



/ NOVEMBER 2021

MID-SOUTH LUTHERAN



Getty Images

Give thanks in **ALL** circumstances

A friend of mine who lives in South Dakota told a story about two men who were hunting on the vast prairie land around Buffalo, S.D. They were walking through a field when they spotted a gigantic Charolais bull pawing at the ground, kicking up huge clumps of sod. In a second, they realized they were in his “territory” and had better get out of there.

The two men made a beeline for the nearest fence, about a quarter-mile away. The raging bull wanted nothing of their retreat and followed the men in hot pursuit. Despite its massive size, the bull was gaining on them, and they soon realized at least one of them wouldn’t make it to safety.

Terrified, the one shouted to the other, “Start praying, John. We’re in for it!” John answered, “I can’t. I don’t know what we should pray for.”

“For heaven’s sake, John,” replied his partner, nearly out of breath, “You and your daddy are preachers! You must know some sort of

prayer! So pray John, pray!” “All right,” huffed John. “How about, ‘We thank You, O Lord, for what we are about to receive from Your abundant grace.’”

Obviously, it’s a silly story and not the kind of prayer we’d pray if we were in danger. But it illustrates the point: Some of our prayers may be offered without thinking of prayer as a conversation with God.

We celebrate Thanksgiving every November. We pray to give thanks to God for the abundance of His blessings. Hopefully, those prayers offered around the dining room table are not only to give thanks, but to give *thanks*-giving for everything God brings us in His overflowing providence.

Unfortunately, some of those around us don’t really feel thankful. They may feel worried. They may feel like a herd of bulls are catching up with them and there is no hope. They may feel anxious, concerned, lonely, distressed, bored or just blue.

Sitting down to write a Thanksgiving greeting brings up fond memories of times with friends and family. But putting down thoughts that reach those outside of our circle of friends and relatives becomes sort of generic. It’s almost like another person doesn’t have to read the whole thing because it’s the same kind of stuffing over and over, with something personal added at the beginning or end.

Most Thanksgiving greetings say about the same thing: “Give thanks to God!” “Praying you have a pleasant time with your family.” “Have a great Thanks-



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

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THANKSGIVING

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giving!” Put an exclamation point at the end so the readers know you really mean it!

As I write my thoughts this year, however, I’m reminded of pastoral brothers in Christ who are suffering with diseases. I’m reminded of families that will observe Thanksgiving this year without a loved one who died of COVID, a brother who has a son hanging on to life, or another who tragically left loved ones behind way too early in life.

We’re told the economy is getting better. But there’s still unrest in our city streets. Why are there so many places that can’t remain fully open because there aren’t enough workers? Why are there still so many who are unemployed or underemployed? What about the missionaries, soldiers, healthcare workers and civilians who are still being held captive in Afghanistan?

It is sometimes hard to give thanks.

So what is your Thanksgiving like? Is it joy and gratitude, or anxiety and worry? Sometimes it is hard to find the sunny side of things and not worry about our lives. St. Paul’s letter to the Philippians says something very similar:

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. **Phil. 4:4**

St. Paul always brought *thanks*-giving to God. To the Thessalonians, he wrote:

Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. **1 Thess. 5:18**

He urges us to constantly lift up all sorts of prayers — including those of thanksgiving for everyone (1 Tim. 2:1)

and in every circumstance. We might say that it was easy for Jesus and St. Paul. They were spiritual giants and had it easy, so giving thanks was natural for them.

But oftentimes we read about how St. Paul’s life was difficult. In 2 Cor. 11:23-28, he wrote:

Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned.

Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.

St. Paul wasn’t bragging or looking for sympathy. He was encouraging the first-century Christians to continue to bear up under the oppression, persecution and dangers of being a Christian. “Give thanks in all circumstances,” he wrote, despite a litany of things that would have made a lesser person give up long ago. St. Paul knew life and salvation are given

in abundance by God to all those joined together in His Son, Jesus Christ.

He encourages us to be thankful when things are going great. But he also meant we should be thankful when things are not going exactly our way.



Paul knew he could always give thanks to God, even in the most difficult of situations, because he knew his pilgrimage and ours will bring us to the glorious presence of Jesus Christ.”

Paul knew he could always give thanks to God, even in the most difficult of situations, because he knew his pilgrimage and ours will bring us to the glorious presence of Jesus Christ.

