



/ AUGUST 2018

MID-SOUTH LUTHERAN

'Is it **DO** — or is it **DONE**?'

The third chapter of John's Gospel has likely the best known passage in the Bible. We even see it in the end zones of football stadiums, pasted on the back of semi-trucks or on a placard in someone's yard: "John 3:16." This passage is a foundation

for one of the sacred doctrines in our Lutheran Confessions. Yet I marvel: Some folks can read these verses and not see the absolute truths in God's Word that form the doctrines of our Church and the historic Christian Church for the last 21 centuries.

Here's what I mean: Is there any difference between religion and faith? Absolutely! Church is not a religion. Actually, the difference between faith and religion can be seen in two simple words. Religion is boiled down to one word: "Do!" Faith, however, boils down to another word: "Done."

So when it comes to our worship, which is it? Do or Done? ... It's all the difference in the world. Actually, this isn't about religion at all, but rather where our faith is grounded ... Do or Done?

The same question confused Nicodemus in John's Gospel. He should've known the answer. After all, he was a religious man and a Pharisee. (Pharisees knew all the rules.) At the time of Jesus, Pharisee meant a highly religious person; someone deeply committed to their religion. They



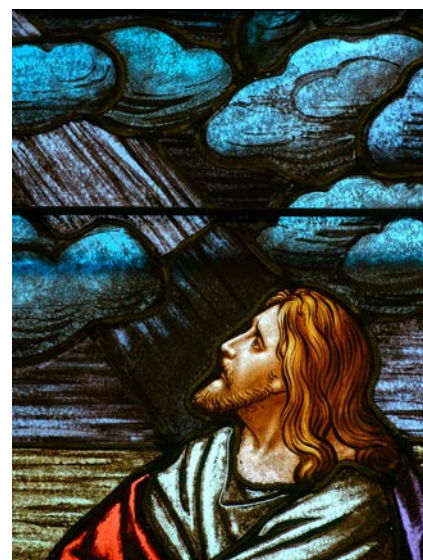
Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola
District President

knew how to dictate personal behavior for themselves and for anyone around them. It was all about Do ... do this, do that, don't do this and don't do that. They made laws that went beyond the Ten Commandments and the 673 Levitical laws.

If we had been a Pharisee, or lived next to one, we couldn't walk more than a mile on the Sabbath unless we strategically left a cloak at a person's house — an excuse to go just about anywhere. We wouldn't carry food, unless it weighed less than a dried fig. But we'd carry extra for any beggar who might come along. But we'd avoid beggars, so the food was ours. Our dedicated religious acts would seem ridiculous to us today. But we'd have taken our religion seriously.

Nicodemus was such a man, a member of the Sanhedrin, the ruling class of 70 Jewish men who governed the behavior of everyone in Israel. Under an agreement with Rome, the Sanhedrin could enforce so many more rules because they'd parlayed their religion under the disguise of political authority, just to keep their flimsy jobs. They could execute civil, criminal and religious jurisdiction; and carry out trials in conformity with their agreement with Rome, and recommend execution by the Romans.

Nicodemus was a highly educated man. So we're not surprised by his conversation with Jesus. It was steeped with deep philosophical reasoning, complex Scriptural allusions and deep spiritual truths. But despite its complexity, Jesus makes the out-



come of the debate so clear it amazes us as to why today's Pharisees can't see the plain truth of its doctrine.

The focus of this verse has to be "You must be born again." You'll hear that statement from religious types today. Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

The difference between what Jesus said and what Nicodemus understood needs an understanding of Greek: Jesus used the word *anōthen* — it can mean "again" as most English Bibles translate it. But most often, it means "from above." In this case it's a noun. So the correct translation has to be

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DO OR DONE?

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

“You must be born from above.”

But the way Nicodemus understood *anohen*, he thought Jesus was saying he had to be born all over again. That’s a Do. But Jesus meant a person must be born from above ... from God and what He’s Done.

