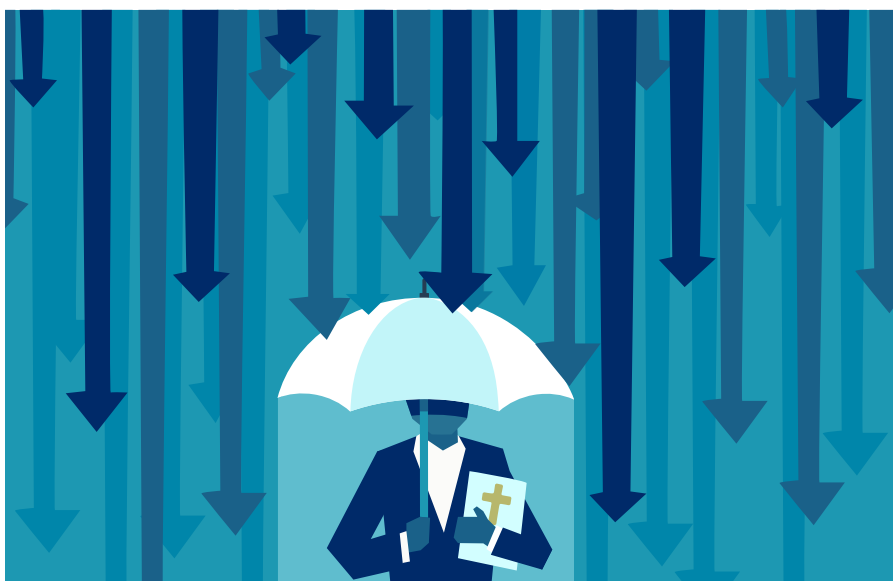




# MID-SOUTH LUTHERAN



## CHRISTIAN UMBRELLAS



Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola  
District President

**W**e've all heard about a "gaggle of geese." Collective nouns like "gaggle" colorfully describe a gathering of certain things. For example, a gathering of lions is called a pride. A gathering of turtles is called a creep. A gathering of crows is called a murder. A group of lawyers is called a conspiracy (I didn't make that one up!). A gathering of angels is called a pinhead. A group of umbrellas is called a phalanx and a gathering of God's people is called a worship.

As we look at the list of collective nouns, many of them jump out at us as a collection of things that make sense — a menagerie of wild animals, a party of friends and a flock of sheep. Birds and animals gather together in collective units for protection. They travel collectively for the purpose of hunting for food, protection from predators or warmth and security.

But what about the phalanx of umbrellas? What fascinates me about those umbrellas is how they get left behind by their owners at the office, church or other place they go. When their owner needs them for the next rainfall, they won't be able to be used

because they were forgotten.

Umbrellas offer some kind of protection so we, and our clothing, don't get wet. An open umbrella held over our heads means the storms and rain won't bother us.

Think of the love of God as an umbrella. The gathering of the first-century Christians was kind of like an umbrella. St. Peter's sermon in Jerusalem called for the congregation to gather together for worship each week for the common good of the family of believers. Worship was for the mutual prayer and support of the family of God's people.

God's provision calls, strengthens and protects His people. He gathers us together in the common union, when He serves us, feeds us and makes us His own in the one, true and Holy Christian Church. His grace is somewhat like an all-encompassing umbrella that guards us against the storms of our life that are caused by the evil and sin in this world.

Sin and temptation are the way that Satan tries to get us out of God's family and to erode away our faith. But God sends His grace and mercy to us in as many ways as we will need for each day, even in the stormy times.

When we are covered with the dirt of our sinful nature, God baptizes us, cleanses us and brings to us faith through Holy Baptism. When our faith is shaken and we need to hear about His continuing presence with us, God offers us the Lord's Supper and the proclamation of His forgive-

Continued on Page 2

## UMBRELLAS

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

ness and mercy, coming through the preaching of His Word in the proper balance of Law and Gospel.

Prayer — the great weapon given to the gathering of believers — is our way to keep in constant communication with God for our strength, protection and praise to Him for all His blessings for us in Christ Jesus. His Word, His Church, His Sacraments and His people are kind of like an umbrella, protecting us from the eroding works of Satan.

But as strange as it may seem sometimes, God's umbrellas don't work because we either forget them or we don't use them.

