



MID-SOUTH LUTHERAN

Everyone's Valentine!

According to legend, there was a third-century bishop in Rome named Valentine. He was taken prisoner in one of the many persecutions by the Roman government against the Christian Church.



Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola
District President

Although Valentine was sentenced to death, he was able to grow some violets outside his prison window. He sent them to his loved ones with the message "Remember your Valentine." After his death, he was canonized by the Roman Catholic Church. Hence, we've inherited a tradition known to us as St Valentine's Day — when some of us remember to send cards to our loved ones asking them to remember us.

Chances are, however, you have never heard a Valentine's message from the Church. Yet there can't be a more appropriate day to be reminded of love, marriage and commitment. You have to wonder, how can Elizabeth Taylor write a book titled "How to Marry and Keep a Man?" Or maybe, who could better speak with experience and objectivity than someone who has been married more than a half-dozen times?

Love is a commitment. Think about the account of Abraham trying to help his son, Isaac, find a wife. Sarah was dead, so Abraham sent a servant into Haran to find Isaac a wife. The servant

came back with the idea of having Isaac marry Rebecca. (He should have brought pictures!) You could hardly call it love at first sight when Isaac saw his bride!

There was no engagement ring, premarital counseling, marriage inventory, prenuptial agreement or wedding ceremony. Rebecca wasn't required to read, "The Total Woman," nor was Isaac required to read James Dobson's "What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew About Women." Isaac simply married Rebecca and took her into his tent, as it says in Genesis 24. They changed the name on their mailbox and lived happily ever after, right?

Gen. 24:67 sums up what went right: "And she (Rebecca) became his (Isaac's) wife, and he loved her." Do you notice something different? By today's standards, shouldn't it have read: "Isaac loved Rebecca so she became his wife?" Or maybe, by the standards of postmodern consumers, it should read: "Isaac wanted to find out if he really loved her, so he took her to his tent and they tested the theory."

Our society equates romanticism with love, which can come and go faster than some people change underwear. Love today is defined in terms of emotions, hormones and pheromones. When those are spent, love is gone! We can dispose the unused leftovers and move on. But not so with Isaac. Love, the way



LCMS/Erin M. Lunsford

he understood it — and the way the Bible teaches it regarding a husband and wife — is a covenant, a bond based on commitment.

Commitment is fundamental to a marriage. Feelings come and go, but a covenant is always the baseline that brings a couple back to the bond that God created and maintains within His blessings (see Gen. 2:24 and Matt. 19:6). Commitment gets beyond the "me-vs.-you" difficulties. Commitment recognizes that there is no such thing as compromise as both give in on enough to settle on common ground. Commitment gives 100 percent of each person, so the new flesh of a life from two individual personalities, blessed by God, becomes one new, living life.

See **GOD'S LOVE**, Page 2



GOD'S LOVE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

George Bernard Shaw once said about wedding vows, “When two people are under the influence of the most violent, most insane, most delusive, and most transient passions, they are required to swear that they will remain in that excited, abnormal, and exhausting condition until death parts them.”

He missed it! Those feelings do *not* make the vows last. Excitement and passion will wax and wane in most any relationship. The Christian covenant of marriage is God’s way to bring order and reason into the exciting, delightful and seemingly chaotic institution God Himself made when He created the difference between woman and man.

How does a marriage last beyond seven years? How about 10 years ... 25, 40, 50 or 60 years? A lasting relationship of any duration begins when two people take their covenant seriously and give of themselves, leaving behind any binding relationships that have gone before, and yoking themselves to a chosen partner.

Yes, love is, first, a commitment in covenant. But, second, it’s not a burden of fulfilling a contract, but a commitment surrounded in feelings. Love is many splendorous things! Part of the problem is that, as English-speaking people, there’s only one word that expresses everything from our connection to how things taste, look, smell, feel or sound; and our feelings toward our spouse, our children and our God.

