

Encourager

Mid-South District LCMS | February 2019

February's Focus: OUTREACH

The Mid-South District is blessed with LCMS ministries that regularly seek ways to reach beyond their own walls to share the love of Christ. This month, the *Encourager* is pleased to celebrate outreach in the Mid-South with stories of ministries and individuals shining Christ's light – both in their communities and beyond.

...

*"And He said to them,
"Go into all the world and
proclaim the Gospel to the
whole creation."*

Mark 16:15 ESV

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



I do a lot of traveling with my Calling. I get to explore parts of the world God has created that few other people will ever see. Before I head out on a trip, I check my GPS to see how long it will take to get to the next destination and how to get there. When the GPS works well, it's a great trip. However, on the last few trips, I typed in the name of "Hopkinsville, KY." It came back that there was no such place! I typed Kentucky and then the zip code with the same results. I've been there before, I KNOW they're there. But, then on my most recent trip, I wanted to get my ETA for going to Fort Wayne. The GPS said "There is no Indiana." Well,

isn't that great?! A good GPS can save a traveler time and make the trip more trouble free. But, not this time.

Wouldn't it be great if we had a functioning GPS for doing ministry? Wouldn't it be so much easier if God's Positioning Service (GPS) told us exactly where and how He wants us to carry out our Gospel privilege? But, God does guide our Gospel outreach – not always going in the directions we'd expect, but always where His work awaits. For many years, the Mid-South District purchased vacant land in areas where it seemed reasonable that we could plant a church. That became difficult to manage, the District then tried parachuting new pastors into areas where it seemed reasonable a church plant could start. We know there have been some successful plants and some that no longer exist. What's the difference?

On his second missionary journey, St. Paul learned firsthand how God would guide his Gospel outreach. After returning to the congregations

he started in Asia Minor (his first missionary journey), Paul looked for a new area to share God's Word. It seemed the logical place to go was due west to the provinces of Asia. There were some big cities like Ephesus and Smyrna out there. But, the Holy Spirit turned Paul and his companions in another direction. Recalculating! So Paul turned his attention north

Baby Caps, Lap Blankets & More

Several ladies at Beautiful Savior Lutheran in Olive Branch, MS meet on Tuesday mornings for several hours and knit and sew. They have created some beautiful items that they distribute to area assisted living units, hospice locations and various other outlets. The items include baby caps, lap blankets, prayer shawls, bibs, etc. All knitters and sewers are invited to participate. The group meets at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesdays. Donations of money or materials are encouraged because the group anticipates the expansion of their donations to other areas of the community.

to Bythinia. But again the Holy Spirit prevented Paul from going where he thought he should go. Recalculating.

While we don't know how or why the Holy Spirit made His will known, we do know that he didn't hinder Paul from entering into those territories because the souls there were important. Later, those churches would be established in Asia - churches in Ephesus, Colossae, Pergamum, Laodicia, Philadelphia, and others. By guiding Paul away from that area, God was simply saying, "Not now."

God continues to guide His Gospel outreach. Although He has told us to go into all the world with the Gospel, there are times when He closes doors to certain areas. Our District and some congregations have experienced that before. Many efforts have been started, but several times God says, "Not now." This doesn't mean that the Gospel ministry is unimportant, or that it's not ever going to happen. The Gospel continues to be shared there, just not at this time.

After being turned away from Asia and Bythinia, Paul and his companions ended up in Troas, an out-of-the-way port town in the northwest corner of present-day Turkey. Paul must have wondered what God had in mind! Paul didn't have to wait long to find out. While God doesn't always guide us to where we expect,

He always lead us to where His work is needed. Paul found that out in a vision he received in Troas. In this vision Paul saw a man from Macedonia begging him to come over and serve them. God sent this vision to lead Paul to expand his ministry into Europe.

God still works to guide our Gospel outreach. We may not receive visions but we do receive requests from people and places where the church can serve them. That's how our Synod started its work in our country and in its many foreign missions. People looking for a Bible teaching church began contacting our Synod and pleaded with them to send support. Circuits and congregations working together have begun to identify areas where new church plants might work. Demographic studies help guide our decisions and mission outreach in the wider sense takes place. It's happening now in Munford, TN, West Little Rock, AR, Fayetteville, AR, and Jonesboro, AR. The map of places where Lutheran congregations could appear has many gaps. We can keep our eyes and ears open and be ready to share God's Word with those whom God would place for us to reach.

