



MID-SOUTH LUTHERAN



FREEDOM: the Immeasurable Gift



Rev. Kevin R. Conger
District Second
Vice-President

“We therefore, The Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name and by authority of the good People of these Colonies solemnly publish and declare That these United Colonies are and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. 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.”

These are the words that close the Declaration of Independence, signed on July 4, 1776.

For the men who signed the declaration and pledged their lives, fortunes and sacred honor, their futures were less than certain. If the war for independence had failed, they would have been tried for treason against the British crown. They would have lost everything and faced the most horrific punishments. So why take such

a chance? Why place everything on the line with no guarantees?

To be sure, these men didn't just rest upon their own strengths, hopes or dreams. In fact, they made it clear why they would take such action. They did so with a “firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence.” Of course, much had to take place before this freedom and independence that they spoke about would be realized.

Certainly the battle for independence would not be won overnight. In fact, while the Declaration of Independence was signed in July 1776, the war didn't end until October 1781, when the British surrendered to Gen. George Washington after their defeat at Yorktown. Even with this surrender, fighting continued through the fall of 1783.

Throughout the war there were great victories won on the battlefield. There were also, however, crushing defeats that cost the lives of many. It has been estimated that there were 6,800 Americans killed in battle. Another 6,100 were wounded and as many as 20,000 were taken prisoner. The fight for freedom and independence would cost a great deal in blood and treasure.

Yet here we are now, some 246 years later, and over these many years we remember the sacrifices that were made in order to establish this free and independent nation. We recognize how much has been done to secure and maintain our freedoms. Over the years, many have given their lives, fortunes and sacred honor in defense of this nation and the freedoms we have.

The fact is the battles that America faces, when it comes to our freedom, will

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morph from generation to generation as our leaders will take different paths that will excite some and greatly disappoint others. There will be conflicts with other nations as well as conflicts among our citizens, who are attempting to discern what is best for this country and her people. There will always be these struggles and conflicts as this nation fights to remain free.

So as we consider our July 4 celebration and how we got here as a nation, certainly it is a good time to place freedom in its proper perspective. Without a doubt, by the grace of almighty God this nation has stood secure over these many years. We've had many years of peace and prosperity, but we've also had many difficult moments, hard times and challenging years. However, the desire to be free and remain free never seems to diminish no matter the situation.

The freedom of a citizen in this world is vastly different from the freedom of a Christian, who is free by faith in Jesus Christ no matter the surrounding political environment. St. Paul wrote to the church in Galatia:

For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. GAL. 5:1

In his letter, Paul reminds the church that the freedom which they have is not of their own doing. Their freedom is found only in Christ, whose death and resurrection have brought them out from under the slavery of the Law to the freedom that is theirs by faith in Christ.

Martin Luther wrote:

Every word [that St. Paul writes] is emphatic. "Stand fast," he says, "in freedom." In what freedom? Not the freedom for which the Roman emperor has set us free, but in the freedom for which Christ has set us free. LW, VOL. 27, P. 3

This is freedom, and this freedom came at a tremendous cost. While the struggle for our nation's independence and freedom cost the lives of thousands and the blood of thousands more, this battle

for your spiritual freedom, as the people of God, came at the cost of Christ's life and his bloody sacrifice for you.

By His suffering, a multitude so great that it can't be numbered, now lives in that freedom. Luther writes:

For Christ has set us free, not for a political freedom or a freedom of the flesh but for a theological or spiritual freedom, that is, to make our conscience free and joyful, unafraid of the wrath to come. This is the most genuine freedom; it is immeasurable. LW, VOL. 27, P. 4

To think about this freedom is to joyfully remember that in all circumstances we are free.

While our nation may go down different political paths and struggle with its own definition of freedom, the church looks to the genuine freedom in Christ Jesus. This genuine and gracious gift removes the condemnation that rested over the sinner. Those who have been washed in Holy Baptism and confess the name of Jesus have been washed in His blood and are free. As a result, no country, no politician or group of politicians, no new social construct, no old or modern philosophy can change the truth of what God has done through His Son. No one can remove that gift of life and the forgiveness that God grants by faith alone. This truly is the "im-

measurable" gift of freedom that brings hope to the broken, joy to the sorrowful and peace to the struggling.

While the world itself is hostile to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the church is constantly renewed in the assurance of God's gracious love that sustains us in holy living. Sunday after Sunday your freedom is celebrated as Christ serves you with His own body and blood. At the same time, we recognize not our independence, but our constant and ever necessary dependence on our Lord Jesus Christ. For He alone provides all that we need for this body and life as well as for the life to come.

