



MID-SOUTH LUTHERAN

SOLOMON'S WISDOM, and the new year's Star of Hope

By the time you read this article, 2020 should be gone in welcomed relief!

Last January began with eager anticipation of great expectations. Then February and March came along with a strange alien invader.

How many conversations have you had this past year that did *not* include something about COVID-19? The roller coaster economy, the rioting in our cities' streets, a contested presidential election — just to name a few things — made 2020 a year we wanted to banish into history.

We had hoped that 2020 would be a year of clear vision, but everything that wandered into the year made for a blurred vision of what was going to happen next. So much for the meaning of perfect vision!

Each year on Dec. 31, over 1 billion eyes from all over the world are focused on the sparkling Waterford Crystal Times Square ball. At 11:59 p.m., the ball begins its descent as millions of voices unite to count down the final seconds of the year and celebrate the beginning of a new year full of hopes, challenges, changes and dreams.

The ball is a geodesic sphere, 12 feet in



Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola
District President

diameter and weighing almost 12,000 pounds, built to withstand the stresses of harsh weather conditions to brightly shine over 400 feet above Times Square.

The ball, known as "The Star of Hope," is made up of 2,688 Waterford Crystal panels which each reflect an annual theme. The 288 panels designed for 2021 express the new "Let There be Love" theme, and join older triangles inscribed with "Let There be Courage," "Let There Be Joy," "Let There Be Peace," and the original "Let There Be Light" message.

It is a beautiful thing to watch at midnight in New York. Over 1 million

people gather there each year no matter what the weather conditions might be. It's beautiful on television and I can't imagine how beautiful it is in person.

And if you are ever there in person and are so inclined, you can make a wish at the New Year's Wishing Wall (sounds like a modern-day Jerusalem temple Wailing Wall.) You'll write it on a piece of New Year's Eve confetti. All wishes will be collected and added to the 2,000 pounds of confetti that flutters down at midnight onto the crowd celebrating in Times Square.

So the Times Square crystal ball represents lots of wishes, love, courage, joy, light and hope. But love, courage, joy, light and hope are not found in wishes or in a crystal ball. The world may look up to find them there, but Solomon tells us otherwise, and I believe this is something we should think about as we begin the new year.

King Solomon, King David's son, wrote his proverbs sometime between 1,000 and 900 years B.C. Perhaps some may have been written even before that. Put together are the most important 513 of the over 3,000 proverbs he wrote.

Proverbs means "to be like." Proverbs are simple moral statements that teach fundamental realities about life. In the beginning of his reign as king over Israel, Solomon sought wisdom from God, the only source of true wisdom. Solomon offered these sayings to help us contemplate the fear (love, reverence and respect) of God, living by God's wisdom and finding the sum of this wisdom through a relationship with Jesus Christ.



Wikipedia/Niklem

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WISDOM

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Let's read this one proverb together,
Prov. 17:24:

The discerning sets his face toward
wisdom, but the eyes of a fool are on
the ends of the earth.

The translation known as The Message
says it this way:

The perceptive find wisdom in their
own front yard; fools look for it every-
where but right here.

The proverb is saying that the wise man
has a powerful future waiting for him
because he keeps his eyes on wisdom.
By contrast, the fool has his eyes on
something else. His eyes are on the ends
of the earth.

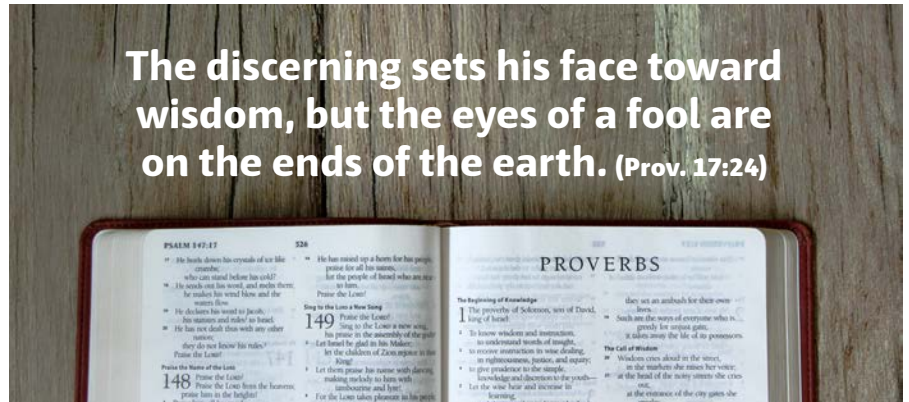
Let's start by looking at foolish men and
women. They are always searching the
earth for the newest remedy, quick fix or
the latest and greatest in most anything.
I read of a story about a man picking
strawberries in a patch. This man would
pick a strawberry here and then he'd
look up and see another strawberry a
couple of rows away and off he'd run.
Then he would look up and see another
berry a few plants away and off he'd go,
again and again and again all across the
patch. In the time it took him to fill one
bucket others could fill 10.

