



/ MAY 2021

MID-SOUTH LUTHERAN



At the time of Christ's ascension, the disciples were about to see Jesus for the last time after His resurrection ... or was it?

Some denominations teach that Jesus ascended into heaven and was seated at the right hand of God, but won't be on earth until Judgment Day. Is that important?

Of course it is! Just imagine what would happen to this entire universe if God took His divine power and majesty away from us on this tiny blue dot in the cosmos! If God's presence was gone, the earth would spin out of control, the stars would plummet from the sky, the balance of the universe would be turned inside out and we'd all be dead. But why is this important, now?

There are 10 days between Christ's



Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola
District President

ascension and the day of Pentecost. Some Christians believe that once Christ ascended into heaven, the Holy Spirit could come and take over. They teach that the Holy Spirit couldn't come to earth as long as Jesus was here. For one thing, that kind of divides the Holy Trinity into three different gods. But don't we also read about the

Holy Spirit's presence in events surrounding the ministry of Jesus?

What's more troubling is that if the Holy Spirit didn't come to earth until the day of Pentecost ... why could we still be here? If God's almighty and gracious hand withdrew His presence from creation, wouldn't all hell break loose, literally? We get the idea there's something wrong in the incomplete understanding of Christ's incarnation and the indivisibility of the Triune God.

Rejoice

A huge crowd gathered on some dusty hillside outside of Bethany 2,100 years ago. They stood dumbfounded by what they just saw. Jesus began to rise into the air, with no fanfare, no brass bands, no ostentatious display of God's almighty powers; just Jesus rising and disappearing into a cloud. Other than the amazement and confusion, the most puzzling thing is their reaction: They rejoiced!

We're puzzled. St. Luke describes it:

And he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God. *Luke 24:50-53*

Where did He go? What was it that the disciples really witnessed up there? In the wake of such a phenomenon, it might be easy to stand around with the others who watched in awe. Maybe they just caught a glimpse of His feet disappearing into the cloud. But amazingly, instead of bewilderment, they rejoiced! But any other reaction would miss the point of this whole event.

It's the close of Christ's earthly ministry. He focused on getting people to understand Him and His ministry; His life, death and resurrection; and His prevailing powers given to His holy church. His ascension should open our eyes to see God's power and love. It's meant to show how the worst thing we could imagine — Jesus disappears — can be transformed into a witness for God's redemptive power and love.

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ASCENSION

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It's about Jesus

Throughout Luke's Gospel, the disciples had difficulties understanding how Jesus fit into God's overall plan of salvation. But Jesus opened their minds, "so they could understand the Scriptures." Jesus reminds His disciples of all the things He told them regarding the Law, the prophets and the Psalms. He put in place the final puzzle piece of the mystery of God's plan of salvation and opened their eyes. They saw Him as their risen Lord, who led them for three years, and the Son of God.

And (Jesus) said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem."

Luke 24:46-47

Each disciple was led to understand the depth of God's love to this world. They knew their role as Gospel witnesses would be a dangerous and a death-defying task. Still, knowing Jesus was about to leave them, why weren't they sad?

But we hear how He opened their minds, as they'd soon discover how God transmits His power through His elect in the Holy Christian Church by His Spirit.

The word "witness" translates into English as "martyr." When Jesus commissioned His disciples to be His witnesses, He directed them how they should start in Jerusalem. Remember, there were many Romans, Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes and keepers of the Law who didn't want anyone to say anything good about Jesus Christ. Being a witness about Him and what He did would put that witness's life in danger.

Jesus didn't instruct them to tell about Him or His Messiah-ship. He didn't send them to convert the whole world to believe in Him. He didn't even tell them to promise the resurrection on the Last Day. He simply said:

"Repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his

name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

Luke 24:47-49

That wasn't an easy message. Jesus offered unseen power in facing powerful soldiers and temple leaders, and mighty empires.

But here on earth, as the body of Christ, the Holy Christian Church is endowed with power to carry on Jesus' ministry. The disciples and all the elect become the eyes, ears, arms and legs for Jesus.

