

Encourager

Mid-South District LCMS | April 2017

Volunteers from around the Mid-South District

"In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" Acts 20:35 (NIV)

This month we focus on volunteers who bless others with their service. They may not always be seen but their presence, time and hard work always shines the light of Christ.

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



I'm not a very patient man. I'd rather do something myself than to wait for someone else to do an obvious job. I have to multi-task! I can't stand the idea of waiting for water to boil, for a traffic light to turn green, or paint to dry. I played just about every sport there was to offer in high school: basketball, wrestling, cross country, track, tennis, baseball, and hockey. Football, yup, just so I could run head long into guys two times bigger than me. I went out because I enjoyed participating more than I did watching. Golfing wasn't something I took up until college. Then, the more I got into it, the more I enjoyed it. It's fun to even watch when there's a good tournament, like the Master's that comes up this month.

After watching Jordan Spieth sink a long putt or watching Rory McElroy smash a spectacular drive gets our own

adrenalin pumping. Like most sports, when we've watched it, we go out on our own to hit a few shots or go to a putting green to sink a few ourselves. We all love spectator sports. We enjoy seeing someone win. We love to cheer for the home team. But, the problem is, as spectators we don't get the exercise the athletes get who play the games... unless, of course, if you count the exercise of going to the refrigerator for another beverage and snack.

What's more, if we're not careful, we can turn our faith life into a spectator sport just as easily. We can find ourselves out of the game and only watching on the sidelines. Isn't it interesting that there's no place in Scripture that talks about people who are spectators in Christianity? In I Corinthians, Paul says, *"Don't you realize that in the race everyone runs, but only one wins the prize? So run to win."* Paul paints a picture of a stadium and the running of games that were so popular back in his day. He urges his listeners to picture themselves ALL running a race - stretching out to win the prize. Notice what Paul says. He doesn't say, "Cheer them on to win!" He doesn't say, "Cheer them and

encourage the runners." Nor does he say, "Give them enough money so they can build the franchise so the team wins." No... you and I are in the race. Each one of us is supposed to run. Each of us is supposed to run so we stretch for the prize - the goal before us.

Paul's background that got him to this point is pretty unique though, isn't it? He was a Jewish leader who persecuted the early Christian membership. He was the man who held a man's cloak in order to stone St Stephen to death. He hated Christ's followers, until one day he came

face to face with Christ on the road to Damascus. Everything changed after that - even his name. From that time on, Paul was the most prolific evangelist for the early Christian Church. His congregations dotted the coastal regions around the Mediterranean. The grace of God saved a once hateful man who'd eventually give his own life for the sake of the Gospel he had once hated so much.

Paul considered himself a well-toned athlete. He understood that his Lord and God was the one who coached and trained him in all things. But, he also understood that he had a task to fulfill - a mission or a race, if you wish. He knew he had to give all he had because the prize Paul was after wasn't for him. Indeed, the prize Paul raced toward... is for you... and for me. The message of salvation by God's grace that we receive by faith is at the foundation of everything Paul wrote about. The message Paul brought to the Gentile world was and is for us.

When we hear the message of the forgiveness of sins through the vicarious atoning sacrifice of our Savior Jesus Christ, the promise of life everlasting, and the abiding presence of God with us on this earthly journey... now, we're participants in the middle of a race. We have the same mission as Paul. We're God's ambassadors - witnesses of His grace, mercy and love for all of mankind on the course laid out before us. We're called to share the truth we receive from the proclaimed Word of God when God serves us in

Lenten Crosses

Members of Chapel of the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Sharps Chapel, TN are displaying Lenten crosses on their homes' front lawns in order to share their faith with their community. Theresa and Jeff Landis shared the idea with other church members. As a result, Jeff Landis and Jeff Garretson made crosses for each home, while Cindy Garretson made the hangings: purple for Lent, black for Good Friday, and white for Maundy Thursday and Easter. The crosses were given out after Sunday's worship service on March 5.

"It's been a joy driving around the area and seeing the crosses," noted Paul Kritsch, pastor of the church. "We pray that our neighbors have a blessed Lenten and a joyous Easter as together we focus on Christ, the Savior."



L-R Jeff Garretson and Jeff Landis install one of the Lenten crosses at the Community Center

worship. We're in the race for our lives. So, when we know the prize set before us (eternal life!), we become runners... no longer spectators.

One of the biggest thrills we can ever have on this side of eternity is to know that our lives have been a witness to someone who's been drawn to the Christian faith by the Holy Spirit working in and through us. But, we're not called to be spectators. We're called to be runners, so that we may share God's grace with a world gone flabby just watching.