His eyes were always wandering across
the field looking for the easiest berries
to find. And the fool is like that. He's
always looking for the easiest berry in
the patch. He's always seeking an easy
way to get ahead in his life.

He's the guy who invests in the future
by buying lottery tickets. He can't keep
a job because no job is good enough.
He can't stay in one church because no
church is good enough.

There is always a rainbow waiting for
them over the next hill. Their eyes
wander constantly to the ends of the
earth. They are constantly comparing
themselves, their families, their jobs
and their potential to something else
or to someone else. They can't find
satisfaction in anything. And in the end,
they have done less with their lives than
they could have.

The discerning sets his face toward
wisdom, but the eyes of a fool are
on the ends of the earth. (Prov. 17:24)



By contrast, the wise man and wom-
an have two advantages over the fool.
First, they are focused on what is most
important in life: Wisdom from God,
trust in God and faith in God. In God
we find everything we need — love, joy,
peace, hope and even courage when we
face adversity.

Second, they know where to look for
wisdom. Where did Solomon get his
wisdom? He asked God because true
wisdom can only come from God.

James 1:5 says:

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him
ask God, who gives generously to all
without reproach, and it will be
given him.

There are many places we can find
knowledge and information. And
increased knowledge is useful, but it is
based on man's education and experi-
ence. The more knowledge we acquire
and the more information we gather
will certainly make us smarter, and
that's a good thing.

But the smarter we get and the more
knowledge we acquire should continue
to draw us closer and closer to God,
who created it all in the first place.
The more we study the human body
— our anatomy, the inner workings
of our cells, our DNA — the more our
knowledge will lead us to a much better
understanding of how we function.
But believe me, none of this is or will
be a surprise to God. We don't have to
search the earth to find the answers.
We only need to search for the answers
from God, through Jesus Christ.

The key thing to remember is that —
both as individual Christians and as a

church — we have access not only to
God's wisdom but also to His power.
Our ability to create a great new year
for our lives isn't limited simply to what
we know and can do with our lives.
God's power and working in our lives
is the single most important advantage
we have.

So here are four steps to consider as we
have begun the new year:

- ▶ Seek God's wisdom for our lives.
- ▶ Know God's wisdom for our lives.
- ▶ Apply God's wisdom in our lives.
- ▶ Repeat steps one through three.

I'll close with a story about the movie
“Ben-Hur.” It was released in 1959 and
won 11 Academy Awards. It was the
most expensive film to be made at that
time and was 3½ hours long.

One of the most famous scenes was the
climactic chariot race, which required
five weeks of filming, 15,000 extras and
18 chariots, nine to be used by the stunt
crew during practice. The set was built
over 18 acres of land.

In the spirit of authenticity, Charlton
Heston actually learned to drive the
four-horse vehicles. But after weeks of
practice, he expressed concern about
the final shoot.

He took the stunt coordinator aside and
said, “I can drive the chariot, but I'm
not sure I can win.”

“Charles, you just make sure you stay
in the chariot,” the coordinator replied,
“and I'll make sure you win the race.”

Likewise, God is saying to us: “Just stay
in the chariot and I'll make sure you
win the race.”

Church-work students get help from mission grant

The LWML Mid-South District Financial Aid for Professional Church Workers mission grant was approved for funding by delegates to the 2020 biennial convention held in June. The grant is for \$15,000 and will be awarded to the district in four installments over the next two years.

The first installment of \$3,750 was presented to Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, Mid-South District president, at the Fall Pastors Conference in October.

The generous grant from the LWML enables the Mid-South District to help fund \$81,000 annually to those enrolled at LCMS seminaries and universities who are studying to become professional church workers.

