



# MID-SOUTH LUTHERAN

## Lutherans love Christmas

Growing up in suburban Baltimore, Christmas worship services were always my favorite. I especially loved the Christmas Eve services of my youth. Even as I left home, Christmas services in Lutheran churches never disappointed. It is my contention that Lutheran churches excel at Christmas worship.



**Rev. Richard Elseroad**  
Fourth Vice-President

My first call was to be a missionary at-large (it was the parlance of that day — we would now say church planter) in Gardendale, Ala. Good Shepherd Lutheran Church would be my home and joy for the next 14 years. In my early years, there I was naturally trying to fully perceive and appreciate the Southern culture. I came to love Alabama and the South. But there was one incredible oddity that had to do with Christmas. Many Baptist and other evangelical churches had no Christmas Eve or Day services. When Christmas landed on a Sunday, they didn't even have church! Things have changed over the years and many do have Christmas services now. But I was intent on making sure Good Shepherd had the best Christmas services we could — “pulling out all the stops!”

Christmas is important to Lutherans because it is all about Jesus. We champion the biblical teaching of “grace alone.” The birth of Jesus signals that He came to earth to complete the work of our salvation. It is a high and holy celebration because our King and the one and only Savior of the world was born.

With increasing numbers of unchurched and unbelievers, Christmas is an opportunity we Christians can't miss. We want to raise questions in people's minds about the origin and meaning of Christmas. Why is this day, this season, so important to Christians? Why do they flock to churches? Is it just tradition to do so or is there something more? It is our opportunity in the worship services to show them there is a lot more!

How can we use the Christmas season to the greatest advantage in our desire to connect people to Jesus? I have four suggestions, but I am sure you can add to this list. (Why not email the Mid-South District with your ideas so they can be shared with all.) Here are mine:

### **INTRODUCE ADVENT CALENDARS**

I've always liked the ones with a little chocolate behind each date. This is a great tool especially for children to anticipate Christmas that's linked to its true meaning. Lessons taught to children before the age of 7 are deeply ingrained and have staying power. Let's



grab a hold of children's hearts in every way we can. Christmas is a wonderful season to do just that.

### **LET YOUR CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS DECLARE YOUR FAITH**

My wife, Susie, loves Christmas more than anyone I know. She has collected miniature Nativities from all our travels. But we also have a large lighted Nativity we place in our front yard. (Please allow me to give a little plug for Bronner's CHRISTmas Wonderland in Frankenmuth, Mich. They have wonderful Christ-inspired decorations.) Decorations can bring joy and celebration and at the same time point to the true meaning of the holiday.

### **LET EVERY CHRISTMAS CARD YOU SEND DISPLAY THE TRUE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS**

I have nothing against Santa Claus or Frosty the Snowman. But why waste

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## Faith hosts mission conference



Staff and presenters, from left, (kneeling) Deb Reed, Chris Knoernschild; (standing) Chuck Smestad, Shirley Smestad, Linda Ronsinbaum, Gary Reed, David Knoernschild, Keith Keck, Julie Keck and Susan and Rev. Greg Finke.

By Debbie Reed

Faith, Hot Springs Village, Ark.

On Saturday, Sept. 30, Faith Lutheran Church, Hot Springs Village, Ark., hosted a “Kick the Tires” Mission Conference with 115 in attendance representing 13 churches and four denominations from the Hot Springs Village area. The attendees had the opportunity to “kick the tires” on the way they have approached evangelism.

The Rev. Greg Finke, founder of Dwelling 1:14 and author of “Joining Jesus on His Mission,” was the speaker.

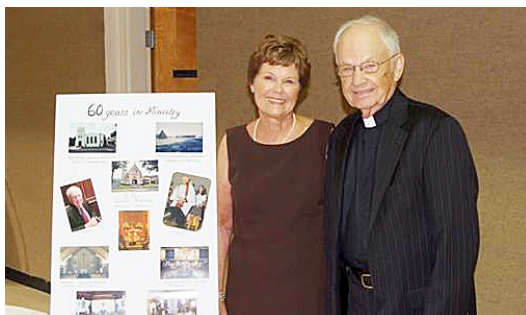
With humor, Finke explained that we are not to be “Jesus sales people,” taking the lead and forcing interactions. Jesus is already “messing” with people, trying to get their attention. He will place them in our paths, and it is up to us to recognize those situations so we can be good listeners and share kind words.

