

Encourager

Mid-South District LCMS | December 2019

Our district has been richly blessed this year through the work and dedication of everyone's ministries.

Pastors, educators, church workers, volunteers and those behind the scenes who are not mentioned, each come together, daily, to show the love of Christ to those around us.

May everyone have a blessed Christmas in Christ Jesus.

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



2019 at the Mid-South District

This is an unusual assignment! Instead of our usual encouragement for ministry, this month's Encourager is supposed to deal with the things that have happened during 2019. That being said, it's been a good year because the work of the Mid-South District has been about the work of the Kingdom of Christ. But, there are challenges.

CHURCH PLANTING: The District's Board of Directors continues its efforts with the Mission and Ministry Committee and executive staff to bring our proclamation of the Gospel into every corner of the District. We have worked with the GracePoint Lutheran congregation in Munford, TN, to settle in their new location. A welcoming for the community was held on August 17 at the new location. Restoration Lutheran Church, in northwest Arkansas, continues

its efforts in the Fayetteville area with Rev. JD Zischke, planter. Salem Hispanic Ministry, in Springdale, AR continues to grow with its planter, Rev. Brandon Martin. The Mekane Yesus congregation in Thompson Station, TN continues its ethnic ministry with Rev. Alebachew Teshome as its leader planter. A new plant in West Little Rock, AR, with the efforts of Christ Lutheran, Little Rock, and Daniel Bodeman as planter continues to grow into a promising ministry. Holy Trinity Lutheran, Bowling Green, KY and Rev. Mark Press are working on developing new ministries in southern Kentucky.

SYNOD CONVENTION: The Mid-South District submitted an overture to the Synod Convention that resulted in Resolutions 2-02A on the processes that affects the ordination of Specific Ministry Pastors – seminary track. As a result, the Pastoral Formation Committee of the Synod will be evaluating the process that SMP candidates move toward ordination and make their recommendations to the 2022 Synod Convention.

Our Generation to Generation (G2G) project also received overwhelming support as a study model at the Synod. We will submit a report on the findings and methodologies to evaluate ways to bring in and keep our young adults active in the church, and ways to have families become more deeply involved in faith formation for future generations.

CHURCH WORKER CHANGES: The District continued its work to bring men into the ordained ministry through the SMP Colloquy program started after the Synod's Resolution 13-02A. Rev. Thomas Moore, West Memphis; Rev. Craig Fiebiger, Thompson Station, TN; Rev. Ray Krieg, Seymour, TN; Rev. Henry Thompson, Malvern, AR; Rev. John Mathis, Little Rock, Rev. George Smith, Oak Ridge; Rev. Jim Belles, Cordova, TN; Rev. Jerry Stobaugh, Oakland, TN; Rev. Jeremy McDonald, Memphis; Rev. Tim Hunze, Hermitage, TN; Rev. Randy Sakach, White House, TN; and Rev. Bill Schutte, Mountain Home, AR were added to the roster of ordained pastors from the deacon program or through a seminary SMP track.

RETIREMENTS from ROSTER: As we have noted in the recent past, there is a need for more men to enter into the ministry. Our Seminaries are not producing enough new pastors to cover the retiring pastors. We received notice of eight (8) pastors retiring this year and have only received 2 men at Spring placement. The same is true for our Commissioned Church workers as our Concordia University system is not producing enough teachers, DCE's, musicians, DCO's and the like to keep up with the decline in rostered workers.

The good news is the Mid-South District is identifying men who are interested in seminary education. This year, the Ministry Placement committee interviewed seven men who are willing to take up the challenge to consider pastoral ministry.

VACANT CONGREGATIONS: The vacancy rate in the Mid-South District remains lower than most of the other LCMS districts. At one point in 2019, we had as many as six vacant congregations seeking placement. At this point, there are three congregations who are going through the vetting process for pastoral ministry.

