



# MID-SOUTH LUTHERAN

## LENTEN BETRAYAL



There's nothing that poisons a relationship like betrayal. Betrayal is painful! It raises emotions to a high level and seeks to do harm, putting the betrayer and betrayed at high risk. As we approach the holy season of Lent, we're reminded that Jesus was crucified as a result of a Judas' betrayal. But because of his betrayal, Judas eventually committed suicide.

Think about the gravity of Judas' sorrow! Christ's disciples gathered to celebrate the Passover meal, celebrated by the Israelites annually to commemorate their departure from slavery in Egypt. By sacrificing a lamb, putting its blood on the doorpost and lintel of their homes, and eating the lamb's flesh and unleavened bread, the Angel of death "passed over" the homes of the Israelites by God's command.



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

Then many years later, at the Last Supper, Jesus taught His disciples the true meaning of the Passover. He *is* the Passover Lamb. His death and shed blood give us the promise that eternal death will pass over us. But the Last Supper happened before Christ was crucified. So naturally, the disciples were somewhat confused and unaware of what would happen next. The Last Supper didn't really make a lot of sense to them — at least until after the Resurrection.

Emotions ran high outside of that Upper Room. Messianic zeal had the Romans on high alert. Some of the Jews had spoken openly about wanting Jesus to be their king. The Pharisees and Sadducees were afraid Jesus was going to ruin their fragile, phony positions in the Temple. Then Jesus vividly told His followers about His impending suffering and death.

His disciples just couldn't figure it out. They thought that maybe Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, was the best person to figure things out. Earlier,

that same Mary poured out expensive perfume on Jesus' head. It was a lavish expense for that poor woman. So Judas asked in puzzlement, "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" Jesus gently rebuked Judas, saying, "Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial" (John 12:1-8). Judas seemed a little miffed.

Despite the many times Jesus had talked of His death to the disciples, Mary alone seemed to understand His words and had acted on them. By pouring the perfume on Jesus — something that was usually reserved for burials or weddings — Mary somehow showed she understood. Jesus was going to Jerusalem to die. It was prophetic, setting in motion the whole domino effect of God's salvation plan. The unstoppable tumbling of events were reaching the climax of what was to happen in what we call Holy Week.

Then comes the Last Supper. The location was pre-arranged. Jesus told the two disciples He sent ahead to prepare the upper room. A man carrying a water jug would let them inside this room. By Thursday evening, everything was ready (Mark 14:12-16). John 13 records that after eating the Passover supper together, Jesus would wash the feet of the disciples.

He was teaching them what it means to be a servant. He shared His Last Supper with them and instituted what we still celebrate even today. Jesus took bread, and after giving thanks He broke it and gave it to His disciples. He said it is His body. OK, so not unlike the crowd at Capernaum (John 6), now the disciples

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## LENT

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were really confused. Then He took the cup — the last cup of the Passover meal, the Cup of Thanksgiving — and said, “Drink of it, all of you for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matt. 26:27-28).

The disciples must have thought, “I think I get it. It’s symbolic! Jesus is becoming our conquering king! Jesus is saying He’s ready for the fight against the Romans. Great!”

But Jesus was about to explain that there is the dark figure of betrayal lurking within their own circle of friends. “Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me,” Jesus declared (Matt. 26:21). The room erupted with distrust.

When Jesus broke the news about a betrayal, there was anger, shouting, confusion and finger-pointing. One disciple frantically asked, “Is it I, Lord?” (It was probably Peter since he was always the first one to speak.) But Jesus replied, “He who has dipped his hand in the dish with Me will betray Me” (Matt. 26:22-23). Imagine the panic that froze Judas’ arm as his hand was in the same sopping dish as Jesus.

John 13:26 says, “It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it.” Jesus gave the bread to Judas. But Judas didn’t ask Jesus, as did the other, “Is it I?” He knew! *After* Jesus gave Judas the bread he asked, “Is it I, Rabbi?”