Finke encouraged attendees to think about their mission. Are we spending too much time creating church programs and activities instead of using our time caring for others? Are church

activities providing opportunities for personal interactions with the individuals being helped?

Attendees learned how to begin the process of joining Jesus on His mission in their neighborhoods, workplaces, social circles and schools. Finke emphasized the importance of being intentional in getting to know others and their stories. The first step is to pray for them. Then take time to get to know them. Social events such as cookouts, ice cream socials, chili cook-offs and cookie exchanges are comfortable gatherings for conversations. The more conversations that occur, the more opportunities we have to develop strong, caring relationships, allowing us to join Jesus in the work He is already doing.

Finke has been a pastor for more than 22 years and resides in League City, Texas, with his wife, Susan. They founded Dwelling 1:14 in 2011 to help Jesus-followers become strong disciples by connecting with others in their neighborhoods, workplaces, social circles and schools. He is a popular non-denominational presenter for conferences and retreats, regularly speaks to seminary and university students, and has worked with pastors and leaders across the United States and Canada.



## HAPPY 60!

On Sept. 24, St. Paul, Paducah, Ky., celebrated the Rev. Paul Donner's 60th anniversary of his ordination and consecration into the Office of the Holy Ministry. The St. Paul congregation praises the Lord of the Church that He has permitted Paul to serve these many years, and that He has sustained, supported and blessed his ministry among the congregation and district. Paul is shown with his wife, Carol.

## MESSAGE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

such a golden opportunity when we can send a Gospel message to all our friends in the guise of a Christmas card. And don't forget the stamps! Thankfully through the years, the U.S. Postal Service has produced Christ-themed stamps.

### INVITE FRIENDS AND RELATIVES TO CHURCH FOR CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

These are the easiest services to invite them to, and they will not be offended even if they are bound to say no. Attach a Christmas party to your invitation

to church and you have an even greater witnessing possibility to your unbelieving friends. Pastors must let the simple Gospel really shine at these services. The impression to be made in every way possible is that this Good News of Jesus' birth is not to be missed or misunderstood. Christmas is an invitation to continue to explore the meaning of Christianity. Perhaps this is the perfect time to announce an adult confirmation class (however named — mine is the Adult Inquiry Class) is to commence in early January.

Yes, Lutherans love Christmas and why not, our Savior came for us and all people!

## District welcomes Bishop Makala

The Rev. Emmanuel Makala of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT) visited Memphis in September to meet those in the Mid-South District who have been committed supporters of the South East of Lake Victoria Diocese, of which Makala serves as bishop. The ELCT is one of the largest Lutheran denominations in the world with more than 6.5 million members.

Among those Makala greeted during his visit were members of Christ the King, Memphis, who have been good friends to him and the diocese for many years.

During meetings in St. Louis, he was also able to meet with Mid-South District President Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola and others in the LCMS Council of Presidents. Makala and his companions talked about the challenges the ELCT is facing in managing its finances, and expressed a desire to learn from LCMS and the Lutheran Church



From left, Victor Malewo, the Rev. Emmanuel Makala and Loata Mungaya of Tanzania visited the Mid-South District office.

Extension Fund in managing and growing its financial assets.

Makala was accompanied on his visit by Victor Malewo, CEO of Lusamba Investment Company (LUICO) of Tanzania, and Loata Mungaya, treasurer of the ELCT.

The distinguished visitors were

escorted and guided in their travels by Bob Allen, LCMS Mid-South District mission director.

The Mid-South District provides financial support for the theological education of the pastors at the Bishop Emmanuel Makala Training Center in northern Tanzania.

## Symposium helpful for laymen, too



Concordia Seminary's 28th annual Theological Symposium theme, "The Just Shall Live By Faith: The Reformation Word for Life Then and Now," recognized the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. The presentations, held at the seminary in St. Louis, were judged excellent by attendees Chuck Ransdell and Hubert L. Dellinger Jr., MD, members of Christ the King (CTK), Memphis.

Highlights included the Rev. Dr. James Voelz's lecture "Who Is Able To Be Saved?", the symposium worship service and the home brew fair and German buffet dinner. Voelz is graduate professor of Exegetical Theology and the Dr. Jack Dean Kingsbury Professor of New Testament Theology.