Being thankful in all situations is sometimes simply a matter of having a positive attitude because we can reflect on everything God’s provision offers us. It is more than simply looking on the bright side. It is His promise to be beside us in all times. It is the real promise of life and salvation in Christ forever.

One of my favorite Thanksgiving hymns was written by a German pastor, Martin Rinckart. It was written in the 1600s amid the carnage of the Thirty Years’ War. People were dying by the hundreds. Pastor Rinckart buried 500 parishioners in one year. At one point an average of 15 people a day were dying. In the depth of that darkness, with the cries of fear outside his window, Pastor Rinckart wrote this song as table grace for his children:

Now thank we all our God
With heart and hands and voices;
Who wondrous things hath done,
In whom His world rejoices;
Who from our mother’s arms
Hath blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love
And still is ours today. **LSB 895**

Thankfulness to God is not simply a self-centered appreciation for the things God has done for us and gives to us. Thankfulness to God is a God-centered appreciation for His faithfulness in our lives, for giving us all that we need for this life, and for everything we will ever need in life everlasting through His grace in Christ Jesus, our Lord and Savior. With *thanks*-giving, give praise and thanks for our gracious God.



FOCUS on EVANGELISM

Congrats on your new job!

Shared by the Board of Evangelism of First, Little Rock



Great to hear the good news that you have a new position. I know you have been searching for some time, so I am excited for you and the possibilities that lie ahead.

“What position are you talking about?” you ask.

It is your new position as an ambassador for Christ, representing the Kingdom of God and the sovereign, living God of the universe to the kingdom of man — the people, nation and culture in which you live.

I know, you thought becoming a Christian just meant you would go to

church on Sunday and perhaps sing in the choir. But it is so much more.

When you became a Christian, you became a new creation. You were born again — spiritually (2 Cor. 5:17). Isn’t that incredible? Of course, it takes time to fully realize this through the process of sanctification, like silver being refined in fire.

But when you became a Christian, you were appointed to this important position: ambassador of Christ (2 Cor. 5:20). You are called to serve not just the king, but the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Many see the presidency of the United States as the ultimate position of power. But it pales in comparison to the sovereign, living God of the entire universe. What an honor this is for you! There is no position on earth that is higher than serving as personal ambassador for the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

God is going to use you to represent Him in all kinds of situations, to all kinds of people. Just as the Holy Spirit speaks what is given to Him from Christ, you are to speak what is given to you from the Holy Spirit. But it is critical for you to always repent of your sins, forgive others, surrender all to the Lord and seek Him with all your heart.

When you do, He will guide you — day by day and moment by moment.

Have a great day, ambassador!

Congregation mission commitment receipts

as of Aug. 31, 2021 (8 months)

Anticipated amount (67% of budget)	\$982,410
Actual receipts	\$992,899
Over (under) anticipated amount	\$10,489

Use of mission commitment receipts

Allocated to Synod for world missions	\$281,203
Allocated to Tanzania	\$16,667
Retained for district ministry/mission support (70% of receipts)	\$695,029
Total receipts	\$992,899

Mission commitment receipts comparison

Actual receipts as of Aug. 31, 2021	\$992,899
Actual receipts as of Aug. 31, 2020	\$987,543
Over (under) prior year receipts	\$5,356

Strengthen evangelism with LHM

Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM) provides a number of ministry-building and personal evangelism resources on its website. A suite of such resources is provided in the *Outreach Essentials* collection, including the module titled “Love Thy Neighbor.” Learn more at lhm.org/learn/outreach-essentials.

For those who have completed this module, LHM recommends visiting hopefulneighborhood.org/fieldguide to review details on the free follow-up videos included in *The Hopeful Neighborhood Field Guide*.



Going (back) to church

By Rev. Ron Bacic
Pastor, First, Little Rock

For the next three months, I will share 10 reasons for going to church (or going back to church if you have been away for a while).

01 To have fellowship with the crucified and risen Christ.

If you knew that Jesus Himself was going to be at a particular place on a regular basis, would you not be motivated to go? The Christian congregation is that place. Christians gather publicly to be with their risen Savior. When they worship, the Lord Himself is present!

“For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.”