YOUTH AND FAMILY MINISTRY FORUM: The Youth and Family Ministry Committee has set its Beta-study congregations in Arkansas, and began its work toward presenting Generation to Generation (G2G) to those congregations. A report of the G2G project will be submitted to the entire Council of Presidents at the end of 2020 and make its recommendations to the Synod Convention in 2022 on retention of youth and faith formation.

MID-SOUTH DISTRICT LAY MINISTRY ASSOCIATE PROGRAM: The Synod's Resolution 13-02A provides for LLD's to be in the process of their application to the ordained ministry to continue their work until the General Colloquy Committee for Pastoral Ministry of the Synod acts on their applications. We are developing a program with the Concordia University, Mequon and Concordia University,

Portland, for on-line courses for men and women who are not on a pastoral ministry track to become Lay Ministry Associates who will focus on visitation, shut-in visitation, outreach, assimilation, and general work within the congregations, schools, and ECCs of the District.

FINANCIAL AID: The Financial Aid Committee of the District awarded over \$81,000 for educational support for our members in church worker tracks through our University System and Seminaries. The Mid-South District Board of Directors approved a resolution to allocate the remaining 2020 budgeted student aid funds, held in reserve, to MinistryFocus, an LCMS RSO that assists rostered church workers with large educational debt. The reserve funds are designated specifically for grants awarded by MinistryFocus to church workers in the Mid-South District.

COMPASS and C.A.R.: These programs, developed by the Mid-South District, continue to grow. The interest at the Synod level has resulted in 16 other districts interested in having the product brought to their district. The results have been remarkable, and have brought new directions to many of the participating congregations, schools, and ECC's. The districts that have expressed interest include the Minnesota North, Ohio, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Southern, Kansas, New England, Florida-Georgia, Rocky Mountain, Missouri, and Northern Illinois Districts. There have been 73 congregations who have completed the C.A.R. tool for assessing congregational activity.

COMPASS
C.A.R.

EACH ONE – REACH ONE (E1-R1): In cooperation with Diane Reimold, LWML District President, the District continues the second phase of E1-R1 in the District. With the materials from Synod's "Every One His Witness" program, E1-R1 applies principles in our local congregations connecting with the community. The total number of E1-R1 participants amount to over 300 people.



DEVELOPMENT: Since 2013, the IMPACT program has allowed us to engage individuals across the Mid-South in prayerful financial support of the District's ministry building work—programs and services for congregations, schools, workers and future ministries. The IMPACT program was launched with an initial campaign to raise \$1.5 million. The District has been blessed to achieve 97.5% of the financial goal, receiving pledges of just over \$1,462,313 in

gifts and commitments. In 2020, we will have set to raise more than \$250,000 to continue the efforts where 102% of our operating budget that comes from congregational commitments is used for mission development and outreach.

SYNOD CONVENTION: The Convention was held in Tampa, Florida from July 20 to 25, 2019. The results of the election for Synod President was that Matthew Harrison was elected on the first ballot. With the Retirement of Rev. Dr. Herb Mueller, 22 names were submitted in nomination for First Vice-President. Rev. Peter Lange, formerly President of the Kansas District, was elected on the first ballot. He assumed office in September. With the retirement of Rev. Dr. Daniel Preus, the Central Region Vice-President elected at Convention was Rev. Benjamin Ball.

VACANCY REPORT – LCMS: From the Council of Presidents, Clergy Call and Rosters Committee: The number of vacancies in the LCMS continues to increase from 413 vacant congregations in 2017 to 511 vacant pulpits in 2019. The number of congregation that are seeking part-time pastors has increased from 357 to 465 congregations in a year's time. Meanwhile, the number of new starting congregations when compared to the number of congregations that are closing remains somewhere in the category of no net gain in the number of congregations in the LCMS.

SPRING PLACEMENT RESULTS: This year we were informed that there were grand total of 80 candidates graduating and ready for placement from both of the seminaries of the LCMS! The good news is that the Mid-South District will receive two candidates from this year's candidates, and one convertible vicar. There were 79 unfilled requests across the Synod's other 34 Districts.