Paul writes to the Corinthians, *"Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law, though I myself am not under the law, so as to win those under the law."* Paul became a servant to all for the sake of the Gospel.

Everyone in this world fits into one of two categories - saved or

lost. My heart breaks and I get this empty sickening feeling in the pit of my belly when I read an obituary about a person who had no connection with a church. What's their eternal existence going to be? Paul writes, *"To the weak I became weak to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the Gospel, that I may share its blessings."*

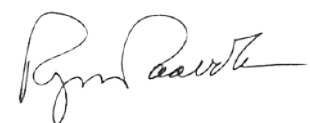
Paul found a way to relate to everyone for the sake of the Gospel. He sought the common ground - the Gospel of Jesus Christ. When we abide in Christ, He brings His power and love through us for the sake of the Gospel. Whether it's our energy, our strengths, our wealth, or the misfortunes that have fallen on us, God's wisdom can use those gifts to strengthen us and lead us to be witnesses of God's divine provision.

This month we celebrate the thousands of volunteers who work in the Church and for the Church. It's been estimated that

the US Economy has a gigantic benefit from volunteers - men, women and children who aren't satisfied with sitting on the sidelines and watching. They get involved because of the love of the work that gets done. According to the Corporation for National and Community Service, about 62.8 million Americans, or 25.3 percent of the adult population, gave 7.9 billion hours of volunteer service worth \$184 billion in 2014. Without volunteers, most of our congregations couldn't make ends meet. Without volunteers, our District offices would come to a screeching halt! We thank God for our participating volunteers - they're our "Good and Faithful Servants" for the Lord and His promise of eternal glory.

Where do we find this precious gem of forgiveness and hope of eternal life? You won't find it outside of God's Word and the sacred doctrines preached, taught and embraced within the Holy Christian Church. With the precious Word of God and by the Holy Spirit's calling, gathering, and enlightening, we are brought to faith to apprehend God's grace that comes in overflowing abundance. Are we spectators in the stands or runners, running the race? What race are we running, anyway?

Your servant in Christ +
Rev Roger Paavola



Smiling Faces and Helping Hands

Volunteers Make an Impact at the Mid-South District Office

If you call or visit the Mid-South District Office, chances are you'll be greeted by the friendly voice or smiling face of a volunteer. For well over a decade, the Mid-South District Office has been blessed by volunteers who answer phones, help with large mailing projects, assist with on-going needs like subscriptions to the *Lutheran Witness*, and simply have a positive impact on the overall function of the office. All the Mid-South District Office volunteers also share their time and talents with other worthwhile organizations – so we are especially grateful for the time they spend with us!

Following an appreciation luncheon where they were showered with some fun gifts, four of our six wonderful volunteers posed for a slightly silly picture: seated left to right are Nancy Hugo (Christ the King – Memphis) and Joann Wright (Immanuel Lutheran – Memphis) with Pat Ellis (Trinity Lutheran – Memphis) and Pat Paavola (Christ the King Lutheran – Memphis) standing (L to R). Not pictured are the Mid-South District's newest volunteers Susan Jones (Trinity Lutheran – Memphis) and Diane Reimold (Immanuel Lutheran – Memphis).



Ralph Weiser Excellence in Ministry Award

This is a check for \$5000 being presented to Faith Lutheran Church in Magnolia, AR. Presenting the check is Mr. Chris Weiser to Rev. Jim Jobst, pastor of Faith Lutheran. The members of the congregation are in the picture. The \$5000 is from the Ralph Weiser Excellence in Ministry Award, an award of the Mid-South District for exceptional service to the Kingdom of God and The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod by a layperson selected for their service to the Church.

The first recipient was chosen last year at the Fiftieth Anniversary Banquet of the Mid-South District. Mr. Chris Weiser and Mrs. Margo Weiser were presented the award on behalf of Ralph Weiser for his many years of servant service to the LCMS and the Mid-South District.





The **Installation of Rev. Bruce Hanson at First Lutheran Church, Blytheville, AR** on March 5, 2017.

Those present (L-R) President Roger Paavola, Rev. Bruce Hanson.

The installation of Rev. Paul Kritsch at The Chapel of the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Sharps Chapel, TN, took place on Sunday, March 19, 2017. Good Shepherd congregation began less than two years ago, when people in the Sharps Chapel area were called together for Bible studies and discussions. They have grown from a small group of 5-6 people to over 25 members in that time, and continue to grow beyond the current facilities capacity. They are in a building planning phase with property being made available in the community near the Sharps Chapel Elementary School. Participating in the service were (L-R) President Roger Paavola, Rev. Paul Kritsch, Rev. John Frietag, and Deacon Tom Kyner.



