



MID-SOUTH LUTHERAN



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Raise your church's

'LOVE QUOTIENT'

When people come to your church for the first time, do they “feel the love?” Most of us think our churches are very friendly. But are they really? Of course we may be friendly and loving to each other (and this is extremely important), but how do people who visit with us rate our love and friendliness?

It is my contention that every church can raise their love quotient and the first step is to want to see it raised.



Rev. Richard Elseroad
Pastor, Grace, Knoxville
Fourth Vice-President,
Region 4

We'll present some ideas on how that might happen.

Since the pastors are the leaders and most visible representatives of their churches, a welcoming manner starts with them. My personal principle is that I am going to like everyone who enters the doors of our church. I smile often.

You may say, “Pastor, that is not my personality.” I would respond that it can become part of your personality.

C.S. Lewis once said if you do loving acts, the feelings of love will ultimately come. You can become that welcoming, inviting and warm pastor that in time will influence your entire congregation.

Now here are some other practical considerations you might consider.

- ▶ It feels very awkward and embarrassing to come to a church and find the front door locked. In days of heightened security that can happen; but it shouldn't. There are easy ways to make sure this doesn't occur when your next visitor arrives.
- ▶ When visitors do enter your church, are they immediately lost as to where to go? Good signs and friendly people to direct them are a must.
- ▶ Our regular attendees need to be instructed to greet people, ask them their names and ask them if they have any questions. It goes without saying that if they are sitting in “your pew” that you don't scold them!
- ▶ When I first came to Grace, the members had coffee mugs with their names on them. Environmentally it might have been a good idea, but even their new pastor felt excluded. Like inside jokes, we have practices and language that seem friendly to us, but give visitors a sense that they are outsiders and will have to do much to earn their way into the congregation.
- ▶ Even the smallest church can have an Information Center. But it is no good to have one unless there are people willing to serve at it.
- ▶ Fellowship time before and after services is extremely important. At Grace we have a coffee machine that is always available and free. It is worth the cost! When everyone bolts out of church it looks to visitors that people don't particularly like each

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Mission team celebrates growth and light in Haiti



The team worshipped at Light on the Hill, a church which brings light to banish the darkness of voodoo.



Members of Our Savior, Nashville, and St. John's, Effingham, Ill., joined with Keith

Logan, executive director of Trinity HOPE, for an April mission trip to Haiti. The group experienced a true example of light in the darkness.

On its first Sunday in Haiti, the team worshipped at a church started in an extremely rural area of Gonaives. The church is named Light on the Hill, and is already succeeding in its efforts to bring God's light to an area shadowed by the darkness of voodoo.

During the week-long tour, the team also visited a school named Bas de Sault, which also spreads light and love to more than 100 students who meet in its one-room building. It was one of many schools and vendors the team visited while in Haiti while verifying that the feeding programs are running efficiently and according to plan. The group enjoyed sharing Bible stories, playing games and extending loving outreach to the students.



The Bas de Sault school educates, enlightens, and provides meals to more than 100 children.

MESSAGE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

other. Attempt to create times when people can mingle and talk and be friendly.

- ▶ Some churches invite visitors out to lunch. They even make provisions in their budgets for these invites.
- ▶ Identify really warm and friendly members and use them in critical places to meet visitors.
- ▶ Follow up on all visitors. Use any and every method to do so. Any contact is good, but the more personal is better.
- ▶ Gather a team to evaluate and explore how to raise the love quotient of your church. Listen to visitors and maybe even survey them. Ask fellow Lutherans who visit your church to be brutally honest with you about what they experienced. Then make the changes that need to be made.

The Gospel of Christ that we proclaim should not be needlessly hindered by things we can easily change. We Lutherans have so much to offer people. Let's also have churches that are drawing people in and transforming their lives.

Student aid forms are due!

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. **Applications for the 2017-18 school year must be postmarked by June 15.**

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 and the district budget.