Candidates:	MDiv	AR	SMP	SMP	TOTAL
COLLOQUY					
Fort Wayne	38	2	-	2	42
St Louis	41	1	-	9	51
			37		
Total	79	3	37	11	130

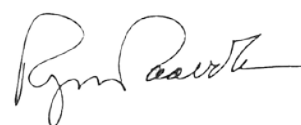
Candidate Calls Submitted: 148

OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS: Dr. Kevin Robson has announced the Call of Rev. Daniel McMiller to become the Executive Director of the Office of International Missions for the LCMS. He replaced Rev. John Fale who has retired as of July, 2018. Rev.

McMiller is a seasoned international missionary, having served in South America. He colloquized into the LCMS from the Evangelical Lutheran Synod in 1985.

LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRIES: The director of the Office of National Missions, Rev. Bob Zagore, has announced the acceptance of the Call to become the Director of LCMS School Ministries. Dr. Rebecca Schmidt will replace the retiring Terry Schmidt.

THE YEAR AHEAD: The progress of the Mid-South District continues to be bright but filled with daily challenges. With the prayerful support of our member congregations and schools, our 2020 Vision will bring new opportunities for us to partner with our faithful workers and dedication congregations to bring the message of the Gospel into every country road and Main Street in the Mid-South. May God continue to richly bless and keep us all as we go about the work He has given us to do in His kingdom. Have a blessed New Year.




Kits for Kids Project



Eighteen members rallied after service on Sunday to assemble activity bags for children that police officers may encounter when responding to a call. Each bag contained an activity book and crayons, small stuffed animal, tissue, snacks and bottled water along with a note from Concordia reminding the children that Jesus loves them! Through donations and Thrivent grant money, we had enough supplies to assemble 50 kits.

Members from Concordia donated soap, toothbrushes, and nail clippers and through a generous Thrivent grant to purchase bath towels, we were able to assemble 53 personal care kits for Lutheran World Relief. As members young and old were put to work assembling the LWR kits, we also used that time to bag 50 "kits for kids" that our local police department can keep on hand for emergency calls involving children. Those kits included bottled water, snacks, small stuffed animal, activity book and crayons and a note to remind them that Jesus loves them!

Concordia Lutheran Church
(Kingsport, TN)



How much do 46 quilts weigh?



Emmanuel's quilters did another fabulous job this year! These quilts were made with love, and then blessed before shipping off to Lutheran World Relief's Care Van earlier this month.

They shipped 46 quilts (that's 53 pounds) in the care van, plus made 13 quilts for area nursing homes, 4 were given to church families and another to the homeless.

These ladies worked tirelessly all year long. What a labor of love!

By the way, Emmanuel also sent 2 boxes of school kits in the Care Van.

—Emmanuel Lutheran Church (Hermitage, TN)



CONGREGATIONAL MISSION COMMITMENTS

Mission Commitment Receipts as of 10/31/19 (10 Months)

Anticipated Amount (75% of budget).....	\$1,276,895
Actual Receipts.....	<u>1,270,955</u>
Over (under) anticipated amount	<u>(\$5,940)</u>

Use of Mission Commitment Receipts (10 Months)

Allocated to Synod for World Missions	\$360,453
Allocated to Tanzania	20,833
Retained for District Mission/Ministry Support (70% of receipts)	<u>889,669</u>
Total Receipts	<u>\$1,270,955</u>

Mission Commitment Receipts Prior Year Comparison (10 Months)

Actual Receipts as of 10/31/19	\$1,270,955
Actual Receipts as of 10/31/18	<u>\$1,255,755</u>
Over (under) prior year receipts	<u>\$15,200</u>

Lutheran World Relief CARE-VAN Drive 2019



(Above) Pastor Russell and Nancy Shewmaker delivering boxes from the Jonesboro Circuit for Care-Van.
(Right) Diane Reimold, CARE-VAN Coordinator for the Memphis area at Immanuel Lutheran, Memphis, TN