God's umbrellas of grace and forgiveness are always there, but these have to be open in the way God designed them to be. If we don't want to read the Bible and be led by the living, active Holy Spirit, it's not God who isn't acting, but our forgotten or left-behind umbrella He gave to us.

If we don't come to worship to be served by God with His Word and Sacraments, it isn't God who has gone away, but us. If we don't say our prayers, don't do our devotions or don't study His Word, we can't blame God for lack of protection and comfort. We just haven't opened up the umbrella of His grace the way He meant it to be.

An unopened or forgotten umbrella is worthless in a storm. An umbrella left somewhere because we can't find it is as good as no umbrella at all. It's not the umbrella's fault. It's our great privilege to open the umbrella of God's grace, just as much as it's our responsibility to open this umbrella outside when it rains.

In the Gospels, Jesus called His people together for nourishment from spiritual food. He showed how He cares for both our physical and spiritual needs. He showed compassion for the sick and the disadvantaged. He demonstrated compassion on the

children and the widows. He told us never to worry about anything transpiring in our life that may seem like a storm.

Here, in the middle of the Lenten season, we are reminded of what it cost our Lord Jesus Christ to "open" God's grace, protection and mercy to us. He meant to cover all people in God's grace.

Some have not chosen to accept it while others have either forgotten it or left it closed in disuse.

Watch what happens the next time a rain storm hits: Some people will duck their heads, but some kindly person will offer them the covering of their own umbrella. Isn't God's grace more important?

Jesus calmed the storms. But in the middle of our storms, He offers His protection of grace and mercy for everyone He brings into His fellowship.

**"Here, in the middle of the Lenten season, we are reminded of what it cost our Lord Jesus Christ to 'open' God's grace, protection and mercy to us. He meant to cover all people in God's grace."**



Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

— Matt. 6:20-21

Treasure this, not some discarded and forgotten umbrella left at church, but something that is even more than an umbrella — God's grace through Jesus Christ, the company of His people gathered together in worship and prayer, and the strength and grace that He offers through His Word and Sacrament.

It's ours to use. It's ours to keep. It's ours forever.

Don't forget to use it as God intended.



# Camp Trinity to host **Champions of Religious Liberty Conference**

**By David Cox**  
Director, Camp Trinity

Rev. Dr. Gregory Seltz will be the featured speaker at the Champions of Religious Liberty Conference March 28 at Camp Trinity, the Lutheran Camp on Petit Jean Mountain. Seltz, former speaker of “The Lutheran Hour,” serves as executive director of the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty in Washington, D.C.

The one-day conference will include lunch and conclude with a worship service, led by Dr. Seltz.

There is no charge for the conference, but participants need to register in advance to ensure there are plenty

of conference materials on hand and plenty of food for lunch.

For more information and to register, visit [lutherancamp.org](http://lutherancamp.org) and click on the “Liberty Conference” button at the top of the page. You can also register by emailing the camp office at [director@lutherancamp.org](mailto:director@lutherancamp.org) with your name, phone number, email address and the number in your group.

Seltz will address the “increasing intrusions, limitations and challenges by the government in the life of the Church.” He will also provide information and encouragement for Christians to take “informed action in support of marriage, life and religious freedom.”



**Rev. Dr. Gregory Seltz**

## Apply now for student financial aid

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.



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.

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

## LCEF offers new Gold Tier StewardAccount

Imagine investing in such a way that benefits LCMS ministries, earns a competitive interest rate and gives your congregation the kind of access it needs to funds — that’s what the new LCEF Gold Tier StewardAccount can do!

Available to LCMS individuals, congregations and organizations, this new account is for deposits of



\$50,000 and above that your congregation wants to keep accessible and flexible.

Interest rates are tiered based on the balance and range from 2.125 to 2.500 percent. This account can only be opened with new money.

For more information, visit [lcef.org/gold-tier](http://lcef.org/gold-tier).

