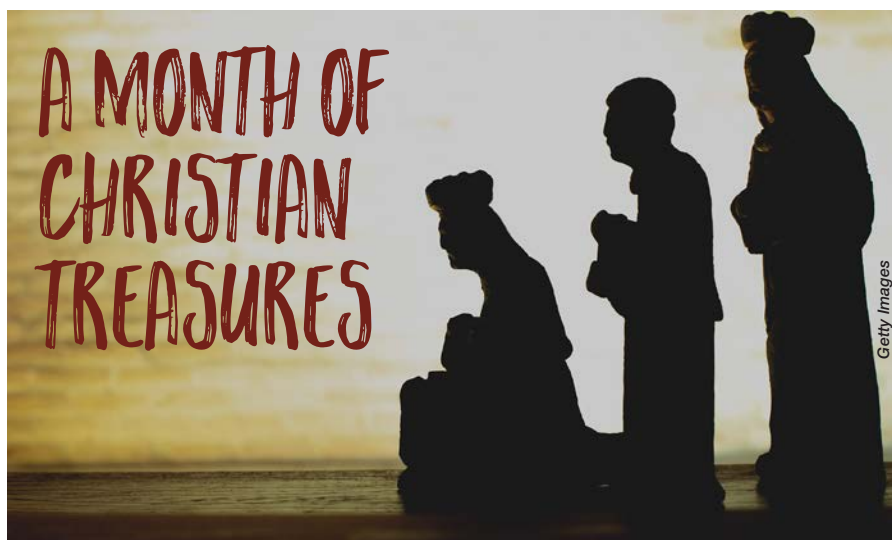




/ JANUARY 2019

MID-SOUTH LUTHERAN



By Rev. Gilbert H. Pingel

District Third Vice-President

New Year's Day, Jan. 1, the first day of a new year. For many people this will be a day of relaxing; sleeping late; making resolutions for 2019; listing hopes, dreams and plans for the year; and possibly a day of special prayers for 2019.

As I remember January when growing up in central Wisconsin, it was a long, cold, hard month. Temperatures at zero or below were not unusual. A common saying was: "When the days begin to lengthen, the cold begins to strengthen."

For the Church, January holds rich treasures. The year begins on Jan. 1, the eighth day of Christmas; and since it is the eighth day, it is the circumcision and naming of Jesus. For Jesus, it was another "welcome to humanity" day. He who "emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men" would begin to find out what this was about.

His parents, Joseph and Mary, faithful obedient Jewish parents, brought

Him to the heavenly Father and had Him circumcised just like any other Jewish boy. My wife and I attended a circumcision of a Jewish chaplain's son while we were in Germany. The little tyke cried. I imagine Jesus cried and bled too; normal results of circumcision. Eight days old — in pain, hurt, bleeding.

They gave Him His name: It was "Jesus" — just as the angel told Mary at the annunciation, and as the angel told Joseph during his sleepless

night. Jesus: "For he will save His people from their sins." How great is God's grace!

Six days later, the Church observes the Epiphany of our Lord. This year it falls on a Sunday. Our worship will begin with Isaiah telling us:

"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you." — **Is. 60:1**

The well-known story of the Magi traveling from the East — and seeking out "he who has been born king of the Jews ... we have come to worship him" — will be read for us.

Sometimes this day is called Christmas for the Gentiles. Some cultures celebrate this day, Jan. 6, as their Christmas Day. Listen to those Scripture lessons carefully. They clearly spell out that the Babe of Bethlehem was born for the whole world. The Good News of God's forgiving love in Jesus Christ is not restricted to any one people. Epiphany celebrates our heavenly Father's grace, mercy, love and desire for all people to know Him and come to the knowledge of the truth regardless of any demographic designator. How great is God's grace!

On Jan. 13, the Church will observe the Baptism of our Lord. There are some interesting aspects to the story. John the Baptist was sure, at first, that Jesus didn't need to be baptized. He protested about it. Jesus overruled John and said: "It is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."

As Jesus' baptism was completed and He was praying, the heavens opened,

Continued on Page 2

'The Lord hath Helped Me Hitherto'

Rev. Barrie Henke created this poem* for the



New Year, based on Hymn #33 in *The Lutheran Hymnal* — and our Christian belief that if God has helped us thus far, then surely He will help each of us in days to come.

