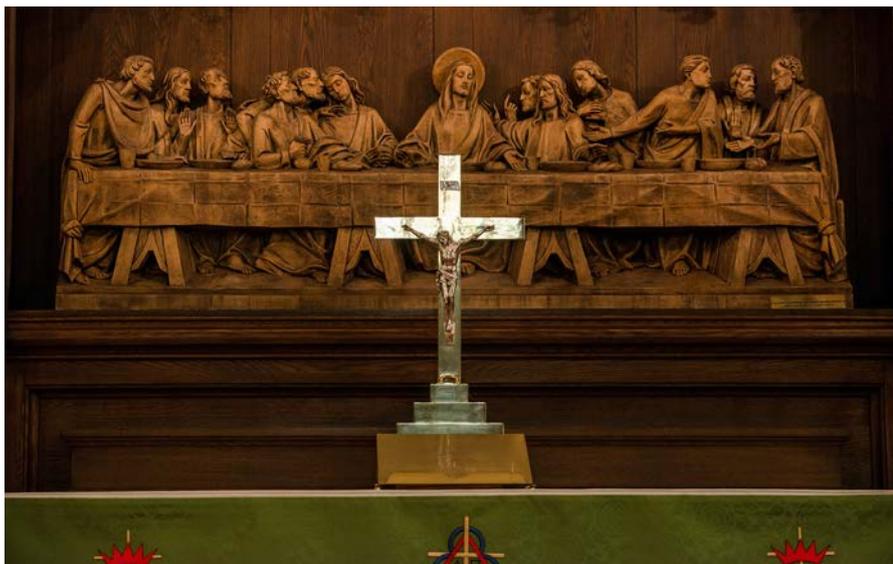




MID-SOUTH LUTHERAN



of conflicting stories, Jesus was vividly talking about His suffering and death.

Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, poured expensive perfume on Jesus' head just a few days before — a lavish expense for a poor woman. Judas asked in horror:

“Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?” **JOHN 12:5**

But Jesus gently rebuked Judas, saying:

“Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial.”

JOHN 12:7

Judas seemed a little miffed. The other disciples didn't get it, either. When Jesus talked about His death, Mary alone seemed to understand His words and acted extravagantly on them. By pouring the perfume on Jesus — which was usually reserved for burials or weddings — Mary showed she understood that Jesus was going to go to Jerusalem to die.

Mary's prophetic act set the dominoes in motion for what was to follow during what we call Holy Week, bringing us to the Last Supper. By Thursday evening, two of the disciples found the Upper Room and prepared the Passover.

John's Gospel records that not only were the disciples going to eat the Passover meal together, but Jesus began to wash the feet of the disciples after the supper ended, a lesson in being a servant.

He celebrated the Last Supper with them and instituted what we celebrate today:

Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” **MATTHEW 26:26**

See **LENT**, Page 2

FORGIVEN

As we continue in this season of Lent, we look at how Jesus died following the betrayal of Judas, who committed suicide as a result. The back story of these deaths, however, involves the holiest of meals: the Lord's Supper that we share in Christian fellowship.



Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola
District President

and placed its blood on the doorpost and lintel of their homes, and ate the lamb's flesh and unleavened bread.

At the Last Supper, Jesus taught His disciples the true meaning of the Passover: *He is* the Passover Lamb. Since the Last Supper happened before Christ was crucified, the disciples were confused and largely unaware of what was going to happen next. That Last Supper didn't really make a lot of sense until after the Resurrection.

Outside of the Upper Room emotions ran high. Messianic zeal had the Romans on high alert. Jewish nationalists wanted Jesus to be their new king. The Pharisees and Sadducees were afraid Jesus was going to ruin their positions in the church. In the flurry

The disciples had gathered to celebrate the Passover — the celebration of the Israelites' departure from slavery in Egypt many years before. We recall that the angel of death passed over the houses of the Israelites who, according to God's instructions, had sacrificed a lamb

LENT

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

(Now the disciples were really confused.)

Then Jesus took 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.”

MATTHEW 26:27–28

The disciples must have thought this symbolized Jesus becoming the conquering king! He’s ready for the fight against the Romans!

But instead of a mighty conquering kingship, Jesus tells of the dark figure of betrayal lurking within their own circle of friends.

“Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me.” **MATTHEW 26:21**

The room erupts with distrust. “And they were sorrowful,” says Matthew 26:22 — meaning, in Greek, that they were violently pained and vehemently distressed. There was anger, shouting and finger-pointing. A veritable flood of emotions was released,

One of the disciples, probably Peter, asked, fearfully, “Is it I, Lord?” But Jesus replied:

“He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray Me.”