When God guides us to where He wants us to work it's not always under the circumstances that we imagined. When Paul arrived

in Macedonia he went to the city of Philippi – the most important city in the region. Based on his vision, Paul didn't expect to find a large group of people just waiting to hear the Gospel. However, he couldn't even find a synagogue – the place he usually started his ministry. Instead, Paul found a few Gentile women who regularly met down by a river to pray. He went to that group, shared God's Word, and through that ministry God opened the heart of a woman by the name Lydia.

Lydia's conversion reminds us that although God carries out His ministry through us, it's always still His ministry. He is the one that brings people to faith. We merely share the message that saves us, so we can share it with those who still live in darkness without Christ. Our work may be compared to a certain extent to that of a lifeguard. A good lifeguard is not just a strong swimmer but skilled at calming others. He needs to be skilled. Otherwise the person he tries to save will keep thrashing, even after the lifeguard has reached him and starts to rescue him. This isn't only tiring but dangerous. Both the swimmer and the lifeguard could be in peril.

But, the job of "towing" sinners into heaven still belongs to the Holy Spirit, God's Word, and our Savior Jesus. Jesus has rescued us from the sins that threatens to

Convention Proceedings Notice

The 2018 Mid-South District Convention Proceedings have been finalized, and were approved by the District's Board of Directors at the January 27-28 meeting. They are available on the District's Convention webpage for congregations and delegates to download their copy, or by [clicking here](#). Delegates to the convention or congregations who desire a printed copy may request one from the district office. Rev. John P. Gierke, District Secretary



lose us. God has given us the privilege of telling others what Jesus has done for us and for them. Only through God's Word can we tell others how God stopped our thrashing about and rescued us for His kingdom in heaven. On their own those who have not heard the Good News are destined to sink away from life eternal. In the arms of Jesus they can rest secure in the blessed hope of life through the forgiveness and life He freely offers.

Since God brings people to faith through His message, we should never take His Word for granted nor underestimate what His Word can do. Although the church in Philippi had only humble beginnings, it became the crowned jewel of the churches Paul started. The Philippians often sent Paul financial support and encouragement, even when

he no longer served them directly. Lydia demonstrated an eagerness to serve, who, after being baptized, insisted that Paul and his companions make her home their base in Philippi.

I wonder what Paul thought when he and Silas ended up in prison in Philippi. They had been jailed for driving out a demon from a slave girl. Was this part of God's plan? Well it was! God used that experience to put Paul into contact with the jailer who was later converted after hearing Paul and Silas sing hymns and share with him what Jesus had done. God may still use every trial to put us into contact with the people with whom He wants us to share His Word.

We don't have a GPS that tells us exactly where Jesus wants us to go. There is no recorded message that tells us we're not

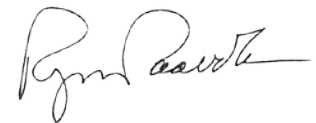
going to the right place. God wants us to tell others about Him. We can expect that He will guide and direct us in the way He wants us to go. St Peter in his first Epistle makes it clear that our privilege and responsibility as Baptized Christians is to "proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous Light [of Christ]." (I Peter 2:9, ESV) We don't need to become discouraged if our missions haven't been a 100% success rate. He will lead and guide our efforts and the efforts of every

congregation and person to go in the way God guides His work. He is guiding us where His work already awaits. This is the resolve and efforts of the Mid-South District's mission and ministry plan - working for our congregations and the Kingdom of Christ.

Our Gospel outreach is **not** on hold. God has already opened doors with our efforts with the Lutheran Women Missionary League, our Each 1-Reach 1, and Synod's "Everyone His Witness. The tools are there! The Bible is central and

the Gospel our focus. In the meantime, continue to walk through those doors God opens to bring you into contact with the people of His Calling. So tell them, "Christ has died, Christ has risen, and Christ will come again... for you!"

Your servant in Christ –
Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola



Grace Place is a Saturday evening service, an outreach ministry of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

In December 2017, Grace Place was started as an outreach ministry of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Pastor Ed Rosser, was called to serve at the Saturday evening worship service. Members of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church placed introductory door hangers, hung signs at strategic locations and a large banner was placed on the lawn of Good Shepherd.

Several of the visitors were seeking a new church or were unchurched for quite some time. In addition, members of Good Shepherd who worked on Sunday morning or had not worshipped recently liked the Saturday evening

opportunity to worship. Bible class is from 4:45-5:35 PM with 12-14 attendees. Worship is from 6-7 PM with weekly celebration of Holy Communion. Some people go out to dinner or a movie after worship.

Eleven (11) brothers and sisters in Christ have joined Good Shepherd and additionally there are four (4) in various stages of completing Adult Confirmation classes.

