



MID-SOUTH LUTHERAN

REFORMATION



LCMS/Erik M. Lunsford

THE October Holiday



A statue of Martin Luther appears in front of the City Church of St. Mary's in Wittenberg, Germany.

What happens on the last day of October? Are you shopping at Walmart or Hobby Lobby, or are you watching TV?

You know it's Halloween. So why are the church paraments red instead of orange and black? Why don't we come to church in Halloween costumes? The reason is that the last day of October is when we celebrate the Reformation. It may not be exciting to the world, but for Lutherans and most Christians, it's the day we reflect on God's Word being rediscovered in truth and purity by His servant, Martin Luther.

This isn't some tedious, dusty old history. It's rather our focus on the chief doctrine of our church on life eternal — justification, which comes from the language of jurisprudence, or application of the law. Our justification is God declaring sinners not guilty of sin because justice for us was paid by the suffering and death of Jesus Christ.

God wants us to know that we need to be justified to stand



Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola
District President

before His perfection. We confess that we're all poor, miserable sinners who justly deserve God's eternal wrath and punishment, not only for what we do, say, don't do and don't say, but because we're born sinners. We can't justify ourselves, at least before God. We have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

When confronted with God's Law, we know He demands perfection, sinlessness (Matt. 5:48). But the Law shows us that we're accountable to God in all things. His Word declares:

"The soul who sins must die."

— Ezek. 18:20

God laid down the Law, which condemns us, as St. Paul says:

Through the Law, we become conscious of sin. — Rom. 3:20

Luther never ignored the weight of the Law. He knew our sins condemn us, left on our own. Luther tried harder than anyone to keep the Law to earn God's favor. But like those today who try to win God's favor, who try earn God's salvation or prove their worthiness, Luther was convinced that no amount of works or good intentions could ever release him from guilt under the Law. On the road of works and righteousness, the monk Luther and anyone who tries their own path to God inevitably come to a dead end.

Luther would be sad about the state of the church today. It's no different in any mainline denomination. Only 17 percent of Americans will be in church on a given Sunday.

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REFORMATION

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Are we a Christian nation as some suggest? Are God's Word and salvation precious to us anymore? Do we deserve God's love and salvation by the way we honor Him and His church?

Fortunately, over 500 years ago Luther blew the dust from Holy Scripture and found the answer to our dilemma. God's Word, guided by the Holy Spirit, led Luther to understand — as we should again today — that we need a Savior, plain and simple. How else can anyone be saved from our sins except through God's grace in Christ Jesus?

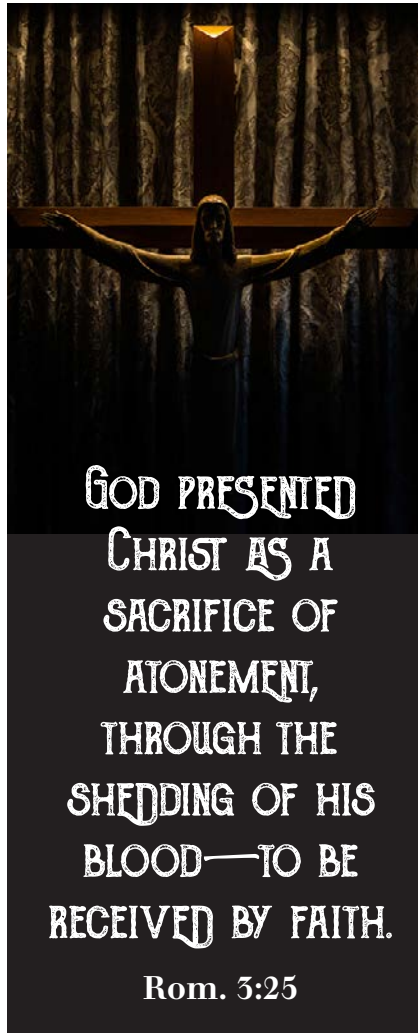
Luther rediscovered the sweet Gospel — what God has already done for us through Jesus Christ. From Holy Scripture, Luther rediscovered the answer to humanity's deepest troubles.