MATTHEW 26:23

Imagine the panic that froze the arm of Judas, whose hand was in that same sopping dish!

John’s Gospel (13:26) says:

“It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it.”

And Jesus gave the bread to Judas. But Judas didn’t ask Jesus “Is it I?” He knew! Instead he asked, “Is it I, Rabbi?” He addressed Jesus as just another teacher, not his Lord.

What changed Judas from a chosen disciple to a betrayer? Maybe he was smarting from the scolding he got from Jesus earlier. Maybe he sought revenge for being questioned about finances. John’s Gospel says that Judas was a bit

of a scoundrel. As treasurer of the group he helped himself to some of the money. Maybe that perfume Mary poured out could’ve meant more in his pocket, maybe as much as 30 pieces of silver? But John’s Gospel explains that as soon as Judas took the bread from Jesus, “Satan entered into him” (John 13:27).

Consider the emotions in the room at that instant. The disciples were deeply distressed; they were angry. They could’ve sought their own revenge on Judas for his betrayal of Jesus.

Why did Judas leave that room in such a hurry? Well, after all, he was about to betray his best Friend. They’d been through thick and thin together. They shared the most intimate times together. He saw the signs that this Man was indeed the Messiah. But then the 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 up Jesus to murderers. The other disciples knew what that word meant. If we had been Judas, we’d have run too.

But beyond the stark reality of betrayal, there is a great promise that Jesus delivered, which would not have been fulfilled if Jesus had not been betrayed. That promise is *forgiveness*. Even though Jesus was betrayed, leading to unspeakable torment and death, His suffering ultimately brings us the forgiveness of our sins.

Sins are the source of all our hurting and death. Sin has suffocated the world. It infects our hearts, twists our minds and gives rise to every word, thought or action we know is wrong. Sin is evil that affects even disciples, as Peter and the others discovered that fateful night when denial, abandonment and lies filled the chilly night air.

We call it Maundy Thursday. In God’s plan of salvation, someone’s evil intent actually became the source of salvation as Judas betrayed Jesus into the hands of sinners. Luke records:

“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.”

ACTS 2:23–24

Evil men arrested Jesus that night. Jealous high priests convicted Him of blasphemy. A weak-kneed governor condemned Jesus to death. This all was the work of Satan, who wanted Jesus dead and out of the way. Yet as evil executed its diabolical plan, a great, more divine plan revealed itself. What was intended to be a grievous delivery of injustice is also the greatest demonstration of faith and love — just for you and me.

By faith, God’s grace gives the saving work of Christ to us unworthy sinners in a real and tangible way. We call it the Means of Grace. We hear the Word of God proclaimed, condemning the sinner and forgiving the repentant in Confession and Absolution. 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 that He graciously offers in a morsel of bread and tiny sip of wine for the forgiveness of our sins.

These are the same Means of Grace in the Gospel that declares worthless sinners forgiven, for the sake of Jesus Christ, who 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.” **MATTHEW 26:29**

That means we’ll be with Jesus in heaven. We’re going to feast with Him in an everlasting banquet of victory. 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 can be joined together with the angels, archangels and all the saints who have gone to heaven before us when we gather around the table of Christ at His supper.

Glory be to Jesus. Until that great and unending glorious day in Christ’s kingdom, we gather beneath His cross knowing He fulfilled the entire plan of salvation for us — that we can live in His blessed assurance and promise.



CSP offering free tuition for church work students

Concordia University, St. Paul (CSP), Minn., is strengthening its commitment to the church through an expanded Church Work Tuition Guarantee, offering \$0 tuition for all students preparing for full-time church work vocations. This initiative affirms CSP’s long-standing mission to prepare workers for the church wherever and however they are called to serve.

“This commitment reflects who we are and what we value — affordable tuition, outstanding faculty and a robust, confessionally Lutheran curriculum,” said Rev.

Dr. Mark Koschmann, CSP chief mission officer. “Our prayerful hope is that this removes financial barriers so that more students can joyfully prepare for lives of service in the church, strengthened by the gifts God has entrusted to them.”

Through this commitment, CSP seeks to ensure that financial barriers do not prevent students from responding to God’s call into church work. “We pray that this commitment to ensuring an affordable, Christ-centered Lutheran education will bless countless students now and in the years to come,” said Rev. Dr. Brian Friedrich, CSP president. “We are grateful to CSP’s many friends and alumni who generously support our students through scholarships and endowments, which help us underwrite their educational costs.”

