

Encourager

Mid-South District LCMS | March 2019

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

Focus for March: YOUTH

This month we focus on the young people across the Mid-South District who are making a difference through ministry programs, projects and events that bring the Gospel and share Christ's love with others.



When the Lutheran migration to the United States began, one of the first things the new Americans wanted to do was establish Lutheran schools. The first building built in Delaware was a school that also served as a worship sanctuary. When The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS) was founded in 1847, the education tradition of the Lutheran Church continued. The Synod started with twelve churches. Ironically, they operated nineteen schools! Several of the churches operated a number of schools in the rural and mostly remote areas of the central United States so

students didn't have to walk far to school.

As a matter of fact, most denominations found Christian education to be the foundation of their contacts within a community. For the most part, Lutheran schools are traditionally operated by individual congregations. Later in the LCMS history there were schools that were operated by groups of congregations, or associations. The schools hired their own teachers, selected their own curriculum, and set their own fees to support the educational ministries and missions of the congregations. Most of the costs for curriculum, salaries, and building expenses were historically paid by the congregations that sponsored the education ministry.

Today, the LCMS operates the largest total number of education ministries in the United States. By 2016-17, the LCMS grew from its original nineteen schools to over 1,150 Early Childhood Centers (ECC'S), 793 elementary schools, and 86 high schools. The LCMS also operates nine

universities and two seminaries. These schools provide Christian and secular education to more than 280,000 students. The students in our ECC's, schools, and universities are taught by almost 22,000 teachers. Lutheran schools are also operated by the LCMS in Hong Kong, Mainland China, and Vietnam. By comparisons, The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) operates 403 ECC's, 313 elementary schools, and 27 high schools. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) operates 1,573 ECC's, 296 elementary schools, and 14 high schools.

While I attended the Seminary in St. Catharines, I used to go by the Welland Canal along a side road past the Niagara River gorge toward Niagara-on-the-Lake. There are dozens of vineyards and wineries dotting the countryside. The investment in their wineries is

gigantic - all with a guarded hope that the vines once planted, will produce an abundant crop, and a sweet delightful final product. In contrast those grape vines, the ones we had next to my childhood home produced hundreds of grapes every year, but, because of our acidic soil, those grapes were bitter, more like chokecherries than grapes.

That's the difference the prophet Isaiah described in beautiful poetic form, when he pictured the love God tendered on His vineyard. His relationship with His vineyard is shown in the deep personal loving care. God, the Vineyard owner, says, *"My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; He built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine press in it; and he looked for it to yield grapes..."* From our Christian perspective, we can unpack the symbolism of Isaiah's poetry. The fertile hill is the horn of a mountain – an area that receives both an abundance of nourishing rain and warm sun. Isaiah's poetry describes a choice hill, freed of confounding stones, worked painstakingly by hand, and planted with the choicest of vines.

The choice vines are the forefathers of our faith: Abraham, Isaac, David, and the faithful kings of Israel. Luther posits that the winepress is the mortifying of the Old Adam - our human nature. He describes the watchtower as symbolic of God's Word, His promise, and Mercy Seat... the things in faithful spiritual worship. In Luther's description, we begin to see details of God's planning: loving care, and meticulous tending - hard work - and how it applies to us today.

From all His efforts, God expected an abundance of the richest fruit. So, when Jesus spoke to the crowd in the Gospel lesson, the Pharisees, and high priests knew full-well that He was speaking of Isaiah's condemning prophecy about them. They saw, but turned a blind eye to God's prophecy. No cultivating, pruning, or fertilizing could solve the sour substance of

Congregational Mission Commitments

Mission Commitment Receipts as of 1/31/19 (1 Month)

Anticipated Amount (8.3% of budget) \$127,690
Actual Receipts 118,127
Over (under) anticipated amount..... (\$9,563)

Use of Mission Commitment Receipts (1 Month)

Allocated to Synod for World Missions \$33,355
Allocated to Tanzania 2,083
Retained for District Mission/Ministry Support (70% of receipts) 82,689
Total Receipts \$118,127

Mission Commitment Receipts Prior Year Comparison (1 Month)

Actual Receipts as of 1/31/19..... \$118,127
Actual Receipts as of 1/31/18..... \$113,795
Over (under) prior year receipts \$4,332

their hearts nor sweeten the bitter fruit of their idolatry - sour grapes.

