



/ NOVEMBER 2025

MID-SOUTH LUTHERAN



LCMS/Erik M. Lunsford



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

In November, we celebrate Thanksgiving. It's turkey, stuffing, football and, just maybe, an obligatory visit to church.

Don't we have something greater to celebrate as Christians? In Matthew 16:13-15, the apostle records:

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

Recent events in our American landscape give us pause to reflect on what the government's next responses may be. Is there something going on that creates confusion and disrupts American unity, or do we have something that responds to today's crisis? The exit polls from the last presidential election indicated that a greater number of people voted *against* a candidate than those who were comfortable voting *for* a candidate! The ballot box is how a republic is supposed to operate, not by violently eliminating those who oppose our individual political and religious thoughts.

Some years ago I read *The Prince of India*, written by Lew Wallace, a former governor of New Mexico and Civil War general who also wrote *Ben-Hur*. *The Prince of India* was set in late-Christian

Constantinople. Its content was very critical of the Christian church as an institution.

The characters in the book had a plan to reform Christianity. But each plan included the abolition of the organized church. The church of those days had its venalities, but it was no less an evil than those who sought to abolish it. Throughout the church's history, emperors and politicians have tried to control the church and make it a creature of the state. Many of the patriarchs of the early church had been known to be greedy and self-absorbed. Clergy were either legalistic or, in many cases, bent on maintaining their worldly privileges and evil passions.

Their abuses from within the church, however, have never invalidated Christ's original design that the church should be His bodily presence in the world. No human figure can replace the pristine perfection and divine love Christ has for His bride, the church. Just as there were horrible exceptions to Christ's original design, so too were there glaring exceptions to her by display of occasional moral weaknesses.

One of my favorite early church fathers is St. John of Chrysostom, the patriarch of Constantinople. He was one of those exceptions who did his best to maintain the integrity of the pastoral office. In 398 AD, he was made bishop of Constantinople, much against his will. He refused to curry favor with the politically well-connected church leadership. Instead of yielding to the demands of church insiders, St. John of Chrysostom spent his time helping the poor people of Constantinople.

See **CHURCH**, Page 2

CHURCH

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

What's more, the church in Constantinople was founded by Constantine, the Roman emperor who proclaimed all of his kingdom to be Christianized. It's a nice idea, but it confuses the body of the Christian church with secular governments. The two-headed snake that brought the church and state together as one has never worked, and it's totally contrary to the words of Christ Jesus, who told Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). That was the two-headed snake St. John encountered as the bishop of Constantinople.

St. John ran especially afoul of Empress Aelia Eudoxia. She presumed that John's public preaching against loose morals and ostentatious clothing was directed at her. He never backed down from preaching Law and Gospel sermons. Finally, St. John's enemies in the Greek church, and among Constantinople's elitists, had him deposed in 403 A.D. However, he was recalled from exile when the Constantinople church started falling apart. The church was restored, but John's Law and Gospel preaching prompted the empress to send him to his second exile in 407. He died shortly afterward.

For John, the church still had to fulfill its mission of calling men and women to repentance, no matter who that preaching might have offended. He was convinced that the moral evils that plagued the church were attributed to the leader's ignorance of Holy Scripture. If Scripture is a lamp illuminating our way, those who do *not* know Scripture walk in total moral and spiritual darkness.

John trusted nothing but God's Word and placed himself in His gracious care. He preached the whole Word of God, enlightening those who listened. Those who refused to listen were left in the dark. St John's view is still correct today. He wrote, "Countless evils have arisen from ignorance of the Scriptures. For just as men deprived of daylight of this world do not walk rightly, so those who do not look to the gleaming light of the Holy Scriptures must be walking in the worst of darknesses."

The church's problem is not its "corporate" nature. It is still the body of Christ (*corpus Christi*). There is no Christ apart from the church and no church apart from Christ. Because He promises that the "gates of hell shall not prevail against it," Christ is the church's only Lord and protector. The church must remain the mouth of Christ, preaching His Word, by which the Holy Spirit forms us into His Body. For this reason, we are moved to give thanks for God's continuous provision, grace, mercy and peace.

May God preserve us to live as the people of His church and provide for our nation's leaders who preserve both the kingdom of the Left, or worldly governments, and the gracious kingdom of the Right, the eternal Kingdom of Christ.