Henke is president of the Oklahoma District and senior pastor of Holy Trinity, Edmond, Okla.

**reprinted with minor edits.*

As we begin a brand new year
We greet it with both hope and fear,
Because we question what might be
Awaiting us each day, you see.
And if it's fear that frets our mind
Then in this hymn verse may we find,
The peace that truly does renew:
"The Lord has helped me hitherto!"

For if the Lord has blessed our past
Then surely will His blessings last.
Throughout a new year filled with stress—
Our lives He will steadfastly bless,
Since that's His promise to His saints,
In spite of all our life's complaints;
Because His Word to us is true:
"The Lord has helped me hitherto!"

The past years have been awfully tough
As we have watched events quite rough.
We've seen those Christians in Iraq
Who under ISIS were attacked...
Then close to home we hear the news
Of broken homes and lives misused.
But fear not, saints, for God is true:
"The Lord has helped me hitherto!"

And even though the powers of hell
Attack Christ's Church, they won't prevail.



For Jesus Christ is King of all—
He shields His Bride against a fall!
Let Satan roar and rant and rave
He shall not overcome the saved!
The grace of Christ shall get us through;
"The Lord has helped me hitherto!"

The Holy Spirit shall empower
God's saints to face the darkest hour.
For God has helped us hitherto
And gives us grace each day anew
To bless our church, our friends and kin,
And each of us—Thanks be to Him!
May we in trust keep this in view:
"The Lord has helped me hitherto!"

We know this world is changing fast,
But God's great love remains steadfast!
With trust we seize this year so new
And watch in awe what God will do.
If he's been faithful in years past
Then surely will his blessings last!
The Lord HAS helped you hitherto...
In this New Year He'll bless you, too!

TREASURES

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

the Holy Spirit descended on Him and a voice came from heaven: "You are my beloved Son; with You I am well pleased" (Luke 3:22). How Jesus must have treasured those words!

What a spiritually rich beginning to 2019. What a marvelous January, that as the days begin to lengthen, our faith and life as a child of God are strengthened. Be like Mary and ponder this: Eight-day-old Jesus, obedient to His Father, was joined as a human being into the family of God. Pain was experienced. Blood was shed. Both were a foreshadowing of what lay ahead for Him, and all this for you and me. We didn't deserve it. We couldn't lay claim to it. It is a gift to us. How great is God's grace!

Epiphany ... what a stirring reminder that Jesus Christ shines into the world. We, too, like the Magi, have been to worship the Babe of Bethlehem. I can't imagine they returned home and said nothing. They had worshiped the King of the Jews.

So have we. Like the Magi, we can now share that story and all it means to people wherever and whenever we have opportunity — at home and at work, with neighbors, family and friends. We can reach out to someone who doesn't know Jesus and tell them His story — and let the light of Christ shine and pierce the darkness of sin with a life-giving message so they, too, will be filled with the joy and peace of knowing how great is God's grace!

Finally, regardless of what 2019 throws at you, take comfort, hope,

strength and joy in your heavenly Father's word to you: "You are my beloved daughter/son, I am well pleased with you."

You were born into the family of God when water and the Word were poured on you at your baptism. Daily you have been nourished on the sacred Scriptures as you read and hear over and over again what God has done for you because that is the way He is. He first loved you.

Regularly you hear the invitation of your Savior to come to His table to eat His supper — where you receive His very body and blood given and shed for your forgiveness; and where there is forgiveness of sins there is life and salvation. It is in God's great grace you will live in 2019.

Wow! Bring it on!



Celebrating God's work in our schools • Jan. 27-Feb 2

"Real. Present. God." is the theme for the 2019 National Lutheran Schools Week celebration. The associated Scripture verse is Psalm 46, which begins:

"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging."



Please visit mid-southlcms.org to see highlights of the great things happening in our Lutheran schools across the Mid-South District, as featured in the January 2019 *Encourager*.



And watch for more district school activities and achievements in the special expanded schools edition of *Mid-South Lutheran*, our district's supplement to *The Lutheran Witness* — coming in April!

JOY:FULLY LUTHERAN

REJOICE / PRAY / GIVE THANKS 1 THESS 5:16-18



The 67th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod will be held July 20-25 in Tampa, Fla.