Jesus later explains this, saying, “Do not marvel that I said, ‘You must be born *anohen*.’” In other words, “Don’t be confused when I say *anohen*, because you think it’s something you have to do; but God intends for it to be something that is Done to you by God’s grace.” But Nicodemus is not sure what to think. He heard about the “signs” of this great prophet and miracle worker. Jesus performed His first miracle — changing water into wine. The word was out about this Man that struck a curious nerve in Nicodemus.

But he gets more than he bargained for. He came to Jesus under the cover of the night because he didn’t want to get caught. He went to Jesus to see how He measured against the Pharisees’ laws and ideas. “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.”

Nicodemus was perhaps recruiting a potential new leader — maybe even the Messiah who will finally rid Israel of the Roman rulers and let the Pharisees run the country again. But Christ’s response didn’t answer Nicodemus’ curiosity.

Jesus said: “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born *anohen*.” The difference isn’t about Do ... that a strong bunch of men that will turn around and conquer the world. This is Jesus, the Christ, who came to the world to save us from our wretched condition.

Done! Jesus confirms our biblical understanding of *anohen* in His next statements: “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom

of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born *anohen*.’”

Jesus is clearly speaking about a spiritual birth — one given by God that enables the recipient of spiritual birth to become an inheritor in the kingdom of God. Jesus is saying, “No! Nicodemus, an old man returning to his mother’s womb isn’t what this is all about. It’s all about what God’s Spirit has Done” — spiritual rebirth to give new life to lost and condemned sinners.

We have more evidence of our Lutheran understanding of this rebirth by water and the Spirit!

Jesus continued, “Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born *anohen*.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

The Spirit’s work in our lives is not what we Do, what we decide, how good we are or what good intentions we might have. Our promised entrance into God’s Kingdom is based on what God has Done for us, through Jesus Christ.

The teachings of the world’s religions run rampant with hundreds of examples of how mankind must crawl its way to some god. Some inside Christianity subscribe to this erroneous belief. From the time God created Adam and Eve, mankind has tried to either hide from God or cover the sin that separates them from God and His holiness; or prove their worthiness by what they Do.

Where unconditional love once reigned in a perfect relationship with God, fear, complacency, animosity and hostility define the relationship of mankind to God. So from the time of Adam forward, religion tries to answer the question, “What must I Do to get right with God?”

That’s the result of Nicodemus’ question. Some believe you find God by

keeping rules. Some believe enough sacrifices will make them worthy to stand in the glory of God. Some believe that if they avoid the temptations of the world or Do fasts or pray harder or take a life-long vow of poverty, they will inherit eternal life. Religions are all about what you Do.

Yet our Christian faith is all about what’s already been Done for us. Jesus said, “If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? ... And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.”

There it is! Jesus slam-dunks with just one single word: *anohen*.

Anohen is above — in heaven. Unless we are born by water and the Spirit, joined with God’s means of grace through Jesus Christ, there’s not a snowball’s chance of getting into the kingdom of our Heavenly Father! Because it’s not what we Do or how we decide. God isn’t lost. He doesn’t need to be found. He came to seek and to save the lost — us!

Is our understanding of religion about Do or Done? Nicodemus was thinking about something he had to Do. But Jesus demonstrated that it isn’t the best effort — to Do the best Nicodemus could Do — nor our best effort. Those efforts always fall woefully short of the glory of God.

All of the religions of the world are defined by what its adherents must Do. Jesus alone offers a religion that is defined by His life and death on the cross. It is Done — for you and me and everyone — so that we may have eternal life through the merits of Jesus Christ, in the justice of God the Father and the gathering of the Holy Spirit to receive God’s means of grace.

This summer, we celebrated another year of our nation’s independence. Declare independence from worthless attempts to Do what God has already Done for you — life, salvation and grace on this journey toward His glorious Kingdom, forever.

Seltz is guest speaker at LLL convention



On May 5, Christus Victor Lutheran Church, Knoxville, partnered with the Lutheran Layman's League (LLL) to bring the Lutheran Hour Ministries district convention to East Tennessee.

