



/ SEPTEMBER 2018

MID-SOUTH LUTHERAN



*Like the boys trapped in a cave, we can't save ourselves ... that is the **work of Christ***

Several weeks ago, the world was watching the turn of events developing in Thailand. Twelve teenage soccer players and their coach were trapped inside a cave, separated by over a mile of tunnels, caverns, treacherous passages and rain water from a monsoon. The world went to its knees, praying that all of the kids could be saved. Finally, after three days of team efforts, all the players and coach were rescued.

The rescue gives us a snapshot of what faith is like. Most of our congregations



Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola
District President

will return to the routines of the church. Sunday school will be in full swing. Catechism classes will be taught to the youth. Summer vacations are over. Public and Lutheran schools will have started classes and pastors return to teaching the fundamentals of our Christian faith. They will remind us all that faith is a gift from God. It doesn't emanate from within our person. Christian faith receives the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit gives faith in Christ. The Holy Spirit confers Christian faith and faith receives the benefits of the Holy Spirit.

As Christians, we recognize that faith — large or small — is God's gift to us that receives the overflowing abundance of grace that comes from God. Faith captures the whole work of salvation from the first particle of faith that welcomes us into our relationship to God and His family, and the object of faith is our blessed hope of everlasting life in heaven. Faith clings to the divine promises of God like the Thai

spelunkers clung to the hope of being saved.

On one hand, just as those boys were unable to save themselves, my good friend Rev. Dr. Scott Murray notes that our faith does nothing and can do nothing when it has no foundation. Those young men in Thailand could not see or even hope for help coming from outside the cave. They didn't even know if anyone else knew where they were. Did they trust someone would rescue them? Faith is not our own work. Faith without something in which it can root its trust can accomplish nothing. Christian faith grasps the salvific work of Christ on our behalf.

Yet on the other hand, faith has what it receives. Jesus Christ demonstrated His divine power over all created things during His ministry. He was born — God Incarnate — to suffer, die and be buried as our Savior. But His resurrection proved God's satisfaction of His sacrifice, and our justification to stand before God in His day, righteous, pure and holy through the merits of Jesus Christ — for those who are joined together in the death and glorious life in Christ.

We receive the divine power of God for our salvation by faith. Faith embraces our creedal belief in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and the gifts they offer through Christ's Holy Bride — the Church. Martin Luther's Seven Marks of the Holy Christian Church signals where our faith has its foundation: It has God's Word, it is known by the blessed Sacrament of Baptism when God claims us as His own, it rightly administers the Sacrament of the Altar as given in Christ, where the forgiveness of sins through the Office

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Filled with the spirit

By Rebecca Tieman

This was it! All the months of planning, packing and fundraising, all the days of travel, all the prayers and Bible studies, emails and meetings were over. It was really here ... our mission team of 14 from Mid-South District congregations were ready to go to the Itilima district of Tanzania.

We weren't visiting another church, school or mission outpost. We weren't signing a guest book, admiring the fruits of a grant or donation. We were entering the mission field and Satan was working overtime, plaguing my thoughts with doubts, fears, worry and apprehension. What was I doing? I wasn't an evangelist, I wasn't a pastor and I certainly wasn't an apostle. And, wait, I seemed to remember all the things that happened to those people — beatings, shipwrecks, stonings, jail time and all sorts of major persecution. I felt we could rule out the shipwrecks — people were walking miles just to secure a bucket of water, but I certainly saw plenty of rocks. In fact, I felt plenty of rocks. My Fitbit registered more than 8,000 steps before we even left the vehicle!

Everyone else seemed so confident — they were smiling, laughing and re-connecting with the pastors and evangelists from past trips. And the other team from Christ the King (CTK) had been so successful — they had baptized nearly 600 during their week. What if we were rejected, what if no one listened or cared about the Gospel message? I felt like the shy, quiet, little girl that had attended a two-room Lutheran grade school up in the middle of cornfields in North-west Iowa.

