



# MID-SOUTH LUTHERAN

# Lent.

A SEASON OF GRIEF — AND JOY!



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

One of the overriding themes of Lent is remorse over our sins and what that cost Jesus. But remember when we grew up, we were told, “Big boys don’t cry.” Something I must have heard many times is, “Don’t cry over spilled milk.” The best one of them all was, “For crying out loud!”

Scripture, however, is loaded with examples of shedding tears, some of them from really big and important men and women. Job wept in agony at his suffering; David wept over his son, Absalom; and Joseph wept for joy when he was reunited with his brothers. Solomon says there is a time for weeping and a time for joy. The psalmist says:

Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy! **PS. 126:5**

Maybe we need to get back to being honest about our feelings. There really is a holy God who holds us accountable. He really did send His Son, Jesus, to die for our sins and rise for our justification. We really are condemned to an eternity in hell unless we repent and trust Christ as our only Savior. For those who trust in Him, there’s really a wonderful eternity ahead filled with rejoicing, where there are no more tears of sorrow, but rather real tears of joy.

Lent focuses on tears because they tell such a profound story. Indeed, the Passion really means a

strong feeling of pain and suffering. What could be more appropriate than to focus on tears that came as a result of what sin did to this world?

Sometimes tears are from the disciples. Sometimes tears are from the women. Sometimes tears are even shed by Jesus. It’s about Him, the time Jesus wept. It’s all about His grief over Jerusalem. That grieving actually began around Palm Sunday for Jesus. You’d think it would have been a joyous occasion, with all the palm branches and the shouts of “Hosanna” to the King.

But it wasn’t. Jesus approached the city with sorrow:

“Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. ... You did not know the time of your visitation.” **LUKE 19:42, 44**

What He meant, of course, is that most of the people didn’t recognize the time — the coming of the Messiah. They didn’t realize this was a time of repentance. They didn’t believe in God’s grace and that mercy belonged to them by grace, so Jesus wept.

This happens on the Tuesday after Palm Sunday. Jesus came into the holy city amid the throng of people. He rid the temple court of the money changers. He commended the widow for her offering of two mites and spent countless hours discussing theology

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## MESSAGE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

with those thick-headed Pharisees and Sadducees. He was the clear winner in those debates.

From reading the Scriptures, it looks like things are going pretty well for Jesus. The religious hypocrites were publicly humiliated. So the throne of David seemed like His for the taking. You'd think He'd be rejoicing, but He wasn't. What's wrong with Jesus? Is He a sourpuss?

It's not Jesus who is the problem. It's the people. They still rejected Him for what He was and is. They wanted a military king, which brought Jesus grief. But don't we like to win arguments? Don't we feel good when we win an argument?

Not Jesus. He didn't come to compete in a popularity contest. He came to call people to faith and repentance. He came to save them by His death and resurrection. He came to win souls — forever.

To some of the common folks, Jesus was the Messiah, but not the Son of God. They saw Him as a miracle worker, but not the Redeemer of their souls. To the leaders, Jesus was a rival who had embarrassed them. Even His own disciples couldn't quite figure out who He really was.

In other words, the heart and soul of Jerusalem was lost, so Jesus grieved:

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem ... How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!” LUKE 13:34”

Can you sense the pain? Many of us have lost loved ones, so we know the pain. That's what Jesus is feeling as He sorrows over Jerusalem. He sees the utter destruction of everything that the holy city stood for because religious leaders couldn't see the God and Man who stood directly in front of them.

But spiritually Jesus doesn't just grieve over a city. He grieves at the loss of souls to an eternity of darkness apart from God. Created, nurtured and loved by God, the very people of God rejected



**“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,  
was a cry of sorrow. But  
the same words can just  
as easily express a cry  
of joy as you and I hear  
Christ's Word and receive  
Him in faith.”**

Him as their Savior — the One who came to save them. Jesus pleaded with them to believe, but they didn't. So, Jesus wept.

What about us? Is Jesus in sorrow over Christianity today? Are we like rebellious and unbelieving Jerusalem, going dutifully to church and maintaining our membership, but not really embracing all that the church stands for?

Set apart for the express purpose of repentance, Ash Wednesday is when we're supposed to resolve our calling and move back toward God. But like Jerusalem, we've heard the teaching of Jesus. In fact, we've heard *more* about Jesus and what He accomplished than what the people of Jerusalem heard.

We've read of His suffering and death. We've read of His rising from the dead and ascension into heaven to prepare a place for us. We've heard Jesus say that the time is fulfilled — all things are complete.