What changed Judas from a loyal disciple to a betrayer? Maybe he was smarting from the scolding he got from Jesus earlier, so he found a way to seek revenge. It certainly wasn’t beneath him, since John’s Gospel says that Judas was a bit of a scoundrel. He was the treasurer of the group and had helped himself to some of the money. Maybe there’s another way to scrounge more money — let’s say, 30 pieces of silver?

John’s Gospel gives the best explanation of his turncoat action: As soon as he took the bread from Jesus, “Satan entered into him.” Think about the emotions in the room at that instance. The

disciples were deeply distressed, angry and confused. They didn’t understand Judas for his betrayal.

As can happen to any of us, if Satan gets his sinister way, one thing leads to another and the litany of evil deeds start to pile up. Judas had been through thick and thin with Jesus. So why did Judas leave that room in such a hurry? After all, he was about to betray his best Friend. He couldn’t have missed the signs that this Man was indeed the Messiah. That trust turned to betrayal. Do we know what that word “betray” means? It means “to deliver up ... to give over to.” Judas was about to deliver Jesus to murderers. If the other disciples had been in Judas’ sandals, they would have run, too.

But, ironically, there’s Good News. Beyond the stark reality of betrayal, these are two words of great promise Jesus delivered, promises that are the only solution to the great hurts and pains we all have living in this sin-encrusted world. But neither of His promises would be fulfilled if Jesus hadn’t been betrayed.

One of Jesus’ promises is forgiveness. Even though Jesus was betrayed and subjected to unspeakable torment, His suffering, crucifixion and death was the price God paid that brings us the forgiveness of our sins. Sin is ultimately the cause of all our hurting. It has suffocated the world and infected our hearts ever since the time of Adam. It twists our mind and gives rise to every wrong word, thought and deed. It’s evil that affects every disciple as Peter and the others soon discovered on that fateful night we call Maundy Thursday.

In God’s plan of salvation, the evil intent of those who wanted Jesus killed becomes our source of salvation. Judas betrayed Jesus into the hands of sinners. St. Luke records in Acts 2:23-24, “This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised Him up, loosing the pangs of death.”

Evil men eventually arrested Jesus. Jealous high priests charged Him with blasphemy and accused Him of treason before Pilate. That weak-kneed governor

condemned Jesus to death. It all seems to be the work of Satan who wanted Jesus dead and out of the way. Ever since Jesus was a newborn infant, Satan affixed evil intent to take Jesus away from fulfilling God’s salvation plan. Yet beneath the obvious, a great and more divine plan was working. What was intended to be the most grievous delivery of injustice also became the greatest demonstration of grace and mercy from God — just for you and me.

How does this horrible event save us? By faith, through the Means of Grace, God gives the saving work of Christ in a real and tangible way. We hear God’s Word proclaimed that condemns the sinner but forgives the repentant. We receive Christ’s righteousness when our old self is crucified, drowned and raised to a new life in the waters of Holy Baptism. We eat and drink the body and blood of Christ He graciously offers in a morsel of bread and tiny sip of wine for the forgiveness of our sins.

At the Last Supper, Jesus said, “I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s Kingdom” (Matt. 26:29). We’ll be with Jesus in heaven, feasting with Him in an everlasting banquet of victory He won for us.

We’ll be gathered around the eternal throne of glory. Fear, hatred, betrayal, suffering and anger will all be gone. But in the divine mystery of Christ’s promises, we don’t have to wait. We are joined together with the angels, archangels and all the saints who have gone to heaven before us. It happens where Jesus reaches from heaven to give us His true body and blood in the blessed meal as He joins us to the Sabaoth, above all human burdens and incumbrances.

The glory of God was revealed and His grace toward us was never more evident when Jesus was lifted up on His throne — the day when He became our eternal king, the day He became our Savior, the day that it pleased God to offer His Son as the Lamb of God so that He might be the sacrifice for the sins of all the world, for the forgiveness of our sins.

Glory be to Jesus on our Lenten journey to the foot of His Cross.



