



MID-SOUTH LUTHERAN

THE GOOD SHEPHERD



Several years ago, we had a treat we hadn't seen before: our backyard was filled with goats. There was every size and color of goat munching away on my wife's vegetable garden. I wasn't concerned until they started moving toward the small fruit trees I planted.

I saw the goats had escaped their fence and needed to be rounded up. I hopped into my pickup and headed toward the bridge where the head goat seemed to lead the flock. Since the road was heavily traveled it was a hazard to goats unaware. The goats sensed they were trapped between the road and the river. I was on one side, a huge Hereford bull was on another side, houses were on



Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola
District President

another side and a river on yet another. They thought they were surrounded by dangers.

A neighbor believed the goats belonged on the other side of the road and across a river. Then I noticed there were two heifers that got out with the goats and were also in trouble. If I approached the goats, they scattered. I was totally useless getting them back to food, water and safety by myself.

Then to my amazement, a shepherd dog came along. If the bull got too close to the little goats, the dog would take after the bull. If one goat strayed too far away from the flock, the dog chased him back. If one of the heifers got too close to the goats, the dog yapped at it until the goats were left alone.

When I whistled, the dog pricked up its ears to see if there was a goat that had strayed from the flock. I tried to get the dog to help get the goats across the road

and back into their safe pasture. Not a chance. She just sat and stared at the flock.

Then occurred the most amazing thing I learned from my little goat herding experience. The farmer finally showed up, shook a feed bucket and every last one of the flock — from smallest to biggest — took off in a dead run to their own pastures. No fuss, no bother. On the other hand, the cattle didn't belong to him so they took off for the bridge. And the dog? She ran away with the goats and, as I learned later, back to her eight 4-week-old puppies she left behind just so she could tend the goats.

When the Bible talks about shepherds, it usually speaks of leadership — like the Good Shepherd discourse of Jesus. The Jews in Jesus' day thought about kings, queens and ambassadors almost as soon as when the word "shepherd" was used. The illustration of shepherds was used to refer to great kings like David, Josiah and Hezekiah, who were all men of God who began as shepherds.

There were some bad shepherds too. Ezekiel warned Israel about the shepherds who ended up caring for themselves rather than their people. The same applied in Jesus' day as the Herodians sold out the Jewish people to the Romans. For the sake of his shallow title and appointment, Herod paid for the position of king and high priest in his own temple.

Yet when Jesus talked about a Good Shepherd, He left no mistaken idea that He referred to a sacrificing shepherd who cared for His people above all other priorities. No king, no leader, and

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SHEPHERD

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

not even Herod would have set out to lose a flock or give it over to predators. Nor do we hear of public officials, business moguls or pastors who purposely put their flock at risk for the sake of their reckless or evil desires.

The problem is that as sheep — people who follow — we might have a good leader, but he may change or be taken away from us. The ones who start out good might turn out rotten or corrupt. Other strong leaders have even been cut down in their prime. Still others may sound good, but underneath they're corrupt as all evil itself. History is filled with misguided and misled peoples and nations that have followed after a charismatic charlatan. How do we know the difference?

What we need are truly trustworthy leaders, good shepherds who seek us even when we may remain unaware of our lost condition. We need shepherds who take hold of us when we ourselves have gone outside the "fences" that are meant to keep us in bounds as much as they are meant to protect us. We need shepherds for the shepherds.

The Gospel proclaims such a Shepherd, one who left everything behind with His throne of glory to guide, feed and protect us. He's always at work on our behalf through His church and Means of Grace. He was set apart from eternity to become our anointed Savior and Shepherd. We confess in our creeds that He was true flesh and blood, prone to pain and sorrow, vulnerable in every aspect like any mother's son, just to become our Shepherd and the sacrificial Lamb of God.

In one way, this is probably what made Him to be our Good Shepherd. He came as one of us in flesh and blood. He chose to give us life and protection. He came to seek His own and willingly gave of Himself to find those lost in darkness and danger. He is loved by the heavenly Father and called the Good Shepherd because He did everything without regard to His rightful majesty and divine attributes.

