



/ FEBRUARY 2021

# MID-SOUTH LUTHERAN

## Valentine, the martyr for love



Getty Images

**V**alentine's Day brings to mind images of hearts, greeting cards and flowers, but few people know anything about the man for whom the day is named.

The history goes back centuries to tell the story of a Christian martyr named Valentine, who lived under the Roman Empire. He was a young priest who lived in third-century Rome. The Roman Empire was constantly at war. Emperor Claudius II thought that single men made better soldiers than those with wives and families. So Claudius forbade young people to marry.

But out of compassion for Christian matrimony and love, Valentine defied the emperor and continued to perform weddings in secret.

He even comforted, encouraged and rescued victims of religious persecution.



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

However, Valentine was eventually arrested and imprisoned. According to the story, he fell in love with his jailor's daughter, Julia. One of the men who was to judge him under Roman law was Asterius. His daughter was blind. Valentine prayed for and allegedly healed the young girl with such astonishing results that Asterius became a Christian.

However, in 270 A.D., Valentine was sentenced to death because of his continuation of Christian weddings and preaching of the Gospel. But he was able to write Julia one final love letter that began, "From your Valentine."

His appeal as a sympathetic, heroic and romantic figure made him become one of the most popular saints in England and France. Some historians believe Valentine's Day is celebrated in

mid-February to commemorate the anniversary of his death. Others claim the Christian church decided to have St. Valentine's festival in mid-February to "Christianize" the pagan celebration of Lupercalia, a fertility festival dedicated to Faunus, the Roman god of agriculture.

Valentine greetings were popular as far back as the Middle Ages. The medieval poet Chaucer's work "Parliament of Foules" in 1375 linked traditional, courtly love with St. Valentine's Day. The poem refers to Feb. 14 as the day birds (and humans) come together to find a mate.

Chaucer wrote, "For this was sent on Seynt Valentyne's day; Whan every foul cometh ther to choose his mate." He may have invented the holiday we know today.

Valentine's example inspired millions of Christians and pagans alike to express our love for our loved ones. Just as he put in writing his deep love for his beloved, Julia, he inspired millions to express love to our very own "valentines." Yet Valentine's expression of love was the action he took as a self-sacrifice that led to his imprisonment, and it ultimately cost him his life.

Yet love comes in various kinds of packages. A love of pizza, cars or football isn't the same as love for our brothers, sisters and family. Yet it's not the kind of love that is totally giving and unconditional.

Eros is a love that receives, but doesn't necessarily give in return. Philia is familial love that oftentimes squabbles with our loved ones, but will never let

See **VALENTINE**, Page 2



Compass is a ministry of the Mid-South District that provides its member congregations and schools with the opportunity for a new direction for their ministries and mission outreach. Compass has several components that can be custom designed for the needs of each congregation or school:

► **A.C.T.S. (Assisting Congregations To Success)** allows congregations to work on identified opportunities in their community to bring about connections to specific community cultures. The Mid-South District provides assistance to congregations in identifying bridges to the community as a means to live in the *Witness, Mercy, Life Together* initiative of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

► **C.A.R. (Congregational Assessment Resource)** is an online tool designed to help congregations in identifying key factors in their ministry and mission, and compare their activity with a registry of other congregations. C.A.R. can help identify key areas where attention is needed and desired to enhance the mission and ministry of our member congregations.

► **M.A.P. (Ministry Action Plan)** is the process of offering a strategic planning exercise for congregations. It offers a written plan of objectives, derived from the strategies identified by the members of each participating congregation.

► **Revitalization**

“What does a healthy congregation look like?” A healthy ministry is both faithful and fruitful.

Faithful congregations are confessional ministries faithful to God’s Word. Faithfulness is a hallmark of the LCMS. It is the core that defines our ministries in the Mid-South District.

Fruitful ministries equip their members

to live as missionaries in their communities. They make Christ’s mission “to seek and save the lost” (Luke 19:10) their top mission priority.

