



# MID-SOUTH LUTHERAN



## 'Who will roll away the stone?'

Easter is a time for us to rejoice! Our Savior is no longer dead! He is risen!

Can our human mind completely wrap itself around the idea of a living Savior and what that means to us today? We celebrate Easter, the festival of the resurrection of Christ Jesus from the dead, that proves God's guarantee of our eternal salvation in Him.

Easter is the day the Lord has made. It's a day the church has set aside for the last 2,000 years to acknowledge and celebrate the life, death and resurrection of our Savior, Jesus Christ. It's not about Easter bunnies hopping down the bunny trail. It's not about hiding colored eggs for little children. Easter isn't about a brand new suit or hat. Easter isn't about the sales at JCPenney, Macy's or any other store. In truth, Easter isn't even about a specific day or time each year. Easter is about every day throughout the year!

Easter is always the new beginning of



**Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola**  
District President

life for all mankind because Jesus Christ was no longer dead. His body didn't remain in a tomb. He arose in human flesh, proving God's satisfaction for the price Jesus paid on our behalf when He died on the cross on Friday. Easter is the third day after that awful Friday when, in human flesh, our Savior arose, no longer dead, because — He is risen!

What are the facts? Mark's Gospel says two Marys and Salome purchased spices to anoint the body of Jesus, as was a custom of their time. They made their way to the tomb, probably discussing the horrors of what took place in the last three days. They were probably still stunned and crying, remembering what they had witnessed on Friday. Then they wonder, "Who will roll away the stone?"

You see, somewhere between sunset Friday and sunrise on Sunday, these women were most of the way to the tomb when they realized they hadn't asked anyone to come along with them to help move the stone from the entrance to the tomb. "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance?" Who's good at rolling stones?

But while it was still dark and as the women cautiously approached the tomb,

they were astounded. "We don't have to remove the stone!" In an instant they felt a confusing mix of terror and joy when they saw the stone was already rolled away. "What does this mean? Has someone taken away the body of Jesus?"

As they moved closer to the tomb they saw that even the Roman guards weren't there anymore. The women cautiously peeked inside the tomb and were startled to see a young man sitting inside. Could he have been the one who moved the stone? Who helped him?

Matthew's Gospel (28:2) has the answer:

And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it.

So we know God's messenger moved the stone, but that doesn't explain what happened to Jesus. Did the angel take Him? No! The stone was moved for our understanding of the truth about this Man, Jesus.

On Friday, God the Father had turned His face away from His Son. God's Son — Jesus Christ — took all of God's just wrath and fury against our sin and the sins of all the world. But in that divine mystery of God's grace, Jesus willingly suffered and died for our sake, so we may be restored to a right relationship with God. Imagine this! We who were once enemies of God by our sinful human nature are being turned into inheritors of His eternal Kingdom!

The angel of God moved the stone from the tomb, but who is going to roll away the three stones in our lives? The angel rolled that first stone to prove to all humanity that God was satisfied

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## MESSAGE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

with Christ's sacrifice. According to Romans 6, all human flesh joined with Christ, through Holy Baptism in His Means of Grace, to die to sin and also to rise victorious over sin, death and the grave in Christ. Even though evil men had placed a stone over the tomb of Jesus, God conquered sin, evil, death and Satan. God's messengers removed the stone from the grave of Jesus just to show His unconditional love was fulfilled for us in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Redeemer.

But we ask, "Does evil still use stones to cover over the unconditional love of God for us today?" The angel of the Lord told the women at the empty tomb to "Go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead" (Matt. 28:7). So, do we? Do we have friends and neighbors who don't know about this Easter miracle? Do they know that Jesus died for their sins and rose from the dead to prove our salvation before a perfect and Holy God? Do we even care what may happen in their eternity if they don't believe?

That's the second stone that can block God's unconditional love: the stone of fear. But the angel of the Lord said, "Do not be afraid."

Are we somewhat afraid of those friends and neighbors who don't believe and maybe think we're religious nuts? Do they think we've gone off the deep end? What would've happened if those women hadn't gone to tell the disciples about the risen Christ? Those men would've stayed locked up away in that upper room. They could have never seen or witnessed the risen Christ.

Fear is a stone that can cover our mouths and harden our hearts. Stones have been placed there not by God, but by sin and weakness of our human nature. Why does it seem so difficult to share our love of Christ with others? Part of the difficulty is that our society has been duped into thinking that God will let all good people into heaven. No! Goodness isn't the standard God applies for access into heaven. Remember, Jesus said to His disciples:

"You therefore must be perfect, as



your heavenly Father is perfect."

