



/ OCTOBER 2021

MID-SOUTH LUTHERAN

WHAT ARE THE ODDS?



How many of you have taken a course in statistics? I eventually taught statistics in graduate school. But even then, one of the most difficult principles of statistics is the rule of probability.

If I flip a coin, the probability of it landing heads or tails is 50 percent. If I flip it a second time, the probability is still 50 percent. In fact, if you flip a coin 1,000 times and each time it came up heads, the probability of it coming up heads on the next flip is *still* 50 percent.

A few summers ago, we had a total solar eclipse of the sun crossing the United States. Scientists were able to predict the probability of the moon covering our view of the sun, and exactly where the eclipse would happen and precisely at what time. But what was so interesting to me is that science only confirmed the predictable and perfect balance of nature in God's design of the unfathomable cosmos.



Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola
District President

Some pseudo-scientist once said that an invisible planet was going to crash into the earth and bring the end of the world. That was supposed to happen at 9:13 a.m. eastern time on a specific date; yet we're still here. The probability is still zero that anyone can accurately predict the end of the world; even the Son of Man — just as Jesus told us.

But this is the God we serve. We believe in a God without beginning and without end. We believe in a God who, with just a Word, created all things, seen and unseen.

We believe that God took on human flesh to join us in His created world and rejoin us to the grace of God in glory. However, the probability of bringing our American brothers and sisters into a relationship with God is decreasing. The probability is no longer 50-50 that our kids will be faithful church-goers when they're adults and on their own.

Our work together is becoming substantially more difficult in an increasingly skeptical world.

In the New Testament, some of the disciples only believed after they experienced the presence of the eternal Son of the Father. But seeing what Jesus did wasn't always embraced with a 100-percent acceptance of what they just saw.

They saw and heard Jesus; we can only read about Him in Scripture. But we have to conclude that the probability of our believing does not make things so. Only God's being in Christ to reconcile the world to Himself, not counting our sins against us, makes things so. Only by the gift of faith, given by the Holy Spirit, are we able to read the printed words on the pages of a book and made alive in Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit (Third Article stuff).

This is why Hilary of Poitiers, one of the ancient church fathers, pointed out that the way to the Father is only through His Son. This is not merely through knowing the instruction of the Son. And it isn't just because of the historical reality of Jesus Christ. The Son Himself is our salvation. Believing that He is our Lord and Savior is given by the power of the Holy Spirit through His gift of faith.

What is the probability that this Person — Jesus — could be our Savior? Out of the over 1,500 prophecies about Him in the Old Testament, what would be the probability of anyone else fulfilling all of them? The probability of any *one* person to fulfill just 15 of those prophecies is 15 factorial or 1,307,674,368,000 to one!

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FAITH

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Who else was born of a virgin mother? Who turned water into wine? Who walked on top of the water? Who was crucified, suffered and died so that you and I may live?

It is no wonder the church celebrates so joyously the season of the Incarnation. Christ is the revelation of God in the world. Through His Incarnation, He Himself is our righteousness, in what Martin Luther called the “Happy Exchange — my sin in exchange for Christ’s righteousness.”

The Bible attributes our salvation to the right God, not to our right believing. Even though the right God and right believing are inextricably bound together, still, like love and marriage, they are distinguishable, even if inseparable.

We are saved from God’s side by His decisive forensic action in Christ. We are not saved from our side by our pious believing of this or that. Our believing only follows the self-revelation of God in Christ, which is apprehended by faith alone, by grace alone, in Christ alone. God’s revelation of Himself has priority.

Christ guides us to the Truth. The Truth will establish us in the Life. It is all-important for us to know what this mysterious mode is, by which God offered Himself for this life, in order to be given eternal life.

Jesus said, “No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). But does righteousness come by a course of our obedience to His teachings or by faith in His Godhead? For it is conceivable that our way to the Father may be through adherence to the Son’s teaching rather than through believing that the Godhead with the Father and Spirit dwells in the Son.

It is not by clinging to a preconceived opinion that has satisfied our intellec-

tual reason, but by hearing the force of the words that we shall enter into possession of this by faith.

It is the man, Jesus Christ, whom the disciples beheld. The apostles saw Him wearing the vesture of our human nature. But God in Christ is not encumbered with body and flesh and was not recognizable by those who are born in a weak and fleshly body. The answer is given by the Lord, who asserts that under the flesh, which in a mystery He had taken, His Divine nature also dwells within Him.