On July 4, many of us will be with family and friends to celebrate what we have as a nation. We must remember, however, that while the writers of the Declaration of Independence pledged their "Lives, Fortunes and Sacred Honor," it is by God's grace that the war for independence succeeded and this nation was established. The freedoms that we have in this world, while they may be seen as fleeting, fragile and changing, is vastly different than the freedom that we have as Christians, which is founded upon the solid rock of Jesus Christ.

Luther writes:

Therefore the greatness of Christian freedom should be carefully measured and pondered. The words "freedom from the wrath of God, from the Law, sin, death, etc., are easy to say; but to feel the greatness of this freedom and to apply its results to oneself in a struggle, in the agony of conscience, and in practice this is more difficult than anyone can say." LW, VOL. 27, P. 5

So we have the opportunity on this Fourth of July, and every day, to ponder the greatness of our freedom. This freedom is measured not by national policies or declarations, but in the vastness of God's love that sent His Son to the cross for us. May we daily recognize this immeasurable gift of true freedom, what it means and how it fashions our lives as we live in the resurrection power of Jesus Christ and place our total dependence upon Him.





Photos: LCMSErik M. Lunsford

HURRY!

Scholarship application due 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, a student must be a member in good standing in a Mid-South District congregation and be enrolled in a Synod seminary or university to prepare for full-time service to the LCMS as a rostered church worker. Rostered workers include pastors, teachers, deaconesses, directors of

Christian education, music ministers, family ministry directors and more.

Visit mid-southlcms.org/student-financial-aid for all related forms, including the financial aid application.

The application deadline is June 15, 2022. This information may be sent to Julie Tyler at jtyler@mid-southlcms.com or by postal mail to:

Mid-South District LCMS
Attn: Julie Tyler
1675 Wynne Road
Cordova, TN 38016

CSP reduces tuition for church work students

Concordia University, St. Paul's (CSP) church work tuition guarantee ensures eligible students enrolled in church work programs will pay no more than \$6,000 in tuition each academic year. This move further supports CSP's commitment to preparing more workers for the church as the most affordable church work option in the Concordia University System of the LCMS.

Full-time students enrolled in a church work program will receive a minimum of \$18,400 in combined institutional,

state and federal financial aid each year. Scholarships and grants from a student's home congregation, LCMS district and local communities may be stacked on top of this guarantee to further reduce the cost of tuition and living expenses. If you know a student who is considering a career in professional church work, be sure to share this exciting program.

For more information, visit csp.edu/churchworktuitionguarantee or call CSP Financial Aid at 651-603-6300.

Congregation mission commitment receipts
as of March 31, 2022 (3 months)

Anticipated amount (25% of budget)	\$378,722
Actual receipts	\$351,236
Over (under) anticipated amount	(\$27,486)

Use of mission commitment receipts

Allocated to Synod for world missions	\$99,121
Allocated to Tanzania	\$6,250
Retained for district ministry/mission support (70% of receipts)	\$245,865
Total receipts	\$351,236

Mission commitment receipts comparison

Actual receipts as of March 31, 2022	\$351,236
Actual receipts as of March 31, 2021	\$358,371
Over (under) prior year receipts	(\$7,135)

Happy 175!

By Rev. William F. Zwick
Executive Director, Missions and Ministry

And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness. **ACTS 4:29**

The people of the church in Acts prayed for boldness to speak the Word — the proclamation of the Gospel.



The 175th anniversary of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod was on April 26. On this date in 1847, representatives from 14 Lutheran congregations in the United States gathered in Chicago to sign the constitution of Die Deutsche Evangelisch-Lutherische Synode von Missouri, Ohio und andern Staaten, which became the LCMS.

There were German-speaking Christian churches in America at the time, but the churches were not speaking the whole truth of the Bible. They were not speaking the whole truth and nothing but the truth. It was also a world wanting to suppress biblical truth.

Our church body formed to boldly proclaim God's Word in a place needing to hear the Word of God. Those Lutherans left Germany to be able to speak the truth of God's Word in its fullness. They knew that God's true Word was for the German Lutherans in every walk of life — farmers, factory workers, tradesmen and entrepreneurs. But that is not all.

God's Word was for their neighbors and all people in a world trying to silence God's true Word.

That tradition remains in the LCMS today. We boldly speak God's Word in its fullness. Our confessions speak the Bible in its fullness. Thus, our *Book of Concord* applies and speaks God's Word. To be a Lutheran is to boldly speak God's Word in its fullness to all people in our lives. It is to boldly speak in a world muzzling God's truth and His Word.