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.

Candidates for the presidency of the LCMS Mid-South District

The Rev. Dr. Roger C. Paaavola

President, Mid-South District



The Rev. Andrew W. Toopes

Pastor, Holy Trinity, Bowling Green, Ky.



EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

Paavola: BA, public administration, University of Minnesota-Duluth (1969); MBA, healthcare administration, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis (1977); MDiv, Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, St. Catherines, Ontario, Canada (1997); DMin, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind. (2009)

Toopes: BA, Concordia College, St. Paul, Minn.; MDiv, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind. (1983)

MEMBER OF SYNOD CONGREGATIONS

Paavola: 70 years (currently is a member of Christ the King, Memphis)

Toopes: 61 years (currently is a member of Holy Trinity, Bowling Green, Ky.)

DISTRICT, SYNOD EXPERIENCE

Paavola: District president (2012-present); district secretary/second vice-president (2009-12); LCMS Council of Presidents (2012-present); Concordia Plan Services Board of Directors (2010-present)

Toopes: District Mission Board (12 years); Eastern District Mission Board chairman (three years); Florida-Georgia District Mission Board (3 years); LWML zone counselor (14 years); LCMS convention delegate (1992, 2016)

CONGREGATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Paavola: Pastor—Heavenly Host, Cookeville, Tenn (2000-12); Grace, Beausejour, Manitoba, Canada (1997-2000).

Toopes: Pastor—Holy Trinity, Bowling

Green, Ky. (6 years); St. John's, Stuttgart, Ark. (1 year); Hope, Bradenton, Fla. (4 years); Christ Memorial, Malvern, Pa. (4 years); Zion, Avilla, Ark. (18 years)

COMMUNITY AND OTHER EXPERIENCE

Paavola: Hospital CEO in metropolitan medical centers (23 years); preceptor and taught courses in administration for the University of Minnesota graduate program; served on numerous civic boards and councils: Regional Health Agency, hospital association legislative council, the board for the Communication Service to the Deaf, chairman for a state safety council; Habitat for Humanity; the American Cancer Society; the American Red Cross; lecturer on business, management, and small church forums; published four books and several articles.

Toopes: Law enforcement chaplain (30 years); chaplain for ATF and DEA (25 years); hospital chaplain (35 years); hospital ethics board (3 years)

BRIEF PERSONAL STATEMENT

Paavola: "Married since 1969; with wife Pat, have raised three children. Other accomplishments: chaired the Mission Action Council and served as speaker for small church forums and ministry conferences. Also re-established the Rural-Small Town Ministry (RSTM) Task Force; developed a congregational diagnostic (C.A.R.); established an ongoing Gifts and Development function (IMPACT); and established a strategic mission and ministry program (COMPASS)."

Toopes: "I have been blessed to serve

in the Mid-South District under every district president we have had. All of these men have served the Lord faithfully in that office. I believe with all my heart that it is time for a change. We need to take a practical look at the office of district president. Do we need a full-time president or would a part-time position better serve our churches and show us as good stewards? Times are changing and just because a model worked 30 years ago does not mean it will work today."

Congregation mission commitment receipts

as of March 31, 2018 (3 months)

Anticipated amount (25percent of budget).....	\$395,353
Actual receipts	\$390,610
Over (under) anticipated amount	(\$4,743)

Use of mission commitment receipts

Allocated to Synod for world missions	\$110,933
Allocated to Tanzania	\$6,250
Retained for district ministry/mission support (70 % of receipts) ..	\$273,427
Total receipts	\$390,610

Mission commitment receipts comparison

Actual receipts as of March 31, 2018	\$390,610
Actual receipts as of March 31, 2017	\$378,480
Over (under) prior year receipts	(\$12,130)

PRO-LIFE IN A PRO-LIFE CHURCH

By Rev. Philip H. Young
Life Ministry Coordinator,
LCMS Mid-South District



In the April issue of *The Lutheran Witness*, an article revealed some shocking statistics on abortion positions among religious bodies in the United States. Gene Veith commented on a Pew Research study that recorded the percentage of members in each religious group who support abortion remaining legal in “all or most cases.” While support for legal abortion among all U.S. adults is 57 percent, many church denominations barely reflected a more pro-life sentiment in the survey of their members, and some denominations were even found to have a membership more accepting of abortion than the national average!