# Help for California

LCMS/Erik M. Lunsford

Safety and shelter remain concerns for those of our brothers and sisters in the Pacific Southwest District (PSW) who have lost their homes to the fires as recovery efforts begin. Numerous congregations, schools, workers and members in the impacted areas have been affected.

As our friends in the PSW seek to help those in their disaster-ravaged communities, we encourage our Mid-South District members to encourage prayers and support for their efforts.

If you would like to offer monetary support for continuing disaster relief efforts of the Pacific Southwest District, you are encouraged to send your check payable to the Pacific Southwest District and designated for "Disaster and Emergency Relief." Checks should be mailed directly to the Pacific Southwest District at:

LCMS Pacific Southwest District  
16355 Laguna Canyon Road #300  
Irvine, Ca. 92618



## Learn more about TEC21 teachers' workshops

TEC21 is an organization dedicated to connecting and equipping Lutheran school teachers to inspire students in technology enriched classrooms. Now in its 15th year, TEC21 has a schedule of exciting workshops for educators and administrators.

Visit [tec21connect.com/workshops](https://tec21connect.com/workshops) to learn more about this opportunity. Then contact Michelle Fischer, Mid-South District education executive, at [mfischer@mid-southlcms.com](mailto:mfischer@mid-southlcms.com) and let her know which learning opportunity interests you!

## Congregation mission commitment receipts



as of Dec. 31, 2024 (12 months)

Anticipated amount (100% of budget)	\$1,639,545
Actual receipts	\$1,682,132
Over (under) anticipated amount	\$42,587

### Use of mission commitment receipts

Allocated to Synod for world missions	\$479,640
Allocated to Tanzania	\$25,000
Retained for district ministry/mission support (70% of receipts)	\$1,177,492
<b>Total receipts</b>	<b>\$1,682,132</b>

### Mission commitment receipts comparison

Actual receipts as of Dec. 31, 2024	\$1,682,132
Actual receipts as of Dec. 31, 2023	\$1,605,837
Over (under) prior year receipts	\$76,295



## Share the HOPE



APRIL 24-29, 2025  
OnLine Virtual Auction

Help us feed these precious souls

# Grants help new ministries flourish

The Mid-South District encourages innovative and creative new ministry initiatives of its existing congregations and schools through the GROW Grants program.

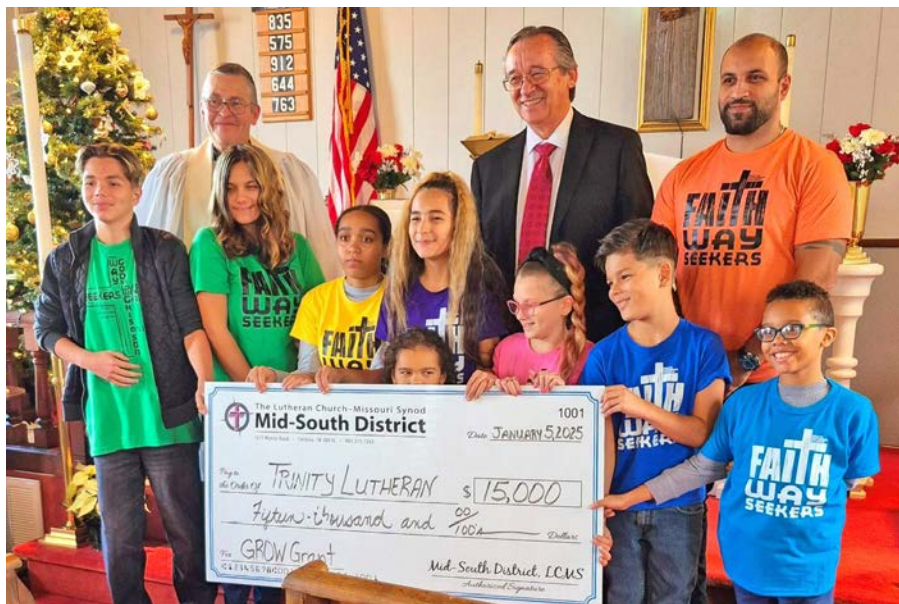
What is a GROW Grant? It is a one-time financial outlay of up to \$15,000 from the district for a ministry or program to reach new hearts with the Gospel. GROW Grants are intended to “seed” new ministries that will be on-going and self-sustaining after their initial launch. Since introducing the program in 2022, the Mid-South District has awarded over \$156,000 in GROW Grants to congregations!

