

# Encourager

Mid-South District LCMS | February 2018

## February's Focus: OUTREACH

The Mid-South District is blessed with LCMS ministries that regularly seek ways to reach beyond their own walls to share the love of Christ. This month, the *Encourager* is pleased to celebrate outreach in the Mid-South with stories of ministries and individuals shining Christ's light – both in their communities and beyond.

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*"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."*  
Matthew 5:14-16

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



### Is There Something to Share?

Back in the 70's, I took my turn at covering the emergency room in the small country hospital where I worked as its CEO. Early in the evening, a young man and his wife came in because he had rolled his car and wanted to be checked out. Fred - the physician on call that night - came in and examined the man, coming to the conclusion that he had fractured ribs and needed to be hospitalized to prevent any further damage to his

lungs and internal organs. "I'm alright," the man demanded, "just wrap up my chest, give me some pain medicine, and I'll go home. I hate hospitals!" Fred wasn't the most patient physician on my staff, but argued for a few times, arguing that it was dangerous for him to go home. But after requiring him to sign himself out against medical advice, Fred resigned himself to the fact that he couldn't convince the man about the gravity of his injury. About 24 hours later that same young man was brought in by ambulance - unconscious - because he had a collapsed lung.

"There's nothing wrong with me," is a dangerous thing to say. Yet, when we consider the spiritual things in our life, it's probably the worst thing to say. For a person to stand in front of God and say, "There's nothing wrong with me," is to say the opposite of what Scripture says about us and is, therefore, unacceptable to God. The Bible tells us that in

the case of the unregenerate soul, **everything** is wrong with us! Yet, as Christians we can truly say that Jesus Christ has overcome all our sins. He has taken away everything that is wrong with all people. Some just don't accept the gift He offers! We begin Lent on Ash Wednesday - which just happens to be St Valentine's Day. It's going to culminate on April First - when the rest of the world celebrates April Fools Day. Isn't it great that we have these "bookends" to tell others about what Jesus came to offer to the world?

Jesus tells a parable about two men - one who is confident and self-righteous, who looked down on everyone else; and another man too much aware of his short comings to even lift his eyes to heaven. *"Two men went up to the Temple to pray,"* Jesus tells, *"a Pharisee and a tax collector."* Remember, Pharisees were people confident in their faith, who lived clean lives. They didn't want to bother with sinners who resided outside of their tight little circles.



**St. Augustine's Lutheran School in South Sudan.** Pastor Russell Shewmaker (Pilgrim Lutheran Church, Jonesboro, AR) has been teaching there on a short term mission trip.

Tax collectors, on the other hand, were known to have swindled people and intimidated others into paying more than was expected. Both came to church. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself, *"God, I thank you that I am not like other men - robbers, evildoers, adulterers - or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get."* Perhaps we can sum up his prayer like this: *"God, just look! There's nothing wrong with me!"*

He was a good citizen. He obeyed the laws, lived a moral and upright life (and was willing to tell everyone about it, and point an accusing finger at those who didn't match up to his standards). From all outside appearances, there really wasn't much wrong with him - at least in humanitarian terms. But, then Jesus focused on the tax collector. He may have stolen money from people using the system. He ruined other people's lives. His life was an external disaster and deserved earthly and eternal punishment. *"The tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'"* He was ashamed of what he was and what he did. We can sum up his prayer, *"You don't need to look, God. Everything wrong with me!"*

But, Jesus says the tax collector is the one forgiven by God. Jesus explains, *"For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."* The Pharisee exalted himself, while the tax collector was exalted by God. But, is Jesus saying that you earn the forgiveness of sins by being humble? *"The tax collector deserves forgiveness because he is so humble."* Is that how it really works? No, that's the way a lot of people think, but it's not the way God's mercy works. If that's the way it works, then our whole salvation would be dependent on us and our

attitude. No one would ever be sure if they were forgiven by God or not. No one would ever know if their humility was sincere enough or not. The truth is, however, that neither the Pharisee nor the tax collector deserved God's forgiveness. The Pharisee didn't deserve it because he was self-righteous! The tax collector didn't deserve it because he was a horrible sinner.