**MATT. 5:48**

Speaking for myself, I'm not. So is there really any hope? Absolutely! Any hope of gracious perfection isn't from or in us. Any perfection we may ever claim isn't computed by how good or bad we are. Our perfection in the eyes of God happened the day He washed us clean in the waters of Holy Baptism and the promise in His Word. God claimed you. He made you perfect in His sight because He placed Christ and His Spirit in you. Even though we're still sinners, we're made His saints in Christ Jesus and made holy by His Means of Grace.

What Jesus said about perfection is meant this way: we're perfect in the eyes of God because we're covered in the sacrifice of the life and blood of our Lord Jesus and by the grace and mercy of God. We are totally passive as we receive God's grace by faith since we have Christ in us, according to Holy Scripture. God doesn't save us because we're good, or that we at least try to be good some of the time. He knew we can't save ourselves. That's why He sent His Son to take on our human flesh, suffer for our sins and die in our place.

That's why He raised His Son to life on the third day. It proves we are made righteous in the sight of God because of what Jesus accomplished for us.

We cannot overlook this Gospel message of a glorious and joyous Easter and what it means to us. St. Paul wrote to the Roman Christians:

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ

was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. **ROMANS 6:3-5**

This proves our redemption! It proves our life eternal! It proves that in our Baptisms, God's Means of Grace has made us one in Christ Jesus! God removed the stone that covered the tomb of fear and doubt to demonstrate His great love, mercy and peace toward us in Jesus Christ.

Our hands are flesh — like the flesh that clothed the Son of God in His incarnation. You are so precious to God that He died for you in His human flesh. God withheld nothing to win us back to Him forever. Knowing that should roll the stone of fear away from everyone!

But there's a third stone God wants moved — the stone of an unrepentant heart. He's calling to us all to live in His grace through His Word and the blessed Sacraments He offers through His holy Christian church. There's only one person who can roll away all the stones that clutter our lives. It's Jesus Christ, our Savior who offered His perfect life in exchange for the filth and unworthiness of any imperfect, fully human existence. God's divine grace had forsaken His only Son so that He might embrace and accept us as His own precious children.

That Easter morning over 2,000 years ago proved God's joy in receiving us all to become co-heirs of His eternal and glorious kingdom. All of this we know as the absolute truth because Christ is alive! Satan is defeated. Death no longer holds us.

Jesus told His disciples 2,000 years ago and even today: "Repent and be baptized. You will be saved." We are the baptized sons and daughters of our almighty and gracious God! Death no longer rules over our humanity. God in flesh is alive to reign forever.

We are saved. We are made alive. We're guaranteed life eternal ... because He is risen!



The Mid-South District awarded Grow Grant funds to Praise Lutheran Church, Maryville, Tenn., for its Music Conservatory and David's Harp program. The program provides music education to those in the community who are interested in Christian music, playing instruments, and learning about the contributions music makes to worship. Pictured are, from left, Rev. Derek Roberts, Praise pastor; Caleb Hesse, Praise music director; and Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, district president.

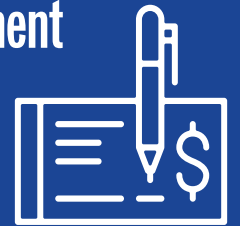
## Download convention BIBLE STUDY

A new Bible study that explores the convention theme, "Christ Is Risen Indeed," is now available. Written by Rev. Timothy J. Pauls, pastor of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Boise, Idaho, each of the study's six lessons includes a short devotion along with Scripture study, a closing prayer and a suggested hymn.

Guides are available for both leaders and participants. You are invited to use this study in your congregations and groups as we join together as a church to proclaim that Christ is risen indeed.

Find Bible study materials at [lcms.org/convention/bible-study](https://lcms.org/convention/bible-study).