The power His disciples were to receive would become the divine power that defies Satan and his evil minions. Without God's power, their task would be an impossible, miserable failure. No one would have ever heard about Jesus, let alone the church, or the name "Christian." But through the Holy Spirit, the disciples remain joined to all of God and His divine powers.

What does this mean? It means that the indivisible Triune God is not divided by poor dogmatic theology. "God with us" means the entire essence of God is with us. No matter the obstacles or resistance, the first-century disciples and the disciples 2,100 years later are endowed with God's almighty power in all things He gave His church. They were given the Great Commission — to make disciples of all nations by baptizing and teaching them all Jesus had done for us.

Does witnessing still happen today?

Yes, if Jesus Christ and His love for all is real. It's only possible when the Holy Spirit's power dwells among us and through the Means of Grace Jesus gave to His church. It's only possible when God the Father's favor rests on the work of the church to remain in the truth and purity of His Word. It's never divided. It's never diminished.

We may not be eyewitnesses of what

happened 2,100 years ago, but we certainly can be witnesses of what He's done for us. When we embody the Good News of God's mercy, love and forgiveness in our lives, we can't help but share

that message with those who are torn to shreds by the ravages of sin in this world. Why shouldn't we be witnesses of this divine grace, mercy and power that gives eternal life?

Imagine yourself digging around in the kitchen one day and something falls out of the refrigerator on the floor. You start to clean it up and discover that it's put a brilliant shine on your floor. When you look at the cloth used to clean the spill, you notice that it's whiter and cleaner than ever before.

Then you look at your

hands. The combination of things you spilled healed the sores on your hand and you start to see wrinkles disappear from your face.

You bring the solution to a chemist and find out the substance on the floor can actually cure arthritis, gout, heart problems and even cancer. What would you do?

Some may say, "I'm not going to tell anyone else. It's my secret! In fact, I can make billions with this concoction." No. We'd hurry to tell every one of our friends. We'd bring it to the best chemists to make sure everyone could take advantage of our serendipitous spill.

So why is it so difficult for us to share with those outside the body of believers about the mystery of what God reveals to us about our eternal salvation? There's no limit on the love and forgiveness of God in Christ. God's Word reveals that every bit of righteousness for our sake has been fulfilled in Christ.

Don't just stand there! Why hide it? As Christ ascended into heaven, He knew God's grace would continue. Yes, it's a strange sight to see a man rising into the air. But standing around, staring at

“There's no limit on the love and forgiveness of God in Christ. God's Word reveals that every bit of righteousness for our sake has been fulfilled in Christ.”

Continued on next page

some feet dangling from a cloud and wondering what it all means doesn't accomplish a single thing.

We don't need to be afraid. We're promised power from God in His Spirit to be with us. We can be like those disciples who didn't cry and mourn because Jesus was gone. We can be like those disciples who left that place with joy and worshiped and praised God for allowing this great event to take place.

Their joy was overwhelming because they remembered Christ's promise that He was going to prepare a place for all believers. They remember He went away to intercede for us with the Father in heaven. Everything's OK!

Is Jesus gone?

As far as some are concerned, He's in heaven, but that's it. Scripture doesn't support that idea. Instead of confessing the real presence of Christ in the Means of Grace given to the Holy Christian Church, far too many believe in His real absence. What will we give as a witness to others: That Christ is with us, as is the Father and the Holy Spirit when we come in worship?; or that only Jesus Christ's real absence is what enabled the Holy Spirit to come on Pentecost?

Ponder that question, because that same Christ who suffered and died for our sins, who rose victorious on Easter and ascended into heaven 40 days later, is He who offers to reach from Heaven and feed us with His true body and give us drink from His true blood.

It's sad that not everyone can rest within the indivisible essence of the One living God who invites us to receive His entire presence in Jesus Christ. The divine presence of God — Father, Son and Holy Spirit — remains with His church!

No wonder ascension lessons conclude with:

He parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God. **Luke 24:51-53**

He invites us to His table to receive the forgiveness of our sins and the strengthening of our faith. Rejoice in His divine grace and give thanks to God.

