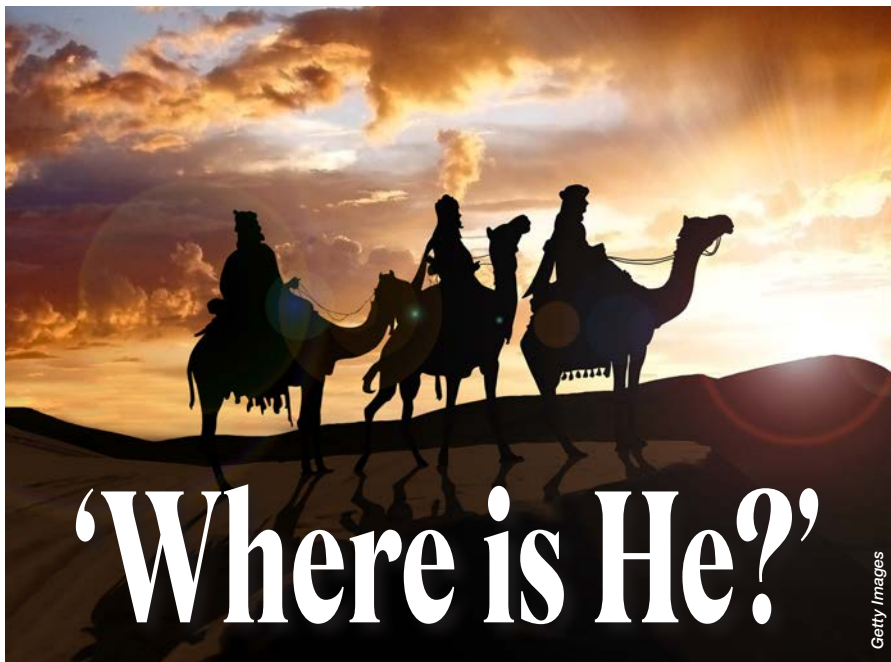




MID-SOUTH LUTHERAN



Getty Images

“Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?” MATTHEW 2:2

The Wise Men from the east expected that, of course, Jesus would be in Jerusalem. After all, Jerusalem was the capital, the city of the king. So where else would one expect to find the King of the Jews? It made perfect sense.

But God’s ways are often different.

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, declares the LORD.” ISAIAH 55:8

And so it was in this case. Where is He? He is where the Word of the Lord, spoken through the prophet Micah, said He would be. Yes, He is in the little town of Bethlehem ... the insignificant and unspectacular town of Bethlehem.

No, Bethlehem was not the place where one would expect to find Him “who has been born King of the Jews.” But then again, neither was Golgotha, the Place of the Skull. And yet, the very One the Wise Men sought hung suspended there, nailed to a cruel and bitter cross. In fact, the sign that hung above His head identified Him as such — “The King of the Jews.”

Where is He? Now He is indeed in Jerusalem, or just outside

Jerusalem, dying the death of the world’s sin. He is indeed in Jerusalem, dying there as the sacrificial Lamb, as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Once more, therefore, He is not where one would expect to find Him. No, once more, He is not where one would expect to find the King of the Jews. He is not where one would expect to find the King of kings, the King of all creation! But there He is nonetheless, suffering damnation itself in the place of sinners. There He is, purchasing and winning sinners for heaven by pouring out His own holy and precious blood.

Where is He? He is in Bethlehem, where the Word of God said He would be. Where is He? He is in Jerusalem, suffering and dying on a cross, and then rising in triumph on the third day. He is in Jerusalem, doing what the Word of God said He would do.

Where is He? That’s the question the Wise Men asked some 2,000 years ago, and it is a question that is just as relevant still today. Sometimes the question is asked when a large-scale tragedy occurs, such as a hurricane or a wildfire or even a mass shooting. Sometimes the question is asked when a more personal tragedy occurs, such as the loss of a job or a bad diagnosis or the sudden death of a loved one.

