



MID-SOUTH LUTHERAN

Set Apart to Serve



Photos: LCMS/Erik M. Lunsford

Synod launches initiative to recruit church workers

In Acts 4, we are introduced to Barnabas, who, forsaking riches in this world, very generously sold land that he owned and gave the proceeds to the apostles for the work of the church. And even though he worked tirelessly as a preacher and missionary alongside early Christian giants and heroes like Peter and Paul — who were probably not the easiest people with whom to work, for both of them possessed character flaws that must have been very taxing at times — it becomes clear that Barnabas was content to maintain a low profile.

Think about it. During the course of your Christian lives, how many



Rev. Andrew J. Abraham
Pastor,
Shepherd
of the Hills,
Crossville,
Tenn.

congregations have you known that were named for Sts. Peter and Paul, and yet how many have you known were named for St. Barnabas? Indeed, you and I know so much more about Peter and Paul, though Barnabas was always there in tandem with those two towering figures, sacrificing his creature comforts, wealth, time, safety and security. He even at times sacrificed his nutritional needs, not for the sake of popularity or fame, but for the sake of a sacred message

meant for sinners of all times and places, and that is the message of the Lord's promise of eternal life and resurrection on the Last Day.

Rejecting the lifeless cynicism of this world, Barnabas clearly put all his hope in the next life. He recognized that our experience in this world is incomplete, and ultimately unsatisfactory to the depth of our human souls and innate appetite for endless communion with God the Creator. Therefore, refusing to put his trust in passing things, Barnabas, the “Son of Encouragement,” put all his faith in the kingdom of heaven, where Jesus has prepared a place for those who are His own.

It is also useful to remember the somewhat troublesome nature of the Christian church, which is composed of sinners who don't always get along. Yet in spite of this pesky reality, Barnabas never failed to find his niche in the work of the church and keep at it.

In case you don't already know, Barnabas was very instrumental in drawing St. Paul into the leadership of

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the church — the same Paul who once was a murderous enemy and persecutor of the church! Obviously Barnabas understood that God's plan for the salvation of those who would believe would be carried out by sinners of every variety. Even knowing of Paul's previous hatred for the church, Barnabas was still remarkably gracious toward Paul and eager to see him rise and become a significant figure in the church for the sake of the Gospel. In fact, Barnabas partnered with Paul in the first of Paul's three major missionary journeys, all fabulously documented for us in Acts of the Apostles. For all intents and purposes, it appears that they worked very well together. But then, even in the best of working arrangements, is it possible to avoid unwanted drama?

Barnabas had a cousin named John Mark, who accompanied Paul and Barnabas on Paul's first major missionary journey. But then, for reasons unknown, John Mark departed from this mission, leaving Paul rather put off. Later, when Paul and Barnabas resolved to go on a second missionary journey together, Barnabas insisted that his cousin again join them. It's hard to understand, but Paul refused to let John Mark come along, and so Paul and Barnabas, who until then appeared to be very good friends and collaborators, parted ways. Paul took Silas on his mission, and Barnabas and John Mark went in the direction of Cyprus, where Barnabas paid the ultimate price for preaching the holy and saving name of Jesus Christ his Lord. According to sound Christian tradition, Barnabas was stoned to death by a mob hostile to the Gospel.

By the way, John Mark, who was at the center of the controversy between Paul and Barnabas, wrote the Gospel according to St. Mark many years later.

So, the work of the church is not always easy, and it is not very often without some contention. Disagreements happen, feelings get hurt and bitterness emerges. Politics will often ruin things,



and those who desire to serve Christ in a meaningful way will clash and create drama with others who also are dedicated to the church. This can be very demoralizing indeed, but so what? This inevitability doesn't change or diminish in any way the greatness of the church's work and mission.

The fact is the church has work to do, and that work must be for God's greater glory and for the salvation of sinners. Therefore, it becomes necessary that Christians have thick skin because not every aspect of church work is easy. Every single part of it, whether a given task seems small or large, is immensely important and valued by Christ and the heavenly host of angels who assist in our calling to serve Him no matter what.

In the pericopes for the Feast of St. Barnabas, there are two very interesting words to note:

While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ACTS 13:2 (emphasis added)

Those two words — "set apart" — are rather timely because of the Synod's new initiative, which is called *Set Apart to Serve*. The initiative is intended to create within our Synod a new culture of encouraging our members to prayerfully consider a life of service to Christ's church, either as a pastor, teacher, deaconess, missionary, DCE, music director, cantor or some other position recognized and esteemed as honorable in our Lutheran tradition.