After dividing up into teams, determining the direction we would go,



A mission team from the Mid-South District served in Tanzania. Rev. Terry Tieman is standing sixth from left, with Terry on his left and Joshua on his right.

meeting our local guide and feeling hopelessly confused as the Swahili flew back and forth at a furious pace, we set off. “Hodi, hodi” was called out as we entered a compound. What was this? A group of young men, not the women, children and babies I was expecting. They welcomed us to join them, perched on stumps and branches in the shade of an acacia tree.

My husband, Rev. Terry Tieman (executive director, Transforming Churches Network, Cordova, Tenn.), noticed one man wearing a Kansas City Chiefs pullover. He mentioned that was where he grew up. This broke the ice and everyone laughed.

Terry pulled out the evangecube and started telling the story. Everyone was leaning forward, listening intently as Silas, our evangelist, interpreted. They kept stopping us to ask questions, they wanted to know more. Soon, Terry had pulled out his bowl, filled it with water, and the entire group was baptized! Was this really happening?

As we worked, another man walked by and stopped to listen. Would we please come over to his boma as soon as possible? We hurried across the path. An impossible number of chil-

dren were swarming about his legs — sons, daughters, nieces and nephews — ready to be baptized. I learned how to say “God bless you, my friend” in halting Swahili — “Mungu akubariki, rafiki yangu” — as I placed crosses around each new Christians’ neck.

As we turned to leave, Joshua, one of the new Christians, came running up. “I have more, come quickly!” he said. Joshua couldn’t keep this Good News to himself; he had been on the phone spreading the Good News to everyone he knew. This, in itself, was a miracle. He had an old flip phone, and if he held it a certain way, he could place a call. Silas explained that most people tried to save their minutes and wanted others to call them, so they would text someone and wait for them to call back. Joshua was using up his minutes with reckless abandon.

We followed Joshua about a half a mile through the fields of cotton, sunflowers and corn. Each hill had been hand-planted, and it would also be harvested by hand. Every grain of rice, kernel of corn and boll of cotton was precious. We got to the next compound and Joshua had them primed and ready for us. He sat through the

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MERCY in West Virginia

Members of Bethlehem, Johnson City, Tenn., traveled to Benton, W. Va., in June to spend a week repairing a home damaged by flooding in 2017. Participating in the mission trip were, from left, Frank deNobriga, Rick Kirkendall, Ann Larson, Larry Larson and Marilyn Abbott.



TANZANIA

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

story again, adding questions and explanations as we went along.

Halfway through, an older gentleman suddenly stood up and threw his lighter on the ground. He didn't want "any other gods!" When it was his turn to be baptized, he struggled with removing his witch doctor charms, but he finally agreed. Then he asked Terry what his father's name was. "Leroy" wasn't going to cut it, so soon his new Christian name was Terry.

As we tried to leave, no one wanted

us to go. Joshua wanted pictures. Newly baptized Terry wanted us to come into his boma and Pastor Grayson finally had to take Terry's hand and gently lead him away since other teams would be waiting and we had a long walk back. As we started back, voices came through the thicket, imploring us to stay and eat with them.

Were we ready to share the Gospel? No, we weren't, but the Holy Spirit had other plans.

"Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said ... 'Brothers, what shall we do?'

... 'Repent and be baptized every one of you ... For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself'" — **Acts 2:37-40**

Congregation mission commitment receipts

as of June 30, 2018 (6 months)

Anticipated amount (50 percent of budget).....	\$790,706
Actual receipts	\$757,223
Over (under) anticipated amount ..	(\$33,483)

Use of mission commitment receipts

Allocated to Synod for world missions	\$214,667
Allocated to Tanzania	\$12,500
Retained for district ministry/ mission support (70 % of receipts) ..	\$530,056
Total receipts	\$757,223

Mission commitment receipts comparison

Actual receipts as of June 30, 2018.....	\$757,223
Actual receipts as of June 30, 2017.....	\$799,191
Over (under) prior year receipts	(\$41,968)

Serving 'those who suffer'

THE 2018 LCMS NATIONAL DISASTER RESPONSE CONFERENCE is scheduled for Oct. 16-18 at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and the theme will be "Lift High the Cross: The Comfort of Christ for Those Who Suffer."