The **Installation of Rev. Paul J. Bushur as Senior Pastor at First Lutheran Church, Chattanooga, TN** on Sunday, March 12. Pastor Bushur came to Chattanooga after 18 years as senior pastor of First Lutheran Church, Knoxville, TN.

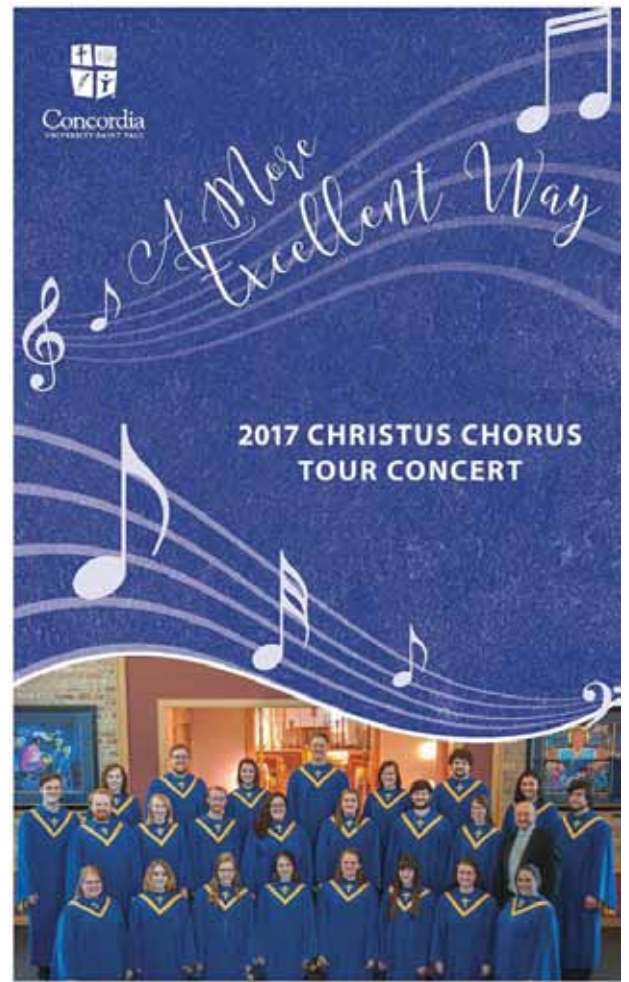
Members of the local clergy with Pastor Bushur are:

Front (L-R) Rev. Josh Woodrow, Rev. Clifford Herd, Rev. Paul Bushur, Rev. Barry Hildebrandt, Rev. John Schulz. Back (L-R) Rev. Ed Rosser, Rev. Chris Sheets, President Roger Paavola, Rev. Mark Rhoads, Rev. Gilbert Pingel.



Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church Joins the Mid-South District Family!

The Mid-South District is pleased to welcome the workers and members of Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church in Olive Branch, Mississippi to our network of ministries. Formerly a congregation of the LCMS's Southern District, Beautiful Savior officially joined the Mid-South District in late 2016 as part of the Memphis Circuit. We look forward to serving Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church and invite you to get to know this congregation by visiting them on the web at <http://www.beautifulsaviorlutheran.org>



2017 Christus Chorus Tour Concert

(Choir from Concordia University-St. Paul)

Monday, April 10 at 7 PM

@ Immanuel Lutheran Church

(6325 Raleigh LaGrange Road, Memphis TN 38134)

Free and open to the public

Apply Now for Student Financial Aid

Students who plan to attend an LCMS seminary or university during the 2017-18 academic year in order to prepare for full-time church work may apply for financial aid through the Mid-South District office. Financial aid amounts are granted for a period of one year, and a new application must be made each year. **Applications for the coming school year must be postmarked by June 15, 2017.**

For forms, please contact the district office by phone (toll-free) at 866-373-1343, by email to jtyler@mid-southlcms.com, or by regular mail 1675 Wynne Road, Cordova, TN 38016.



