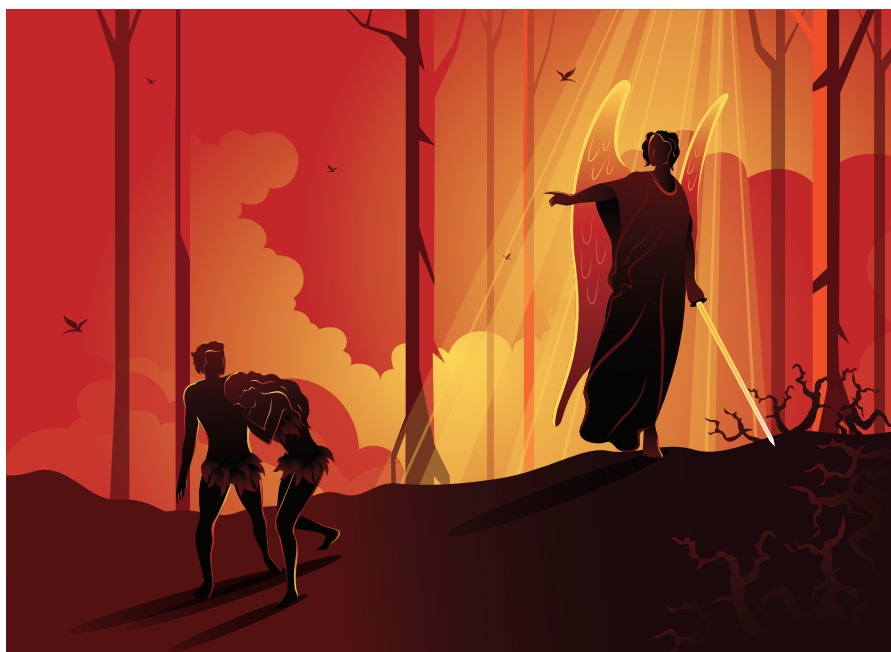




/ MARCH 2024

MID-SOUTH LUTHERAN



FOUR GARDENS



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

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. And God saw His whole creation and that it was very good. So He rested, because everything was complete. The landscape — perfect. The sea — perfect. The skies — perfect. There was nothing left that needed to be done. God created an entire universe to spread His eternal love to the crown of His creation, humanity.

God created the waters and the firmament. He created trees, grass, animals, fishes, and in abundance everything mankind would need to survive and serve God. On the sixth day, God created Adam — a man created in His image. He placed Adam in a beautiful garden — a perfect garden that no other human beings were ever able to see.

All the animals and beasts had companionship. God said it was not good for man to be alone, so He put Adam into a deep sleep, removed his rib and created a woman to be a companion for Adam. Everything was great!

In the middle of that perfect garden, created for mankind, there

was a tree — the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God told Adam that the tree was off limits to him and Eve. God said they couldn't eat its fruit. God warned them that if they did, they would surely die.

But Satan tempted Eve, who tempted Adam, who didn't stop Eve from eating its forbidden fruit. They both ate the forbidden fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Of course, we know, death didn't happen right away. But after Adam and Eve ate of the fruit from the forbidden tree, death and sin visited one generation after another and became a part of every person born of natural means.

It didn't take long for sin to show its ugliness. Within a generation, sin reared its ugly head and took the life of Abel at the hand of his brother, Cain. Generation after generation struggled with the unholy trinity — Satan, the world and our own sinful flesh.

The picture of sin's destruction upon mankind traces its deadly finger throughout the history of mankind:

Sin built the tower of Babel — a defiance of the people against their God.

Sin fashioned the golden calf at Mount Sinai and every other idol put together in the mind of mankind.

Sin begat an adulterous relationship between King David and Bathsheba, and killed Uriah.

Sin led Babylon, Syria and Rome to hold Israel captive.

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MESSAGE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Sin killed Christians at the hand of Nero, Diocletian, and hundreds of worldly kings and rulers since the time of Christ.

Sin led hundreds and thousands to die for the Christian faith. Sin led nation to rise up against nation in war and bloodshed.

Sin separates you and me from the heart of God.