The struggle isn’t about historical or intellectual knowledge of Jesus Christ. The struggle is to change lives, regenerated from a corrupt human existence to an existence of love, peace, hope and service. Can we do it?

Probability says no. We are completely incapable of converting a single soul from a condemned sinner to a child of God who will share eternal glory. Yet by grace, the

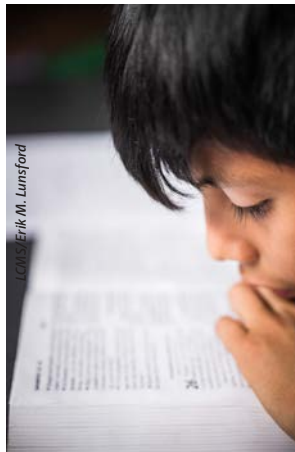
Holy Spirit leads us in faith to apprehend the overflowing grace of God for the sake of Jesus Christ.

Whether you like it or not, our positions mean that the probability that our congregations support a ministry is going to be influenced by how they regard us by their human standards.

Unfair? Perhaps. But with Christ’s gifts, His Calling, His guidance, we — like those most unlikely disciples Jesus chose — show the Good News of grace, mercy and peace like living stones who declare the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Is it improbable for us to convert anyone? Yup, but we are all to be His witnesses.

May God continue to lead, guide and bless our support for the ministries in Christ Jesus, who will bring all who believe and are baptized into His eternal glory.



LCMS Erik M. Lunsford



U.S. Air Force/Tech Sgt. Marleah Cabano

A U.S. Army pilot delivers a patient to an emergency medical service volunteer during a medical evacuation mission in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, on Aug. 24. The mission was part of relief efforts for the people of Haiti who were affected by the recent earthquake.

Help needed **IN HAITI**

Flooding from Tropical Storm Grace and a 7.2 magnitude earthquake left Haiti battered and reeling — and hurricane season offers further threats. Support is needed to help this beleaguered country recover from the terrible destruction and loss of life it has already suffered.

In conjunction with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Haiti (Eglise Evangelique Luthérienne D’Haiti) and LCMS Recognized Service Organizations that have longstanding expertise, LCMS Disaster Response is helping Haitians with continuing difficulty in finding basic supplies, food and water, as well as materials and equipment to aid rebuilding.

Monetary aid and prayer are needed — for those in Haiti and those providing care. To share support and view updates, visit lcms.org/disaster.

FOCUS on EVANGELISM

YOUR NEW BEST FRIEND



Shared by the Board of Evangelism of First, Little Rock

Think of the best friend in your life, and the moment that you met. Do you remember it? Before that moment, you were strangers; but from that moment on, your life changed.

You have become enriched by knowing that person, and you have enriched that

person as well. You have become more alive, more fully human and affirmed as the person you really are and strive to be.

Your friendship has opened you to see the world in a new way — through the eyes of your friend, as you have opened the eyes of your friend to see the world through your eyes.

Now apply this to Jesus. At some point in your life, you did not know Him. But as you came to know Him through His Word, Sacraments, prayer and fellowship with fellow believers, you have become more alive, more fully human and affirmed as the person you were called and destined to be.

Your relationship has opened you to see the world in a new way — through the eyes of the Lord.

Now apply this to a stranger you meet — in your neighborhood, at the grocery store, at work or even at church. That person just might become your new best friend, but you will never know unless you take the time to meet that person, get acquainted and learn of his or her world as you share your world and the love and truth of Jesus within you.

LCEF offers Ministry Moments



Rev. Mark Frith, LCEF vice-president of Ministry Support, talks about re-watching a sermon in a Ministry Moments video.

For years, most have known Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) as the “lender of choice” for Lutheran ministries. But today’s LCEF is so much more. LCEF has grown in its role of encouraging and equipping ministries through its Ministry Support programs and services.

Over the last year, LCEF’s Ministry Support team began sharing weekly videos online called Ministry Moments. The videos are brief but powerful, packed

with practical tips to help ministries move forward, according to God’s will. For anyone who leads in ministry — whether in a large or small way — LCEF’s Ministry Moments can be a great way to get inspired.

Take a look at the collection of Ministry Moments videos at lcef.org/ministry-moments. They are a great example of how LCEF is so much more than a lender.

