

MID-SOUTH LUTHERAN



erry Christmas, Happy New Year and a Blessed Epiphany to you all! Once again the Church Militant – baptized believers daily taking up the fight of the faith in this fallen world — has celebrated the Mass of Christ. In this joyous Feast, we give thanks to Father, Son and Holy Spirit that God has become man, joining Himself to our flesh and blood for our salvation.

Christ Jesus is none other than the eternal Son of the Father, the almighty Word of God through whom creation and all things written in the Old Testament happened; the Word who became flesh and forevermore now tabernacles in our humanity:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ... And the Word became flesh



Rev. Joshua J. Willadsen District Fourth Vice-President and tabernacled with us, and we have seen His glory, glory as the only begotten from the Father full of grace and truth. ... No one has seen God ever; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father has made Him known. John 1:1-3, 14, 18

We have been begotten from above, begotten from water and the Spirit so that by faith we see the reign of God in the Christ

of Christ Jesus, where God bled and died as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. God in man made manifest!

We have heard the teaching of Christ, the Words of eternal life, and we have eaten His flesh and drunk His blood so that His eternal life is now in us, renewing us in body and soul and preparing us for the blessed day of Resurrection. God in man made manifest!

On Jan. 6, the church celebrates the Epiphany of our Lord, the revealing or manifestation of the Lord Jesus Christ to the Magi, Gentiles from the east. God the Father, according to His abundant grace and mercy, revealed the birth of His Son in the flesh to a group of formerly pagan Gentiles and led them by means of a unique star to the house where Jesus was.

Matt. 2:9-11 records:

And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

The King of the Jews revealed to Gentiles; the God of Israel worshiped by nations. God in man made manifest!

Yet there is another blessed Epiphany that bears our meditation, which the church celebrates on the first Lord's Day following Epiphany. That is the Baptism of Our Lord.

Baptism is for sinners. Those who are righteous, those who are blameless, those who are innocent, those who are good have no need for Baptism. Baptism is for coveters, slanderers and self-worshiping idolators.

God instituted Baptism for the good of the wicked, as His tool for working repentance in them; His gracious means of turning the wicked away from sin in sorrow and toward His promise of forgiveness. Through Baptism, God brings an end to the miserable slavery of sin. He begets a new man, free to fear, love and trust in Him above all things.

The house of Israel was in desperate need

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MESSAGE

BAPTISM (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

for the Baptism that God sent John to administer, for they were lost sheep, a people who had forsaken God and His ways for the godless desires of their hearts and their own ways. A few, like John, were repentant, full of sorrow for their sin and trusted God's promise of the coming Savior, but most were wayward and lost. Thus, in mercy, God called and sent John to the lost sheep of Israel, baptizing with water for repentance, preparing the way for the coming of God's heavenly reign to earth.

A countless host of men, women and children — sinners, every one of them gathered at the Jordan and were baptized by John. They confessed their sins and joyously received God's absolution in the water according to God's Word. The sinners were thus made saints, that is, set apart for God by His forgiveness and prepared for His royal coming in their midst.

Then the unthinkable happened. Jesus, the Mightier One than John, promised by God to save sinners, Emmanuel — God with us — came to the Jordan to be baptized by John. Heavens no! God forbid! This cannot happen to the Lord, for Baptism is for sinners!

John tried to prevent Jesus from being baptized. He confessed his own need to be baptized by Jesus. And Jesus replied: "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." Matt. 3:15-17

Why did the Lord Jesus insist that He be baptized by John as a sinner, when Jesus clearly has no sin of His own? Jesus tells us: "To fulfill all righteousness," to enact God's promised salvation for sinners.

God's reign was breaking into the world unexpectedly through the ministry of John and Jesus. John was ordained by God to baptize sinners from the lost sheep of the house of Israel for repentance, and to baptize the Lord as the chief



" Jesus came to save people from sin, thus He was baptized to save you. He was tempted by the devil in the wilderness to save you. He preached, taught and did wonders and signs to save you. He was rejected, suffered. died. was buried and on the third day He rose to save you."

Pastor Willadsen also serves as pastor of Bethel Lutheran Church, Fort Smith Ark. sinner. Jesus was ordained by God to be baptized by John as the substitute for sinful Israel, as the One standing in the place of the many sinners. This was how John and Jesus fulfilled all righteousness.