Sin made God pronounce His judgment against Satan in the Garden of Eden for tempting Adam and Eve to eat the fruit from the cursed tree. Sin's deadly effects led God to give a promise to reconcile the human race to Himself through the Seed He would bring from a woman.

Before anything was created, God had already looked to the future. He foreknew that He would also have to make another cursed tree.

God gave mankind another garden. In that garden, the new Adam prayed to His Father knowing full well what was about to happen to Him. In a plan to save all the people of the world, God was to offer His beloved Son to die a cursed death all mankind deserved. His Son would pay the penalty for all of our sins. God offered His Son to death so you and I could have eternal life.

From the cursed tree, a dying Man — a

dying Son of God — cries out, "It is finished!" and He breathed His last.

Once again, God gave yet another garden and foreknew a place where prophecy would once again be fulfilled in the burial of His Son in a borrowed tomb. Because His sinless Son died for the penalty of our sins, God in His mercy provided the fulfillment of the promise He gave to Adam and Eve generations before. The head of the filthy serpent was crushed.

On the third day after His sacrificial death, Jesus Christ — true God and true Man — rose victorious over death, Satan and the grave. Christ in glorified, holy and living flesh rose from the dead to prove God's satisfaction toward all mankind that is joined together with Christ by God's Means of Grace.

Once again God had offered wholesome fruit — fruit of the redemption earned through the sacrifice His Son Jesus Christ paid.

And God offers yet another garden. A place flowing with milk and honey. A place where there are no more tears, no more suffering, no more death. A place where everything is renewed and alive.

It's all about Jesus and the grace of God for Christ's sake. There isn't any human performance, no obedience, nor any good intentions that can replace God's rich grace toward us, the descendants



of Adam and Eve. This isn't about our deciding to follow Jesus or an age of accountability. Good Friday is good only because of what Jesus did for us. Pure Gospel is all about God's grace toward us because of Jesus Christ. When you come right down to it, redemption has to be all about the work of God or there's no redemption at all.

It is culminated on Good Friday. By God, it is finished. Easter proves the faithful promise of God belongs to us, through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Find teacher positions at job board

A new website that connects LCMS educators with potential employers is now up and running at lcms-jobboard.com.

"Teachers are in short supply, especially rostered teachers," said Dr. Alan Freeman, LCMS School Ministry director. "To meet these challenges, LCMS School Ministry recently launched the Lutheran Career Board, also known as the LCMS job board, as a place for LCMS schools to post open teaching positions."

District education executives and school administrators can use this website to publish job postings that target non-rostered workers. The website also allows prospective teachers to search for job openings.



"The LCMS job board provides school leaders with the ability to push teaching openings to a greater audience and fill teaching positions with qualified Christian educators," said Freeman.

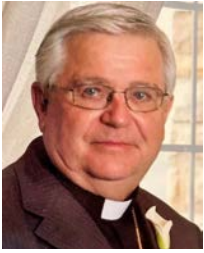
In addition to job listings, the job board organizes links to other important websites into one convenient list. Anyone who visits can find more information about:

- LCMS School Ministry;
- Teacher colloquy and the Concordia University Education Network; and
- The LCMS Commissioned Minister Information Form (CMIF) system, which helps school administrators search for commissioned ministers to fill open calls.

Many new job postings have been populated on the website thus far.

In Memoriam

Rev. Marvin Otto • 1938-2024



The Mid-South District offers prayers of peace and comfort for the family and friends of Rev. Marvin Otto, who was called to glory on Jan. 7, 2024.

A husband, father and faithful servant of the Lord, Pastor Otto graduated from Concordia Theological Seminary and subsequently served as pastor for 39 years, leading congregations in North Dakota, Arkansas, New Orleans and Kingsport, Tenn.

Pastor Otto is survived by his wife of 61 years, Marlene, as well as children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

The service was held on Jan. 12 at Concordia Lutheran Church, with Revs. Vincent Shemwell and Paul Becker officiating.

Thanks be to God for Pastor Otto and his years of service in faith!

Welcome, Lisa!