Complete, updated information for congregations is available on the Synod website at lcms.org/convention. The Synod office is also sending regular notices and reminders to congregations and districts.

Congregations are reminded to watch for important convention information and be mindful of related deadlines.



SEASON OF HOPE

Journey through the season of Lent with Lutheran World Relief (LWR) and proclaim to the world that the hope of Christ makes a new season possible: a Season of Hope.

LWR has a collection of resources to invigorate congregations for global good, including:

- Weekly devotionals by Lutherans in the United States and LWR staff.
- Palm Sunday bulletin insert and children's activity sheet.
- Season of Hope Homily Series centered on Matt. 25:34-46

Visit lwr.org/lent for these resources and more information on making a positive impact on families living in poverty around the world.

Congregation mission commitment receipts

as of Oct. 31, 2018 (10 months)

Anticipated amount (75 percent of budget).....	\$1,317,843
Actual receipts	\$1,255,755
Over (under) anticipated amount	(\$62,088)

Use of mission commitment receipts

Allocated to Synod for world missions	\$355,893
Allocated to Tanzania	\$20,833
Retained for district ministry/mission support (70 % of receipts) ..	\$879,029
Total receipts	\$1,255,755

Mission commitment receipts comparison

Actual receipts as of Oct. 31, 2018	\$1,255,755
Actual receipts as of Oct. 31, 2017	\$1,266,192
Over (under) prior year receipts	(\$10,437)

On the importance of accreditation...

By Allen Piepenbrink

Mid-South District Education Executive

Every five years, Lutheran high schools, elementary schools and early childhood centers across the United States undergo the accreditation process through our Synod's National Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA) teams. The process is time consuming and takes a strong commitment by the principal or director, and the committee that helps with gathering the needed information. So what is the value and effectiveness of such a process?

As I think about education these days, I support those who have the vision of educating the whole child. Yes, I truly believe we need more of God in our lives, but education is more than just religion.



I pray that each child would come to school healthy and learn about practices that would promote healthy lifestyles. I pray that every child would attend school in a safe environment both physically and emotionally (bully-free zones). I pray that every child is actively engaged in learning and has a strong connection to

the school and the community at large. I pray that every student has the support of a well-qualified individual who values personalized learning. I pray that every child is challenged to do his or her best, to be prepared for college, trade school or whatever is best for their success.

It is with those thoughts in mind that I want to congratulate the schools in our district that have gone through the accreditation process in the past or are considering the process in the future. The accreditation process, though it may seem difficult, does a great job in pointing out the school's strengths and weaknesses. Strengths should be celebrated and weaknesses should show the way to becoming better at educating the whole child.



Mercy work blesses those in need — and volunteers

By Rev. Paul Kritsch

Pastor, Chapel of the Good Shepherd, Sharps Chapel, Tenn.

Neighbors worked together Oct. 19-20 at Sharps Chapel Elementary School to help people in need. The event was sponsored by Chapel of the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church (CGS), Sharps Chapel, Tenn. Recipients began lining up at the school at 6:30 a.m. on Saturday.

More than 50 volunteers helped as Chapel of the Good Shepherd sponsored its Oct 19-20 food distribution effort.

There were so many who came for assistance that we unfortunately ran out of food and had to turn some people away. God willing, we hope to have more food available at next fall's distribution. There is a huge need in our community.

More than 50 volunteers joined the joyful effort. There were Lutherans, Methodists, Baptists, Roman Catholics, and those who are non-denominational and non-churched. The volunteers ranged from children through seniors.

When one of the child volunteers was asked what was the best part of the food distribution, he immediately replied, "Helping people!"

Organizers of the event were Karen and Kevin Kitts, CGS members who worked alongside Eileen and Dudley Cunningham, whose expertise made the distribution a huge success for both the volunteers and the food recipients.

The Kittses reported that 169 boxes of food were distributed. Second Harvest brought the food, which was paid for by the Tennessee Valley Authority.

The CGS congregation worships at 10:30 a.m. on Sundays at the Sharps Chapel Community Center.

On Oct. 27, Rev. Bill Schutte was ordained and installed as pastor of Peace Lutheran Church in rural Mountain Home, Ark. From left, Revs. Brian Pummel, Joel Krogen, Dr. Roger Paavola (Mid-South District president), Schutte, Paul Bauman, John Easterling and David Tews.



