



# MID-SOUTH LUTHERAN

## WHAT LIES BEYOND?



L CMS/Erik M. Lunsford

Prior to the 15th century, Queen Isabella's Spanish fleet carried a flag that said *Non Plus Ultra* (Nothing More Beyond). But when Christopher Columbus landed on the shores of North America, her flag was changed to say *Plus Ultra* (More Beyond). For the last two years, our eyes have looked toward the heavens to see if we could find answers to the tragic pandemic that has turned the world upside down. We used to glue our eyes to the TV to find out what might happen next as this event has thrown nations into despair.

### There is *Plus Ultra* — something more beyond

Jesus said:

"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die." JOHN 11:25-26



Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola  
District President

A dear friend asked me if it was OK to pray for God to take her to heaven. I read the words of St. Paul:

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But

to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. PHIL. 1:21-24

We recall the inspiration given by the great cloud of witnesses — the patriarchs, the prophets, the apostles, the elders and generation after generation of family and friends who truly rest from their labors. But we Christians don't mourn as those who have no hope. These saints are in the New Jerusalem. God has wiped away every tear. There is no more death, no more sorrow or pain.

That's why Paul says he is torn. For the

Christian, separation from this life into the company of the saints only means standing in a different place with the saints, joined in Christ Jesus. We are in the mystical body of Christ, which includes all the saints we can see and all the saints who have gone in glory.

When we gather around the communion rail, we gather in a semicircle to symbolize that same mystical union around the same living Christ. When we chant "Hosannas" here on earth, we sing together with the whole company of the saints gathered around the throne of God. We are bound together with them in one, great exalted hymn to praise our God. The circle is completed by Christ, who serves us and joins us together with Him as the triumphant Lamb of God.

Therefore, with Paul, we prepare. Our eyes are fixed toward heaven. We are reminded that in the order of God's creation, we live in His grace here.

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## PROMISE

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Our hope of eternal life with Him is secure. Our faith reminds us that His Son died a most horrible and innocent death to secure our eternal life, beyond the tragedies and pains of this earthly life. That's what Paul knew — his days were numbered. But he was prepared because his trust was in the grace of God through Jesus Christ. The Passion of Christ is celebrated in Lent to remind us what our gracious Lord has done for us in order to guarantee us an inheritance in God's Kingdom in everlasting glory!

### 'I do not fear death'

In his book, "Bound to be Free," Rev. Donald Deffner wrote about his final wish. He asked his family to put a special epitaph on his tombstone. It says, "I know whom I have believed."

In the same way, we are to watch and pray, to be ready and prepared at all times. The first-century Christians lived in the expectation that Jesus would return in their lifetime. And so should we! He's 2,100 years closer to His great and awesome day than He was back then. St. John writes:

He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen.

Come, Lord Jesus! **REV. 22:20**

As saints, by the power of God, we live knowing that each earthly day is a gift from God that will never come again.

Pastor Deffner writes about his visit with an old pastor on his deathbed. After talking for hours, he asked the pastor, "What do you think about your own death?"

The pastor looked carefully at the ceiling of his hospital room and began to slowly answer, "I do not fear death, because I trust in the Lord." But then a smile came across his face and he added, "But I wouldn't court death, either."

A man dying of an incurable disease told me, "Each night I thank God for another day and ask that I may remain in His will. In the morning I thank God that He has kept me safe through the night and allows me to remain in His will throughout the day."

Christians are faced with reality of our earthly life; we face it with zeal and vitality because we know the promises of God.

"He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day" Paul wrote to his young friend Timothy (2 Tim. 1:12 NIV).



### Not by our strength

You may have heard of the Iditarod dog sled race, It covers over 1,000 miles of wilderness with all sorts of challenges. Competitors vie for bragging rights as the best musher in the world. In 1987 and 1988, a woman won the competition. She pressed through blizzards, dark nights, bitter 50- and 60-below-zero temperatures to finish ahead of her competitors.

