TN 38120; Phone: 901-684-6664

Theme: "Declare His Marvelous Works" - 1 Chronicles 16:24

Opening Service with Holy Communion:

Thursday, July 1, 2021 at 7:30 p.m.
Christ the King Lutheran Church
5296 Park Avenue, Memphis, TN 38119
Preacher: *Synodical Representative*

NOTICE TO ALL CONGREGATIONS

Please remember the following deadlines to submit nomination ballots and convention resolutions:

NOMINATION BALLOTS FOR DISTRICT PRESIDENT NOMINATION BALLOTS FOR DISTRICT REGIONAL VICE PRESIDENTS NOMINATION BALLOTS FOR BOARD OF DIRECTORS (Commissioned and Lay)

Deadline: **March 1, 2021**

To be sent to the Mid-South District Secretary

Rev. John Gierke
Mid-South District – LCMS
1675 Wynne Road, Cordova, TN 38016

NOMINATION BALLOTS FOR DISTRICT SECRETARY NOMINATION BALLOTS FOR DISTRICT NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

Deadline: **March 1, 2021**

To be sent to the District Nominations Committee c/o Mid-South District President

Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola
Mid-South District – LCMS
1675 Wynne Road, Cordova, TN 38016

REPORTS, MEMORIALS AND OVERTURES TO BE PRESENTED TO THE DISTRICT CONVENTION

Deadline: **April 8, 2021**

To be sent to the Mid-South District President

Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola
Mid-South District – LCMS
1675 Wynne Road, Cordova, TN 38016

NOMINATION BALLOTS FOR CIRCUIT VISITORS

Deadline: **One day before the Circuit Forum**

To be sent to Each Congregation's Respective Circuit Visitor

(Each Circuit Forum will be held at the District Convention or as scheduled by the individual Circuit per Synod Bylaw 5.2.2 [a])

Rev. Zwick Appointed

We are pleased to announce that Rev. Bill Zwick, the pastor at First Lutheran Church in Harrison, Arkansas has been appointed to the Synod's Board of International Missions. Pastor Zwick has been involved in the District's **COMPASS** program and work on mission development in Northwest Arkansas. He has been with First Lutheran Church since June 2019. Please keep him and the rest of the important work of LCMS Missions in your prayers.



Congregational Mission Commitments

Mission Commitment Receipts as of 10/31/2020 (10 Months)

Anticipated Amount (83.33% of budget)..... \$1,282,475
Actual Receipts1,267,384
Over (under) anticipated amount..(**\$15,091**)

Use of Mission Commitment Receipts (10 Months)

Allocated to Synod for World Missions \$359,382
Allocated to Tanzania20,833
Retained for District Mission/Ministry Support (70% of receipts) 887,169
Total Receipts \$1,267,384

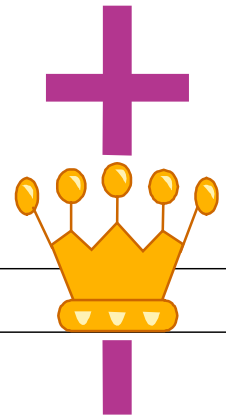
Mission Commitment Receipts Prior Year Comparison (10 Months)

Actual Receipts as of 10/31/2020 \$1,267,384
Actual Receipts as of 10/31/2019 \$1,270,955
Over (under) prior year receipts(**\$3,571**)

now may the
God of hope
fill you with all
Joy & Peace
Romans 15:13



THE MID-SOUTH DISTRICT OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH--MISSOURI SYNOD



Ordained Ministers Celebrating Anniversaries in 2020

60 Years

Rev. Arthur Avery (EM)

Harrogate, TN

Rev. Albert Eichelberger (EM)

Knoxville, TN

Rev. Clarence Helmich (EM)

Oviedo, FL

Rev. Frank Zirbel (EM)

Harrison, AR

55 Years

Rev. David Callies (EM)

Brentwood, TN

Rev. Larry Marhenke (EM)

Hot Springs Village, AR

Rev. Donald Neiswender (EM)

Paducah, KY

Rev. Gilbert Pingel (EM)

Chattanooga, TN

50 Years

Rev. Linsey Dettmer (EM)

Sevierville, TN

Rev. John Freitag (EM)

Rogersville, TN

Rev. Roger Reckling (EM)

Oak Ridge, TN

Rev. Kenneth Taglauer (EM)

Grace Lutheran Church, Mountain View, AR

45 Years

Rev. Darrell Kobs (EM)

Russellville, AR

40 Years

Rev. Dean Clausing (EM)

Benton, AR

Rev. Larry Peters

Grace Lutheran Church, Clarksville, TN

35 Years

Rev. Robert Benke

Faith Lutheran Church, Hot Springs Village, AR

Rev. Jonathan Beyer

First Lutheran Church, Hot Springs, AR

Rev. Gerald Meyer (EM)