Attendees will hear practical ways to love and serve people whose lives have been ripped apart by catastrophe. Pastors, disaster coordinators and others who have experienced and responded to significant disasters in the past year will share best practices concerning mercy in the Church.

For more information, go to thelc.ms/2018-disaster-response-conference or call 888-843-5267.



LCMS/Erik M. Lunsford



20th Regular Convention of the Mid-South District, LCMS • June 28-30, 2018 • Memphis, Tennessee

CONVENTION COVERAGE

The 2018 Mid-South District Convention took place June 28-30 at the Hilton Hotel in Memphis. The theme selected for the Convention was, "The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my salvation!" from Psalm 18:2. Throughout the three-day event, this theme was frequently reflected upon and referenced in devotions and addresses to the delegation. Attendance figures for the Convention included 80 pastoral delegates, 95 lay delegates, 26 advisory delegates and 22 guests. The following highlights provide a glimpse of both the business and fellowship that comprised the 20th Regular Convention of the Mid-South District, LCMS.

THURSDAY • JUNE 28

- Floor Committees, responsible for finalizing resolutions brought before the Convention delegation for consideration, held their final preparatory meetings.
- Registration began just before lunch, with the opening session starting promptly at 3 PM.
- Presidents Emeriti Rev. Norman Groteluschen and Rev. David Callies greeted the delegation with Pastor Callies also sharing a brief address from President Emeritus Rev. Kenneth Lampe.
- District President Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola shared his report with the delegation.
- Christ the King hosted a special dinner (sponsored by Thrivent) and the Convention's Opening Worship Service, with preaching by the Rev. Dr. Herbert Mueller, First Vice President of the LCMS.



Worship Photo by Caroline Johnson

FRIDAY • JUNE 29



- The Second Convention Session included the election for District President. The candidates were current president, Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola and Rev. Andrew Toopes of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Bowling Green, KY. President Roger Paavola was re-elected with 73.1% of the votes.
- LCMS President Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison shared his report and participated in a brief Q & A session with delegates.
- Bishop Emmanuel Makala of Tanzania (Southeast of Lake Victoria Diocese) briefly addressed Convention attendees.

- A number of resolutions were presented to the delegation for consideration. Among the many resolutions adopted by the delegates were a resolution to reaffirm church planting in the Mid-South District, as well as to continue the District's relationships with both the Southeast of Lake Victoria Diocese in Tanzania and the Confessional Malagasy Lutheran Church in Madagascar. A complete list of the resolutions and voting results will be available on the District website.
- Many attended a President's Reception at the close of the day, enjoying fellowship with fellow delegates and guests.

SATURDAY • JUNE 30

- The Rev. Joseph Randrianasolo from Madagascar addressed the delegation and his wife, Razafindradio, shared her beautiful gift of song.
- All elected officers were installed, concluding the official business and duties of the Convention. The final session ended several hours early, just before lunch.
- A Pastors' Wives luncheon was held at the close of the final session, hosted by Mrs. Roger Paavola (Pat).



Visit the Mid-South District's Vimeo channel at vimeo.com/midsouthlcms to view a brief highlight video from the 2018 Convention along with "Mission Moments" videos that feature the outreach efforts of Mid-South ministries.



Paavola wins third term as president

BY A MAJORITY VOTE OF 117-43, cast by 175 convention delegates and pastors in attendance, incumbent president Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola retained his position as the Mid-South District's leader, winning over the Rev. Andrew Toopes, Holy Trinity, Bowling Green, Ky.