Gratitude and Thanksgiving

Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. **1 THESS. 5:18**

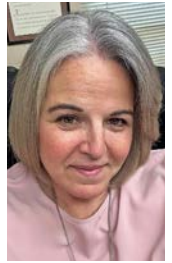
As the days grow shorter and the air turns crisp, the season of fall gently shifts our attention toward reflection and thanksgiving. Surrounded by signs of harvest and God's provision, we are reminded to pause and give thanks, not only for material blessings, but also for the many ways God's grace is at work among us.

Paul's command in 1 Thessalonians reveals the essence of gratitude and thanksgiving in the Christian life. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, gratitude is "the state of being thankful," a recognition of God's goodness and blessings. Thankfulness, then, is our active response — the words and actions that flow from a grateful heart.

Paul's instruction to "give thanks in all circumstances" teaches us that this spirit is not tied to abundance or ease, but to our trust in God's character and His constant care. Recognizing that gratitude is "God's will for you in Christ Jesus," we see it as both a privilege and a responsibility for His children.

Applied to Lutheran schools and early childhood centers, this understanding of gratitude calls us to praise God for ministries in which faith and learning grow together. We give thanks for schools that shape students in both knowledge and identity as God's children; for teachers who guide with grace and excellence; and for centers that provide safe, Christ-centered environments where even the youngest experience His love.

In these places, gratitude is more than a feeling — it is a witness to God's faithfulness in raising up generations who know and love their Savior, Jesus Christ.



Michelle Fischer
Executive Director,
Education, Youth
and Family Ministry

**Christ the King Lutheran
School, Memphis**



Christ Little Rock School





First Lutheran School, Fort Smith, Ark., received a district Grow Grant to fuel the expansion of its Panther Preschool program. First's leaders give thanks for this blessing and gift! Pictured are, from left (up front) Kim Ballard, interim principal; Michelle Gerlach, early-childhood director; Rob Schmidt, Board of Elders chair; Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, district president; Laurie Davenport, Board of Christian Education (BCE) member; (back) Mike Ellig, BCE chair; Rev. John Merrill, First Lutheran Church pastor; Jim Parker, property and maintenance; Randy Coleman, property and maintenance; Sally Coleman, BCE member; Mark Hass, congregation president; and Sue Wendte, BCE member.

District offering workshops for treasurers

Congregational treasurers are urged to attend one of the Mid-South District's free Treasurers' Workshops, to be held in January. Details and online registration are available at mid-southlcms.org/2026-treasurers-workshop.

Workshop dates and locations are:

- ▶ Jan. 3, Grace Lutheran Church (9076 Middlebrook Pike), Knoxville
- ▶ Jan. 10, Our Savior Lutheran Church (5110 Franklin Pike), Nashville
- ▶ Jan. 17, Hope Lutheran Church (1904 McArthur Blvd.), Jacksonville, Ark.
- ▶ Jan. 24, Salem Lutheran Ministries (1800 W. Emma Ave.), Springdale, Ark.
- ▶ Jan. 31, Mid-South District office (1675 Wynne Road), Cordova, Tenn.

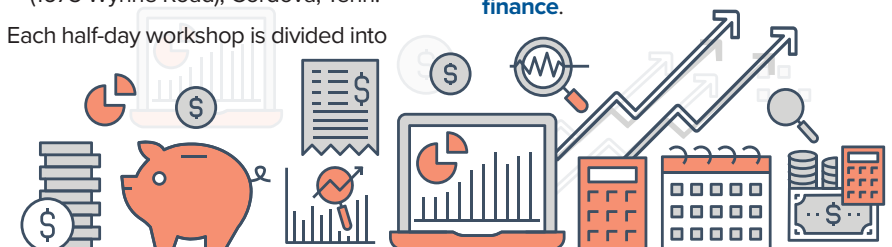
Each half-day workshop is divided into

two sessions. From 9 to 11 a.m., Charlie Rhodes will present on Volume 1 of the Synod *Treasurer's Manual*. Rhodes retired as director of Accounting for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Following lunch, Angela Fowler will present on church treasurer "best practices." Fowler serves as Mid-South District Business and Finance executive director.

The workshop concludes at 1 p.m.

Please note that attendees are encouraged to have either a printed or digital copy of the *Treasurers' Manual—Volume 1* with them at the workshop. To access the online manual or request a copy, visit mid-southlcms.org/business-finance.