Congregation mission commitment receipts

as of July 31, 2021 (7 months)

Anticipated amount (58% of budget)	\$859,609
Actual receipts	\$871,616
Over (under) anticipated amount	\$12,007

Use of mission commitment receipts

Allocated to Synod for world missions	\$246,901
Allocated to Tanzania	\$14,583
Retained for district ministry/mission support (70% of receipts)	\$610,131
Total receipts	\$871,616

Mission commitment receipts comparison

Actual receipts as of July 31, 2021	\$871,616
Actual receipts as of July 31, 2020	\$868,627
Over (under) prior year receipts	\$2,989

In Memoriam

Rev. Norman Groteluschen

1924-2021

Rev. Norman L. Groteluschen, who served two terms as Mid-South District president (1985-91), was called to his heavenly home on July 23. A dear friend and faithful servant, “Pastor G,” as he was known to many, was a driving force in shaping the mission-minded character and heart of the Mid-South District.

Rev. Groteluschen was part of the district’s first leadership team when the former Western District voted to split into two districts in 1966, forming the Mid-South District and Missouri districts.

A seasoned pastor and church planter with 26 years of experience, he accepted the call to serve as district executive secretary of Missions, Education and Stewardship in 1975. His passion for the mission of the church made him well-suited for the role, which in turn prepared him in serving as district president. He was elected as the second president of the district in 1985.

During his two terms as president, the mission mindset was emphasized and



nurtured. A “Church Planter’s Manual” was developed and new ministry growth accelerated rapidly.

By the time he retired in 1991 following his second term, the Mid-South District was home to 110 congregations after starting just 25 years earlier with 77 congregations.

Following his retirement, Rev. Groteluschen continued to share his leadership expertise and passion for ministry growth for the next several years as the district’s part-time mission executive. Even after his complete retirement in 1994, “Pastor G” remained a faithful friend and servant of the Mid-South District, frequently sharing

encouragement, advice and wisdom with those who would lead after him.

“The Rev. Norman Groteluschen was the quintessential example of the ‘pastor’s pastor,’” said Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, current district president. “Most of the existing congregations in the Mid-South District owe their existence to the blessings of God on the work of the faithful man of God, Pastor Norm Groteluschen. With kind, pastoral care, Pastor Groteluschen asked me to consider allowing my name to stand for district president. I said I would only on the condition that he guide me — often.

“As a church planter with a true Christian concern for the lost, and as a district president, Pastor Groteluschen personified the essence of what Scripture identifies as a true compassion for Christ’s church and Christ’s ministry to make disciples of all people.”

Rev. Groteluschen was preceded in death by his beloved wife, Margaret, and two children who died in infancy. He is survived by sons Rick and Ron, and daughter Becky.

Rev. Groteluschen’s long-time church home, Christ the King, Memphis, hosted his funeral service on July 29. A recording of this Service of Victory and Celebration is available at ctkmemphis.sitewrench.com/live-video-streaming.



Rev. Joel Krogen

1965-2021

We offer prayers of peace and comfort for the family and friends of Rev. Joel Krogen, who was called to glory on July 26.

A husband, father and faithful servant of the Lord, Pastor Krogen led the congregations of Hope, Batesville, Ark., and Zion, Waldenburg, Ark.

Pastor Krogen served

as a circuit counselor in the Mid-South District since 2015 and supported LWML as both a district counselor and zone counselor.

Pastor Krogen was also a veteran of the U.S. Navy.

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

“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



Christ welcomes Pastor Hamilton

Rev. Morgan Hamilton was installed as senior pastor of Christ Lutheran Church and School, Little Rock, on Aug. 1. Clergy in attendance were from left, (front row) Rev. Kent Schaff, Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, Rev. Morgan Hamilton, Rev. Kevin Conger, Rev. LeRoy Leach; (back row) Rev. Jon Mathis, Rev. David Vandercook, Vicar Anthony Johnson, Rev. Emil Woerner, Rev. Jon Beyer and Rev. John Gierke.




 **LWML**
Lutheran Women in Mission

MID-SOUTH DISTRICT CONVENTION

**June 11-12, 2022
Clarksville, Tenn.**

*"I PLANTED, APOLLOS WATERED,
BUT GOD GAVE THE GROWTH."*
1 Cor. 3:6



Protecting your freedom

Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) is sharing a helpful document and video on church autonomy.

The information is made available to help congregations and church workers understand the rights of religious institutions in today's contentious social and political arena. Please take a moment to look over this resource, available at adfchurchalliance.org/church-autonomy.

Because of the Mid-South District's existing partnership with ADF, you can receive a discount on ADF membership. For more information, contact Sherri Huston of ADF at shuston@adflegal.org or 480-206-9164.