Although laymen are rare at the symposiums, Dellinger, a 42-year member of CTK, has missed only four symposiums, and notes that he enjoys the camaraderie with his friends on the faculty and the knowledge gained.

From left, Ransdell and Dellinger attended Concordia Seminary's 28th Theological Symposium and are pictured with the Rev. Dr. Dale Meyer, Concordia Seminary president.

## Congregation mission commitment receipts

as of Sept. 30, 2017 (9 months)

Anticipated amount (75% of budget) .....	\$1,179,858
Actual receipts .....	\$1,163,850
Over (under) anticipated amount .....	(\$16,008)

### Use of mission commitment receipts

Allocated to Synod for world missions .....	\$330,405
Allocated to Tanzania .....	\$18,750
Retained for district ministry/mission support (70% of receipts) .....	\$814,695
Total receipts .....	\$1,163,850

### Mission commitment receipts comparison

Actual receipts as of Sept. 30, 2017 .....	\$1,163,850
Actual receipts as of Sept. 30, 2016 .....	\$1,166,368
Over (under) prior year receipts .....	(\$2,518)

## Seminaries to hold visitation events

**CONCORDIA SEMINARY, ST. LOUIS**, has scheduled a variety of on-campus visitation events for prospective students to be held during the 2017-18 academic year.

All events are aimed at providing a preview of the seminary's ministerial formation experience as students prepare for pastoral and diaconal ministry. There is something for everyone – including events for prospective students who are in high school or college, as well as for those who are considering ministry as a second career.

Upcoming visitation events include:  
**Contemplate (March 8-10, Oct. 4-6, 2018)**

For college students and second-career men and women, this three-day visit offers an in-depth view of the preparation that leads to service as a pastor or deaconess. The event is free.

Register at [csl.edu/contemplate](http://csl.edu/contemplate).

**Green & Gold Days (Feb. 9, April 6 and Nov. 2, 2018)**

For college students and second-career men and women, Green & Gold Days is an opportunity to spend a day on campus and see what the seminary has to offer. The day includes meeting with current students and professors, attending classes and chapel, and ending the day with dinner and discussion. The event is free.

Register at [csl.edu/greengold](http://csl.edu/greengold).

**Shepherds of God's Flock (Feb. 8, 2018)**

For college students and second-career men, Shepherds of God's Flock is about the decision-making process of "service as a shepherd." At this one-day event, participants explore ministry through Bible study, hear panel presentations from pastors and students, and talk with others who are asking the same

questions. The event is free.  
Register at [csl.edu/shepherds](http://csl.edu/shepherds).

**Taste of the Sem (Feb. 17-19, 2018)**

For high school men, this is the chance to spend a weekend on campus diving into Lutheran theology, prayer and worship. Participants can talk with current students and professors. Because preparation extends beyond the classroom, participants accompany their mentors on Sunday to the church the mentor serves. The event is free.

Register at [csl.edu/taste](http://csl.edu/taste)

**Vocatio (June 23-28, 2018)**

For high school men and women, this weeklong retreat explores God's calling and direction. Included are Bible study, worship, vocation discussion, a servant event and some St. Louis fun. A Concordia University System college fair also is scheduled. Registration is \$150, but travel assistance is available upon request.

Register at [csl.edu/vocatio](http://csl.edu/vocatio).

**Next Steps (July 13-14, 2018)**

For prospective students who are married and their immediate families, this two-day event provides participants an opportunity to connect with the Concordia Seminary community. From visiting the campus to experiencing life with seminary families, participants

learn about transitioning to life at the seminary from those who already have taken this step. The event is free.

Register at [csl.edu/nextsteps](http://csl.edu/nextsteps)

To learn more about the seminary's visitation events, call 800-822-9545, email [admissions@csl.edu](mailto:admissions@csl.edu) or visit [csl.edu/admissions](http://csl.edu/admissions).

**CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY (CTS), FORT WAYNE,**



**IND.**, will hold Prayerfully Consider Visit (PCV) March 14-17, 2018.

The event invites men and women of all ages to explore the pastoral and diaconal training happening at CTS and gives a time for contemplation on the vocations of pastor and deaconess, offering an occasion for prospective students to envision themselves stepping into the formation happening at CTS.

Prospective students will be able to:

- ▶ EXPLORE the campus.
- ▶ ENGAGE the students and faculty.
- ▶ EXPERIENCE the rich fellowship and worship.
- ▶ CONTEMPLATE the vocation of pastor or deaconess.