According to the study, which was conducted in 2014, the top spots for non-Christians supporting abortion went to Unitarian Universalist (90 percent), Atheist (87 percent), Agnostic (87 percent) and Jewish (83 percent). The highest ranking Christian denomination on this inglorious list was the Episcopal Church. Seventy-nine percent (79 percent) of surveyed Episcopalians believed that abortion should be legal in “all or most cases.”

Other notables include the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) which were both tied at 65 percent of members who approve of abortion.

Among the religious groups at the bottom of the list was the Southern Baptist Convention with 30 percent of surveyed members supporting abortion and 66 percent believing it should be illegal. The Church of God

came in at 20 percent for abortion and 77 percent against it. The Jehovah’s Witnesses had the least support for abortion at “just” 18 percent.

Where did the LCMS rank in the study? One might think pretty low. After all, we are publically pro-life as a national church. Shockingly, the LCMS member support of abortion was recorded at 46 percent, and only 51 percent were opposed to it. This was only two points lower than the pro-life Roman Catholic Church, which had 48 percent support for abortion.

If the results of this study are even close to being accurate, then even among pro-life religious bodies, the cultural view of abortion is holding many captive or is not being relinquished by stubborn hearts.

What can be done specifically in the LCMS, not to poll better but for the sake of our people and the sake of



Percentage of adults who say that **in all or most cases**, abortion should be **legal**:



See the full results at thelc.ms/2018-pew-research-center-abortion-survey

those who will hear their confession of faith? Let me first suggest supporting your pastor(s). Pray for him. Encourage him in delivering God’s Law against murder and the forgiveness of sins and new life in Christ. Encourage him in speaking boldly on the topic of life in sermons, the prayer of the church, newsletters, confirmation instruction and new-member orientation. Where this is already happening, thank your pastor.

The Rev. Michael Salemink, Lutherans For Life (LFL) executive director, has also noted the alarming statistics and he cites one more from Pew: “Only 36 percent of conservative (Bible-believing, life-affirming) Christians have heard their pastors address abortion in the past few months” (LFL letter dated February 2018).

A second suggestion is to use the life resources from your pro-life LCMS and Lutherans For Life at lcms.org/life and lutheransforlife.org. The simplest way to keep these resources before your congregation members may be through your Sunday bulletin. Talk with your pastor to see if you may include “Life Thoughts in the Church Year” (from LFL). They are just short paragraphs based on the appointed Sunday readings from *Lutheran Service Book*. In addition to these “Thoughts,” Lutherans For Life also provides monthly bulletin inserts with important news stories and articles. They can be found under the “Media” tab in “Life News.” I highly recommend including them in your bulletins on the first Sunday of the month.

The last suggestion is to encourage your pastor(s) to consult with me or President Paavola. Your district leadership is committed to affirming the sanctity of human life. The district president can explain the theological position of the Synod, and I will be happy to help your congregation formulate a life plan in the name of Jesus our Savior, who came to give life “abundantly” (John 10:10).

(Rev. Young serves as pastor of Redeemer, Nashville.)

Pastor reflects with members on MLK, 1968 sanitation strike

By Rev. Russell Belisle
Pastor, Cross of Calvary,
Memphis

It was 50 years ago in April that the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was in our district to speak up for the striking Memphis sanitation workers. As our country observes a national remembrance of the assassination of Dr. King, I would like to share with you a Lutheran connection to the sanitation workers' strike.

