

Encourager

Mid-South District LCMS | June 2018

June's Focus: Leadership

This month, we celebrate the leaders of ministry across the Mid-South District. We give thanks for those celebrating great milestones in their service and welcome those who are just beginning their ministry journey.

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



I have a friend who's a pastor in the Lutheran Church-Canada, who holds nine (9!!) world records according to the Guinness Book of World Records. For example, he pulled a fully loaded 188 ton C-141 jet; pulled three loaded fire trucks over 200 feet; tossed a caber 30 times in less than 2 minutes; lifted 11 fully grown adults on his shoulders, and pulled a house – 14 tons across the street to its new location. Those are pretty impressive accomplishments. He leads the world in those categories. But, you wonder, why?

The Mid-South District Board of Directors invests itself in valiant efforts to navigate the external factors that affect the delivery of the services we offer

to our professional staff and congregations of the District. Since 2014, the government stepped up its intervention into ministry, imposed stricter requirements for us as an employer, and supporter of mission and ministries entrusted to our care. Yet, under these external circumstances, we must preserve the core values of the Lutheran Church and look to the future so we may continue the vision and objectives of what the Mid-South District is charged to do.

As a result, the action at the Executive and Board level had to respond. The government seemed to be moving things around just for the sake of making things more difficult. Internally, we have to be more creative on how we continue to supply essential services and professional staff members to our congregations, schools, and ECC's. Accounting staff had to crunch numbers. Information Technology had to re-configure our systems to be able to handle recordkeeping nightmares. The executive staff searched ways to manage undefined systems and regulations.

Like looking at some of the Guinness Books of World Records, we're left scratching our heads, wondering what the government is really going to do to us next! But, as confusing as everything out of Washington might be... they keep moving with a direction that seem like the goals and visions of a man hauling a 3-bedroom house across the street under his own power to a new location. Trying to meet the standards of ill-defined bureaucratic red-tape left us with the question – what's our purpose and what do we need to do to continue?

Our purpose – our goal is to meet the needs of the congregations, the schools, the professional workers, and staff who have dedicated themselves to the ministry of the Gospel. There are others out there who have seen the efforts and successes of our District who see they could benefit from our organization and ability to respond to a changing environment.

It's because our efforts are built around the message of the Gospel – our focus on the ministry and servanthood of Christ Jesus. Our overall well-being is the engine that drives the delivery of our vision of providing support to the workers who dedicate, if not selflessly, give of themselves for the message of the Gospel of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

It's not really what we do as a Board of Directors or Executive Staff. It's what God has guided and led us to do for the sake of His Church and His called servants. Thinking of my friend, Pastor Kevin Fast, wouldn't it be more efficient for him to move a railroad car with a locomotive rather than his manpower. The power of a railroad engine is huge that can move the rail cars thousands of miles. But, in this rapidly changing playing field,

we don't have that luxury. We need leadership – like that as assembled in the Mid-South District Board of Directors.

Ever since the time of Adam and Eve, humanity has tried to achieve what we were created to be – people in the image of God. When Adam tried to exceed his created abilities and purpose, he plunged mankind into an impossible conundrum. However, we've been successful in meeting the needs of our congregations, schools, and professional church workers only because we

have asked God to grant us His guidance and wisdom.

You may remember the old WWJD wristbands – What Would Jesus Do. I made a new wristband with the letters WJHD. Seeing the new wristband, someone said, "You have the letters messed up." No – our work is more accurate, more focused. WJHD

means – What Jesus Has Done.

Jesus didn't just carry the weight of 11 people on His shoulders. He bore the consequences of sins of the whole world upon His shoulders on the cross. Rev. Kevin Fast has set a record – a mark that no one else has ever accomplished. We cannot boast about our abilities or goodness apart from the source of all goodness, our Lord Jesus Christ. He set the record that no one else can ever achieve.