So as we begin Ash Wednesday in formal and liturgical ways, we acknowl-

edge that Jesus has called us to faith. We hear His yearning for us to receive His gracious love. We've publicly confessed our sins and received the ashes as an outward symbol of our repentant hearts. We're even prepared to receive the true body and blood of our Savior for the forgiveness of our sins.

That's a whole lot more than the people of Jerusalem ever had. But will we be different tomorrow? Will we forgive those who have hurt us? Will we love our neighbor as ourselves? Will we apply ourselves to the Word and Sacraments with greater devotion? Will there be rejoicing in heaven because of the repentance we have truly done in our hearts? Or will Jesus still weep over chicks that refuse to come to the cover of His gracious wings?

There's sorrow in the words of Jesus. But don't overlook the hope and blessings in what we read. It's not all guilt and damnation. There's joy in the Gospel. Jesus said:

“For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

MATT. 23:39

Jesus comes in the name of the Lord. He comes to save sinners. That's what the crowd sang about on Palm Sunday:

“Hosanna to the Son of David!  
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”

MATT. 21:9

Ash Wednesday is a new opportunity, another chance to embrace what we've heard and yield to the calling of the Holy Spirit in God's Word. Lent is such an opportunity. May we use this time to bless Jesus, to trust Him, to let Him gather us unto Himself.

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,” was a cry of sorrow. But the same words can just as easily express a cry of joy as you and I hear Christ's Word and receive Him in faith.

May this Lenten season be a time of rejoicing, because we *do* know the rest of the story. Our sins are washed away by the loving sacrifice of our Lord, Jesus Christ, and out of that love we are embraced in the shelter of His wings forever.

# WANTED: Future church workers

## SET APART TO SERVE

LCMS CHURCH WORK RECRUITMENT



*Set Apart to Serve* is the intentional effort of the LCMS to identify, encourage and form future church workers for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ until His return.

Your congregation can help spread the word about this effort and point interested future workers in the right direction by sharing information about the *Set Apart to Serve* initiative within your congregation. To download bulletin inserts and presentations, and to learn more about the initiative, visit [lcms.org/sas](http://lcms.org/sas).



Photos: LCMS/Erik M. Lunsford



## Overtures sought for LCMS 68th Regular Convention

The 68th Regular Convention of the LCMS will be held July 29-Aug. 3 in Milwaukee. The principal business of an LCMS convention is the consideration of reports and overtures.

Overtures are recommendations in the form of proposed resolutions requesting action on the part of the convention. Reports and overtures shall be submitted to the Synod president no later than 20 weeks prior to the opening date of the convention. For the upcoming convention, that deadline is March 11.

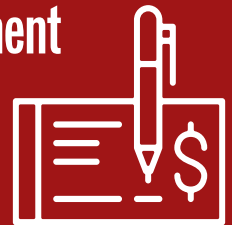
**However, because of printing timetable requirements, an earlier deadline of Feb. 10 is recommended.** An electronic template and accompanying instructions are available at [lcms.org/convention/overtures](http://lcms.org/convention/overtures) (see the “How is an overture assembled?” section).

The theme for the convention is “We Preach Christ Crucified,” based on 1 Cor. 1:18-25. In a world of uncertainty, the church’s proclamation, her mission and her identity remain the same: We preach Christ crucified.



## Congregation mission commitment receipts

as of  
Nov. 30, 2022  
(11 months)



Anticipated amount (92% of budget) .....	\$1,391,398
Actual receipts .....	\$1,403,669
Over (under) anticipated amount .....	\$12,271

### Use of mission commitment receipts

Allocated to Synod for world missions .....	\$398,184
Allocated to Tanzania .....	\$22,917
Retained for district ministry/mission support (70% of receipts) .....	\$982,568
Total receipts .....	\$1,403,669

### Mission commitment receipts comparison

Actual receipts as of Nov. 30, 2022 .....	\$1,403,669
Actual receipts as of Nov. 30, 2021 .....	\$1,394,939
Over (under) prior year receipts .....	\$8,730



Shared by the Board of Evangelism of First, Little Rock

Two good friends invite you on a day trip to the Atlantic Ocean to try out their new boat, The Laodicea. You are excited to go although you cannot swim and have a fear of drowning. A major storm is forecast, but not until later.

Thirty miles out, the wind comes up, waves start getting rough and a rogue wave hits your boat, killing the engine. You then discover your friends forgot life preservers and begin to panic.