In photo, Diane Reimold, past district LWML president, presents the first installment check to Paavola.



LWML 39th Biennial Convention

June 24-27, 2021 • Lexington, Ky.



Scripture verse: Heb. 12:1-2

Goal: Looking to Jesus, we run the race set before us and proclaim the joy of the Lord.

Visit lwml.org/2021-convention

Hotel registration opens Jan. 5 • Early bird convention registration opens Feb. 1

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. **Heb. 12:1-2**

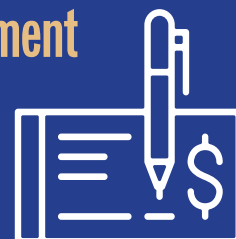
Convention attendees' objectives will be to focus on Jesus through God's Word and Sacrament, joyfully celebrate our salvation with song and prayer, and serve our neighbors through witness and mission.

Lutheran Women in Mission have a heart for sharing Jesus' sacrifice, and with the Holy Spirit's guidance, we will be "Running the Race ... Looking to Jesus."

Watch for more details coming soon.

Congregation mission commitment receipts

as of
Oct. 31, 2020
(10 months)



Anticipated amount (83% of budget)	\$1,282,475
Actual receipts	\$1,267,38
Over (under) anticipated amount	(\$15,091)

Use of mission commitment receipts

Allocated to Synod for world missions	\$359,382
Allocated to Tanzania	\$20,833
Retained for district ministry/mission support (70% of receipts)	\$887,169
Total receipts	\$1,267,384

Mission commitment receipts comparison

Actual receipts as of Oct. 31 2020	\$1,267,384
Actual receipts as of Oct. 31, 2019	\$1,270,955
Over (under) prior year receipts	(\$3,571)

Happy New Year!



RECOVERY AND GROWTH IN MADAGASCAR

Thanks to contributions from the Mid-South District, the Lutheran Institute of Management and Entrepreneurship (LIME) school in Madagascar reopened in October and its classrooms now house students and teachers hard at work.

Although not all students have returned, because of the financial impact of COVID-19 on their families, there is hope they will be able to rejoin their classes later.

Rev. Joseph Randrianasolo, LIME rector, sends thanks for the “saving gifts” from the Mid-South District that have made this recovery possible, and a blessing to carry into the new year: “A warm and huge thanks to the Mid-South District as a whole. May Jesus Christ, the good teacher, bless you all!”



Rev. Dr. Denis Rakotozafy has been chosen to lead the Malagasy Lutheran Church, Madagascar, as its new president. He assumes the duties of Rev. Dr. David Rakotonirina, who succumbed to COVID-19 during the summer of 2020.



The Malagasy Lutheran Church and its LIME school have been mission partners with the Mid-South District since 2015.



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!**



By Frances Bacic
Media and Marketing
LWML, Mid-South District

I love nothing better than a trip to a flea market or antique store. The hunt for a bargain delights me. Scoring that perfect item to complete a set or finish a project makes my day. Taking something that someone else sees as trash and turning it into a functioning and useable item gives me a sense of accomplishment.

On a recent shopping trip to a flea market with my aunt, I had seen a posted sign stating: “Joyfully Restored, Psalms 51:12.”

How appropriate for a flea market! All the items there are usually dated, restored and made new. Someone had to restore or see the potential of an item that needed tender, loving care.

I had to quickly look up the reference. Ps. 51:12 says:

Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.

What a beautiful thought from Scripture in this time. We are facing a new year. Calendar year 2020 is now behind us. Is 2021 really going to be the new beginning everyone is hoping for? Probably not.

We will still have sickness and diseases. We will still have poverty and struggles. We will still have natural disasters. We will still have pain and sufferings.

But we will also still have faith, hope, peace, joy, kindness, gentleness, compassion and wisdom.

Through all of the situations during the COVID-19 shutdowns, we got the Word of Christ out to the nation. We shared our faith and will continue to do so. We have the hope of our salvation. We have peace knowing that God provides for us in all our



This restored and repurposed picture frame, now an attractive and functional showcase for jewelry, illustrates how our own potential for fresh purpose and worthwhile accomplishments in the new year can be realized with God’s help and guidance.

We made jewelry and cards, scrapbooked, hiked and laughed. We were restored on the mountain.

On the return trip, you guessed it: We stopped at a flea market. We did find the perfect item at the perfect price. Yes, it is waiting to be restored by us.