Jesus came to save people from sin, thus He was baptized to save you. He was tempted by the devil in the wilderness to save you. He preached, taught and did wonders and signs to save you. He was rejected, suffered, died and was buried and on the third day He rose to save you. He ascended to the Father's right hand to save you. On the Last Day, He shall return in glory to save you by raising your bodies from death to everlasting life.

As God's faithful Son — anointed Christ by the Holy Spirit — Jesus completed the will of His Father and gave His life as a ransom for many. He suffered God's wrath and judgment for sin and died, certain that His sacrifice was sufficient for all and confident that the Father would raise Him from the dead.

God in His wisdom and power chose the foolish and weak things of this world for His Son — a washing for sinners and a cross for criminals to redeem and save the world. God in man made manifest!

St. Paul writes:

We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. ... So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

Rom. 6:4, 11-14

Beloved in Christ, Jesus was baptized to save you. You were baptized to be saved. Through Holy Baptism the Lord has brought an end to your old way of life dominated by sin, death and the devil, and given you new life in Him. May this new life in Christ Jesus our God and Lord be ever manifest in you!

DISTRICT NEWS



By Rev. Ron Bacic Pastor, First, Little Rock

In this final chapter of the series, I share the final four of 10 reasons for going to church (or going back to church if you have been away for a while).

To be prayed for

This is an often overlooked reason. Jesus promised:

"If two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven." **Matt. 18:19**

There is power when the people of God pray. But for those unfortunate souls who have cut themselves off from regular attendance at the Christian assembly, their needs are unknown, and they pray alone.

To love and encourage your fellow Christians

At the heart of the Christian ethic is the privilege to love our neighbor as ourselves. Jesus sharpens this when He says:

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13:34-35

The apostle Paul echoes this when he writes:

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. Gal. 6:2

So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. **Gal. 6:10**

When we refuse to gather with our fellow Christians, we lose touch and

Salem Lutheran Church and School, Springdale, Ark., is pictured in 2015.

cannot love them. Our absence is a powerful nonverbal discouragement to them, but our presence is a powerful inspiration.

🤊 To worship

That Christians are to worship God publicly is a biblical given. Behind this given is the reality that we are creatures and God is the Creator. Everything we are and have is a gift from Him. Therefore, God richly blesses us in our worship, praise, thanks and prayer. At its heart is the gift of forgiveness that God gives us in Jesus Christ through our Baptism, Confession and Absolution, His Word and the Lord's Supper. It is not by accident that in Revelation, heaven is pictured as a place where the ransomed will worship God forevermore.

10) To promote the Gospel.

We promote and defend the Gospel by regularly attending corporate worship. Remember, the Christian church exists, *ipso facto*, "to make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19). We exist to tell the Good News that through Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, God has forgiven humanity and offers heaven as a gift to those who believe this.

The church's main mission is to populate heaven, not to make people better (though through the Gospel this happens, too!). The Gospel is proclaimed through weekly offerings, through preaching and Sacraments, and by giving a very positive message to others about what Jesus Christ means to them by the example we set. May these words encourage you to come to church or, if you have been away, come back. There's always a place for you in the Lord's house.

This article is adapted from a devotional by Rev. Michael Mueller, pastor emeritus.

Congregation mission commitment receipts

as of Oct. 31, 2021 (10 months)

.\$1,228,013
\$1,275,480
\$47,467
ient \$361,811
\$20,833
/ \$892,836
\$1,275,480
ceipts \$1,275,480
\$1,267,384
\$8,096

DISTRICT NEWS

FOCUS on EVANGELISM



THE LORD HAS WORK FOR US

Shared by the Board of Evangelism of First, Little Rock

When we wake up in the morning, we may create a list of things to do that day. For example, you need to run some errands, go grocery shopping, call your nephew on his birthday and stop by the coffee shop.

The Lord, however, also has a list for us — a list of divine appointments and works of the Spirit. And if we spend time with the Lord in the morning, His Holy Spirit will reveal these to us.

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. **Prov. 3:5-6**

These are not works of righteousness or works of salvation. It is a response to His call in our lives. It is the work of saints that He calls us to do.

What might this look like?

On the way to the grocery store, you see a man with a sign that says he is a Vietnam vet and asks for help. You give him a little cash and your favorite Bible verse on a piece of paper. He says, "God bless you."