As the boat begins to take on water, a large ship in the distance hears your frantic cries on the radio and heads toward you. Close by, a life preserver is thrown into the water and you hear shouts to jump out of your boat to be rescued.

You are terrified, fearful you will miss the life preserver and sink into the sea. Will you get out of the boat and try to get to the life preserver?

Just like in this scenario, many of us are in a boat called “Laodicea,” which Jesus

addresses in Rev. 3:15-17:

“I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing.”

Just as Jesus invited the apostle Peter to get out of the boat and come to Him in Matthew 14, Jesus invites us to get out of lukewarm Laodicea and come to Him, that we may walk with Him and live extraordinary, supernatural lives, led by the Holy Spirit.

We are all in a boat — our culture and the world — that is sinking. Jesus says get out of the boat and live, for He is our *eternal-life* preserver. Are we going to go down with the ship, or are we going to walk with the Lord across the water in an unparalleled spiritual adventure?

Do all of your friends, family and acquaintances have this eternal-life preserver — Jesus? If not, what are you going to do about it? For the hurricane is on the way, the boat is leaking, the water is deep, heaven and hell are real and eternity is forever.

To God be the glory.

## SAVE THE DATE

## Henkel Conference returns in 2023

Thanks to a great response in 2022, the next Henkel Conference has been scheduled for Aug. 7-8 at Ascension Lutheran Church, Nashville. Registration information is coming soon.

The Henkel Conference is devoted to sound theology and cultural engagement by hosting distinguished Lutheran theologians and experts on Christian subject matter.

The speaker lineup has been finalized:

► **Carl Trueman**

Professor of Biblical and Religious Studies, Grove City College, Grove City, Pa.

► **Jack Kilcrease**

Associate professor of Historical and Systematic Theology, Christ School of Theology, Brookings, S.D.

► **Aaron Kheriaty**

Fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center, Bioethics and American Democracy

► **Rev. Dr. Peter Scaer**

Chairman and professor of Exegetical Theology, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne

► **Matthew Eppinette**

Executive director, The Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity

► **Rev. Dr. Jordan Cooper**

President, American Lutheran Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne

► **Adam Koontz**

Pastor, Trinity Lutheran Church, Denver

► **David Fowler**

President, Family Action Council of Tennessee

## Welcome, Pastor Wagner

Rev. William Wagner was installed as pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, Columbia, Tenn., on Nov. 20. Pictured are, from left, Revs. Henry Graf, Promise Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne, Ind.; Carl Wenck, emeritus; Curt Hoover, Faith, Thompson Station, Tenn.; Dr. Roger Paavola, district president; David McMinn, Shepherd of the Hills, McMinnville, Tenn.; William Wagner; Lane Reuter, Our Savior, Nashville; Randy Sakach, Prince of Peace, White House, Tenn.; Marty Nutter, Faith, Tullahoma, Tenn.; and Craig Fiebiger, Faith, Thompson Station, Tenn.



## Good News **FOR ALL** who pass by

On Nov. 13, following morning worship, members of Chapel of the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Sharps Chapel, Tenn., gathered to dedicate their new road sign to God's service. The sign and church building are located on Sharps Chapel Road and are clearly visible to those who travel in and out of Sharps Chapel.

"More than just a way to give information about church and Bible study times, this sign helps us to share messages about our faith," said Rev. Paul Kritsch, Chapel pastor. "We want passersby to know that



Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior, and that He has Good News for them, too."

The dedication of the new road sign is the latest exciting development for this grow-

ing ministry. Just last year, the congregation completed construction of a new facility after several years of gathering for worship in community buildings.

## 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 April 2023 issue by Feb. 15!





Getty Images

**By Rev. Robert Portier**

Pastor, Immanuel, Bossier City, La.

**H**ow did we get what we today call the Holy Bible? First, God has clearly revealed that all Scripture is breathed out by Him and, second, God used more than 40 individuals and their personalities to record the various books of His Word so they could be made known to all.

The Bible's 66 books were produced over a period of about 1,600 years. The book of Job perhaps dates back to 2,000 B.C., most of the Old Testament was written between 1,500 and 500 B.C., and all of the New Testament was recorded between 45 and 95 A.D. Taken together, this amazing book has a consistent story line — a meta-narrative that points to Christ, its one ultimate author.

Authors Dan Brown (“The Da Vinci Code”) and Richard Dawkins (“The God Delusion”) would have you believe that we as Christians are simply deluded, mindless followers of a long list of interconnected manipulative monarchs and their obedient clerics. However, a simple examination of their claims shows them to be either dishonest, uniformed or some combination thereof.