Two of the recent grant recipients were presented “giant checks” for the funds that will help them establish and build their unique new ministry programs. On Dec. 22, Grace Celebration Lutheran Church, Cordova, Tenn., received a \$15,000 GROW Grant for its impactful ministry reaching local public-school students. The ministry, called LifeWise Academy, provides students with weekly instruction that connects biblical truth with practical application in their daily lives and interactions with others.

The district GROW Grant was presented to Rev. Dr. Terry Tieman, Grace pastor, and his wife, Becky, a teacher who is very involved in the new ministry. Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, Mid-South District president, and Michelle Fischer, the district’s education executive, presented the grant funds and congratulated the congregation on their impactful work through LifeWise Academy.

On Jan. 5, Pastor Paavola presented Rev. Timothy Henning and the members of Trinity, Mena, Ark., with a \$15,000 GROW Grant for the congregation’s new Gospel Connections and Engagement program. This multi-faceted ministry includes:

- ▶ a new community youth ministry called Way Seekers;
- ▶ expanded weekday Bible study and discussion groups;
- ▶ home fellowship gatherings called Life Groups; and



Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola (center) visited Trinity, Mena, Ark., to present a GROW Grant to Rev. Timothy Henning (left) for the congregation’s new Gospel Connections and Engagement program. Included is a community youth ministry called Way Seekers, in which participants and leaders were in attendance.



Michelle Fischer (left) and Pastor Paavola (right) represent the Mid-South District in presenting a GROW Grant for LifeWise Academy of Grace Celebration Lutheran Church, Cordova, Tenn. Pictured in center are Becky and Rev. Dr. Terry Tieman of Grace Celebration.

- ▶ a community door-to-door prayer and service outreach effort.

Watch for more updates on the GROW Grant program — an important resource for ministry that is helping Mid-

South District congregations share the Gospel within their communities. More information about GROW Grants, as well as the application, is available at [mid-southlcms.org/grow-grants](http://mid-southlcms.org/grow-grants).



## Peace pastor — and community leader

Rev. Tom Boeck, pastor of Peace, Conway, Ark., recently received a diploma following completion of a leadership program through the Conway Area Leadership Institute.

The institute prepares emerging leaders to serve the Conway community. Through shared experiences and frequent interactions, participants engaged in a 10-month curriculum inspired by Conway2035, which is a long-range strategic plan developed with the input of more than 1,800 area residents.

Class participants are identified by the institute as highly motivated individuals who are interested in learning; pursuing first-hand experience; and interacting with community leaders, businesses and organizations.

The Conway community welcomes graduates as “a dynamic group of leaders fully equipped to help create a better Conway.”

Congratulations, Pastor Tom!



## Welcome back, Amy!

Amy Kurtz was installed as principal of Immanuel Lutheran School, Memphis, by Rev. Jon Petering, Immanuel senior pastor, on Jan. 12.

Amy taught Spanish at Immanuel before departing in 2016 to serve as principal of Trinity-St. John Lutheran School, Nashville, Ill.. In 2022, she accepted a call to serve as principal of Faith Lutheran School, Marietta, Ga.

The church and school family of Immanuel are overjoyed that God’s path for Amy has led her back to Memphis!

At the installation service, many faces from Immanuel’s present and past were in attendance to welcome Amy and her family back to the church and school.



**TOP:** Amy Kurtz’s family attended her Jan. 12 installation. Pictured are, from left, husband Mike, daughter Emma, Amy, mother Sarah Starks, and daughter Penelope (in front). Four adult children were unable to attend. **BELOW:** Amy is pictured with Rev. Jon Petering.

## Share your news with us!

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

Send us your stories and photos for our **May 2025** issue by **March 15**.



