



# MID-SOUTH LUTHERAN

## A SERVANT OF US ALL

During the reign of King Cyrus of Persia, around 450 B.C., there was an enemy of Cyrus who seemed to be bigger than life. His name was Cagular, a chieftain whose armies had defeated all that invaded his land, including a small army of Cyrus. But Cyrus couldn't stand defeat. He assembled every able-bodied man he could find for a great assault on Cagular. It worked, as Cyrus finally defeated that man.



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

Cyrus' army captured Cagular and his family. They were brought back to Persia for execution. Heavily armed guards brought Cagular and his wife along the palace's marble covered hallways from the prison, to stand in chains before Cyrus.

Cyrus couldn't help but notice how tall and powerful looking Cagular was — well over six feet, muscular, with sharp features on a battle-worn face. Cyrus was impressed. So he asked Cagular, "Oh, great Cagular, what would you do if I spared your life?"

Cagular responded, "I'd give honor to your majesty and serve you for the rest of my life."

King Cyrus continued, "And, what would you do if I spared the life of your wife?" Cagular answered, "I would be willing to die for you, O great King Cyrus."

Cyrus released Cagular and his entire family and made him the governor of the southern Persian provinces. On the way to their new position, Cagular asked his wife, "Did you notice the riches of King Cyrus — marble-covered corridors, magnificent fountains, and statues? His throne looked as if it was cut from a single lump of gold."

His wife said, "No Cagular, I didn't see any of those things. I saw a face, the face of a man who said he was willing to die for me."

### Feast of St. James

We celebrate the Feast of St. James the Elder on July 25. In Mark's Gospel, James and John ask Jesus to let them sit at His right or left when He came into His kingdom. They wanted to be set apart in honor and power.

But Jesus asked them:

"Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?"  
— **Mark 10:38**

They replied:

"We are able."

And, Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized." v. 39

Did they know what they were getting into? Jesus was speaking of His agony and death on the cross. He's asking if they're willing to similarly suffer. In fact, 14 years later James was martyred by King Herod Agrippa, "killed



by the sword," rather than crucified as the Romans would have done.

James and John saw God's kingdom in human terms. They imagined the power, authority and honor of Jesus and wanted to have a part of it.

But Christ's kingdom isn't about earthly power and glory. Jesus said:

"But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." v. 43-45

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## SERVANT

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

### The nature of sacrifice

Remember the story of the chicken and the pig? They were walking past a very poor family. They felt sorry for them, so the chicken said to the pig, “See that hungry family? Why don’t we give them some ham and eggs to eat?” The pig replied, “For you a meal would be a contribution, for me it would be a complete sacrifice.”

How do we see the kingdom of God? Is it keeping a pew warm once in a while during the summer? Is it giving a contribution, or is it sacrifice? Who is this St. James the Elder? We know he’s the brother of John. They’re both fisherman, sons of Zebedee. Doing some exegetical study, we’d discover that Zebedee’s wife was Salome, the sister of Mary, Jesus’ mother. James was a first cousin of Jesus.

James and his brother, John, were called the “Sons of Thunder,” likely because of their sturdy stock and their loud disposition. There was another fisherman, Simon Peter. Because of their relationship by occupation, Peter called John to follow Jesus. John called James and they were the three men most commonly with Jesus. They were with Jesus at important events: the raising of Jairus’ daughter, the Transfiguration and the Lord’s agony in the Garden of Gethsemane.

James is called the elder because he was older than John. They were also called the “Sons of Thunder” likely because of their evangelistic zeal and hot temper. For example, when the Samaritan refused to receive Jesus into their community, it was James who asked:

“Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?”

— Luke 9:54

But Jesus deterred his zeal.

After the brothers asked for the right- and left-hand seats

with Jesus to no avail, Salome, their mother, asked Jesus for the same privilege:

“Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom.” —

Matt. 20:21

The brothers, still ignorant of the reality of the Messianic kingdom, figured they were able to drink the cup and be baptized with the cup and baptism Christ would face. They didn’t know it meant a cross.