Paavola, who was declared winner at 8:53 a.m. on Friday, June 29, pledged to continue his efforts to support rural and small-town ministry and the planting of new churches, as well as other programs targeted toward more effective mission and ministry work — including emphasis on local and regional outreach to the unchurched through the *Each One Reach One* initiative.

Rev. Paavola plans to continue townhall



Paavola

meetings and to help in fighting the growing scourge of opiate addiction. He praised the success of the district's partnership with the Southeast of Lake Victoria Diocese, Tanzania, and the LIME Institute of the Malagasy Lutheran Church in Madagascar, represented at the convention by Bishop Emmanuel Makala and Rev. Joseph

Randrianasolo.

From his perspective in the presidential seat since 2012, Paavola pointed out the measurable growth of baptized members within the Mid-South District in recent years, and refers to this as the "best district" — with excellent potential to build on that growth as the deacon program continues to produce more pastors.

The Mid-South District Board of Directors includes, from left, Rev. James Walter, Larry Vickers, Rev. Gil Pingel, Larry Zehnder, Fred Guengerich, Marc Higgins, Rev. Paul Hass, Shirley Piepenbrink, Rev. Charles Neugebauer, Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola and Rev. John Gierke. Missing from the photo are Tessa Brasher and Jeff Pittman.



Rev. John Gierke was re-elected to a second term as district secretary. Gierke serves as senior pastor of Peace Lutheran Church, Conway, Ark.

Elected to serve on the Praesidium were, from left:

- ▶ **Rev. James Walter**
Second Vice-President (Region 2)
- ▶ **Rev. Gil Pingel**
Third Vice-President (Region 4)
- ▶ **Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola**
President
- ▶ **Rev. Charles Neugebauer**
First Vice-President (Region 3)
- ▶ **Rev. Paul Hass**
Fourth Vice-President (Region 4)



Proclaiming Life

By Rev. Philip H. Young

Life Ministry Coordinator, LCMS Mid-South District



At the 20th Regular Convention of the Mid-South District, delegates had the opportunity to adopt three Mission and Ministry directives for the Synod to consider during the 2019-2022 triennium.

Each circuit forum (of pastoral and lay delegates) discussed and submitted recommendations on what is most important for the Synod to emphasize and teach by developing further resources. The entire assembly then voted on the list to determine the top three. Of the 18 worthy recommendations, the top choice was **“Strong Support for Pro-Life Initiatives and Legislation.”**

(Second and third were “Examining Best Practices in Reaching Millennials and Next Youngest Generation,” and “Focus on Reconciliation and Unity Within the Body of the LCMS.”)

The Mid-South District is for Life. Even more important, the Mid-South District is for boldly proclaiming Life! In a culture of death that results in millions of abortions and a growing number of suicides, Christians of the Mid-South District want strong support — not tepid — for pro-life initiatives and legislation.

This boldness is born out of faith in Christ our Savior and love for neighbor. While the pro-life movement

could just be seen as an affirmation of the natural knowledge of the law that is written on the hearts of even unbelievers (Rom. 2:15), and while we may partner with a variety of religious and non-religious groups that want restrictions on abortion, our efforts in promoting the sanctity of human life are done in the hopes of bringing souls out of captivity to sin and death.

We certainly will use our voice to support laws that curb the gross, narcissistic and violent impulses of man. But our true hope is to give a reason for our support of life, namely, the full life that is given in and through Jesus Christ (John 10:10).

It may be that *Roe v. Wade* will be overturned, and many children will be preserved. We pray! (As I write this, the political world is agitated at the news of a vacancy on the U.S. Supreme Court following the announcement that Justice Anthony Kennedy will retire.) But the government will never be able to deliver any comfort for those who regret their “choice” and their false beliefs. Only God’s people, the Church, have the proclamation of Christ and the means to deliver the forgiveness of sins that

He won through His death and resurrection. Therefore, for us, pro-life legislation and pro-life initiatives that hold out the Gospel must go together.

