



MID-SOUTH LUTHERAN



Getty Images

“Lord, I am ready to go with You both to prison and to death.” LUKE 22:33

But Jesus knew better. He said that Peter would deny Him three times — even though Peter *did* know Jesus — all before a rooster crowed at dawn.

Later, when they went to the Mount of Olives with Jesus, the disciples all fell asleep while they waited for Jesus to finish praying. They couldn't help it. They had a big meal like we do on Thanksgiving, when we watch the Detroit Lions get stomped and then we fall asleep. After all, the disciples had a hard day with everything that went on. They were trying to process what Jesus said was coming next and getting ready to celebrate the Passover.

Then it got even worse! Soldiers accompanied by Judas Iscariot interrupted the disciples' snooze. Chaos followed as Peter cut off the ear of the servant to the High Priest; but Jesus told Peter to put his sword away and He healed the servant's ear, which everyone could see! But it didn't matter. Jesus was arrested anyway and dragged to the home of the High Priest.

Peter followed the entourage to find out what was going to happen next. He couldn't use the sword again — Jesus had scolded him for that — but he felt he had to do something. When he got to where the crowd had taken Jesus, Peter stood in the courtyard feeling a little awkward. Peter could see Jesus in the center of the kerfuffle but couldn't hear what was being said. It didn't sound like it was going very well for Jesus, with a lot of finger pointing and loud emotional outbursts. Peter stuck around,

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LIVING DOWN DENIAL

You've all heard the story. It was one of those special evenings when friends get together and share a great meal, tell stories and generally have a good time. The camaraderie of being with His friends, the warmth of their fellowship and just the joy of being together was just the way Jesus wanted it.

But He also had some serious things He needed to do. His disciples were there together, celebrating the Passover feast, listening to all the things their Master had to say. It was one of those evenings that you'd love to keep going and would not soon forget, but it was just about to run off the rails.

Things started to slip when, without the slightest hesitation, Jesus said one of the twelve was going to betray Him. As usual, Jesus turned it into a teaching opportunity.

It must have been awkward for Peter. Jesus leaned over to him with a troubled look on His face. He said something to the effect that Satan had demanded something of Peter, but Jesus had prayed for him. Peter was aghast!



Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola
District President

FORGIVEN

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

sneaking in and out of the crowd so that no one would connect him with Jesus.

There was a charcoal fire in the courtyard, so Peter moved a little closer to warm himself and get closer to the arguments. He hadn't really noticed that there was a little girl standing next to him and staring at him until she blurted out, "This man also was with Jesus!"

Peter jumped, realizing someone might include him in the accusations being thrown at Jesus. But they only glanced momentarily when then they heard Peter say, "Oh, no. I don't know that Man!"

Peter breathed a sigh of relief and continued listening to more arguing, raised voices and accusations, but he never heard Jesus reply. Peter shivered, maybe from the sense of foreboding going on with his friend Jesus.

Just then, a young man who may have heard what the little girl said inched closer to Peter, casting a menacing, inquisitive eye before blurting out, "Wait a minute, you are one of them, too!"

Peter was a little irritated, and a little frightened. He wanted people to quit asking him questions. "Focus on Jesus," he thought. "He's the One being accused of treason, heresy and rebellion!" Defensive emotions spilled over as Peter shouted, "Man, I am not with Him!"

Because Peter was so adamant, the young man walked away, but Peter saw him whispering to other people in that courtyard. He felt their curious glances and tried to ignore them and focus on Jesus, but he sensed the accusing glances.

During that evening, and into the hours near sunrise, Peter lost track of the time. The arguing was still going on around Jesus, and there was more yelling and finger pointing. The High Priest appeared to be quite agitated about the things Jesus was accused of doing and saying.

That's when it happened. From across the courtyard, the voice rang out, above

all the din surrounding Jesus. The man who stood there pointed his finger directly at Peter like a laser. "I tell you, this man was with Jesus. I saw it myself! He is definitely from Galilee; his accent gives him away!"

Every eye turned toward Peter. What would happen if the angry crowd found out that Peter really did know Jesus? Would they arrest him, too? If Jesus was accused of treason, would Peter be named as a conspirator? He didn't know for sure but didn't want to find out.

