



2025 ANNUAL REPORT

FOLLOWING THE **BLUEPRINT** for Ministry in the Mid-South District, LCMS

GREETINGS, FROM THE PRESIDENT -

The ministry work of the Mid-South District is both challenging and rewarding. With 120 Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) congregations, 10 schools, 20 early childhood centers, over 200 professional church workers and over 23,000 members impacted by that work, it is essential that services, programs and actions of the District be prayerfully and carefully considered and executed. Much like the construction of a building, before the first bit of soil is disturbed, a solid plan must be developed and set forth as the foundation for all activity going forward. There is simply too much at stake! The same holds true for ministry; the consequences of hearts in need not learning about their Savior are far too great. A plan must be in place.

For the Mid-South District, the plan has been shared in its **Blueprint for Ministry**. Introduced in 2024, this plan focuses on the following five critical ministry initiatives:

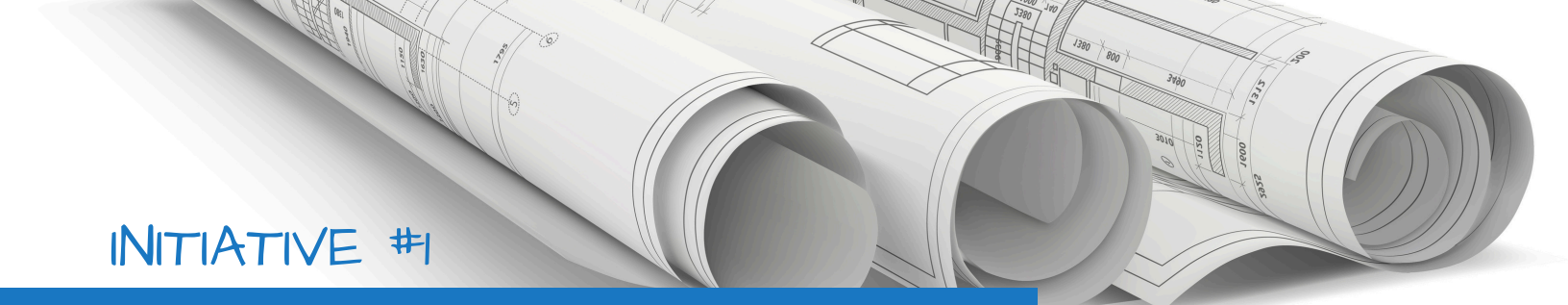
1. Planting New Church & School Ministries
2. Recruiting & Retaining Professional Church Workers
3. Strengthening Generational Faith
4. Providing Pastoral Coverage for Rural Ministries
5. Equipping Congregations for Ministry to People in Crisis



Prayerfully constructed to meet key ministry needs, these initiatives comprise the core of District work through at least 2027. Since first sharing these essential elements of our **Blueprint for Ministry**, I am pleased to report that progress has been made in each area. A brief account of that progress is shared here, as well as a look at the District's funding sources and allocation of financial resources for ministry from our recently-closed fiscal year (2025).

As the Mid-South District enters its 60th year of ministry, I am inspired by this District's enduring legacy of faith and commitment to mission. Together—and with God's blessing and guidance—we can build upon that legacy by continuing to pursue the critical initiatives outlined in our **Blueprint for Ministry**. I thank you for your faithful and prayerful support which has made our progress thus far possible. I pray you will be a continued source of encouragement as we further implement this important plan for ministry.

In Christ,
Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, President



INITIATIVE #1

• Planting New Church & School Ministries

The Mid-South District is passionate about seeking creative and effective ways to connect people to the Gospel. Current activity in this area includes:

- Pursuing opportunities for 5 new education ministries (either early education ministries, micro-schools, or homeschool partnership programs).
- Continuing involvement with 8 Mid-South church plants; 5 are existing ministries, while 3 are in various stages of formation.
- Conducting regional informational and training sessions for both pastors and laity on *Churches Planting Churches*.
- Investing in new ministry ideas of current congregations through GROW Grants.; since 2023, a total of \$247,000 in GROW Grants has been awarded, providing launch funding for 21 ministry programs across the district.