Congregation mission commitment receipts

as of Aug. 31, 2025 (8 months)

Anticipated amount (67% of budget)	\$1,085,797
Actual receipts	\$1,057,928
Over (under) anticipated amount	(\$27,869)

Use of mission commitment receipts

Allocated to Synod for world missions	\$300,712
Allocated to Tanzania	\$16,667
Retained for district ministry/mission support (70% of receipts)	\$740,550
Total receipts	\$1,057,928

Mission commitment receipts comparison

Actual receipts as of Aug. 31, 2025	\$1,057,928
Actual receipts as of Aug. 31, 2024	\$1,075,504
Over (under) prior year receipts	(\$17,576)

A day of celebration



The congregation of **Christ the King (CTK), Memphis**, welcomed 20 new members to its family by affirmation of faith, adult instruction, or transfer. A day of celebration was held on Aug. 24 as the new members gathered in the rotunda to be pinned with corsage or boutonniere to be recognized by their brothers and sisters in Christ.

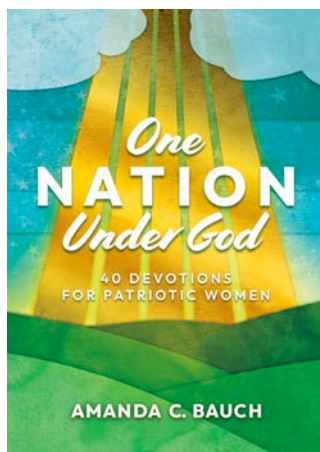
During the service, the new members were invited to the chancel and led through the rite of membership, after which they were individually introduced to the congregation by Rev. Mark Goble,

CTK senior pastor, who shared information about their interests and backgrounds.

Following the service, everyone was invited to a potluck, where new and current members mingled and shared food and fellowship. The congregation looks forward to integrating the new members into life at CTK, building on the time and talents the Lord has given them. Welcome, all! *Soli Deo Gloria*.

— Submitted by Genie Swan, CTK Community Outreach Coordinator

Devotional for women available Nov. 11



Christians disagree on many issues, but one thing we all agree on is that prayer works. And what better way to serve our country and our fellow Americans than to pray for them?

One Nation Under God: 40 Devotions for Patriotic Women (available Nov. 11) encourages believers to pray for our nation's citizens and leaders, regardless of who occupies positions in government. Each devotional focuses on a Bible verse that speaks to an issue facing America, discusses how the text relates to us today, and includes inspirational prompts,



Amanda Bauch

reflection questions, and journaling space to capture your thoughts.

The author is Amanda C. Bauch, a writer and editor whose creative nonfiction and short fiction has appeared online and in print anthologies. As an editor, she has worked on many books, including several bestsellers. Her husband is Rev. Gregory Bauch, pastor of Ascension, Madison, Tenn., and they are raising a son and daughter.

To preorder the book and learn more about her work, visit AmandaBauch.com.



We share with you the pastors of the Mid-South District who are celebrating milestone ordination anniversaries in 2025. Congregations are encouraged to observe these ministry milestones with an appropriate recognition.

We rejoice and give thanks to God with these gifts to His church. Well done, good and faithful servants!

65 YEARS

Rev. Albert Eichelberger
Emeritus, Knoxville, Tenn.

Rev. Frank Zirbel
Emeritus, Harrison, Ark.

60 YEARS

Rev. David Callies
Emeritus, Brentwood, Tenn.

Rev. Larry Marhenke
Emeritus, Hot Springs Village, Ark.

Rev. Donald Neiswender
Emeritus, Paducah, Ky.

Rev. Gilbert Pingel
Emeritus, Chattanooga, Tenn.

55 YEARS

Rev. Linsey Dettmer
Emeritus, Sevierville, Tenn.

Rev. John Freitag
Emeritus, Rogersville, Tenn.

Rev. Roger Reckling
Emeritus, Knoxville, Tenn.

Rev. Kenneth Taglauer
Emeritus, Brookline, Mass.

50 YEARS

Rev. Darrell Kobs
Emeritus, Russellville, Ark.

45 YEARS

Rev. Dean Clausing
Emeritus, Benton, Ark.

Rev. David Cloeter
Emeritus, Bella Vista, Ark.

Rev. Larry Peters
Grace, Clarksville, Tenn.

40 YEARS

Rev. Robert Alexander
Emeritus, Bella Vista, Ark.

Rev. Robert Benke
Faith, Hot Springs Village, Ark.

Rev. Jonathan Beyer
First, Hot Springs, Ark.

Rev. Wayne Schuett
Emeritus, Russellville, Ark.

Rev. John Treude
Emeritus, Fort Smith, Ark.

35 YEARS

Rev. James Burns
First, Benton, Ark.

Rev. Myles Schultz
Grace, Holiday Island, Ark.

30 YEARS

Rev. David Lampman
Emeritus, Crossville, Tenn.