## Congregation mission commitment receipts

as of Dec. 31, 2019 (12 months)



Anticipated amount (100% of budget)	\$1,532,274
Actual receipts	\$1,576,515
Over (under) anticipated amount	\$44,241

### Use of mission commitment receipts

Allocated to Synod for world missions	\$447,955
Allocated to Tanzania	\$25,000
Retained for district ministry/mission support (70% of receipts)	\$1,103,561
Total receipts	\$1,576,515

### Mission commitment receipts comparison

Actual receipts as of Dec. 31, 2019	\$1,576,515
Actual receipts as of Dec. 31, 2018	\$1,542,151
Over (under) prior year receipts	\$34,364



Anna Young leads a Students for Life of America meeting at her public high school in Nashville.

# FAITH IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE:

## LCMS YOUTH STARTS STUDENTS FOR LIFE GROUP AT HER PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL

By Cheryl Magness  
 Managing Editor, LCMS Reporter

**A**T A TIME WHEN BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY IS UNDER INCREASING ATTACK IN BOTH POPULAR CULTURE AND THE PUBLIC SQUARE, IT CAN BE SCARY TO STAND UP FOR THE SANCTITY OF LIFE.

But that didn't deter Anna Young, an LCMS pastor's daughter in Nashville, Tenn., from doing so. Several months ago, Anna started a Students for Life of America (SFLA) group at her public high school. It is the first such group at a public high school in Davidson County, Tenn.

"I think it is one thing to say you are pro-life, but it is another to actually act on that," Anna explains. "I think a lot of people keep their pro-life views to themselves, but I found myself questioning that. I always think of the Elie Wiesel quote, 'Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim.' ... I had to do something."

For Anna, that "something" could have easily remained within her family and church. She grew up being taught that life is sacred because it is created by God. Her father, Rev. Phillip Young, is pastor of Redeemer, Nashville, and life coordinator for the LCMS Mid-South District, so Anna has participated in pro-life conferences and other events since she was a child. But she wanted to do more.

"This isn't just a religious or political issue," continues Anna. "It's a human rights issue. ... People ask why I don't keep this issue in the faith realm. Why did I have to extend it to the public arena of my high school?"

"My answer is simple. It is too important. Life is too precious



From left, Bella Ford and Anna Young took part in a leadership workshop at Middle Tennessee State University for a new Students for Life club at their high school. Ford is vice-president of the group, and Young is president.

— all life, at all stages, from all backgrounds and all parts of the world. Life is not just a political or religious issue, but a human rights issue. Once I truly understood the magnitude and reality of the injustice at hand, I couldn't sit and watch my fellow peers not know the truth."

### MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Anna researched the guidelines for clubs at her school and began working through the steps to get approval for a Students for Life group. First, she had to find a faculty sponsor for the group. She says that wasn't easy because "public high school teachers aren't encouraged to voice their beliefs on this sort of thing." But she approached a teacher she knew to be Christian, and the teacher was willing.

The next step was to fill out and submit an application for her proposed club, explaining the club's purpose and plans and how its presence would benefit the school. Anna wrote to the school principal:

“The Students for Life community is a group of pro-life students that encourages students, specifically, but all people to choose life. Students for Life is found in over 1,100 high school and college campuses nationwide and is making a big difference. Although the matter at hand is controversial, I strongly believe our club would only be a positive influence ... . This is a topic many students ... are passionate about.

“The purpose of our club is simple. We plan to educate, encourage and make a difference in the community.”

The club was approved. But “I would be lying,” says Anna, “if I said this process has been easy. At a public high school, abortion is not talked about. And if it is, it most definitely is not portrayed in the correct light.

“Since [the new group] was created ... I have lost friends, had my own character criticized, been gossiped about, and even experienced a bit of administration push-back regarding events we wanted to host at school. In the end, it is all worth it. I have to take a step back and look at the big picture. Pro-life ideals are being talked about at a public high school. That is a miracle in itself.”

To spread awareness about the club, Anna and the group’s core members participated in the school’s lunch-time club fair. They got about 55 initial sign-ups, approximately a quarter of whom were male students. They also got a handful of antagonistic comments on the sign-up sheet.

But the group now has about 20 active members, is meeting semi-weekly and planned to attend the National March For Life in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 24. Locally, they plan to host monthly events such as volunteering at a local pregnancy resource center, holding a drive to collect mother and baby



The new Davidson County SFLA has about 20 active members.

items for donation, and gathering for learning and mutual support. Recently, they took time to write letters of encouragement to expectant mothers being served by Hope Clinic for Women, a faith-based family and pregnancy resource center in Nashville. In the future, they hope to watch the movie “Unplanned,” based on the book by pro-life activist Abby Johnson.

