



MID-SOUTH LUTHERAN

The creeds that define **‘TRINITY’**

On Trinity Sunday, many of us will recite the Athanasian Creed. On other Sundays, we recite the Apostles’ Creed or the Nicene Creed. When we examine the three Christian creeds, how are we supposed to understand our Triune God? We don’t find this word in the Bible, but *Trinity* signifies whom we worship — Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three persons in one God.



Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola
District President

This Trinitarian doctrine sometimes leaves us scratching our heads about this mystery of our Christian faith. Some have tried to explain the Trinity metaphorically with an apple, a glass of water or the man sitting next to us in church. They say, “The Trinity is like water: It can be steam, liquid or ice.” Or, “The Trinity is like the man who is a son, a father and a husband.” Others suggest the Trinity is like an apple, comprised of the peeling, the fruit and the core.

Unfortunately, all these examples are wrong. They aren’t the same substance in one case, and the mode of their existence isn’t the same as the true nature of our Triune God taught in Holy Scripture.

Because mankind has a propensity to explain such mysteries, the ancient Christian creeds were adopted by the early church to combat those kinds of errors in biblical teachings. These are heresies, which come from the premise that if something cannot be explained by human reason, it must be impossible (such as Christ’s virgin birth, water turned into wine, Christ giving us His true body and blood to eat and drink).

First- and second-century heresies promulgated false teaching about Jesus. Human reason couldn’t explain how Jesus is both fully God and fully Man as Scripture says. Heretics were inclined to teach that Jesus only appeared to be human. Others taught Jesus wasn’t really God incarnate, or that He only became God after His birth or Baptism. Still others taught Jesus was kind of like two boards glued together.

The ancient world had no foundation to explain the doctrine that says “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” Human reason can’t grasp the concept that Jesus Christ is one person in two distinct natures, but the Bible is absolutely clear that Christ doesn’t merely come in the appearance of a man. He



is God in human flesh, born of a virgin mother, the focal point and foundation of our Christian faith. His incarnation to become God in flesh is essential to the doctrine of salvation by God’s grace alone, by which we are forgiven of our sins. Our salvation couldn’t have happened unless Jesus Christ is both true God and true Man. St. Athanasius said it this way: “What Christ did not assume, He could not redeem.” What he means is that because Christ did take on human flesh, He did bear our sin and the sins of all the world. God in Christ died a real death on the cross to

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pay for the punishment of our sins. If Jesus did not take on human flesh, He could not be the Savior of all mankind. If He wasn't fully God, He could not fulfill the perfect, sinless life as a sacrifice for our sin.

Our Trinitarian creeds are statements that form the basis of our faith. The early church fathers found it necessary to codify these doctrines in order to combat errors and teaching that had departed from Holy Scripture. The second century's Apostles Creed and the fourth century's Nicene Creed combated false teachings about Christ's divinity and later affirmed the existence of the Holy Spirit as the third person in the Godhead.

The Athanasian Creed states:

We worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, neither confusing the persons nor dividing the substance. For the Father is one person, the Son is another, and the Holy Spirit is another. But the Godhead of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, is one: the glory equal, the majesty coeternal."

Yet we still face this Trinitarian mystery. Countless generations have spent countless hours trying to explain the inexplicable. And in their feeble effort to find an acceptable explanation, they fall into false teaching that is refuted by Holy Scripture.

Let's think about it this way: How big is the universe? Where does it end? Where did it start? We simply don't know. It's beyond our human reason. But by the same token, despite factions of religion, pseudoscience or philosophy that try to explain or disprove God (or three persons in one God), God remains a greater mystery than the expansive mystery of the cosmos.

Genesis 1 begins: "In the beginning, God (the plural form of *Elohim* — God in the Hebrew) created the heavens and the earth." But there's more. In Genesis 1:27, God says: "Let us create mankind in our image." These verses, plus many

more throughout Scripture, prove a plurality of persons in the Godhead. The persons of the Trinity were present before creation!

The plurality and unity of our Triune God defies human reason. Why? The Hebrew language is rich in its meaning of the word "God." It's supposed to be understood in a plurality and unity of who our God is. Creation began by the true and living God in three persons. St. John's Gospel begins with "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" because already in John's time, the Trinitarian doctrine was questioned or attacked by various gnostic sects.

Ever since God empowered the church to bring Scripture's pure doctrine into the world, some people have chosen to use human logic to explain the existence of God, rather than letting His Word speak for itself. So we confess our Christian faith to a growing non-Christian public; those who don't understand or have not accepted the true and living God. Just as our Athanasian Creed says, without faith to embrace the truth of Jesus as our Savior — the One who died for the sins of all the world — those who reject Christ as true God and true Man are left in their sinful estate with no hope of escaping eternal condemnation.