It’s wrong to say that love is just commitment. Period. But that doesn’t explain the Bible’s understanding of

what constitutes love. The Song of Solomon has nothing to do with commitment. It has everything to do with love as a feeling. That’s the kind of love that gives so many people fits. Some say the Song of Solomon shouldn’t even be in the Bible because it talks about a sensual love. Others allegorize it, watering it down or symbolizing it in such a way that it means nothing.

But none of this changes the feeling Solomon had for his true love and the spark of love that exists between him and his beloved. What is certainly true is that Solomon had true and deep feelings for his wife, and his wife had deep and true feelings for him. The necessity to include feelings in a loving relationship was so important that Solomon (the wisest man who has ever lived) also wrote:

“Rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely deer, a graceful doe. ... be intoxicated always in her love.” **Prov. 5:18-19**

He’s speaking about commitment, sensual feelings and fidelity between a husband and a wife. Rather than being obsessed with what he didn’t have (like his father, David), Solomon rejoiced in the love he shared with his wife.

Unfortunately, some marriages seem to lose their emotional “spark.” Many don’t need to feel trapped into saying, “Love is basically a commitment.” Commitment is an institution or imprisonment. Love goes beyond



Love is a growing, beautiful blossom that displays the glory of God and His love for us in His Son, Jesus Christ.”

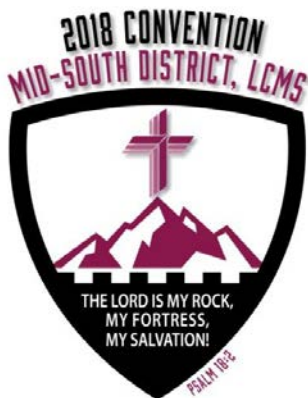
our passive reaction of something done toward us. Love, the way God understands it, is giving everything, but also receiving everything from what God joins together when He makes two to become one flesh.

Liberal interpretations of this world’s governments won’t change its meaning. Love isn’t simply an emotion, and not just a feeling or commitment. Love isn’t limited to the bond of a contractual agreement. Love is a growing, beautiful blossom that displays the glory of God and His love for us in His Son, Jesus Christ. When Jesus becomes the standard for love, legislation and contracts will disappear like a mist.

Since “God is love” (1 John 4:16), He cannot be reduced to feelings, commitments, bonds or covenants. We bring ourselves to the stark realization, as we begin

another Lenten season, that Christ’s love for us showed its depths in His sacrifice for us to be with Him forever. He gave up His perfect life, took on our corruption and died in our place — out of love!

Jesus embodies the essence of love and becomes the only standard of what makes love alive. That’s what can make God “everyone’s Valentine.” Remember Him.



**The 20th 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; 901.684.6664
Opening Service with Holy Communion: Thursday, June 28, 2018 at 7:30 p.m.
 at Christ the King Lutheran Church, 5296 Park Avenue, Memphis, TN 38119

DEADLINES:

- February 28, 2018** – Nomination Ballots for District President, District Regional Vice Presidents, and Board of Directors (Commissioned and Lay)
 Mail to: *The Mid-South District Secretary, Rev. John Gierke, Mid-South District – LCMS, 1675 Wynne Rd., Cordova, TN 38016*
- February 28, 2018** – Nomination ballots for District Secretary, District Nominations Committee, and LCMS Committee for Convention Nominations (Lay)
 Mail to: *District Nominations Committee c/o Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, Mid-South District – LCMS, 1675 Wynne Rd., Cordova, TN 38016*
- March 31, 2018** – Reports, Memorials and Overtures to be presented to the District Convention
 Mail to: *The Mid-South District President, Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, Mid-South District – LCMS, 1675 Wynne Rd., Cordova, TN 38016*
- One day before the Circuit Forum** – Nominations ballots for Circuit Visitors
(Each Circuit Forum will be held at the District Convention or as scheduled by the individual Circuit per Synod Bylaw 5.2.2 [a])
 Mail to: *Each Congregation's respective Circuit Visitor*

Please contact the Mid-South District Office at 901.373.1343 or 866.373.1343 if you have any questions.