- ► You pass the hospital and remember to bring a New Testament to a friend's mother who is in the hospital, and to pray with her. She blesses you.
- ► You go grocery shopping and give your favorite Bible passage to the cashier, telling her this is your most favorite quote in the whole world and she can read it later. She thanks you.
- ▶ While you are at the coffee shop, you call your nephew and discuss what is happening in his life. You follow up by sending him some compelling Christian articles that relate to his situation. You also notice a young man who is looking for a table. They are all taken, so you invite him to join you, which leads to a great discussion about life, drugs, Uganda, Christianity and Jesus. Everybody has a life story to tell. He tells you his story, then you tell him yours.

So when you are developing your list for the day, be sure to ask the Lord what He has for you to do.

To God be the glory.



Put convention on your calendar

Making summer plans? Include attending the LWML Mid-South District Convention, which will be held June 10-12 in Clarksville, Tenn.

Convention Theme: "Planting Seeds of Faith," based on 1 Cor. 3:6.

Location: The TownePlace Suites by Marriott, conveniently located at exit 4, off Interstate 24 in Clarksville. Additional sleeping rooms are available at the Fairfield Inn & Suites and Courtyard by Marriott, both within walking distance.

Keynote speaker: Rev. Dr. Gregory Seltz, executive director of the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty and speaker emeritus of "The Lutheran Hour."

Song leader and banquet entertainer: Wendysue Fluegge, song leader at the 2017 LWML convention in Albuquerque, N.M.

Convention offerings will go to Mara Evangelical Church at Holy Trinity, Bowling Green, Ky., and Loaves & Fishes, Clarkville, Tenn. Ingathering recipients will be Hope Unlimited Crisis Pregnancy Center, Paducah, Ky., and Hope Pregnancy Center, Clarksville, Tenn.

For more information, visit *midsouthlwml.org/ district-convention*.

Can't make it to convention? A convention registration makes a great gift! Consider gifting the registration to a young lady in your congregation.

Enjoy a weekend of fellowship with your pew sisters. Convention is a great way to get focused on the LWML mission.

LWML Mission Statement: As Lutheran Women in Mission, we joyfully proclaim Christ, support missions and equip women to honor God by serving others.

EDUCATION

Belvoir student earns award

effrey Stubblefield, a third grader at Belvoir Christian Academy, Chattanooga, was the winner of the Tri-Star Reads/Tennesseans for Student Success annual competition.

Jeffrey, who won in the elementary school division, read for over 30,000 minutes over the summer. This is the second consecutive year Jeffrey received this honor for his reading efforts.

For his accomplishments, Jeffrey was invited to Nashville to join other divisional winners and meet Gov. Bill Lee.

Gov. Lee awarded Jeffrey the ceremonial Tri-Star 529 College Fund Scholarship for \$1,000. Additionally, Tennessee Rep. Esther Helton read the House of Representatives Proclamation of Tribute to Jeffrey, and presented him with a State of Tennessee flag that was flown over the State Capitol building in his honor.

Jeffrey has also been selected to join the Davidson Institute Young Scholars program, which provides extracurricular activities for gifted students.

Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee congratulates Jeffrey Stubblefield on his award-winning accomplishment.





By Frances Bacic First-grade teacher, Avilla Christian Academy, Alexander, Ark.

It's that time of year — time to celebrate our Lutheran schools!

Lutheran churches have a rich history of educating children. The LCMS currently operates more than 1,200 early childhood centers, 880 elementary schools and 130 high schools, and reaches more than 180,000 students guided by almost 22,000 teachers. (And that's not counting our universities and seminaries.)

Many schools celebrate in different ways. Most schools participate in service projects in which students reach out and share Christ's love with those in their communities.

Most schools celebrate with spirit weeks, when students and teachers dress in themed costumes. School colors, crazy socks, crazy hair, backwards day, decades day and many more are featured. My favorite is P.J. Day.

We do this to share in the joy of being a student, teacher or supporter of a Lutheran school, to bring a smile to a kindergartener's face when he or she sees our blue hair; to encourage the ninth-grader who is prevented by peer pressure from joining the fun. We do this to share Christ in all that we do.

Volunteer at a Lutheran school We are always looking for helpers. This is more difficult in the age of COVID, but there is always a list of things that need to be done.

Donate to a Lutheran school

Donate to a special project, toward supplies or to a tuition fund.

Pray for our Lutheran schools

They are a mission of the church. They are where many children meet Jesus face to face in song, word and deed. They are where the Word of God is planted. Who knows where it will bloom and flourish?

CAMP TRINITY



Register for summer camp

Registration for summer camp 2022 is now open at Camp Trinity, the Lutheran camp on Petit Jean Mountain. Parents can register their children at lutherancamp.org. Go to the "Summer Camp" link at the top and select "Register" from the drop-down menu.