After much grunting and groaning, what real good for the Church have we accomplished outside of God's guidance and God's provision? Perhaps, spiritual grunting and groaning is all we could generate... and that's no Guinness World's Record.

Yet, our God has not left us with the enormous task of pulling this load by our own good works. Through Christ, God has relieved us of the



oppressive dominion of our lives. As long as our leadership is focused on and founded on Christ, we will achieve great things for His Kingdom. Since we live under His grace, Christ Himself is the power of our locomotion, our purpose, and our motivation for Christian leadership. A trainload of good works without God's power to move us is quite useless. This is why we confess our faith in Christ. Only Christ's life frees us to be empowered to live for His glory as we serve our neighbor. The power is all His and His eternal leadership of His

precious Church. I give thanks to God for allowing me the privilege of working with the leadership of the Mid-South District. We pray God continues to lead, guide, and inspire us to be about His ministry and His service to the people He has entrusted to our care.

Your Servant in Christ +
Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola



• 50th Anniversary Celebration •



On May 6th, we at Christus Victor Lutheran in Knoxville celebrated a huge mile stone. We turned 50!!! We had a great day with many guests from the past joining us in the celebration. Rev. Dr. Paavola was here and preached a beautiful sermon that touched the hearts of many of the people that were here. As the day approached,

some women in the congregation surprised me with a beautiful hand made stole to commemorate the celebration. As well, a number of ladies had come together to make a beautiful banner that is proudly hung in out sanctuary. All in all it was an awesome day by God's grace.



Christus Victor
Lutheran Church



Christus Victor
Lutheran Church

Three Confirmands share in the day at CVLC Knoxville

On Maundy Thursday, we had the blessed honor to share with three young adults and their families, as their sons and daughters made their first communion. We began the service as we always do, with the washing of feet, before moving on and walking through the agenda. It was a beautiful service with many in attendance. It brought a great joy to my heart as we shared in this day together and concluded our three year journey to this special event. They were confirmed three weeks later, and the church shared in fellowship time after the service to welcome them to the church and to get to know them as adults.



LHM Conference

On May 5th, we here at Christus Victor in Knoxville partnered with LLL to bring the Lutheran Hour Ministry Convention to East Tennessee. Rev. Dr. Paavola joined us for the day as we had a number of speakers, study time and fellowship time. Thrivent footed the bill for pizza for lunch, and Christus Victor came together and fed our guests with a delicious fish fry. Dr. Greg Seltz blessed us with his presence and Rachel, from LHM and THRED shared with us how social media can be used in a way to help educate the people in our community of all the church does. The day came to a close as we watched the Kentucky Derby on the big screen...when it was done everyone made their way home or to the local hotel to get some much needed rest.



More from the LHM Conference

Rev. Dr. Greg Seltz, Speaker Emeritus of The Lutheran Hour, and Executive Director of the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty (LCRL) was the keynote speaker for the Tennessee District of the Lutheran Layman's League annual meeting. There were over 100 registrants

LHM Conference continued

who attended the meeting at Christus Victor Lutheran Church, Knoxville, TN on Saturday, May 5. LCRL is a new organization coming from the roots of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, but a self-sustaining organization without financial support from the LCMS. The LCRL is an advocacy for maintaining our religious rights in an increasingly more repressive society.



Krista Carstens participating in the Special Olympics

Trinity Lutheran in Mena is proud of one of her members, Krista Carstens, who will be participating in the Special Olympics in Seattle, Washington in July! Krista is the daughter of Rev. Dr. Gary and Linda Carstens of Pensacola, Florida. Krista and her teammates have been busy training for this life moment! Krista is proud of her church and her accomplishments, saying, *"That God has given me the opportunity to share my faith with others through my words and actions."* Krista will be participating in the 100 meter dash, the 400 meter dash, and the 4x100 meter relay. Watch ESPN2 for the opening ceremony and various events of the Special Olympics! Join us in congratulating Krista and the whole team with a job well done!