LHM LENTEN DEVOTIONS

Learn from the 'silent witnesses'

Do you ever wish that you could have been there at Jesus' passion? Imagine what it would be like to:

- **HEAR** the crowds shout "Hosanna!" as Jesus rode into Jerusalem?
- **SMELL AND TASTE** the feast at the Passover?
- **SEE** Jesus carrying His cross to Golgotha?
- **TOUCH** the wounds in Jesus' hands when He rose from the dead?

We cannot do that, but the men and women who were eyewitnesses of these events have left their testimony in the pages of the Gospels. John tells us:

"These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

John 20:31



But there were also silent witnesses in the Gospels — objects, animals and places that played a part during key moments of Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection. Though they cannot speak, they can show us something of His love and mercy toward us.

Available to read or listen online, "Silent Witnesses"

Lent devotions can also be received as an e-mail subscription throughout the Lenten season. The devotions can also be downloaded, personalized and printed to give to congregation members or use as an outreach tool with guests and visitors. Included on the site is an opportunity to help Lutheran Hour Ministries promote the devotions.

Go to lhm.org/lent for more information.

Congregation mission commitment receipts

as of Nov. 30, 2017 (11 months)

Anticipated amount (91.67% of budget)	\$1,442,049
Actual receipts	\$1,401,633
Over (under) anticipated amount..	(\$40,416)
Use of mission commitment receipts	
Allocated to Synod for world missions	\$397,573
Allocated to Tanzania	\$22,917
Retained for district ministry/mission support (70% of receipts) ...	\$981,143
Total receipts	\$1,401,633

Mission commitment receipts comparison

Actual receipts as of Nov. 30, 2017	\$1,401,633
Actual receipts as of Nov. 30, 2016	\$1,413,920
Over (under) prior year receipts	(\$12,287)

Let's show LOVE

By Julie Keck
Media/Marketing,
LWML Mid-South District

"Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves."

Rom. 12:9-10, NIV



Maybe your society is planning a "LOVE" event — showing Christ's love to a person, a group or your community. Take a look at Jesus' ministry and you'll see that He didn't stay in the synagogue. He went out into the community. He went to where the people were living their lives.

We, too, need to do the same. Get out of your comfortable pew and find a way

that your group could show love and support to a crisis pregnancy center, a local food pantry or an animal shelter. Call them and see what they need and how you can help.

If one of your members has a policy with Thrivent Financial, she can apply for an Action Team grant and get \$250 "seed" money to jumpstart your project. Check out thrivent.com/actionteam.

Maybe your LWML Zone is planning its spring zone event. These events are great ways for women from different societies to show love by bonding together and learning about missions.



Don't forget to check out the LWML website (lwml.org/program-helps) for all the resources you will need, from Bible studies to skits to mission grant videos.

Love is at the heart of LWML — just check out our new logo. Let's all think of ways to show love this month!

The roots of Lent



During the first through third centuries, the Lenten season had controversy. St. Irenaeus (who lived in the second century) wrote a letter to Pope St. Victor I regarding the Lent fasting controversy among different factions of the Church.

By the time the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. gathered, however, it was noted, "For the first time in recorded history, we have mention of this period of preparation for Easter as lasting forty days..." beginning on the sixth Sunday before Easter.



Lent will begin on **Wednesday, Feb. 14;**
Easter Sunday is **April 1**

Since people wanted the 40 days of fasting, prayer and penance to emulate the days Jesus spent in the desert, the Church added the days of Good Friday and Holy Saturday back into the season of Lent, bringing the number of days to 36. During the next centuries, the Church decided to include the four days before the first Sunday of Lent, bringing the days to 40.

Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent in the western Christian calendar. It occurs exactly 46 days before Easter (40 fasting days not counting Sundays), and falls this year on Feb. 14. It is named after the practice of placing ashes on the foreheads of the faithful as a reminder of human mortality, and as a sign of mourning and repentance to God.