25 YEARS

Rev. Andrew Abraham
Shepherd of the Hills, Crossville, Tenn.

Rev. Jerome Leckband
All Saints, Jonesboro, Ark.

20 YEARS

Rev. John Beabout
Shepherd of the Hills, Crossville, Tenn.

Rev. David Schmidt
Faith, Bentonville, Ark.

15 YEARS

Rev. Michael Croom
Trinity, Memphis

Rev. Michael Edwards
Candidate, Nixa, Mo.

Rev. Gerald Heinecke
Hope, Batesville, Ark.
Zion, Waldenburg, Ark.

Rev. David Witte
Grace, Little Rock, Ark.

10 YEARS

Rev. Eric Longman
Holy Trinity, Rogers, Ark.

5 YEARS

Rev. Sawyer Meyers
Beautiful Savior, Olive Branch, Miss.

Living with the end in view

We are nearing the end of the church year. The Scripture readings on the last Sundays come from some of Jesus' final teachings in the days before He suffered and died on the cross.

In many of our churches, we'll hear passages from the Gospel of Luke in which Jesus prophesied of both the destruction of Jerusalem and Herod's magnificent temple, and the destruction of this entire present creation on the Last Day.

As we read the Bible, passages about the end of the world may seem like a "downer" to us. However, there's much for us to learn and apply to our life in Christ from these end times messages in Scripture. St. Peter addresses the coming Day of the Lord in 2 Peter 3. Those of you who attended the 2025 LWML national convention will remember that 2 Peter 3:18 was our theme verse:

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

Earlier in the chapter, Peter describes the end of the world, writing:

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens



Rev. Kory Janneke
Mid-South District
Junior Pastoral
Counselor

will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. **2 PETER 3:10**

As we look at the material world around us, we need to remember that nothing here lasts forever. Our possessions, our property and even the church buildings in which we gather will all perish on the Last Day. Peter calls us to live now with the end in view. He goes on to say:

Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God.

2 PETER 3:11-12A

This present world isn't our forever home. We are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells (2 Peter 3:13). So as we live in the



present day, what sort of people ought we to be? The Lord calls us to live faithful, God-pleasing lives and to look forward eagerly to the final coming of our Savior Jesus. We are to live out our mission as His people, to "proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

Scripture encourages us as we await the end. Jesus says in Luke 21:28:

"Now when these things (signs of the end) begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

In other words, don't live in fear in these latter days! Trust the Lord and look forward to His appearing!

Lastly, St. Paul also encourages us as we remember Jesus' resurrection and look forward to our resurrection on the Last Day. He says in 1 Corinthians 15:58:

Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, raise your heads and be encouraged in Christ! Keep abounding in the Lord's work. Your labors for Christ's kingdom are making a difference and do not go unnoticed.

Keep living for eternity today as you await your Savior's return on the Last Day!

Rev. Janneke also serves as pastor of St. Matthew, Conway, Ark.

Endowment fund

This is a great time to think about year-end charitable contributions. Remember that our LWML Mid-South District Endowment Fund needs to be fed to grow! This fund enables women in our district to attend events and training that they otherwise might not be able to afford.

For more information, please visit midsouthlwml.org/endowment-fund.

LWML Mid-South District Convention

June 12-14, 2026 • Springdale, Ark.



Lodging and business sessions will be at the Holiday Inn Springdale/Fayetteville. Opening worship on Friday will be at Salem Lutheran Church, Springdale.

The keynote speaker will be Deaconess Dr. Tiffany Manor, LCMS Managing Director, Human Care and Ministerial Support.

Get the dates on your calendar!

I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come?
My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. **Ps. 121:1-2**

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Welcoming **ALL** into an 'eternal family'

On any given Sunday at many LCMS congregations, older members smile at the antics of the youngest Lutherans, while people from different backgrounds join together in worship and then mingle over coffee cake.

In the various stories in the fall issue of *Lutherans Engage the World*, the same kinds of scenes are playing out. "[The] children of God come in all ages, shapes and forms," we are reminded in a feature story about how three congregations care for their shut-in and homebound members. In the articles about a youth camp in Cambodia, a new community library at a church in Illinois, and the recent LCMS Youth Gathering in New Orleans, we see how the church welcomes young people.

And in the features about two thriving Chinese ministries and outreach in Italy, we learn how all kinds of people are finding a home — an "eternal family," according to Rev. Andy Wu — in the LCMS. To God be the glory.



Read the issue online at
engage.lcms.org.