To put it plainly (and without heaps of drab and unhappy statistical data), the Synod is facing a significant shortage of ordinations and commissionings. *Set Apart to Serve*, therefore, is a very highly coordinated effort to turn that trend around by engaging the youth of our Synod — and adults considering a second career — with an increased understanding of all the ways one might serve Christ and His church in a life of radical self-sacrifice and dedication to the Great Commission of Matthew 28.

I am deeply touched that our district president, Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, has appointed me to be on the district's *Set Apart to Serve* team. We've had occasional meetings at the district office, and there's much about this program that we are anxious to share with you. For now, it is enough to remind you that Jesus encouraged His disciples to "pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest" (MATT. 9:38).

As you read and study Acts of the Apostles, it's easy to see that there are so many different ways for men and women to serve the Lord, and all of them are critical to the life and vitality of the church. St. Barnabas is a wonderful example of a holy self denial practiced in dedication to Christ, leading to a lifetime of service to the church and the promotion of the Gospel. We should all be inspired by him and so many other terrific saints like him in the history of the church.

The exorbitantly cynical world around us, after all, has become quite vocal in its rejection of Christian truths that

have served as the bedrock of Western civilization for centuries. It's time for us who are stout believers to do all that is necessary to ensure that generations subsequent to us have knowledge of Jesus and the eternal life He intends for those who trust in His friendship.



Serving neighbors IN DISASTER

The 2023 LCMS Disaster Response Conference will be held Sept. 6-8 at the LCMS International Center in St. Louis.

Under the theme “Walking Together in Disaster Response,” the conference will include feature presentations, case studies, group discussions and practical breakouts.

The first day of the conference is meant for LCMS district disaster-response coordinators (DDRCs) and Lutheran Early Response Team (LERT) trainers. The second and third days are open to anyone with an interest in disaster response.

This year, a specialized track will focus on providing spiritual care after disasters, and Continuing Education Unit credits will be available to pastors and other church workers who attend these sessions.

“The Disaster Response Conference is a fantastic opportunity for those interested in the LERT program to network and learn from each other’s experiences,” said Rev. Michael Meyer,

director of LCMS Disaster Training and managing director of Congregations and Districts for the LCMS Office of National Mission. Together, we will learn new ways to engage and support future volunteers so that we may better walk together and serve our neighbors in disaster.”

The first day of the conference will feature a workshop on volunteer site coordination with Joel Mathews and the staff of LCMS Disaster Response, as well as a session on insurance and risk management by Judy Davis Helms.

Sessions on the second and third days of the conference will include topics such as the response to recent floods in Missouri, the response to Hurricane Ian, engaging youth and college-age volunteers, disaster response chaplains, Recognized Service Organizations in disaster response, general site safety, muck out and drywall removal/repair, food preparation and distribution,



LCMS Erik M. Lunsford

grants and equipment, and more.

Registration is \$75 per person, which includes conference lunches and a banquet on Thursday night.

Visit calendar.lcms.org/2023-lcms-disaster-response-conference to register and learn more.

Congregation mission commitment receipts

as of
April 30, 2023
(4 months)



| | |
|--|------------|
| Anticipated amount (33% of budget) | \$521,423 |
| Actual receipts | \$483,956 |
| Over (under) anticipated amount | (\$37,467) |

Use of mission commitment receipts

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Allocated to Synod for world missions | \$136,853 |
| Allocated to Tanzania | \$8,333 |
| Retained for district ministry/mission support (70% of receipts) | \$338,769 |
| Total receipts | \$483,956 |

Mission commitment receipts comparison

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Actual receipts as of April 30, 2023 | \$483,956 |
| Actual receipts as of April 30, 2022 | \$472,409 |
| Over (under) prior year receipts | \$11,547 |



VOLUNTEER HELP WANTED

Trinity HOPE has always been blessed with volunteers who want to help us in the mission to feed children in Haiti. They are a vital element for our continued efforts to feed more children, and a huge reason why we can keep the cost of a meal at about a quarter.

We have had a volunteer who sends weekly thank you letters to donors. After 10 years of dedicated service, our volunteer is stepping down. We are looking for someone new to help with this project. The role is extremely flexible, very easy to accomplish, and helps us stay engaged with donors.

Please share this opportunity with your congregation.

Candi Cook, Operations Manager
910-797-8357 • trinityhope.cc@gmail.com



Synod will cover MinistrySafe fees

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

1 PETER 5:8



The Lutheran—Missouri Synod

(LCMS) recognizes the need to continue vigilance in child protection. The LCMS Office of National Mission (ONM) recommends congregations and schools of the Synod use resources including tools, training and instruction in child sexual abuse awareness and prevention. Where possible, obtaining a discounted rate on criminal background check services for staff and volunteers is also recommended. To help with these efforts, the ONM is pleased to announce fully funded memberships with MinistrySafe.