(Left to Right) **Elizabeth Tompkins (Assistant Coach); Krista Carstens (Athletics); Jessie Ezell (Flag Football); and Maddie Fletcher (Swimming).**



Special Olympics

Mission Trip to New Orleans

High school youth and adult chaperones are invited on the mission trip to New Orleans! **Dates are July 22nd-25th** and the cost is \$95 for the first 50 people to register, \$120 for everyone after. Bring a few or your whole youth group to New Orleans, joining youth groups from across the district for a mission trip opportunity! This includes food and lodging! Transportation is not included. The theme for this year comes from Acts 1:8, *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my WITNESSES in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth."*

Register Online Today!

<https://mid-southlcms.org/youth-mid-south-missiontrip/>

Agenda [available online](#)

Student Financial Aid Applications Deadline June 15

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](#).

CALLING ALL Youth Leaders & Ministry Teams

ROOT

Relax.Connect.DigDeep

We are excited to invite youth leaders-both called and volunteers- from across the Mid-South to "ROOT" where we will relax, connect and dig deep into God's Word.

ROOT will be held on Friday, September 14 and Saturday, September 15 at Grace Lutheran Church in Murfreesboro, TN.

"Standing Together in Youth Ministry" is the theme, based on Isaiah 41:10: *Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your*

God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.

It's a time of reflection, support, encouragement, building community, worship and Bible Study, specific resource sharing and preparing for "hot topics." Registration opening soon!

SAVE — the — DATE
September 14 & 15, 2018



Meet District President Candidates

Rev. Dr. Roger C. Paavola

Each candidate was asked to describe the challenges, opportunities and priorities that face the Mid-South District over the next five years and to limit their answers to 300 words or less.

Rev. Dr. Roger C. Paavola response —

"In 2018, the District will spend 102% of what we received from congregation commitments on missions! With over 3 million unchurched people in the District, our harvest field is waiting. Therefore, we will —

Coordinate congregation's outreach with "Each One – Reach One" for personal witness, establishing a Lutheran Identity Task Force to develop members who can boldly share our Lutheran Confessions. Coordinate outreach efforts with the LWML and LLL.

Expand COMPASS and CAR resources to provide information to grow congregations and schools. Refine Church Planting to maximize successful planting opportunities. Partner with congregations, schools, and ECC's where there is excess capacity of their facilities to explore the possibilities of Planting Schools and Early Childhood Centers and possibly Virtual Schools.

Build the Small and Rural Congregations Network to maximize the possibilities of missions in their communities. Increase our congregations' abilities to develop and strengthen children and youth ministries in the Generations2Generations Initiative.

Continue Town Hall Meetings to gather ideas and concerns for services from the District. Expand Tuesday Sermon Studies for pastors and laity. Offer SMP Colloquy, and financial assistance to seminaries SMP.

Continue the District's stewardship council to bring understanding of Christian stewardship to congregations.

Expand financial scholarships for students for church work and offer assistance in Education Debt Relief.

Seek additional opportunities to Expand Ethnic Ministries.

Offer data and financial management assistance and accounting for congregations unable to acquire their own fiscal management systems. Expand "Funding the Ministry" opportunities. Support Lutheran International Missions and Ministries with the SELVD, the Malagasy Lutheran Church, and Trinity/Hope through support of our congregations.

At congregation's requests, develop multi-parish arrangements and alternative arrangements. Work with congregations interested in providing Housing for the Elderly and Condominium Development. Develop live-streaming options from our existing congregations that have the need for arrangements of providing televised worship programming."



Read more about Candidate Rev. Dr. Paavola bio on the district website: <https://mid-southlcms.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/THE-REVEREND-DR-ROGER-C-PAAVOLA.pdf>

Meet District President Candidates



Rev. Andrew W. Toopes

Each candidate was asked to describe the challenges, opportunities and priorities that face the Mid-South District over the next five years and to limit their answers to 300 words or less.