For in it (the Gospel) the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith." — **Rom. 1:17**

In the mystery of God's divine justice, our sin is gone. Christ, who had no sin, was made sin for us so that we may stand before the throne of God completely innocent, pure and holy. In the joyous exchange of Christ's purity for our wretched estate, Christ redeemed us from our sin!

Following the events of Oct. 31, 1517, Luther stood on trial before the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, condemned by his contemporaries as a heretic. His defense wasn't based on arrogance or pride. Rather his defense was founded on Holy Scripture. Even under the threat of being condemned to death, Luther stated, "Unless I am condemned by Holy Scripture, I will not recant. Here I stand. I can do no more."

What emboldened his confidence? Justification by God's grace alone, by faith alone, revealed in Scripture alone, in Christ alone. For all those who misunderstand Luther and our beloved Lutheran church, let the corollary of Luther be known: If one thing in our theology is contrary to Holy Scripture, we will shut down. If we cannot stand



on Holy Scripture, we can never stand.

The apostle Paul writes:

God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished.

— **Rom. 3:25 (NIV)**

What does this mean? God doesn't need to prove anything. He's a just God. But God uses His patience to prove His justice for our sake. His patience proves that it's by grace that God justifies us. In other words, just as God forgave the sins of believers who looked by faith to the coming of the promised Savior, so today He still forgives sins by faith in our Savior who has already come, and

is coming again in glory to receive all people joined together in Christ into our promised inheritance, His eternal kingdom.

Scripture also says Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness, that he trusted God's promise. What about today? God's patience with mankind still shows He justifies freely by His grace in Christ. He waits patiently for those who have never heard His promise. However, God will eventually give all, even those who reject Him, the desires of their heart (Ps. 37:4): His glorious kingdom or eternal condemnation.

OK, we like the good stuff, so why all this bad junk? Why the worldwide disease? Why the economic hard times? Why the family struggles and fractured relationships? Why so much violence, rioting and terrorism? Why?

Paul answers:

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to his purpose. — **Rom. 8:28 (NIV)**

In good times and bad, God always works for the good of those who love Him.

It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. ... For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

— **Rom. 8:33-34, 38-39**

God wants us to cherish, preserve and share the Gospel's life-saving message. Martin Luther was a bold, hard-working man for the Christian church. We don't worship him. We worship the God Luther rediscovered in the message of the Gospel. We embrace and cling to God's promise that we are saved by God's grace through faith, and this is not a work of ourselves, but rather our gift from God.

Supporting our future church workers



11 students
have received
\$81,000
in financial aid



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

By Angela Fowler

Executive Director for Business and Finance

One of the highlights of the year is the awarding of financial assistance to Mid-South District students who are preparing for full-time church work. Our district is blessed to have financial resources to help with tuition for these students who are attending one of the Concordia seminaries or universities.

The number of applicants this year is both exciting and challenging. It's exciting because 11 individuals from the Mid-South District are attending a seminary or university during the 2020-21 school year, with an additional four students pursuing degrees through alternate route programs. The good news is that these students will receive \$81,000 in awards this school year!

What's challenging is the limited available funds. The district's Financial Aid Committee is challenged to carefully allocate funds so that every dollar is awarded in a responsible and fair way.

There are three sources within our district that make it possible for this many students to receive financial aid:

- ▶ Generous LWML grants.
- ▶ Endowment funds provided by faithful servants of God for the sole purpose of scholarships.
- ▶ The district budget, made possible from congregational monthly mission commitments.

The district gratefully acknowledges the generous support of our individuals and organizations.

May God bless these gifted and faithful students as they work toward their goals of serving our congregations and schools!