NEWS BRIEFS

Wellness champions

The Mid-South District kicked off the new year by launching a worker wellness program in partnership with Concordia Plan Services and Lutheran Family Service.

Each congregation and school is encouraged to designate a wellness champion — a member who has a heart for encouraging healthy living within their church or school community.

Wellness champions receive monthly support, resources and ideas, and work with the district Wellness Team to help promote healthier habits, simple goals and wellness activities in their local setting.

You’re invited to join this exciting program as it grows, and to enjoy serving in an uplifting and encouraging role! Just contact your pastor or reach out to Deaconess Robin Moyer at the district office — rmoyer@mid-southlcms.com.

Partnering with LFS

Lutheran Family Service (LFS) is pleased to partner with the Mid-South District in fostering wellness for our district’s workers, members and communities. LFS walks with those experiencing difficult times through mental health counseling,

marriage counseling, crisis pregnancy counseling, and adoption services.

LFS recently published a blog post titled “Why resolutions fail — and what actually works,” emphasizing why small, Christ-centered goals and practical steps toward lasting change work better than those failed resolutions you made in January. Learn how to set yourself up for success with practical advice and biblical encouragement by visiting lutheranfamilyservice.org/blog. Select “Mental Health” from the “Filter by” box.

You will also find other blog posts for other categories, including parenting, technology, military and veteran, outreach, adoption and more.

Facebook group

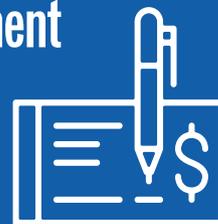
The Mid-South District is inviting middle school educators, administrators and pastors to connect in a special Facebook group. This closed group provides a space to share ideas and encouragement as you journey through the rewarding — and challenging — ministry of teaching today’s middle school students.

The group is also open to our educator friends in the LCMS Southern District.

Join the group page at facebook.com/groups/690593034030361.

Congregation mission commitment receipts

as of
Dec. 31, 2025
(12 months)



Anticipated amount (100% of budget)	\$1,628,696
Actual receipts	\$1,642,156
Over (under) anticipated amount	\$13,460

Use of mission commitment receipts

Allocated to Synod for world missions	\$467,647
Allocated to Tanzania	\$25,000
Retained for district ministry/mission support (70% of receipts)	\$1,149,509
Total receipts	\$1,642,156

Mission commitment receipts comparison

Actual receipts as of Dec. 31, 2025	\$1,642,156
Actual receipts as of Dec. 31, 2024	\$1,682,132
Over (under) prior year receipts	(\$39,976)



A Mission Grant check for \$8,000 was presented on Dec. 7 to First Lutheran Church, Hot Springs, Ark., for its transportation ministry to those who are wheelchair bound. Pictured are, from left, Rev. Jonathan Beyer, First senior pastor; Sheila Foley, First LWML president; Stephanie Rohrer, Mid-Arkansas Zone president; Rev. Anthony Johnson, First associate pastor; Sueann Clayton, First LWML; and Pam Gruber, First LWML vice-president. To learn more about district LWML Mission Grants, visit midsouthlwml.org/mission-grants.

‘God Loves Me Dearly’

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.

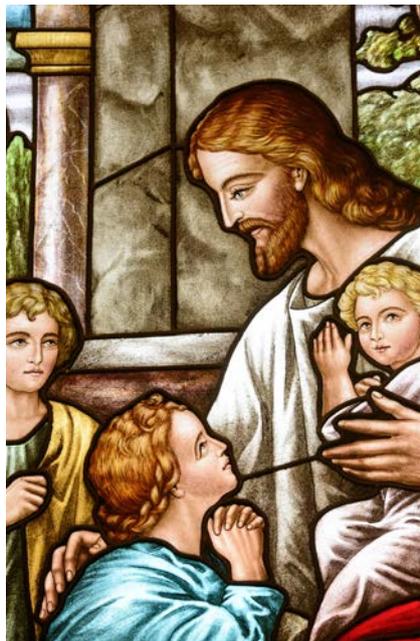
EPHESIANS 2:4-5

We recently sang “God Loves Me Dearly” (LSB 392). This beautiful and simple hymn brought back memories of Sunday school days for many of us. The lyrics clearly spell out the story of salvation.

These days, when life seems way too complicated, it’s good to be reminded that God’s love for us is infinite, and that He loves each one of us as His very own. That love also applies to our family, friends, neighbors — and who we consider the most evil people in this world.