# HAPPY 75!



**Revs. Richard Smith and Robert Seaton**

**First Lutheran Church, Cleveland, Tenn., celebrated its 75th anniversary** on Dec. 16. Rev. Richard “Kipp” Smith, former First pastor, traveled from Fort Wayne, Ind., to preside over the special service, assisted by Rev. Robert G. Seaton, who currently serves at First.

Pastor Kipp (as he was affectionately known) was serving First when it finished a church expansion project in 1990, and he was the first pastor to preach in the new sanctuary. He is now retired.

A reception followed the service in the fellowship hall, where many fond memories were shared.

# Plan to attend Henkel Conference

The fourth annual Henkel Conference, devoted to Christian theology and cultural engagement, aims to provide a forum of renowned theological and cultural speakers within the Christian faith in order to educate and encourage in the midst of the present assaults on God’s eternal truth. Clergy and laity are invited to attend, and to bring friends, family and congregation members.

Speakers include:

- ▶ **Andrew Walker**, associate professor of Christian Ethics and Public Theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville; fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center, and managing editor of *WORLD Opinions*.
- ▶ **Dr. Peter McCullough, MD**, internist, cardiologist, and epidemiologist who manages infectious diseases as well as complications of COVID-19 vaccines.
- ▶ **Chad O. Jackson**, who starred in the

*Uncle Tom* films and contributor to podcasts, radio shows and news programs, making the case for Christian ethics, family values, independence and intentional citizenship.

- ▶ **Joy Pullmann**, executive editor of *The Federalist* and an 18-year education and politics reporter
- ▶ **Rev. Scott Stiegemeier**, associate professor of Theology and Bioethics at Concordia University Irvine, Calif.
- ▶ **Rev. Thomas Korcok**, associate professor of Theology at Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada
- ▶ **Rev. Willie Grills**, pastor of Zion, Avilla, Ark., and podcast co-host of *A Word Fitly Spoken* and *A Brief History of Power*

For more information and registration, visit [ascensionmadison.com/henkel.html](https://ascensionmadison.com/henkel.html). You may also send an email to [henkel@ascensionmadison.com](mailto:henkel@ascensionmadison.com).



**Rev. Gerald Heinecke was installed as pastor of The Shepherd of the Hills, Horseshoe Bend, Ark., and Hope, Batesville, Ark.,** on Jan. 12. The congregations recently formed a dual parish. Pictured are, from left, Revs. David Vandercook, Trinity, North Little Rock, and Shepherd of Peace, Maumelle; Jerome Leckband, All Saints, Jonesboro; Dr. Roger Paavola, district president; Gerald Heinecke; Joshua Leigeber, All Saints, Jonesboro; and Andrew Lehman, All Saints, Jonesboro; and Zachary Heinecke, crucifer and Pastor Heinecke’s son.



For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. **2 Timothy 1:7**

During the Lenten season we often focus on the idea of self-control and how we need to resist the many temptations we face, such as overeating and spending too much time looking at screens. We give up certain actions for a period and, God willing, we may conquer them for good!

But in Paul's letter to Timothy, we are reminded that we also have the gifts of power and love through the Holy Spirit. We should turn our focus outward and consider how to best use these gifts.

As we wrestle with our inward

demons, we should also seek ways to love those around us. Lent, and the commercial focus on Easter, can provide a multitude of ways to reach out to friends and family to share its true meaning. We have the power to show love through grace and mercy to those around us.

There are some excellent LWML resources for the Lenten season. They may be found at [lwml.org/posts/category/lent](http://lwml.org/posts/category/lent). God bless your Lenten journey!

**Candy Habich, Chairman**  
LWML Mid-South District Media and Marketing Committee



On Nov. 3, Geal Goldbeck (right), president of the LWML group of Redeemer, Nashville, presented a Mission Grant check for \$5,000 to Candi Boudreau, operations manager for Trinity HOPE, a ministry that serves lunches to schoolchildren in Haiti. For more information on the Mission Grants, visit [midsouthlwml.org/mission-grants](http://midsouthlwml.org/mission-grants).