If you and your congregation are trying to answer some tough questions — like “How do we get more people to church?”, “How do we follow up with guests?”, “Where are the young people?” or “How do we get ‘unstuck?’” — Compass has answers.

► **S.W.O.T. (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats)** is a process that uses C.A.R. information and allows the pastor, leaders and members of a congregation to engage in open and revelatory dialogue about the various aspects of the congregation’s mission and ministry. S.W.O.T. can help identify ways to engage members in meaningful ministry and empower them to connect to their communities in a meaningful and Christ-like way.

For more information, contact Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola at the district office: 901-373-1343, 866-373-1343 (toll free) or [rpaavola@mid-southlcms.com](mailto:rpaavola@mid-southlcms.com).

**Rev. William Zwick, pastor of First Lutheran Church, Harrison, Ark., has been appointed to the LCMS Board for International Mission.**



He has been involved in the Mid-South District’s COMPASS program and work on mission development in Northwest Arkansas. He has been with First Lutheran Church since June 2019.

Please keep Pastor Zwick and the important work of LCMS International Mission in your prayers.

## VALENTINE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

someone outside our circle do what we do or say to our family members. But the totally giving, unconditional and sacrificial love is called agape.

We express eros love each day in what we like to do, eat, or say. Philia love happens in our chosen circle of friends and family. But seldom, if ever, will we experience true agape love from the temporal world.

The greatest expression of agape love — true, unconditional and sacrificial love — is given to us:

But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.  
— Rom. 5:8

Without any expectation of something in return, Christ descended from His throne to take on human flesh to become our Savior and Lord. He taught love, showed love and gave the deepest expression of love by taking our sin on Himself under the wrath of God, so Jesus will welcome us into His eternal presence on the Last Day.

He told His disciples:

“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends.”  
— John 15:1

Valentine may be the saint of beekeepers and love. But Christ Jesus is love in an incomparable demonstration of how we are loved so we can love unconditionally.





## McDowell receives Weiser Award

The 2020 Ralph Weiser Excellence in Ministry Award was presented to Michael McDowell at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Murray, Ky., on Dec. 20.

The award is given annually, in honor of Ralph Weiser, to a layperson who has contributed exemplary service and stewardship to the Mid-South District's missions and ministries.

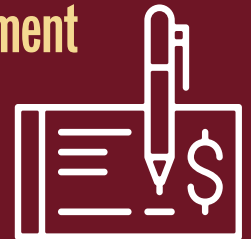
In addition to the bronze statue, the Mid-South District donates \$5,000 to the Lutheran ministry of the recipient's choice. McDowell chose LAMP (The Lutheran Association of Missionaries and Pilots) and Lutheran Bible Translators.



Celebrating are, from left, Angela Fowler, district executive director of Business and Finance; Pat and Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, district president; Michael and Diane McDowell; Nancy Lee, retired district business executive; and Paul Reaves, LCEF.

## Congregation mission commitment receipts

as of  
Nov. 30, 2020  
(11 months)



Anticipated amount (92% of budget)	\$1,410,723
Actual receipts	\$1,410,633
Over (under) anticipated amount	(\$90)

### Use of mission commitment receipts

Allocated to Synod for world missions	\$400,273
Allocated to Tanzania	\$22,917
Retained for district ministry/mission support (70% of receipts)	\$987,443
Total receipts	\$1,410,633

### Mission commitment receipts comparison

Actual receipts as of Nov. 30 2020	\$1,410,633
Actual receipts as of Nov. 30, 2019	\$1,392,896
Over (under) prior year receipts	\$17,737

## In Memoriam

**Rev. James Carl Walter**  
1953-2020



Rev. James Carl Walter was called to glory on Wednesday, Dec. 2. He was born in Paducah, Ky., to Carl and Margaret Walter on Oct. 3, 1953, and attended St. Paul, Paducah, where he was also baptized, confirmed, ordained and married to the love of his life, Paula Gail Donner, on Aug. 4, 1979.

They became the proud parents of three children and delighted in four grandchildren.