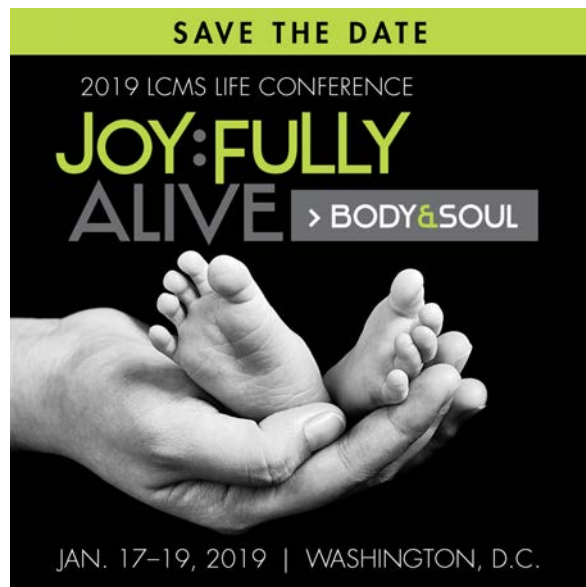
The Mid-South District will continue to inform member congregations about state legislative proposals in Arkansas, Kentucky and Tennessee. We will boldly use our voice to support what is good in the civil realm, as we did with Amendment 1 in Tennessee. (The 2014 East Region Spring Pastors Conference of the Mid-South District unanimously supported Amendment 1, which was written to nullify a state Supreme Court ruling that found a right to an abortion in the wording of the state constitution.)

If you become aware of civil legislative proposals on the sanctity of human life, please contact me that I may then inform the district president.

We will partner with LCMS Life Ministry and the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty. The Synod’s biennial Life Conference will be held Jan. 17-19 in Washington, D.C. The conference is titled “Joy:Fully Alive>Body & Soul,” in conjunction with the Synod convention theme *Joy:Fully Lutheran*. It would be great to have a “strong” contingent from our district since we are for the “strong support” of Life. Contact me at rlcpastor@bellsouth.net if you have members who are considering attending.

Lastly, as we urge the Synod to create more pro-life initiatives, please make use of the *Eyes of Life* initiative. It has high production value and may be used to share with others who are willing to listen to real people in their struggles and blessings. *Eyes of Life* is an effort to spread the stories of Christians who see with eyes of life, eyes that recognize God’s gift of life, eyes that see life with the lens of God’s Word. Find out more at eyesoflife.org.

May the Lord continue to strengthen us, that we may continually show “strong support” for Life in the district and Synod to the glory of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.



‘The Church is calm’



The convention welcomed the Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, LCMS president, during the opening session on Friday morning. Harrison's address emphasized JOY: the joy of the Lord in us and our joy from abiding in the Lord; the joy that pastors have in their congregations and the joy with which members greet their pastors. After an illuminating illustration of Lazarus rising from the dead (or rather, Harrison rising from the table), attendees were reminded of the Christian joy to be found in the sacrifices of prayer, thanksgiving, works of love and proclaiming the Gospel.

Following his address, Harrison took questions from the attendees, which addressed the Synod's position on immigration ("The right-hand kingdom is mandated to love your neighbor"), division in the Synod ("The Church is calm, Grasshopper") and possible seminary closings ("Seminaries are stable, in healthy financial condition").

Harrison closed with a reminder from St. Paul to pray without ceasing and "to stay away from the bad stuff." He then thanked Mid-South District staff, pastors and lay people for their continued faithfulness in sharing the Gospel.

Officers elected, grants adopted

District LWML has rousing convention

By Diane Reimold

President, Mid-South District LWML

"Pardon me boys, is that the Chattanooga Choo-Choo?"