Recently I sat down with William Stewart, Jesse

Reid and Woody Hunt. In addition to being deaf and members of Cross of Calvary, they were Memphis sanitation workers in April 1968 during the strike. They have shared with me that, unlike today, each home had trash pick-up three times a week.

When Stewart began working as a sanitation worker in 1959, he was paid 95 cents per hour. In 1968, all three were earning \$1.75 per hour and had no pension or health plan. All three have



From left, the Rev. Russell Belisle met with men who "lived history" in April 1968: Woody Hunt, William Stewart and Jesse Reid.

shared memories of marching with Dr. King, the signs that read "I AM A MAN," and the assassination. All three are active members of Cross of Calvary.

Recently, all three men were

honored with the NAACP Vanguard Award, and a one-time financial gift from the city of Memphis. We thank God for the living history of these men in our congregation.

It's time to submit nominations

67th LCMS convention is next summer, but the earlier, the better

The Oct. 20 deadline may seem a long way off, but the time is now to submit nominations for the 74 officer, board and commission positions to be elected at the next LCMS convention, July 20-25, 2019, in Tampa, Fla. Details on the positions are available at lcms.org/2019-nominations.

The theme for the convention is "Joy:fully Lutheran."

If every LCMS congregation submitted one nomination, there would be more than 6,000 total nominations. But four months into the process, only 226 nominations had been received. Of those, only half have been positively identified as willing to serve.

As outlined in Bylaw 3.12.3.4, nomi-

**JOY:FULLY
LUTHERAN**
1 THESS 5:16-18

REJOICE / PRAY / GIVE THANKS

nations may be submitted by agencies and officers of the Synod, congregational and individual members of the Synod, and laypersons of the congregations of the Synod. While it may seem that there is still plenty of time to nominate, input is desired as soon as possible to allow time for the Committee for Convention Nominations to do its work of identifying the best candidates.

"It is especially important that nominators take up their work with zeal this triennium," said LCMS Secretary Rev. Dr. John Sias, "as nominations for the regional Board of Directors and the regional mission board positions are for the first time being

received through this process. Let's all pitch in to help the nominating committee find those who will guide everything our congregations have built together, by God's grace, faithfully into the future."

Nominations for regional positions may come from anywhere in the Synod, but the nominee must reside in the designated region. The nomination process for president, first vice-president and regional vice-presidents will be conducted by mail with the nominating member congregations beginning in October.

The nomination form is available at lcms.org/convention/2019-nomination-form. It may be downloaded and sent via U.S. mail, or filled out electronically and emailed to the Office of the Secretary at ccn@lcms.org. Electronic submission is preferred and will expedite processing.

For more information on the nominations and elections process, go to lcms.org/convention/nominations-and-elections.

Defining CHRISTIAN CONSENT

By Rev. Robert Portier

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

“Consent” has become the new gold standard for our society. If you can establish “consent” between two or any number of adults, then anything they choose to do is thought of as being their business alone, as long as their activities do not negatively affect anyone else.

However, this is a very subjective standard for a society. It becomes nearly impossible for anyone to keep themselves clear of the danger of “negatively affecting” others, because the terms are subjective. There are many who like this because it means they can make their own rules to suit their desires, even twisting reality (like attempting to argue that the words “male,” “female,” or “marriage” mean something other than what they always have as defined by Scripture, science and common sense).

“Consent” can become coercion, derision or some other form of manipulation depending on who defines the word. “Adulthood” is a biological concept which the medical community generally agrees is not reached mentally until the mid-20s or even 30 years, but even now, there are pedophiles arguing that children can be considered adults, and that as consenting adults they, too, can do anything they want.

When we try to establish behavioral norms without God’s Word and guidance, we resign ourselves to a whole sea of often contradictory information and to the whims of our sinful desires. God’s Word, on the other hand, is objective and inerrant, and provides clear guidance for all. If we follow His word, we will never be in danger of offending God or even our neighbor, unless our neighbor seeks to act counter to the Word (in which case we



should side with God and let the chips fall where they may).