And sometimes, it’s just the everyday burdens and stresses and cares of life that lead us to ask, “Where is He?” After all, our expectation is that He will always be here to deliver us, to lead and guide us, to guard and protect us, to defend us in the midst of trials and troubles both great and small. And when



Rev. Michael M. Miller
Pastor,
Redeemer,
Harriman,
Tenn.

See MESSAGE, Page 2

MESSAGE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

it seems that He is absent, as if He is nowhere to be found, even we may find ourselves asking, “Where is He?”

For the Wise Men, the answer turned out to be rather obvious, for Matthew tells us that the star they had been following “rose and went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was” (MATTHEW 2:9). Yes, for them, the answer ended up being rather clear and obvious. He’s right there in the house, right there with His mother.

For us, however, the answer might seem less obvious. Oh, some may be quick to say, “Don’t you know that He is omnipresent, that He is present everywhere?” While such a response is in fact true, I’m not sure that such a response is really all that helpful. If He is just vaguely present everywhere, then He might just as well be present nowhere. No, to simply say that He is present everywhere, that He is just out there somewhere and everywhere, does not offer a whole lot of help or comfort.

Where is He? That’s the question that confronts us as we begin 2023. Where is He present with us and for us today? The Wise Men probably expected to find Him in a regal setting, surrounded by servants and an abundance of the world’s finery. Instead, they found Him in ordinary Bethlehem, in an ordinary house in rather ordinary and mundane surroundings.

And it’s really no different for us today. Where is He? He is present in the rather ordinary Word of Absolution spoken by a rather ordinary pastor. And those rather ordinary words declare to you that all your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Of those simple and ordinary words announcing Christ’s blood-bought forgiveness, Martin Luther says in the Small Catechism that the forgiveness of sins those words declare “is just as valid and certain, even in heaven, as if Christ our dear Lord dealt with us Himself.” Where is He? Yes, He is especially present in those simple and ordinary words of forgiveness.

So also, through rather ordinary water combined with His Word, He touches us and binds Himself to us through time and for all eternity. Where is He? He is present in the waters of our Baptism, naming us and claiming us as His own, washing away all our sins and proclaiming that He will never leave us or forsake us. Where is He? He is present in the waters of our Baptism, uniting us to Himself in His death and resurrection, uniting Himself with us and promising to abide with us now and forever! Where is He? Yes, He is especially present in that simple and ordinary water combined with His life-giving Word.

And He continues His presence in our lives through rather ordinary and mundane bread and wine, which are connected to His Word and promise in His Holy Supper. Where is He? He is really and truly present in, with, and under the rather ordinary bread and wine, feeding us and nourishing us with His very body and blood for the forgiveness of all our sins and to strengthen and nourish us for the living out of our life of faith. Where is He? Yes, He is especially present in the simple and ordinary bread and wine through which we receive His true body and His precious blood.

Where is He? To be sure, He is present everywhere as the King of kings and Lord of lords, but He is especially present with us and for us where He has promised to be — in His Word and Sacraments. He is especially present there, present with us and for us to bring us every blessing of His victory, which He purchased and won for us through the cross and the empty tomb.

And there is one more place where He has chosen to be. So, where else is He? He is living in us and shining through us. He is shining through our words of witness and through our acts of loving service. He is shining through us to lead others out of the darkness and into His marvelous and saving light!

Happy new year and blessed Epiphany!



Overtures sought for LCMS 68th Regular Convention

The 68th Regular Convention of the LCMS will be held July 29-Aug. 3, 2023 in Milwaukee. The principal business of the 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 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 (scroll down to 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.

Vickers receives LAYERPERSON AWARD

On Oct. 23, representatives from the Mid-South District visited Our Savior, Nashville, to present Larry Vickers with the 2022 Ralph Weiser Excellence in Ministry Award.