"Man, I do *not* know what you are talking about. I do *not* know Him!" Peter spat out each word, hoping his vulgarity would make them stop. The courtyard became uncomfortably quiet. Then, off in the distance, Peter heard a rooster crow. A sudden chill of guilt ran through Peter's body like a bolt of lightning. Even though Jesus was up to His own neck in trouble, He slowly turned sad eyes toward Peter, who remembered what Jesus had said about denying Him three times before the rooster crowed.

Tears must have welled up in his eyes as Peter worked his way from the courtyard, away from the shame of guilt, away from the merciful eyes of Jesus, the Christ. Peter had to escape being face to face with Jesus. After realizing what a fraud he was earlier that night, Peter was ashamed. He felt lost.

What does all this mean? How often have we done the same thing? Are there times when we fail to stand up for our faith in public because we're afraid of how people will react? Are there times when we fail to intervene when a crowd mocks another believer's faith? Do we want to reveal our own faith and suffer the same ridicule, or is it easier to just say nothing? Is it really denying the One who died for our sins if we don't defend our faith, the church or even Jesus?

Does our life truly reflect what others would expect to see from a follower of Jesus, or do we look more like the rest of the world's rat race?

When we realize that the things we say or do — or *don't* say or do — are just as

much a denial as what Peter did in the courtyard, it may be hard to even step inside a church, feeling like hypocrites because of the things we said or did yesterday. Can Jesus ever forgive us, wretched that we are? Is there any hope for poor, worthless, miserable sinners like us? The answer, in Christ, is simple: Yes.

After His glorious resurrection, Jesus looked Peter in the eye one more time. Just as on that night in the courtyard, there was a charcoal fire. This time, however, Jesus had prepared breakfast for the disciples. Since it was just after dawn on the Sea of Galilee, Peter might even have heard another rooster crow.

Jesus confronted Peter, asking, "Peter, do you love Me?" It must have embarrassed Peter, at least a little.

But why the questions? Three times Jesus asked, "Do you love Me?" Each time Peter responded, "Yes Lord, You know that I love You."

Jesus said, "Tend My sheep, feed My lambs, care for My flock." In other words, "Peter, you have work to do."

Jesus has already dealt with every denial and every sin on the cross. He made Himself to be sin for us, that He would suffer the punishment that our sins deserved. The punishment of every sin of everyone born of natural means was laid on the sacred shoulders of Jesus Christ so that we would not perish but have everlasting life.

Jesus asks, "Do you love Me?"

"Yes, Lord, You know I love you."

Then we have work to do. Share this Good News of sins forgiven, grace, mercy and everlasting peace. Don't shrink away from claiming Jesus to be *our* Lord and Savior.

Jesus has called you to return to Him. Because He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, our salvation is guaranteed, completed by His atoning death and resurrection. You and I are forgiven children of God.

What proof do I have for that bold statement? Jesus made us a promise. He said, "It is finished."

FOCUS on EVANGELISM

Shared by the Board of Evangelism of First, Little Rock

Take a short prayer quiz

Answers are at the end ... don't peek!

Prayer is (you may check more than one):

- a. Asking for stuff, so the more we pray, the more stuff we get.
- b. A waste of time. God is too busy with other people to hear lil' ole me.
- c. Only necessary when we are really in trouble and need help.
- d. The way to become healthy, wealthy and wise.
- e. Not necessary. Why pray when we can just worry?
- f. Proven to work and you can pray to anyone, including the God of the Bible, Mary Mother of God, Allah, Buddha or the Hindu goddess Shiva.

- g. Vastly overrated. It rarely works, and even then, how do you know something was not just a coincidence?
- h. Vastly underrated. Most of us don't take it seriously.
- i. An ongoing conversation and communion with the Lord regarding our concerns and His will. That's what "pray without ceasing" means (1 Thess. 5:17).
- j. Necessary for us to be in tune with the Lord as we witness to people the Lord brings across our path. "Do not worry about the words to say... "

Answers:

The world, the flesh and the devil say a-g. The Word of God says h-j.