Isaiah's prophecy painfully turns into a dirge of severity and horrible desolation. Seeing the pungent evidence of their veneration, God rhetorically asks, *"Judge between Me and My vineyard. What more was there to do for My vineyard, that I have not done in it? Because, when I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield stinking, wild, sour grapes?"* Christ pleads us to, *"Look at the evidence!"* In the past, Israel's apostasy produced nothing but fruitless service...punctuated with evidence of its disregard of God's loving care. But, this spiritual ineptitude repeated its sour results, once again, at the time of Christ. The resulting fruit in both cases did not produce what God desired.

But, this isn't literally about bad wine, or a bad fermentation. Isaiah's prophecy makes it absolutely clear that their desolation is all about their stinking and sour adherence to our stewardship of the gifts of God. Jesus echoes this theme, *"For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit. The good person, out of the good treasure of his heart, produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks."* In other words, evil's worst evil boils over into an over-flowing, sour, acrid abundance.

God pronounced His righteous judgment: *"So, now I will tell you what I will do to My vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and briers and thorns shall grow up; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. Make no mistake!"* God pronounced that, not only was Israel's spiritual kingdom going to break down, but her political kingdom will be utterly trampled and laid to waste.

The total disregard of God's desire for sweet, satisfying results of His work in His chosen people was largely ignored by a careless clergy, and an

idolatrous people. He warned that His mantel of grace could be removed. Shallow, meaningless worship speaks only on self-improvement or proving one's worthiness by their good works, is perfunctory at best or destructive at worst. Hence, the repeated cry of despair prevails, *"We have to do something!"* Can we ever return to the basics of what allowed the Gospel message to flourish? Despite God's desire for mercy, and despite Christ's warnings centuries later, the Holy City was destroyed – not one stone left atop another.

Is there something we can learn from a prophecy of 3000 years ago? Know this: genuine good works – sanctification - are not the result of human efforts. They come in the abiding love of God in Christ, and the movement of the Holy Spirit. We're fruitful because of the true Vine, Jesus Christ. The Holy Christian Church was established at the price of His Son's perfect life and innocent death. God guards and protects Her from heresy and protects Her in times of persecution. His Holy Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens, directs, and empowers Her people to live in His grace today, on to glory everlasting. Today, we celebrate the privilege of the incomprehensible gift of grace. Despite Eden's acidic soil destroyed by sin; and despite the crude tree of innocent suffering on Calvary's rocky crest, the Tree of Life is our eternal hope in Christ. Can we see how this applies to our dedication to educate (formally and informally) our young people? What can we do to teach the next generations of this great living hope? May we, this Lententide, we are given the distinct privilege and expectations to bear the fruit in His design and for His purpose. It belongs to us... and future generations in our educational ministries entrusted to us by our gracious Lord.





Salem Lutheran Ministries Leaders in Training --- Summer Internship 2018



The five participants outside the Samaritan Shop in Springdale, AR

At Salem Lutheran Ministries (Springdale, Arkansas), we have developed a summer ministry internship for youth ages 14-18. The purpose of the internship is to disciple, motivate, and equip youth to follow Jesus, serve others, and become leaders in our community. We call it Leaders in Training.

Last year, five teenagers participated in the eight-week internship. We read the Gospel of Mark as the youth learned to Listen, Trust, and Follow Jesus for Life (our 2018 theme). We spent time every day serving the needs of our church or community. Each of the youth also developed a personal project that used his or her gifts and passions to share the Gospel.

The teenagers also participated in leadership development activities that equipped them to stand firm in God's Word and lead their peers in God's ways. They also participated in the district service project at Camp Restore and enjoyed an awesome week at Camp Trinity (Petit Jean Mountain). I look forward to how our God will continue to work in and through these youth!