## Congregation mission commitment receipts



as of  
Jan. 31, 2026  
(1 month)

Anticipated amount (8.3% of budget) .....	\$137,388
Actual receipts .....	\$86,315
Over (under) anticipated amount .....	(\$51,073)

### Use of mission commitment receipts

Allocated to Synod for world missions .....	\$23,811
Allocated to Tanzania .....	\$2,083
Retained for district ministry/mission support (70% of receipts) .....	\$60,420
Total receipts .....	\$86,315

### Mission commitment receipts comparison

Actual receipts as of Jan. 31, 2026 .....	\$86,315
Actual receipts as of Jan. 31, 2025 .....	\$94,837
Over (under) prior year receipts .....	(\$8,522)

## DYING WELL IN CHRIST

### A Christian Response to Issues at Life's End

with Rev Dr. Aric Fenske  
Executive Director, Lutherans for Life

Hosted by Christ Our Savior Lutheran Church



**FREE ENTRY**

\*limited seats

#### Reality

- What is death
- Life in a culture of death

#### Decision

- Advance Medical Directives
- Hospice & Palliative Care
- Family Conversations

#### Hope

- Going Grace-fully

**Saturday, April 18**

8:30am -1:30pm

Christ Our Savior  
Lutheran Church

260 Wade Rd W. Loudon

Light breakfast & lunch provided

Free Will Offering

**REGISTRATION IS ENCOURAGED • CALL THE CHURCH OFFICE AT 865-458-9407**

# Joyful learning

## Celebrating our Lutheran schools

By Michelle Fischer

Executive Director for Education, Youth and Family,  
Mid-South District

### Our shared joy

There is a special kind of energy in our district's early childhood centers and elementary schools that you just won't find anywhere else. We have so much to be thankful for as we watch our youngest learners grow, from a preschooler's first time saying the Lord's prayer to a middle schooler beginning to articulate their identity in Christ.

These aren't just buildings where kids learn math and reading; they are communities where the Gospel is the very center of everything. We see every child as a redeemed gift from God, and it's a privilege to help them discover their unique vocations. By keeping our classrooms anchored in the Lutheran Confessions and the truth that we are "saved by grace through faith" (Eph. 2:8), we give our students a firm foundation that stays with them long after they leave our classrooms.

We are incredibly grateful for the teachers and staff members who pour their hearts into this mission every single day as faithful servants of the church. These dedicated men



Michelle is pictured at right handing a National Lutheran Schools Accreditation certificate to, from left, Joyce Enloe and JoAnn Seay of Belvoir Christian Academy (BCA) Early Education Center (ECE), Chattanooga.

The BCA early childhood program serves infants through pre-K4. Seay, who serves as director, and the ECE team has worked diligently over the past two years to meet the criteria to receive accreditation.

and women do so much more than follow a lesson plan. They are the steady, compassionate faces our families rely on to model Christ's love. Whether they are tying a shoelace in an early childhood classroom or navigating a tough conversation through the lens of Law and Gospel with a seventh grader, they lead with the heart of a servant.

By weaving the Word into the daily rhythm of school life, they are living out the call to "train up a child in the way he should go" (Prov. 22:6). It's a sacred calling that plants seeds of faith in young hearts, creating a legacy that ripples out into our homes, our congregations and our neighborhoods.

As we look to the future, we give thanks to God for the tireless dedication of our educators and the trust of our families, remaining grateful for the opportunity to partner in nurturing the next generation.

### St. John's Lutheran School, Stuttgart, Ark.

St. John's offers a preschool program that serves infants through preschool four. Our elementary school serves kindergarten through sixth-grade students, and our enrollment for the current school year is 181.

Students enjoy many school and community activities. We sponsor an archery team for students in grades 4–6, and host six basketball teams.

Our families also collected over 3,200 items for the local ICCM Food Bank, while we collected funds for food packs for community children.

We are very thankful for the support of our church members, parents and community!



## All Saints Classical Lutheran School, Jonesboro Ark.

We offer a joyful and rigorous classical Christian education rooted in truth, goodness, and beauty, where students are formed in wisdom, virtue and the Christian faith. Grounded in Holy Scripture, the Small Catechism and the life of the church, our school unites strong academics with reverence, order and care for the whole child.



## Christ Little Rock School and Early Childhood, Little Rock, Ark.

At Christ Little Rock School, students experience meaningful learning and strong community connections. Our fifth graders recently explored the rich history and symbolism of traditional Kente cloth from Ghana, discovering how each color and pattern tell a meaningful story before creating their own beautiful, symbolic designs. We also celebrated the special bond within our school community during a fun and memorable Dudes and Divas evening. Moments like these highlight the creativity, culture and community that make our school so special.



The early childhood center includes 78 precious little ones from six weeks to five years of age. We strive to build strong family and community connections with a teaching team that includes four alumni of Christ Little Rock now serving their own and other children. Parents continue to trust our team for care and a vibrant ministry that is alive and well in midtown Little Rock. One parent recently thanked us for a "being safe place to leave my little guy!" Thank you, Lord, for blessing us in so many ways.