MinistrySafe is a national organization that equips congregations and ministry programs to better protect children from sexual abuse. The LCMS has a relationship with MinistrySafe that allows all LCMS congregations and schools to have access to the online MinistrySafe resources at no cost to the church, camp or school through 2024.

In 2023 the ONM is bearing the full cost and has worked with LCMS districts to make sure that 2024 is funded as well. If you would like to know more about the training, please contact Missy Washburn at mwashburn@mid-southlcms.com or 901-373-1341, ext. 3101.

Visit ministrysafe.com/lcms to activate your ministry's membership under this special offer. Select "Start Your MinistrySafe Membership" and "Organization Membership \$250." The billing page will allow you to enter the access code LCMS2023, which covers the cost of the membership.



TCN offers discipleship training

The principles that Jesus presented in the Gospels constitute the basic job description for making and multiplying disciples in fulfillment of His Great Commission, and they still work today. However, they must be learned and implemented in the context and culture of your church and community.

Transforming Churches Network (TCN) has developed a basic discipleship training system that you can adapt and use immediately. It includes all the materials and resources you will need to make and train disciples (who also make and train disciples).

The discipleship training is:

- ▶ **BIBLICAL** (based on Jesus' and the Apostles' teachings and practice).
- ▶ **LUTHERAN** (developed by LCMS Lutherans for LCMS Lutherans).
- ▶ **EFFECTIVE** (in diverse communities all over the U.S.).
- ▶ **ONLINE** (anyone can be trained anywhere).
- ▶ **AFFORDABLE** (no church will be excluded due to cost).

Training is organized into eight modules each with a specific learning or project outcome. Each online session is 90 minutes and is conducted online through Zoom. Training draws heavily on the experience and leadership of Rev. Dr. Terry Tieman and TCN staff, as well as peer learning within the group.

For more information, email Pastor Tieman at terry.tieman@gmail.com; call 901-494-7375; or visit tcnprocess.org.



Congratulations to scholarship recipients

The Take Heart Scholarship program was developed for Lutheran Church Extension Fund's (LCEF) Young Investors (Y.I.) Club members who are high school seniors who will advance to the next level of higher education.

As students begin this new journey,

LCEF wants to help their transition by offering financial support through this scholarship opportunity. The application period for this year opened in March and closed in early May, with students from across the United States taking part by submitting essays.

Congratulations to the following students on their outstanding submissions and selection as 2023 Take Heart Scholarship recipients:

- First place: Samuel Simmons, Orlando, Fla.
- Second place: Grace Ann Roth, Elgin, Texas
- Third place: Amelia Gillard, Cambridge, Minn.

Learn more about the Take Heart Scholarship at lcef.org/scholarship.

Mighty Mites!

By Lauren Robertson

Media and Marketing Chair,
LWML Mid-South District

The LWML is known for the mission grants that provide financial support for ministries emphasizing the Word of God. Mark 16:15 says:

“Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.”

Just as God instructed us to proclaim the Gospel, the LWML uses this Bible passage to be its mission focus. Providing not just financial support, but also volunteer hours and donated items has been a primary focus of the LWML.

The LWML celebrated the disbursement of \$2.15 million — the 2021-2023 biennium goal — to all mission grant recipients, with an additional \$9,200 to rollover to the 2023-2025 biennium. In our very own Mid-South District, the 2022-2024 biennium goal of \$105,000 is almost 75% paid.



The Food Co-op at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, is one of three remaining LWML Mid-South District 2022-2024 mission grants to be funded.

August 17 is National Nonprofit Day. We encourage everyone to give to your local nonprofits, including your local LWML group's mite box. We have three mission grants left for this biennium, as voted on at the LWML district convention:

- Financial aid for professional church workers (through the district office).
- Cultivating innovative new ministry

programs (through the district office).

- Concordia Seminary Fort Wayne — Financial Support for the Food Co-op.

To learn more about the grants that have been filled and those that are still waiting, visit midsouthlwml.org/mission-grants. You can also follow our Facebook page at facebook.com/MSD. *LWM* to see a monthly report of mites for our district.