Written by Pastor Brandon Martin



Our girls serving at a Camp Restore project



Levi teaches Bible stories at VBS

Attention District Youth

Lutheran Youth Retreat Summer 2019

June 4-8, 2019

University of North Alabama, Florence
Lutheran Middle School and High School
Fun, Worship & Study!
\$250-300, last year under \$200 per

Fun highlights

- Cane Creek Canyon Nature Preserve
- Muscle Shoals-record music for our retreat
- Rattlesnake Saloon

Worship and Study

Worship at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church,
Florence, Alabama. Study: Acts of Mercy, Helen
Keller and Anne Sullivan

Theme

Hymn "LSB 849" - adapted to the genre of the
Muscle Shoals Sound for our in-studio recording
session.

Contact Info

Rev. William Parsons, Redeemer, Fairhope, AL
Phone (251) 591-0602
Email w.a.parsons.3@protonmail.com

Rev. Curt Hoover, Faith, Thompson's Station, TN
Phone (615) 533-4636
Email pastorcurthoover@gmail.com

[Download flyer](#) (pdf)



Party in the Park - NYG 2019

Friday, July 12 at 4:30p-7:30p

Minnehaha Falls Park | Wabun Shelter D
4655 46th Ave S, Minneapolis, MN 55406
\$35/person

Deadline March 1, 2019
Cost will go up after that date

Please join us for a afternoon of food, carnival
games, inflatables, splash pad and fantastic
scenery while we connect with one another.
All students and chaperones from the
Mid-South District are welcome to attend.

Register online

Fill out the registration form online, payment
to be mailed to the District Office

Contact Info

Tabitha Wildhirt, NYG District Coordinator
Phone 501-414-4726
Email wildhirtsing@yahoo.com

More Info

[District website](#)





Campers fish and canoe on Lake Bailey at Petit Jean State Park

Camp Trinity announces summer camp theme

"Listen" is the theme for summer camp 2019 at Camp Trinity, the Lutheran Camp on Petit Jean Mountain, with Matthew 17:5 as the theme verse: "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him."

At daily Bible studies campers will learn the many ways God speaks to us: through His Word, the Bible ("The Word of God is living and active"); through pastors and teachers and Christian friends ("Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom"); through music ("Sing to the Lord, tell of His wondrous works"); through His creation ("The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork"); and through His Son ("In these last days He has spoken to us through His Son").

The camp season includes four traditional camp sessions, with hiking, swimming, horseback riding, archery, canoeing, games, crafts, service projects, campfires and lots of singing.

Four special camps are also scheduled: Adventure Camp for high school students that takes campers off the mountain for a river float trip and overnight camping; Arts Camp, a joint project of Camp Trinity

and the Little Rock School of the Arts; Overcomers Camp for youth with disabilities; and Family Camp, where children can enjoy camp activities with parents and grandparents.

To learn more or register, visit the Camp Trinity website: www.lutherancamp.org.



Family Camp includes a visit to the petting zoo.

**Congratulations
Rev. Michael
Croom who was
installed as
Pastor of Trinity
Lutheran Church
in Memphis, TN
on Feb. 10th.**



Pictured are (Front row L-R) Rev. Don Schmidt, Rev. Dan Elkins, Pres. Paavola, Rev. Michael Croom, Rev. Greg Prauner, Rev. Clarence Martin. Middle row: Rev. Clayton Sellers, Rev. Jim Belle, Rev. Jerry Stobaugh. Back row: Rev. Mark Goble, Rev. Chuck Neugebauer, Rev. Jeremy McDonald, Rev. Terry Tieman.

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.**

“As
deaconesses,
we watch
for where
there is need,
and that is
where we
serve.”



Deaconesses have become an active participant in ministry in the South East of Lake Victoria Diocese (SELVD). Recently the focus of these women has broadened to include a number of components. Deaconesses Lilian Makala, Stella Matary, Esther Mangesho and Linda Funke are working on the Community Health Evangelism program. Esther is the coordinator for that program that focuses on bringing health awareness into schools. Deaconess Matrida Sanga is still heading up the Right to Live with Albinism project that teaches young women with albinism to sew, bake, make lotions, and other entrepreneurship skills with a goal of becoming self-supporting. Deaconess Edna Shoo and Deaconess Leah Charles are doing parish deaconess work. They coordinate efforts to serve people in their respective communities who are suffering from illness or poverty. Deaconess Justina Nsekela is the matron for the Home of Peace orphanage in Bariadi. Deaconess student Grace Mutabuzi serves as the SELVD's Director of Education and Deaconess student Rose Mono is working with Amber Reed (GLO Missionary) to build up the SELVD's new daycare program.