Lisa Pennington has joined the Mid-South District office staff as Finance Assistant. She can be contacted at lpennington@mid-southlcms.com or 901-373-1343, ext. 3104.

The district also bids farewell to **Julie Tyler**, who retired in December. Julie was a valued member of the district staff for 10 years, working closely with our education ministries, and assisting in both Finance and the president's office.

The Mid-South District thanks Julie for her years of faithful service and wishes her a long and happy retirement!

Financial Peace University

The Mid-South District is pleased to partner with our congregations to bring Financial Peace University (FPU) to their members and guests through a special rebate program.

For congregations that offer FPU, the Mid-South District will offer a rebate for the cost of the class to individuals who complete the nine-week program.

The program is on a first-come, first-served basis until funds have been exhausted. Contact Angela Fowler at afowler@mid-southlcms.com to discuss scheduling a class or for more information.

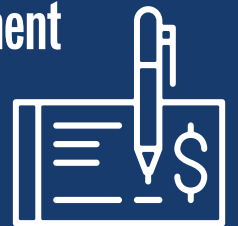
'Text to give'

Supporting district ministry is now as simple as sending a text! Donations to the Mid-South District's IMPACT Fund (general fund) can now be made by texting a gift to 844-214-0075.

Please note that "text to give" does not provide the option to make restricted gifts (such as to disaster relief, international missions). Therefore, if a specific fund is intended, the donor can contact the Finance department to provide further instruction.

Congregation mission commitment receipts

as of
Dec. 31, 2023
(12 months)



Anticipated amount (100% of budget).....	\$1,564,770
Actual receipts	\$1,605,837
Over (under) anticipated amount.....	\$41,067

Use of mission commitment receipts

Allocated to Synod for world missions	\$456,751
Allocated to Tanzania	\$25,000
Retained for district ministry/mission support (70% of receipts)	\$1,124,086
Total receipts	\$1,605,837

Mission commitment receipts comparison

Actual receipts as of Dec. 31, 2023	\$1,605,837
Actual receipts as of Nov. 30, 2022	\$1,403,669
Over (under) prior year receipts	\$202,168

SHARE YOUR NEWS WITH US!

Digital files, sent via e-mail, are preferred. Send email submissions to LW@mid-southlcms.com or send by postal mail to:

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

Send us your stories and photos for our **May 2024** issue by **March 15**.



Young musicians wanted for summer

Lutheran Summer Music (LSM) is a residential music academy that offers opportunities for young musicians (in grades 8-12) of all kinds — brass, winds, strings, percussion, piano, organ, voice, harp, guitar, handbells and more.

Students come together from all over the country to immerse themselves in joyful music-making and to build a supportive and welcoming community, living together on a Lutheran college campus. Students will gather at Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Ind., June 30–July 28.

During the day, students receive advanced musical instruction through large ensembles, chamber music, pri-

vate lessons with collegiate-level faculty, and elective classes. In the evenings, students attend recitals and Evening Prayer services based in Lutheran liturgy, and social events with friends.

Each year, the primary way that music students find their way to LSM is through the encouragement of their church musician.

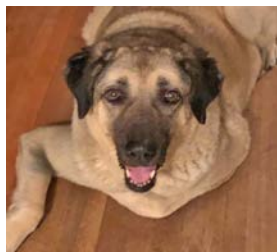
If you know a young person (grades 8-12) who would benefit from the life-giving and joyful musical community at LSM, please nominate them for LSM today at lsmacademy.org/nominate. Find out more information about LSM by clicking the logo at the top of the page.



Evangelism

Here for a season ... and a reason

Annie, our Anatolian Shepherd dog (pictured), recently died. She had been a good dog, although sometimes a lot of trouble. Bred to protect sheep, Anatolians see other dogs as predators — big trouble! But she was our dog, and we loved her and she loved us.



When we lose someone close to us, even a dog, there is a sense that a part of us is gone forever. Her death helped me realize that our loved ones are with us only for a season. It might be for a year, or it might be for 80 years, but it is only for a season. Realizing this helps us treasure the times we have with loved ones as we (and they) are never guaranteed tomorrow.