Parents are encouraged to sign up early this year to ensure a spot for their children.

Summer camp promotes faith development through morning devotions, daily Bible studies and campfire messages about God's love in Christ. Camp is also about having fun in a beautiful outdoor setting atop Petit Jean Mountain.

Camp fun includes hiking and exploring the mountain, swimming, canoeing, softball and kickball, archery and axe throwing, disc golf, sand volleyball, gaga ball, crafts, outdoor education, tent camping, service projects and lots of singing.

The season has sessions for students in grades 2-12, as well as Family Camp, in which families can enjoy outdoor fun together.

Summer staff wanted

Camp Trinity is looking for Christian young adults who want to serve God by serving as senior staff at summer camp while earning money for school.

The camp is seeking 10 college students or recent college graduates to serve as cabin counselors or support staff in

June and July. Priority is given to LCMS members who have completed at least one year of college. Those studying to be pastors, teachers or youth/family ministers are especially encouraged to apply.

To fill out a candidate profile, visit the website of the National Lutheran Outdoors Ministry Association, nloma. org, or email director@lutherancamp.org.

The camp is also seeking high school students with servant hearts to help the senior staff as counselors-in-training (CiTs). Students would serve for one or two season sessions.

CiTs pay a nominal fee to cover meals and must attend training in early June. CiTs enjoy all the fun camp activities while working with younger children alongside senior staff. This is a great way to get a taste of outdoors ministry, and many CiTs become senior staff after high school. Email director@ *lutherancamp.org* for an application.

Linkt deadline

The registration deadline for the Linkt senior high youth retreat is Jan. 23. The retreat will be held Feb. 18-20. Registration is by congregation, but individual high school students (grades 9-12) from district congregations may contact the camp to register and be assigned to a youth group from another church. For more information, click the "Linkt Retreat" tab at *lutherancamp.org*.



education specialist with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. introduces a red-tailed hawk to students.

2022 Outdoor Classroom schedule available

Camp Trinity has completed a third semester of the Outdoor Classroom for homeschooled students. For the first time, however, students from a conventional school joined the class as guests.

Twenty-two students, teachers and parents from Avilla Christian Academy arrived for the Oct. 21 session, Wildlife Stewardship. The session was led by two officers from the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, along with an interpreter from Petit Jean State Park. Officer Trent Powell brought a red-tailed hawk to show the students.

The Outdoor Classroom schedule for spring 2022 is posted at the Camp Trinity website. Parents can sign up for individual classes or for the entire 10-class semester at a steep discount. Lutheran schools are invited to participate in the Outdoor Classroom or to come on separate days for outdoor education retreats. Visit lutherancamp.org and click the "Home School" tab at the top of the page.

MILESTONES

CONGRATULATIONS!

We share with you the Mid-South District pastors who will celebrate ordination anniversaries in 2022. We rejoice and give thanks to God for the gifts these men provide to His church.

65 YEARS

Rev. Paul Donner (emeritus) Paducah, Ky.

Rev. Donley Hesse (emeritus) Mena, Ark.

Rev. John Schulz (emeritus) Knoxville, Tenn.

60 YEARS

Rev. Fred Hagemeier (emeritus) Fort Smith, Ark.

Rev. Wesley Toncre (emeritus) Conway, Ark.

55 YEARS

Rev. James Evers (emeritus) Oak Ridge, Tenn.

50 YEARS

Rev. Peter Ave-Lallemant Faith, Fairfield Bay, Ark.

Rev. Philip Bohlken (emeritus) Knoxville, Tenn.

Rev. Gary Heckmann (emeritus) Cookeville, Tenn.

Rev. Paul Muench (emeritus) Knoxville, Tenn.

45 YEARS

Rev. Jan Munch (emeritus) Athens, Tenn.

Rev. Dr. Mark Press Holy Trinity, Bowling Green, Ky.

Rev. Don Schmidt Messiah, Memphis, Tenn.



40 YEARS

Rev. Keith Enko Emmanuel, Hermitage, Tenn.

Rev. Bradley Heinecke Shepherd of the Hills, Horseshoe Bend, Ark.

Rev. Stewart Marshall Trinity, Pine Bluff, Ark.

Rev. Richard Mayer Messiah, Pea Ridge, Ark.

35 YEARS

Rev. Steve Harmon Bethlehem, Johnson City, Tenn.

Rev. Paul Leigeber Faith, Union City, Tenn. Trinity, Dyersburg, Tenn.