LWML presents grant to Pregnancy Resource Center



Volunteers at the presentation are, from left, Kathy Wuethrick, Christ Our Savior, Loudon, Tenn.; Valerie Millsaps, PRC director; Beverly Miller, Grace, Knoxville; Sandie Harjala, Grace, Knoxville, and district LWML financial secretary; and Rev. Derek Roberts, pastor of Praise, Maryville, Tenn.

A mission grant check for \$6,000 was presented to Pregnancy Resource Center (PRC) in Blount County, Tenn., on March 16. PRC is a faith-based, safe and confidential place equipping women, men and families to deal with unplanned pregnancies. It helps provide women access to health care, education and pregnancy-loss support.

PRC provides medical care, education, mentorship and practical support regardless of age, race, religion, or ability to pay, and serves Maryville, Alcoa, Greenback, Seymour, Townsend, Madisonville, Lenoir City, Sevierville, Knoxville and many other surrounding counties.

Volunteers, both women and men, are needed and very welcome!

Congregation mission commitment receipts

as of
Feb. 28, 2021
(2 months)



Anticipated amount (16.7% of budget)	\$245,603
Actual receipts	\$219,451
Over (under) anticipated amount	(\$26,152)

Use of mission commitment receipts

Allocated to Synod for world missions	\$61,669
Allocated to Tanzania	\$4,167
Retained for district ministry/mission support (70% of receipts)	\$153,616
Total receipts	\$219,451

Mission commitment receipts comparison

Actual receipts as of Feb. 28, 2021	\$219,451
Actual receipts as of Feb. 28, 2020	\$239,870
Over (under) prior year receipts	(\$20,419)

Looking for a Bible study?

By Frances Bacic
Media and Marketing
LWML, Mid-South District

Did you know that LWML has resources for Bible studies, devotionals, retreats and more? It's all yours for the asking. All you need to do is go to lwml.org/bible-studies.

You may also check out Donna (Pyle) Snow's new book, *Chosen*, a Bible study on Esther. Through this study, we will see God working His plan around us. If, like me, you tuned into her Facebook Live Bible studies, you will want to order it soon.

This June is our national LWML convention in Lexington, Ky., offering fellowship with other Lutheran women. Registration is still open. For more information, go to lwml.org/2021-convention.

Be sure to watch for more information on the upcoming retreats to be held in September.



39th Biennial Convention

June 24-27, 2021
Lexington, Ky.



Don't miss out! The keynote speaker will be Linda Reiser, former LWML president (2003-07).

The Bible study leader will be Deaconess Heidi Goehmann, a licensed clinical social worker and independent mental health practitioner, and writer. You will be in for a treat if you have never heard her speak.

Last, but not least, Abbey Goehring and Jan Struck will be humorous interrupters throughout the convention. They will keep you entertained with their humor.

The convention is a wonderful opportunity for fellowship with other ladies from throughout the United States and many other countries.

Come Run the Race ... Look to Jesus!

Attend a district Fall Retreat!

Theme: "Our Hope & Future"

WEST

- Sept. 10-12
- Mount Eagle Retreat Center
935 Beal Road
Clinton, Ark.

MIDDLE

- Sept. 17-19
- Camp Garner Creek
700 Sam Hollow Road
Dickson, Tenn.

EAST

- Sept. 24-26
- Eagle Rock Retreat Center
7143 Flats Road
Tallahassee, Tenn.

For more information, including registration, visit midsouthlwml.org and select "District Retreats" from the "News and Events" tab.

Studying for a church work career?



Students work in Greek class at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, last July.

To support the efforts of individuals pursuing a full-time career in church work, the Mid-South District is pleased to once again offer student financial aid. To be considered, a student must be a member in good standing in a Mid-South District congregation and be enrolled in an LCMS seminary or university and studying for full-time service to the LCMS as a rostered church worker.