(Below) Trailer with boxes at Immanuel, Memphis, TN



At this year's Lutheran World Relief CARE-VAN ingathering the Mid-South District once again had seven drop sites collecting handmade quilts, school kits, personal care kits, baby care kits, fabric kits and boxes of soap the weekend of Nov. 1st – 2nd. Our drop sites included Christus Victor, Knoxville, TN.; Cross of Christ, Chattanooga, TN.; Our Savior, Nashville, TN.; Immanuel, Memphis, TN.; First, Fort Smith, AR.; Grace, Little Rock, AR.; and Salem, Springdale, AR.

At the time of this report (11/25/2019), the top three quilt-producing congregations that dropped off their work at an LWR CARE-VAN ingathering site were St. Paul Lutheran Church, Gillett, AR (415 quilts), Zion Lutheran Church, Alexander, AR (192 quilts), and First Lutheran, Chattanooga, TN (106 quilts). A total of 2,058 quilts (270 were from several area ELCA congregations) were donated.

To date we had 45 congregations participate (3 ELCA), collecting over \$4,139 for shipping costs. We also collected 1,329 personal care kits, 171 fabric kits, 823 school kits, 104 baby care kits, 16 fleece blankets and 12 boxes of soap. The CARE-VAN trailers were loaded up with 626 boxes (weighing approximately 12,050 pounds!) of offerings from District congregations for Lutheran World Relief. Way to go Mid-South District!

Many of the congregations' efforts are coordinated by LWML groups and longstanding quilting groups in the congregations. They participate in this effort to share the love of Christ in a personal way. The tireless efforts of those who share their talents and the generous contributions of many make this a successful ingathering.

Thank you to all who participated in this year's annual LWR CARE-VAN drive!

Julie Tyler
Mid-South
CARE-VAN Coordinator



Generation to Generation

G2G is going strong in the Mid-South District and we are excited to announce an opportunity to empower, equip and encourage parents, grandparents, teachers, pastors and all adults to pass on their faith to the next generation!

E3: Faith in the Home is coming to Nashville and Little Rock this Spring!

Dr. Kim Marxhausen will be keynote speaker. She states, *"Children's parents are their first and best teachers, especially when it comes to sharing the faith. God designed our brains and hearts to learn best within a family setting, and the church can do much to support parents. In our plenary sessions, we will explore how faith teaching is essential to a child's spiritual and emotional well-being. We will learn how God cultivates resilience through the teaching of His Word. The goal of these sessions is to give you much to think and pray about as you build family and child ministry in your church."*

Sectionals are designed to Empower, Equip and Encourage, giving participants knowledge, skills and attitudes to teach faith in the home and opportunities to hear how churches can partner with them.