Congregation mission commitment receipts

as of July 31,
2020 (7 months)



Anticipated amount (58.33% of budget).....	\$897,733
Actual receipts	\$868,627
Over (under) anticipated amount.....	(\$29,106)

Use of mission commitment receipts

Allocated to Synod for world missions	\$246,005
Allocated to Tanzania	\$14,583
Retained for district ministry/ mission support (70% of receipts)	\$608,039
Total receipts	\$868,627

Mission commitment receipts comparison

Actual receipts as of July 31, 2020	\$868,627
Actual receipts as of July 31, 2019	\$887,080
Over (under) prior year receipts	(\$18,453)



CTSFW campus visit event is Oct. 15-17

Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (CTSFW), Ind., will host a Prayerfully Consider Visit (PCV) on campus Oct. 15-17. This event is an opportunity for men and women considering a future vocation as a pastor or deaconess to explore what life is like as a student at CTSFW.

If you know anyone who may make an

excellent pastor or deaconess, please share this information with them. Your encouragement is one of the tools God uses to call His future laborers into the harvest fields!

For more information, go to ctsfw.edu/ctsfw-events/prayerfully-consider-visit. You may also call 800-481-2155 or send an email to admission@ctsfw.edu.

DISTRICT NEWS

INSTALLATIONS

Rev. Paul Leigeber was installed as pastor of Trinity, Dyersburg, and Faith, Union City, Tenn., on July 26. Pastor Leigeber returns to the Mid-South District, having formerly served as pastor of Zion, Waldenburg, Ark. Pictured are, from left, Revs. Dr. Roger Paavola, Daniel Ulrich, David Appold, Paul Leigeber, Larry Peters and Bill Stevenson.



Rev. Joshua Leigeber was installed as pastor of Pilgrim Lutheran Church, Jonesboro, Ark., on Aug. 16. Clergy attending the service included, from left, Revs. Brian Pummill, John Bussman, Dr. Roger Paavola, Paul Leigeber (Joshua's father, see above), Joshua Leigeber, Joel Krogen, A. J. Neugebauer, Jeffrey King and Kirk Neugebauer.



Rev. Sawyer Meyers was ordained and installed as a district missionary at Beautiful Savior, Olive Branch, Miss., on July 25. Pastor Meyers recently graduated from Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind., and is serving his first call. Pictured are, from left, Rev. Dr. Terry Tieman, Rev. Jim Belles, Rev. Chuck Neugebauer, Rev. Sawyer Meyers, Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, Rev. Dr. Adam Koontz, Rev. Dan Hawkins, Rev. Dan Elkins and CTSFW fourth-year student Ian Kinney.





Rev. Douglas DeWitt was installed as associate pastor of Faith Lutheran Church, Thompson Station, Tenn., on Aug. 22. Pastor DeWitt will also work as a church planter in Hohenwald, Tenn. From left, Revs. Curt Hoover, Alebachew Teshome, Douglas DeWitt, Craig Fiebigger and Dr. Roger Paavola.

Soaking up the Son

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

My favorite flower is the sunflower. It is such a bright and cheerful flower. It signals the beginning of fall and the changes that are to come: leaf colors, cooler weather and the beginning of winter.

As with many flowers, you can watch this tall, proud flower physically follow the sun. It is a reminder that we need to follow the Son in all we do, soak-

ing up everything that we can through church services, Bible reading and study, and Christian fellowship.

Just as without the sun, the sunflower will wilt and die, so will the brightness of our faith. This fall especially we need to be thankful for being able to gather in His name as that privilege was temporarily disrupted this year.

As the sunflower seeks the sun, so let us all soak up the Son!



Blessings at Faith, Hopkinsville

Top, new members brought into fellowship on July 19 at Faith, Hopkinsville, Ky., include, from left, John Schlei, Carol Heilman, the Di Giovanni family (Adam, Megan and children Josh and Mia) and Adam and Katie Eatherton. In back is Rev. Neely Owen, Faith pastor.

Right, celebrated on July 16 was the baptism of Aubrianna Lashay Snead. From left, Kyliee Snead (mother), Vickie Moats (great-grandmother and sponsor, holding Aubrianna), Pastor Owen and Rex Cole (great-uncle and sponsor).