History tells us that James won that crown of glory for God’s kingdom 14 years after Christ’s prophecy. Herod Agrippa, son of Aristobulus and grandson of Herod the Great, wanted to please orthodox Jews. He was a tyrant. He was a self-appointed priestly king in the Northern Kingdom. Because Orthodox Jews had nothing to do with the Herodians, Agrippa tried to win their favor by finding ways to impress them.

The Christian community had grown rapidly. Since James was the most outspoken leader in the northern regions, Agrippa likely chose him to be martyred during the Passover festival in 44 A.D. As for James’ brother, John, we’ve been entrusted with a Gospel given by God in his name, three epistles and the marvelous book of God’s Revelation of the eternal kingdom of God in glory. By all accounts, John was the only apostle at the cross of Christ on that fateful Good Friday. He is the only apostle who never died a

martyr’s death. Yet he was beaten, left for dead, and imprisoned throughout most of his adult life.

Neither brother sat at the right hand or the left hand of Christ in glory. The inauguration of Christ in His kingdom took place at the cross. There, the Son of God and the Son of Man suffered and died to earn the forgiveness of all the sins of all the world. Who was at Christ’s right hand and left hand that day? Common criminals, sinners, two men crucified on either side of Jesus. One died cursing God. The other heard the gracious promise of Christ our Savior: “Today you will be with Me in paradise.”

That’s the message for you and me. We’re crucified with Christ in our Baptisms, crucified to sin and raised to new life with the resurrected Christ. I write this during the up-curve of the COVID-19 pandemic. Someday, soon, we will be able once again to gather in worship and celebrate what Christ gives us as His baptized saints.

No, we’re not all going to die and go to God’s kingdom of Paradise. But when we return to our houses of worship, we’re going to be fed in the foretaste of God’s eternal peace when Christ serves us with His very body and blood in His supper. We’ll be joined with all the saints and angels, with James and John who reside with Christ in the kingdom of glory, and with Christ, who comes to serve us all.

### Why celebrate the festivals of the saints?

So just as Cagular’s wife saw in the presence of King Cyrus not the things of worldly glory, but the face of her husband who was willing to die for her; when we return to worship as the Body of Christ, we won’t focus on the beauty and glory of an earthly domain, but rather on the face of Him who willingly died for us, that we may inherit the glory and majesty of His eternal kingdom.

May God grant this to us all.



# Financial aid deadline is June 15

To support the education efforts of students pursuing a full-time career in church work, the Mid-South District is pleased to once again offer opportunities for financial aid.

To be considered for financial assistance, a student must be a member in good standing in a Mid-South District congregation and be enrolled at an LCMS seminary or college/university to prepare for full-time service as a rostered church worker. Rostered workers include pastors, teachers, deaconesses and directors of Christian Education.

To be considered for the student financial assistance program, you must first inform the Mid-South District office that you are or will be a student enrolled at a Synod school. This information may be sent to Julie Tyler at [jtyler@mid-southlcms.com](mailto:jtyler@mid-southlcms.com) or Attn: Julie Tyler; 1675 Wynne Road; Cordova, TN 38016.



All related forms, including the financial aid application, are at [mid-southlcms.org/student-financial-aid](http://mid-southlcms.org/student-financial-aid).

The application deadline is June 15.

## Bethlehem safely feeds the needy

On the last Friday of each month, Bethlehem, Johnson City, Tenn., provides about 200 meals to feed those less fortunate at Muncey Methodist Church in downtown Johnson City. This became a difficult task during the COVID-19 pandemic as the safety and health of the participants and the servers became a primary concern.

To continue serving in March, Bethlehem provided 200 bag lunches that were distributed to the participants as they maintained the recommended spacing between individuals.