He was one in flesh and blood with those He came to save. He gave His flesh and blood to us who need His comfort and care. He shared true grief with those who were in deep in despair and sorrow. He gave of



“

He chose to give His own flesh to fill the void between God's grace and His flock. He chose to die for our fractured human nature... He stands in His constant watch over us so we might return to the safe pastures of God's peace, protection and preservation forever.”

Himself in flesh and blood when His eyes of compassion saw danger, hunger, illness, worry and poverty. He gave of Himself in flesh and blood when He willingly suffered the pain and punishment our sins deserved. He gave, and we have received.

The Good Shepherd is good because He gave of Himself.

“For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.”

John 10:17-18

All that He had to give, He gave to the entire flock, the whole community without reservation, and for the joy that was set before Him in the glory of our eternal life.

Jesus did not seek suffering, nor the hidden glory in it. But He chose suffering for sin that stood between Almighty God and His flock. He chose to give His own flesh to fill the void between God's grace and His flock. He chose to die for our fractured human nature, and He rose in glory to restore all humanity into its right relationship. He stands in His constant watch over us so we might return to the safe pastures of God's peace, protection and preservation forever.

We may be confused, fearful and fragile flesh, but we are His. Because we are His, we can be assured that we have all that our Lord Jesus generously gives us by His grace. He gives us His Spirit of peace amid dangers and trials. He gives His body and blood to sustain us in faith for each day on this mortal journey. He gives life, even when it may appear to rush away in a whisper.

The goats in my backyard scrambled to reach the provisions and protection of the farmer's pasture. The shepherd dog looked back, as if to check to see if every goat was inside the pasture. Then she ran over the top of the hill and out of sight. What a great lesson!

Every day that our God graciously offers us is filled in our rest with His peace and the comfort of knowing we have a shepherd — the Good Shepherd for us all, who keeps us in His care and in His blessed assurance. May God give us His peace for each of our days in this new year, as the sheep of His pasture and the flock of His hand.



Lutherans offer
HELP, HOPE

By Rev. Trae Fistler
Pastor, Faith, Hopkinsville, Ky.

Throughout 2024, the Mid-South District has provided financial and volunteer support at several disaster sites, and continues to do so as needed. We share one of many notable examples.

On May 26, eight confirmed tornadoes touched down in Rogers, Ark., and the surrounding communities. In addition, straight line winds of 80 to 100 miles per hour swept through the area. The district office and our district Disaster Response coordinator (DDRC), Janet Simko, in conjunction with our DDRC in training, Kurt Ludwig, were immediately in contact with our pastors in these communities.

The Faith In Action disaster response team — made up of LCMS members in the Hopkinsville, Ky., and Clarksville, Tenn., areas — was immediately notified and our district Lutheran Early Response Teams (LERT) were put on standby until Rev. Dr. Ross Johnson, LCMS Disaster Response director, and Simko met with Rogers-area pastors to determine what help was needed. Over two dozen LCMS households in this community were affected and had tree damage.

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Rogers, Ark., graciously offered to host and feed our LERT volunteers. This congregation became the camp for our LERT teams for five weeks.

Progress made, but more help is needed

Following the devastation left by Hurricane Helene in late September, many responded to the Mid-South District’s call for support through gifts to the Disaster Relief Fund. By December, \$163,000 had been received to provide aid to those impacted by Helene and the damage from the storm’s resulting floods in east Tennessee, the Carolinas and Georgia.

But financial gifts are only part of the story. Across the district and beyond, Lutheran Early Response Teams (LERT), families, students and other Lutheran groups provided manpower, supplies, food and so many other means of support for those whose lives have been turned upside down by this tragic event. You are urged to see updates on these efforts at:

- mid-southlcms.org/disaster-response-update
- The Facebook page of Faith in Action Disaster Response, a district LERT. Visit [facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com) and type the name in the search bar.

Continuing help by donation and/or volunteer training and availability is always needed and appreciated. Specify a disaster or location, or your donations will be directed where the need is greatest.

The Rogers deployment began on June 3 and ended on July 12. Our LERT volunteers completed 35 work orders for homeowners. The majority of volunteers were members of the local LCMS congregations, but included 50 volunteers from nine states.

Our teams removed and cleaned up 315 trees — nearly \$800,000 worth of work if it had been done by tree removal companies.