Rostered workers include pastors, teachers, deaconesses, directors of Christian education and other professions. To be considered for financial assistance, you must first inform the district office that you are or will be enrolled at an LCMS school. All related forms, including the financial aid application, are available at mid-southlcms.org/student-financial-aid. The application deadline is June 15.

The application may be sent to Julie Tyler at jtyler@mid-southlcms.com or Attn: Julie Tyler, Mid-South District LCMS, 1675 Wynne Road, Cordova, TN 38016.



Staff invited to reunion

IN PHOTO: The summer staff explored Stout's Point during training in 2017.

All former and current summer staff are invited to attend a staff alumni reunion to be held on Saturday, May 29, at Camp Trinity, the Lutheran Camp on Petit Jean Mountain.

Alumni can arrive anytime during the day. A cookout will be held in the late afternoon.

In addition to the meal, the reunion will include icebreakers, games, a roundtable discussion when new staff can ask questions of returning or former staff, and an update on camp development.

The reunion will end at a campfire with a message of God's love in Christ and lots of singing. Staffers from years past are invited to come prepared to teach old favorite songs.

Alumni are welcome to stay the night in the cabins. There is no charge for those attending the reunion. Former staffers are welcome to bring spouses and children. The kitchen staff will serve breakfast Sunday to all who stay overnight.

This is an opportunity for staff alumni

to rekindle the feelings of fun and excitement of summers past, as well as offer wisdom and practical advice to the young staff who will be serving campers at summer camp 2021. Training for the incoming staff begins the following day.

This year's camp theme, "Abide," reminds us that the Savior to whom staffers drew close in their summers of service on the mountain abides with them all their lives, bringing forgiveness, comfort, strength, peace and joy.

Alumni will be asked to tell how their experiences at camp made an impact on their lives.

Those who plan to attend are asked to email the camp office at director@lutherancamp.org.

It's not too late to register children for summer camp.

Camp Trinity is planning 10 sessions, including two weekend family camps. Learn more and register at lutherancamp.org.

Davenport is new Our Redeemer pastor

Rev. Dr. Richard Davenport was installed as pastor of Our Redeemer, Fort Smith, Ark., on Feb. 28. From left, (front row) Revs. Michael Eckert, Trinity, Hill City, Minn.; Dr. Roger Paavola, district president; Dr. Richard Davenport; Josh Willadsen, Bethel, Fort Smith, and circuit visitor; Timothy Henning, Trinity, Mena, Ark.; (back row) Josh Ralston, Zion, Augsburg, Ark.; Thomas Bartzsch, vacancy pastor, River Valley, Lamar, Ark.; John Merrill, First, Fort Smith; and Tysen Bibb, Trinity, Norbourne, Mo.



Beabout joins pastoral staff at SOTH, Crossville

Rev. John L. Beabout was installed as associate pastor of Shepherd of the Hills (SOTH), Crossville, Tenn., on Feb. 7. Pastor Beabout joined SOTH in 2020 and accepted the call to help shepherd the growing congregation. Pictured are, from left, Revs. Dr. Roger Paavola, district president; John Beabout; and Rev. Andrew Abraham, SOTH senior pastor.



Convention is July 1-3

The 21st Regular Convention of the LCMS Mid-South District will be held Thursday, July 1, to Saturday, July 3, 2021, at the Hilton Hotel, 939 Ridgelake Blvd., in Memphis.

Christ the King (CTK) Lutheran Church and School, Memphis, will host the convention's opening worship service and dinner. CTK is nearing the completion of a major expansion and the convention gathering will offer a wonderful opportunity to celebrate this blessing.

Stay updated on convention news at mid-southlcms.org/resources/convention.

Mid-South District 2021 Ordination Anniversaries

60 Years

Rev. Daniel Otto (emeritus)
Murfreesboro, Tenn.

55 Years

Rev. Luther Hasz
Christ, Paris, Tenn.

50 Years

Rev. Bruce Hanson
First, Blytheville, Ark.

Rev. Erwin Lueker Jr. (emeritus)
Elizabethton, Tenn.

45 Years

Rev. David Hudak (emeritus)
Bella Vista, Ark.