## Congregation mission commitment receipts

as of March 31, 2020 (3 months)



Anticipated amount (25% of budget)	\$384,743
Actual receipts	\$349,034
Over (under) anticipated amount	(\$35,709)

### Use of mission commitment receipts

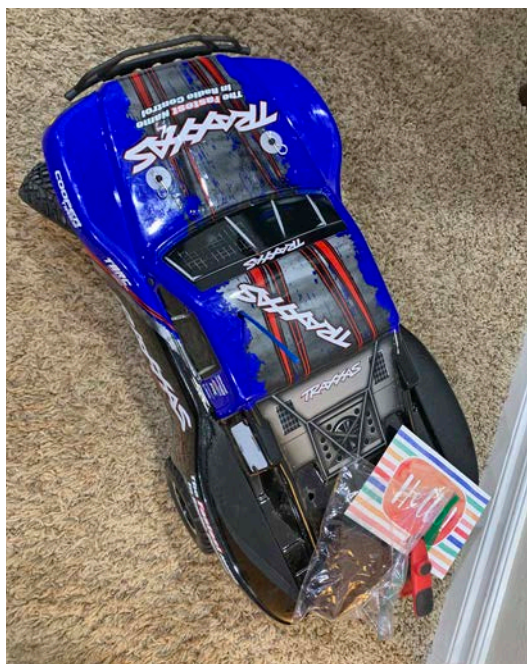
Allocated to Synod for world missions	\$98,460
Allocated to Tanzania	\$6,250
Retained for district ministry/mission support (70% of receipts)	\$244,324
Total receipts	\$349,034

### Mission commitment receipts comparison

Actual receipts as of March 31, 2020	\$349,034
Actual receipts as of March 31, 2019	\$400,443
Over (under) prior year receipts	(\$51,409)

In time of trial ...

# KINGDOM WORK CARRIES ON



Brook Brown, fourth-grade teacher at **First Lutheran School, Fort Smith, Ark.**, made special brownie deliveries to the homes of her students, using a remote control car to deliver them up the driveway. In the class novel they are reading, the teacher makes brownies for the class. Brook was not going to let social distancing stop her from doing the same!



Job, the comfort dog of **Christ the King, Memphis**, reaches out to children and others through virtual visits via Lutheran Church Charities' online portal. He is shown here with his handler, "Top Dog" Barbara Schmitt, who is connecting with her grandchildren, Liam and Greer.



Jennifer Greenwell virtually teaches one of her second through fifth grade classes at **Avilla Christian Academy (Zion Lutheran Church), Alexander, Ark.**



Across the miles, Frances Bacillus illustrates colorful lessons in religion for her first graders at Avilla Christian Academy.



Avilla teachers Lesley Kelly and Elesha White provide an Easter Sunday serenade for a graduating senior at his home.



**By Rev. Robert Portier**  
Pastor, St. Paul, Sevierville, Tenn.

Greetings in Christ and happy birthday, United States of America! Our country marked her birth on the fourth of July 1776 with a declaration of independence. As I pondered that, I wondered what a similar document might look like if it were to come from our church as a proclamation to our community of who we are and what we are all about. What follows is the result of that pondering. This is our “Declaration of Dependence.”

## **The unanimous Declaration of the Congregation of God’s Church**

In the course of divine events it became necessary for God to dissolve His connection with sinful man, because this sinful nature was so offensive to His just and holy nature. It is not possible for man to earn a separate and equal station to which the Laws of God entitle those who keep them. A decent respect to the truths of God requires that we should declare the causes which impel us to cling in faith to the promises of God.

We hold these truths to be divinely revealed, that all men inherit from Adam their sinful nature, that they are blessed by their Creator with a certain assurance of salvation through Christ, this is affirmed by God in His sacramental gifts of Baptism, Holy Communion and Confession and Absolution.

To secure these Gifts, God bled, died and resurrected in the person of Jesus Christ in order that all men would have available to them atonement, allowing them through faith access to the just and Loving God.

Because of these truths we the people of God declare our dependence on Him and as such enumerate the following truths revealed by Him. We believe and teach in accordance with His word that:

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness. — **2 Tim 3:16**

His word is the rule and norm for all we say and do as His church.