Like the award's namesake, Larry Vickers has exemplified service to God's Kingdom in numerous ways. Locally, he has been an instrumental leader in Our Savior's efforts to reach more people in the Nashville community with the Gospel, including through a church plant.

For the district, he shared his business acumen as Board of Directors treasurer for nine years and has served as an example of generous support and encouragement for the IMPACT development initiative, further partnering in the ministry-building work of the Mid-South District.

Through his leadership and faithful support of ministry, Vickers — with his wife, Brenda, by his side — is a layperson who continues to make a lasting impact for the Kingdom in his community, across the Mid-South District and around the world. Congratulations and many thanks to Larry Vickers!

Introduced in 2016, the Ralph Weiser Excellence in Ministry Award recognizes

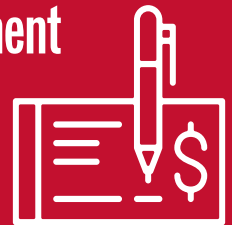


From left, Larry Vickers, 2022 Ralph Weiser Excellence in Ministry Award recipient, is pictured with his wife, Brenda, and Rev. Dr. Roger and Pat Paavola at Our Savior, Nashville, on Oct. 23.

es the dedication and ministry-building work of a Mid-South District layperson. The award honors the life and work of the late Ralph Weiser, a long-time friend of the Mid-South District whose example of leadership, service and faith impacted his Lutheran congregation and community, as well as ministries across the entire district.

Congregation mission commitment receipts

as of
Oct. 31, 2022
(10 months)



Anticipated amount (83% of budget)	\$1,264,908
Actual receipts	\$1,275,045
Over (under) anticipated amount	\$10,137

Use of mission commitment receipts

Allocated to Synod for world missions	\$361,680
Allocated to Tanzania	\$20,833
Retained for district ministry/mission support (70% of receipts)	\$892,532
Total receipts	\$1,275,045

Mission commitment receipts comparison

Actual receipts as of Oct. 31, 2022	\$1,275,045
Actual receipts as of Oct. 31, 2021	\$1,275,480
Over (under) prior year receipts	(\$435)

WANTED: Future church workers



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.



Introducing:



By Lauren Robertson
Media and Marketing Chairman,
LWML Mid-South District

The LWML Assembly of Leaders met in St. Louis in October 2022. One of the many sessions focused on the website and all the rich resources to be found there.

Using a website full of information can be overwhelming, but we want to change that when you visit *lwml.org*. Every second Tuesday of the month will be Treasure Hunt Tuesday. Our Facebook page will identify sections within the website to search for hidden gems to help with your local LWML group or zone. These little gems will also be found in our *eNews* and *League Letter*. Visit facebook.com/MSD.LWML.

I just wonder where we will go on our first hunt!

Mission Grant spotlight

Lutheran Bible Translators (LBT) works hard to ensure that God's Word is shared throughout the world with those who have very limited or even no access. LBT missionaries are working to translate the New Testament for the Subula people of Cameroon.

The \$5,000 mission grant received from the LWML Mid-South District will help translate five chapters. Thanks to the LWML and many other organizations for helping see the importance of Lutheran Bible Translators work so that God's Word is shared throughout the world.



Helping our future church workers

In October, Diane Reimold, LWML Mid-South District second vice-president, presented the first installment of the Financial Aid for Professional Church Workers grant to Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, Mid-South District president. The grant was chosen at the LWML district convention in Clarksville, Tenn., in June and will support students who are studying to become full-time LCMS church workers. The total grant amount of \$25,000 will be paid in four installments over the next two years.

Convention Proceedings available online



The 2021 *Mid-South District Convention Proceedings* have been finalized and were approved by the district's Board of Directors at the Aug. 26 meeting. To download, visit mid-southlcms.org and click the "Convention" tab at the upper-right side of the page.

Delegates to the convention or congregations that desire a printed copy may contact the district office at 866-373-1343 and a printed copy will be mailed to them.

Fulbright scholar makes presentation at Bethlehem

By Larry Larson

Bethlehem, Johnson City, Tenn.