In May 2018, it was suggested the sermon be recorded (Android phone) and placed on Facebook. Soon after a Lay Minister suggested that Pastor record a Grace Place Minute. It is recorded in the Narthex with Pastor sitting on stool and sharing spiritual insights.

Over the past eight months, there have been over 30,000 viewings of these messages. Recently Pastor's spiritual poems have been placed on Facebook and over 1500 people have viewed them.

The service is liturgical with a husband and wife team leading the music program. The musicians play piano, trumpet, Irish whistle and guitar. This past year's attendance has averaged between 47-50 weekly worshipers.

In His Service;
Ed Rosser
Associate Pastor

The Mid-South District, LCMS, Announces 2018 Ralph C. Weiser Excellence in Ministry Award Recipient



John Hall (1939 – 2016) - Founder

The Mid-South District is pleased to announce Mr. John Hall as the 2018 Ralph C. Weiser Excellence in Ministry Award recipient for his work for Trinity/HOPE Ministries. The award was given to Mr. Hall posthumously on Sunday, December 16, 2018 at his home congregation, Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Hermitage, Tennessee.

Introduced in 2016, the Ralph C. Weiser Excellence in Ministry Award recognizes the dedication and ministry-building work of one Mid-South District layperson. The award honors the life and work of the late Ralph Weiser, a long-time friend of the Mid-South District, whose example of leadership, service, and faith impacted his local Lutheran congregation and community, as well as ministries across the entire District.

This year's recipient, John Hall, was the founder of Trinity/HOPE, beginning the ministry in 1999. He witnessed a school where the children were disengaged in the learning process and very lethargic because of hunger as their parents weren't able to feed them. John began a feeding program at that one school of 42 children in 1999. Through God's abundant blessings, John kept raising funds for more children and schools. Under his leadership, Trinity/HOPE served more than 26,000,000 meals throughout Haiti. John Hall went to be with the Lord in November, 2016.

"An empty stomach has no ears," is a well-known phrase in Haiti. But, Haiti's future depends

on the education of the upcoming generation. "Ain't God good!" was one of John's favorite phrases, and he was known to use it often when talking about the work God accomplished through Trinity/HOPE. John and his lovely wife, Carol, were married over 50 years and have two grown daughters and two grandchildren. As the words in Matthew 25 state, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" Like the award's namesake, Ralph Weiser, Mr. Hall exemplified service to God's Kingdom. Congratulations and many thanks go out to Mr. John Hall!



Presenting the Ralph C. Weiser Award to Carol Hall (L) on behalf of the Weiser family is Cassie Weiser-Herrington (R), the daughter of the late Ralph Weiser. The Mid-South District is pleased to honor Mr. Weiser's legacy of leadership and faith with this annual award.

Local Athlete is on Team USA and Attending the Special Olympic World Games



KRISTA CARSTEN, a member of Trinity Lutheran Church, Mena, Arkansas will be traveling with Team USA to the Special Olympic World Games to be held in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates in March of 2019!

Krista will be participating in the 100 meter dash, the 200 meter dash, and the 1x400 meter relay. She is the only Arkansan selected to be part of Team USA! The Opening Ceremony will be aired live on Thursday, March 14 on ESPN and also the Closing Ceremony on Thursday, March 21. Krista and the rest of the athletes will be participating in a three day event prior to the Opening Ceremony, where they will experience the culture of Dubai and get some rest before the games begin. **You can follow Krista and Team USA at www.abudhabi2019.org.**

Please join the members of Trinity in congratulating Krista for being selected for this life moment! This past summer, Krista was part of Team Arkansas, and participated in the USA Special Olympic Games held in Seattle. She brought home several ribbons and a Silver Medal in the 1x400 meter relay. Krista is the daughter of Rev. Gary and Linda Carstens of Pensacola, Florida.



*Krista
Carstens
Silver
Medalist
and Pastor
Henning*

Sharps Chapel Plans Building

Having purchased a building site in Sharps Chapel, TN, Chapel of the Good Shepherd has begun to formulate plans for their first church building.

Pictured are the members of the design team who are gathering ideas which soon will be submitted to a building designer.

Front row: Pastor Paul and Dorothy Kritsch, co-chairs. Back row (l-r): Cindy Garretson, Tom McCaffery, Theresa Landis, Jim Wonsey, Lea Wonsey, Karen Kitts, and Jane Bruns (photo by team member Margo McCaffery).