Matt. 18:20

Further, Scripture calls Christians assembled together “the body of Christ.” In other words, the answer to the question, “Where can I find Jesus today?” is “Where Christians gather,” for they are His body.

02 To be forgiven of your sins.

Jesus is there primarily to give forgiveness to all who repent and believe. Proclaiming the full forgiveness that Jesus won for us

on the cross is the main point of all Christian worship services. The amazing thing about our God is that He comes among His people not primarily to receive but to give the precious forgiveness of sins through the preaching of the Gospel, Holy Absolution and the Lord’s Supper.

03 To hear the voice of God.

Never before have people been confronted with so many voices or choices, which is all the more a vital reason to go to church regularly. For there the voice of God Himself speaks to us through sermons, Scripture, liturgy and hymnody. God speaks to His people, guiding them to truth, reminding them of what is right and warning them about what is wrong.

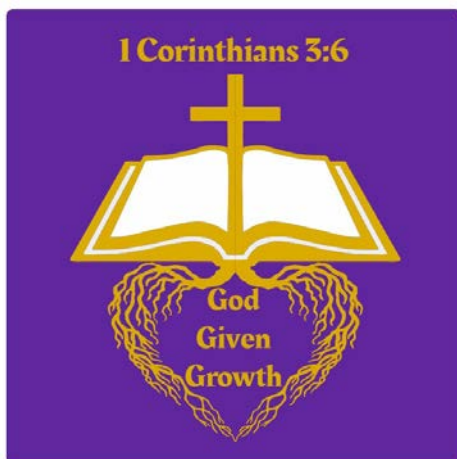
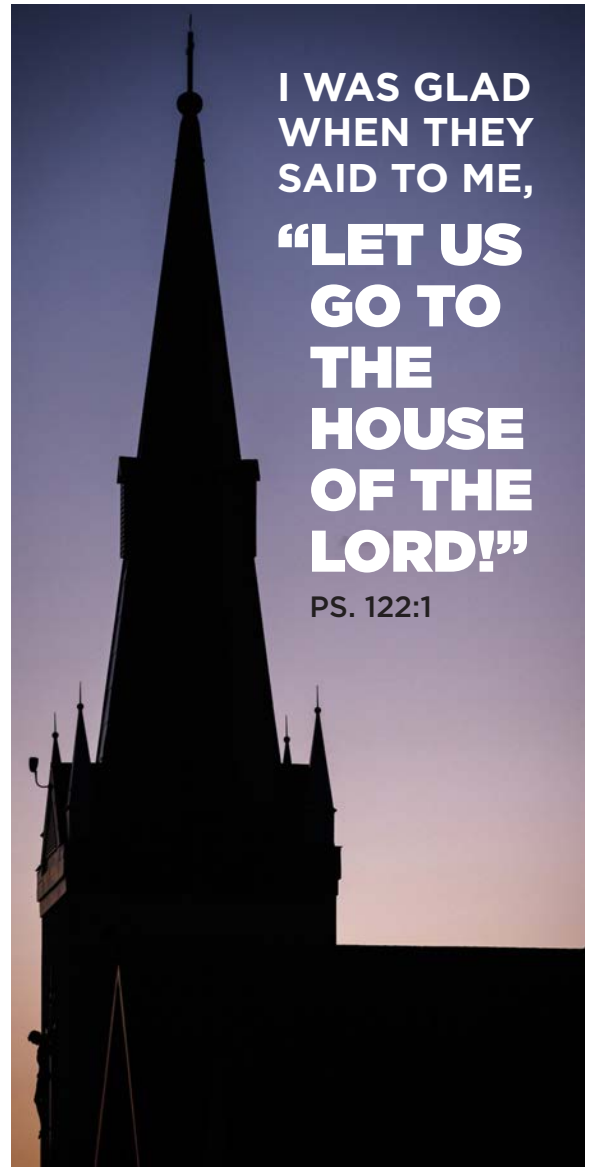
May these words encourage you to go to church. If you have been away for a while, come back! There is always a place for you in the Lord’s house.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, strengthen me to confess You without wavering. When I fall, grant me a repentant heart. Amen.

This article is adapted from a devotional by Rev. Michael Mueller, pastor emeritus.

I WAS GLAD
WHEN THEY
SAID TO ME,
“LET US
GO TO
THE
HOUSE
OF THE
LORD!”