Here is a good way to see prayer and its purpose in our lives (from *Run Before the Wind* by Catherine Martin):

- P**repare your heart to meet God.
- R**ead and study God's Word.
- A**dore God in prayer.
- Y**ield yourself to God.
- E**njoy His presence.
- R**est in His love.

Congregation mission commitment receipts

as of Dec. 31, 2021 (12 months)

Anticipated amount (100% of budget)	\$1,473,615
Actual receipts	\$1,572,598
Over (under) anticipated amount	\$98,983

Use of mission commitment receipts

Allocated to Synod for world missions	\$446,779
Allocated to Tanzania	\$25,000
Retained for district ministry/mission support (70% of receipts)	\$1,100,819
Total receipts	\$1,572,598

Mission commitment receipts comparison

Actual receipts as of Dec. 31, 2021	\$1,572,598
Actual receipts as of Dec. 31, 2020	\$1,559,221
Over (under) prior year receipts	\$13,377



LCEF has grants for elementary schools

Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) has opened the 2022 Kaleidoscope Fund grant process to LCMS K-8 elementary schools.

Funds will be granted in amounts from \$10,000 to \$40,000, based on proposals selected by the committee. This year LCEF is narrowing the focus of impact for the grants to Lutheran elementary education, in recognition of the

critical role that Lutheran schools play in impacting the community through Christian education.

The proposal submission deadline is June 1.

Please visit lcef.org/kaleidoscope to learn more about the Kaleidoscope Fund and grant opportunity — and explore the ways your school could take part!



Ascension Lutheran Church, Madison, Tenn., is pleased to host The Henkel Conference on Aug. 22.

The Henkel Conference is devoted to Christian theology and cultural engagement by featuring dedicated Lutheran theologians and experts on Christian subject matter.

Presenters include Rev. Dr. Thomas M. Winger, president of Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, St. Catherines, Ontario, Canada; Ryan T. Anderson, president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center;

Brent P. Waters, director of the Stead Center for Ethics and Values; and Leonydus Johnson, host of the *Informed Dissent* podcast.

Although not yet finalized, the presenter topics are anticipated to be worship, the mystical union, gender theory, race theory, religious liberty, bioethics, children's rights, and Christian education.

Visit ascensionmadison.com/henkel for more information and to register. Your greatest support for this new endeavor is your attendance!

Grace to hold seminary class

Grace Lutheran Church, Little Rock, will host a Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (CTSFW), Ind., extension class June 8-11.

The conference will welcome Rev. Scott Stiegemeier, who teaches theology, church history and bioethics at Concordia University Irvine, Calif. He has a master's degree in bioethics from Trinity International University, Deerfield, Ill., and a doctoral degree in bioethics from Loyola University in Chicago. He has served as a pastor in Pittsburgh, Pa., and Elmhurst, Ill.; and as director of Admission at CTSFW.

The class will address "What It Means to be Human." It will consider questions concerning human nature and personal identity and congregational responses to transgender ideas and goals, as well as the increasingly important issue of genetic engineering, or transhumanism. The topics will be considered from a biblical perspective.

For more information and registration, contact Rev. Kent Schaaf at 501-663-3631 or kent.schaaf@glclr.org.



Convention worship is June 10

Grace Lutheran Church, Clarksville, Tenn., looks forward to hosting the Mid-South District LWML Convention worship service with Holy Communion at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, June 10.

The sanctuary at Grace was beautifully constructed more than 20 years ago and Grace is excited to share the edifying experience of worshipping within its walls with district LWML members.

Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. **HEB 10:24-25**

Worship service officiants include:

- Rev. William Ondracka, district LWML senior pastoral counselor, proclaimer
- Rev. Joshua Ralston, district LWML

junior pastoral counselor

- Rev. Larry A. Peters, Grace senior pastor
- Rev. Daniel Ulrich, Grace associate pastor, LWML Paducah Zone counselor

Dr. Jonathon Rudy, organist and cantor, leads the Grace choir before service and during worship. (Sample a preview performance of the Grace Epiphany concert at vimeo.com/664462082.)