INITIATIVE #2

• Recruiting & Retaining Professional Church Workers

There remains a critical shortage of new church workers across the LCMS. And for those who do answer the Call to serve, the rewarding work can also take a toll on wellness. The Mid-South District's current work to address these areas includes:

- Conducting preliminary assessments to establish a Concordia University System satellite location in the Mid-South District, bringing educational opportunities for church worker professions closer to students in our region.
- Continuing to provide significant financial aid to Mid-South District students attending a university or seminary to pursue full-time church work.
- Providing regional "Best Practices" forums to facilitate the exchange of innovative ideas in ministry.
- Launching a Worker Wellness Program to encourage the spiritual, emotional and physical well-being of all those who serve.

INITIATIVE #3

• Strengthening Generational Faith

Many families today—even Christian families—have lost their foundation of faith, with worldly influences often superseding that of God's Word and will. The Mid-South District is engaged in efforts to help families establish a strong faith which can be passed on to future generations.

Examples in the pursuit of this initiative include:

- Hosting regional Youth and Family Discipleship conferences for church workers and lay leaders in youth and family ministry in the Fall of 2026.
- Identifying Mid-South District Lutheran students attending colleges, trade schools or entering military service to connect them with nearby LCMS ministries once they are away from their home congregations.

INITIATIVE #4

• Providing Pastoral Coverage for Rural Ministries

Small congregations across our district often struggle to retain a full-time, ordained pastor. As these faith families worship, share fellowship, and serve their communities in the name of Jesus, the Mid-South District is working to address their need for regular Word and Sacrament ministry through:

- Establishing a “hub and spoke” ministry model in certain Circuits, whereby several smaller congregations partner with a designated larger ministry in the area to exchange resources and fulfill some key functions.
- Working with neighboring districts to establish “shared pastor” arrangements for small and rural ministries along the Mid-South District border.
- Continued use of the C.A.R. and COMPASS ministry assessment tools, helping small congregations maintain a “ministry growth” mindset despite their size or rural location.

INITIATIVE #5

• Equipping Congregations for Ministry to People in Crisis

People experience crisis in countless ways, and often look to “the church” for compassion and mercy in those moments. To help congregations minister to those who are experiencing brokenness, the Mid-South District is:

- Continually expanding the capabilities of its Disaster Response Ministry, both in equipment for deployments and financial resources for direct aid to disaster victims.
- Establishing a support community for widows and widowers; the ministry includes both congregation-based and an online means for connection among those navigating life after such significant loss.

Marking a Ministry Milestone in 2026!

The Mid-South District is celebrating its 60th year in 2026! That is 60 years of gratefully serving, supporting and encouraging LCMS ministries, workers and members across Arkansas, Tennessee and southwestern Kentucky. This ministry milestone is made possible through God’s grace and the dedication to mission of countless servants across our District, and even beyond its borders.

The anniversary is a wonderful time to look back at the faces, places and moments that have shaped our District over the last six decades. Throughout the year, historical notes are being shared on the District website at <https://mid-southlcms.org/category/60-anniversary/>. Be sure to check the page monthly for the latest history installment.

Please also make plans to join the Mid-South District in Memphis on **Saturday, October 24, 2026** for a 60th Anniversary Oktoberfest celebration. Watch our website for details on this exciting event!