### **Through His Word:**

- ▶ He reveals Himself to be one God, triune in nature, consisting of God the Father, creator of the universe and all that is in it; God the Son, born of a virgin, suffered, died and resurrected for all (2 Cor. 5:15); and God the Holy Spirit, praying for us and planting faith in contrite hearts.
- ▶ He is perfect and holy, and His Law reveals His perfect and just nature. We are sinful at birth as descendants of Adam ... “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).
- ▶ He washes us clean in Holy Baptism ... “the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5).
- ▶ He commissions us all to spread His Gospel ... “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19).
- ▶ He defines His church as the body of Christ ... “Now you are the body of Christ” (1 Cor.12:27).
- ▶ He gives forgiveness in the Lord’s Supper that He instituted by Christ as His true body and blood in, with and under the forms of bread and wine, for Christians to eat and drink. Jesus said this in Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22 and 1 Corinthians 11, with the words “this is my body ... this is my blood ... given and shed for you.”



But in a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the service of self, man has a design to reduce God’s Word to absolute despotism. Because of this it is the privilege and duty of His church to throw off such human reason, which is insufficient to understand God and to adequately describe His glorious mysteries.

Therefore, the church, His body, must provide in accord with His will the visible means for the benefit of man’s eternal security.

Such mysteries are treasured and protected by His holy church in spite of the resistance, consternation and outright rebellion of the world that surrounds it. To wit: the account of His miraculous creation of all that exists in six 24-hour days, miraculous plagues, taming of the elements, provision for His people, healing of the sick, the gifts of order, abundance and well-defined roles for all mankind at all stations of life. These gifts are unquestionable, but man continues to rebel against what God so freely gives.

And for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor.

Happy Independence Day!

**In Christ • Pastor Portier**

*This article first appeared in 2008 on Rev. Portier’s Smoky Mountain Reflections blog at [splctn.com](http://splctn.com).*



Getty Images



Initiative  
aims to  
unite  
Synod in  
**God's  
Word**



Short  
verses  
will be  
**posted  
weekly**

**By Stacey Egger**  
LCMS Staff Editor, Writer

**T**he Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) has a suggestion for how to spend some of your free time during the pandemic: memorize verses of Scripture together!

On March 25, Director of LCMS Worship and International Center (IC) Chaplain Rev. Sean Daenzer issued the Psalm 91 Challenge over LCMS social media, encouraging members of the Synod to memorize the psalm over a couple of weeks.

LCMS Communications decided to take the opportunity to launch a memory initiative that had been in the works for several months.

“Psalm 1 teaches us that it is blessed to meditate on the Word of God day and night,” said Dr. Kevin Armbrust, director of Editorial for LCMS Communications. “We in Communications had been talking about providing a Bible passage each week for the Synod to meditate on and memorize together. Our unity is in Christ and in His Word, so we wanted to provide an opportunity for the people of the LCMS to be united in memorizing Scripture.

“When Chaplain Daenzer started encouraging us to memorize some psalms, we knew this was the perfect opportunity to begin posting a weekly memory verse.”

Starting the first week of Easter, a new memory verse will be added weekly at [lcms.org/memoryverse](https://lcms.org/memoryverse) and shared on LCMS social media, including its Facebook page, [facebook.com/TheLCMS](https://facebook.com/TheLCMS).

The verses will be selected primarily from the Gospels and epistles. Most of the selections will be short, just one or two verses at a time.

Daenzer said that memorizing Scripture is a valuable practice for Christians, even in a digital age.

“We’re so connected with everything digitally, and we have

information at our fingertips,” Daenzer said. “But if that were to ever go out, what would we know? Almost nothing.

“When Jonah was in the belly of the whale, it was too late to pull out his Bible. It was too late to grab his catechism and his hymnal. ... The great Song of Jonah in Chapter 2 is nothing but pieces of the psalms stitched together. They’re his childhood memory verses and bedtime prayers that he was able to use in the total darkness of the whale to pray faithfully, to bring God’s Word to bear on his situation, and to comfort himself in the midst of great distress.