So next time you disagree with someone or are frustrated by someone’s actions, try singing this hymn, but substitute their name (or “her/she” or “him/he”) in place of “me.” Go ahead, give it a try. Here are the lyrics:

1: God loves me dearly, Grants me salvation, God loves me dearly,



Loves even me.

- 2: I was in slav’ry, Sin, death, and darkness; God’s love was working, To make me free.
- 3: He sent forth Jesus, My dear Redeemer, He sent forth Jesus, And set me free.

4: Jesus, my Savior, Himself did offer; Jesus, my Savior, Paid all I owed.

5: Now I will praise You, O Love eternal; Now I will praise You, All my life long.

Ref: Therefore I’ll say again: God loves me dearly, God loves me dearly, Loves even me.

See how easy that was? Keep this lovely hymn in the playlist in your brain and let God take care of the rest.

Bathed in God’s Love, Candy Habich

Chairman, LWML Mid-South District Media and Marketing Committee

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LWML (CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

Register for district convention

Don't delay! Secure your spot for the 2026 district convention, to be held June 12–14 in Springdale, Ark. Registration is open, as are reservations for housing.

All the details are available at midsouthlwml.org/district_convention.

The theme is “Look to the Hills. The Lord Reigns,” based on Psalm 121:1–2. Highlights include:

- ▶ Friday evening opening worship at Salem Lutheran Church, Springdale.
- ▶ Keynote speaker Deaconess Dr. Tiffany Manor, LCMS Office of National Mission managing director.
- ▶ LWML national representative Debbie Yocky, Public Relations director.
- ▶ Song leader Bonnie White.
- ▶ Saturday evening banquet with entertainment.



Pastor shares musical messages

Rev. Dr. Ed Rosser, associate pastor of Good Shepherd, Chattanooga, is an untrained musician, but his sermon-based songs have been written and recorded on SoundCloud with the help of AI.



Rev. Dr. Ed Rosser

He began by writing a poem after each of his sermons, summarizing its message. “Soul Food Spiritual Poems,” a book of 80 such poems, was published in a limited printing and distributed at no cost, but is no longer available.

These poems, and more to come, however, were crafted into songs. The first 20 songs have been expressed in a variety of musical “flavors” — some gospel, some Christian, some choral, some solos — all of which are AI-generated in the genre of his choice.

With a PhD in psychology, a law license and pastoral training, Rosser has amassed an abundance of life experiences. Those experiences as pastor, lawyer and Christian psychologist (focusing on conflict resolution) have provided inspiration and insights into the needs of people struggling with hardship, who are seeking to discover God’s plan for their lives, he said.

“It’s all about sharing God’s grace, mercy, peace and forgiveness. And if this venue reaches more Mid-South District listeners, I hope they will find these songs to be a blessing.”

To listen to these and other songs he continues to compose, visit soundcloud.com/pastor-ed-rosser.

MISSIONS



The **Lutheran Institute of Management and Entrepreneurship (LIME)** in Madagascar recognized students who completed their German-language studies in December. Rev. Dr. Joseph Randrianasolo, LIME president, is shown with the class. LIME is supported with Mid-South District mission funds.

Sustained by God, serving with love

Across Haiti, children wake each morning facing hunger, fear and uncertainty that no child should ever have to endure. For many, the food they receive at school is the only reliable meal of the day, and the Gospel they hear there is the clearest message of hope speaking into their circumstances.

In these classrooms, native Haitian Feeding Program Directors not only ensure children are fed, they also help teach Gospel-centered lessons through our evangelism program, reminding

each child that they are seen, loved and cared for by God.

Even in the midst of ongoing unrest in Haiti, Trinity HOPE continues its work, because God prepared this ministry long before today's challenges. What began more than 20 years ago as a practical way to manage growth has become a clear example of God's provision and foresight. As Scripture declares, "And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

Today, Trinity HOPE operates throughout Haiti in 16 autonomous districts, each led by native Haitian Feeding Program Directors who live and work

within their own communities. This structure allows food to be purchased locally, resources to be stewarded wisely, and children to be fed safely and consistently, even as much of the country faces instability. Through this model, more than \$3.5 million in economic impact is shared across communities each year.

We give thanks to God for His ongoing protection and guidance. The infrastructure God led Trinity HOPE to build allows us to remain present and continue feeding children, one bowl of beans and rice at a time. Thank you for your prayers and faithful support as we give God all the glory for the hope being shared across Haiti every single day.

To learn more about the ministry, visit trinityhope.org.



The circled numbers indicate how many schools Trinity HOPE serves in that particular district of Haiti.



Read **Book of Concord** online for free



Concordia Publishing House (CPH) recently announced the launch of an online version of the Book of Concord (BOC), available at no cost at bookofconcord.cph.org.