Brown claims that some 80 gospels preceded what we have now. The four Gospels, however, have never been in question historically. It would also be difficult to identify more than seven or eight gnostic gospels which, incidentally, the church dismissed as heretical for

good reason over 1,900 years ago.

It was no secret club that made these decisions. What they dismissed and why have been published and is available for all to read in documents by early church fathers Clement, Origen, Athanasius and many others. We could spend a lot of time pointing out the errors of the critics, but let's move on to more positive evidence.

In 1976, John A.T. Robinson, a liberal scholar, Anglican bishop and dean at Trinity College in Cambridge, England, wrote a book titled “Redating the New Testament.” He originally set out to show that the New Testament had been

written hundreds of years after Christ, but the evidence led him in quite a different direction.

He states in his book that all 27 books of the New Testament must, in fact, have been written before 70 A.D. He had many reasons for this, but one was simply that, from a purely historical perspective, it is difficult to believe following the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 A.D. that anything originating in or around the region of Jerusalem by people of Jewish descent would not carry even one mention of the event. This was such a significant, historic event that many writers after that date cited the number of years that had elapsed since then to date their own writings.

God used real people to produce His Holy Word, but divine inspiration does not mean that the writers functioned as robots, moving the pen in some disconnected, mindless way. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21).

God used the personalities of the writers (which are evident throughout their writings): Matthew the tax collector was concerned with the details of what he records; Luke the physician was concerned with the personal aspects of the same accounts; Paul the Pharisee wrote in a highly-educated form of Greek with a clearly fluent knowledge of Hebrew as well.

In the same way, people today have different writing styles and their vocabulary, level of education and method of constructing sentences all come through in the way they write.

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*(This article is part of Pastor Portier's "Red River Reflections" series. More about the Bible's origins, writing styles, and credibility will be addressed by Pastor Portier in Part 2, to be published in the March issue.)*



LCMS/Erik M. Lunsford

# CONGRATULATIONS!

We share with you the Mid-South District pastors who will celebrate ordination anniversaries in 2023. We rejoice and give thanks to God for the gifts these men provide to His church.

