



MID-SOUTH LUTHERAN

God's 'family reunion'

By Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola
District President



We've been reminded that May is when we celebrate Mother's Day, Cinco de Mayo, Armed Forces Day, graduations, confirmations, Memorial Day and the unofficial beginning of summer vacation. While growing up, our grade school teachers had us make "May baskets" in which we could carry candy to give to our favorite friend. But what happens inside the Church in May? We're getting ready for the beginning of summer vacations — and the reasons dozens of our families won't be taking up pew space on Sunday mornings.

What's the excuse? It seems like what starts with Easter is the best time of the year. There's no snow or ice, no cold weather and daylight saving time has already started. We celebrate Easter with great joy, food and festivities. Friends we invited came to worship — big numbers of visitors come to receive the blessed promises of Christ for the forgiveness of our sins and God's proof of our justification in Christ's glorious Resurrection.

But then there's that post-Easter slump. It happens every year. The excuses begin to pile up: We're told:

- ▶ *"I just have gotten out of the habit."* Habit?

- ▶ *"I have too many things to do."*

Things?

- ▶ *"The kids don't want to go to church, so I just don't fight them on this."*

Don't fight?

- ▶ *I went on Easter, what do you expect?"*

Expect?

Excuses!

One of my college professors once told our class, "If we laid all the crutches in the world end to end, they still couldn't support all the lame excuses I hear from you."

People have many or any reason for not being an active part of the Christian Church. Our Mid-South congregations are exceptional when it comes to volunteering, stewardship and worship attendance. But we're sure there's always a drop-off after Easter.

We need a "No Excuse Sunday!" Picture this: Cots will be furnished in the sanctuary for those who say Sunday is their only day to rest. Bring in armchairs for those who think the pews are too uncomfortable. Eye drops and black coffee will be served for those who have trouble staying awake because they stayed up too late on Saturday night. Issue hardhats for those who say the roof will cave in if they come to church. Issue blankets to those who think the church is too cold and personal fans for those who think it's too hot.

Hand out scorecards for those who

want to keep track of the number of hypocrites they can count. Hand out buttons saying, "STAMP OUT STEWARDSHIP" for those who think the church asks for money too often. Bring in a pallet of grass and a tree for those who want to worship God in nature. A doctor and several nurses will be available in case you feel like coming down with something. Display Christmas poinsettias and Easter lilies for those who don't think the church has looked any different since the last time they were there. Give hearing aids to those who can't hear the pastor and abundant amounts of cotton for those who don't want to.

Nothing new

But Jesus is used to excuses. He heard them all the time. "Let me go bury my father, then I will come follow You." "I will follow You, Lord, but first, let me say goodbye to my family." The responses Jesus gave to those kinds of excuses might, at first, seem cold and uncaring. But Jesus comes to us on *His* terms, not ours.

Why is it so difficult? Why are some willing to commit, but not on the terms Jesus wants? Family, friends, work, sports, service clubs, cleaning, cooking, vacation, rest or just plain "too busy" will cover most of those lame excuses congregations are hearing in increasing numbers. But are we too busy to be bothered by God? The issue that Christianity faces today is the same Jesus faced when He walked this earth. People were ready for commitment, but only on their own terms. Being a follower of Jesus — discipleship — comes at a price. If

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Mission accomplished!

Historic church is restored

The restoration of Trinity Lutheran Church on Petit Jean Mountain is complete. The three-year project was completed in two phases at a cost of about \$57,000.

Henry Jones, an engineer and retired energy company executive, spearheaded the project. A lifelong Lutheran whose great-grandfather was one of the founders of



the congregation, Henry and his wife, Kay, now live on Petit Jean Mountain.

The restoration was paid for with two grants from the Arkansas Historic Preser-

vation Program and \$20,000 in contributions from individuals and organizations.

Trinity was built in 1886 on 20 acres donated by the Little Rock and Fort Smith Railroad through a federal-government program designed to encourage settlement along the Arkansas River. Other congregations that received land in exchange for building a permanent

house of worship included Grace Lutheran Church, Lutherville (now River Valley Grace Lutheran Church, Lamar), and Zion Lutheran Church, Augsburg.