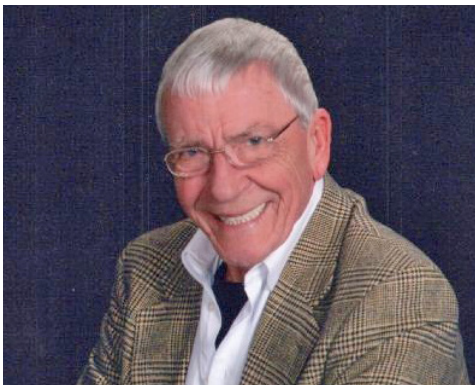
When you register for the convention, sign up for a Friday boxed dinner to enjoy in the church fellowship hall before the pre-service music.

Get all the convention information, including registration, at midsouthlwml.org/district-convention.

Registrations will be taken until May 20 (early-bird registrations will be accepted until April 15).



In memoriam



Rev. Dr. Wesley Toncre 1937-2022

We offer prayers of peace and comfort for the family and friends of Rev. Dr. Wesley Toncre, who was called to glory on Jan. 14, 2022.

Pastor Toncre began his ministry as a missionary-at-large in the Southern California District in 1962. He then went on to serve congregations in Arizona, Florida, Alabama, Louisiana and Florida, and along the way completed his doctorate before joining the Mid-South District in 2011 as a beloved emeritus. Pastor Toncre and his shepherding spirit served Trinity Lutheran Church, North Little Rock, as an interim pastor (2014-16) as well as other vacancies when called upon.

A beloved husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather, Pastor Toncre was remembered at memorial services held Feb. 12 at Peace, Conway, Ark. In lieu of flowers, memorials to Peace Lutheran Church, the Mid-South District Scholarship Fund or Lutheran Hour Ministries were requested.

Thanks be to God for Pastor Toncre and his years of service in faith.

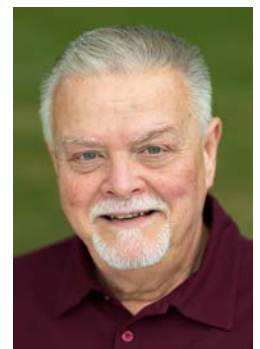
Charles Arthur Winterstein 1949-2021

Charles A. Winterstein was called to his heavenly home on Friday, Dec. 31, 2021. During his almost 50 years in ministry, “Chuck” (as he was known to many) served schools in Illinois, Ohio and Michigan. He also served the Lutheran Education Association, Concordia University Ann Arbor, and the Mid-South District as education executive.

He most recently served as the assistant to the superintendent of schools for the Michigan District. He received the LEA’s highest honor, the *Christus Magister* award, in 2020.

The funeral was held Jan. 14 at St. John, Indianapolis. In lieu of flowers, memorials to either the Lutheran Education Association or Lutheran Special Education Ministries were requested.

Please keep Chuck’s wife, Alecia, and family in your prayers.



Rev. Don Schmidt 1949-2022

We offer prayers of peace and comfort for the family and friends of Rev. Don Schmidt, who was called to glory on Jan. 12, 2022. A husband, father and faithful servant of the Lord, Pastor Schmidt led congregations in Bertrand, Neb., and Slayton, Minn., before joining the Mid-South District in 1991. He served Heavenly Host Lutheran Church, Cookeville, Tenn. (1991-99) and Messiah Lutheran Church, Memphis, (1999-2022).

Memorial services for Pastor Schmidt were held at Messiah on Jan. 22.

Thanks be to God for Pastor Schmidt and his years of service in faith.



Offering 'HOPE' for earthquake victims



A pastor prays before food is distributed.

Trinity HOPE has been providing meals to malnourished children in Christian schools in Haiti since 1999. In a country that predominately practices Voodoo, and where over 4.4 million people are suffering from acute hunger, this noon meal fills tummies and opens ears and hearts to the love of Christ.

Our infrastructure is such that we employ over 30 Haitian feeding program directors to source food from Haitian vendors at the best price possible. Because of this, we have been able to keep the cost of a meal at about a quarter.

Though 2021 brought great strife to our Haitian neighbors, this infrastructure means that our work can continue. At a time when visits from missionaries and other outside assistance is limited by social/political unrest, this infrastructure is more important than ever.