Congregational Mission Commitments

Mission Commitment Receipts as of 02/28/17 (2 Months)

Anticipated Amount (16.67% of budget)	\$262,191
Actual Receipts.....	<u>246,585</u>
Over (under) anticipated amount	(\$15,606)

Use of Mission Commitment Receipts (2 Months)

Allocated to Synod for World Missions	\$69,809
Allocated to Tanzania	4,167
Retained for District Mission/Ministry Support (70% of receipts) ..	<u>172,610</u>
Total Receipts	\$246,585

Mission Commitment Receipts Prior Year Comparison (2 Months)

Actual Receipts as of 02/28/17	\$246,585
Actual Receipts as of 02/28/16	<u>\$264,993</u>
Over (under) prior year receipts	(\$18,408)

Next month's *Encourager* focus will be on Small Town/Rural Ministry. Share your stories and photos with us.



In this world that we live

In this world that we live in, we in the church are always reminded of the daily struggle we face, especially with the constant reminder of the declining number of people who are attending church. We at Christus Victor Lutheran Church in Knoxville have reason to celebrate. One March 5th, we brought in eight new members into our church. Many have been visiting with us for some time, while others are recently new. Some were brought in by confession of faith while others had a history with the LCMS and transferred in. In today's culture, health is normally measured by numbers, the typical butts in the seats formula. Being a small church pastor, I see things a little differently, we gauge our strength and health on the hearts and faith of the members not just in the numbers.

We celebrated and the sanctuary was filled with joyous sounds when the people turned and I introduced the newest members to those in the pews. It truly brought a smile to my face as I saw the excitement in the eyes of those whom I have the privilege to serve and minister with and to. God has been good to us during my time here and I look forward to seeing what God has in store as we



L to R: Stephen Duncan, Damion Billingsley Sr., Jessica and Derrick Moeller, Keri Cole and her daughter Jessie, Lib and Lea DiMaria. Back: Pastor Bill Ondracka and Jim Henning (head elder)

continue to be groomed and equipped to be used in His service.

Following the service the fellowship committee had prepared a festive array of snacks, cake, punch and coffee, so we all gathered together and took the time to get to know each other and more about the church. Instead of me standing before them being pounded with questions, I turned the tables and prepared a number of questions about the history of the church to help educate the newest members with who we are. God is good!

The Second Graduation- Tanzania

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania South East of Lake Victoria Diocese celebrated the second graduation of students from Bishop Makala Training Center on March 12th in collaboration with Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, IN.

The class work was coordinated and taught by Concordia Theological Seminary Fort Wayne, IN personnel with financial support from the Mid-South District and The Lutheran-Church Missouri Synod.

Seventeen pastors were ordained in the ceremony held in Ebenezer Lutheran Church Cathedral in Shinyanga. This includes three pastors from Rwanda.

(Right) Seven new Tanzanian deaconesses also graduated and received beautiful deaconess stoles made by First Lutheran Evangelical Church in Longmont, Colorado.



(Left) Bishop Celestine Sebrikoko from Rwanda helped celebrate the event

INTERIOR PAINTING OF LIME, MADAGASCAR

Continued from March Encourager 2017

An update from Joseph, Lutherans in Madagascar, and how the District continue to make an IMPACT.

The Lord be with you!

I have sent you 9 sets of pictures concerning the interior painting of LIME. This was done because of you and of your team. You are the gracious hands of Jesus blessing us and giving us the gift of love and brotherly mutual support. Thank you and thank you.

God bless you. Thank you and thank you.

Joseph, your brother in Christ.

Joseph Randrianasolo



Prayer Summary, March 2017

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 March 2017.

PRAYER CONCERNS

MRS. JUDY BACHERT (wife of Rev. Alan Bachert, EM, Wildwood, MO)

MS. SARA FEURESTEIN (daughter of Rev. Donley Hesse, Mena, AR)

MR. GLENN GOERES (Former Education Executive, Central Illinois District – LCMS)

MRS. NANCY HERD (wife of Rev. Cliff Herd, EM, Chattanooga, TN)

REV. DONLEY HESSE (Emeritus, Mena, AR)

REV. HERB KLEPATZ (Emeritus, LaVergne, TN)

MR. RICHARD MEYER (Bella Vista, AR)

MRS. MEGAN NAVRATH (daughter of Rev. Carl and Gwen Wenck, Grace, Murfreesboro, TN)

REV. DAVID RUBKE (Tullahoma, TN)

REV. PHIL SCHMIDT (Emeritus, Memphis, TN)

MR. BILL SHARPE (North Dakota District)

MRS. CHLOE SWANSON (wife of Rev. Herb Swanson, Lamar, AR)

MRS. SUE ANN TOOPES (wife of Rev. Andy Toopes, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Bowling Green, KY)

MRS. MARGARET WENCK (mother of Rev. Carl Wenck, Grace, Murfreesboro, TN)

MR. PAUL WILKEN (father-in-law of Rev. Russell Shewmaker, Pilgrim Lutheran, Jonesboro, AR)

REV. PHILIP YOUNG (Redeemer Lutheran Church, Nashville, TN)

Our deepest sympathies to:

The family and friends of Deacon Don Rothenbush (St. John, Crossett, AR) who passed away on Wednesday, March 1, 2017.