The deaconesses were trained at the Makala Training center in Negezi, by Sandra Rhein and Amy Rast from the Deaconess program at Concordia

Theological Seminary Fort Wayne, Indiana and by Deaconess Linda Funke who is currently serving in Mwadui. Additional training also took place at a Lutheran College in Kenya.

These women are eager to bring their talents to the Body of Christ. This training program is a part of the partnership with The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) and the South East of Lake Victoria Diocese (SELVD).

The concept of mercy and need undergirds their ministry. If you would like more information about the work in Tanzania, please contact Bob Allen at rjallen@prodigy.net.



Amy Rast teaching class



Raising Young Leaders and the Lutheran Young Adult Corps

When I was in sixth grade, the Director of Christian Education at my church asked me to be one of several teen representatives on the Youth Board. It might sound silly to ask an eleven-year-old to sit through the business agenda of monthly meetings, but I took on the responsibility with genuine passion. This one person saw me, challenged me, equipped me and ultimately moved me towards pursuing professional church work. Raising up young leaders can be a powerful thing.

Rural and small-town ministries are uniquely designed to mentor new young leaders. These congregations tend to be close-knit where young people are known deeply. This can give special insight into where a young leader can best use their skills, passions and abilities and prevent ill-fitting or token leadership roles.

Smaller congregations can be more open to empowering young leaders, sometimes out of necessity. When they do, leaders of all ages must work together for the sake of the Gospel. While established leaders have experience, knowledge of systems and a critical understanding of history, young leaders bring a fresh perspective and new strategies. Young leaders can learn and grow in new skills while established leaders can be reenergized and help manage change.

One example of raising up young leaders is Lutheran Young Adult Corps. Lutheran Young Adult Corps provides full-time service opportunities for LCMS young adults in urban settings. Participants grow in community and share their faith in Jesus through acts of service for 10 weeks in the summer or 10 months as a gap year. During their service, our 18- to 26-year-old participants serve in roles such as volunteer coordinators, after school tutors, communications and administrative help.

The power of young leaders should not be underestimated. Consistently the young leaders

in Lutheran Young Adult Corps prove to be self-motivated, passionate, adventurous, independent, and have a desire to grow in the areas of faith formation, service and community outreach. This is true of the young people in your congregation as well. Engaging young leaders helps ministry, keeps young people connected to the church and provides a chance for all ages to live out their vocation.

- LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission monthly newsletter by Julianna Shults, DCE, Program Manager, Lutheran Young Adult Corps, LCMS Youth Ministry



Madagascar Update from Dr. Joseph Randrianasolo Feb. 4, 2019

Madagascar, To President Paavola

"As I promised you, here are the photos of the teachers who have benefited from your LIME Donation. They are on the front row of the photos. We have three classes and the photos were taken in one of them with some of its students. I inform you that the full rehabilitations of the LIME University building as a whole were done by the LCMS Mid-South District under the dynamic leadership of my brother the Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola.

The teachers asked me to thank you out of the depth of their heart. Thank you very much my Brother. May Jesus Christ, the Great and the good teacher, reward you one hundred times!

Your brother across the ocean, Joseph "



Correspondence from our schools in Haiti

Jan 2019



Dear Trinity HOPE Supporters,

2019 is here! We hope and pray this new year brings you great joy and you have many opportunities to glorify God by serving others. You are certainly a tremendous blessing to the children in Haiti through the on-going sponsorship of our schools, and we want to share our most sincere thanks.

Life in Haiti continues to be more and more challenging, and the unrest among the people seems to be growing. Since July 2018 there has been a noticeable increase in the number of protests and demonstrations throughout the country, with the fundamental cause seeming to stem from the frustration and concern the people have with their government leaders. At times these demonstrations have become violent and in some rare situations, have even led to death. In most cases, these demonstrations are pre-planned and the majority of people stay off the streets and remain safely in their homes. However, they also result in the children not being able to go to school on those days, and we have seen attendance dip some this year during those times.