Many events canceled, but some summer camps held

Quiet spring and summer

Camp Trinity was effectively closed for six months of 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic. Except for a modified summer camp schedule, all events on the calendar from mid-March through mid-September were canceled. These events included six retreats, six reunions, Spring Work Weekend, the cemetery homecoming and the Champions of Religious Liberty Conference.

Some fall events have also been canceled: Trivia Night, originally scheduled for April 15 and then postponed until Nov. 14, has been canceled for 2020 because it would not be possible to observe physical distancing protocols for the event.

The Arkansas Lutheran youth leaders voted to cancel the fall LinkT retreat at Camp Trinity. LinkT retreats, which replaced the former Mid-Winter Youth Gatherings starting in 2015, have occurred twice a year until this year, with the junior high retreat held in the fall and the senior high retreat in the winter.

Under COVID-19 protocols, the cabins would be limited to half capacity, or 40 people. LinkT retreats typically draw two to three times that number. At past LinkT retreats, the overflow has been housed at Camp Mitchell, the Episcopal camp on Petit Jean Mountain. But Mitchell closed down indefinitely in April, and the earliest operations could resume would be summer 2021. In addition to the housing challenge at LinkT, it would be difficult to maintain physical distancing during meals and worship.

The youth leaders are delaying a decision on whether to keep the senior high LinkT retreat on schedule, hoping the picture will be clearer by October.

The loss of revenue from canceled



Campers enjoy a game of Duck-Duck-Splash during summer camp 2020 at Camp Trinity, the Lutheran Camp on Petit Jean Mountain.

events and fewer than anticipated summer campers has forced the camp to dip deep into reserves. Donations from friends of the camp, along with grants and loans, have partially offset the losses, as has cutting expenses as much as possible. Because most of the camp's expenses are fixed, a considerable deficit remains between income and expenses.

To encourage donations to the camp, an anonymous donor has agreed to match donations up to \$15,000 through the end of 2020. The Camp Trinity board also reminds Thrivent members that they can direct charitable funds through the Thrivent Choice program to Camp Trinity or the approved organization of their choice. It does not cost members anything except a few minutes of their time.

Summer camp season

Camp Trinity was able to hold eight on-site summer camp sessions and one virtual session in June and July. Four volunteer nurses from LCMS congregations helped with COVID-19 screening at check-in, and the camp observed strict protocols from the Arkansas Department of Health.

Although the number of campers was down nearly a third from 2019, the sessions were a great blessing to those who attended — campers and staff alike. Many parents expressed their appreciation for the camp and the summer staff. Among their comments:

"Thank you, Camp Trinity staff! Your hard work and hearts for Christ made camp amazing — despite all of the challenges of coronavirus."

"Camp Trinity is such a happy place for (our daughter)! This year once again, she made great memories and new friends for life!"

"Such an awesome bunch! The camp makes a huge difference in how the children interact with the surroundings they are in. All for the better because of the love for Christ that you young adults have shown them."

The camp added a new session, Pioneers, as campers slept in teepees and cooked some of their meals over an open fire. New summer camp activi-

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CAMP TRINITY

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6)



Pathfinders week at Camp Trinity included a trip to the petting zoo.

ties included softball and kickball on the new ballfield (thank you, Henry and Kay Jones), hatchet throwing, 9-square (thank you, Peace Lutheran Church, Conway), a giant water slide, line dancing and new competitive events on Lake Bailey.

Bible studies revolved around the theme "Sent" (Is. 6:8). Campers learned

of heroes of the faith who were sent on missions God prepared for them. Campers learned how they are sent to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ, who came to seek and save the lost. And they learned how Jesus Himself was sent to purchase eternal life for all who believe in Him through His death and resurrection.

December issue deadline is Oct. 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



Rev. Gregory Prauner, pastor of Immanuel, Memphis, welcomes Michelle Fischer as the new Immanuel Lutheran School principal.