For more information, including registration, go to [ctsfw.edu/ctsfw-events](http://ctsfw.edu/ctsfw-events) and click the link, and learn out about other events happening at CTS, or call 260-452-2100

## New associate installed at Faith



The installation of the Rev. Alebachew Teshome as associate pastor of Faith Lutheran Church, Thompson's Station, Tenn., was held on Sunday, Oct. 15. Celebrating the occasion were, from left, the Revs. Gerald Meyer (circuit visitor), Teshome and Curt Hoover (Faith senior pastor).

## Redeemer has new associate

On Sunday, Sept. 17, Redeemer Lutheran Church, Mountain Home, Ark., installed its new associate pastor, the Rev. Thomas T. Presley. Joining the celebration were Arkansas pastors (from left) the Revs. David Tews, Horseshoe Bend; Russell Shoemaker, Jonesboro; John Easterling, Redeemer senior pastor; Joel Krogen, Batesville; Presley; Fred Hagemeyer, Lakeview; Deacon Bill Schutte, Mountain Home; and the Revs. David Gadbow, Mountain Home, and Brian Pummil, Cherokee Village.



## Bi-vocational pastor installed

By Deaconess Connie Goines  
Grace, Greenwood, Ark.

The Rev. Timothy J Henning was installed as pastor of Trinity, Mena, Ark., on Sunday, Oct. 8. The Rev. Darrell Kobs was the presiding minister and the Rev. Jason Zirbel gave the sermon. A reception and luncheon followed in the fellowship hall.

Henning graduated from Concordia College, Seward, Neb., and from Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind. He was ordained in 1999. He has served for eight years in the U.S. Army (active duty and the reserves) as a chaplain's assistant. He also served in the Persian Gulf War.

He also works full-time for Tyson Foods in Dardanelle, Ark. He and his wife, Janet, and their three children, ages 18, 16 and 14, live in Russellville.



Attending Henning's installation were pastors from the Fort Smith Circuit, from left (front row) the Revs. Donley Hesse, emeritus; Henning; John Merrill, First, Fort Smith; (back row) John Truede, Our Redeemer, Fort Smith; Darrell Kobs, emeritus/circuit visitor; Jason Zirbel, Grace, Greenwood; Joshua Willadsen, Bethel, Fort Smith.



## Grace, Clarksville, welcomes new members

Three families are the newest members of Grace Lutheran Church, Clarksville, Tenn. They were received on New Member Sunday, Sept. 17, and welcomed with a pot luck meal. These three families include eight children — adding to the congregation's blessings.

Grace has welcomed more than 30 infants, toddlers, youth and adults into the Kingdom by Holy Baptism so far this year. Grace pastors are the Revs. Larry A. Peters and Daniel M. Ulrich. The DCE is Jo-Ann Thomack.

**OFFICIAL NOTICE**  
**The 20<sup>th</sup> Regular Convention**  
**Mid-South District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod**  
**Memphis, Tennessee**

**Dates:** Thursday, June 28, 2018 (mid-afternoon) to Saturday, June 30, 2018 (mid-afternoon)

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

**Theme:** "The LORD – Our Rock, Our Fortress, Our Savior" – Psalm 18:2

**Opening Service with Holy Communion:**

Thursday, June 28, 2018 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: **February 28, 2018**

**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**  
**NOMINATION BALLOTS FOR LCMS COMMITTEE FOR CONVENTION NOMINATIONS (Lay)**

Deadline: **February 28, 2018**

**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: **March 31, 2018**

**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])*

## Camping and canoe weekend stresses outdoor appreciation



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY MARY HUGO

**By Genie Swan**  
Community Relations,  
Christ the King, Memphis

**M**ore than 50 members of the Christ the King (CTK) Lutheran Church and School family enjoyed a September weekend on the Buffalo River in Tennessee for the annual Family Camping and Canoe Trip.

Coordinated by Chris Miller, CTK youth minister, the weekend provided adults and children with plenty of opportunities to enjoy the outdoors. Both novice and experienced canoeists were welcome. Tents were set up, meals were provided and everyone had a wonderful, safe and relaxing time. After a Saturday of canoeing and



campfire, the group gathered at the river for worship led by Chris Hugo, CTK elder, with many of the children helping to lead the songs.

At the close of the weekend, everyone agreed that the time had led to a deeper relationship with each other and with the Lord, and they are already looking forward to the next camping trip.