Rev. Roger Sterle (emeritus)
Bella Vista, Ark.

40 Years

Rev. Edward Fehskens (emeritus)
Bristol, Tenn.

Rev. John Lindner (emeritus)
Bella Vista, Ark.

Rev. Daniel McDougall
Our Savior, Cabot, Ark.

Rev. Lynn Spencer (emeritus)
Bentonville, Ark.

Rev. James Watson (emeritus)
Ootlewah, Tenn.

Rev. Carl Wenck
Grace, Murfreesboro, Tenn.

35 Years

Rev. Paul Becker
Concordia, Kingsport, Tenn.

Rev. Brian Bibler (emeritus)
Bella Vista, Ark.

Rev. Thomas Sayre (emeritus)
St. Johns, Fla.

30 Years

Rev. David Gadbow (emeritus)
Mountain Home, Ark.

Rev. Donald White
St. John's, Stuttgart, Ark.

25 Years

Rev. John Gierke
Peace, Conway, Ark.

Rev. Mark Hass (candidate)
Fort Smith, Ark.

Rev. Lane Reuter
Our Savior, Nashville, Tenn.

20 Years

Rev. Kevin Conger
Hope, Jacksonville, Ark.

Rev. Alebachew Teshome
Faith, Thompson's Station, Tenn.

15 Years

Rev. Kirk Abatelli
Faith, Oak Ridge, Tenn.

Rev. Curt Hoover
Faith, Thompson's Station, Tenn.

Rev. Derek Roberts
Praise, Maryville, Tenn.

10 Years

Rev. Thomas Bartzsch (emeritus)
Hot Springs Village, Ark.

Rev. Joshua Leigeber
Pilgrim, Jonesboro, Ark.

Rev. William Ondracka
Christus Victor, Knoxville, Tenn.

5 Years

Rev. Gregory Bauch
Ascension, Madison, Tenn.

Rev. Kirk Neugebauer
St. John's, Lapeer, Ark.



**WELL DONE, GOOD
AND FAITHFUL
SERVANTS!**

TEN more years!

M.Div. student Koh Yamamoto reads coursework during class on Jan. 15.

10 years – the longest term the accrediting agencies can approve.

“This 10-year reaffirmation of accreditation builds upon the strength of the 10-year reaffirmation achieved in 2010,” said CTSFW President Lawrence R. Rast Jr. “Both

commissions recognized CTSFW’s strong sense of mission and identity.”

“Both visitation teams commended the culture of assessment that informs integrated planning,” said Rev. Robert Roethemeyer, CTSFW vice-president

of Strategic Planning and Mission Execution and self-study chair. “These are great characteristics to celebrate in this 175th year of forming pastors, deaconesses and other servants of Jesus Christ for the congregations and service organizations of the LCMS and beyond.”

The accreditors noted that CTSFW’s “mission and [Lutheran] identity permeate, animate, and guide the school and are supported by a strong sense of community.” They also complimented the seminary for “exceptional financial stewardship and generosity of the seminary’s constituency (both local and global) that make it possible for students to graduate with manageable debt.”

The tremendous amount of work that goes into preparing an institutional self-study of this magnitude allows the seminary to celebrate and build upon its strengths and recognize areas for potential growth and improvement.

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, is also accredited by both agencies, and received its most recent 10-year renewal in 2014.

CTSFW receives highest level of accreditation

Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind. (CTSFW), has again received full accreditation from the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) and the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) for the next



Leigeber gets 60th birthday celebration

Rev. Paul Leigeber, pastor of Trinity, Dyersburg, and Faith, Union City, Tenn., was given a surprise 60th birthday party in February by celebrants from both congregations. At the luncheon, Pastor Leigeber is pictured in front of the table in the Faith fellowship hall, being served by, from left, Kimberly Elliott, Jennifer Vickers, Carolyn Meisner and Sandy Baker. Pastor Leigeber accepted a call to serve the dual parish in July 2020.



August issue deadline is June 15

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

Send email submissions to LW@mid-southlcms.com or send by postal mail to:

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