## INGATHERING GOES VIRTUAL!

For the first time, the Gifts from the Heart ingathering at the national convention will be done online. That's right – no more cars filled to the brim with ingathering items!

There are Amazon wish lists available for three recipients — Camp Luther of Nebraska, Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska, and Campus Ministry at the University of Nebraska.

Whether you plan to attend the convention or not, you can still participate. Plus, you can get your whole congregation involved!

The LWML 41st Biennial Convention will be held June 26–29 in Omaha, Neb. For more information, visit [lwml.org/convention](http://lwml.org/convention) and find the link under “Convention Documents.”



Lutheran Women *in Mission*

## 41ST BIENNIAL CONVENTION

Omaha, Neb. | June 26-29



But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

## STAY CONNECTED

**On the web**

- [midsouthlwml.org](http://midsouthlwml.org)
- [facebook.com/msd.lwml](https://facebook.com/msd.lwml)

**Email**

- [contact@midsouthlwml.org](mailto:contact@midsouthlwml.org)

**Subscribe**

- [midsouthlwml.org/news](http://midsouthlwml.org/news)

## Wanted: trivia players, spring cleaners

### Trivia Night

Camp Trinity's spring fundraiser is set for April 26 at Christ, Little Rock (315 S. Hughes Street). The 16th annual Trivia Night features 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, a silent auction, and concessions serving burgers, hot dogs, nachos, sodas, candy and more.

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

Register your team now at [lutherancamp.org/trivia-night](http://lutherancamp.org/trivia-night).

### Spring Work Day

Camp Trinity's Spring Work Day is Saturday, March 22. Every year, generally on the Saturday closest to spring equinox, volunteers gather at Camp Trinity to help get the camp ready for the busy seasons ahead. Workers of all ages help with spring cleaning of the lodge, chapel, dining hall and cabins; trail clearing; cutting firewood; clearing Firewise perimeters around buildings and burning brush.

The camp will provide gloves and tools, but those who want to bring their own chainsaws and other tools are welcome to do so. Volunteers able to work chainsaws are particularly needed.

Camp staff will serve breakfast and lunch to volunteers, who are also invited to stay for the Lenten service that afternoon in Trinity Chapel.

### Summer Camp

Parents can save money on summer camp fees by registering children this month. The early registration discount deadline is April 1. Those who register and pay in full by that date can take \$50 off each child's fees.

Other discounts are available as well: first-time camper, bring-a-friend, multi-session (for any camper who



Trivia Night competition is not only about trivia; it also includes contests for table decorations, costumes and most clever team name.



Summer camp features lots of outdoor games, including kickball.

attends more than one session), and multi-child (for families with more than one child attending).

To learn more, check availability at particular sessions and register, visit [lutherancamp.org](http://lutherancamp.org) and click the "Summer Camp" link at the top of the homepage.

The camp schedule will again include three family camp sessions, two on weekends and one on weekdays. The July 21-23 weekday session is open to any family, but is especially designed to accommodate families of pastors

and church workers who cannot get away on weekends because of Sunday responsibilities.

The other family camp sessions, July 18-20 and July 25-27, are scheduled on weekends to accommodate parents who work during the week.

The youth camp sessions are:

- ▶ Trailblazers (for students entering grades 5-8 in the fall), June 8-13
- ▶ Adventure (high school), June 15-20
- ▶ Explorers (grades 4-6), June 22-27
- ▶ Pathfinders (grades 2-4), June 29-July 2
- ▶ Voyagers (grades 7-9 and 10-12), July 6-11
- ▶ Wilderness (grades 6-9), July 13-17 (four nights)

Lutherans ages 18-25 who love Jesus and love serving others are encouraged to apply for summer staff. The positions are for two months (May 26-July 31).

To request an application email [director@lutherancamp.org](mailto:director@lutherancamp.org).

High school students who want to serve one or two weeks as counselors-in-training can also request an application by emailing the camp office.