Immanuel has new principal

Michelle Fischer chose to serve Immanuel Lutheran School, Memphis, for her 11th year as a school principal — and the Mid-South District applauds her choice and welcomes her gladly!

A graduate of Eastern Washington University with a bachelor's degree in elementary education and a master's degree in educational leadership and administration, she has served in a variety of educational settings in California, Alaska, Colorado and Missouri. She also worked for the U.S. Air Force as a school liaison officer and in the child development and school age programs.

Michelle and her husband, Paul, have been married for 23 years and have two sons. Nathaniel, 18, who is attending Grand Canyon University in Phoenix, and Johnathon, 16, who attends Arlington High School in Memphis. Paul is a retired U.S. Air Force avionics technician.

LCEF



Paul Reaves
District Vice-President
901-395-7051

Here for your ministry

Since 1978, Lutheran Church Extension Fund's (LCEF) commitment to the church and her workers has remained steadfast and uncompromising — especially for a time such as this.

Whether it is providing online giving options for churches, remedies to help our borrowers or updates

on PPP loans, LCEF is ready to help you in any way we can.

For more on ways LCEF is responding to ministry and church worker needs in the wake of COVID-19, visit lcef.org or contact Paul Reaves.

Video series shares ministry insights

LCEF has launched a weekly video series called *Ministry*

Moments. This collection of short videos shares insights and encouragement regarding a variety of ministry topics — everything from stewardship to conducting more efficient meetings.

To view the current collection of videos, and to subscribe to the series, visit lcef.us/MinistryMoments. For more on how LCEF can partner with your ministry, visit lcef.org or contact Paul Reaves.



District rejoices with Malagasy church

The Mid-South District is proud of the work done by the leaders and educators of Lutheran Institute of Management (LIME) in Madagascar, and pleased to have been a small part of what they and the Malagasy Lutheran Church have accomplished to advance the Gospel of Christ.

A graduation ceremony was recently held for LIME students at a church near the Lutheran Graduate School of Theology at Ivory Avaratra, where Rev. Dr. Joseph Randrianasolo, LIME president, presided for 17 years.

Continuing financial support and especially prayers are requested as the Lord leads the Malagasy Lutheran Church to find an able and fit president to replace Rev. Dr. David Rakotonirina, who succumbed to COVID-19 and joined his Lord on July 11. Dr. Rakotonirina had served as president since 2016.

Dr. Rakotonirina is fondly remembered as a student of Dr. Randrianasolo, and by Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, district president, as his doctoral classmate at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.



URGENT: A special appeal on behalf of LIME

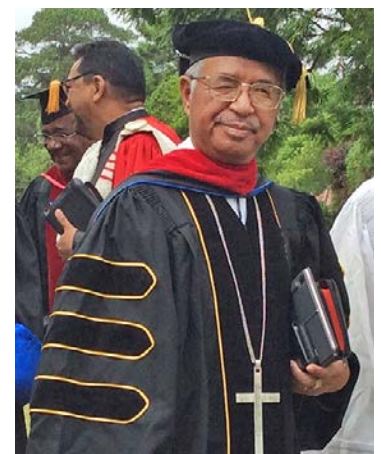
Like many organizations, LIME has been hit especially hard by the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. After graduating its last class in January, the doors have now been closed for six months. With no tuition coming in, Dr. Randrianasolo has shared that the six staff members of LIME and their families now face the very real possibility of starvation.

The Mid-South District is sending support and inviting its ministries and individuals to do the same. Donations can be made at mid-southlcms.org (click the "Donate" button at the top right of the homepage). Choose the "Restricted Gift" field and designate the funds for "LIME Staff COVID-19."

Gifts by check should be made payable to the Mid-South District with "LIME Staff COVID-19" in the memo line. Please mail to: The Mid-South District LCMS, 1675 Wynne Road, Cordova, TN 38016



Rev. Dr. Joseph Randrianasolo is pictured with a student.



Called to glory

Rev. Dr. David Rakotonirina, 58, passed away on July 11 from coronavirus. He served as president of the Malagasy Lutheran Church since 2016.