Pastor Walter received his Master of



Divinity from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in 1991. He served his vicarage at St. Peter, Reedsburg, Wis., and then served the congregations of Christ, White Cloud, Minn. (1991-95) and Grace, Little Rock (1995-2020). Pastor Walter also served as a

circuit visitor (2003-06).

He was a valued and dedicated member of the Mid-South District's Board of Directors from 2006 until his passing, and served as chairman. He served the district as first and second vice-president.

"Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

# 'Abide' at Summer Camp 2021

The apostle John records the words of Jesus:

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me."

— John 15:4

"Abide" is the theme for summer camp 2021 at Camp Trinity, the Lutheran Camp on Petit Jean Mountain. At daily Bible studies and evening campfire chats, campers will learn what it means to abide in Christ. More importantly, they will learn of His promise to abide in them.

The camp schedule will include 10 sessions, with two running concurrently. Specialty sessions include:

- ▶ Adventure Camp for teens
- ▶ Overcomers Camp for campers with special needs
- ▶ Arts Camp for budding artists, musicians, writers and actors
- ▶ Pioneers Camp for adventurous junior high students
- ▶ Two sessions of Family Camp, both on weekends for families with small children to enjoy camp activities together

Traditional sessions are also on the schedule: Pathfinders (grades 2-4), Explorers (4-6), Trailblazers (5-8) and Voyagers (7-9 and 10-12).

The camp operated in 2020 following directives from the Arkansas Department of Health, which required strict protocols. The camp staff is prepared to again follow whatever protocols the state requires.



Children and their parents explored Petit Jean Mountain during sessions of Camp Trinity's first Outdoor Classroom.

Health protocols didn't prevent summer 2020 campers from having fun, making friends and growing in faith at Camp Trinity.

## Outdoor Classroom adds 10 new sessions

The first semester of the Outdoor Classroom at Camp Trinity drew 29 students from 12 families. The camp has opened registration for the spring semester, with 10 new sessions on the schedule.

Classes are held on Thursdays from March 4 through May 6. The Outdoor Classroom is for school-aged children (6-17).

Classes for the term include:

- ▶ **It's a Small World** (Human Geography: learning about cultures around the world)
- ▶ **Mountain Music** (Fine Arts: distinctly American genres)
- ▶ **Junk Sculpture** (Fine Arts: found-object assembly)
- ▶ **Old-fashioned Games** (Physical Education: playground fun from 19th-century country schoolyards)



- ▶ **Digging Into History** (History: what archaeology can teach us about the past)
- ▶ **Kites and Bridges** (Engineering: design and construction)
- ▶ **Frontier Skills** (History: axe throwing, archery and canoeing)
- ▶ **Native Flora** (Science/Botany: uses and dangers of native plants)
- ▶ **Birdwatching** (Science/Ornithology: all about birds)
- ▶ **Creepy Crawlies** (Science/Entomology/Biology: snakes and bugs)

Each session also includes a message about how the living God acts in history and nature, and how we can learn more about our Creator through our own creative endeavors.



For more information and to register, visit **[lutherancamp.org](http://lutherancamp.org)**.

**David Cox**  
Director,  
Camp Trinity



# Pastors installed at Trinity, Memphis

The installations of Rev. Michael Croom as senior pastor and Rev. Jesus Ricardo Granado Lizardo as associate pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church and Hispanic Ministries, Memphis, were held on Nov. 29. Pastor Granado is from the Lutheran Church of Venezuela, an LCMS partner church body. He will develop a church plant and outreach to the Hispanic community in the greater Memphis area.

From left, (front row) Revs. Sawyer Meyer, Beautiful Savior, Olive Branch; Dr. Roger Paavola, district president; Ricardo Granado; Michael Croom; (back row) Mark Goble, circuit visitor and associate pastor, Christ the King, Memphis; Don Schmidt, Messiah, Memphis; Clarence Martin, emeritus, Memphis; and Brandon Martin, Salem Lutheran Ministries, Springdale, Ark.



## Gifts from the Heart

By Candy Habich

LWML Mid-South District President

**D**uring this month of hearts galore, I thought it timely to write about Gifts from the Heart. In the LWML, these gifts are typically useful things collected at an ingathering.