Dr. Mark R. Fairchild talked about his experiences as the Fulbright Senior Research Scholar exploring the underwater basilica at Iznik (ancient Nicaea), Turkey, in a presentation at Bethlehem, Johnson City, on Oct. 14. Dr. Fairchild serves as professor of New Testament Studies in the department of Bible and Religion at Huntington University, Huntington, Ind.

This exploration of a structure that was probably used during the First Council of Nicaea in 325 AD (in which our Nicene Creed was created) was only a small portion of Dr. Fairchild's work in the area known as Asia Minor in our Bible.

The following day, Dr. Fairchild presented an



overview of St. Paul's three missionary journeys in an area he has explored every year for the past 20 years.

Dr. Fairchild is a prolific author and photographer, with a collection of over 600,000 photographs of the artifacts

he's discovered in modern day Turkey. His documentary, *The Last Apostle*, can be viewed on Amazon Prime.

Bethlehem was excited to receive Dr. Fairchild and hopes that he may return next year.

'Male and female He created them'

On Oct. 21, about 3,000 people gathered in downtown Nashville for the Rally to End Child Mutilation. The event was organized to call attention to the worrying trend of medicalized gender transitions for children.

Speakers at the rally included Matt Walsh, Tulsi Gabbard, Landon Starbuck, Colin Wright and Chloe Cole, all of whom spoke on the dangers of these procedures and the need to protect children from the narratives often used to promote the acceptance of gender-change therapies.

Four Mid-South District pastors were among the thousands who attended and bravely affirmed biblical teaching on gender, despite vicious and vulgar protests from many who attended to demonstrate against the rally's cause. They are Revs. Phil Young (Redeemer, Nashville), Greg Bauch (Ascension, Madison, Tenn.), David McMinn (Shepherd of the Hills, McMinnville, Tenn.) and Randy Sakach (Prince of Peace, White House, Tenn.).

Many thanks to these pastors for attending this important awareness event.



Participating at the Rally to End Child Mutilation are, from left, Revs. Phil Young, Greg Bauch, David McMinn and Randy Sakach.

Making preparations for summer

Retreat lodge open for booking

The retreat lodge at Camp Trinity is now open for events. The lodge has six sleeping rooms and can accommodate 30 guests. It has a large gathering room, kitchen, laundry room, deck and porch.

Lodge rooms are not available for individual bookings but are reserved for group events. The facility is ideal for women's or men's retreats, church council planning retreats, LWML groups, family retreats, family reunions and circuit pastors' retreats.

Groups that book the lodge have access to camp amenities: hiking trails, archery range, sand volleyball court, disc golf course, gaga ball pit, canoes and kayaks. Lodge guests can also gather in the historic Trinity Chapel for worship.

More information is available at lutherancamp.org/retreat-lodge.

Summer camp registration now open

Kristian Lehrke (camp name: Burn) of Our Savior Lutheran Church, Cabot, Ark., is returning for his third year on senior staff and his first as summer program director. He is working with camp operations manager Aaron Davis (camp name: Mountain Man) to plan exciting activities for the camp season.

A mid-week Family Camp, created for the families of pastors and other church workers, will replace one youth session in late July. The full schedule is found at the camp website.

Families will be able to stay in Camp Trinity's new retreat lodge for all three Family Camp sessions.



Young campers explore rock shelters along Bear Cave Trail during Family Camp. Camp Trinity is adding a third session of Family Camp in July. The mid-week session is designed for church-work families that can't get away on weekends.

Every day of summer camp begins with First Word, a quiet time for Bible reading, prayer and reflection, followed by a brief devotional message. Every evening ends at campfire with lots of singing and a message about God's love in Christ. Each day also includes Bible study focusing on the summer theme.

Summer campers have fun with activities such as hiking, swimming, canoeing, archery, horseback riding and large-group games.