We as Christians are enabled by God the Holy Spirit, and enlivened to live as God would have us live. We are justified by His grace and "sanctified," made holy by and in the power of God the Spirit. This Triune God we confess was seen at the Baptism of Jesus: God the Father spoke, God the Son was baptized, and God the Holy Spirit descended on Christ in the form of a dove. Each person of the Godhead was there, vividly evident. In a Gospel proclamation, Jesus Christ (God's Son) spoke to His disciples, saying He was ascending to the Father, but would send the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, with the gift of faith and guidance to the church. These are just a few examples of the irrefutable Trinitarian evidence!

Just as we can't explain the vastness of the cosmos, we still live in it. Because we cannot fully explain the divine

obscurity of God, we still believe what He says and teaches so that we may live daily and richly in His grace. Martin Luther said:

Let us, therefore, rid ourselves of such ideas and realize that God is incomprehensible in His essential existence before Creation. He is within, without, and above all created things, that is, He is still incomprehensible...God does not manifest Himself except through His works and the Word.

Trinitarian doctrine does not teach three Gods. It doesn't teach a God in three modes or three manifestations. Scripture says the Trinity does consist of one God, eternally existing in three persons — Father, Son and Holy Spirit — who are equal in essence, distinct in persons, indivisible, immutable, eternal, co-existing, unconfused, undivided, omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent and gracious.

Trinity Sunday celebrates the mystery of our God, because nothing could be more important for us to celebrate! We live with this blessed assurance of our Father's grace and our redemption because of what Jesus accomplished for us by His death on the cross. By simple water joined together with God's sacred Word, He joins us into His Holy Name — "of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Our eternal life is assured since God sees us as His beloved sons and daughters.

Therefore, we're enabled, empowered and encouraged to live life to the fullest as Jesus equips His Holy Christian church with the words, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20).

As Christ Jesus gave His life for us, He has also emboldened us to share His grace with those who don't know Him. May the love of God, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit continue to be reflected in our lives as a witness of our gracious Lord on Trinity Sunday, and every day thereafter He graciously grants us.

The Mid-South District Grow Grant program continues to support our congregations' new ministry start-ups.

Hope Lutheran Church, Batesville, Ark., received a grant for its Family Life Pantry (FLP), which began in 2026 to serve families in the Batesville area.

The pantry has served as many as 67 young and growing families per week, providing them with diapers, wipes, formula and more.

Pictured are, from left, Dawn Vaughan, FLP coordinator; Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, district president; Brian Luetschwager, congregation vice-president; and Rev. Gerald Heinecke, Hope pastor.



The LCMS Mid-South District celebrates its 60th year in 2026! That amounts to 60 years of gratefully serving, supporting and encouraging ministries, workers and members across Arkansas, Tennessee and southwestern Kentucky.

A 60th anniversary page has been added to the district website and will feature highlights of the Mid-South District's history, with a different facet explored each month. Take a moment to learn more at mid-southlcms.org/category/60-anniversary.



Watch for announcements about a special 60th anniversary Oktoberfest celebration to be held later in the year.

CHURCH-WORK STUDENTS:
Financial aid available

To support students pursuing full-time church work, the Mid-South District is pleased to offer financial aid. To be considered for financial assistance, a student must be a member in good standing in a Mid-South District congregation and be enrolled in a Synod seminary or university preparing for full-time service to the church.

Rostered workers are pastors, teachers, deaconesses, directors of Christian education, music directors, family ministry directors and other vocations.



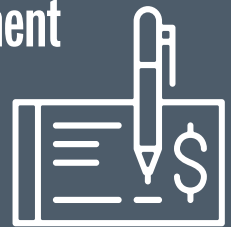
Students must first inform the district office that you are or will be a student at a Synod school.

All related forms, including the financial aid application, and instructions on submitting are available at mid-southlcms.org/student-financial-aid.

The application deadline is June 15.

Congregation mission commitment receipts

as of
Feb. 28, 2026
(2 months)



Anticipated amount (17% of budget)	\$275,020
Actual receipts	\$245,638
Over (under) anticipated amount	(\$29,382)
Use of mission commitment receipts	
Allocated to Synod for world missions	\$69,525
Allocated to Tanzania	\$4,167
Retained for district ministry/mission support (70% of receipts)	\$171,947
Total receipts	\$245,638

Mission commitment receipts comparison

Actual receipts as of Feb. 28, 2026	\$245,638
Actual receipts as of Feb. 28, 2025	\$228,991
Over (under) prior year receipts	\$16,647



DISTRICT DELEGATE CIRCUIT MEETINGS SET

Circuit meetings have been scheduled for all Mid-South District delegates to the 69th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, to be held July 18–23 in Phoenix.