She prepared for the race's bitter conditions. She made booties for each of her dogs. Instead of being exposed to snow that acted like sandpaper, her dogs' feet were strong and in condition to pull strongly and press forward to reach the finish line.

This is not a moralistic poke in the belly to say, "You can do it, just try harder." Rather, this is an illustration to look at the saints who have gone before us to glory. They didn't rely on their own strength, but rather believed like St. Paul, who proclaimed that his strength came from God.

Some may be tempted to think that God doesn't care what happens to us. But we pray: "Lord you know we have problems in this country. You know we have problems with our health. You know we have troubles in the world..."

What? Don't we think God already knows what we read in the newspapers? Yet in His Word God remains active. In His Sacraments He visits us and sustains us. Jesus reminds all His followers, "I am with you always, to the end of the age" (**MATT. 28:20**).

Those who knew His promise and trusted His guidance during their earthly pilgrimage were never shaken from that truth. They now rest in that ever-growing circle of the saints around His throne in glory.

As we enter the Lenten season may we, like all the saints around the throne of the Lamb, be always faithful, knowing that the Lord is at our side. May our lives bear witness to the flag that sails over the fleet of the Christian church *Plus Ultimata* (there is more — much more — beyond).

# Rallying FOR LIFE

The first week of December could be a landmark for the unborn as the U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments in the *Dobbs v. Jackson* abortion case. The event made a soul-deep impression on Anna Young, daughter of Rev. Phillip Young, pastor of Redeemer, Nashville, and Mid-South District life coordinator.

Anna is a freshman at Concordia University Wisconsin and also a student in the Forge Mentorship Academy program. She recently earned first place at the National Right to Life Oratory Contest (see *Mid-South Lutheran*, August 2021).

Anna was in Washington, D.C., on the steps of the Supreme Court building, participating in a rally during the oral arguments on Dec. 1, continuing her fight for the rights of those yet unborn. Following are excerpts from a moving article she wrote:



“I fight every day for a post-Roe America, and this moment is pivotal.

“We are uncertain on the exact outcome of the Dobbs case, but one thing I know for certain is that *Roe v. Wade* truly belongs in the ash heap of history right alongside *Plessy v. Ferguson* and *Dred Scott v. Sandford*.

“The decision will probably be known in June 2022, and in the meantime

... we pray. We pray that the truth that life begins at conception and deserves protection is revealed to each justice. We pray that lives may be spared and women may be empowered with life rather than oppressed by a culture of death. We pray that America may right its wrong. We pray for repentance across the nation. We pray for the preborn to be included in the bold engraving sprawled across the front of the Supreme Court: ‘Equal Justice under Law.’ We pray with thanksgiving that, regardless of the outcome, Christ Jesus has already won the eternal victory.”

Kudos to Anna for so effectively carrying on the pro-life battle and giving a voice to the unborn!

The entire article is available at [thelc.ms/forge-right-to-life](http://thelc.ms/forge-right-to-life).

## FOCUS on EVANGELISM

### Divine appointments

Shared by the Board of Evangelism of First, Little Rock

When we meet someone, whether it's a friend, family member, neighbor, co-worker or the produce worker at the grocery store, it is helpful to remember that with God, there are no coincidences. Consider these points:

- ▶ It might be a divine appointment from the Lord for you to minister to that person, or for that person to minister to you.
- ▶ This person is unique and special, created by God in His image.
- ▶ What are they experiencing in their life — are they happy? Sad? Fearful? Angry? Joyful?
- ▶ Relate to them where they are, with non-judgmental acceptance and love.

- ▶ Seek to relate to them at the soul level — what is the status of their soul?
- ▶ Do they know the Lord?
- ▶ Are they producing the fruit of the Spirit in their lives?
- ▶ Do they know the Lord's calling on their life?
- ▶ Are they fulfilling God's calling on their life? If not, what is holding them back?
- ▶ How can you minister to them?
- ▶ What do they need you to pray for?