Our teams joyfully proclaimed God’s love in Christ Jesus to those affected by this disaster. Many thanks go to Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, her pastors, and all the members who provided meals to our volunteers, as well as those whose donations make all of this possible. Our LERT teams and congregations in the Mid-South District continue to help the Southeast with recovery after hurricanes Helene and Milton.

Pastor Fistler also serves on the Faith in Action response team and is a chainsaw and heavy equipment trainer.

Congregation mission commitment receipts

as of Oct. 31, 2024 (10 months)

Anticipated amount (83% of budget)	\$1,366,288
Actual receipts	\$1,353,661
Over (under) anticipated amount	(\$12,627)
Use of mission commitment receipts	
Allocated to Synod for world missions	\$385,265
Allocated to Tanzania.....	\$20,833
Retained for district ministry/mission support (70% of receipts)	\$947,563
Total receipts	\$1,353,661
Mission commitment receipts comparison	
Actual receipts as of Oct. 31, 2024	\$133,508
Actual receipts as of Oct. 31, 2023	\$116,322
Over (under) prior year receipts	\$17,186

Wintertime blues?



Getty Images

By Candy Habich
Media and Marketing Chairman,
LWML Mid-South District

Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. **1 Peter 4:9-11**

Here we are at the start of another new year and maybe you’re in a post-holiday slump. Gray skies and cold winds don’t help your mood either.

The best way to improve your own mood is to help someone else improve theirs! Perhaps there’s an elderly person who needs help with housekeeping, or a shut-in who would dearly love a visit. Maybe there’s a mom who could use a break while the kids are out of school.

As the passage above from 1 Peter 4 reminds us that we ultimately serve our great God through our service to others, we should be excited to give God the glory while we bring some joy to our sisters and brothers in Christ. So let’s grab our coats, put on our boots and get out there!

If you’re not sure where to start, you may find inspiration by browsing the list of LWML Toolkit Kits at thelc.ms/lwml-toolkit. You’ll find ideas for everything from visiting shut-ins to encouraging college students.



A Mission Grant check for \$5,000 was presented to the Spiritual Support for Cancer Patients ministry of Grace Lutheran Church, Knoxville, on Nov. 3. This grant will help provide training and devotional materials. Pictured are, from left, Sandie Harjala, LWML district president; Kathy and Steve Crum; and Grace pastors Rev. Danny Anderson (senior) and Rev. Jake Childers (associate pastor). Praise God for this wonderful ministry! To learn more, visit midsouthlwml.org/mission-grants.

Life ministry resources

The LCMS, the LWML and Lutherans For Life have many resources for learning about, advocating for and serving in life ministry. Below are links to just a few resources that you may find helpful for your congregation and your LWML group. And, no matter what — pray, pray, pray!

- lcms.org/life • lutheransforlife.org
- lwml.org/posts/mission-servants-activities/january-2019
- lwml.org/posts/mission-servants-activities/2012/03/january-2016
- lwml.org/posts/mission-servants-activities/mission-service-to-mothers

STAY CONNECTED

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- midsouthlwml.org
 - facebook.com/msd.lwml
- Email**
- contact@midsouthlwml.org
- Subscribe**
- midsouthlwml.org/enews

COMING UP

- LWML 41st Biennial Convention, Omaha, Neb., June 26-29
- LWML Mid-South District Fall Retreats:
- **WEST** – Sept. 5-7, Mount Eagle Retreat Center, Clinton, Ark.
 - **MIDDLE** – Sept. 19-21, Camp Garner Creek, Dickson, Tenn.
 - **EAST** – Sept. 26-28, Eagle Rock Retreat Center, Tallassee, Tenn.



Congratulations!

We share with you the pastors of the Mid-South District who are celebrating milestone ordination anniversaries in 2025. Congregations are encouraged to observe these ministry milestones with an appropriate recognition.

We rejoice and give thanks to God with these gifts to His church. Well done, good and faithful servants!

65 YEARS

Rev. Albert Eichelberger
Emeritus, Knoxville, Tenn.

Rev. Frank Zirbel
Emeritus, Harrison, Ark.

60 YEARS

Rev. David Callies
Emeritus, Brentwood, Tenn.