“And that’s exactly why we learn the Scriptures now: We never know when persecution may come, when technology or even access to Bibles and churches may go away. We’re getting a taste of that now in the quarantine time. So, it drives home the point that we need to have Scripture ... on our hearts and our minds.”

## Tips for effective memorization from Chaplain Daenzer

- ▶ Small, short bites, repeated many times, are way better than one giant “cram” session. Take two minutes every night and say it through twice together, or once in the morning and once in the evening.
- ▶ Music always helps us to memorize more easily and then to retain it. Sing anything that can be sung, either to a tune you know, or to a simple tone like one of the psalm tones in the hymnal.
- ▶ If you have a Bible translation that you’ve started memorizing in, don’t feel like you have to switch translations whenever a new one comes along. Whatever you’re familiar with will be just fine.

# He's still in control!

By Frances Bacic  
Media Marketing,  
LWML Mid-South District

As I write this, I am disappointed that I must teach my kids through a computer. Disappointed my two boys will not walk for graduation or have prom, senior skip day and all the other things seniors cherish.

I am disappointed that I am attending and facilitating worship service through Zoom from my bedroom while my husband is preaching in the dining room and our organist is playing from his house. I am disappointed that I am stuck at home, not being able to do what I want to do. Things I want to do are canceled.

Then I am reminded: Creation bears His glory, His order and His symmetry. I am reminded of Phil. 4:8:

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Yes, my yard is looking the best it has



Pictured are the lonely graduation gown and valedictorian medal of Derek Bacic, son of Frances and Rev. Ronald Bacic, pastor of First Lutheran Church, Little Rock. Will they ever be worn?

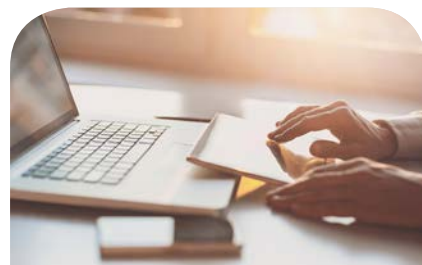
ever looked since we moved into this house! I have time to cook. I may even have time to clean, my least favorite chore. I am seeing my friends through online Bible studies. I am having three months with my college-age senior. I am helping to keep myself and others safe. Yes, our church was empty of people on Easter morning, but we still gathered strong and the grave is still empty! Our sins are still forgiven

and we are still His children, perfectly and wonderfully made.

I look around and see store clerks are still stocking food shelves. Doctors, nurses and support staff are still doing their jobs taking care of the ill. Emergency workers are still responding to our needs. And we in the Mid-South District have had many needs so far this spring tornado season.

God is still in control. God is still telling us to "Be Still." God is still providing the daily needs we ask Him for. Are we listening? Are we doing what is important for Him? Are we bearing witness to others concerning the truth found in God's Word?

God made us precious. He loves us and gave His life in exchange for our lives. Are we honoring Him in all we do and say? I hope and pray that our answer is always a resounding yes.



## Deadline for the September issue is July 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](mailto:LW@mid-southlcms.com) or send by postal mail to:

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

## Camp Trinity revises event schedule

The 12th annual Trivia Night, Camp Trinity's annual fundraiser, has been re-scheduled for Nov. 14 at Peace Lutheran Church, Conway, Ark.

Previously slated for April 25, the event was moved because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the state directive prohibiting groups larger than 10.

The camp also postponed the Champions for Religious Liberty Conference featuring Rev. Dr. Gregory Seltz, executive director of the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty in Washington, D.C. The conference was originally scheduled for March 28.

A new date has not yet been set.

All other events between March 15 and May 15 at camp were canceled. This included six retreats and the annual Spring Work Weekend.

As of April 15, the camp board and staff were optimistic about summer camp and planning to hold it as scheduled. Although registrations slowed after March 15, they picked up again in late April. The camp has 10 sessions scheduled. Parents and grandparents can learn more about the sessions and register their children or grandchildren at [lutherancamp.org](http://lutherancamp.org).