You can then tell them about Jesus, how He died for our sins and invites us to repent of our sins and receive Him into our lives as Lord and Savior with the gift of salvation.

And you can invite them to your church, to join a fellowship of believers who love the Lord and seek to share His love and truth with the world.

## Congregation mission commitment receipts

as of Nov. 30, 2021 (11 months)

|                                    |             |
|------------------------------------|-------------|
| Anticipated amount (92% of budget) | \$1,350,814 |
| Actual receipts                    | \$1,394,939 |
| Over (under) anticipated amount    | \$44,125    |

### Use of mission commitment receipts

|  |             |
|--|-------------|
| Allocated to Synod for world missions                            | \$395,565   |
| Allocated to Tanzania  | \$22,917    |
| Retained for district ministry/mission support (70% of receipts) | \$976,457   |
| Total receipts   | \$1,394,939 |

### Mission commitment receipts comparison

|                                     |             |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| Actual receipts as of Nov. 30, 2021 | \$1,394,939 |
| Actual receipts as of Nov. 31, 2020 | \$1,410,633 |
| Over (under) prior year receipts    | (\$15,694)  |

# Gifts from the Heart to help pregnancy ministries

**The LWML Mid-South District Convention will be held June 10-12 in Clarksville, Tenn.**  
 For more information and registration, visit [midsouthlwml.org/district-convention](https://midsouthlwml.org/district-convention).

Prayerfully consider gathering donations for our Gifts from the Heart recipients. Donations will be collected for the following ministries:

**Hope Pregnancy Center, Clarksville, Tenn.**  
 A Christ-centered ministry committed to upholding the sanctity of human life, Hope provides Bible-based counseling, education and help through crisis pregnancy and post-abortion trauma.

The staff at Hope recognizes every client interaction as an opportunity to share the Gospel and speak up for life to those who are in the midst of crisis. Services and programs are designed to meet real needs in the lives of those Hope serves and build a platform from which to speak of the hope available in Christ.

Services included pregnancy tests, ultrasounds and medical care referrals. Hope also provides maternity clothes and infant starter baskets.

Hope also has a Mom2Mom mentoring program. Clients ages 14 to 24 can be partnered with a mentor for nine months and attend monthly workshops that provide information, fellowship and hope. For more information, visit [hopepregnancy.net](https://hopepregnancy.net).

**Hope Unlimited Crisis Pregnancy Center, Paducah, Ky.**  
 Sharing the Good News of Jesus and defending the value of every life, Hope Unlimited educates and supports moms and dads through the journey of parenting.

Hope Unlimited provides free pregnancy testing, a Learn to Earn program, help for students with their schoolwork, adoption information, post-abortion recovery programs, court-ordered parenting classes and a full mens' program — all of which help build self-worth and integrity.

They also give referrals for other services, and receive clients through referrals from other local profit and non-profit agencies. A 24-hour Hope Line — for clients who may be in crisis and unable to access their services during regular business hours — is available.

Learn more about this organization at [hopeunlimitedfcc.org](https://hopeunlimitedfcc.org).



On Nov. 14, at Concordia, Kingsport, Tenn., a check for \$5,000 was presented to the Oasis of Kingsport women's ministry. Funds will be used to enhance the Bible study area and program. From left, Teri Miller, LWML East Tennessee Zone president; Dorothy Edwards, district Mission Grants Committee; Laura Mitchell, the Oasis; and Candy Habich, LWML district president. The Oasis is a 2020-22 mission grant recipient.



On Sunday, Nov. 7, at Our Savior, Nashville, a check for \$5,000 was presented to Inspiritus. Pictured are (from left) Sandra Gean, Our Savior LWML; Sandra Arnold, LWML district third vice-president; Rev. Lane Reuter, Our Savior senior pastor; and Janet Arning, regional director of Inspiritus for Middle Tennessee. Inspiritus, which offers many community building programs to help low-income families, is a 2020-22 mission grant recipient.