Rev. Larry Marhenke
Emeritus, Hot Springs Village, Ark.

Rev. Donald Neiswender
Emeritus, Paducah, Ky.

Rev. Gilbert Pingel
Emeritus, Chattanooga, Tenn.

55 YEARS

Rev. Linsey Dettmer
Emeritus, Sevierville, Tenn.

Rev. John Freitag
Emeritus, Rogersville, Tenn.

Rev. Roger Reckling
Emeritus, Knoxville, Tenn.

Rev. Kenneth Taglauer
Emeritus, Brookline, Mass.

50 YEARS

Rev. Darrell Kobs
Emeritus, Russellville, Ark.

45 YEARS

Rev. Dean Clausing
Emeritus, Benton, Ark.

Rev. David Cloeter
Emeritus, Bella Vista, Ark.

Rev. Larry Peters
Grace, Clarksville, Tenn.

40 YEARS

Rev. Robert Alexander
Emeritus, Bella Vista, Ark.

Rev. Robert Benke
Faith, Hot Springs Village, Ark.

Rev. Jonathan Beyer
First, Hot Springs, Ark.

Rev. Wayne Schuett
Emeritus, Russellville, Ark.

Rev. John Treude
Emeritus, Fort Smith, Ark.

35 YEARS

Rev. James Burns
First, Benton, Ark.

Rev. Myles Schultz
Grace, Holiday Island, Ark.

30 YEARS

Rev. David Lampman
Emeritus, Crossville, Tenn.

25 YEARS

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

Rev. Jerome Leckband
All Saints, Jonesboro, Ark.

20 YEARS

Rev. John Beabout
Shepherd of the Hills, Crossville, Tenn.

Rev. David Schmidt
Faith, Bentonville, Ark.

15 YEARS

Rev. Michael Croom
Trinity, Memphis

Rev. Michael Edwards
Candidate, Nixa, Mo.

Rev. Gerald Heinecke
Hope, Batesville, Ark.
Zion, Waldenburg, Ark.

Rev. David Witte
Grace, Little Rock, Ark.

10 YEARS

Rev. Eric Longman
Holy Trinity, Rogers, Ark.

5 YEARS

Rev. Sawyer Meyers
Beautiful Savior, Olive Branch, Miss.

OFFICIAL NOTICE
The 22nd Regular Convention
Mid-South District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
Memphis, Tennessee

Dates: Thursday, June 12 (mid-afternoon) to Saturday, June 14, 2025 (mid-afternoon)

Location: The Hilton Hotel
939 Ridgeland Blvd., Memphis, TN 38120; Phone: 901-684-6664

Theme: "Christ: The Church's One Foundation" - 1 Corinthians 3:10-11

Opening Service with Holy Communion:
Thursday, June 12, 2025, at 7:30 p.m.
Christ the King Lutheran Church
5296 Park Avenue, Memphis, TN 38119
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: **February 11, 2025**

To be sent to the Mid-South District Secretary

Rev. Larry Peters
Mid-South District – LCMS
1675 Wynne Road, Cordova, TN 38016

NOMINATION BALLOTS FOR DISTRICT SECRETARY
NOMINATION BALLOTS FOR DISTRICT NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

Deadline: **February 11, 2025**

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: **March 15, 2025**

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])