Despite those challenges, the work Trinity HOPE is doing throughout Haiti continues to move forward, and God continues to bless the ministry beyond measure. At the beginning of this school year, we added six new schools to our feeding programs, representing an **additional** 172,000 meals each year. We are now serving 121 schools each day and providing well over 4,000,000 meals each year.

We give God all the glory for everything He has allowed us to accomplish! We also give God tremendous thanks for each of our supporters and for allowing us to partner with you. The children at our schools are so blessed by your generosity and support. To show you their appreciation, they have prepared the enclosed materials especially for you. We hope you will enjoy them and will continue to keep these beautiful children in your daily prayers.

Thank you for all you do, and may God bless you and fill your 2019 with His joy and peace!

Serving Christ Together,

Keith Logan

☞Let them give **thanks to the Lord** for His unfailing love and His wonderful deeds for mankind,
for He satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.☞ Psalm 107:8-9





The Church Interpreter Training Institute (CITI) program will take place from June 13 to June 16, 2019, on the campus of Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Ind.

CITI has been serving the Church by equipping church interpreters and providing Deaf ministry training to reach Deaf people with the Gospel of Christ for more than 30 years.

Continuing education credits for RID (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf) interpreters is in process. For more information or to register for this summer's program [go to lutheranfriendsofthedeaf.org/citi](http://lutheranfriendsofthedeaf.org/citi) or email Deaconess Heidi Sias at hsias@millneck.org.

We look forward to seeing you this summer!

Prayer Summary, February 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 February 2019.

PRAYER CONCERNS

MRS. SUSAN ELSEROAD (wife of Rev. Richard Elseroad, Grace Lutheran Church, Knoxville, TN)
REV. NORM GROTELUSCHEN (Germantown, TN, MDS President – Emeritus)
MRS. PAMELA HANSON (wife of Rev. Bruce Hanson, First Lutheran Church, Blytheville, AR)
MRS. ALISON HAWKINS (Mid-South District Office)
MR. RICHARD KLINE (father-in-law of Rev. Ron Bacic, 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)
MR. TOM MCWILLIAMS (Troy, TN)
MR. RICHARD MEYER (Bella Vista, AR)
MRS. MEGAN NAVRATH (daughter of Rev. Carl and Gwen Wenck, Grace Lutheran Church in Murfreesboro, TN)
REV. DAVID RUBKE (Tullahoma, TN)
WILLIAM GLENN SCHEIDERER (newborn grandson of Rev. Don White, St. John's, Stuttgart, AR)
REV. MERLIN SEPMAYER (Crossville, TN)
MRS. SUE ANN TOOPES (wife of Rev. Andy Toopes, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Bowling Green, KY)
MRS. BONNIE WHITE (wife of Rev. Don White, St. John's Lutheran Church, Stuttgart, AR)
THE MOTHER OF MS. MICHELE LAYNE (ECE Director, St. John's, Fayetteville, AR)
SOON KYOUNG KO (mother-in-law of Vicar William Zwick, First, Harrison, AR)

Our deepest sympathies to the family and friends of Rev. John Merrill (First Lutheran Church, Fort Smith, AR) at the loss of his father, Mr. Randy Merrill on Monday, February 18, 2019.

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.**

Rev. David Lampman, Crossville, TN has accepted the 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

Avilla Christian Academy, Alexander, AR – Director of Parish Music
Immanuel Lutheran Church & School, Memphis, TN – Principal
Pilgrim Lutheran Church & School, Jonesboro, AR – Principal

RSTM Events Update - free monthly webinars

Don't forget Rural & Small Town Mission provides free monthly webinars on topics important to congregations in town and country settings. Up next is **Raising Young Leaders and the Lutheran Young Adult Corps on March 7**, followed by Community Engagement Leaders on April 11. Find past webinars in our archive.

For more information, visit lcms.org/rstm or contact our office at 888- 463-5127 or rstm@lcms.org

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



Mid-South District, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

Staff

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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*

Missy Washburn, *Administrative Assistant to the District President*

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Julie Tyler, *Administrative Assistant for Missions and Education*

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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 **March 21, 2019** to Rhonda, webmaster@mid-southlcms.com