The 175th anniversary logo for the Mid-South District was designed by Dr. Kristina Phillips, wife of Rev. Dr. Eric Phillips, pastor of Concordia Lutheran Church, Nashville.

“What does this mean?” (Yes, that good Lutheran phrase!) We do boldly speak God's Word in church every Sunday. It is easy for pastors to speak from the pulpit, but what about the people? Lutheran congregation members are to confess God's Word. So we as pastors need to pray with our people, asking God to grant us *all* the boldness to speak the Word.

We need to equip God's people for this speaking of His Word through teaching and training. Training for people to boldly proclaim involves learning how to apply God's Word in daily life, within our vocations and a world hostile to God's truth. A foundational teaching, and great place to start, is the summary of God's Word also known as Luther's Small Catechism. It then makes training with *Each 1 Reach 1* or *Everyone His Witness* more effective to build confidence. With those foundations, the people can speak boldly in a challenging world.

When the people are ready to speak boldly, the Mid-South District offers GROW grants for assistance. These are one-time grants up to \$15,000 for creating self-sustaining outreach efforts. You are invited to consider how a GROW grant might be used in your congregation to share the Gospel with people in your community.

So in this, the 175th anniversary of our Synod, we remember the boldness of the early church and how the truth of God's Word was brought to “Missouri, Ohio, and other States” in the frontier days of our country. We do the same. This year, we boldly speak God's Word.

Protect your freedoms

“In the culture, in the courts, even in casual conversation, it is increasingly obvious that we have lost sight of over 200 years of social and legal tradition that has secured our fundamental freedoms — namely, freedom of speech and religion.” This statement begins the introduction of the brochure “Protecting Your Ministry” from Alliance Defending Freedom, which

provides information resources to help ministries understand and navigate some of the complex legal issues facing the church.

Resource topics include a focus on Christian schools and the dangerous social ideologies — such as sexual orientation and gender identity education — that

threaten the religious freedoms of these critical ministries. A recent video discusses “How Gender Ideology Threatens Core Freedoms in K-12 Schools” ([youtube.com/watch?v=quetXWPx6Y0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=quetXWPx6Y0)). Others address challenges arising in admissions, employment, health insurance and athletics.

A discount is available to LCMS congregations interested in ADF membership. For more information, call 1-833-233-2559 or visit [adflegal.org](https://www.adflegal.org).

Summer camp season kicks off

Staff training has begun at Camp Trinity, the Lutheran Camp on Petit Jean Mountain.

The camp will be buzzing with activity over the next two months for Summer Camp 2022, with seven sessions for children and youth, two weekends of Family Camp and one session of leadership training for high school youth who will be serving as counselors-in-training.



The summer theme, “Into the Wild!,” is based on Is. 43:19 (NIV):

“See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.”

Jesus and His disciples sometimes withdrew into the wilderness for spiritual refreshment and fellowship. Summer campers will literally venture into the wild to explore God’s awesome creation, enjoy fellowship and learn of God’s love in Christ.

Through Christ’s sacrifice, God does indeed

make a way through the desert wasteland of hearts corrupted by sin, transforming them into the beautiful gardens through Jesus, the Living Water.

Some camp sessions still have openings.

Activities include hiking, swimming, canoeing, archery, horseback riding, campfires, crafts, outdoor education and service projects. Every day includes devotions, Bible study and a campfire with lots of singing and a message about God’s love in Christ.

Learn more and register at lutherancamp.org.



Almost there!

Construction on the retreat lodge, which began in October 2021, has progressed rapidly after extended weather delays in winter. Completion is expected in August. The lodge is already booked for six weekends in the fall.

An open house will be announced soon.

Ideas sought for conference presentations

The Mid-South District will host the conference “Leadership: the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly” July 22-23 at Christ the King Lutheran Church and School, Memphis.

The event will bring together Mid-South school principals, early childhood directors, DCEs and all those who seek to establish a school or micro-school in our district.

Please save the date for this important event. If the conference theme sparks ideas on what should be included in the presentations, please share your suggestions with Allen Piepenbrink, district education executive, at apiepenbrink@mid-southlcms.com as soon as possible.

MISSION

The Mid-South District and LIME

WALKING TOGETHER

By Rev. Dr. Joseph Randrianasolo
President, Lutheran Institute of
Management and Entrepreneurship (LIME)
Fianarantsoa, Madagascar

On Feb. 19, the LIME faculty held a special meeting to evaluate previous school years and to make proposals for the future. Our administration and 24 teachers also gathered to evaluate the dynamic partnership between the LCMS Mid-South District and LIME, and to formulate proposals to strengthen the growing partnership.