First celebrates, teaches about the Reformation

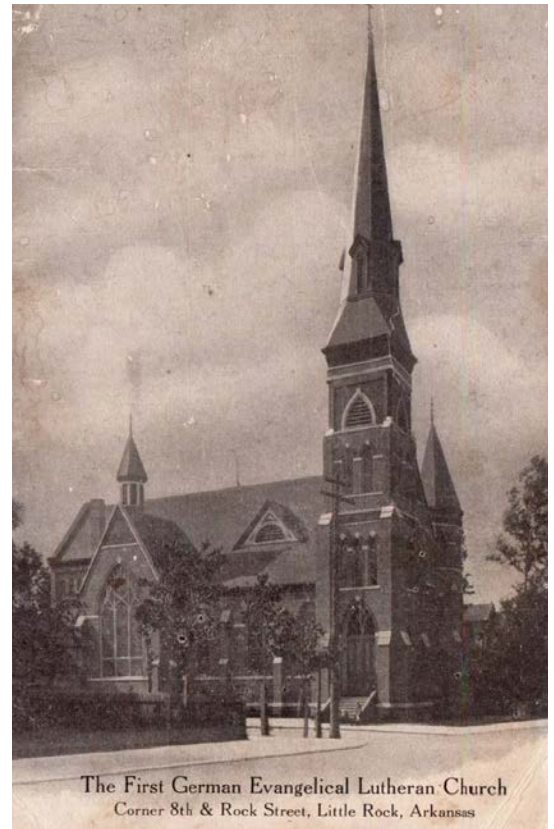
When staff of First Lutheran Church, Little Rock, was planning its Reformation Service and Oktoberfest Dinner, which was held Oct. 27, Men’s Club President Nate Brandes spread the word and invited many in the community, including Frank Lockwood, religion editor for the statewide *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* newspaper. Lockwood wrote a feature article that was published on the Saturday preceding the event.

“We accomplished our objective of obtaining mass public notification not only of our event, but more importantly education regarding what the word ‘Reformation’ was all about and why we continue to celebrate it 517 years after Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses,” Brandes said. “We

know this since guests approached us during the post-service dinner and told us they were attending because of the newspaper article information, and had not previously heard about the Protestant Reformation.”

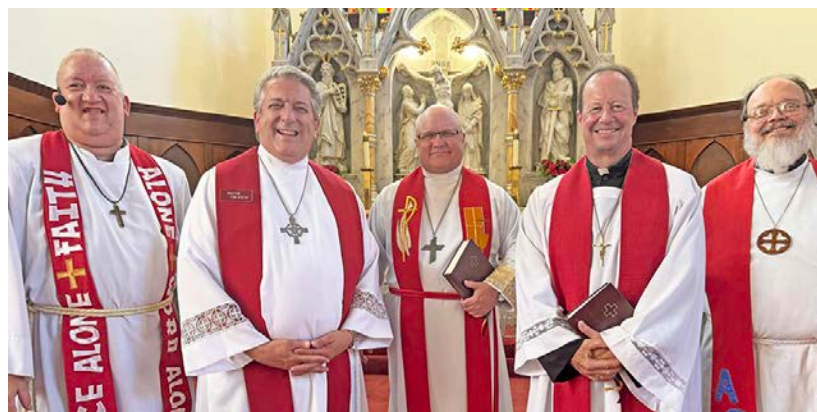
Curiously, while researching the story, Lockwood located on Ebay a historic postcard picturing “The First German Evangelical Lutheran Church” — the current First Lutheran Church of Little Rock, on the corner of Eighth and Rock streets — as it appeared in 1888.

The Men’s Club sponsored the Oktoberfest dinner that followed the afternoon Reformation Service. The Reformation Service/Oktoberfest Dinner has been a successful blend event since 1992.



▲ First, Little Rock, is pictured in 1888.

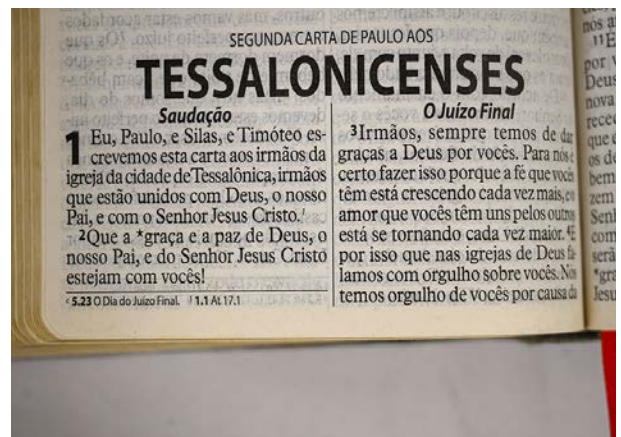
▲ Pastors who served at the Reformation service at First were, from left, Revs. Ronald Bacic, First, Little Rock; Thomas Boeck, Peace, Conway; Dr. Kurt Taylor, associate professor of theology, Concordia University, Mequon, Wis.; Emil Woerner, Friends in Christ, Bryant; and Steven Teske, Immanuel, Alexander.