Although other congregations from that period still exist, Trinity on Petit Jean is the only original structure that still stands. Because of its place in that era, the little church is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Lutherans worshiped at Trinity for a century before the congregation dissolved and the property was converted to a camp and retreat center.

Today the Lutheran Camp on Petit Jean serves campers and guests year round, with eight sessions of summer camp and retreats on weekends throughout the year (see page 7).

FEAST

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

we hold anything back, there's another god in the way.

I read a story about an elderly man who wanted to visit his ailing brother who lived a long distance away. He couldn't drive himself because he couldn't read road signs and he only drove 30 miles per hour when he did drive. What he did is stick one of those bright orange flags on his lawnmower and went 240 miles across Iowa so he could visit his sick brother. That's commitment. That's love.

It's all about love — unconditional love like that which moved God to send us His Son, Jesus Christ. In Him, God gave us something we couldn't earn — grace, that priceless gem we carry everywhere we go in faith. God's gift of grace and mercy don't depend on how good we are or how well intentioned we may be. Grace comes from God freely in His faithfulness to us. He is always willing to forgive — more so than we may even be willing to ask for His forgiveness. He extends love, even when we don't deserve it or expect it.

Remember your last family reunion? The well-intentioned son-in-law said, "Just bring what you want to eat for yourselves, and we'll furnish the drinks."

You really didn't want to go. After all, there'd be that small talk about whose kids are growing up so fast. You'd hear about somebody's surgery or latest aches and pains story. Yet it had been so long since you'd seen some relatives, maybe just this time.

So you dragged yourself out, not really wanting to be there. You wanted to dress in a manner so you wouldn't stand out. There was nothing in the refrigerator to bring, so maybe you found an old piece of bologna, mustard and some pickles.

But at the reunion was an abundant spread — fried chicken, baked beans, potato salad (with lots of eggs on top), fresh-cut vegetables, hot dogs, hamburgers and the best chocolate cake your eyes had ever seen.

You only brought bologna, but "Oh, there's plenty for everybody. Come on, eat up!" they urged you. And so you ate. You came like a pauper, but you feasted like a king.

Empty-handed

Think about how little we have to bring to God's "family reunion." We're humbled to think of how He asks us to share in Him. We think we don't have enough to go around, but God lavishly showers us with His grace, love and mercy. You see, God doesn't really need our bologna. He sees that we need so much more. That's why He didn't spare His Son, but gave Him up for us, that we might enjoy the eternal family feast in His kingdom forever and ever.

That's why our daily devotions, our weekly worship, our Bible study, our taking the children to Sunday School, our volunteering and reaching out to others is so important to the Church. God has enough grace and mercy to go around for everyone in an overflowing abundance.

So as our busy summers begin, what's our response to His gracious invitation? More excuses? Jesus has heard them all, but that doesn't stop Him from trying

Come! Let's feast together at the feast of the King of kings. He's invited you to join Him.

Church-work students: apply now for financial aid



LCMS/Erin M. Lunsford

The Mid-South District Financial Aid Committee awarded \$80,000 in student aid grants for the 2017-18 school year. In addition to the 11 seminary and university students who applied, available funds were also awarded to students who are enrolled in the Specific Ministry Pastor and colloquy programs.

The district gratefully acknowledges the generous support of the individuals and organizations within our district that make it possible for students to receive financial aid through:

- ▶ LWML grants.
- ▶ Endowment funds provided by faithful servants of God for the sole purpose of scholarships.
- ▶ The district budget, made possible from congregational monthly mission commitments.



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

Applications for the coming school year must be postmarked by June 15.

Students who plan to attend an LCMS seminary or college/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.

Deaconess Caitlin Worden, an LCMS missionary, plays a game with children in Lima, Peru.

Considering pastoral or diaconal ministry?

Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind., is holding summer retreats:

- ▶ Phoebe Academy High School
June 17-24

This one-week summer retreat is for high-school-aged women considering diaconal ministry as a possible vocation. For more information, go to ctsfw.edu/PAHS.

- ▶ Christ Academy High School
June 17-30

This two-week summer retreat is for high-school-aged men considering pastoral ministry as a possible vocation. For more information, go to ctsfw.edu/CAHS.