To learn more about Camp Trinity's summer camp, visit lutherancamp.org and click the link at the top of the page. The link to register is in the "Summer Camp" drop-down menu.

Summer staff needed

Camp Trinity is seeking Christian young adults who want to serve in ministry for the summer of 2023. Six cabin counselors and three kitchen/general staff members are needed.

Cabin counselors need to know Scripture and be familiar with Lutheran theology to lead daily Bible studies and evening campfire devotions. The period of service runs from May 29 to July 31.

Applicants, ages 18-25, can fill out a summer service profile at the National Lutheran Outdoors Ministry Association website: nloma.org.

Golden Wedding anniversary

Artie and Helen Megibben, members of Concordia, Nashville, recently celebrated their first 50 years of their marriage. They were married at Zion Lutheran Church, Dallas, Texas, on Dec. 30, 1972.

To God alone be the glory!

Share your news with us!

Send us your stories and photos for our March issue by Jan. 15. Digital files, sent via e-mail, are preferred. Our submission deadline is the 15th of each month, two months before publication. Photos must be sent in high resolution.

Send email submissions to LW@mid-southlcms.com or send by postal mail to: Judy Otto; 150 N. Maury St.; Holly Springs, MS 38635.

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

District comes through for CARE-VAN

By Julie Tyler

Mid-South District Administrative Assistant for Missions and Education, CARE-VAN Coordinator

At the 2022 Lutheran World Relief (LWR) CARE-VAN ingathering, the Mid-South District once again had seven drop sites where we collected handmade quilts, school kits, personal care kits, baby care kits and fabric kits. Our drop sites were Grace, Knoxville; Cross of Christ, Chattanooga; Our Savior, Nashville; Immanuel, Memphis; First, Fort Smith, Ark.; Zion of Avilla, Alexander, Ark.; and Salem, Springdale, Ark.

At the time of this report (Nov. 18), the top three quilt-producing congregations were Zion of Avilla, Alexander (192 quilts), Grace, Knoxville (118 quilts), and Cross of Christ, Chattanooga (114 quilts). A total of 1,864 quilts have been donated.

To date we had 42 congregations participate, collecting over \$3,307 for shipping costs. We also collected 1,518 personal care kits (one congregation donated 351 personal care kits!), 172 fabric kits, 917 school kits, 213 baby care kits. Also, 50 face masks were donated. The CARE-VAN trailers were loaded up with 626 boxes (weighing about 12,236 pounds) of offerings from district congregations for LWR. Way to go Mid-South District!

We were blessed to have LWR representatives Ed and Vicki Whetstone join us at two of the drop off locations.

Diane Reimold, Memphis Circuit CARE-VAN coordinator, noted that 2022 was one of the best years for donations. "COVID certainly was the reason for the lack of donations the past two years," she said. "Once 2022 got here, we were ready to be together again, as reflected in total donations that far exceeded what was donated in 2021.

"One individual donor who is not currently affiliated with a Lutheran



▲ Vicki and Ed Whetstone of Lutheran World Relief helped with collections in Memphis and Alexander, Ark.

◀ Diane Reimold of Immanuel, Memphis, and CARE-VAN coordinator, and Julie Tyler of Beautiful Savior, Olive Branch, Miss., delivered boxes of school kits.

church located us on the LWR website and read about the gatherings across the country. Julie Tyler at the district office helped to arrange delivery of her donation to the drop off site. She hopes to make more quilts for next year's event.

"Knowing there are random people looking for ways to help others is so heart-warming. Thank you to all the congregations in our district that contributed to CARE-VAN this year. Our donations will make a difference in people's lives."

Many of the congregations' efforts are coordinated by LWML groups and longstanding quilting groups in the congregations. They participate in this effort to share the love of Christ in a personal way. The tireless efforts of those who share their talents and the generous contributions of many make this a successful ingathering.

Thanks to all who participated in this year's annual LWR CARE-VAN drive. You touched someone in need!