The Rev. Dr. Greg Seltz, speaker emeritus of The Lutheran Hour and executive director of the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty (LCRL) in Washington D.C., was the keynote speaker for the LLL Tennessee District's annual meeting, which was part of the event.

LCRL is a new organization established by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, but is self-sustaining and does not receive financial support from the LCMS. The LCRL advocates for maintaining religious rights in an increasingly more secular society.

There were more than 100 registrants who attended the meeting, hosted by Christus Victor. The Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, Mid-South District president, also participated in the event, filled with speakers and time for study and fellowship. Thrivent Financial provided pizza for lunch, and Christus Victor treated guests to a delicious fish fry.

LHM and THRED speakers shared ways that social media can be used to help educate those within the community about the church's role and service. The day came to a close with a viewing of the Kentucky Derby on a big screen.

Seltz was speaker of The Lutheran Hour from 2011 to 2017. He now directs the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty. Its mission is to "ignite and fuel a uniquely Lutheran response to increasing intrusions, limitations and challenges by the government in the life of the Church, while educating, encouraging and equipping LCMS members and organizations to take informed action in support of marriage, life and religious freedom."



Awaiting a call...

Mid-South District President Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola met recently with Mauricio Franco (left), who has completed the Center for Hispanic Studies program at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Franco lives with his wife and family in the Springdale, Ark., area, where he previously served as vicar at Salem Lutheran Church. Franco has been taking classes toward ordination since 2013.

Congregation mission commitment receipts

as of May 31, 2018 (5 months)

Anticipated amount (33.3 percent of budget).....	\$658,921
Actual receipts	\$619,524
Over (under) anticipated amount ..	(\$39,397)

Use of mission commitment receipts

Allocated to Synod for world missions	\$175,441
Allocated to Tanzania	\$10,417
Retained for district ministry/mission support (70 % of receipts) ..	\$433,667
Total receipts	\$619,524

Mission commitment receipts comparison

Actual receipts as of May 31, 2018	\$619,524
Actual receipts as of May 31, 2017	\$629,981
Over (under) prior year receipts	(\$10,457)

Nothing says summer like watermelon

By Julie Keck
Media/Marketing
LWML Mid-South District

Yay! It is National Watermelon Day Aug. 3! To me there is nothing more delicious on a hot Arkansas summer day than ice-cold, cut-up pieces of watermelon!

I eat a lot of watermelon over the summer. It is so refreshing and cools you right down as you eat it. The hard part is picking out the perfect watermelon! It is always a surprise when I cut it open, hoping for the bright red color and the best flavor. Another

reason that watermelon makes me happy is that it is served at family dinners and church picnics.

Watermelon hydrates us in the heat of summer, just like a cool cup of water. The Gospel of Mark states, “Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward.” (Mark 9:41 NIV)

Watermelon comes in a large size and is meant to be shared. So let’s invite

some neighbors over for watermelon and also share the love of Jesus with them. Or maybe serve watermelon this month at your LWML meeting!

The LWML Mid-South District had a wonderful convention in June in Chattanooga. Check out the election results, selected mission grants and pictures at midsouthlwml.org.



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WITNESS
National LCMS Campus Ministry Conference
Fort Wayne, Ind. | Jan. 2-5, 2019

Online
registration
opens Aug. 15
lcmsu.org

Mark your calendars now for “WITNESS,” the fourth biennial conference for college students and campus-ministry workers.

The collegiate campus is an ever-expanding mission field. College students have more opportunities in their vocations to bear witness to their faith in Jesus Christ. “WITNESS” will provide a timely opportunity for them to receive a sound theological framework and the practical help necessary to do just that.

Participants will gain a familiarity with the *Every One His Witness*® Lutheran evangelism program and will also have opportunities to explore witnessing in various areas of most interest to them in their collegiate contexts.