I believe that people also come into our lives for a reason. Perhaps they are family members who have fulfilled our need to belong to a family, or a child whom the Lord has entrusted us with. Perhaps they help us with some important work, or perhaps we minister to them in some vital way.

When Jesus came from the kingdom of God to the kingdom of man, it was only for a season — 33 years. And He came for a reason — to bring hope, joy and salvation to all who would respond through His teaching, His ministry, His death and His resurrection. He and His followers changed the world, overcoming the fear of death, offering a life of joy and peace regardless of circumstances, and life eternal in heaven.

What about you? Obviously your season is not up yet, but one day will be your last on earth. Do you know why you are here;

your reason? For Christians, our reason is clear — to share the love, compassion and truth of Christ to all who come across our path, to the glory of God.

Not realizing we are here for just a season leads to taking life and relationships for granted, while not knowing our reason leads to a life wasted on worldly concerns or a life of purposelessness and despair.

This is the day which our Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

To God be the glory

The Board of Evangelism, First Lutheran Church, Little Rock

The Law's role in the church

The 2024 Faith of Our Fathers Conference will be held April 12–13 at Good Shepherd, Collinsville, Ill. Open to both laity and pastors, the theme of the gathering is “The Law of God Is Good and Wise.”



Over two days, those gathered will learn about and discuss the Law of God. We'll look to our past, confront present challenges, and look toward the future confident in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and thankful for all the treasures with which He has blessed us.

Learn more and register at [t](https://t.me), and share information about this event with others in your congregation!



Rev. Anderson is now Grace senior pastor

Rev. Danny Anderson was installed as senior pastor of Grace, Knoxville, on Jan. 7. Pictured are, from left, Revs. Chase Lefort, Faith, Oak Ridge, Tenn.; Paul Kritsch, Chapel of the Good Shepherd, Sharps Chapel, Tenn.; Seth Korte, St. Paul, Sevierville, Tenn.; Jake Childers, Grace, Knoxville; David Graves, St. Paul, Wartburg, Tenn.; Derek Roberts, Praise, Maryville, Tenn.; Michael Miller, Redeemer, Harriman, Tenn.; Rich Elseroad, Grace, Knoxville; Bill Ondracka, Christus Victor, Knoxville; Danny Anderson; Phil Bohlken, emeritus; Ed Maanum, First, Knoxville; Adam Woldt, The Point, Knoxville; Steve Skov, emeritus; George Smith, Faith, Oak Ridge, Tenn.; Dr. Roger Reckling, emeritus; Dr. Paul Muench, emeritus; and Ben Gonzales, Texas District mission strategist.

Growing community, growing church

Grace Lutheran Church welcomed some of its 30 new members at its late service on Dec. 17.



On Dec. 17, Grace, Clarksville, Tenn., welcomed 30 new members, most through adult confirmation or affirmation of faith. Included in that total are nine who were received by Baptism.

Added to 16 received in June and 18 in January, Grace received 64 new members in 2023. While this reflects the growing nature of the Clarksville community (over 15% per year), it is also a reflection of the intentional welcome the congregation extends

to its many visitors. There were more than 350 visitors at Grace in 2023.

Grace has been served by Rev. Larry Peters for more than 30 years. The congregation is also well served by Cantor Jonathan Rudy and a vibrant music program on Sunday mornings and in community concerts.



Gifts of Peace

By Laurie Sanders • Peace, Conway

Peace Lutheran Church, Conway, Ark., is charging forward as the hands and feet of Jesus in the greater Conway community! Peace renewed its zeal for serving those in need by sponsoring a “Blessing Bag” giveaway just prior to Thanksgiving.

The members shared the love of Christ by providing a Thanksgiving meal in a bag and much-needed hygiene items, along with encouragement, prayer and Scripture. The response to our November mission outreach project was overwhelming as we witnessed the work of our loving God in our midst.

The Peace Outreach Board organized a coalition of partners, including the Conway Ministry Center, which serves families and individuals dealing with poverty and homelessness while

facing food insecurity. The center provided the names of families most in need of assistance.

The Gideons International gave out New Testaments in English and Spanish. Conway Noontime Rotary donated several of our blessing bags, and Kroger provided shopping bags for our groceries.