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, has annual visitation events that give participants valuable information about

formation for pastoral and diaconal ministry. There's something for everyone, including events for prospective students who are in high school, college or are considering ministry as a second career, as well as events for prospective students who are married and have children.

For more information, go to csl.edu/admissions/visit.

A Spring Riddle:

If March winds bring April showers and April showers bring May flowers, what do May flowers bring?

Answer:
Pilgrims!

Congregation mission commitment receipts

as of Feb. 28, 2018 (2 months)

Anticipated amount (8.3% of budget)	\$263,568
Actual receipts	\$238,540
Over (under) anticipated amount...(\$25,028)	
Use of mission commitment receipts	
Allocated to Synod for world missions	\$67,395
Allocated to Tanzania	\$4,167
Retained for district ministry/mission support (70% of receipts) ...	\$166,978
Total receipts	\$238,540

Mission commitment receipts comparison

Actual receipts as of Feb. 28, 2018	\$238,540
Actual receipts as of Feb. 28, 2017	\$246,585
Over (under) prior year receipts	(\$8,045)

INSTALLATIONS



The Rev. Floyd Smithey was installed as associate pastor of First Lutheran Church, Knoxville, on March 18. He came out of retirement to serve part-time, helping to carry out the mission of First, including its growing school. The Rev. Edward Schmidt, First senior pastor, installed Smithey. The members thank God for this faithful servant and pray every blessing upon Him as he serves the Lord among them. May God's richest blessings abide with both Pastor Floyd and Sherrill Smithey. The installation may be viewed at youtu.be/r9WSQ79KxDo.



The Rev. Jerry Stobaugh was ordained and installed as pastor of Holy Spirit Lutheran Church, Oakland, Tenn., on Saturday, March 10. Stobaugh is the first of several men in the Mid-South District who have completed colloquy to be a Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP). Celebrating with the congregation were, from left, Rev. Josh Willadsen, Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola (Mid-South District president), Stobaugh, Rev. Mark Goble, Rev. Jim Belles (who also completed colloquy; see below) and Deacon Jeremy McDonald, an SMP candidate.

The Rev. Jim Belles was ordained and installed as pastor of Grace Celebration Lutheran Church, Cordova, Tenn., on March 18. Taking part in the divine service were, from left (front row) the Rev. Mark Goble, Rev. Don Schmidt, Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola (Mid-South District president), Belles, Rev. Norm Groteluschen (district president emeritus), Kerry Weiser (acolyte); (back row) Deacon Jeremy McDonald, Rev. Clayton Sellers, Rev. Shawn Hunze, Rev. Russell Belisle, Rev. Jerry Stobaugh, Deacon Gary Kinne, Rev. Robb Harbin and Rev. Dan Hawkins.



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 Lutheran Church,
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

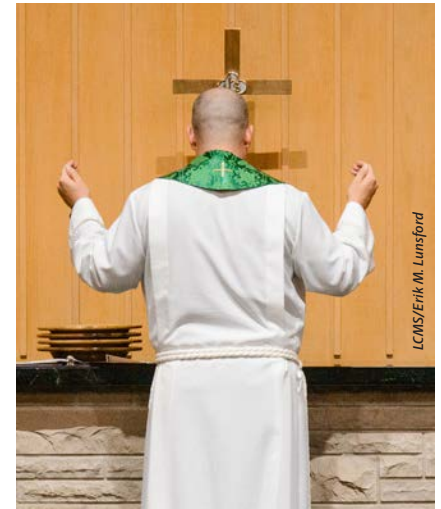
Rev. Shawn Found
Little Rock, Ark.

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 Lutheran Church, 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 Lutheran Church,
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!

FOUNDATIONS OF THE REFORMATION



thinkstock

The Dark Ages and Renaissance

By Rev. Robert Portier

St. Paul, Sevierville, Tenn.
Smoky Mountain Bible Institute

Dark Ages, Middle Ages, Renaissance — many western Christian historians define the general period from 500 to 1500 with these titles, starting with the fall of Rome’s western empire in 476, followed by the Dark Ages, which in some areas lasted until the 1300s. The Middle Ages, also known as the Western Christian Medieval period, began when King Charlemagne (Charles I) of the Franks was crowned first Holy Roman Emperor of the West by Pope Leo III in 800.