Rev. Andrew W. Toopes response —

"The challenges I see for our district are the same ones for our church body. Shrinking church attendance, shrinking dollars to carry out ministry and an ageing church that is focused on the past. All three of these challenges can be met with churches that bring a positive Gospel message and that are focused on the communities around them. You can have the best message in town but if you don't take it to the people it really makes no difference. In the place of praying for God to bless what we are doing maybe it is time to pray that God lead us to what He is blessing in our neighborhoods.

The opportunities around us are endless. With ever increasing numbers of immigrant populations around us we have the opportunity to show and tell of the love of Christ. We need to meet the needs of young families with affordable Christian child care. We need to take advantage of the skill and wisdom of our senior adults to offer programming that appeals to the senior population across our district. We have the opportunity to support our Lutheran Schools as they reach out to families who would not normally be able to afford Christian education.

Finally, I see my top two priorities as District president, the financial health of the district and its congregations. This is where I see the need to change the District President position to a part time position. Second, the serious effort to encourage all the churches of the district to be the very best at the ministry they do in their community. From the pastor to the oldest and youngest in the church to get out into the community and be a light to a very dark world."



Read more about Candidate Rev. Toopes bio on the district website: <https://mid-southlcms.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/THE-REVEREND-ANDREW-W-TOOPES.pdf>

The good, bad, and ugly sides of leadership

How do you start your day as a leader? At a recent pastors' conference, the speaker challenged the pastors to read the Bible at least one hour every day. That is great advice, and even if you do not spend an hour in God's Word, you need to heed that advice every morning. As a great leader you should start your day in prayer and meditation. Before you even jump into the shower you need to take a deep breath, pray, read a devotion, read a portion of the Bible and then begin your day with thanksgiving.

On your way to work, think about that one thing that you need to accomplish that day. You know you will have distractions during the day, but that one thing will need to be done. And how are you preparing yourself on the way to work? Are you optimistic about the day? Are you focused on caring for the individuals with whom you will be working? Are you smiling? Be sure to believe in the ones around you. Know their strengths and expect that they will perform to the best of their ability.

One of the things I learned early on in my ministry was that of active listening. When someone walks into your office all attention needs to be directed to that person. Put down the phone, turn off the computer monitor and listen. But remember that what you hear is not always what was said, which is the active part of active listening. Ask questions to clarify what the person is saying. "So, what you are saying is" "If I'm understanding you correctly you mean" "This makes me think" Remember that you do not have all the answers and that listening strengthens the connection you have with that individual. Be interested in what the person is talking about. Make this a safe place to discuss issues. Let people know that you respect them.

Being a good leader, these days is more difficult than it used to be. To be successful you have to understand that it is not about you. Your ability to lead rests on the relationships you build with



those around you. They must agree, through their actions, that they are willing to follow your lead. They have to know that your words and actions align with the godly principles of your faith in Jesus as your personal Savior. They have to know that you have thought about the future and where the organization is headed. They have to know that you are passionate about your work. Which leads to the discussion about why leaders make poor decisions.

The worst decision you can make is the one where you consulted no one. If you make a group commitment to someone or something without consulting your team, you are in trouble. I'm not talking about an individual commitment to someone or something, but rather to something that will affect the entire group. You need to have several people that you can consult who are suited to speak about a particular area with expertise. Create a list of individuals with whom you can call or text immediately if the situation arises. Consider forming a council of individuals with whom you meet on a regular basis to discuss issues and long-range plans. Keep them informed and pray for them often.