No, the truth is that forgiveness is offered by God out of His grace and mercy. God forgives people because of His grace through Jesus Christ. Because of the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross, taking away the sins of all the world, God offers forgiveness to all the world, for every generation. That's true love. God offered forgiveness to both men, but only the tax collector received God's forgiveness, because God forgives those who confess their sin, rather than those who wish to stand on their own "goodness" before God. Those who confess their sinfulness and plead for God's mercy recognize their need for God's help - not because they earn it, not because they're groveling, but because God shows undeserved love (grace) to all who humble themselves to God.

The tax collector is the picture of Lent. The Pharisee is the opposite. Will we plan to observe Lent this year by acting in extra religious piety? "Maybe I will give up something for Lent - my favorite food, watching my favorite TV show, or give up eating chocolate. Look how religious I am, God." But, is Lent about self-denial and abstinence from chocolate? Lent isn't about chocolates and TV. Jesus is concerned about what's churning around in our hearts. Lent is a time to turn from the sin that stains our lives more than chocolate stains our favorite shirt or blouse. Lent is a time to give up the sin of hypocrisy - only acting like Christians on the

## Congregational Mission Commitments

### Mission Commitment Receipts as of 12/31/17 (12 Months)

Anticipated Amount (100% of budget) .....	\$1,573,144
Actual Receipts .....	<u>1,558,963</u>
Over (under) anticipated amount.....	(\$14,181)

### Use of Mission Commitment Receipts (12 Months)

Allocated to Synod for World Missions .....	\$442,689
Allocated to Tanzania .....	25,000
Retained for District Mission/Ministry	
Support (70% of receipts) .....	<u>1,091,274</u>
Total Receipts .....	\$1,558,963

### Mission Commitment Receipts Prior Year Comparison (12 Months)

Actual Receipts as of 12/31/17 .....	\$1,558,963
Actual Receipts as of 12/31/16 .....	<u>\$1,607,925</u>
Over (under) prior year receipts .....	(\$48,962)

outside, but being self-righteous on the inside. Lent is a time to give up the sin of duplicity - being a Christian on Sundays but living like an unbeliever Monday through Saturday.

Lent is that man who stood at the back of the Temple, looking only at the ground and praying, "God have mercy on me, a sinner." Lent is our time to ask God to forgive us, to wash away our sins and to empower us by His Holy Spirit to turn away from our sinful past and live new lives dedicated to Him. In Lent we lay our sins at the foot of the old rugged cross and there realize the great act of love Jesus did for us. We can walk away, knowing that we've been forgiven by God out of His grace and mercy - washed clean in the blood of the Lamb. It's all about God.

Maybe that's why the early Christian Church began its observation of Lent - giving us seven weeks to not only look deep inside our hearts,



but having a special time to share this great treasure with those who have no hope... out there. Jesus promises that by the Holy Spirit, others may be enlivened to live a new life in Him as well.

If people want to give up something for Lent as a sign of love for Jesus, that's OK. But, let's give up our fear of telling others of what it is Jesus has done for us, *"To declare the excellencies of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous Light."* (1 Peter 2) At the cross, we will see how wonderful and deep our Savior's love is for us. Our Christian joy doesn't end at the cross, but at an empty tomb, where Jesus rose from the dead to prove God's satisfaction

in Christ's sacrifice was fulfilled, and that, just as Christ rose from the dead, we too shall rise to the glory of His holy name. May God bless us on this Lenten journey, and in our Christian witness, knowing that in Christ, we're truly forgiven and made heir - and co-heirs with Christ of a glorious and eternal kingdom.