President Timothy Yeadon (New England District – LCMS) and family on the loss of his mother-in-law, Flo, on Sunday, March 19th.

The family and friends of Rev. Al Boysen (Emeritus – Cordova, TN) who passed away on Saturday, March 25th.
Renaë McElwain (District Office) and family on the loss of her father-in-law, Roy McElwain, on Saturday, March 25th.

The family and friends of Rev. Dean Bauer (Emeritus – Hot Springs Village, AR) who passed away on Monday, March 27.

Thanksgiving for the complete recovery of Mrs. Judy German (Beautiful Savior, Olive Branch, MS)

CALL UPDATE

ORDAINED MINISTERS

ACCEPTED: **Rev. Kirk Abatelli**, Millington, MI, has accepted the call to serve as pastor at **Faith Lutheran Church, Oak Ridge, TN.**

Rev. Greg Truwe, pastor of Concordia Lutheran Church, Jackson, TN, has accepted the call to serve as Senior Pastor at **Trinity Lutheran Church, Cole Camp, MO.**

DECLINED: **Rev. Barry Hildebrandt**, Pastor at Cross of Christ Lutheran Church, Chattanooga, TN, has declined the call to serve as Associate Pastor at **Immanuel Lutheran Church, Memphis, TN.**

PENDING: **Rev. Mark Bushuiakovish**, Associate Pastor at Grace Lutheran Church, Knoxville, TN, has received a call to serve as **Associate Pastor** at **Christ the King Lutheran Church, Southgate, MI.**

Rev. Michael Croom, Pastor at Faith Lutheran Church, Hopkinsville, KY, has received a call to serve as **Pastor** at **Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, LaGrange, KY.**

IN THE CALLING PROCESS - COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

Concordia Lutheran Church, Jackson, TN – Pastor
Faith Lutheran Church, Bentonville, AR – Pastor
First Lutheran Church, Knoxville, TN – Pastor
Grace Lutheran Church, Knoxville, TN – Associate Pastor
Grace Celebration Lutheran Church, Cordova, TN – Pastor

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Memphis, TN – Associate Pastor

Mid-South District, Cordova, TN – Missionary-At-Large/
Church Planter

Our Shepherd Lutheran Church, Searcy, AR – Pastor
Redeemer Lutheran Church, Mountain Home, AR – Associate Pastor

The Point, Knoxville, TN – Pastor

Trinity Lutheran Church, Memphis, TN – Pastor

COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

DECLINED: **Mrs. Becky Bernau**, teacher at **Concordia Christian Academy**, Jonesboro, AR, has declined the call to serve as teacher at Our Savior Lutheran School in Hutchinson, MN.

Mr. Scott Johnson of Lakefield, MN, has declined the call to serve as principal at First Lutheran School, Fort Smith, AR.

continued next page...

Mr. David Kaiser of Sebeawing and Unionville, MI, has declined the call to serve as principal at First Lutheran School in Knoxville, TN.

Mrs. Erika Kaiser of Sebeawing and Unionville, MI, has declined the call to serve as teacher at First Lutheran School in Knoxville, TN.

IN THE CALLING PROCESS – FOR COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

First Lutheran Church and School, Fort Smith, AR – Principal

First Lutheran Church and School, Knoxville, TN – Principal

Grace Lutheran Church, Little Rock, AR – Director of Parish Music

Heavenly Host Lutheran School, Cookeville, TN – Principal

Staff of the Mid-South District, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod



Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola
President

Paul Reaves
*Executive Director for LCEF Vice President
and Executive Director for Development*

Angela Fowler
*Executive Director for
Business and Finance*

Allen Piepenbrink
*District Education Executive for
Education and Preschools*

Carolyn Metzger
Finance Assistant

Renae McElwain
LCEF Communications & Marketing Specialist

Julie Tyler
*Administrative Assistant
for Missions and Education*

Alison Hawkins
*Administrative Assistant
to the District President*

Contact the Mid-South District

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FAX: 901.373.4826

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"@midsouthLCMS"

Contribute to The Encourager

The Encourager is a monthly newsletter from the Mid-South District LCMS. If you would like your article or event published in the next Encourager, please email it by the **April 20** to Rhonda, webmaster@mid-southlcms.com