On Oct. 20, Rev. Randy Sakach was ordained and installed as pastor of Prince of Peace, White House, Tenn. From left, (front row) Revs. Erik Christensen, Allan Thoe, Dr. Roger Paavola, Sakach, Allen Bachert, Tim Hunze, Carl Wenk; (back row) Deacon Bob Allen, Revs. David Mader, Eric Phillips, David Callies (president emeritus), Greg Bauch, Gene Henke, Jerry Stobaugh and Curt Hoover.



Pastor surprises former congregation



By Michael Elling

In a delightful surprise visit on Oct. 31, the Wednesday evening Bible study at Faith Lutheran Church, Union City, Tenn., was blessed by the presence of Rev. Ronald Tabbert. Now retired in Golden, British Columbia, Canada, he serves “only” three congregations there — down from seven in Tennessee.

Pastor Ron served Faith from 1978 to 1987. He remembers everyone from his time in Tennessee and was brought up to date on all the surviving members.

He reminded everyone during the study that the love of Christ is reflected in us to all the people we meet during our own short time in life.

A lively study of 1 Corinthians 13 (the “Love Chapter”) at Faith, Union City, was joined by Rev. Ron Tabbert, who stopped by while visiting old friends in the area. From left, Rev. Shawn Hunze (Faith pastor), Michael Elling, Robert German, Roberta German, Tabbert, Carolyn Miesner, Jim Holford and Tom McWilliams (study leader).

THINK SUMMER!



Campers saddle up for a trail ride during Voyagers Camp 2018 at Camp Trinity.

2019 registration starts now

Registration is now open for all summer camp sessions at Camp Trinity, the Lutheran camp on Petit Jean Mountain.

The 2019 camp season features four specialty camps and four traditional camps. Every night of every session ends with a campfire, lots of singing and a message about God's love in Christ. Every morning starts with First Word, a quiet time for Bible study and prayer, followed by a brief devotion. Bible study follows breakfast every day.

Most sessions start Sunday afternoon and end Friday afternoon (five nights).

Every summer, campers take part in a servant event. In 2018, the project was writing more than 100 letters of encouragement to missionary families serving through the LCMS Office of International Mission and the

Mission of Christ Network. Campers also made birthday cards for missionary children.

Specialty Camps

At **Overcomers Camp**, the newest session, campers with disabilities, sixth grade and above, have the opportunity to take part in the same kinds of activities as campers at traditional sessions, but with extra time and assistance as needed. Parents can join their children in this five-day, four-night session.

Overcomers is an overnight camp, but parents have the option of signing up their children as day campers. Activities include hiking along the paved biking/running trail, swimming, canoeing, fishing, archery, large-group games and outdoor education.

Family Camp is a three-day, two-night session for whole families, with

activities suitable for younger children. The camp provides a sampling of activities older campers enjoy at regular sessions: swimming, hiking, canoeing, games, archery, crafts and a trip to the petting zoo.

Adventure Camp is for high school students and new graduates. Much of the session takes place off the mountain as campers take a canoe trip on the Buffalo River and camp out overnight. The session also includes rock climbing or rappelling. The Bible studies at the session are, like the outdoor activities, extra challenging.

Arts Camp is a joint venture of Camp Trinity and Little Rock School of the Arts, a ministry of Christ, Little Rock. Campers in grades 6-12 will explore the arts in three broad categories:

- Performing arts: voice, guitar, drums, keyboard, dance and drama.
- Visual arts: drawing, painting, photography, sculpture, printmaking and pottery.
- Literary arts: poetry, prose, songwriting and journaling.

Professional instructors lead the sessions. Campers in this session will still take part in some traditional camp activities, including swimming, games and campfires.

Traditional Sessions:

Pathfinders Camp is a four-day, three-night session that includes swimming, hiking, games, crafts, archery and a visit to the petting zoo. Pathfinders is for children entering grades 2-4 in fall 2019.

Explorers Camp is for grades 4-6. This session, for campers old enough for a full-week session, includes all the activities of Pathfinders

Camp plus canoeing on Lake Bailey.

Trailblazers Camp adds optional horseback riding to the lineup of activities. Campers take longer hikes,

Continued on next page

To register campers or learn more about any session, visit lutherancamp.org.



stay up a little later and have more in-depth Bible study.