PS. 122:1



Seltz is LWML convention speaker

Are you ready for some excitement? Plan to attend the LWML Mid-South District Convention June 10-12 in Clarksville, Tenn.

What you need to know:

- ▶ The location is the TownePlace Suites by Marriott in Clarksville, which is conveniently located at exit 4 off Interstate 24. In addition to the TownePlace Suites, sleeping rooms will be available at the Fairfield Inn & Suites and Courtyard by Marriott, which are both within walking distance.
- ▶ The keynote speaker will be Rev. Dr. Gregory Seltz, Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty executive director and former “The Lutheran Hour” speaker.
- ▶ The song leader and banquet entertainer will be Wendysue Fluegge, who was the song leader at the 2017 national convention in Albuquerque.

Our Shepherd welcomes Pastor King

Rev. Jeffrey W. King was installed as pastor of Our Shepherd, Searcy, Ark., on Aug. 8. Clergy attending the ceremony were, from left, Revs. Dr. Wes Toncre, St. John's, Russellville, Ark.; Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, district president; Jeffrey W. King; Rev. Kevin Conger, Hope, Jacksonville, Ark., and district second vice-president; Rev. Andrew Lehman, Pilgrim, Jonesboro, Ark.; and Rev. David Vandercook, Shepherd of Peace, Maumelle, Ark., and Trinity, Little Rock.

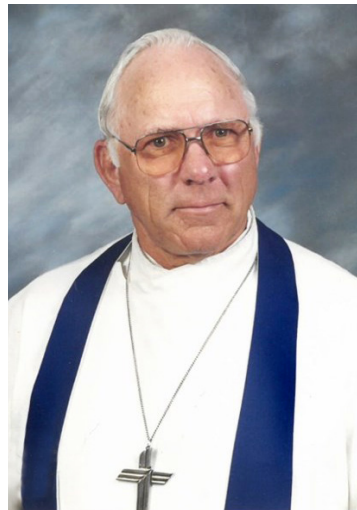


In Memoriam

Rev. Henry Behling 1932-2021

We offer prayers of peace and comfort for the family and friends of Rev. Henry William Behling, who was called to glory on Sept. 4.

A husband, father and faithful servant of the Lord, Pastor Behling led congregations in Langford and Sidney, British Columbia, Candada, as well as Lakefield and Okabena, Minn., before joining the Mid-South District to serve in Hot Springs Village, Ark. His first task was to plan and oversee the building of Faith Lutheran Church, where



he served for seven years. After retirement, Pastor Behling continued the work in the Kingdom of our Lord by serving vacancies in Arkansas.

Thanks be to God for Pastor Behling and his years of service in faith.



Pastor Johnson installed in Hot Springs

Rev. Anthony Johnson was ordained and installed as associate pastor of First Lutheran Church, Hot Springs, Ark., on Aug. 22. Clergy on hand to celebrate were, from left (front row), Revs. Dr. Roger Paavola, district president; Anthony Johnson; Jon Beyer, First, Hot Springs, Ark.; back row, Henry Thompson, St. Luke, Malvern, Ark.; Morgan Hamilton, Christ, Little Rock; and John Mathis, Christ, Little Rock. Not pictured are Revs. Kevin Conger, Hope, Jacksonville, Ark., and district second vice-president; Gregg Bearss, LakePointe, Hot Springs, Ark.; and Dan McDougal, emeritus.



"WELL DONE, THOU GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT. YOU HAVE BEEN FAITHFUL OVER A LITTLE; I WILL SET YOU OVER MUCH. ENTER INTO THE JOY OF YOUR MASTER."
Matt. 25:21

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 Gadbaw (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, Lape, Ark.



WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANTS!

WANTED: Summer staff

College students looking for summer employment combined with ministry opportunities in 2022 are encouraged to consider working at a Lutheran camp. Outdoors ministry is a fun and fulfilling way to serve God by serving His children. Positions include cabin counselors, kitchen staff and program staff.

Camp Trinity, the Lutheran Camp on Petit Jean Mountain, is the camp serving the Mid-South District. Located atop a mountain rising from the Arkansas River Valley, the camp borders Petit Jean State Park, renowned for its natural beauty, which includes cliffs, canyons, caves, forests and waterfalls.