Save the dates

March 7, 2020

Our Savior, Nashville @ 10am-2:30pm

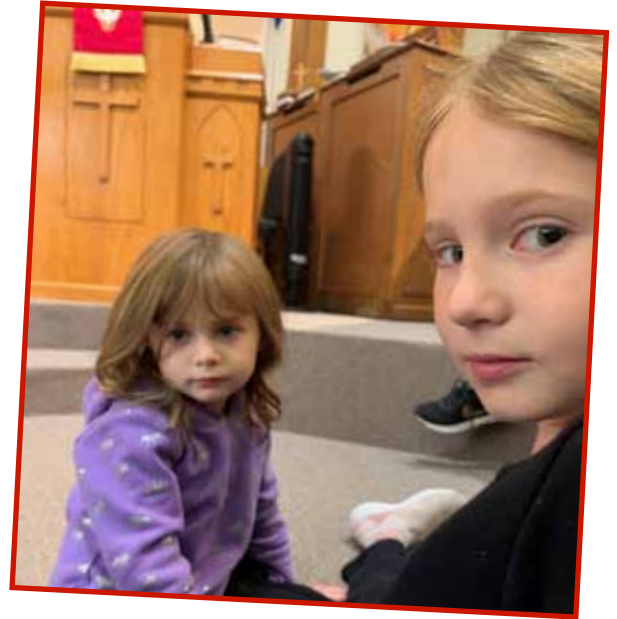
April 25, 2020

Christ Lutheran, Little Rock @ 10am-2:30pm

Generation to Generation Network Training

Generation to Generation will offer two Networks to join in 2020, orientation beginning this fall in Central Arkansas and Nashville areas.

For more information-Pastors interested in hearing more are encouraged contact Tessa Brasher at brashert@csp.edu or call 870-215-3261. District G2G Trainers are available to visit your congregation to begin the conversation.



20 Years Strong – Exponentially Amazing

I recently read a book (*Sun Stand Still*) that really challenged my way of thinking about my faith. It forced me to ask, “Am I serving God within the limits I can accomplish, or am I serving through *Audacious Faith* and expecting **Him** to accomplish the impossible?”. Honestly, I didn’t like my answer. The author of the book talks about the desire to see God accomplish something so **exponentially amazing** that it would leave no doubt who deserved the credit. That made me stop and reflect on what He has accomplished through Trinity HOPE. As we start this new school year, we humbly celebrate 20 years of ministry, serving God by serving the children throughout Haiti. During that time, more than 38,500,000 meals have been served in the name of Jesus. We have grown from one school to 141 schools, feeding 28,000 meals every school day. We have invested close to \$10 million dollars into the Haitian economy and touched tens-of-thousands of families. By my definition, that’s *exponentially amazing*, and we give God ALL the credit and glory!

And God isn’t finished with us yet. We believe God has put on our heart the challenge to trust Him to “**accomplish the impossible.**” Our vision is that over the next few years we see Trinity HOPE feeding 100,000 meals per school day. Frankly, even with my wildest imagination, I believe that is humanly impossible. But Jesus’ own words in Luke 18:27 assures us, “What is impossible with man is possible with God.”

The author of *Sun Stand Still* had another compelling quote in his book. He said, “**If the size of your vision isn’t intimidating to you, there’s a good chance it’s insulting to God.**” Wow! That got my attention. Psalm 37:5 tells us, “Commit your ways to the Lord; trust in Him, and He will act.” We walk in faith as we boldly take these next steps... totally trusting Him to lead us and to provide. That doesn’t mean we sit idle while we wait on Him. God is **expecting** us to work hard and to fully commit our very best efforts to Him. We are ready to do that with joy, led by *Audacious Faith*!

As we start our third decade of ministry with **big bold plans**, we hope you share in our passion to reach thousands of more children in the name of Jesus. In the near future, we will be revealing many new opportunities for people to continue to walk



beside us and support our efforts. In the meantime, one of the best ways you can help us now is to **pray for our leadership** to clearly hear God’s plans and have the expectant faith to confidentially move forward. In addition, I’d like to personally ask you to boldly share more about the ministry of Trinity HOPE with at least 1-2 people you’re associated with. I’m confident God will use your words to open doors. Thank you for your help.

Trinity HOPE has truly been blessed over the past 20 years. Each of you are a huge part of that success and we thank God for our generous supporters. We look forward to seeing where God leads us as we start our third decade of service together. May God Continue to bless you and your family!

Serving Christ Together –
Keith Logan, Executive Director

God’s Provisions in 2018-2019

Amount of Rice, Corn, & Beans Purchased in Haiti last year: **1,400,000 pounds**

Number of New Annual School Sponsors: **13**

Number of New Schools Added in 2018-19: **15**



Graduates



Congratulations to the first class of Financial Peace University at Peace, Cherokee Village, AR

Financial Peace Rebates Are Still Available

The Mid-South District is pleased to continue to partner with our congregations to bring Financial Peace University (FPU) to its members and guests through a special rebate program. For those congregations that offer FPU between now and the end of 2019, the Mid-South District will offer a rebate of the \$93 cost to individuals who complete the 9-week program. The rebate program is on a first come, first serve basis until budgeted funds have been exhausted. All materials must be purchased through the Mid-South District prior to the start of any classes. Please contact Angela Fowler (afowler@mid-southlcms.com) if your ministry is interested in hosting this class for your congregation.