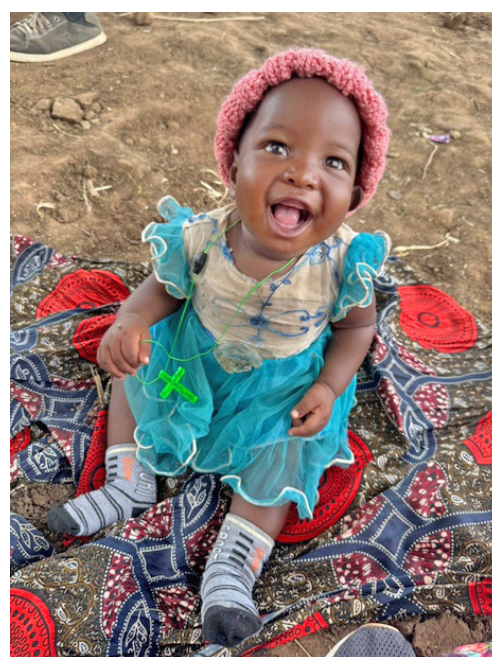
Prince of Peace knitters share talents and treasures for Tanzania

At Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, White House, Tenn., a gifted member of our church, Vicky Mowatt, offered to start a knitting class — and Knitwits was born. Together we made over 100 hats to send with Bob and Susie Allen on their annual mission trip to Tanzania.

These hats were given to infants and adults to protect heads from the sun. We received generous donations of yarn and even a Thrivent Action Card to buy supplies.

Our next project is making blankets for our neighbors at the nursing home. If you live in the Middle Tennessee area and would like to join us, contact Vicky at 425-238-1774.

— Submitted by Amy Conner





Love in 'deed and truth'

By **Gretchen Roberts**
Praise Lutheran Church, Maryville

Seven LCMS congregations gathered together on Jan. 14 to learn more about the Pregnancy Resource Center, which has locations in Maryville and Sevierville, and raise funds for a matching grant as a part of LCMS Life Ministry's 1 John 3 Million Dollar Life Match grant initiative.

Members of Christ Our Savior, Loudon; Faith, Oak Ridge; First, Knoxville; Grace, Knoxville; Praise, Maryville; St. Paul, Sevierville; and St. Paul, Wartburg, raised \$25,000, to be matched dollar-for-dollar by the awarded grant.

In total, members raised \$33,817, far surpassing the \$25,000 goal, totaling \$58,817 for the Pregnancy Resource Center. Half of the funds will be used to benefit their newest expansion to a center in Sevierville by providing financial ability for staff to receive training. The other half will go toward medical equipment for the center in order to offer pregnancy tests and ultrasounds to mothers, free of charge. Training for staff will also include learning to share the Gospel with clients at the center, which is our best comfort in moments of crisis.

"God has given us an opportunity to minister to young mothers and fathers and their children through the two area PRCs, where LCMS volunteers are present every week," said Praise pastor Rev. Derek Roberts, who helped coordinate the grant project. "These centers steer clients to good life-affirming

choices and to know Christ and the forgiveness of sins, so the whole person and many babies in the womb receive spiritual care in addition to medical and maternal care. In these ways, 1 John 3:18 applies: 'Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.'"

This funding comes at the perfect time after *Roe v. Wade* was reversed last year, making abortion illegal in Tennessee. Now more than ever, pregnant mothers need somewhere to turn when facing unexpected pregnancies, and the Pregnancy Resource Center welcomes them in the door with open arms. Not only are mothers welcomed in and encouraged in their pregnancies, but fathers are also encouraged and supported throughout the pregnancy.

Mothers and fathers facing unplanned pregnancies deserve to be empowered, supported, counseled, encouraged and offered grace in the face of an unplanned pregnancy.

Praise be to God for the collaboration of these congregations coming together in support of life and professing what God tells about our lives and the lives of precious children in the womb — that we are created, redeemed and called by Him with a purpose from the moment of conception until natural death.

A special thanks to LCMS Life Ministry for the impact that these matching grant initiatives will make in the pro-life sphere and to all the pastors and donors who made this possible. *Soli Deo Gloria.*

Pregnancy Resource Center staff and LCMS volunteers gather to celebrate the funds raised — and God's gift of life. From left, Bob and Bev Miller, Kate Roberts, LJ Blinn, Irene Roberts, Valerie Millsaps, Chuck Anderson, Kathy and Don Wuethrick, Rev. Derek Roberts (pastor, Praise, Maryville, Tenn.), Beth Ottinger, Linda Anderson, and Rev. Danny Anderson (associate pastor, Grace, Knoxville).

Ready to serve when needed



In the wake of the deadly chain of intense storms and multiple tornadoes in March and April, Lutheran Early Response Teams (LERT) intensified their trainings as well.