Generous support from the members of Peace ensured that we were able to meet our goal of 100 blessing bags, serving 101 community families!

On Nov. 18, more than 30 Peace volunteers and elementary-school aged children distributed the blessing bags and hygiene items to our guests. Rev. Tom Boeck, Peace pastor, and our prayer team prayed with each family entering our campus.

We look forward to greater community-oriented mission outreach in 2024 as Peace celebrates its 60th anniversary.

LWML

STAY CONNECTED



There are so many ways to stay connected with those who are important to you — your family and friends and, of course, your LWML family! LWML prioritizes making sure that you can keep up with all that's new and noteworthy through its website and social media sites.

NATIONAL

- lwml.org
- facebook.com/thelwml
- twitter.com/thelwml
- pinterest.com/thelwml
- youtube.com/user/thelwml
- instagram.com/lwmlnational

DISTRICT

- midsouthlwml.org
- For the **prayer chain**, go to the “Christian Life” tab and select “Prayer Chain Guidelines” from the drop-down menu.

For the **calendar**, go to “News and Events” and select “Event Calendar.”

For an **eNews** subscription, go to midsouthlwml.org/enews.

- facebook.com/MSD.LWML

You can always reach the LWML Mid-South District through their contact link at the top of the homepage. This will get your message to the appropriate board members or committees.

A most blessed way to stay connected to LWML is to attend a convention. The ladies you meet are our best resource.

For all the information you need to know about our 28th Biennial District Convention, to be held June 7–9 in Memphis, go to “News and Events” at the homepage and select “District Convention.”

We hope to see you in Memphis!



Registration is now open to volunteers who wish to participate in an LCMS Servant Event this year. Hosted by LCMS congregations and Recognized Service Organizations (RSOs) across the country, LCMS Servant Events provide youth with opportunities to serve their communities, develop skills and relationships, and display God's mercy to their neighbors through service projects. Events will begin in 2024 as early as March and continue through August.

In a testimonial on the Servant Event website, the Rev. Michael Pottschmidt, former pastor of Trinity, Richmond, Va., writes, "Hosting an LCMS Servant Event makes ignoring or avoiding God's mission impossible. Congregation leaders and members must be intentional and deliberate about seeking local opportunities to proclaim and demonstrate the saving love of Jesus. And how invigorating it is for all involved to roll up their sleeves and join with fellow servants — youth and adults alike — in accomplishing this task. That enthusiasm for mission continues long after the Servant Event is over — those volunteers become leaders in finding ways to share their faith and serve others."

Servant Event leaders met at the LCMS International Center Nov. 13–15, 2023,

to share ideas, receive training and prepare to host their respective events. Among the events taking place this summer are:

- ▶ **"Forts and Sorts at Youth Haven Ranch,"** hosted by Messiah Lutheran Church in Holt, Mich.;
- ▶ **"Adventures in Colorado: Dirty Jobs Servant Event,"** hosted by Lutheran Valley Retreat in Florissant, Colo.; and
- ▶ **"Beholding God's Miracles in the High Country,"** hosted by Camp Linn Haven and Mountainside Lutheran Church in Linville, N.C.

See a full list of events and register at lcms-servantevents.org.

Many Servant Events challenge youth to step outside their comfort zones and get their hands dirty. As suggested by the name, the "Adventures in Colorado: Dirty Jobs Servant Event" will include trail building and maintenance at the retreat center, moving dirt and working on drainage around buildings, and even rebuilding a retaining wall. Volunteers will also have a chance to participate in challenging adventure options at the camp, such as rafting and rappelling.

Other events provide opportunities for youth to serve and connect with those in need.

Volunteers at "Forts and Sorts" will perform construction and maintenance to benefit underprivileged children at Youth Haven Ranch and may also have a chance to interact and share the Gospel with the campers. At the "Shepherding Sheep Volunteer Event" hosted by Camp Wartburg in Waterloo, Ill., volunteers will serve as companions for developmentally disabled children and adults during a five-day summer camp.