Your servant in Christ +  
Rev Dr Roger Paavola



## LWML and the "4-S" (Cereal, Soup, Snack, Spaghetti)



Our Savior Lutheran Church, in Morristown, TN came together for it's 4th annual Christmas outreach event for the Kingswood School ([www.kingswood-school.com](http://www.kingswood-school.com)), a private 501(c)(3) non-profit residential agency serving the needs of neglected or abandoned children, located in neighboring Bean Station, TN. The church's LWML chapter took some creative license and led the "4-S" (Cereal, Soup, Snack, Spaghetti) collection on consecutive Sunday mornings and delivered the bounty pictured at the end of the month along with a sizable monetary donation to help the school with other expenses.

## 40 years of Baptism Banners



On Sunday, January 7, 2018, members of Christ the King Lutheran Church, Memphis, gave thanks for the work of a very special lady, Mrs. Willie Garner. For the last 40 years, Willie has been handcrafting Baptism banners for each child of God baptized at CTK's font. About twenty years ago, Confirmation banners were added to her loving tasks.

Willie, assisted by granddaughter Jessica Prince, continues to make beautiful banners which are much more than a keepsake of a special Sunday. They remain a constant reminder of the child's Baptism and of the promise of salvation and the strengthening of faith brought by the Holy Spirit in this Sacrament of Word and water. That these banners hold a special place in the lives of children of Christ the King was evidenced by the many families who brought their banners to church on January 7, as a way to display to the congregation the depth of impact that

Willie's handiwork has had on the members of Christ the King through the years.

Special note was made of those families whose parents still had their banners from 30+ years ago, as they stood next to their children holding their more recent banners, celebrating a remarkable generation-to-generation continuity of faith.

Pastor Chuck Neugebauer invited Willie forward for a special thank you, a beautiful plaque, and a round of applause by a very grateful congregation. We know that Willie will continue to touch the hearts of the children as they reach these milestones of faith at their Baptism and Confirmation.

— Genie Swan



## Mission Team Prepares for Trip to Tanzania in May 2018

Twenty-four representatives from the Mid-South District are preparing for a mission trip to Tanzania in May.

The first group of 10 (team 1) will be leaving Memphis on May 19th and the 2nd group of 14 will be departing on May 31.

Each group will fly into Kilimanjaro Airport and then board a smaller plane to Mwanza. From there they will drive to Shinyanga, where the headquarters of the Southeast of Lake Victoria Diocese of the Lutheran Church of Tanzania is located.

Team 1 will drive to a remote location and conduct an outreach to villages known as Ulowa. Team 2 will be going to a remote location north and east of Shinyanga to a new district whose only exposure to the Gospel was in 2015.

Please keep the teams in your prayers as they prepare for this mission experience.

— Bob Allen, LCMS Mid-South District Mission Leader



Photo courtesy of [elct-selvd.org](http://elct-selvd.org), "Sinema Leo means Movie.... Outreach to Remote Areas and the Wataturu tribe" [read full story.](#)

## Altar Paraments Dedicated

On Sunday, January 7, Chapel of the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Sharps Chapel, TN dedicated the white, green, and red altar paraments and other hangings which were made in the 1960s by the Ecclesiastical Arts Group from Redeemer Lutheran Church, Westfield, NJ. Redeemer's altar guild had new paraments and donated their "old" paraments to our church.

We hold worship services in the town community center. Our altar is an 8 foot folding table and our pulpit is the center's speaker's stand. Dorothy Kritsch did an excellent job of fitting the paraments, and Jane Bruns made the fair linen. Because I served Redeemer for twenty-five years, using the paraments brought back many wonderful memories. Our congregation greatly appreciates the support of a well-established congregation for our relatively new and growing church. — Paul Kritsch, Pastor



## More Than a Bowl of Rice and Beans



God has called Trinity HOPE to be His instrument to reach thousands of hungry children in Haiti and give them HOPE. By providing a nutritious meal during the school day, we not only fill their stomachs with life sustaining food, we also enable them to be fed spiritually in Christian schools. A common phrase in Haiti is "An empty stomach has no ears." At Trinity HOPE we understand this, and work very hard to give children a better future.