## Zion welcomes Pastor Grills

Rev. Willie Travis Grills was installed as pastor of Zion of Avilla Lutheran Church, Alexander, Ark., on Nov. 20. Pictured following the Rite of Installation are, from left (front row) Revs. Sawyer Meyer, Beautiful Savior, Olive Branch, Miss.; Dr. Roger Paavola, district president; Willie Grills; Kevin Conger, Hope, Jacksonville; Kent Schaaf, Grace, Little Rock; and Robert Benke, Faith, Hot Springs Village; (back row) Dr. LeRoy Leach, emeritus, Conway; Jim Burns, First, Benton; Ron Bacic, First, Little Rock; Emil Woerner, Friends in Christ, Bryant; Don Hefta, emeritus; and David Vandercook, Trinity, North Little Rock, and Shepherd of Peace, Maumelle.

## Immanuel has new pastor

Rev. Neil Vanderbush was installed as pastor of Immanuel, Memphis, on Dec. 5. From left, (front row) Revs. Sawyer Meyer, Beautiful Savior, Olive Branch, Miss.; Dr. Roger Paavola (district president); Neil Vanderbush; Michael Sneath, LCMS chaplain to the Armed Forces; (middle row) Clayton Seller, Faith, Collierville; David Vandercook, Trinity, North Little Rock; Clarence Martin, emeritus; Michael Croom, Trinity, Memphis; (back row) Chuck Neugebauer and Mark Goble, both of Christ the King, Memphis.





Instrumental to the progress of Faith's remodeling effort were members, from left, Tim Peters, Dayton Gehler and Benny Stovall.

## Faith, Bentonville celebrates renovation

The completion of an extensive remodeling project undertaken by Faith Lutheran Church, Bentonville, Ark., was celebrated on Oct. 3 with a dedication of the redesigned sanctuary. Rev. David Schmidt, Faith pastor, led the service.

Inspired by the example of Bruce Greene, a leader in earlier renovation efforts, many members of the congregation donated to the project and put their manual skills to work as well.

Thanks be to God for the will and the way to accomplish this inspirational metamorphosis to His house.

## Share your news with us!

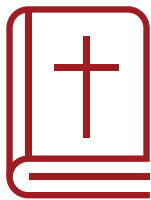


We are always in need of more submissions for *Mid-South Lutheran*. They help remind us of what God is doing around the Mid-South District. It is also a way to share ideas for nurturing those God has already gathered into His church and for reaching those still outside of the flock with the Good News about Jesus. It finally reminds each of us that Christ's church is much larger than just our particular congregation.

We welcome pictures and stories of congregational events, youth events, outreach events, installations, events from your men's or women's group, servant events, conferences, anniversaries, church renovations or additions, and much more. If you would like an upcoming event publicized, please make sure we have the information at least two months in advance.

**Submissions for the April issue are needed by Feb. 15.**

Send submissions to **LW@mid-southlcms.com** or by postal mail to: **Judy Otto; 150 N. Maury St.; Holly Springs, MS 38635**. Please ensure photos sent electronically are high resolution.



See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland. *IS. 43:19*

This summer at Camp Trinity, counselors will take campers on an adventure through God's Word in daily Bible studies, focusing on God's people wandering into the wilderness and the lessons to be learned from those journeys.

Those attending "Into the Wild" will learn how Jesus made a way through the wilderness of our fallen world for sinners to enter the presence of God, forgiven and unashamed.

Keeping with the theme, counselors will take campers on real adventures in the wilds of Petit Jean Mountain. Campers will hike and explore canyons, cliffs, caves, boulders and waterfalls while learning about Arkansas wildlife. Some treks will be led by interpreters from Petit Jean State Park.

Camp activities also include swimming, horseback riding, large-group games, archery and axe throwing, tent camping, crafts, service projects and campfires every night with lots of singing.