The event that marks the end of this period is the falling of the Last Crusader city (Acre) to the Mamelukes in 1291. The Late Middle Ages, or Renaissance, began with Dante’s writing “The Divine Comedy” between 1307-14. This period comes to a close with a number of key events, such as the discovery of the Americas in 1492 by Christopher Columbus and the beginning of the Reformation in 1517.

Here’s a closer look at some of the major world history events taking place during this period, primarily in the western Christian World.

The Dark Ages

Less history was written during the fall of Rome — as is the case in any fall of a society after decades or even centuries of chaos, disease and war — and thus we get the title “dark ages.” The first big blow to civilization was the devastation of some 40 percent of Europe’s population due to a plague in 541-542. Another reason it is often called the Dark Ages is various Germanic peoples conquered the former Roman Empire in the West (including Europe and North Africa), shoving aside ancient Roman traditions in favor of their own.

The negative view of the so-called “dark ages” became popular largely because most of the written records of the time (including those by St. Jerome and St. Patrick in the fifth century, Gregory of Tours in the sixth and Bede in the eighth) had a strong

Rome-centric bias. A good read on the History Channel’s website is at history.com/news/history-lists/6-reasons-the-dark-ages-werent-so-dark

The Middle Ages

(aka the Early Medieval period in the Christian West, 800-1300)
The church climbed into the leadership vacuum in the west during the Dark Ages, leading to quite a disagreement on who the actual pope was. The Western Schism (or Papal Schism), as it is called, was a split within the Catholic Church that lasted from 1378 to 1417. Three men simultaneously claimed to be the true pope, driven by politics rather than any theological disagreement: one in southern France and two in Rome. The schism was ended by the Council of Constance (1414-18). For a good read on this, I suggest the *Christianity Today* article titled “1378–The Great Papal Schism.”

As we call these ages “Dark” and “Middle,” I like to point out again that many great advances came to pass; it is just that as progressive moderns, we often look down our noses at the past. We overlook that just because the people of these eras lacked some of our technology and suffered plagues, war and strife, it does not mean they were not as intelligent (if not more) than we are today.

The Renaissance

(or Late Medieval period in the Christian West, 1300-1700)
This period is regarded by most historians as the cultural bridge between the Middle Ages and modern history. It started as a cultural movement in Florence, Italy, in the Late Medieval period, and later spread to the rest of Europe, marking the beginning of the Early Modern Age.

It was a time when all forms of art, architecture, humanism, science, music and religion began to grow and flourish in many cultures, leading to the age of enlightenment beginning in the 1600s, ignited in part by the Reformation in 1517.

What's happening at Lutheran Camp on Petit Jean?



Arts camps give attendees many creative opportunities.

The Rad Scientists took first place in the 2017 costume contest at Trivia Night.



Register for summer camp

Eight sessions of camp include week-long camps for students entering fourth grade and above, a three-night session (Pathfinders) for students entering grades 2-4, and a two-night Family Camp for entire families, with activities geared for children too young for regular camps.

Adventure Camp takes high school students and new graduates off the mountain for a river float trip, overnight camping and either rock climbing or rappelling.

Arts Camp brings out campers' creativity with classes on visual arts (drawing, painting, sculpture, pottery, printmaking); performing arts (drama, dance, voice, guitar, keyboard, drums); and literary arts (poetry, fiction, songwriting, journaling).

The first session of Arts Camp is for students entering grades 5-8, the second is for students entering grades 9-12 and new graduates.

Each Arts Camp session ends with an art show and a program when students perform for parents and guests. Arts Camp includes some regular camp activities, including swimming, hiking and evening campfires with lots of singing.

Traditional camp sessions are for students entering grades 4-10.

To register or learn more, visit the camp website at lutherancamp.org or call the office at 501-652-6304 to request a brochure. Many congregations in the Mid-South District have camp brochures on hand; check with the church office.

Trivia Night

The 10th annual Trivia Night is Aug. 25 at Peace, Conway, Ark. All Mid-South District West congregations are invited to enter eight-person teams to compete for prizes and the coveted dinner bell trophy.