Lutherans observe Ash Wednesday, as do most Christians. In the Catholic Church, Ash Wednesday

is observed by fasting (abstinence from meat). The Anglican Book of Common Prayer also designates Ash Wednesday as a day of fasting.

The custom of sprinkling ashes as a sign of mourning and repentance, celebrated on Ash Wednesday, is known in many cultures and traditions. In the liturgy, it appeared in the eighth century — the first testimony of the practice comes from the 10th century. In 1091, Pope Urban II launched the custom as binding the whole Church, and established that the ash must come from the palm trees dedicated on Palm Sunday of the previous year.

The use of ashes on Ash Wednesday is derived from biblical history. In Job 42:4-6, Job answers the Lord by saying:

"Hear, and I will speak;
I will question you, and

See **LENT**, Page 8

District call for senior high youth



- Interested in attending LWF training event? Get essay in by **Feb. 10** for chance to have registration fee covered
- Adult chaperones also sought

The Youth and Family Ministry Board of the Mid-South District is seeking senior high youth and adult chaperone applicants to attend the LCMS Lutheran Youth Fellowship's (LYF) Leadership Development Training, to be held March 15-18 at the Pallottine Renewal Center in St. Louis.

The focus of this year's training is "Speaking The Truth In Love." The training equips teens to develop and use leadership skills as they serve Christ within their congregations and communities. The training offers many resources, equipping teens to lead and mentor each other.

This experience is facilitated by the teen LYF Executive Team. The event makes use of leadership resources developed to

give teens the tools they need to mature in their faith, become leaders in their congregations, and reach out to their peers with the love of Christ.

The Mid-South Youth and Family Ministry Board will pay the registration costs for three senior high youth and two adult chaperones. Registration is \$375 per person (youth or adult), which covers training, housing and meals. Participants are responsible for their transportation costs.

There will be one youth chosen from each Mid-South District region.

Each youth should write a 200-word essay that conveys the following:

1. Involvement in ministry.
2. Interest in this type of training.

3. What they hope to do with this experience.

Each essay should include the applicant's name, address, phone number, email address and church of membership.

Essays must be emailed and be received by midnight of Feb. 10. Please email them to Allan Piepenbrink, Mid-South District Executive for Education and Preschools, at apiepenbrink@mid-southlcms.com.

Participants will be notified by no later than Feb. 15. Adult chaperones may also email Piepenbrink and will be selected by the District Youth and Family Ministry Board.

2018 ministry responsibilities for student leaders:

Selected students are required to give of their time in two ways during the 2018 calendar year. These include:

1. Attending (in person or through online conferencing) two of the Youth and Family Ministry planning meetings to help in the details of planning a District Youth and Family Servant event for the Summer of 2018.
2. Visiting at least two youth groups (other than your own) in your region to share insights and experience you gained through the LCMS training. This visit should be designed by each student to accommodate their style and personality. The goal of each visit is to bring encouragement to each youth group, be an example to other youth to engage in church ministry/ leadership, and help youth grow in their Christian faith.



Lutheran Youth Fellowship (LYF) members lead teen participants in a session during a previous LYF Teen Leadership Training. The next training event will be held March 15-18 in St. Louis.

LCMS Youth Ministry

The Mid-South District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Ordained ministers celebrating anniversaries in 2018



60 Years

Rev. Henry Behling (em)
Hot Springs, Ark.

55 Years

Rev. William Couch (em)
Knoxville, Tenn.

50 Years

Rev. Kenneth Haydon (em)
Eureka Springs, Ark.

Rev. Arthur Kaufmann (em)
Bristol, Tenn.

Rev. Stephen Skov (em)
Rockwood, Tenn.

Rev. David Tews
Shepherd of the Hills,
Horseshoe Bend, Ark.

45 Years

Rev. Barry Hildebrandt
Cross of Christ,
Chattanooga, Tenn.

Rev. Paul Kritsch
Chapel of the Good Shepherd,
Sharps Chapel, Tenn.

40 Years

Rev. Johnny Graham
Our Savior/Zion, Brinkley/Ulm, Ark.