Along with the chance to serve, Servant Events provide an opportunity for youth to bond and grow in their faith through shared activities and Bible study. Youth will also learn from mentors and see the witness of ministry leaders and church workers in vocations that some of the youth may be called to some day as well.

"The goals for the youth at the servant event are to grow in their faith, experience their faith in action by working at Youth Haven Ranch, and build community and relationships with each other," says Jo Ellen Miskowski, host of the "Forts and Sorts" event. "Each year has been such a blessing for the youth, volunteers and staff. Our evaluations each year show that the youth participants enjoy the event. They often make comments regarding their growth in faith, relationships, learning new skills and what they can accomplish with the help of God."

"In the summer of 1989 I went on my first servant event," recalls the Rev. Steve Hayden, senior pastor of Lutheran Church of St. John, Quincy, Ill. "Entering my senior year, I was considering a future in pastoral ministry, so I thought a trip like this might be a good experience and a lot of fun. Little did I know the way it would transform my life."

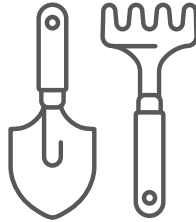
"To any congregation considering getting a group together, or any individual who has always thought about participating in a Servant Event ... do it!"

This article is reprinted from the February 2024 issue of LCMS Reporter and was written by Caitlin Magness.



For a schedule and descriptions of the 2024 LCMS Servant Events, and to register, visit lcms-servantevents.org.

Help spruce up camp



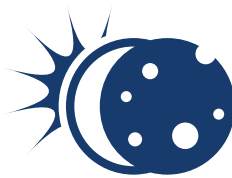
Spring Work Day – March 23!

It's the annual Saturday when volunteers arrive at camp for a day of service and fellowship. Workers will engage in spring cleaning, both indoors and outdoors, and may also help with minor building projects. Men with chainsaws are particularly needed to cut firewood.

Volunteers are necessary to keep the camp functioning and are welcome any time of year. The spring work day is specifically set aside for getting the camp cleaned up and spruced up for the busy seasons ahead. This year's work day will focus on preparing for the crowd expected for the solar eclipse.

Eclipse 2024

Petit Jean Mountain will be a prime location to view the total solar eclipse on April 8. The path of totality will run through Arkansas from southwest to northeast, and Petit Jean Mountain will be right on the "blue line," the path through the center of totality where the eclipse lasts the longest. The eclipse will last more than two hours and 30 minutes, with partial eclipse beginning around 12:30 p.m. and ending at 3. The period of totality will last more than four minutes, from 1:49 to 1:53 p.m.



The April 2024 eclipse is historic for the state. Only two total eclipses have happened in Arkansas's recorded history, one in 1834, before Arkansas became a state, and the second in 1918.

Visitors from all over the world are expected to descend upon Arkansas to view the eclipse, with the highest concentration along the blue line. Camp Trinity will be hosting guests in the retreat lodge, five cabins and campground.

Summer Camp

The early registration discount deadline for summer camp at Camp Trinity is April 1. Parents can save \$50 per child on fees by registering and paying in full by that date.

To learn more and register, visit lutherancamp.org and click the "Summer Camp" link at the top of the homepage.

Camp Trinity is still in the process of hiring summer staff. Lutheran young adults, aged 18-25, looking for summer jobs in which they can share their faith with children and families can request an application by emailing the camp office at director@lutherancamp.org

Trivia Night

The 15th annual Trivia Night is Saturday, April 20, at Christ



▲ Summer camp provides a wonderful opportunity to reconnect old friends — and make new ones.

▼ Trivia Night is not all about what you know. It also includes contests for best costumes, best table decorations and most clever team name.



Lutheran Church, Little Rock.

This camp fundraiser is an evening filled with fun, food, fellowship and friendly competition.

Trivia Night includes multiple rounds of trivia questions, in which teams of up to eight people compete for prizes and the coveted Dinner Bell Trophy.

The event also includes games between rounds and concessions serving burgers, dogs, nachos, sodas, candy and more.

Prizes are also awarded for most clever team name, best costumes and best table decorations.

The night features a silent auction in which guests bid on all kinds of great items.

Register your team now at lutherancamp.org/trivia-night.