What a wonderful convention we had in Chattanooga June 22-24 under the theme "He alone is my ROCK and my Salvation." Linda Reiser's keynote address was wonderful and Jan Struck had us all laughing as she served as our humorous interrupter (as Katie Luther) and interest-session presenter. She also provided banquet entertainment, along with Just4Fun.

The Cross of Christ Praise Band (Chattanooga) was superb in leading us in songs all weekend long, and the addition of the drums, mandolin and saxophone really made the music come alive!

The Bible studies from our two counselors were "rock solid" and we had rocks, big and small, all over the ballroom. Yes, we were definitely "rockin'" at the convention!

A total of 227 people attended at least some of the convention, and this included 20 first-timers and 11 Young Woman Representatives (YWR) and one Junior YWR. The participants were very generous with their gifts, as our offerings totaled \$1,891 for the 2018-20 district mission goal, \$1,680 for Welcome Home of Chattanooga and \$1,480 for Chattanooga Rescue Mission. Several hundred household and personal care items were also donated for our in-gathering for Chattanooga Room in the Inn. Thank you ladies for showing your love to those in need!



Jan Struck entertained at the LWML convention in her popular role as Pearl Van Odd Even Hoven, a charter member of the LWML.

Along with all the fun stuff during the convention, we also conducted the needed business for our district for the next two years. A Mission Grant goal of \$85,000 was approved and 13 mission grants will be fully funded.

If you would like more information on the Mid-South District LWML, please visit midsouthlwml.org.

Elected officers

- ▶ **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**
Rebecca Grese
 Second vice-president
Megan Fosler
 Fourth vice-president
- ▶ **RECORDING SECRETARY**
Deanna Sobocienski
- ▶ **TREASURER**
Mary Pruitt
- ▶ **JUNIOR PASTORAL COUNSELOR**
Rev. Bill Ondracka
 Christus Victor, Knoxville
- ▶ **NOMINATING COMMITTEE**
Ora Mae Golter (chairman)
Shari Francisco
Esther Mahnken

Blessings at Christ the King

The Rite of Ordination for the Rev. Jeremy McDonald was held on July 15 at Christ the King, Memphis. McDonald was approved for pastoral ministry by the LCMS Colloquy Committee. Pictured are, from left (front row) Revs. Norm Groteluschen, district president emeritus; Mark Goble; Dr. Roger Paavola, district president; McDonald; Don Schmidt; Russell Belisle; Jim Belles; (back row) Jerry Stobaugh; Will Miller; Chuck Neugebauer; Terry Tieman; and Rev. Dan Hawkins.



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of the Keys is proclaimed, where pastors are called as under-shepherds of Christ, where God's people gather in worship and prayer, and where His people give witness (outwardly known) by the possession of the Holy Cross.

Christians have no power in themselves, except all the power of Almighty God. We cannot save ourselves because of the monsoons of sin that block us from the life outside of this cave of our own human existence. But when we are empowered of God, He gets the credit for all the good done through His Church and on our behalf. He rescued us from drowning in sin, and from being cut off for life and Light by God's grace in the merits of Christ Jesus. That's our privilege and our responsibility when we get back from the scurrying of summer.

Happy anniversary!



On July 8, Grace Lutheran Church, Holiday Island, Ark., celebrated the ordination anniversaries of two pastors: **Rev Ken Hayden** (right) celebrated 50 years in the ministry and **Rev. Robert Herring** (left) celebrated 40 years. They were joined for the occasion by Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, district president.

Future pastors?



Youth from the Mid-South District attended Christ Academy June 17-30 at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind., to explore the vocation of pastor and learn what it's like to live and learn on campus. The opportunity, offered for young men in grades 9-12, was enjoyed by **Evan Barnett** (left), Grace, Clarksville, Tenn.; and **Caleb Mohr** (right), St. Matthew, Conway, Ark. **Sawyer Meyers** (center), a seminarian from Zion, Avilla, Ark., served as a student worker.

Deadline for the November issue is Sept. 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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