Voyagers Camp includes the Group Initiative Course, designed for team building. The session also includes an early morning visit to Stout's Point to watch the sun rise over the Arkansas River Valley. Voyagers are introduced to Creative Comm, a series of exercises designed to give teenage campers an opportunity to talk through issues of faith, relationships, pain and suffering, morality, origins, destiny and purpose.

Counselors wanted

High school students who want to serve God by serving others are invited to apply to become Counselors-in-Training (CiTs), who are students in 10th grade and above and serve one or two weeks in sessions with younger campers. CiTs take part in all the camp activities while providing some assistance to senior staff.

Those interested can request an application by sending an email to director@lutherancamp.org.

Camp seeks summer staff

College students looking for an opportunity to serve God by serving others are encouraged to consider Lutheran outdoors ministry.

Staff positions are open at Camp Trinity, the Lutheran camp on Petit Jean. The camp is looking for cabin counselors and general staff members.

Positions are also open at many other camps affiliated with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, including counselors, program staff, lifeguards, kitchen staff and maintenance workers.

To complete an employment profile for Camp Trinity or any other Lutheran camp, visit the newly updated website of the National Lutheran Outdoors Ministry Association: nloma.org/employment/summer.

Outdoors ministry gives young adults



College students are invited to become part of the outdoors ministry team at Camp Trinity.

the opportunity to share the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ to children and youth in a beautiful outdoor setting. Summer staffers work together as a vital ministry team and form bonds with other staff members that can last the rest of their lives.

Outdoors ministry is a great way to get a taste of ministry for those considering professional church work.



SPREAD THE WORD!

February's senior high youth Mid-Winter Retreat is nearly here

Join us for the fun Feb. 22-24 at beautiful Fall Creek Falls in Tennessee for the 2019 Mid-Winter Retreat for Senior High Youth.

Youth leaders from Our Savior Lutheran Church, Nashville, and Grace Lutheran Church, Knoxville, are joining forces to reach out to all surrounding congregations in the Mid-South District — and they have an exciting weekend planned for all who attend!

The cost to participate in the retreat is \$50, which covers lodging, food and retreat materials. **DCEs and youth leaders interested in signing up their group must do so before Jan. 20.**

Find more information on the district website at mid-southlcms.org or contact Rev. Erik Christensen, retreat coordinator, at erik.christensen@oslcnnashville.org.



RESTORATION



Restoration was sought and achieved at the Camp Parron retreat sponsored by Zion, Avilla, Nov. 9-10. Guest speaker Katie Schuermann (kneeling in front row, center) spoke on the "Anthems of Zion."

By Frances Bacic

Media/Marketing,
LWML Mid-South District

Happy New Year!

We hear it everywhere we go. What will be new in your life this year? Will you resolve to lose weight? Will you resolve to exercise more? Will you clean up a part of your life that is a mess? Will you return your focus to Christ?

Is. 40:31 says:

"But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."

We get our restoration through Christ. We need to turn to God and give Him control.

I have recently read "He Restores My Soul," a collection of writings based on Psalm 23. In this collection, edited by Katie Schuermann, each chapter talks about the crosses that 12 women have borne.

The definition of restoration is the returning of something to a former,



original, normal or unimpaired condition.

We all need restoration. Each of us have our crosses that we bear. It may be neglect, stresses of daily life, abuses or losses in our life. We need to find restoration in our lives. We may find it through prayer, songs, retreats, books or Bible study.

Look for times to find your restoration. It may be fellowship in church, your church Bible studies, your LWML Bible studies, LWML-sponsored retreats or even just a scrapbook weekend at Camp Trinity. Find time to reflect on God and put your focus back on trusting our Good Shepherd, because He can help in our sufferings here on earth.

Matt. 6:33 says:

"But seek first His Kingdom and His Righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

We strive for restoration in our lives. Our final and perfect restoration will be in our eternal rest with our Father in Heaven. God gives us the strength we need to get through the trials we face in this life. Look to Him! He restores us.

Deadline for the March issue is Jan. 15

Digital files, sent via e-mail, are preferred.

Our submission deadline is the 15th of each month, two months before publication.

Send email submissions to:
LW@mid-southlcms.com

or send by postal mail to:
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