## 55 YEARS

**Rev. Kenneth Haydon** (*emeritus*)  
Eureka Springs, Ark.

**Rev. Arthur Kaufmann** (*emeritus*)  
Bristol, Tenn.

**Rev. Stephen Stov** (*emeritus*)  
Rockwood, Tenn.

**Rev. David Tews** (*emeritus*)  
Horseshoe Bend, Ark.

## 50 YEARS

**Rev. Barry Hildebrandt**  
Cross of Christ, Chattanooga, Tenn.

**Rev. Paul Kritsch**  
Chapel of the Good Shepherd, Sharps Chapel, Tenn.

## 45 YEARS

**Rev. Dan Elkins** (*emeritus*)  
Olive Branch, Miss.

**Rev. Johnny Graham**  
Zion, Ulm, Ark.; Our Savior, Brinkley, Ark.

**Rev. Gene Henke** (*emeritus*)  
Nolensville, Tenn.

**Rev. Robert Herring** (*emeritus*)  
Holiday Island, Ark.

**Rev. Larry Rockemann** (*emeritus*)  
Knoxville, Tenn.

## 40 YEARS

**Rev. Andrew Toopes**  
Holy Trinity, Bowling Green, Ky.

**Rev. Thom Lakso** (*emeritus*)  
Knoxville, Tenn.

**Rev. Charles Neugebauer**  
Christ the King, Memphis, Tenn.

**Rev. Robert Pfaff** (*emeritus*)  
Wartburg, Tenn.

**Rev. Robert Seaton**  
First, Cleveland, Tenn.

**Rev. Larry Seiferth** (*emeritus*)  
Peoria, Ariz.

**Rev. Terry Tieman**  
Grace Celebration, Cordova, Tenn.

**Rev. Brian Truog**  
Christ Our Savior, Loudon, Tenn.

## 35 YEARS

**Rev. Russell Belisle**  
Cross of Calvary, Memphis, Tenn.

**Rev. Mark Krause**  
Salem Lutheran Ministries, Springdale, Ark.

**Rev. Randy Loux**  
Chaplain, Clarksville, Tenn.

**Rev. Steven Teske** (*candidate*)  
Little Rock, Ark.

**Rev. William Wagner**  
Trinity, Columbia, Tenn..

## 25 YEARS

**Rev. Douglas DeWitt**  
Faith, Thompson's Station, Tenn.

**Rev. Robert Harbin**  
Faith, Collierville, Tenn.

**Rev. Mark Wenzelburger** (*emeritus*)  
Garfield, Ark.

**Rev. Philip Young**  
Redeemer, Nashville, Tenn..

## 20 YEARS

**Rev. Paul Hass**  
Bella Vista, Bella Vista, Ark.

## 15 YEARS

**Rev. Andrew Abraham**  
Shepherd of the Hills, Crossville, Tenn.

**Rev. Robert (Danny) Anderson**  
Grace, Knoxville, Tenn.

**Rev. Shawn Found**  
LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces,  
Little Rock, Ark.

**Rev. Edward Maanum**  
First, Knoxville, Tenn.

**Rev. Brandon Martin**  
Salem Lutheran Ministries,  
Springdale, Ark.

**Rev. Theodore McMinn**  
Shepherd of the Hills, McMinnville, Tenn.

**Rev. Kevin McReynolds**  
Redeemer, Mountain Home, Ark.

**Rev. Aaron Neugebauer**  
Redeemer, Paragould, Ark.  
St. John's, Lafe, Ark.

**Rev. Gregory Prauner** (*candidate*)  
Battle Creek, Neb.

**Rev. Mark Rhoads**  
Christ Our Savior, Loudon, Tenn.

**Rev. Gordon Smith**  
Our Savior, Morristown, Tenn.  
Christ of the Cumberland, Harrogate, Tenn.

**Rev. Jason Zirbel**  
Grace, Greenwood, Ark..

## 10 YEARS

**Rev. David Graves**  
St. Paul, Wartburg, Tenn.

**Rev. Joseph Jacks**  
St. Philip, Chattanooga, Tenn.

**Rev. William Ringer**  
St. John's, Russellville, Ark.

**Rev. Clayton Sellers**  
Faith, Collierville, Tenn.

**Rev. Alan Thoe**  
Grace, Murfreesboro, Tenn.

## 5 YEARS

**Rev. James Belles**  
Grace Celebration, Cordova, Tenn.

**Rev. Timothy Hunze**  
Emmanuel, Hermitage, Tenn.

**Rev. Jeremy McDonald**  
Fort Wayne, Ind.

**Rev. George Smith**  
Faith, Oak Ridge, Tenn.

**Rev. Gerald Stobaugh**  
Holy Spirit, Oak Ridge, Tenn.

**WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANTS**

# CAMP TRINITY



## Summer schedule has new additions

Two new sessions have been added to the summer camp 2023 schedule at Camp Trinity, the Lutheran Camp on Petit Jean Mountain.

A family camp designed especially for families of LCMS pastors and church workers is July 5-7 (Wednesday-Friday). The summer schedule already has two weekend family camp sessions that are more convenient for most families, but since pastors have to leave early to lead worship on Sunday, it became apparent that a mid-week session would better serve church-worker families.

Another new session, Wilderness,

replaces Pioneers. Wilderness camp will emphasize outdoor skills — survival, building log and rope structures, hiking safety and first aid, outdoor cooking and more. Campers will stay in tents for one night. The four-night session, to be held July 16-20, will include many of the same activities as traditional summer camp, including swimming, horseback riding, canoeing, archery, games and campfires.

The summer camp season includes nine sessions plus Boot Camp for counselors-in-training. Learn more and register at [lutherancamp.org](http://lutherancamp.org). Click the “Summer Camp” link up top.

▲ Katie McEntire, a member of St. John's, Stuttgart, Ark., leads First Word at the fall Linkt retreat for junior high youth. The senior high Linkt retreat is March 3-5.

▼ Campers will compete in axe throwing at Camp Trinity's 2023 summer camp.

## Register for Linkt senior youth retreat

The Linkt retreat for senior high youth is March 3-5. Rev. Dr. Leroy Leach, who was the main presenter at the Linkt junior high retreat in October, is returning to lead Bible study and worship at the senior high retreat.

He will also lead an evening “Ask the Professor” session in which youth can ask questions about faith, sin and temptation, evolution v. creation, relationships or anything on their minds.

The theme is “Fight the Good Fight,” based on 2 Tim. 4:7. Activities will include worship, hiking, games, a service project, fellowship and campfires.

Congregations sending youth are asked to also send adult chaperones.

**The early registration discount deadline is Feb. 5.** Pricing and other details can be found at [lutherancamp.org/linkt-youth-retreats](http://lutherancamp.org/linkt-youth-retreats).