### ‘CUT FROM DETERMINED CLOTH’

Elizabeth Parker, the Tennessee and Kentucky regional coordinator of Students for Life of America, and the organization’s national minorities coordinator, worked closely with Anna in applying for the club’s school charter. She also attended and spoke at the club’s first meeting.

Parker said, “Sometimes it can be slow going getting SFLA clubs started at high schools and colleges. Hurdles can arise for all differ-

ent reasons. Even though it took time and patience, Anna stuck to it. She is cut from determined cloth ... a leader who truly cares about her peers and community. She and the new Students for Life of America group at her high school are living proof that there is not only hope for the future, but amazing things [happening] in the present.”

Rev. Dr. Gregory P. Seltz, executive director of the Lutheran Center for

“Pro-life ideals are being talked about at a public high school. That is a miracle in itself.” — Anna Young

Religious Liberty (LCRL) in Washington, D.C., says Anna is “just the kind of young person we’re trying to raise up for the next generation. These moral issues are fundamental to our culture if it’s to remain civil, humane and free. The LCRL is dedicated to providing all kinds of information and resources to support people like Anna.”

Sometimes people of faith feel like “strangers in a strange land” (Ex. 2:22). They know their hope is not of this world, and they feel out of place in it. The world grows ever more hostile toward them, and when they engage with it in the only way they know how, guided by the faith that defines them, they are branded as fools, haters or worse. They may sometimes wonder why they should bother.

Anna says she bothers because “we are making a difference. It may feel like we’re not doing anything ... not saving lives. But Elizabeth [Parker] has always told us, ‘You won’t see how many lives you saved until you get to heaven.’”

To find out more about LCRL, visit [lcrifreedom.org](http://lcrifreedom.org). To learn more about SFLA, visit [studentsforlife.org](http://studentsforlife.org).



Elizabeth Parker (left), SFLA regional coordinator, assisted Young (right) in starting an SFLA group at her high school.

# Zion celebrates record Fall Festival

By Earl Schrock

The 12th annual Augsburg Fall Fest — hosted by Zion, Augsburg, Ark., in October — brought in \$29,441, surpassing all previous events and was \$5,000 more than the total raised in 2018.

Zion celebrated by sharing the proceeds with two local charities. On Dec. 5, Rusty Dorn, Augsburg Fall Fest Committee chairman, presented a check to Diane Ragsdale of the Augsburg Food Pantry for \$14,720; and a check to Don Guess of the River Valley Christian Clinic in Dardanelle for \$14,720.

The presentation was made as Valley Christian Clinic volunteers ate a dinner provided by Zion members.

The festival proceeds are equally divided between the clinic and pantry every year. Zion has now contributed more than \$111,000 to each charity.

The Augsburg Fall Fest Committee would like to thank all of the festival sponsors, those who attended and the excellent group of volunteers — some from as far away as Iowa, California and Hawaii — for their hard work that made the festival so successful.



TOP: Beneficiaries of the funds raised at the Augsburg Fall Festival receive checks from Rusty Dorn (center), Zion congregation president and festival chairman. At left is Diane Ragsdale of the Augsburg Food Pantry, and at right is Don Guess of the River Valley Christian Clinic.



Demolition work is underway at CTK, Memphis.

## CTK in midst of expansion

Progress! Members of Christ the King Lutheran Church, Memphis, said goodbye to long-standing buildings beyond repair and now look forward to a \$6 million expansion.

The expansion will include a state-of-the-art fellowship hall, additional Bible class and meeting rooms, and new and improved space for service, fellowship and outreach opportunities, including CTK's plan to serve as host for "Room in the Inn" on a regular basis.

We lift up in prayer the congregation and its pastors, Revs. Charles Neugebauer and Mark Goble, as they face the challenges of renovation and the excitement of future expanded ministries. *Soli Deo Gloria!*

— Submitted by Genie Swan,  
CTK Community Relations coordinator



Many parents believe having their children attend church, Sunday school, VBS and youth events is how their child's faith is nurtured. Statistics prove that this method alone does not work.