Thank God we don’t have to wait for our own restoration!

needs. We have joy knowing we are planting the seeds of faith, even if we don’t yet see the crops from those seeds. We have the willing spirit to be kind, gentle and compassionate to those around us. We have wisdom to make good decisions that will affect us and others around us.

Through our salvation, granted through Christ, we have the joy of knowing that we are made new in Him.

We may struggle, but He provides for us in our time of need. He keeps us through our times of trials and watches over us. Just as that unwanted resale item finds a new home or purpose, so do we through Christ.

More recently, I dragged my aunt up to the Lutheran Camp on Petit Jean.

March issue deadline is Jan. 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 or send by postal mail to:

Judy Otto • 150 N. Maury St. • Holly Springs, MS 38635

OFFICIAL NOTICE

The 21st 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.
Immanuel Lutheran Church
6325 Raleigh-LaGrange Road, Memphis, TN 38134
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])



Celebration crafters share homemade warmth

Twelve quilts and one fleece blanket with crocheted edging were made by the LWML of Celebration Lutheran Church, Seymour Tenn., during this pandemic year of 2020 — by staying connected and yet a safe distance apart.

Tables in separate rooms allowed four ladies at a time to work at a safe

distance and masked. One lady in each room kept the needles threaded. Talk about efficiency!

All the quilts were made with love, and will be donated to Lutheran World Relief (LWR) for distribution to those in need. The ladies pray that the blankets help recipients feel warm and cared for.



Busy needleworkers from Celebration, Seymour, Tenn., are, from left: Lyla Krieg, Karen Trebus, Barb Schmidt, Deb McLeod, Norma Latham, Linda Lakso, Lynn Thayer and Linda Hempel. Missing from the photo are Barb Roberts, Beverly Miller, Eileen Spinks, Mary Ann Stoeckle and Jeanette Eggebraaten.

A new year prayer for our nation

By Rev. Brian Noack

LWML Junior Pastoral Counselor

Almighty God, heavenly Father, You have promised to uphold us by Your strong arm, to provide for our needs of body and soul and to sustain us through this life until You see fit to bring us to Yourself. There is much unrest and uncertainty in our world at this time, and so we ask You to come to our aid, to provide Your protection, to grant healing and to bring peace to Your people. Where we have sinned and gone our own way, turn us again to You in repentance, forgive us our sins and draw us back to Your divine presence.

Hear us on behalf of all whose lives have been affected by the ravages of wind and water and fire. Where there has been a loss of property, give restoration, and where there has been a loss of life, give comfort by the power of Christ's resurrection. Watch over and sustain the rescue and relief workers who experience danger of peril themselves, and may they be encouraged in their labors.

As our nation's leadership transitions, we humbly ask You to raise up good and honest leaders who will protect the most vulnerable among us and work for the good of the citizens of this land. Help us to live as good citizens, and good stewards, of all You have blessed us with, seeking to love our neighbor just as we have been loved by Christ. Where there is disagreement and conflict among us, supply us with your peace and heal our divisions so that we may come to better understand one another.



Be with us, Lord, as we continue to wage war against this pandemic. Give strength to all those whose work calls them to care for the infected among us including doctors, nurses and all health care workers. Heal the sick and give to them the encouragement they need from Your Word to see them through to health and vigor. Give wisdom to all who are working to find a vaccine for this virus, and in Your time open up opportunities to bring an end to the fear that plagues so many.

Bless our families, Lord, in these days. Keep us on the firm foundation of Christ and guide us by Your Word and Spirit to do all that You desire. Continue to strengthen all Christians and the congregations to which they belong, that our witness to the world in these days would be bold, compassionate and comforting. Provide for those who cry out to You in distress, especially those who are unemployed or underemployed. Use us to provide for all who are in need and least among us.

In circumstance, remind us that when we are uneasy about life that You are there and will give us all things needful; when we are lonely or afraid, make Yourself known to us by Your grace; and when uncertainty is found at every turn, teach us again that You have ordered all of our days and that, in Christ, our future is always certain with You. You have promised us that nothing shall separate us from You, so help us to rest in this comforting truth, teach us to number our days and grant us to live always in the hope and certainty of the resurrection of the body and life everlasting in Your kingdom.

To you, O God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be all the glory, now and unto the ages of ages. Amen.