Following the 7.2-magnitude earthquake on Aug. 14, LCMS Disaster Response provided a \$100,000 grant to Trinity HOPE. Going beyond our normal school-day meal delivery, we were

able to partner with Lutheran churches in Les Cayes and Jeremie to provide over 300,000 meals to the communities impacted by the earthquake.

The families in these communities lost many loved ones, homes and possessions. Over 2,200 lives were lost in this catastrophic event. Piling up to 10 family members in a home, food was scarce and communities were suffering. The provision of food with a strong message of love was a gift we were honored to provide.

These meals opened doors for Lutheran pastors to have a dialogue about God's love and grace. The sharing of the grace of God and the Good News of our Savior, Jesus Christ, is the true hope that our Haitian neighbors can look toward. To God be the Glory; we are so thankful to be a part of His work, and we are honored to partner with LCMS Disaster Response to provide for these wonderful Haitian neighbors.

To learn more about Trinity HOPE, visit TrinityHOPE.org and follow us at facebook.com/trinityhopehaiti.

Share your news with us!



We are always in need of more submissions for *Mid-South Lutheran*. They help remind us of what God is doing around the Mid-South District. It is also a way to share ideas for nurturing those God has already gathered into His church and for reaching those still outside of the flock with the Good News about Jesus. It finally reminds each of us that Christ's church is much larger than just our particular congregation.

We welcome pictures and stories of congregational events, youth events, outreach events, installations, events from your men's or women's group, servant events, conferences, anniversaries, church renovations or additions, and much more. If you would like an upcoming event publicized, please make sure we have the information at least two months in advance.

Submissions for the May issue are needed by March 15.

Send submissions to LW@mid-southlcms.com or by postal mail to: **Judy Otto; 150 N. Maury St.; Holly Springs, MS 38635**. Please ensure photos sent electronically are high resolution.

District provides disaster relief in Kentucky

By Rev. David Appold

Pastor, St. Paul, Paducah, Ky.

It was Friday, Dec 10. We were all set to host a Christmas party at our home in Paducah when my wife and I heard that conditions were ripe for a tornado. Thankfully, all of our members in the tornado's path were protected through the storm. Two had damage to their homes, but no harm was done to their bodies. The next morning I was at a loss. What could we at St. Paul do? We turned to the Lord in prayer, trusting that in Him there is no lack and no shadow of change.

Sunday morning raised the same question: What can be done? We spent Bible study time discovering if anyone had family or friends in trouble, and that night put together an impromptu potluck for 100 — including homeless survivors and first responders sheltering at a Baptist church.

On Monday President (Rev. Dr. Roger) Paavola and Rev. Dr. Ross Johnson, LCMS Disaster Response director, asked if St. Paul could be a host site for trained volunteers from across Synod, who would bring heavy equipment to help those who were suffering.

We quickly assembled a four-person committee to prepare to receive these visitors, but we had no experience with an Lutheran Early Response Team (LERT) or response teams from Lutheran Church Charities (LCC). Would we need to host them in our homes, provide cots and bedding and feed everyone?

I figured this would all take a while because we were approaching Christmas and New Year's, and surely no one would come to Paducah, Ky., at this time of year to help out, right?

Thankfully, I was wrong! In no time our congregation resembled Bethlehem at that first Christmas: No room in the inn! By Sunday, Dec. 19, people were setting up cots and inflatable mattresses everywhere. Jan Simko from Shepherd of the Hills, Crossville, Tenn., arrived



Helping in Paducah were, from left (kneeling) Jim Morris, Christine Brandt, Paul Keller, Brian Mead, Johnny Hartig; (standing) Rev. David Appold, Jan Simko, Phil Justice, Ray Musgrave, Mary Legendre, Mike Legendre, Sue Doering and Walter Doering.

as the district disaster relief coordinator along with her pastor, Rev. Andrew Abraham, who made assessments and pastoral visits with her. Brian Mead from the Kansas District helped Jan learn the ropes (this was her first disaster response).