Crossville, TN

Rev. John Treude

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Fort Smith, AR

30 Years

Rev. James Burns

First Lutheran Church, Benton, AR

15 Years

Rev. Greg Bearss

LakePointe Lutheran Church, Hot Springs, AR

Rev. Jasson Kalugendo, (Candidate)

Nashville, TN

Rev. Joel Krogen

Hope Lutheran Church, Batesville, AR and

Zion Evan. Lutheran Church, Waldenburg, AR

Rev. David Schmidt

Faith Lutheran Church, Bentonville, AR

10 Years

Rev. Michael Croom

Trinity Lutheran Church, Memphis, TN

Rev. David Witte

Grace Lutheran Church, Little Rock, AR

5 Years

Rev. Eric Longman

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Rogers, AR

Rev. Mark Tooley

Peace Lutheran Church, Conway, AR

Rev. Daniel Ulrich

Grace Lutheran Church, Clarksville, TN

Well done good and faithful servants!

A Note From Madagascar



My dear Brother Rev. Dr Roger Paavola
President
Mid-South District
LCMS

LIME has been back to ordinary teaching work for one month now. Thank you very much to make it happen through your saving gifts. Class doors are now open and there are students and teachers inside the classrooms.

However, not all the students are back. The COVID-19 has heavily impacted on the financial health of families. Some students could not yet come back to LIME. But let us pray that they will come back later.

The Lord be with you!

I have sent you some photos of LIME one month after our coming back to school. This has happened because of your loving gifts and of the LCMS Mid-South District. Thank you and thank you very very much my Brother.

A WARM AND HUGE THANKS TO YOU, TO ANGELA FOWLER, TO YOUR STAFF AND TO THE MID-SOUTH DISTRICT AS A WHOLE. MAY JESUS CHRIST, THE GOOD TEACHER, BLESS YOU ALL!

Your brother across the ocean, Joseph



Join Us On A Mission Trip To Tanzania

We are making plans for a mission trip to Tanzania from the Mid-South District in 2021. We have a Mission team from Christ the King Memphis who will be leaving Memphis at the end of May 2021 returning home on June 10 and a second team from the Nashville area who will be leaving on June 10 returning home on June 24th.

The trips will consist of outreach and church planting in rural villages of the Southeast of Lake Victoria Diocese (SELVD) and safari into the Serengeti and Ngorongoro Crater National parks after the mission.

Come join us

The SELVD is one of the fastest growing Diocese of the Lutheran Church of Tanzania and the Mid-South District has been blessed to be able to work with this group of fine Christians. The district has been involved in annual mission trips where we go to an area of the Diocese that has had no or little exposure to the Gospel message because of its locations. Financially we have sent \$12,500 to the diocese to help them train Pastors and Deaconesses at the Makala training center in Negezi. This training is conducted 4 times a year by professors from Fort Wayne and by theologians in Tanzania. The district also sends \$12,500 to help pay for Pastors from the SELVD to come to Fort Wayne for advanced degree education.

Mid-South District members have helped the SELVD in some of the following ways; participated in mission trips outreach and church planting, Pastors have taught at the Negezi training center, lay-people have taught at Lutheran secondary schools, nurses have worked at clinics, conducted eye clinics. District members have helped raise money for school dorms and facilities at the Mwadui Lutheran Secondary school, have donated laptops and books, have raised money to help albino children and youth and have helped work to develop a technical training school for secondary youth.

Contact Bob Allen for more information about joining us on this 2021 mission trip. Call 270-535-7370.



Graduate Rev. Gyunda (SELVD/ELCT)

Friend of the Mid-South District Rev. Odolous Gyunda of the South East of Lake Victoria Diocese of The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (SELVD/ELCT) received his Master of Arts (MA) degree from Concordia Theological Seminary Fort Wayne, Indiana on Friday November 13.

Concordia Theological Seminary does such a great job training Pastors from countries all over the world. The Mid-South District helps support Pastors from the SELVD to receive advanced degree training.



2022 Tournament of Roses Parade

As a result of this year's postponement, the 2022 Tournament of Roses Parade will feature all of the elements planned for 2021. Under the theme Dream Believe Achieve, the Lutheran Hour Ministries' float entry is to be JESUS TEACHES. The LHM float is the only Christian float in the parade and carries on our mission of providing a Gospel witness to viewers from along the parade route to television worldwide. Using the float as the basis for spiritual conversations, just think of the many Christian witnessing opportunities!