Recently formed LERT teams at Trinity, North Little Rock, and Hope, Jacksonville, Ark., received training on April 10 and 11, and the Grace, Knoxville, team completed basic and advanced chainsaw trainings in late April.

They join the Mid-South District's existing teams in Paducah and Hopkinsville, Ky., and Batesville, Ark. The district now has a total of 82 LERT-trained volunteers.

The need for such teams will almost certainly continue, and volunteers are always welcomed. If your church is interested in LERT training, contact Jan Simko at 931-200-1777. The LCMS is also holding a conference in St. Louis Sept. 6-8 (*page 3*).

Rev. Ed Brashier, Southern District Disaster Response coordinator and trainer, is pictured with the new LERT chainsaw team following basic and advanced training April 27-29 at Grace, Knoxville. From left, Brian Strobel, Phil Bohlken, Brashier, Andrew Cole, Steve Peterson, Michael McCay, Jason Caudill, Rich Cole, David Wade, David Hart and Jim O'Hatnick.



Blessings at Celebration

IN PHOTO: Revs. Thom Lakso and Ray Krieg welcomed new members (from left) Darlene and Dick Davis, Connie Sexton, and Keith and Suzie Brandt to the Celebration congregation.

Five new members were received into the Celebration, Seymour, Tenn., congregation on Pentecost Sunday, May 28.

"Although we were far short of the 3,000 on the original Pentecost, this was a big event for our congregation of 23 confirmed," Rev. Ray Krieg said.

In fact, the figure represents a more than 20% increase in their membership.

The church offers an 11-week series of adult information classes to acquaint new members with both the teachings and practices of the LCMS and with other church members.



Hymn festival is Oct. 15

Grace Lutheran Church, Little Rock, will host a Hymn Festival at 3 p.m. on Sunday, Oct. 15. More information is coming soon.

Rev. Dr. Todd Peperkorn, assistant professor of Pastoral Ministry and Missions at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, will be the guest pastor. The organist will be Jacquelyn Magnuson of Grace.

Visit www.gracelutheranlr.org/hymn-festival.



40 years of blessings

More than 160 people attended the 40th anniversary celebration of Camp Trinity and the dedication of the new retreat lodge on May 21. The celebration was also a reunion of former board members, staff and campers, many of whom had not seen one another in years.

Guests toured the lodge and the rest of camp before and after the dedication service. They played games and enjoyed a barbecue dinner and fellowship outside the camp dining hall.

Many with early ties to the camp attended, including former board members Mike Hill, Don Raymond, Len and Linda Hill, Anne and Marvin Barnard, Rev. Darrell Kobs, Henry

Jones, Patti Airoldi, Debbie Schalk, Othel Bruce, Paul Easterday and Rev. Duncan Cox, who served as summer program director in the early years of the camp and later as pastoral advisor to the board.

Current board members also attended: President Katie McEntire, Vice-President Timothy Vanya, Secretary Debbi Nix, Treasurer Rob Chatham, Christine Koch and Dr. David Stearns.

Pastor Cox reminisced about the camp's early years and the people who served, especially the late Rev. Duane Brunette, who spearheaded the creation of the camp in 1983. He served Christ, Little Rock. Rev. John Mathis, who currently

serves at Christ, Little Rock, and as pastoral advisor to the camp board, preached during the dedication service.

Maggie Davis, wife of camp Operations Manager Aaron Davis, and their daughters, Gwyneth and Lottie, provided special music. Aaron Davis and David Cox, camp director, also spoke.

The retreat lodge is already busy with retreats and family reunions. More information on the lodge can be found at lutherancamp.org/retreat-lodge.

Enjoy day of music

The sixth annual Music on the Mountain will be held on Saturday, Sept. 30, at Camp Trinity. The festival will feature hours of music in many genres: gospel, bluegrass, country, folk, blues and contemporary praise. Musicians who would like to perform are invited to contact the Camp Trinity office at director@lutherancamp.org.



Performers can stay in bunkhouse cabins or in the campground at no charge Friday or Saturday night.

Admission is free, but donations will be accepted. Music on the Mountain is a fundraiser for Camp Trinity.

Concessions will be open all day, offering barbecue dinners starting at 11 a.m. The dinners will include pulled pork sandwiches with sides and drinks. Also, drinks and snacks will be available all day.

Families and friends can enjoy games such as cornhole, sand volleyball, horseshoes, gaga ball, and giant checkers. Guests are also invited to tour the camp.

SHARE YOUR NEWS WITH US!

Digital files, sent via e-mail, are preferred. Send email submissions to 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 **October 2023** issue by **Aug. 15**.