# Time is a gift



“There is a **time** for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven,” **Eccl. 3:1**

**By Diane Reimold**  
President, LWML Mid-South District



Time is probably our most valuable commodity, but also the one thing we waste the most!

How many times have you been at the end of the day and thought, “I didn’t get anything done today!” It’s not that you didn’t do anything, but rather you didn’t get the things done that you had wanted to or thought you would accomplish. Every person on earth is equal in that we all just have 24 hours in a day, and if you’re like me, I tend to be a little selfish with my time.

December is always a busy month with all the extra events that occur — holiday parties, additional church services and

dinners, Christmas program rehearsals and performances plus all the Christmas decorating,

shopping, wrapping and baking.

It is very easy for me to get wrapped up in all the Christmas activities and forget about sharing the wondrous birth of Jesus with those who might not have a relationship with Him. Have you thought about visiting a

retirement center, homeless shelter or women’s residence to sing carols, give cookies, help decorate or just enjoy some fellowship? LWML societies usually plan special outreach events during December, so if you’d like to spend some time sharing Christmas with others this year, contact your local LWML society or member.

We all have the same amount of time each day and the key is to use our time wisely and the best use of our time — no matter the month — is for sharing the love, forgiveness and eternal life we have in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Who can you share Christmas with this month?

Christmas blessings and a Happy New Year!

## Deadline for the February issue is Dec. 15

Digital files, sent via email, are preferred. Email submissions to [lw@mid-south-lcms.com](mailto:lw@mid-south-lcms.com), or mail via U.S. Postal Service to: **Judy Otto, 150 N. Maury St., Holly Springs, MS 38635**

Submission deadline is the 15th of each month, two months before publication.

# Sharing the Reformation story

By **Rena McElwain**

LCEF Communications & Marketing Specialist

The weekend of Oct. 13-14 was an exciting and busy time as the Mid-South District's official Reformation events were held in Memphis.

On Friday, more than 500 people gathered for a special Reformation Choral Concert at the Rose Theater on the University of Memphis campus. The evening featured a choir of voices from across the Mid-South District, including 11 pastors and singers from other Protestant denominations in the Memphis area and members of the University's Collegiate Choir.

Members of the Memphis Symphony Orchestra also took part, as well as organist Dr. Sarah C. Harr of First Lutheran Church, Chattanooga, and harpsichordist Chris Cardona, Christ the King, Memphis. Under the direction of conductor Jeremy T. Warner, the performers shared a moving tribute to the Reformation sparked by Martin Luther in 1517.

The Mid-South District was honored to host such an event and is most grateful for the efforts and vision of Christ the King member Charlie Gemeinhardt, who, along with his wife, Carol, coordinated every detail of the memorable evening.

On Saturday, the district's celebration took a more casual and festive turn at an Oktoberfest event. Immanuel Lutheran Church and School graciously hosted the event on behalf of the district — and what fabulous hosts they were! More than 300 people came out to enjoy the food, beer, Oompah band and German-inspired fun of the day.

The LCMS Office of International Mission received a portion of the proceeds from the event, including more than \$1,500 raised in an auction featuring themed baskets donated by area congregations' Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML) chapters.

If smiles, dancing, full bellies and an empty beer keg are marks of success, then the Oktoberfest event hit all the



Oktoberfest attendees took advantage of a Martin Luther "photo opp," with Wittenberg's City Square as the backdrop.



CAROLINE JOHNSON/JOHNSON PHOTOGRAPHY



▲ The choral concert included stirring renditions of hymns and classic works from Lutheran composer Johann Sebastian Bach.

◀ Bob Westbrook and The Edelweiss Band kept folks dancing and singing with their classic Oktoberfest Oompah music.

marks! The festive day of fun would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of Diane Reimold, Immanuel member and Mid-South District LWML president, who planned and executed the Oktoberfest celebration with excellence!

The Mid-South District's weekend of Reformation events were brought to life by the work of the event coordinators and many volunteers. In addition to the wonderful work of these individuals, the

district is grateful to Thrivent Financial for its generous sponsorship of both events.

The vision for the weekend of events was to bring not only members of our area LCMS congregations together, but also to attract those from the community to share and celebrate the Reformation story. By God's grace and the efforts of many who shared in the hope of this vision, these aspirations were certainly achieved!