As is the custom in the Malagasy Lutheran Church, the three-hour meeting concluded with an *agape* lunch.

LIME staff appreciates very much the loving and dynamic engagement the Mid-South District has shown. The outcome of such a posture was the birth of LIME and its growth.

Partnership history

The mission undertaken by the Mid-South District and LIME uses education as a means of transmission of the Gospel, and began when an aged, decrepit two-story structure was transformed into a modern school in Masombahoaka, Fianarantsoa in 2016. Four classrooms were furnished with chairs and tables. A Wi-Fi connection was added and a small language lab was equipped. Jesus of Nazareth performed these miracles by using the Mid-South District to help enable LIME to start its mission in close brotherly partnership.

The mission is to help assure the future of young people coming from poor and especially rural families. Madagascar is ranked among the poorest countries in the world, due to the low intellectual



Rev. Dr. Randrianasolo (third from left) congratulates a LIME graduate during a ceremony in 2017. At right is Rev. Dr. David Rakotonirina, who was called to glory in 2020 after serving as president of the Malagasy Lutheran Church.

levels of the youth. Many children who go to primary school abandon their studies during high school. Only a few who finish high school have the ability to go to university, creating an opportunity for the Mid-South District and LIME to practice mission through education.

LIME infrastructure offers more advantages

All 24 teachers agreed that LIME has the best infrastructure among local private universities; only the state university outdoes it. The building has two floors with average-size classrooms and one larger room on each floor. The larger rooms have until recently stayed empty and unused. The teachers reinforced the administration of the idea to use them for income-generating projects. They suggested that LIME should furnish them with chairs and tables for these purposes. They said that the burden from poverty was already heavy on the shoulders of parents of the students. This was the reason behind the decrease of students coming to study at LIME, which has impacted LIME's financial situation. Income-generating projects could change the balance of LIME's financial situation.

The teachers also remarked that more

people might become aware of LIME if it improves its advertising. Until now, LIME has used traditional media such as radio and television. They suggested the time has come to use Facebook and other internet sites. This approach would allow LIME to be known everywhere in the world, or at least in larger areas of Madagascar.

Teachers also suggested creating a small informative brochure, including color photos of the building and activities, and information about the academic and professional training offered at LIME.

Improved academic and professional training

The teachers insisted that moral and religious values be passed on to the students. They affirmed that this kind of pedagogy was an integral part of a religious institution such as LIME. They themselves were recruited not only for their academic and professional competency, but also for their Christian life practices. LIME educates young people to study and to live as practicing Christians.

They proposed to create new ways to

Continued on next page

improve academic and professional training at LIME. One idea was study trips to historic or religious sites, and to factories in Fianarantsoa for students to observe management and entrepreneurship in action.

The teachers also encouraged academic and professional partnerships with universities abroad, such as the Concordia universities; and with local factories, business institutions and universities. LIME has already been in partnership with the Fianarantsoa state university for some years.

Finally, the teachers emphasized the importance of languages in academic and professional life. They proposed the creation of language clubs, and suggested that a volunteer from the Mid-South District might help start an English language club.

The meeting suggested several ideas for the partnership between the Mid-South District and LIME. These ideas may be compared to branches that abide in the vine to bear fruit. LIME has taken to heart and mind the success of the educational mission with the Mid-South District for the glory of Jesus Christ, who sends us to preach the Gospel into the world.

The Mid-South District has supported LIME since 2013. For more information, visit mid-southlcms.org/mds-missions/madagascar.



A young man rides along a roadway near Antsirabe, Madagascar in 2014

Delegates to vote on 2022-24 MISSION GRANTS

God is awesome! Our LWML Mid-South District has met its mission grant goal for the 2020-22 biennium! The district's goal was \$96,000 among 13 recipients, which reach into many areas in our district and beyond.

We supported Lutheran education through grants for financial aid for church workers, scholarships at Camp Trinity, Lutheran preschools in middle Tennessee, and our seminaries in St. Louis and Fort Wayne.

We supported general well-being through grants to a pregnancy resource center, Paradox teen center, the River Ministry for women and children, Oasis Women's Ministry and Inspiritus food bank.

And we supported those that help spread God's Word: the Last Call radio ministry and Transforming Churches Network.