In fact, the LWML website has a whole list of kit suggestions to satisfy a myriad of needs. There is everything from new mom and new baby kits to first-responder kits. You can find the entire list at [lwml.org/gospel-outreach](http://lwml.org/gospel-outreach) — click “Gifts from the Heart Toolkit.”

While it is very worthwhile to collect items and assemble kits for distribution, this is mostly an anonymous type of activity. It is rare when the participants meet the recipients.

Some of the most precious Gifts from the Heart are much more personal. They may involve delivering meals, visiting shut-ins, providing respite for caregivers or volunteering as a mentor. There are many ideas for these sorts of activities on the Gospel Outreach webpage. Click “Jesus’ Love in Action Through the Year.”

The benefit of sharing your Gifts from the Heart in a personal manner is that you also have an opportunity to share a witness of



your faith. After all, there is no greater gift to share than the One that God gave to us — Jesus!

So be bold, pray for opportunities to share your faith firsthand. I promise, the Holy Spirit will be right there with you, as we read in 1 Thess. 1:4-5:

For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.

Serving with Gladness!

# Mid-South District 2021 Ordination Anniversaries

### 60 Years

**Rev. Daniel Otto** (emeritus)  
Murfreesboro, Tenn.

### 55 Years

**Rev. Luther Hasz**  
Christ, Paris, Tenn.

### 50 Years

**Rev. Bruce Hanson**  
First, Blytheville, Ark.

**Rev. Erwin Lueker Jr.** (emeritus)  
Elizabethton, Tenn.

### 45 Years

**Rev. David Hudak** (emeritus)  
Bella Vista, Ark.

**Rev. Roger Sterle** (emeritus)  
Bella Vista, Ark.

### 40 Years

**Rev. Edward Fehskens** (emeritus)  
Bristol, Tenn.

**Rev. John Lindner** (emeritus)  
Bella Vista, Ark.

**Rev. Daniel McDougall**  
Our Savior, Cabot, Ark.

**Rev. Lynn Spencer** (emeritus)  
Bentonville, Ark.

**Rev. James Watson** (emeritus)  
Ootlewah, Tenn.

**Rev. Carl Wenck**  
Grace, Murfreesboro, Tenn.

### 35 Years

**Rev. Paul Becker**  
Concordia, Kingsport, Tenn.

**Rev. Brian Bibler** (emeritus)  
Bella Vista, Ark.

**Rev. Thomas Sayre** (emeritus)  
St. Johns, Fla.

### 30 Years

**Rev. David Gadbow** (emeritus)  
Mountain Home, Ark.

**Rev. Donald White**  
St. John's, Stuttgart, Ark.

### 25 Years

**Rev. John Gierke**  
Peace, Conway, Ark.

**Rev. Mark Hass** (candidate)  
Fort Smith, Ark.

**Rev. Lane Reuter**  
Our Savior, Nashville, Tenn.

### 20 Years

**Rev. Kevin Conger**  
Hope, Jacksonville, Ark.

**Rev. Alebachew Teshome**  
Faith, Thompson's Station, Tenn.

### 15 Years

**Rev. Kirk Abatelli**  
Faith, Oak Ridge, Tenn.

**Rev. Curt Hoover**  
Faith, Thompson's Station, Tenn.

**Rev. Derek Roberts**  
Praise, Maryville, Tenn.

### 10 Years

**Rev. Thomas Bartzsch** (emeritus)  
Hot Springs Village, Ark.

**Rev. Joshua Leigeber**  
Pilgrim, Jonesboro, Ark.

**Rev. William Ondracka**  
Christus Victor, Knoxville, Tenn.

### 5 Years

**Rev. Gregory Bauch**  
Ascension, Madison, Tenn.

**Rev. Kirk Neugebauer**  
St. John's, Lape, Ark.



## WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANTS!

# OFFICIAL NOTICE

## The 21<sup>st</sup> Regular Convention

### Mid-South District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

#### Memphis, Tennessee

**Dates:** Thursday, July 1, 2021 (mid-afternoon) to Saturday, July 3, 2021 (mid-afternoon)

**Location:** The Hilton Hotel  
939 Ridgelake Blvd., Memphis, TN 38120; Phone: 901-684-6664