Rev. Gene Henke (em)
Prince of Peace, White House, Tenn.

Rev. Robert Herring
Grace, Holiday Island, Ark.

35 Years

Rev. Thom Lakso
Celebration, Seymour, Tenn.

Rev. Charles Neugebauer
Christ the King, Memphis, Tenn.

Rev. Robert Pfaff (em)
Spring City, Tenn.

Rev. Robert Seaton
First, Cleveland, Tenn.

Rev. Larry Seiferth (em)
North Little Rock, Ark.

Rev. Terry Tieman
Memphis, Tenn.

Rev. Andrew Toopes
Holy Trinity, Bowling Green, Ky.

Rev. Brian Truog
Cross of Christ,
Loudon, Tenn.

30 Years

Rev. Russell Belisle
Cross of Calvary, Memphis, Tenn.

Rev. Mark Krause
Salem Lutheran Min., Springdale, Ark.

Rev. Randy Loux
Clarksville, Tenn.

Rev. Steven Teske
Immanuel, Alexander, Ark.

Rev. William Wagner
Trinity, Columbia, Tenn.

20 Years

Rev. Robert Harbin
Faith, Collierville, Tenn.

Rev. Philip Young
Redeemer, Knoxville, Tenn.

15 Years

Rev. Paul Hass
Bella Vista, Bella Vista, Ark.

Rev. Shawn Hunze
Memphis, Tenn.

10 Years

Rev. Shawn Found
Little Rock, Ark.

Rev. Brandon Martin
Salem Lutheran Min., Springdale, Ark.

Rev. Theodore McMinn
Shepherd of the Hills, McMinnville, Tenn.

Rev. William Miller
Immanuel, Memphis, Tenn.

Rev. Aaron Neugebauer
St. John, Lafa, Ark.



Rev. Gregory Prauner
Immanuel, Memphis, Tenn.

Rev. Mark Rhoads
Cross of Christ, Loudon, Tenn.

Rev. Gordon Smith
Christ of the Cumberland,
Harrogate, Tenn.

Our Savior,
Morristown, Tenn.

Rev. Jason Zirbel
Grace, Greenwood, Ark.

5 Years

Rev. David Graves
St. Paul, Wartburg, Tenn.

Rev. Joseph Jacks
St. Philip, Chattanooga, Tenn.

Rev. David Mohr
St. Matthew, Conway, Ark.

Rev. Clayton Sellers
Faith, Collierville, Tenn.

Rev. Alan Thoe
Grace, Murfreesboro, Tenn.

*Well done, good and faithful
servants!*

State bestows honor on St. Paul, Wartburg



Congregation honored for 170 years of community engagement

From left, the Rev. David Graves accepted a framed copy of the official proclamation from Tennessee State Rep. John Mark Windle and Sen. Ken Yager.

The members of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Wartburg, Tenn., were surprised with a special honor from the State of Tennessee in November. At the request of Sen. Ken Yager, an official proclamation was issued honoring both the 170th anniversary of St. Paul and its positive impact in the community throughout its history.

The proclamation was read in Nashville during the September general assembly and presented to the Rev. David Graves and the congregation on Nov. 26 — the Feast of Christ the King. Rep. John Mark Windle and Yager were in attendance for this presentation.

Yager, who frequently interacts with St. Paul on community projects and events, was the facilitator for the issuance of this proclamation, which reads in part:

“WHEREAS, St. Paul Lutheran Church is truly one of the great religious institutions and catalysts for positive spiritual change in our State and nation, and the members of this exceptional congregation should be appropriately honored for their exemplary service to their fellow Christians and to the good people of Tennessee.”

Congratulations to Graves and the members of St. Paul for this very special and unique recognition — and for 170 years of Christian service in their community!



Good Shepherd has assistant

The installation of the Rev. Edward K. Rosser as assistant pastor of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Chattanooga, was held on Dec. 3. From left, the Rev. Gilbert H. Pingel, circuit visitor; Rosser; and the Rev. Chris Sheets, pastor, Good Shepherd.