At these meetings, Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, district president, will review the Synod convention process and workbook overtures, as well as answer questions regarding the role of a delegate.

Delegates may choose from the following meeting dates and locations:

- ▶ Tuesday, May 12; 7–9 p.m. at Grace, Knoxville (9076 Middlebrook Pike)
- ▶ Wednesday, May 20; 7–9 p.m. at district office, Cordova (1675 Wynne Road)
- ▶ Thursday, May 21, 7–9 p.m. at Grace, Little Rock (5124 Hillcrest Ave.)
- ▶ Wednesday, June 10, 7–9 p.m. at St. John’s, Russellville, Ark. (500 North Cumberland)
- ▶ Thursday, June 25, 7–9 p.m., at Ascension, Nashville (610 W. Old Hickory Blvd.)

Delegates, contact Missy Washburn at the district office (mwashburn.contact@mid-southlcms.com) regarding which session you will attend.



Camp Trinity

Register for SUMMER 2026

“I will come to you!” is the theme for summer camp 2026 at Camp Trinity, the Lutheran Camp on Petit Jean Mountain. It is taken from John 14:18 — (Jesus) said to them, “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.” At daily Bible studies, campers will learn more about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

We offer nine total sessions, including three family camp sessions, in which whole families can experience summer camp.

For more information or to register, visit lutherancamp.org. At the top of the page, there is a link for camp descriptions and another link for registration.

Questions? Contact Aaron Davis, camp director, at director@lutherancamp.org.



SCHEDULE

(All grades mentioned are for fall 2026)

June 7–12: Trailblazers (campers entering grades 5–8)

June 14–19: Adventure (grades 9 and above)

June 24–29: Explorers (grades 4–6)

June 28–July 1: Pathfinders (grades 2–4)

July 5–10: Voyagers (grades 7–9 and 10–12)

July 12–16: Wilderness (grades 5–8)

July 17–19: Family Camp I

July 20–22: Family Camp II

July 24–26: Family Camp III



WHERE PRAISES NEVER END

A Hymn Festival featuring
Rev. Dr. Stephen Starke

**MAY 17, 2026
3 p.m.**

Praise Lutheran Church
315 Southdowne Dr.
Maryville, TN 37801



BLESSINGS AT CHRIST THE KING, MEMPHIS

On Feb. 8, Christ the King (CTK), Memphis, welcomed 10 new members who had recently completed the Connect Class, a “next steps” class for prospective members. They were introduced to the congregation by Rev. Mark Goble, CTK senior pastor.

The worship service was also enhanced by the beautiful voices of the kindergarten through fourth-grade students of Christ the King Lutheran School as they kicked off “Celebrate CTK School Week.”

Meanwhile, the Tanzania Mission Team held a bountiful Valentine bake sale, with proceeds going to defray the costs of travel for their spring mission trip.

Additionally, the members were very pleased to host Paige Mielke, a Youth and Family Ministry candidate, with a meet-and-greet, following a full weekend of getting-to-know-you activities.

It was a Sunday exemplifying the many ministries of CTK, involving outreach, discipleship, mission, fellowship, service and worship.

— Submitted by Genie Swan, CTK Community Outreach Coordinator



Pictured are, clockwise from top, the new members; Paige Mielke with Comfort Dog Job; CTK students singing during service; and those who helped run the Valentine bake sale.



DISTRICT NEWS



Rev. Daniel L. Gray was installed as pastor of **Concordia Lutheran Church, Kingsport, Tenn.**, on Feb. 15. Pictured are, from left (front row) Revs. Derek Roberts, Chase Lefort, David Graves, Daniel Gray, Vincent Shemwell, John Freitag, Phil Bohlken, Michael Thureau; (back row) Gordon Smith, Paul Becker, Cullen Duke, Ed Fehskens and Mark Kophamer.



Rev. Dr. Harold Ristau was installed as senior pastor of **Holy Trinity, Bowling Green, Ky.**, on Feb. 15. Pictured are, from left (front) Revs. Dr. Roger Paavola; Dr. Harold Ristau; Sean Smith; (middle) Philip Young, Andy Toopes, Koh Yamamoto, Trae Fistler; (back) David Appold, James Martin, Joshua Reifsteck and Dr. Mark Press.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS:

Register for the Early Childhood Educators' Conference, to be held July 9-10 at Christ the King Lutheran Preschool, Memphis. You will have an opportunity to celebrate your ministry to children through sharing, supporting one another and discovering innovative methods to connect with those cherished young ones.