Trivia Night includes a silent auction when team members and observers bid on valuable items. The concession counter serves up burgers, hot dogs, nachos and other food.

The event also includes contests for most creative team name, best costumes and best-decorated table.

Trivia Night is the main fundraiser for the Lutheran Camp on Petit Jean.

To register your team or to learn more, call the camp office at 501-652-6304 or go to lutherancamp.org.

Struck to entertain at Pastors Wives retreats

Christian humorist Jan Struck will entertain attendees at the Pastors Wives retreats scheduled for October.

Jan's "Life Story" includes the blessing of mothering three children, teaching, working in secretarial positions and experiencing single parenthood after divorce.

Additional surprises from a loving and delightful Creator include the joy of a second marriage and a combined fam-



ily that totals six grown children, their spouses, 11 grandchildren and a great-grandson. She is delighted to have been given a lifetime of bizarre experiences and an ability to see humor and irony in her journey.

As a trainer and consultant in health-care technology, Jan has helped clients in Washington, D.C., Dallas and Houston to implement electronic medical record-keeping systems. Her ministry

is the blessing of serving the Lord as a speaker leading Bible studies, workshops and women's retreats. Her involvement with LWML has enabled her to bring the gift of laughter to numerous district and national conventions, including the LWML's Mid-South District convention in June.

The pastors wives retreats will be held:

- ▶ Oct. 5-6 at DeGray Lake Resort in Bismarck, Ark.
- ▶ Oct. 12-13 at Clarion Inn in Cookeville, Tenn.

Jesus at the laundromat?



From left, Miranda Pitsch, LWML Arkansas River Valley Zone President, presents a grant check for \$3,000 to Mollie Haines of St. John's Lutheran Church, Russellville, Ark., to be used for Loads of Love. The presentation was made during the Spring Rally at River Valley Grace Lutheran Church, Lamar, Ark.

By Julie Keck
Media/Marketing
LWML Mid-South District

Another LWML district mission grant was filled in early 2018. This grant had to do with laundry!

Do you have your own washer and dryer? If you do, then you know what a blessing it is to be able to wash your clothes whenever you want. Many people have to drive to a laundromat, pump quarters into a machine and then wait for the wash and dry cycles to be completed. A group of Christian volunteers are reaching out and sharing the love of Jesus at the laundromat!

The mission of Loads of Love is to help people with a simple need: clean clothes. Once a month, volunteers gather at a laundromat and provide quarters and detergent to those who struggle financially.

But Loads of Love is about more than the clothes. It's about doing what Jesus would do, like listening to them, praying with them and showing them we care. Loads of Love is operated by volunteers and run completely on donations.

Many thanks for this LWML Mid-South District mission grant being filled through the mighty mites your societies have collected!

There is still time to register to attend the 25th Biennial LWML Mid-South District Convention. You will have the chance to hear wonderful guest speakers, study the Bible and see which mission grants will be supported by our district over the next two years (2018-20). The convention registration form can be found at midsouthdistrict.org.



Concordia raises funds for missionaries

The Annual Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper at Concordia, Nashville, raised \$660 in donations, thanks to the help of a Thrivent Action Team. From left are the Rev. Eric Phillips, Concordia pastor, and members Warren Johnstone, Bill Patrick, Jim Brown, Stephen Bozeman, Jim Robert, Shirley Robert and Stephanie Patrick. The funds will help support the ministry of Carl and Karen Cecil, who are serving in Germany as LCMS GEO (globally engaged in outreach) missionaries. The Cecils will work with the LCMS partner church in Germany to welcome Middle Eastern refugees, which includes developing outreach activities to encourage networking and support in the hardship of suffering and persecution. Karen was born in Clarksville, Tenn.



Going on vacation

The June and July issues of Mid-South Lutheran are combined, giving us a month off. But send us your stories and photos for the August issue by June 15.

Digital files, sent via e-mail, are preferred. Our submission deadline is the 15th of each month, two months before publication.

E-mail submissions to LW@mid-southlcms.com or send by postal mail to:

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Holly Springs, MS 38635