Immanuel Celebrates Kris Pudwell's 40 Years in Teaching Ministry

Immanuel Lutheran Church and School in Memphis was privileged to recognize and honor Mrs. Kris Pudwell for 40 years of service in the teaching ministry during the weekend of January 25th. Mrs. Pudwell was recognized at the School's BBQ & Bingo Night and presented with a special award to recognize her service, as well a bouquet of 40 red roses and a big card that Immanuel students, faculty, and staff had signed. On that Sunday she was recognized at Immanuel's worship services and was presented with a Certificate of Recognition by Allen Piepenbrink, Executive Director for Schools and Early Childhood. A reception with cake and punch was also held between Sunday morning services.



38 Graduates from Lutheran Institute of Managerial Enterprise (LIME) Madagascar

The fruits of our partnership

"It is with joy and happiness that we send pictures of our partnership and cooperation. LIME graduated 38 students January 27, 2019. That was possible because of the support from the LCMS Mid-South District. You provided us many pedagogical very useful tools. Thank you and thank you again. May Jesus Christ bless you all! Our deepest hope in and from our heart is that partnership and cooperation will last until the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed we do mission through education" — Rev. Joseph Randrianasolo of Lutheran Institute of Managerial Enterprise (LIME).
(More photos on [District website](#))



Ordinations & Installations

The **Installation Service for Rev. Neil Vanderbush** was held on January 5, 2019 at Faith Lutheran Church, Bentonville, AR. Rev. Vanderbush received and accepted a Call to become a military Chaplain in the US Army. He will be deployed in January.

Pictured are (Front L-R) President Roger Paavola, Rev. Vanderbush, and Rev. Brandon Martin; (Back L-R) Rev. Gordon Besel, Rev. Roger Schoolcraft, Rev. Robert Herring, and Rev. Paul Hass.



The Rite of Ordination and Installation of Rev. Craig Fiebiger as a SMP Pastor was held on Saturday, January 12, 2019 at Faith Lutheran Church, Thompson Station, TN. Pictured with him are (Front L-R) Rev. Carl Wenck, President Paavola, Rev. Fiebiger, Rev. Doug Kalleson, Rev. Curt Hoover, and (Back L-R) Rev. Jerry Meyer, Rev. Ken Krohe, Rev. Eric Christensen, Rev. Alan Thoe, Rev. Randy Sakach, Rev. Lane Reuter, President-Emeritus David Callies, and Rev. Ken Shaw.

The Rite of Ordination and Installation of Rev. John Mathis was held on January 13, 2019 at Christ Lutheran Church in Little Rock, AR. It was conducted by Rev. James C. Walter from Grace Lutheran Church.

Pictured L-R: Rev. Mark Tooley, Rev. James C. Walter, Rev. John Gierke, Rev. John Mathis, Rev. Larry Seiferth, Rev. Dan Hauser



Congregational Mission Commitments

Mission Commitment Receipts as of 12/31/18 (12 Months)

Anticipated Amount (100% of budget) ... \$1,581,411
 Actual Receipts 1,542,151
 Over (under) anticipated amount **(\$39,260)**

Use of Mission Commitment Receipts (12 Months)

Allocated to Synod for World Missions \$437,645
 Allocated to Tanzania 25,000
 Retained for District Mission/Ministry Support
 (70% of receipts) 1,079,506
 Total Receipts \$1,542,151

Mission Commitment Receipts

Prior Year Comparison (12 Months)

Actual Receipts as of 12/31/18 \$1,542,151
 Actual Receipts as of 12/31/17 \$1,558,963
 Over (under) prior year receipts **(\$16,812)**

District Now Accepting Applications for Student Financial Aid

To support the education efforts of individuals pursuing a full-time career in church work, the Mid-South District is pleased to once again offer opportunities for student financial aid. To be considered for financial assistance, a student must be a member of good standing in a Mid-South District congregation and be enrolled in a seminary or university to prepare for full-time service to the Church as a rostered worker. Rostered workers are pastors, teachers, deaconesses and Directors of Christian Education.



To be considered for the student financial assistance program, you must first inform the Mid-South District Office that you are or will be a student enrolled at a synodical school. This information may be sent via email to Julie Tyler (jtyler@mid-southlcms.com) or in a written letter (Attn: Julie Tyler / 1675 Wynne Road / Cordova, TN 38016). All related forms, including the financial aid application, are on the [District's website](#). The application deadline is June 15, 2019.

2019 Synod Convention News: Important Deadlines in February

The 67th Regular Convention of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod will take place July 20-25, 2019 in Tampa, FL. Complete, up-to-date information for congregations is available on the Synod website at <https://www.lcms.org/convention>. Congregations are reminded to watch for important convention information and be mindful of related deadlines.