# EDUCATION

## First Lutheran School, Fort Smith, Ark.



At First, we offer a special program called Reading Buddies. Each week, our elementary students partner with early childhood students to read together. Buddies are thoughtfully paired at the beginning of the year and stay together all year, building meaningful connections along the way. This program fosters responsibility and strengthens reading skills for our older students, while giving our younger learners valuable one-on-one attention and a love for reading.

## Salem Lutheran School, Springdale, Ark.



Salem has been providing loving, caring, Christ-centered education to thousands of children in our Springdale community for over 70 years! We are blessed with a dedicated staff that encourages and sparks the imagination and learning of our students daily.

## Christ the King Lutheran School, Memphis

Our students in preschool through eighth grade collected chapel offerings to support Le Bonheur Children's Hospital. Our goal was \$1,500 and we met that! Our teachers shine, too: Dr. Charlotte Johnson and Michella Novy were nominated on two separate occasions to be awarded WREG News Channel 3's Educator of the Week for Shelby County — a proud distinction! Our middle school vs. faculty annual basketball game kicked off "Celebrate CTK" week, and afforded fun and fellowship for both students and faculty. Our preschool celebrated, too, by dressing up as our favorite book characters.



Dr. Charlotte Johnson

Michella Novy



## Our Savior Lutheran Academy, Nashville

Our Christmas program was a beautiful celebration of the season, with more than 200 parents, grandparents and other loved ones gathered to share in the joy. The room was filled with smiles as our 2-year-old, preschool, and pre-K classes joyfully sang songs proclaiming the Good News of Jesus' birth.

Families also heard the Christmas story from Luke 2, shared by

Matt Fischer, our director of Family Ministries, reminding us all of the hope, peace and joy found in Christ. This precious event was a meaningful way to celebrate Christmas together and a wonderful opportunity to connect our Academy families with our church community. We are so thankful for our students, families and staff who made this celebration such a special reminder of the true reason for the season.

## Faith Lutheran Preschool, Collierville, Tenn.



Our students shared the Christmas message from Luke during four music programs this year. Over 240 students presented the nativity, with our four- and five-year-old students dressed as the holy family, angel choir, wisemen, shepherds and animals. Two-year-old to junior kindergarten classes sang Christmas songs and shared a cookie reception afterwards. What a blessing to share the birth of Christ with our preschool and church families as we continue to embrace our community and connect as Christ's family.

Faith Lutheran is the largest freestanding preschool in the Mid-South District, and has 54 teachers and support staff, a wonderfully supportive congregation, and two faithful pastors to lead us in ministry.



# EDUCATION

## Immanuel Lutheran School, Memphis

The 2025–2026 academic year at Immanuel has been filled with learning, faith, fun and ... HARMONY! That's Immanuel's current theme, inspiring students and staff. Partnering older students with younger students for reading time and games has been a great way to encourage harmony at Immanuel.

Our students, families and teachers also enjoyed a harmonious evening of fun with science, technology, engineering, art and math at STEAM Night. Before the school year concludes, we look forward to many more opportunities for harmony, including a fine arts fair, a seventh- and eighth-grade class trip to Washington, D.C., and a gala fundraiser.



## First Lutheran School, Knoxville

Each quarter, First picks an organization to support with their chapel offerings. This year, several of the classes elected to give more by having their own fundraisers. Our second graders had a plant sale to support Trinity HOPE (which supplies meals for students in Christian schools in Haiti).

Our middle school held a bake sale to help Lutheran Heritage Foundation purchase song books for African children. And our first-grade class organized a carnation sale for Valentine's Day, raising \$700 for the Love Kitchen, a local organization that provides food for those in need.