The theme for this year's event is "Speaking Wisdom, Teaching Kindness," based on Proverbs 31:26. Featuring our keynote speaker, Dr. Annette Anschutz (program director for the graduate early childhood programs at Concordia University, Nebraska), this conference will include a lineup of distinguished speakers and engaging breakout sessions.

Registration is \$50 per attendee, due by June 8. For more information and registration, visit midsouthdistrictlcms.regfox.com/2026-ecce-conference.

A Mission Grant check for \$5,000 was presented to Lutheran Braille Workers (LBW) on March 6. Pictured at the LBW production center in Hot Springs, Ark., are, from left, Nadine Pattison braille coordinator; Cynthia Keh, director of Ministry Production; Nate Paredes, vice-president of operations and finance; Emilee Righter, large print coordinator; and Chuck Wells, ministry center leader.

To learn more about LWML district Mission Grants, visit [t](#).



“Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!” Psalm 46:10

When I see the phrase “be still,” my thoughts tend to lean toward a child being chastised by a parent, perhaps in church as the child has the wiggles; or a toddler running in circles. But that’s not the stillness described in Psalm 46. There we read about God as our refuge and strength. We read about trust and God’s presence. And then, in verse 10, it is God who speaks to us, who commands us to “be still.” God demands to be exalted, and rightly so.

One benefit of researching Scripture is learning connections. In this case, I learned of the connection between Psalm 46 and Martin Luther’s great hymn, “A Mighty Fortress is Our God.” In particular, Psalm 46:7: “The LORD of hosts is with

us; the God of Jacob is our fortress,” which portrays God as our fortress.

For me, the lesson learned from this psalm is that I definitely need to “be still.” I need to sit down, be quiet and listen to what God needs me to hear from Him. There is far too much busyness and not enough quietness. I must take the time to be still in praise, confession, thanksgiving and supplication (also a handy acronym — ACTS).

I pray that you too will find the time to “be still” with your Lord and Savior.

**God’s peace,
Candy Habich**
Chairman, LWML Mid-South District Media and Marketing Committee



We are ready to “look to the hills” during our LWML Mid-South District Convention (June 12–14 at Holiday Inn, Springdale, Ark.). Please pray for safe travel for participants and that the gathering will be blessed beyond measure.

The event opens with worship on Friday evening at Salem Lutheran Church, Springdale.

Read all about it at midsouthlwml.org/district-convention.

STAY CONNECTED

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Holy Trinity celebrates family Baptism

By During the Feb. 4 chapel service at Holy Trinity Lutheran School (HTLS), Bowling Green, Ky., Rev. Andy Toopes baptized the Graham family siblings: Carson (11), Addalynn (3) and Braxton (1). Carson, a student at HTLS since preschool, had expressed his desire to be baptized and for Pastor Toopes to officiate. Rev. Toopes, who retired as Holy Trinity senior pastor in 2023, still blesses the Holy Trinity community through his ongoing ministry and was pleased to honor this request.

The entire school participated in the celebration. Sixth graders operated audio and visual equipment, while the second-grade class performed a moving pantomime behind a lighted scrim, beautifully illustrating the message of God's redeeming love.

Proud parents Sarah and Andrew Graham, along with the children's grandmother, witnessed this family faith milestone. "It takes a village to raise a child," said Sarah, "and Holy Trinity has been my village since my 11-year-old son was two. They have been our consistent foundation, teaching us about Jesus and showing His love in every way. I am thankful and blessed for our family to be a part of such an amazing school."

— Submitted by Desiree Trudy, Admissions Counselor, Holy Trinity Lutheran School

Trinity HOPE

The table grows

Through God's grace and the generosity of faithful supporters, Trinity HOPE is once again expanding our programs to new heights. Beginning in March and continuing over the next few months, we will add feeding programs in about 65 more Christian schools in four more districts. This expansion means that about 14,000 additional children will be blessed with a nutritious meal each school day.

We are humbled and grateful for where God has led us and for the trust our loyal donors have placed in this ministry. As we serve God together, Trinity HOPE will soon feed more than 80,000 children and teachers each school day. Their bellies will be filled with beans and rice, and their hearts will be filled with the Good News of Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God!

To support this growth, we will expand our Haitian staff by interviewing and hiring nine new program directors, one additional Haitian supervisor, and a national purchasing agent. These new team members, alongside our current staff, will help ensure strong accountability and careful oversight of the feeding programs throughout the country. Stay tuned to hear more about this exciting growth.

Learn more at trinityhope.org.



SHARE YOUR NEWS WITH US!

Send us your stories and photos for the August issue by June 7. The issue will also highlight our district schools.

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