The new BOC website makes the historic documents of the *Book of Concord* — containing the foundational writings of the Lutheran confessors — available to all on a user-friendly digital platform. The text provided on the website is from *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, second edition, by CPH. A press release from CPH describes it as “a revised and updated version of the translation originally prepared by William H. T. Dau and G. Friedrich Bente for the *Concordia Triglotta* to ensure both theological fidelity and readability for today’s readers.”

Some key features of the new website include:

- ▶ The ability to easily copy and paste text with a single click. When pasted, the excerpt automatically includes a proper citation.
- ▶ A clear sidebar menu that allows users to quickly locate specific documents and sections, with simple toggles to move between previous and subsequent sections.
- ▶ The ability to search by word, phrase or article/paragraph number. Users can also filter results by individual confessional document for more precise study.
- ▶ Scripture passages, displayed in the English Standard Version (ESV), that appear directly on the page when the citation is hovered over, allowing readers to engage biblical references without leaving the text.

Send questions to publicity@cph.org.

Strengthening faith **IN THE HOME**

LCMS Family Ministry has released several new resources for family devotions and Bible study. They include resources for parents instructing children of all ages in the faith as well as resources for older children and young adults digging deeper into God’s Word.

For parents teaching children, the *Daily Devotions Guide for Families* provides an outline for family devotions, including suggested hymns, catechism memory work and Bible verses for each week of the year. The resource also includes a guide for reading the Bible throughout the year, with suggested books to focus on based on content and ease of understanding.

The Catechism in the Home offers a brief guide for parents seeking to incorporate Luther’s Small Catechism into family life, devotion and study. It outlines how Luther intended the catechism to be used in the home, how it can help parents fulfill their calling to instruct their children in the Word, and how it can strengthen people of all ages in their faith.

For older children and young adults, *Digging Deeper* provides a series of in-depth Bible studies intended for those nearing the age of confirmation study or above. Included are the “God’s Answers” study, which explores the Augsburg Confession and Christian worldview; “Important Words,” which defines words such as “faith,” “forgiveness,” “freedom” and “Gospel” in a Christian context; “Living Planted,” which covers vocation; and “Our Questions,” which discusses the Book of Job and suffering as a Christian.

Christian Character and Calling explores vocation and the Christian life through a series of Bible studies intended to be used by parents or youth leaders instructing teenagers. Each installment covers an area of Christian living and includes Scripture verses and discussion questions. Topics include “Meditate on God’s Word,” “Forgive as I Have Been Forgiven,” “Share the Faith” and “Encourage Other Believers.”

Parents and youth leaders can also use *Short Studies on Tough Topics*, a series of studies covering difficult questions for teenagers and young adults.

LCMS FAMILY MINISTRY is dedicated to equipping families to pass on the faith, nurture the well-being of the family and proclaim Christ. The resources mentioned, and others, are available at lcms.org/family.

SHARE YOUR NEWS WITH US!

Send us your stories and photos for the May issue by March 15.

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

Send email submissions to LW@mid-southlcms.com or mail via U.S. Postal Service to Judy Otto; 150 N. Maury St.; Holly Springs, MS 38635

CAMP TRINITY



Volunteers work hard at Camp Trinity's annual Spring Work Day in 2025. They are needed on March 21 to help prepare for the camp season ahead.

faith with children and families can go to nloma.org to fill out an application. Make sure you list Camp Trinity as your first camp choice. Questions? Send an email to the camp office: director@lutherancamp.org.

Trivia Night

The 17th annual Trivia Night is Saturday, April 25, at Christ Little Rock. The fundraiser for Camp Trinity is an evening filled with fun, food, fellowship and friendly competition.

Trivia Night includes multiple rounds of trivia 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, hot 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 attendees can bid on all kinds of great items.

The team registration form is found at lutherancamp.org/trivia-night.

Volunteers needed

Spring Work Day

Volunteers are welcome to camp on March 21 for an annual Saturday of service and fellowship during our spring cleaning, both indoors and outdoors. Workers may also help with minor building projects. Men with chainsaws are particularly needed to cut firewood.

This service is necessary to keep the camp functioning, and volunteers are also welcome any time of year. The spring work day is specifically set aside for getting the camp cleaned and spruced up for the busy seasons ahead. Lunch is provided.

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.

Help wanted

Camp Trinity is still in the process of hiring summer staff. Lutheran young adults, ages 18-25, looking for summer jobs in which they can share their



Many memories are made at summer camp. Registration is now open for 2026.