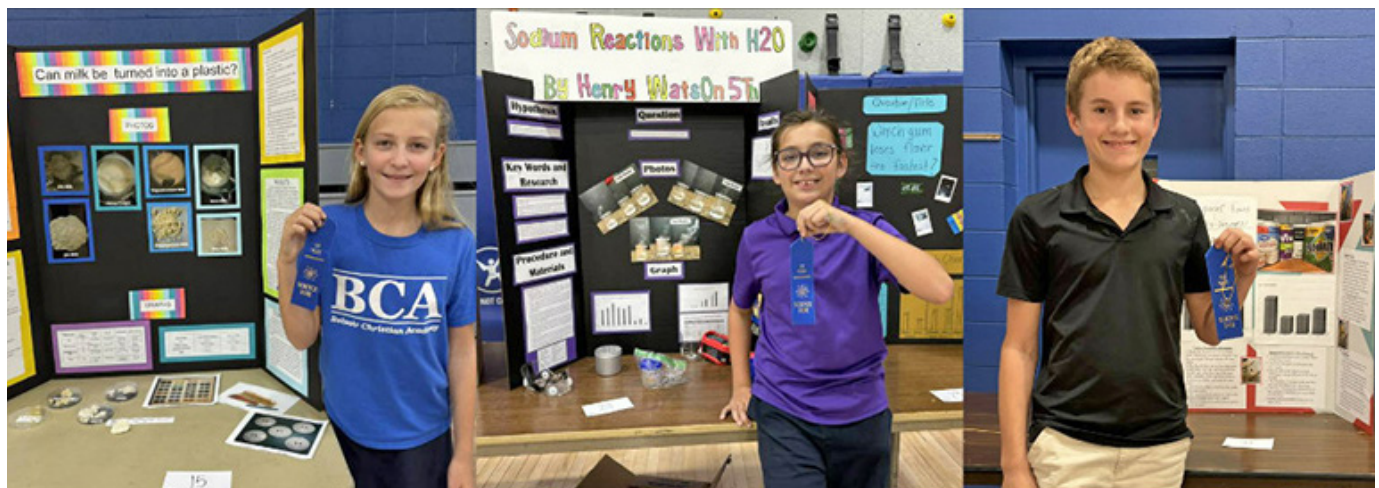
The school also made 300 valentines to be delivered with the meals to provide encouragement for the recipients.



## Belvoir Christian Academy, Chattanooga

Belvoir Christian Academy (BCA) held a lunch to show appreciation for the pastors for their ministerial support for our students. We appreciate the time they spend with students to build upon their faith life. A special Veterans Day lunch allowed students to welcome current and retired service men and women.

BCA celebrates its top winners from the biennial science fair (pictured below), Everly Webb (grade 4), Henry Watson (grade 5) and William McCall (grade 7); and takes pride in our artistic fourth and fifth graders who decorated and displayed a Luther Rose.



# EDUCATION

## Holy Trinity Lutheran School, Bowling Green, Ky.



At Holy Trinity Lutheran School (HTLS), faith and learning come together in joyful purpose. Serving children from pre-school through sixth grade, HTLS offers a challenging yet nurturing Christ-centered academic program in which every subject is taught through the lens of God's Word. Students grow in faith and knowledge through strong core academics and a well-rounded curriculum that includes Spanish, art, music, computer skills and physical education for kindergarten through sixth-grade students — each subject shaping mind, body and spirit for lifelong learning.

Teachers partner with families to cultivate not only intellectual curiosity, but also compassion, integrity, and service to others. In classrooms filled with prayer, discovery and encouragement, children experience what it means to walk with Christ in all they do. At Holy Trinity Lutheran School, we live our motto daily: "Where the heart of education is education of the heart."





## Two ears, one mouth

Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger. **JAMES 1:19**

How often have you half-listened to someone while already formulating your response in your mind? Or how many times have you wished you could take back some hurtful words? Here is a quote attributed to the Greek philosopher Epictetus (or sometimes Zeno of Citium): “We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak.” Our Creator was onto something there!

We need to continually be reminded of the advice given in James 1:19. It’s not important how many ears or mouths we have; it’s important to use them properly.

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. **JOHN 16:13**

Fortunately, our dear Teacher, the Holy Spirit, is always there to guide us. We can count on Him to suggest God’s Word at the appropriate time. But we still must listen!

Let’s all remember to pray first, listen with both ears, and then speak as the Holy Spirit guides us.

**Candy Habich, Chairman**  
LWML Mid-South District Media and Marketing Committee

## STAY CONNECTED

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## Registration cost increases April 16

**Don’t delay!** Secure your spot for the district convention, to be held June 12–14 in Springdale, Ark. The registration cost increases on April 16! Visit [midsouthlwml.org/district-convention](http://midsouthlwml.org/district-convention) for all the details, promotional items you can use, information on the offering recipients, and much more.

The theme is “Look to the Hills. The Lord Reigns,” based on Psalm 121:1-2. Highlights include:

- ▶ Friday evening opening worship at Salem, Springdale;
- ▶ Keynote speaker Deaconess Dr. Tiffany Manor, LCMS Office of National Mission managing director;
- ▶ LWML national representative Debbie Yocky, Public Relations Director;
- ▶ Song leader Bonnie White; and
- ▶ Saturday evening banquet and entertainment.