So how do you know if you have stopped growing as a leader? One factor is whether or not you are more interested in answers than questions. Think about that. Growth is always preceded by questions. Questions often check the status quo, probe for those things that have been overlooked, and imagine the possibilities. Another factor showing that you have stopped growing as a leader is if you are looking for evidence that will back up your current opinions. What if your opinion is wrong? Shouldn't you be

good, bad, ugly continued

looking for new insights about the issues. Yet another reason you might have stopped growing as a leader is that you spend all your time doing the things you like to do. To be a good leader means you are willing to go after the tasks that are not appealing. Let something take you out of your comfort zone. And of course, what I believe is the worst scenario, you've surrounded yourself with people just like you. Don't get me wrong, you do need to have competent people like you around at all times, but diversity is what makes an organization grow stronger as long as you are all pulling in the same direction. Keep people around that are committed to the same mission and vision but who are older, younger, and a different gender than you. And remember to pray without ceasing.

— Allen Piepenbrink
Education Executive, Mid-South District

Congregational Mission Commitments

Mission Commitment Receipts as of 04/30/18 (4 Months)

Anticipated Amount (33.33% of budget)	\$527,137
Actual Receipts.....	<u>\$11,347</u>
Over (under) anticipated amount	(\$15,790)

Use of Mission Commitment Receipts (4 Months)

Allocated to Synod for World Missions	\$145,071
Allocated to Tanzania	8,333
Retained for District Mission/Ministry Support (70% of receipts)	<u>357,943</u>
Total Receipts	\$511,347

Mission Commitment Receipts Prior Year Comparison (4 Months)

Actual Receipts as of 04/30/18	\$511,347
Actual Receipts as of 04/30/17	<u>\$514,385</u>
Over (under) prior year receipts	(\$3,038)



Trinity HOPE

Spring 2018



merci
— BEACOU —

We always **thank** God for all of you and
continually mention you in our prayers.
~1 Thessalonians 1:2

Your faithful generosity, one bowl of
beans and rice at a time, is fostering a
HOPEful future for God's children
in Haiti.

<https://www.trinityhope.org>





Mark your calendar for this amazing weekend August 3-5, 2018 at The Pfizer Hotel, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Lutheran Hour Ministries has a long and respected history of providing outreach tools to congregations that work in concert with its Gospel proclamation activities. This foundation is the catalyst for LHM to partner with the laity and embolden them to be missionaries in their communities.

Be energized through mission and ministry and reflect as you hear first-hand stories from those impacted by the work God is doing through Lutheran Hour Ministries! [Register Online](#)

2018 National RSTM Conference

The 2018 National Rural & Small Town Mission Conference will be held Nov. 8–10 in Kansas City, Mo., at the Hilton Kansas City Airport.

LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission hopes you'll join us by registering now and reserving your spot! **And did you know you can earn Continuing Education credits by attending the 2018 National RSTM Conference?**

The conference will address blessings and challenges facing rural and small town congregations today. Congregations will be encouraged in becoming healthy churches, eager to bear witness for Christ and able to show mercy to those in need in communities and develop a robust life together with fellow members. This conference is meant for anyone living, serving or interested in rural or small-town areas, with topics and resources specifically suited for this unique mission field.

Online Registration, lodging and more information are available at lcms.org/rstm/conference.

New Spanish resources for Hispanic Ministry

If you'd like to share the Gospel with your Spanish-speaking neighbors, or if you're heading out on a short-term mission trip to Central or South America, the Lutheran Heritage Foundation (www.LHFmissions.org) has translated and published two new resources for you: A Child's Garden of Bible Stories and the Bible with Small Catechism, both in the Spanish language. Donations to help cover the printing and shipping costs are gratefully accepted, but as with all of LHF's translated materials, both of these books are free of charge to the ministries, churches, or individuals who need them. Call the LHF office at (800)554-0723 or email info@LHFmissions.org with your order (number of copies, hardcover or paperback).



Early Childhood Educators' Conference Registration is Underway!

The 2018 Early Childhood Educator's Conference is coming up **July 16-17 at Immanuel Lutheran School in Memphis, TN.** [Complete registration materials](#), as well as a conference agenda are

located on the District website. Registration materials have been mailed to all of the Early Childhood centers. Registrations and the conference fee of \$45 are due by June 22.