That nutritious bowl of rice (or corn) and beans reaches further than the child. The child's ears are opened and they take home to their families the message they are hearing of this man, Jesus Christ, who saved them and loves them. This then opens the doors for the school administrators and pastors. The school's attendance grows, allowing more students to be fed physically and spiritually. But it doesn't stop there. The pastors in Haiti have often told us that the Trinity HOPE feeding programs are one of the best evangelism tools they have to reach families. By getting the school kids involved in church programs, the parents come to watch their children and then are taught about the saving grace of Jesus Christ. Praise be to God for all He does and giving Trinity HOPE the opportunity to serve in this way!

We are called to help. You can help us feed the 23,000 we feed daily and reach the more than 6,000 children on our waiting list by praying for the ministry in the United States and in Haiti, helping share our story with your friends and family, and financially supporting Trinity HOPE. Visit our website for more information at [www.trinityhope.org](http://www.trinityhope.org).

## Apply Now for Student Financial Aid



**Deadline June 15, 2018.**

Students who plan to attend an LCMS seminary or university during the 2018-19 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, 2018.

This information may be sent via email to Julie Tyler or by regular mail to:

Mid-South District LCMS  
1675 Wynne Road  
Cordova, TN 38016

All related forms, including financial aid application, are on the [District's website](#).

# Prayer Summary, January 2018

Following is a list of all the people that have appeared on the Mid-South District website prayer list [www.mid-southlcms.com](http://www.mid-southlcms.com) during the month of January 2018.

## PRAYER CONCERNS

**MR. BRAD BINGHAM** (Cookeville, TN)  
**MS. SHERRY COSTELLO** (secretary at Trinity, Pine Bluff, AR)  
**REV. JOHN EASTERLING** (Mountain Home, AR)  
**MS. SARA FEURESTEIN** (daughter of Rev. Donley Hesse, Mena, AR)  
**THE GEMEINHART FAMILY** (Christ the King, Memphis, TN)  
**MRS. NANCY HERD** (wife of Rev. Cliff Herd, EM, Chattanooga, TN)  
**REV. DONLEY HESSE** (Emeritus, Mena, AR)  
**MR. ADAM JANSEN** (brother of Rev. Nathan Jansen, Burns, TN)  
**REV. DARRELL KOBBS** (Emeritus, Russellville, AR)  
**MR. RICHARD MEYER** (Bella Vista, AR)  
**MRS. MEGAN NAVRATH** (daughter of Rev. Carl and Gwen Wenck, Grace, Murfreesboro, TN)  
**REV. TIM RAKE** (Russellville, AR)  
**REV. DAVID RUBKE** (Tullahoma, TN)  
**REV. MERLIN SEPMYER** (Crossville, TN)  
**REV. KEN SHAW** (Gallatin, TN)  
**REV. RUSSELL SHEWMAKER** (Jonesboro, AR)  
**REV. GORDON SMITH** (Morristown, TN)  
**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)

Our deepest sympathies to **Rev. Reed and Emily Shoaff** as they mourn the loss of Emily's grandfather on Wednesday, January 17th and Reed's grandfather on Thursday, January 18th.

## CALL UPDATE ORDAINED MINISTERS

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**IN THE CALLING PROCESS – CONGREGATIONS**  
**Trinity Lutheran Church, Memphis, TN – Pastor**  
**Mid-South District – Executive Director for**  
**Missions and Ministry**

## COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

**DECLINED:** **Mr. David Manning**, Staunton, IL, has been issued a call to serve as **Principal at Belvoir Christian Academy, Chattanooga, TN.**

**IN THE CALLING PROCESS**  
**Belvoir Christian Academy, Chattanooga, TN**  
**– Principal**  
**First Lutheran Church and School, Fort Smith,**  
**AR – Principal**  
**First Lutheran Church and School, Knoxville,**  
**TN – Principal**



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## Contact the Mid-South District

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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 February 20, 2018 to Rhonda, [webmaster@mid-southlcms.com](mailto:webmaster@mid-southlcms.com).