Humanitarian hotspots to watch in 2018

Lutheran World Relief (LWR) has released its *2018 Early Warning Forecast* of regions it is monitoring for potential or worsening humanitarian crises over the coming year.

Daniel V. Speckhard, LWR president and CEO, noted that armed conflict is a thread running through the world’s current crises.

“From Syria to Yemen to South Sudan to the Philippines and Myanmar, we are witnessing spiraling violence and repeated violations of humanitarian law, including targeting of hospitals, schools and civilian residential areas, as well as blockades of relief aid,” he said. “These large, simultaneous emergencies have taxed the international community’s ability to respond.”

Included on the 2018 *Watch List* are:

- ▶ The Rohingya, who are facing ethnic cleansing in Myanmar and migrating to Bangladesh.
- ▶ Yemen, where war has caused a cholera epidemic and aid cannot get to the victims.
- ▶ Mass repatriation to Haiti and Central American nations, causing strains on already stressed economies.
- ▶ Uganda, facing a spike in refugees from South Sudan.
- ▶ Crop devastation in the developing world.
- ▶ Northern Iraq, struggling to find lasting peace post-ISIS.
- ▶ West Africa’s Sahel, where violent extremism is a growing threat.
- ▶ The Philippines, battling ISIS affiliates.
- ▶ Lebanon, an arena for conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran.
- ▶ Zimbabwe, vying for political reforms post-Mugabe.
- ▶ Venezuela, where already dreadful social, political and economic conditions are getting worse.

To learn more, including how you can help, go to thelc.ms/2018-Humanitarian-Hotspots.

Bethlehem revels in Reformation!

By Larry Larson
Bethlehem, Johnson City, Tenn.

In December, Bethlehem, Johnson City, welcomed a distinguished guest speaker and held a celebratory processional — rejoicing in the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

On Dec. 4, Dr. Martin H. Dotterweich, assistant professor of history at King University in Bristol, was Bethlehem's guest. His area of expertise is Medieval Europe, focusing on the Reformation. He presented a wonderful talk on how Martin Luther impacted the German principalities of his time — and how his



Dr. Martin Dotterweich presented insightful perspectives on Luther's impact 500 years ago and his contemporary influence. At left is the celebration banner designed by Kathy Port.

influence still stretches into our modern era.

Almost 80 members from three area Lutheran congregations attended the event, held at Johnson City's Carnegie House hotel.

On Dec. 6, Bethlehem celebrated Reformation Sunday

with a new banner designed especially for the day by Kathy Port, one of Bethlehem's members. The Sunday school children also processed with banners they had been working on. Their efforts made the day a very special one for all to remember.



BIBLE QUIZ

Contemporary phrases, biblical roots

Name the Bible verse where each of these familiar clichés appeared first.

1. A multitude of sins
2. My brother's keeper
3. Have feet of clay
4. A mess of pottage
5. Wolves in sheep's clothing
6. Gird one's loins
7. A man after one's own heart
8. Die the death
9. The sheep and the goats
10. Go the second mile
11. The mark of Cain
12. Lick the dust

Answers

- | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. James 5:20 | 5. Matt. 7:15 | 9. Matt. 25:32 |
| 2. Gen. 4:9 | 6. Job 38:3 | 10. Matt. 5:41 |
| 3. Dan. 2:33 | 7. 1 Sam. 13:14 | 11. Gen. 4:15 |
| 4. Gen. 25:34 | 8. Mark 7:10 | 12. Ps. 72:9 |

LENT

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4)

you make it known to me.' I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

Other references regarding the use of ashes during penance are in Is. 58:5 and Jer. 6:26.

During Ash Wednesday services, parishioners traditionally proceed to the front of the church and the ashes are placed on each person's forehead in the shape of a cross. It is recommended that the ashes are not to be washed off, but are to remain on the forehead throughout Ash Wednesday.

This information appears at holidayscalendar.com/event/ash-wednesday.

Deadline for the April issue is Feb. 15

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

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