Augsburg Fall Fest is Oct. 9

Zion Lutheran Church of Augsburg, Ark., invites guests to its 14th Annual Fall Fest to be held on Saturday, Oct. 9. The festival begins at 10 a.m. and lasts all day.

The event offers continuous musical entertainment, craft and educational booths, a silent auction, children's games, a cake walk, bingo, a drawing for a locally farm-raised and processed whole hog, a handmade quilt and a \$100 gift card, plus brats and other popular homemade German food.

Last year's festival raised \$29,440 despite activities being severely curtailed by COVID. Proceeds are equally divided between the River Valley Christian Clinic in Dardanelle, which provides free medical, dental and optometric care, and the Augsburg Food Pantry, which is in its 26th year of providing food for over 800 people each month. To date, over a

quarter of a million dollars have been raised to benefit these two worthwhile organizations.

Fall Fest began in 2008 as an outreach to the community to celebrate Zion's 125th anniversary, and has grown every year. The 50-60 volunteers who make this effort possible each year come from as far as Iowa, California and Hawaii, as well as the Zion congregation.

Join the family fun and festivity at the intersection of Arkansas Highway 333 and Augsburg Road, north of London and northwest of Dover.

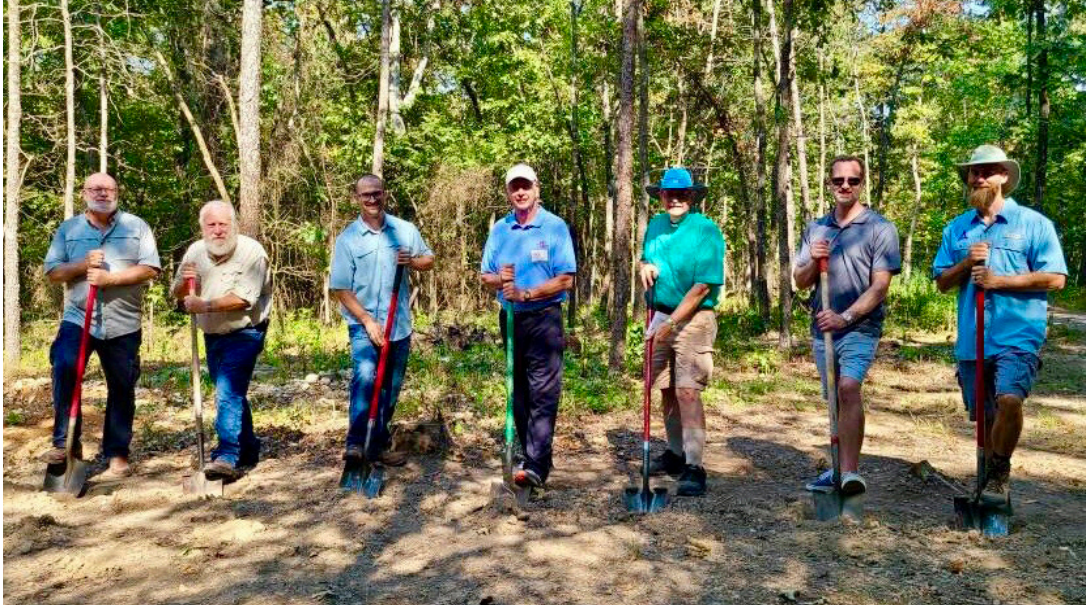
Please keep Zion in your prayers as its members continue these efforts to feed the hungry and minister to the sick.

For more information, visit zionaugsburg.org/fall-fest or facebook.com/AugsburgZionLutheranChurch.



Proceeds of more than \$29,000 from the 2020 Augsburg Fall Fest were celebrated and presented to the Augsburg Food Pantry and the River Valley Christian Clinic.

More space coming soon



Taking part in the groundbreaking are, from left: David Cox, camp director; Bob Heigel, HTW Architects and Engineers; Paul Easterday, w Building Committee chairman; Ray Musgrave, Capital Campaign Committee; Rev. Darrell Kobs, former camp pastoral advisor; Michael Videll, camp Board of Directors president; and Aaron Davis, camp operations manager.

Groundbreaking took place Aug. 15 for a retreat lodge at Camp Trinity, the Lutheran Camp on Petit Jean Mountain.

The event drew 150 people, with guests from at least 17 LCMS congregations. Many residents of Petit Jean Mountain also joined the celebration.