**Theme:** "Declare His Marvelous Works" - 1 Chronicles 16:24

**Opening Service with Holy Communion:**

Thursday, July 1, 2021 at 7:30 p.m.  
Christ the King Lutheran Church  
5296 Park Avenue, Memphis, TN 38119  
Preacher: *Synodical Representative*

### **NOTICE TO ALL CONGREGATIONS**

*Please remember the following deadlines to submit nomination ballots and convention resolutions:*

**NOMINATION BALLOTS FOR DISTRICT PRESIDENT**  
**NOMINATION BALLOTS FOR DISTRICT REGIONAL VICE PRESIDENTS**  
**NOMINATION BALLOTS FOR BOARD OF DIRECTORS (Commissioned and Lay)**

Deadline: **March 1, 2021**

**To be sent to the Mid-South District Secretary**

Rev. John Gierke  
Mid-South District – LCMS  
1675 Wynne Road, Cordova, TN 38016

**NOMINATION BALLOTS FOR DISTRICT SECRETARY**  
**NOMINATION BALLOTS FOR DISTRICT NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE**

Deadline: **March 1, 2021**

**To be sent to the District Nominations Committee c/o Mid-South District President**

Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola  
Mid-South District – LCMS  
1675 Wynne Road, Cordova, TN 38016

**REPORTS, MEMORIALS AND OVERTURES TO BE PRESENTED TO THE DISTRICT CONVENTION**

Deadline: **April 8, 2021**

**To be sent to the Mid-South District President**

Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola  
Mid-South District – LCMS  
1675 Wynne Road, Cordova, TN 38016

**NOMINATION BALLOTS FOR CIRCUIT VISITORS**

Deadline: **One day before the Circuit Forum**

**To be sent to Each Congregation's Respective Circuit Visitor**

*(Each Circuit Forum will be held at the District Convention or as scheduled by the individual Circuit per Synod Bylaw 5.2.2 [a])*



## CELEBRATIONS

### *Blessings abound!*

## Chapel of the Good Shepherd prepares its new home

### Sanctuary milestone

On Dec. 27, furniture builder Tommy Aslinger and his wife, Pat, delivered the lectern, the first of the chancel furniture for the new building of Chapel of the Good Shepherd, Sharps Chapel, Tenn. Pat and Tommy are both members of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Wartburg, Tenn. The lectern, pulpit, altar and communion rail have been donated by supporters and well-wishers — more steps taken by God's grace working through the generosity of His people!

### Raising the cross

On Dec. 13, crosses constructed by Jim Wonsey were dedicated by Rev. Paul Kritsch, Good Shepherd pastor, before being lifted to their lofty positions. Wonsey, assisted by Jeff Garretson, installed the lighted cross over the main entrance while Kevin Kitts joined them to help in raising the cross over the entrance to the pastor's study and fellowship hall.

### Make a joyful noise

On Dec. 10, a piano arrived, donated by Gary Krueger in memory of his good friend, Tom McCaffery. Jeff Garretson and Kitts received the piano, which could not be placed in its final location until the sanctuary was painted the following week. "Keep praying for a pianist," Pastor Kritsch counseled his flock. "The Lord is good, and He will provide!"



▲ The new Chapel of the Good Shepherd is located at 1542 Sharps Chapel Road, Sharps Chapel, Tenn.

▲ Helping install the cross to the new building were Jim Wonsey, Kevin Kitts and Jeff Garretson. Wonsey constructed the cross.

## April issue deadline is Feb. 15

Digital files, sent via e-mail, are preferred. Our submission deadline is the 15th of each month, two months before publication.

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



Tommy Aslinger, left, built and donated the lectern for the new church. He is shown with his wife, Pat, and in the center is Rev. Paul Kritsch.