Please help promote “WITNESS” with your college youth and young adults — make sure they are aware of this wonderful opportunity! To learn more about LCMS Campus Ministry and the Witness conference, visit lcmsu.org/lcmsu.

Pastor Hunze is ordained and installed at Emmanuel

The Rite of Ordination and Installation for the Rev. Tim Hunze was held on May 26 at Emmanuel, Hermitage, Tenn., where he will serve as associate pastor. Hunze has worked as a deacon with congregations in central Tennessee for 16 years and was approved for pastoral ministry by the LCMS Colloquy Committee this spring. Celebrating Hunze's ordination and installation were, from left (front row) the Revs. Dr. Roger Paavola; David Callies, David Rubke, Hunze, Andrew Abraham, John Schulz, Eric Phillips; (back row) Keith Enko, Allan Thoe, Carl Wenck, Greg Bauch, Curt Hoover and Ken Shaw.



District welcomes vicars

Call Day was held at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind., on April 25. Concluding students received their pastoral and diaconal calls, and second-year students received their vicarage and internship assignments. The Mid-South District is pleased to welcome its new vicars. Left, Jon and Shannon Carpenter will serve at Faith, Tullahoma, Tenn., and, right, Carrie and William Zwick will serve at First, Harrison, Ark. The vicars are pictured with Rev. Dr. Roger and Pat Paavola.



Struck to entertain at retreats

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

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

Additional surprises from a loving and delightful Creator have included the joy of a second marriage and a combined family that totals six grown children, their spouses, 11 grandchildren and one 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/consultant in healthcare 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 popular 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 Mid-South District convention in June.

With more than 35 years of experience in teaching, motivating and entertaining her audiences, Jan brings a fresh approach to the journey of faith and uses her sense of humor as she shares her life with fellow travelers and leaves them laughing. Her trust and faith in Christ is her reason to make a "joyful noise unto God!"

Mark your calendar for the Pastors Wives Retreat:

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

BLESSINGS AT BETHLEHEM, JOHNSON CITY, TENN.



The members of Bethlehem welcomed Dr. Don Hudson, chair of Philosophy and Religion at King University in Bristol, for dinner and a presentation at the Carnegie Hotel on April 20. Hudson, a noted Old Testament scholar, archaeologist and historian specializing in the book of Judges, shared with the attendees areas of the New Testament that fulfilled Old Testament prophecy.



The Rev. Steven Harmon, pastor, Bethlehem, confirmed, from left, Grace Marshall, Maggie Howland and Silas Whaley on May 27 as communicant members.

Athletes shine at Special Olympics



In photo at left: Special Olympians from Mena, from left, Elizabeth Tompkins (assistant coach), Krista Carstens (athletics), Jessie Ezell (flag football), and Maddie Fletcher (swimming) were part of the Arkansas contingent that participated in the Olympics in Seattle.



Right: Rev. Timothy J. Henning (pastor, Trinity, Mena, Ark.) congratulates Krista at a welcome home gathering.

The congregation of Trinity, Mena, Ark., is proud of member Krista Carstens, who participated in the Special Olympics in Seattle July 1-6. Krista trained hard alongside her teammates before bringing home several ribbons and a silver medal for the 400-meter relay. Her Mena team-

mates also earned recognition: Jessie Ezell with a bronze in flag football and Maddie Fletcher with two medals (one gold) in swimming events.

"The opening ceremony was awesome and gave all of us a full-hearted feeling," Krista said.

"Participating and being a part of the Special Olympics is indescribable," Coach Elizabeth Tompkins said "Our athletes experienced things for the first time and all of them set personal records from previous times in their events."

Krista, the daughter of the Rev. Dr. Gary and Linda Carstens of Pensacola, Fla., also participated in the 100- and 200-meter dash. Her relay team won the silver medal and shaved off 12 seconds from their time in the preliminary race the day before.

When asked how this has impacted her faith, Krista replied, "I realized that I can shine God's light further than anything that you can imagine. God's love fills my life with love to share with others."

Please join the members of Trinity in congratulating all the athletes and staff.