We will gather for our 27th Biennial Convention June 10-12 in Clarksville, Tenn., and vote on the 2022-24 goal, which was raised to \$105,000. The grants to be considered include:

- ▶ Financial aid for church workers
- ▶ Cultivating innovative new ministry programs
- ▶ First Lutheran Church and School, Fort Smith, Ark., middle-school expansion
- ▶ Camp Trinity camperships
- ▶ Mobile unit for Change Point Pregnancy Center, Hot Springs Village, Ark.
- ▶ Zion Lutheran Church, Benton, Ark., gymnasium refresh and repair
- ▶ POBLO International, cross cultural outreach ministry training
- ▶ St. John's Lutheran School and Eagle's Nest Preschool, Stuttgart, Ark.,; playground update
- ▶ St. John's Lutheran Church, Stuttgart, Ark., Timothy Fund
- ▶ Welcome Home Chattanooga:



LCMS/Erik M. Lunsford

- groceries for residents
- ▶ Table Graces Community Food Pantry, Athens, Tenn.: food insecurities in McMinn County
- ▶ Pregnancy Resource Center, Loudon, Tenn.: medical and program services
- ▶ Hope House (crisis pregnancy center), Kingsport, Tenn.: roof repair
- ▶ Eagle Rock Retreat, Johnson City, Tenn.: accessible walkway project,
- ▶ Compassion Closet of Oak Ridge, Tenn.: operational expenses for foster care resource closet
- ▶ Ascension Lutheran Edison School Partnership, Madison, Tenn.: safety improvements for school facility
- ▶ Lutheran Heritage Foundation: Spanish devotions
- ▶ Trinity HOPE: spiritual and physical food for children in Haiti
- ▶ Christ the King Lutheran School, Memphis: playground and park
- ▶ Faith Lutheran Preschool, Collierville, Tenn.: Risograph machine
- ▶ Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne: support for food co-op
- ▶ Concordia Seminary, St. Louis: support for international students
- ▶ Lutheran Bible Translators: Bible translation in Cameroon

Please pray for wisdom for our ladies at the convention. And when your congregation is collecting mites, please give generously to support these worthy causes, knowing God's Word is being blessed in all of these mission grants.

Toastmasters club offers help to share the Good News

(The first three paragraphs of this story are from an article written by Frank E. Lockwood for the March 12 issue of the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, and are reprinted with permission.)

At Little Rock's First Lutheran Church, people who want to "speak boldly" about their faith have embraced a model that has worked in the secular world: they've launched a Toastmaster's Club.

Kingdom Toastmasters offers "a safe environment to practice talking about Christ," the church says on its website.

Eloquence isn't required of any of the participants. The club's mission is to help members "develop communication and leadership skills, resulting in greater self-confidence and personal growth."

The story points out that the New Testament book of Acts says Christians in that era spoke boldly about their faith. Yet many people today experience levels of discomfort, ranging from a mild awkwardness to tongue-tied panic if they're invited to speak in front of an audience.

(Glossophobia, the fear of public speaking, is a common phobia believed to affect up to 75 percent of the population.)

Exodus 4:10 notes that even Moses ex-



Rev. Ronald Bacic, pastor of First Lutheran Church, Little Rock, delivers a speech during a recent meeting of Kingdom Toastmasters. The club meets in the church's fellowship hall.

pressed anxiety concerning his ability to lead and inspire confidence, saying, "O, Lord, I have never been eloquent...I am slow of speech and tongue."

He even begged, "Please send someone else to do it!"

Many of us experience that same inadequacy despite the Great Commission's clear assignment to "Go ye therefore and teach all nations..."

Rev. Ronald Bacic, First pastor and a charter member of the group, believes that Toastmasters can help break down these barriers to sharing the Gospel.

Faith-focused clubs aren't common in the Mid-South area, according to a Toastmasters spokesperson, who noted that politics and religion are

rarely discussed at their meetings. But faith is at the heart of First's Kingdom Toastmasters group.

Members say they appreciate the relaxed, supportive atmosphere where they feel free to talk about their faith and improve their communication skills, encouraged by friendly faces and voices.

If the Holy Spirit could inspire the disciples to speak in tongues, perhaps a little Toastmasters practice will help contemporary tongues to spread the Good News more readily.

More information about Kingdom Toastmasters is available at tinyurl.com/2p85r6hf.

(The entire article can be read at thelc.ms/little-rock-toastmasters-club.)



Share your news with us!

Digital files, sent via e-mail, are preferred. Our submission deadline is the 15th of each month, two months before publication.

Send email submissions to LW@mid-southlcms.com or send by postal mail to:

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

**Deadline for the
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June 15**