There's still time to sign up to volunteer at the Tournament of Roses Parade.

Please go to <https://www.petalpushers.org/reg> to sign up and learn about the Mini-Package Tour Option: Float Decorating and Rose Parade.

Enjoy this short video about God's Gift at Christmas: The Christmas Journey <https://vimeo.com/54943512>

— From Lutheran Hour Ministries

Prayer Summary, November 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 November 2019.

PRAYER CONCERNS

MRS. DORIS BERTSCH (wife of Rev. Arie Bertsch, District President, North Dakota District)
BISHOP NATHANIEL BOL (South Sudan)
MISS BELLE BRASHER (daughter of Tessa Brasher, Paragould, AR, Mid-South District Board of Directors)
MS. EVELYN DOUGLAS (friend of Julie Tyler, Mid-South District Office)
MRS. SARA FEUERSTEIN (daughter of Pastor Donley Hesse, Emeritus, Mena, AR)
MR. MARK GUDLIN (hospitalized, wife Denise is with Trinity Hope)
MRS. ALISON HAWKINS (Mid-South District Office)
DIONNE MILAM (Secretary to Pastor Toopes, Holy Trinity, Bowling Green, KY)
REV. DR. HERBERT MUELLER (Former 1st Vice President of the Synod)
MS. MEGAN NAVRATH (Daughter of Pastor Carl & Gwen Wenck)
REV. DAVID RUBKE (Tullahoma, TN)
REV. MERLIN SEPMAYER (Crossville, TN)
MR. STEVE TYLER (husband of Julie Tyler, Mid-South District Office)
REV. NEIL VANDERBUSH (Chaplain * U.S. Army with the Board of International Missions * Our Savior, Searcy, AR)
MR. LEONARD YOUNG (Father of Pastor Philip Young, Nashville, TN)

Our deepest sympathies to:

The **family and friends of Phill Miedema** (Brother-in-Law to Rev. Nabil Nour) who passed away on November 21, 2019.

CALL UPDATE ORDAINED MINISTERS

ACCEPTED: **Rev. Bradley Heinecke**, Emeritus in Davenport, Florida, has accepted the call to serve as **Pastor at Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, Horseshoe Bend, AR.**

Rev. Kirk Neugebauer, Pastor at Messiah Lutheran Church, Sterling, IL has accepted the call to serve as **Associate Pastor at St. John's Lutheran Church, Lapeer, MI and assist with Redeemer Lutheran Church, Paragould, AR.**

IN THE CALLING PROCESS – CONGREGATIONS
First Lutheran Church, Chattanooga, TN – Pastor
First Lutheran Church, Knoxville, TN – Pastor
Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, Mid-South District – Executive Director for Missions and Ministry

COMMISSIONED MINISTERS
IN THE CALLING PROCESS
Zion Lutheran Church of Avilla, Alexander, AR – Director of Parish Music
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Chattanooga TN – DCE
Christ Lutheran School, Little Rock, AR – Principal
Immanuel Lutheran School, Memphis, TN – Principal



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*

Missy Washburn, *Administrative 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](https://twitter.com/midsouthLCMS)"

Contribute

The Encourager is a monthly newsletter from the Mid-South District LCMS. The January issue of the Encourager will focus on the wonderful school ministries of the Mid-South District. If your congregation or school has news or photos to include in the issue, please submit articles and photos to webmaster@mid-southlcms.com by Monday, **December 16**. Note that the deadline is a bit earlier due to the Christmas holiday.

Merry Christmas