Camp Trinity is planning nine sessions,



including two weekend family camps. With construction of the new retreat lodge progressing on schedule, the camp board anticipates it will be open in time for the family camps in late July. The lodge will

more than double the housing capacity from previous family camps.

Families can enjoy a sampling of activities led by camp staff. These sessions are designed especially for families with younger children so that they can experience camp with parents and grandparents, reducing homesickness. Older siblings participate as well.

Because of the high demand for summer camp for students in grades 5-8, a second **Trailblazers** session has been added. **Pioneers** camp, in which attendees pitch tents near the waterfront and learn outdoor skills, is also for grades 5-8. The new schedule offers more options, making it easier to plan around family vacations.

**Adventure** camp for high schoolers includes a canoe float trip on the Buffalo River, along with tent camping, climbing Pinnacle Mountain and in-depth Bible studies.

Traditional sessions are planned for students in grades 2-12 and new graduates. Parents can learn more and register their children for camp at [lutherancamp.org](http://lutherancamp.org). Click the "Summer Camp" link at the top of the page.

### Outdoor Classroom resumes in spring

Camp Trinity has scheduled a fourth semester of the Outdoor Classroom, running for 10 consecutive Thursdays from March 3 through May 5. The classes are designed for homeschooled children, but students in Lutheran schools have participated and are welcome.

Sessions will include speakers from the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, Petit Jean State Park and other agencies. Students will explore the fauna, flora, history and geography of Arkansas, along with arts and culture. Some parents participate in the activities, while others use the time to prepare lesson plans, work on projects or run errands. The sessions typically run five hours, with a lunch break.

Families can sign up for individual classes or for the entire semester at a sharply reduced fee. Learn more and register at [lutherancamp.org](http://lutherancamp.org). Click "Home School" at the top of the page.

# Albino ministry prospers in Tanzania

Teams from the Mid-South District have been supporting ministry to the Albinos in the Shinyanga region of Tanzania, which is within the Southeast of Lake Victoria Diocese (SELVD) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania (ELCT).

In collaboration with Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne; the Indiana District; and St. John Lutheran Church, Bingen, Ind., our district has supported the theological education and confessional identity of the SELVD since 2013, when the educational program was developed and implemented for the Bishop Makala Training Centre.

Old tribal religions, however, remain a force. At their worst, witch doctors take the body parts of albinos (common in this corner of the world) and sell them as amulets and charms. They are thought to have magical powers that make one rich, successful and powerful.

Many parents bring their albino children to the orphanage in Shinyanga, where they can be protected by walls and guards from the threats of tribal religious practices. However, the government-run orphanage is severely underfunded and overcrowded, causing these children to live in very sad conditions.

In 2021, the first albino orphanage — Vulnerable Children’s Home — was built on the campus of the Mwadui Lutheran Secondary School, where children can be incorporated into “normal life” rather than segregated at the public orphanage, and plans include the construction of additional buildings at this safe location.

During a visit to the school last year, team leader Bob Allen said that Headmaster/Assistant Bishop Yohana Nzulu showed the team two new buildings that had been built at the back of the school property, and another group of volunteers will be bound for Mwadui in July 2022 to work on two more homes for albino students.

In addition, Rev. Shauen Trump,



LCMS International Mission’s regional director for Africa, anticipates progress in gaining additional support for the Albino children’s home project during the coming year with help from LCEF through a Kaleidoscope Grant and support of the Mid-South District and other donors and congregations.

Allen credits the Mid-South District’s support of the pastor training program at Negezi and ongoing mission team

visits to the SELVD as catalysts for the successful collaborative efforts to date, as he plans another visit in May 2022. Donated funds and sponsorships to support the children at the heart of this essential ministry are always welcomed, and prayers for God’s continued blessings are encouraged.

For more information, visit [elct-selvd.org](http://elct-selvd.org) or contact Bob Allen at [rjallen@prodigy.net](mailto:rjallen@prodigy.net).