That Sunday morning 30 men wearing highlighted yellow volunteer shirts joined us, belting out the liturgy and receiving Holy Communion alongside our members, just as if they were at home, as if they were of one body with us — because they are

Those first few days the crews learned the area and passed out cards with contact information. Slowly but surely we started getting calls at the church: “These people connected to your church who called themselves Lutherans said they could help us. Is this real? They have equipment? And they’ll do it for free? OK, well, sign me up!”

Neighbors saw, inquired and were added to the list. Local sheriffs and FEMA personnel started making referrals to the Lutheran team as well. And in every case, survivors were pointed to the hope of

Jesus Christ and the local congregation, where they could receive His mercy in the communion of saints.

At this January writing, the total number of homes cleared is 62. We’ll continue to host volunteers, and LERT will set up weekend opportunities for service in the coming months. Great work has begun, but it is by no means finished.

Eight of our members went through the LERT basic training, which expands our understanding and offers ideas for future projects. Removing tree limbs and debris is important, but will give way to rebuilding, which takes much longer.

Many congregations and individuals have contributed. (An initial \$10,000 was used to purchase Lowe’s, Walmart and Amazon gift cards, which we passed out in the week before Christmas.)

The outpouring of generosity and love have been truly amazing. On behalf of our congregation and surrounding Kentucky counties I want to thank everyone who has helped. We have had the dual privilege of receiving and sharing

See **TORNADO**, Page 8



Camp Trinity is looking for volunteers willing to spend a few hours on Petit Jean Mountain this month to help get the camp ready for the spring and summer seasons. Spring work week — to be held March 21-25 — coincides with spring break for Arkansas schools. Friends of the camp looking for a way to enjoy the spring weather and serve others are encouraged to participate.

The main work day will be Saturday, March 26. The camp needs help clearing trails, sawing downed trees and limbs into firewood, burning brush, patching roads with crushed stone, raking leaves, deep cleaning camp buildings and more.

Volunteers can stay in camp cabins at no cost. Breakfast and lunch will be provided for those coming on March 26 who let us know ahead of time.

Anyone who can help, even for just a few hours, should contact the camp office at director@lutherancamp.org or by sending a text to 501-652-6304.

Outdoor Classroom begins March 3

Camp Trinity's Outdoor Classroom for homeschooling families starts up again March 3 and runs for 10 consecutive Thursdays through May 5.

Speakers from the Arkansas Game

and Fish Commission, Petit Jean State Park, Arkansas Archeology Station, Petit Jean Raptor Rescue, the Winthrop Rockefeller Institute, as well as camp staff, will lead sessions.

Families will be especially interested to hear Rev. Dr. Leroy Leach, who will speak March 24 on evidence of design in creation.

The outdoor classroom includes hiking, canoeing, fishing, orienteering, bird-watching and more.

Families can sign up for individual classes or for the entire semester at a sharply reduced fee.

Learn more and register at lutherancamp.org/for-home-schoolers.

Sign up for Trivia Night

Members of Mid-South District congregations can test their knowledge of trivial matters while competing with other congregations at Camp Trinity's annual Trivia Night, to be held April 30 at Christ, Little Rock.

The camp fundraiser includes eight rounds of questions, games between rounds, a fabulous silent auction and concessions serving up burgers, dogs, nachos and more.

To learn more and sign up, visit lutherancamp.org/trivia-night.

Get a discount

Save \$50 off each child's registration by registering and paying in full by April 1.

Other discounts are also available: multi-session, multi-child, bring-a-friend, and first-time camper. Learn more at lutherancamp.org/summer-camp-c23ut.

TORNADO

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7)

your encouragement and Christian charity with our hurting neighbors.

To help with the relief effort, the Mid-South District established a disaster relief fund. Donations directed to this fund will be used for continuing relief efforts in the tornado-ravaged communities.

Contribute online or by check payable to the Mid-South District Office. Mail to 1675 Wynne Road; Cordova TN 38016. Please note "Disaster Relief Fund" on any gifts sent by check. When donating online, please designate your gift as "restricted" for the Disaster Relief Fund.

For more information on volunteering, contact Jan Simko at janetsimko73@gmail.com.