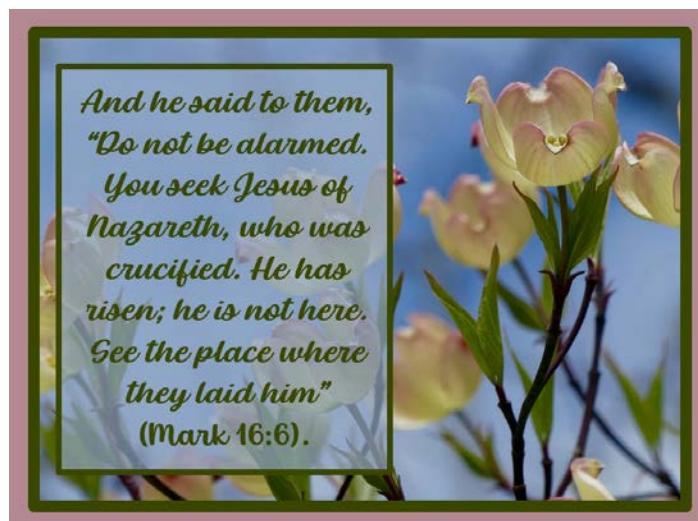


## Two more Mission Grants are funded

Praise the Lord! Checks were mailed to Mission Grant recipients Camp Trinity (\$7,000 to help fund camperships) and the Mid-South District (final installment to reach \$25,000 for financial aid for students preparing to become full-time LCMS church workers).



Now let’s fill some Mite Boxes and get to the finish line! Mission grant information is available at [midsouthlwml.org/mission-grants](http://midsouthlwml.org/mission-grants).



**On behalf of all of the members of the LWML Mid-South District, we pray you have a blessed Easter!**

## Camp Trinity

### TRIVIA NIGHT IS APRIL 25

The 17th annual Trivia Night is scheduled for Saturday, April 25, at Christ Little Rock. The camp fundraiser is an evening filled with fun, food, fellowship and friendly competition.

Trivia Night includes multiple rounds of trivia in which teams of up to eight people compete for prizes and the coveted Dinner Bell Trophy. The event also includes games between rounds and concessions serving burgers, hot dogs, nachos, sodas, candy and more. Prizes are also awarded for most clever team name, best costumes and best table decorations.

The event also features a silent auction.

Register your team using the form found at [lutherancamp.org/trivia-night](http://lutherancamp.org/trivia-night) (scroll down). Questions? Contact Aaron Davis, camp director, at [director@lutherancamp.org](mailto:director@lutherancamp.org).



Teams compete to win prizes for most creative team name, costumes and table decorations.



## SHARE YOUR NEWS WITH US!

Digital files, sent via e-mail, are preferred. Send email submissions to [LW@mid-southlcms.com](mailto:LW@mid-southlcms.com) or send by postal mail to:

Judy Otto; 150 N. Maury St.; Holly Springs, MS 38635  
Send us your stories and photos for our **June-July 2026** issue by **April 15**.

## Trinity HOPE

### LEANING ON HIS EVERLASTING ARMS

The LORD is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him. **NAHUM 1:7**

Each morning in the mountains of Haiti, small feet begin a long walk. Some of those feet are bare. Some are wearing shoes that are too large, handed down from someone else. Some are covered by mismatched sandals. The road is uneven and dusty, stretching farther than a child's legs should have to travel. Yet they walk.

They walk toward a small school building, which may be no larger than a single-car garage. They walk toward a wooden bench and a simple desk. They walk toward a meal. They walk toward the Word of God.

In one classroom sits a very young child who has only recently begun school. His small body carries the quiet signs of hunger; rust colored hair and a heaviness in his eyes. He leans slightly against the desk as if his strength has been borrowed for the day. Beside him are older children. They are smiling. They know what is coming. They know that before the day ends, there will be food. They know that they will sing out in praise. They know that they will be reminded that they belong to Jesus.

These children do not lean on comfort or security. They do not lean on systems or savings. In many ways, all they have to lean on is the Lord. And He is faithful.

Through your generosity, God provides the meal that strengthens their bodies and the Gospel that strengthens their hearts. In a place where resources are few and the road is long, they are learning to trust the One who is their refuge. They are leaning on His everlasting arms.

**Trinity HOPE** feeds over 67,500 children in 300 Christian schools in 16 districts throughout Haiti. We share the Gospel of Jesus Christ one bowl of rice and beans at a time. At a cost of about 38 cents per meal, we are able to provide over 1.3 million meals each month. To learn more, visit [trinityhope.org](http://trinityhope.org).