The costs are not included in any budgets of the Int'l LLL or the LCMS. We hope that you will want to share with us in this ministry. <https://interland3.donorperfect.net/weblink/weblink.aspx?name=E152411&id=3>



www.petalpushers.org

LWML 39th Biennial Convention

June 24-27, 2021
Lexington, KY

Scripture verse: *Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.* Hebrews 12:1-2



www.lwml.org/2021-convention



Treasurers' Workshops

Mid-South District
THE LUTHERAN CHURCH - MISSOURI SYNOD

[Register Online Now](#)

Please mark your calendar to attend one of the Mid-South District Workshops. The presenter for the Treasurer's workbook sessions will be Mr. Charlie Rhodes, Executive Director of Synod Accounting (retired). Angela Fowler will be the presenter for a brief afternoon session covering an overview of the new CPS Compensation Decision Tool as well as any QuickBooks issues or questions.

Please respond by December 31, 2020, if possible

The morning session will be devoted to updates in the Treasurers' Manual (volume 1) with time reserved for specific questions and answers. It would be helpful for you to have a copy of the manual with you, either the CD, hard copy or online version. The afternoon session will focus on the CPS Compensation Decision Tool, how to use as well as interpreting the results along with QuickBooks issues and questions. Please email Angela with specific items that you would like for her to address regarding QuickBooks.

The Treasurers' Manual can be found on the LCMS website.

For additional information and to register

[Register Online Now](#)

Contact Angela Fowler by e-mail afowler@mid-southlcms.com or telephone (866-373-1343)

Dates and Locations

January 2, 2021

9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Treasurer's Manual – Volume 1

11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Lunch (provided)

11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. CPS Compensation Decision Tool/QuickBooks

Grace Lutheran Church, 9076 Middlebrook Pike

Knoxville, TN

January 9, 2021

9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Treasurer's Manual – Volume 1

11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Lunch (provided)

11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. CPS Compensation Decision Tool/QuickBooks

Grace Lutheran Church, 5124 Hillcrest Avenue

Little Rock, AR

January 16, 2021

9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Treasurer's Manual – Volume 1

11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Lunch (provided)

11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. CPS Compensation Decision Tool/QuickBooks

St. John Lutheran Church, 500 N. Cumberland Avenue

Russellville, AR

January 23, 2021

9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Treasurer's Manual – Volume 1

11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Lunch (provided)

11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. CPS Compensation Decision Tool/QuickBook

Mid-South District Office, 1675 Wynne Road

Cordova, TN

January 30, 2021

9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Treasurer's Manual – Volume 1

11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Lunch (provided)

11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. CPS Compensation Decision Tool/QuickBook

Our Savior Lutheran Church, 5110 Franklin Road

Nashville, TN

Prayer Summary, November 2020

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 November 2020.

PRAYER CONCERNS

REV. RONALD HALAMKA (Waxahachie, TX)

MRS. ALISON HAWKINS (Mid-South District Office)

REV. DONLEY HESSE (Emeritus, Mena, AR)

MRS. NANCY LEE (Retiree, Mid-South District Office)

REV. CHRIS SHEETS (Pastor, Good Shepherd, Chattanooga, TN)

REV. NEIL VANDERBUSH (Chaplain*U.S. Army through the Board of International Missions*Our Savior, Searcy, AR).

REV. JAMES WALTER, (Emeritus, Little Rock, AR)

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

Our deepest sympathies to:

The family and friends of Tom Willadsen

(Father of Rev. Joshua Willadsen, Fort Smith, AR) who recently passed away.

CALL UPDATE

ORDAINED MINISTERS

DECLINED: **Rev. Nathan Jansen**, Pastor, St, John's Lutheran Church, Burns, TN, has returned the Call to serve as Pastor to **Calvary Lutheran Church, Murraysville, PA.**

IN THE CALLING PROCESS – CONGREGATIONS

Mid-South District – Executive Director for Missions and Ministry

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Fort Smith, AR – Pastor

COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

IN THE CALLING PROCESS

Zion Lutheran Church of Avilla, Alexander, AR – Director of Parish Music

*Merry
Christmas*



Encourager Topics in 2021

We invite you to share your stories with us please email articles and photo by **December 15, 2020** to Rhonda, webmaster@mid-southlcms.com. Note early deadline due to Christmas.

Here's a look at the upcoming topics for 2021

- January - Lutheran Schools
- February – Outreach
- March – Youth
- April – Volunteers
- May – Small Town & Rural Ministry
- June – Leadership
- July – Veterans
- August – Stewardship
- September – Church Planting
- 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 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

Staff

Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola,

President

Angela Fowler,

Executive Director for Business & Finance

Paul Reaves,

Executive Director for Development & LCEF Vice

President

Allen Piepenbrink,

Executive Director for Schools and Early

Childhood

Missy Washburn,

Administrative Assistant to the District President

Rena McElwain,

Communications & Marketing Specialist

Julie Tyler,

Administrative Assistant for Missions and Education

Contact the Mid-South District

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