One deadline is the submission of nominations for Synod President, First Vice President and Regional Vice Presidents. By now, all congregations should have received the color-coded nominations for these positions, along with return envelopes. Please be mindful of the **February 20, 2019 deadline** for

these nomination forms. Please also ensure that your congregation adheres to the new requirement of voter registration for the Synod President election; this requirement was introduced following the last Synodical convention. Visit the Synod Convention website for complete information on this requirement. Note the congregations must complete their registration to vote in the Synod President election by March 24, 2019.



Prayer Summary, January 2019

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 January 2019.

PRAYER CONCERNS

MRS. SUSAN ELSEROAD (wife of Rev. Richard Elseroad, Grace Lutheran Church, Knoxville, TN)
MR. CLET PFEIFFER (Principal, King of Kings Lutheran School, Roseville, MN)
REV. NORM GROTELUSCHEN (Germantown, TN, MDS President – Emeritus)
MRS. ALISON HAWKINS (Mid-South District Office)
MR. RICHARD KLINE (father-in-law of Rev. Ron Basic, First, Little Rock, AR)
MS. MICHELE LAYNE (ECE Director, St. John's, Fayetteville, AR)
JON MALUAK (Rev. Nathaniel Bol's son, South Sudan Evangelical Lutheran Church)
REV. RICHARD MAYER (Pea Ridge, AR)
MR. RICHARD MEYER (Bella Vista, AR)
MRS. MEGAN NAVRATH (daughter of Rev. Carl and Gwen Wenck, Grace, Murfreesboro, TN)
MR. DAVID OESCH (Jackson, TN)
REV. DAVID RUBKE (Tulahoma, TN)
REV. MERLIN SEPMAYER (Crossville, TN)
MRS. SUE ANN TOOPES (wife of Rev. Andy Toopes, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Bowling Green, KY)
MS. AMY WALTERS (sister of Julie Tyler, Mid-South District Office)
THE MOTHER OF MS. MICHELE LAYNE (ECE Director, St. John's, Fayetteville, AR)

Our deepest sympathies go to the family and friends of:

Ms. Julia Edmonson (Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Chattanooga, TN) who passed away in early January.
Rev. David Maki (Trinity Lutheran Church & School, Arden Hills, MN, cousin to Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola) who was called to glory on Friday, January 18th.
Mr. Phil Schreiner (brother-in-law of Julie Tyler, Mid-South District Office) at his passing on January 21st.

Mr. Gary Reaves (brother of Mr. Paul Reaves, Mid-South District LCEF VP & Executive Director for Development), at his passing on January 2, 2019.
The Iowa District East President, Rev. Dr. Brian Saunders and his family at the loss of his mother, Evelyn Frances Saunders on January 9th.

CALL UPDATE ORDAINED MINISTERS

ACCEPTED: **Rev. Christopher L. Gorshe**, Pastor of St. Peter Lutheran Church, Riceville, IA, has accepted the call to serve as **Associate Pastor of Bella Vista Lutheran Church, Bella Vista, AR.**

PENDING: **Rev. David Lampman**, Crossville, TN has received a call to serve as **Interim Pastor of Faith Lutheran Church, Elma, NY.**

IN THE CALLING PROCESS – CONGREGATIONS
Faith Lutheran Church, Bentonville, AR – Pastor
First Lutheran Church, Knoxville, TN – Pastor
Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Rogers, AR – Pastor
Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, Horseshoe Bend, AR – Pastor
St. John Lutheran Church, Russellville, AR – Pastor
Mid-South District – Executive Director for Missions and Ministry

COMMISSIONED MINISTERS
IN THE CALLING PROCESS - COMMISSIONED MINISTERS
Avilla Christian Academy, Alexander, AR – Director of Parish Music
Immanuel Lutheran Church Memphis TN – Principal
Pilgrim Lutheran Church Jonesboro AR - Principal

2019 Treasurers Meetings

The meetings have been productive and well received. The last meeting is Feb. 2nd.



Mid-South District, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

Staff

Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, *President*

Angela Fowler, *Executive Director for Business & Finance*

Paul Reaves, *Executive Director for Development & Executive Director for LCEF Vice President*

Allen Piepenbrink, *Executive Director for Schools and Early Childhood*

Alison Hawkins, *Executive Assistant to the District President*

Renae McElwain, *Communications & Marketing Specialist*

Carolyn Metzger, *Finance Assistant*

Julie Tyler, *Administrative Assistant for Missions and Education*

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ON TWITTER - "@midsouthLCMS"

Contribute

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 **February 20, 2019** to Rhonda, webmaster@mid-southlcms.com