Camp activities include hiking, canoeing and kayaking, swimming, challenge course, archery and axe throwing, crafts, softball and kickball, sand volleyball and gaga ball.



Every day begins with First Word, a time of Bible reading, prayer, meditation and a brief message. Bible study follows breakfast every morning, and every day ends with an evening campfire with lots of singing and a message about God's love in Christ.

Camp Trinity is one of two dozen LCMS camps that's looking for Lutheran young adults who enjoy working with children and youth. Interested candidates can fill out a service profile at the National Lutheran Outdoors Ministry Association website: nloma.org.



Cadets volunteer in Waverly

Following the historic and disastrous August flooding that devastated the community of Waverly, Tenn., cleanup help arrived from volunteers from Nashville-area universities. The volunteers were led by Benjamin Nissing, a Vanderbilt University senior and Army ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps) cadet from Trinity, Bridgeton, Mo., who attends Redeemer, Nashville, during the school year.

The crew of 18 ROTC students came from Trevecca Nazarene, Lipscomb, Belmont, Tennessee State and Vanderbilt universities to lend their hearts and muscles to the massive flood cleanup effort.



Thank you, Mid-South District!

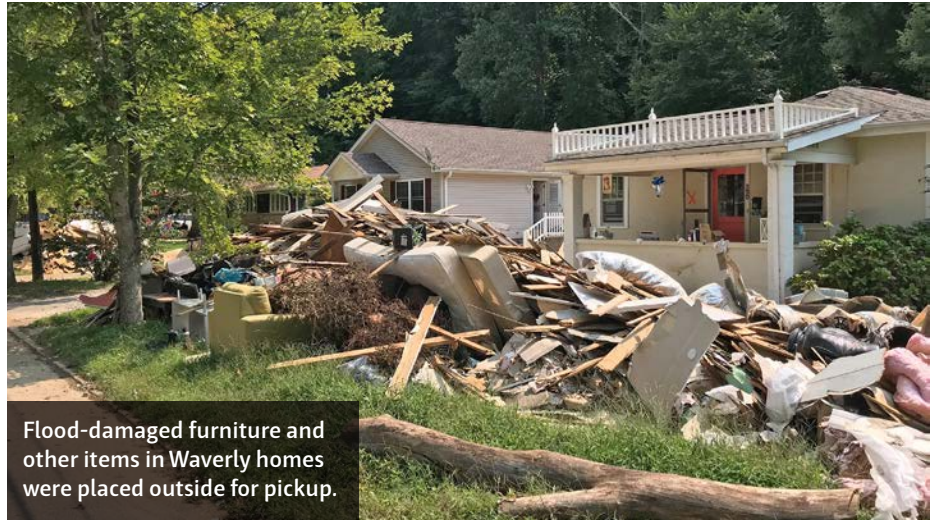
The district response to the need in Waverly, Tenn., following the catastrophic August flooding has been tremendous. Funds provided from generous donors touched by the devastation were gratefully received.

On Sept. 10, Revs. Philip Young (Redeemer, Nashville) and Ken Shaw (Trinity, Gallatin) delivered \$23,000 of aid to Waverly organizations and the families they serve.

Revs. Young and Shaw met with the elders and volunteers at Waverly Church of Christ. They also met with flood victims at First Baptist Church of Waverly and the Humphreys County Sheriff's Department. Bank cards in the amount of \$500 were distributed.

Additional funds have come into the district and will be sent directly to the partner organizations in Waverly.

"Well done" to all who gave so generously in the name of Christ our Savior.



Flood-damaged furniture and other items in Waverly homes were placed outside for pickup.



Humphreys County Sheriff Chris Davis (left) is pictured with, from left, two aid recipients and Revs. Ken Shaw and Philip Young.



Waverly Church of Christ elders David Nowlin (second from left) and George Palmer (right) received district donations that were delivered by Revs. Young and Shaw.



Share your news with us!

Send us your stories and photos for the first issue of a bright new year. Submissions for the January 2022 issue are needed by Nov. 15.

Send email submissions to LW@mid-southlcms.com or send by postal mail to: Judy Otto; 150 N. Maury St.; Holly Springs, MS 38635.



First Baptist Church of Waverly provided aid to families