Fundraiser excitement!

Aug. 25: Lutheran Camp to hold 10th annual Trivia Night

There's still time to enter your team in the 10th annual Trivia Night contest. The contest will again be held in the Family Life Center at Peace Lutheran Church, Conway, the evening of Aug. 25.

Teams of up to eight people will compete for gift cards and the coveted Dinner Bell Trophy in the trivia contest, which will include eight rounds of 10 questions. Prizes will also be awarded for the most clever team name, best costumes and best-decorated table.

Non-competing guests often come to watch the fun and cheer on their favorite teams.

Trivia Night includes a silent auction, with more than 70 great items to bid on, including resort lodging, wine baskets, shop tools, kitchen gadgets, original artwork, home decorating items, sports apparel and more.

No need to eat dinner beforehand; the kitchen will serve up burgers, hot dogs, nachos and more. Free popcorn and bottled water will be served.

The fundraiser will again include the Wish List Board, where friends of the Lutheran Camp can donate for the purchase of specific items the camp needs.

To register or learn more, visit the Lutheran Camp website at lutherancamp.org.



Sept. 29: Praise bands to cover "A Mighty Fortress"

The Lutheran Camp on Petit Jean is issuing a daunting musical test to church praise bands: cover the most traditional of Lutheran hymns, "A Mighty Fortress," before a live audience!

Musicians up to the challenge are invited to enter the Battle of the Praise Bands Sept. 29 at the Lutheran Camp. The all-day event will feature music sets of 20-30 minutes in which each band will perform Luther's best-known hymn along with a collection of its best praise songs, with a panel of judges determining the top three places. A separate award will go to the best youth band; to qualify as a youth band, a group can have no members older than 18.

Jars will be placed on a table, one for each band, where audience members

will make donations to the camp to "vote" for the band they like best. The People's Choice Award will go to the audience favorite, based on the most cash collected in the band's jar.

This fundraiser for the Lutheran Camp will also feature barbecue dinners for sale mid-day, all-day concessions, and lots of games for the family: cornhole, horseshoes, sand volleyball and more.

The battle will take place on two sound stages in the field in front of the recently restored Trinity Lutheran Church, which will be open to guests. In the event of inclement weather, the contest will move to the Cave, the enclosed pavilion connected to the Lutheran Camp dining hall.

The band entry fee is \$100, which will be refunded when the band arrives. No-shows will forfeit the fee.

To register a band or learn more about the contest, go to the Lutheran Camp website, lutherancamp.org, and click on the Praise Band button. Or call 501-652-6304.



The Lutheran Camp on Petit Jean introduced fishing to the summer program this year, with the theme **"Hooked!"** based on Mark 1:17: "And Jesus said to them, 'Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.'"

Joy at Christus Victor, Knoxville

By Rev. William Ondracka

Pastor, Christus Victor

New confirmands

On Maundy Thursday, we had the blessed honor to share with three young adults — and their families — as they received 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.

The youth, Destinee Billingsley, Alesha Austin and Gaven Gloeckner, were confirmed three weeks later and the church shared in fellowship after the service to welcome them to the congregation and to get to know them as adults.

Anniversary celebration

On May 6, we celebrated a huge milestone. We turned 50! We had a great day with many guests from the past joining us in the celebration. Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola was here and preached a beautiful sermon that touched the hearts of many of us.



As the day approached, some women in the congregation surprised me with a beautiful handmade stole to commemorate the celebration. A number of ladies also had come together to make a beautiful banner that is proudly displayed in our sanctuary. All in all, it was an awesome day by God's grace.



Isabella Jones was baptized and welcomed into the Christus Victor congregation by Rev. Ondracka on June 10. Family members who also joined the congregation are Lisa Leigh Bell, Brett Jones and Kristen Smith.



From left, Destinee Billingsley, Alesha Austin and Gaven Gloeckner celebrated their confirmation and first communion at Christus Victor on Maundy Thursday.



Deadline for the October issue is Aug. 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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