Raising up **CHURCH WORKERS**

By Rev. Dr. James Baneck
Executive Director,
LCMS Pastoral Education

It is so exciting to have every LCMS congregation, family, school, district and entity be a part of the wonderful culture of church work formation and recruitment known as *Set Apart to Serve* (SAS). At this year's national convention of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, everyone we talked with was familiar with SAS and shared their own excitement about it.

Future generations will give thanks to God that each of us in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) has taken up the charge of Christ (Matt. 9:37–38) in supplying the church with pastors, teachers, musicians, deaconesses, DCEs and more. This charge is guided by the Holy Spirit through Christ and His holy Word.

To help everyone be even more invested and involved in forming and recruiting workers for Christ's church, SAS has recently released new resources. These resources are the outcomes of SAS pilot groups and have been reviewed and/or tested by various circuit visitors, district presidents, the SAS Advisory Council and others.

Resource #1: Forming a Congregation SAS Focus Team

This resource is both for congregations that are already focused on church work formation and recruitment and those that want to get started. Regardless of what name a congregation may use for its focus team — committee, working group, task force — this resource provides guidelines for building a foundation of church work formation and recruitment and examples of how to make that foundation a part of a congregation's culture.



The resource begins with a brief history of the Synod's focus on church work formation and recruitment since its founding in 1847. It also offers ideas for forming a congregation SAS focus team; provides ideas of who might serve on the team, along with suggested responsibilities; and provides an agenda template and links to suggested SAS resources. Included in these resources are articles and papers for team education as well as ideas to develop action plans that will help the whole congregation embrace an SAS culture.

Resource #2: Next Chapter, New Calling: A Guide for the Wife of a Potential Second-Career Pastor

Last fall, SAS personnel went to the two LCMS seminaries to conduct focus groups with second-career residential pastoral students and their wives. We met with the men for 90 minutes and then with their wives for 90 minutes. We asked questions about the process of deciding to attend seminary, about enrolling and moving, and about seminary life. We also asked participants to identify, for each part of the journey, things that were roadblocks to the process, things that would have been helpful to the process, who and what was most influential in the process, and more.

SAS captured what we learned from these focus groups and developed a guide for wives of men who are considering studying for the pastoral ministry. The guide touches on a variety of topics while emphasizing that those embarking on this journey are not alone and have many resources and people available to assist them.

FIND THE RESOURCES described here, and many others, at resources.lcms.org/set-apart-to-serve.

Camp Trinity

Summer staff

Summer Camp 2026 is still seven months away, but planning is already underway. This includes seeking applications and inquiries from Lutheran young adults who desire to serve in ministry to children and families.

Serving on summer staff provides an opportunity to get ministry experience in a fun and exciting outdoor environment. Christian young adults, often college students on summer break, can earn money while leading young people in all kinds of activities — hiking, games, swimming, archery, canoeing, horseback riding, crafts and outdoor education — while leading daily Bible studies and giving campfire messages about the love of God in Christ Jesus.

To learn more or request an application, contact Aaron Davis, Camp Trinity director, at 501-652-6304 or trinitypetitjean@gmail.com.

Crop and Craft

The semi-annual Crop and Craft women's retreat is Nov. 7-10. This is an informal weekend of creativity and fellowship in which women gather in Cornerstone Lodge and work on scrapbooking projects or other crafts. Camp staff prepares all the meals. Some crafters leave on Sunday while others stay through Monday. Women interested in attending can contact Aaron Davis at the camp office.



O Lord, whose bounteous hand again
Hath poured Thy gifts in plenty down,
Who all creation dost sustain
And all the earth with goodness crown,
Lord of the harvest, here we own
Our joy to be Thy gift alone.

Oh, may we ne'er with thankless heart
Forget from whom our blessings flow!
Still, Lord, Thy heavenly grace impart;
Still teach us what to Thee we owe.
Lord, may our lives with fruit divine
Return Thy care and prove us Thine.

Lord, grant that we who sow to Thee
With joy in endless life may reap.
Of every heart the Guardian be;
By day and night Thy servants keep
That all to Thee may joy afford
On Thy great harvest-day, O Lord.

THE LUTHERAN HYMNAL #567

*A Blessed Thanksgiving
to Our Readers!*

**SHARE
YOUR NEWS
WITH US!**

Digital files, sent via e-mail, are preferred. Send email submissions to LW@mid-southlcms.com or send by postal mail to:

Judy Otto; 150 N. Maury St.; Holly Springs, MS 38635
Send us your stories and photos for our
January 2026 issue by Nov. 15.