We know that those with the greatest influence on a child's faith are close family members and friends. That is why faith in the home is so important.

What sustains and nourishes a child's faith is parents gathering together with their children for prayer, devotions, reading the Bible, talking

about God, serving and loving their neighbors.

It is the parents' responsibility to pass their faith on to their children. The Mid-South District supports congregations and families in this by helping them shift from church-centered to home-centered faith formation.

Learn more by watching the "Faith in the Home" video at [vimeo.com/385280970](https://vimeo.com/385280970).

And watch for details and dates for the "Faith in the Home," forum, coming to Nashville and Little Rock this spring!

# Make plans for convention!

## LWML District Convention

June 12-14  
Paragould, Ark.,  
Community Center

Now you are the body of Christ, Each one of you is a part."  
1 Cor. 12:27

**Highlights:**

- ▶ Interest session speakers will focus on “Community” and “Life Together.”
- ▶ Ingathering will be for Greene County foster families and items include school supplies, backpacks, socks, underwear and more.
- ▶ Host congregation is Redeemer, Paragould.

**Lodging:**

- Three area hotels have been contracted for the convention and each has a block of rooms reserved for June 11-14 under “LWML Mid-South District.” The hotels are
- ▶ Holiday Inn Express Hotel & Suites
  - ▶ Hampton Inn Paragould
  - ▶ Courtyard Jonesboro.

The reservation deadline for all three hotels is May 27.

Registration forms and detailed hotel information may be found at [midsouthlwml.org](http://midsouthlwml.org).



## Bethlehem accepts food challenge — and wins!

When the South Region of Thrivent Member Network challenged members of Bethlehem, Johnson City, Tenn., to collect 500 food items in December, the Bethlehem members replied with nearly twice the enthusiasm required. In just one week, members donated 955 food items!

Along with food items, Thrivent Financial will send a \$500 check to Good Samaritan Ministries along with the food items.

What a great way to celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.



From left, Adam deMello, Ann Larson, Ted Wilson and Betty Jean Sotherland display the mountain of food they collected to benefit Good Samaritan Ministries.



## Summit coming to Memphis

Last year, the Mid-South District introduced a dynamic evangelism event for lay people called 3L Summit. The one-day conference encouraged lay people in their personal evangelism efforts through practical talks on LIVING their faith, LOVING God’s people and LEARNING to disciple (the 3Ls).

This year’s 3L Summit is set for Saturday, May 16, at Immanuel Lutheran Church and School, Memphis.

Watch for details on the event, including ready-made promotional materials to help encourage church members to be part of this exciting spiritual growth opportunity.

# CAMP TRINITY



Youth at Pioneers Camp will learn advanced canoeing skills. Pioneers is the newest session at Camp Trinity.



## Wanted: volunteers for work weekend

Spring Work Weekend is March 20-21 at Camp Trinity, the Lutheran Camp on Petit Jean. The camp is looking for volunteers to help with projects and get the camp ready for upcoming events, especially the Champions of Religious Liberty Conference the following weekend (see page 2).

Volunteers will fix up, clean up and spruce up the camp, both indoors and outdoors. Tasks will include landscap-

ing, deep cleaning cabins, cutting wood, clearing brush around buildings, making minor repairs and other projects.

The camp could particularly use people with chainsaws to clear downed trees and cut firewood for campfires.

Meals and lodging are free for those who come for work weekend; just email the camp office to let them know you're coming: [director@lutherancamp.org](mailto:director@lutherancamp.org).

## Early registration discount available

Parents who want their children to attend summer camp at Camp Trinity can save money by signing up and paying the fees in full by the early registration discount deadline.

Those registered on or before April 1 can take \$50 off the cost of camp.

The camp offers additional special

discounts. Families with more than one child registered can take a multi-child discount of \$50 for the second and each subsequent sibling. Returning campers who bring a friend who is attending camp for the first time can take \$50 off.

The biggest discount is for campers who attend more than one session. Those who pay the full amount for one session can take \$100 off each subsequent session they attend.

The special discounts do not stack; parents can take the early registration discount plus just one of the special discounts (multi-child, bring-a-friend or multi-session).

To register, visit [lutherancamp.org](http://lutherancamp.org).

## Deadline for the May issue is March 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. Photos must be sent in high resolution.