Parents, grandparents and Christian communities have as part of their vocations training up their children in the way they should go. If they are doing that, the children will be taken care of no matter their needs and whether their brains are fully developed or not. If a child is brought up in God’s Word, then the confusion of the opening paragraph is avoided by simply following the Sixth Commandment.

Marriage is the only fitting form of consent. When consent is defined as marriage, then rather than there being ambiguity, there is an objective reality which binds two individuals together for life. If they are blessed with children, those children have parents who are legally bound to them, and the whole community has a framework to help that union and family succeed. Without these simple pillars holding up the family, history teaches us that society will collapse.

Many things in the adult world can be compared to fire. When used properly, as fire in the fireplace, they provide warmth and comfort for all. When

taken out of their proper contexts, though, they can be incredibly damaging, like fire climbing up the wall. Heterosexual monogamous marriage is the fireplace God has made for sexual activity. When a different standard is applied, the fire is removed from the fireplace and the house burns down.

Sexual activity in any context, whether it produces children or not, has physical (think oxytocin & STDs) and mental effects on both the individuals involved and the entire community. When it is in one-man, one-woman marriage, consent is solidified with a ring and a verbal and/or written contract to provide support, protection, mutual love and encouragement. This provides for the needs and concerns of all in the community by supporting what communities are made of: people belonging to families.

When “consent” becomes the only standard, our sinful emotions and desires remove the fire from the fireplace, and everyone has to endure the pain and suffering that brings, like depression, loneliness, STDs, abandoned children, poverty and abuse. The community carries the emotional and financial cost of these things, and in our day we see it perpetuated and sanctioned to support the whims of a society that affirms things which Scripture condemns.

Let’s keep the fire in the fireplace so we can all be warmed and comforted by the results of God’s design for intimacy and our families. Let’s acknowledge the biological reality of the clear binary sexual system which God created. Let’s seek to love and serve those who suffer from dysphoric anomalies that are a part of the crosses they bear but do not define who they are.

Politics based on race, color, gender or sexual preference only divide and harm our society. We are all children of the all-powerful and loving God who gave His son to suffer and die for the whole human race (one race). No matter what we struggle with, He invites us to leave it at the foot of the cross and trust in Him for eternal salvation.

Calling all brainiacs!

The Lutheran Camp on Petit Jean is making preparations for their landmark 10th annual Trivia Night.

The camp's main fundraiser, Trivia Night challenges competitors and their cheering sections to join together on the evening of Aug. 25 in the Family Life Center of Peace Lutheran Church, Conway, Ark. The church is located at the corner of Dave Ward Drive and Donaghey Avenue.

Teams of up to eight people compete for prizes and the coveted Dinner Bell trophy. Prizes will also be awarded for the most creative team name, the best-decorated table and the best costumes.

Many guests come not to compete, but just to enjoy the lively contest, which includes 10 categories of questions, generally with Bible, Arkansas and sports questions, plus arts, science and history topics



Trivia teams and spectators will fill the Family Life Center at Peace Lutheran Church, Conway, Ark., on Aug. 25 for the annual Trivia Night, a fundraiser for the Lutheran Camp on Petit Jean.

unique to each year's contest.

The event also features a silent auction, when competitors and guests bid on dozens of great items, including resort lodging, sports paraphernalia, kitchen gadgets, workshop and garage tools, sportswear, home furnishings, original artwork and more. The kitchen crew will serve up burgers,

hot dogs, nachos, soft drinks and other concession items all evening.

Doors open at 4:30 p.m. so competing teams have time to decorate their tables. Emcee Patti Airoidi goes over rules and instructions at 5:45; the contest begins at 6.

To register or learn more, visit lutherancamp.org/trivia-night.