Prayer Summary, May 2018

Following is a list of all the people that have appeared on the Mid-South District website prayer list www.mid-southlcms.com during the month of May 2018.

PRAYER CONCERNS

MR. BOB ASLINGER (Dayton, TN)
REV. PETER AVE-LALLEMANT (Fairfield Bay, AR)
MS. SHERRY COSTELLO (secretary at Trinity, Pine Bluff, AR)
MS. SARA FEURESTEIN (daughter of Rev. Donley Hesse, Mena, AR)
MRS. NANCY HERD (wife of Rev. Cliff Herd, EM, Chattanooga, TN)
REV. DONLEY HESSE (Emeritus, Mena, AR)
MRS. VALERIA MARCH (mother-in-law of Rev. John Gierke, Conway, AR)
MR. RICHARD MEYER (Bella Vista, AR)
MRS. MEGAN NAVRATH (daughter of Rev. Carl and Gwen Wenck, Grace, Murfreesboro, TN)
REV. DAVID RUBKE (Tulahoma, TN)
REV. EDWARD SCHMIDT (Knoxville, TN)
MR. TERRY SCHMIDT (LCMS Director of Schools & Accreditation)
REV. MERLIN SEPMYER (Crossville, TN)
MRS. STEPHANIE TEWS (daughter-in-law of Rev. David Tews, Shepherd of the Hills, Horseshoe Bend, AR)
MRS. SUE ANN TOOPES (wife of Rev. Andy Toopes, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Bowling Green, KY)
MS. DIANE WALTERS (Cookeville, TN)
THE MOTHER OF MS. MICHELE LAYNE (ECE Director, St. John's, Fayetteville, AR)

Our deepest sympathies to Rev. Herb Swanson (Emeritus, Lamar, AR) on the loss of his wife, Mrs. Chloe Swanson, who passed away on Sunday, May 27, 2018.

We remember the mission teams traveling to Tanzania in May and June, that God would bless their travel and their time of service.

CALL UPDATE

IN THE CALLING PROCESS – CONGREGATIONS ORDAINED MINISTERS

DECLINED: **Rev. Dr. Kevin Wilson** has declined the call to serve as the **Executive Director for Missions & Ministry for The Mid-South District.**

CONGREGATIONS

Grace Celebration Lutheran Church, Cordova, TN – Pastor
Trinity Lutheran Church, Memphis, TN – Pastor
Mid-South District – Executive Director for Missions and Ministry

COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

DECLINED: **Mr. Joel Rachow**, North Branch, MI, has declined the call to serve as **Principal at First Lutheran Church and School, Knoxville, TN.**

PENDING: **Immanuel Lutheran Church and School, Memphis, TN**, has issued a call to **Mrs. Angela Schiller**, Yuma, AZ, to serve as Principal.

IN THE CALLING PROCESS - COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

Avilla Christian Academy, Alexander, AR – Assistant Early Childhood Director
Christ Lutheran Church and School, Little Rock, AR – Science teacher/Athletic Director
First Lutheran Church and School, Knoxville, TN – Principal
Immanuel Lutheran Church and School, Memphis, TN – Principal



Staff of the Mid-South District, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola
President

Paul Reaves
*Executive Director for LCEF Vice President
and Executive Director for Development*

Angela Fowler
*Executive Director for
Business and Finance*

Allen Piepenbrink
*District Education Executive for
Education and Preschools*

Carolyn Metzger
Finance Assistant

Renae McElwain
LCEF Communications & Marketing Specialist

Julie Tyler
*Administrative Assistant
for Missions and Education*

Alison Hawkins
*Administrative Assistant
to the District President*

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Contribute to *The Encourager* — Note Early Deadline

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 **JUNE 18, 2018** to Rhonda, webmaster@mid-southlcms.com.