Rev. H. Christopher Sheets Good Shepherd, Chattanooga, Tenn.

Rev. Russell Shewmaker (emeritus) Gravette, Ark.

30 YEARS

Rev. Jon Bischof St. Matthew, Corning, Ark.

25 YEARS

Rev. Mark Goble Christ the King, Memphis, Tenn. Rev. Mark Louderback (candidate)

Cordova, Tenn.

Rev. Clarence Martin (emeritus) Bartlett, Tenn.

Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola Mid-South District president Cordova, Tenn.

Rev. Andrew Smith Heavenly Host, Cookeville, Tenn.

20 YEARS

Rev. Tracy Nelson Our Savior, Nashville, Tenn.

Rev. M. Chad Philipp St. Paul, Gillett, Ark. St. Luke, DeWitt, Ark.

Rev. Kent Schaaf Grace, Little Rock, Ark.

15 YEARS

Rev. Donald Coulter Athens Lutheran Church, Athens, Tenn.

Rev. Christopher Gorshe Bella Vista Lutheran Church, Bella Vista, Ark.

Rev. Jeffrey King Our Shepherd, Searcy, Ark.

Rev. Robert Portier St. Paul, Sevierville, Tenn.

Rev. David Vandercook Shepherd of Peace, Maumelle, Ark. Trinity, North Little Rock, Ark.

10 YEARS

Rev. Dr. Richard Davenport Our Redeemer, Fort Smith, Ark.

Rev. Donald Welmer First, Chattanooga, Tenn.

Rev. Joshua Woodrow First, Chattanooga, Tenn.

5 YEARS

Rev. Eric Rudsenske Concordia, Jackson, Tenn.

Rev. Adam Woldt The Point, Knoxville, Tenn.

Rev. JohnDavid Zischke Restoration, Fayetteville, Ark.

WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANTS

CELBRATIONS

Renovation honors pastor's memory



After meeting for months in a multi-purpose facility with basketball hoops, worshipers at Grace, Little Rock, returned to their newly refurbished sanctuary on Oct. 31 — in time to celebrate Reformation Sunday and to honor their late pastor, the beloved **Rev. James Walter** (at right), who had shepherded the congregation for 25 years.

Walter, who retired in May 2020 and was called to glory in December 2020, was "very passionate about the need for improvements" reported Frank E. Lockwood, in a story that appeared in the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette — excerpts from which follow.

Gifts in Walter's memory helped to fund the \$230,000 remodeling project that transformed the sanctuary.

Some of the changes are cosmetic. Ceramic tile flooring has replaced the bright blue carpeting, for example. Others are practical -a new heating and air conditioning system and additional worship space.

In addition, the altar has been moved away from the wall and the pulpit has pivoted, enabling the preacher to see the entire congregation.

Perhaps most importantly, the step beneath the communion rail has been eliminated, removing a potential hazard for elderly congregants.

About 160 congregants gathered as the pipe organ, silenced for months, resounded once again, also celebrating the baptism of 22-month-old Karrine Kombe Awichi and the confirmation of two others who vowed to "conRev. Kent Schaaf, pastor of Grace, Little Rock, stands with confirmands Emma Schnackenberg of Little Rock and Isaac Goodrich of Conway.

tinue steadfast in this confession and Church."

"It's a very emotional day for a lot of people because they know that this is what he had been talking about for years," current pastor Rev. Kent Schaaf said.

> Walter's death "was a big blow to this congregation, so they decided to do this in honor of him," Schaaf said.

The longtime pastor's widow, Paula Water, was present for the service and was pleased with the improvements.

"I think the work turned out great, and everyone who was on the committee worked really hard to make it happen," she said. "The contractor did a great job."

Pastor Walter was deeply loved and is greatly missed, but the congregation he left behind is kindhearted and close-knit, said Sammye Harrill, chairman of the Evangelism Committee

"We are a family," she said. "We stick up for each other and we love each other and we do what we can for each other."

Paula Walter offered a similar assessment: "That congregation kind of became our family. We've been there since 1995," she said.

Grace Lutheran was more than James Walter's place of employment; it was a source of joy.

"He loved being their pastor," Paula Walter said.

Thanks to the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette and Frank E. Lockwood, religion editor, for permission to reproduce portions of the story that appeared on Nov. 6, 2021. See the story in its entirely at *ao.pressreader.com/ article/282235193890145*.

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 March issue are needed by Jan. 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.