LUTHERAN CAMP
On Petit Jean Mountain

Praise bands: prepare for battle!

The Lutheran Camp on Petit Jean invites church musicians to enter the first Battle of the Praise Bands this fall, now rescheduled for Saturday, Sept. 29.

Anyone who enjoys listening to live Christian music is invited to enjoy fellowship and listen to some great music for free in a beautiful mountain setting.

If your congregation has a praise band or you play in a band that performs Christian music, you are invited to compete in this all-day festival.

Musicians may also organize bands just for the contest.

The bands will each play a set of their best songs, but with one special challenge: every band will play a cover of a traditional hymn. The hymn is posted at

lutherancamp.org/battle-of-the-praise-bands.

A panel of judges will select the winner. The audience will also select the People's Choice Award with cash in jars.

Barbecue dinners and other concession food will be available throughout the day. Concert-goers can play cornhole, horseshoes, bocce and other games on the grounds while listening to the music.

Guests may also tour the camp to see all the additions and improvements, and sit in on the camp's annual report in the dining hall.

To register or learn more, call the camp office at 501-652-6304 or visit the website.



Church praise bands will compete at the first-ever Battle of the Praise Bands Sept. 29.

What? Me worry?

By Julie Keck

Media/Marketing
LWML Mid-South District

I loved this theme for the Mid-Arkansas LWML Zone spring event that was held at Our Savior, Cabot, Ark., on April 21. We all know that none of us Lutheran Women in Mission worry — right?!

God's Word contains many verses telling us God is in control and He has us in the palm of His hand. The zone event highlighted Matt. 6:26-28 and how God cares even for the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. If God cares for them, He will certainly take care of you.

One of my favorite verses is Phil. 4:6 and I appreciate the version in *The Message*:

“Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and



praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns.”

That verse got me through some stressful times in college. I'll bet you have some favorite verses too, ones that bring you comfort and a sense of peace. Maybe you could put together a short devotion or Bible study for some stressed-out gals in your church or neighborhood to give them encouragement and point them to God's peace.

Now don't start worrying about it, but pray and ask God what He would have you do!

Speaking of prayers, the 25th Biennial LWML Mid-South District Convention is being held in Chattanooga June 22-24. Please keep the entire convention in your prayers.

Include LWF care kits in your VBS activity plans

Assembling care kits has long been a favorite VBS activity, combining a fun sense of teamwork with the good feeling you get when you're doing something for others.

Lutheran World Relief's VBS Kits of Care activities include:

► **School Kits:** Simple school supplies, like notebooks, pencils and scissors, make a world of difference for families that struggle to pay for their children's education.

► **Personal Care Kits:** Basic hygiene items — soap, nail clippers, a towel — are crucial to keeping families healthy, especially after leaving their homes because of war or natural disasters

► **Fleece Tie Blankets:** In a hospital

room or on the hard ground, these handmade blankets provide protection and a sense of comfort.

All are great ways to bring youth together in service to our neighbors in need.

LWR has a number of resources available to help VBS leaders collect items, assemble kits and track them as they travel around the world.

Visit lwr.org/kits to get started!

ANNIVERSARIES

(50 or more years)

- **Armand and Karen Meininger**, members of Christ Our Savior, Loudon, Tenn., will celebrate their 61st wedding anniversary on June 29.

We covet your prayers for:

- The convention committee as it works on all the details.
- Travel safety for all participants.
- No “gremlins” in the audio/visual equipment.
- Calm for the speakers.
- Wisdom for President Diane.
- The district board.
- The delegates.
- The attendees, that they would shine the love of Christ in their actions and words in Chattanooga.

Watch for the mission grant selections in the September issue or at our website at midsouthdistrictlwml.org.

To God be the glory!

Happy:

Flag Day • Father's Day
Independence Day • Summer
Vacation

*from all of us at Mid-South
Lutheran!*

We'll see you again in August!



Deadline for the September issue is July 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