Making District Ministry Possible

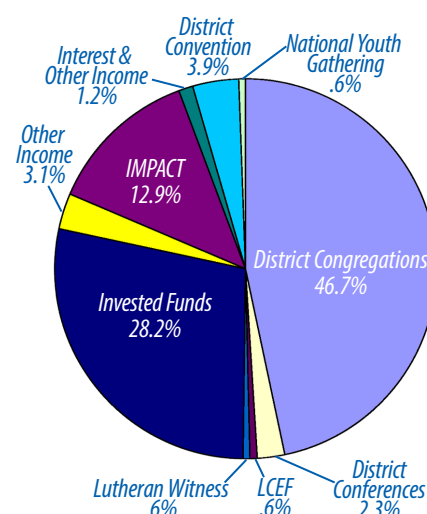
A solid plan, or blueprint, is only meaningful once it is brought to life—and making the plan a reality requires significant resources. The Mid-South District is blessed to have many faithful partners, both lifting our ministry in prayer and providing financial resources. This includes mission commitments from District congregations and support from generous donors. We are grateful to all those who make District ministry possible, thereby joining us in pursuit of our mission to **“provide leadership, resources and encouragement for reaching the lost for Christ’s Kingdom and equipping the found for service in our churches, communities and the world.”**

Financial Highlights for FYE 2025

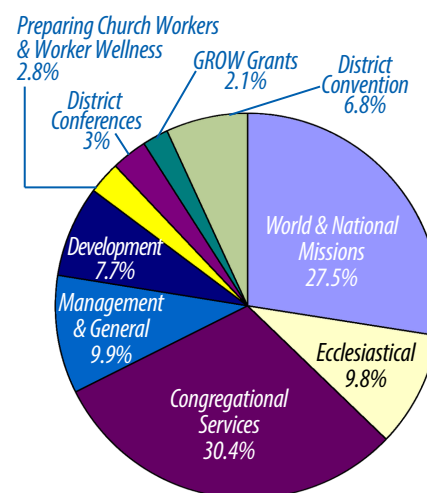
Statement of Activities for the Year Ended December 31, 2025*

	WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS	WITH DONOR RESTRICTIONS	TOTAL
SUPPORT, REVENUES & OTHER ADDITIONS:			
Support -			
District Congregations	\$ 1,646,057	\$	\$ 1,646,057
IMPACT Campaign	454,481		454,481
Assets from Disbanded Congregations	79,561		79,561
Distribution of LCEF Operating Results & Grants		80,036	80,036
Synod		94,551	94,551
Other	42,712	170,007	212,719
Revenues -			
Subscriptions	20,024		20,024
Conventions, Conferences & Workshops	239,388		239,388
Net Investment Return (Loss)	457,219	115,374	572,593
Agreements with LCEF	21,671		21,671
Other	28,008		28,008
Change in Value of Beneficial Interests in Charitable Trusts		17,764	17,764
Change in Value of Beneficial Interests in Perpetual Trusts		17,616	17,616
Net Assets Released from Restrictions	536,567	(536,567)	-
Total Support, Revenues & Other Additions	3,525,688	(41,219)	3,484,469
EXPENSES & LOSSES:			
Program Services -			
World & National Missions	401,039		401,039
Preparing Church Workers	86,456		86,456
Congregational Health & Services	1,127,574		1,127,574
Ecclesiastical Services	306,932		306,932
District & Synod Conventions	217,788		217,788
Support Services -			
Synodical Budget**	468,817		468,817
Management & General	286,458		286,458
Fundraising	242,539		242,539
Total Expenses	3,137,603	-	3,137,603
Loss on Sale of Property Held for Sale	9,203		9,203
Impairment Loss on Property Held for Sale	18,500		18,500
Total Losses	27,703	-	27,703
Total Expenses & Losses	3,165,306	-	3,165,306
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	360,382	(41,219)	319,163
NET ASSETS - Beginning of Year	7,676,213	3,173,973	10,850,186
NET ASSETS - End of Year	\$ 8,036,595	\$ 3,132,754	\$ 11,169,349

FUNDING SOURCES



MINISTRY ALLOCATION



*This information was taken from the audited financial statements of the Mid-South District. Copies of the entire audit report are available from the Mid-South District upon request.

**The Mid-South District remitted 30% of congregational unrestricted gifts to Corporate Synod which amounted to \$468,817. All 35 districts contribute approximately \$12.4 million of undesignated revenue to Corporate Synod annually in support of national and international missions and ministry.