Host a Bible Translation Sunday

Did you know that more than 7,000 languages are spoken in the world, but only 750 languages have the full Bible? Help raise awareness as a church advocate for Bible translation ministry. Host a Bible Translation Sunday at your church to advocate for the mission of Lutheran Bible Translators (LBT). Engage your church with a call to action by inviting individuals and families to contribute \$35 monthly to translate one verse of Scripture until the work is done (or set a total goal for your church).

It’s a simple yet powerful way to gather in prayer, inspire generosity and make a huge impact, translating entire chapters and books of the Bible. Join us in this mission to let the world know that “God speaks your language.” Ready to make a difference? Take the next steps at lbt.org/bts.



Camp close to RSO status

As of November, Camp Trinity was in the final stages of becoming an LCMS Recognized Service Organization (RSO). All the paperwork has been completed, and Deaconess Dorothy Krans, LCMS RSO director, made an on-site visit with the Camp Trinity Board of Directors in November.

The camp was formed in 1983 when the tiny congregation of Trinity Lutheran Church on Petit Jean Mountain deeded its property — 20 acres and a historic chapel — to an association of two dozen LCMS congregations in Arkansas. The camp and retreat center has been in operation ever since, adding new facilities over the years as it was able.

Although all eight members of the Board of Directors and all full-time staffers have been members of LCMS congregations since the camp's inception, the camp itself had no official ties to the LCMS, defining itself as an "independent 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation in voluntary association with the Mid-South District of the LCMS," including the statement of faith as found on the LCMS website.

The RSO status solidifies the camp's connection to the LCMS and reinforces its doctrinal positions. It also makes the camp eligible for some grants, as well as financing of capital projects through the Lutheran Church Extension Fund.

The camp board voted unanimously to become an RSO after recommendation by the Mid-South District and endorsement from Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, district president.

The change takes place as Aaron Davis, known as "Mountain Man" at camp, takes the reins as camp director on Jan. 1. Davis has served as operations manager since 2019. David Cox, who served 11 years as director, is retiring but will remain on staff part-time in 2025 to help with communications.

Linkt Senior High Retreat — Register Now!

January is for youth groups in the Mid-South District to register for the Linkt senior high retreat, to be held

Feb. 21-23. The theme is "Be Anxious for Nothing," based on Phil. 4:6-7. Aaron Davis is the featured speaker/presenter.

Registration is by congregation. The cost is \$125 per person through Feb. 1 (\$150 afterward) and covers food, lodging and activities.

Youth from congregations without youth groups attending can register separately and be assigned to another congregation's youth group. Email the camp office for details or request applications at director@lutherancamp.org.

Financial assistance is available for youth in need that their home congregations cannot provide.

Summer Camp 2025

"Light & Truth" is the theme for Summer Camp 2025. Daily Bible studies will dig into the Scriptures, focusing on the theme verse, Psalm 43:3: "Send out your light and truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling!"

Jesus is the ultimate light and truth, referring to Himself as the "light of the world," and "the way, the truth, and the life."

Campers will enjoy all kinds of fun activities, including hiking, swimming, canoeing, archery, large-group games, horseback riding, nature studies, and trips to the petting zoo. Adventure campers will go on a river float trip with overnight camping. And they will be given a choice between rock climbing or hiking up Pinnacle Mountain. Every day of camp ends with a campfire with lots of singing and a message about God's love in Christ.

As in 2023, summer camp will include five youth sessions and three family camps. Parents can register online at lutherancamp.org.

The camp is also looking for summer help — cabin counselors and kitchen staff. Lutheran young adults, ages 18-25, are invited to apply. The period of service runs from late May through the end of July. College students looking for



Summer camp at Camp Trinity is a great time to reconnect, and make new friends.

summer jobs in which they can make a positive impact on the lives of children are encouraged to apply.

The camp is also looking for junior staffers, which are high school students who work one or two weeks alongside senior staff. To receive an application for either senior or junior staff, send an email to director@lutherancamp.org.

Share your news with us!



Digital files are preferred. Email submissions to LW@mid-southlcms.com or send by postal mail to: Judy Otto; 150 N. Maury St.; Holly Springs, MS 38635

The deadline for the March issue is Jan. 15.