Rev. Darrell Kobs, pastor emeritus of Russellville, led the Rite of Groundbreaking at the site. Pastor Kobs also told of his family's long connection with the camp. He served as pastoral advisor, and all three of his children — Spock, Echo and Strawberry — served on summer camp staff.

A worship service in front of the historic Trinity Chapel followed the groundbreaking, with Rev. Mark Tooley, the current pastoral advisor on the board, giving the message. Pastor Tooley, who serves as pastoral advisor for the camp board and pastor at Peace, Conway, cited biblical examples of buildings that did not last in contrast to the Word of God, which endures.

He offered examples of campers

whose lives were changed eternally through the message of forgiveness found in Jesus Christ alone. The lodge will open up opportunities for more people to hear the message of salvation at camp.

Arkansas pastors Revs. Tom Bartzsch, River Valley Grace, Lamar; Timothy Henning, Trinity, Mena, Ark.; and Josh Ralston, Zion, London, also participated in the service. Music was led by Pastor Tooley, his wife, Katherine, and Maggie Davis.

Following the service, guests enjoyed a dinner of barbecue ribs, brisket and sausage with all the sides, purchased in part with Thrivent Action Team grants. Mountain neighbor Doug Scroggs smoked the meats.

The camp received \$39,000 in gifts toward the lodge during the offering, boosting the capital campaign to \$195,000 in gifts and pledges. The campaign is in the home stretch, hoping to reach the goal of \$270,000 by the end of 2021.

Pledges and gifts for the retreat lodge may be made at lutheran-camp.org/retreat-lodge.

Crisis averted!

As Camp Trinity has planned for a new retreat lodge, God has provided what is needed, often in unexpected ways. Friends of the camp donated 16 windows, more than 10 tons of stone and dozens of chairs even before the lodge plans were announced. All those materials will be used in the lodge.

But sometimes a need is met at precisely the moment it's recognized. As guests were arriving for the groundbreaking, cooks were in the kitchen preparing a barbecue dinner for 150 people. They opened the potato salad tubs and discovered they were moldy and out of date. More than a dozen tubs had been purchased just two days earlier.

Capital campaign committee member Mike Legendre was on the way to the groundbreaking ceremony from Paducah, Ky., with his wife, Mary. A call from Heidi Cox reached them en route, as they were approaching the same store where the tubs were purchased.

Photos of the moldy salad were texted to the store, enabling the Legendres to pick up fresh potato salad (safely within the expiration date, this time!) and deliver it in time for the groundbreaking service.

Guests were able to include the side with their meal as they enjoyed fellowship with other camp friends from across the Mid-South District.



Praise, Maryville, plans expansion

On Aug. 1, Praise Lutheran Church, Maryville, Tenn., launched its capital campaign: “Living Stones: Building Upon the Rock,” in order to expand its worship, fellowship and discipleship. Since the church’s humble beginnings in a downtown storefront in 2000, Praise Lutheran Church has been steadily blessed with growth.

Today, Praise is nearly bursting at the seams and finalizing plans for a new church building with larger worship space, classrooms and fellowship space that will allow its members to continue to grow in grace and share (all the more) the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Rock upon which we have been built.

“As living stones, we endeavor to build upon that firm foundation, build up our community through acts of service, and invite others into a rock-solid biblical and sacramental life with Christ,” says Rev. Derek Roberts, Praise pastor. “Our church family has been preparing for this expansion for several years. The need had become increasingly obvious this spring and summer with a surge in attendance and membership. We are in prayer daily about the vision to faithfully serve our people and community with this upcoming expansion.

“We also want to involve others in the greater Knoxville area and the Mid-South District who may find value in what we are doing. Part of our vision is to provide a desirable space and location for circuit and district gatherings near the Knoxville airport and the Great Smoky Mountain National Park.”

Pastor Roberts invites you to view full details of the project, including 3D animations, a PDF



booklet with the full scope of work and FAQs, and opportunities to make a special contribution, at praiselutheran.com/build; or contact him at pastor@praiselutheran.com.

“Most of all,” he says, “we covet your prayers as we embark on this expansion journey with thanks and praise to our Lord Jesus Christ, who has gathered precious living stones at Praise Lutheran for His glory, worship and honor.”

Pictured are the architect’s renderings of the new Praise Lutheran Church, Maryville, Tenn. Above is the building and below is the sanctuary. Ground will be broken in 2022.



Christmas is coming!

Send us your stories and photos for the December issue by Oct. 15.

Digital files, sent via e-mail, are preferred. 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