



MID-SOUTH LUTHERAN



LCMS/Erk M. Junsford

But her opinion is as old as mankind itself. St. Paul says that any notion about getting into heaven by what we do is wrong ... dead wrong. It's mankind's way of trying to get into heaven, but then there's God's way. Mankind's way is stuck on the belief that we have to do something or that we need to earn it.

But stop and think: We raise our kids with the idea that they have to earn respect and trust. When we grow up, we earn rewards and promotions by working hard. We can say the best things in life are free, but the school of hard knocks tells us that the really good stuff has to be earned.

So there's little wonder why over half of Americans believe they have to earn their way to heaven, on their own.

Many misinformed Christians today believe someone can get to heaven by keeping the Ten Commandments. St. Paul writes:

For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. **ROM. 10:2**

He didn't have anything against his fellow Jews. He was one! He's simply saying that their zeal to keep the Law and do good works to earn their way into heaven or gain points toward their own righteousness is misdirected.

There's a big problem with the concept. Quite simply, it's mathematically impossible. Paul writes:

For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. **ROM. 10:5**

It's called perfection — everything

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God's Grace: Not for sale

As we celebrate the Reformation in October, I am reminded of an article in *USA Today* some years ago about a survey that asked the richest Americans what three things they'd be most willing to pay for. Their choices were "great intellect," "true love" and "a place in heaven." The averages were \$407,000 for intellect, \$487,000 for true love and \$640,000 for a place in heaven. I'm not sure what it all means, other than that the richest Americans might think they can buy just about anything!



Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola
District President

According to the report, over half of those surveyed believed that if people are generally good and do enough good things, they'll get to heaven. (Test that spurious belief against God's Word!)

I'm in favor of doing good works. But what about the news about acts of violence? It's more than we hear about acts of kindness.

People convicted of crimes oftentimes have to do community service. When our congregation volunteered to work on a Habitat for Humanity project, I was on the scaffolding with a young teenager when she asked, "Sir, what were you convicted of that you're here today?"

She seemed to believe that her good works were some kind of currency she could use to pay back for her misdeeds.

MESSAGE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

done, said, thought and acted on are without sin. If there's just one little error in the trillions of thoughts, acts or words we have, how many good things would we have to think, do or say in order to make up for the one error?

The answer is we can't make up for it. It's still an error.

We're expected to be 100-percent perfect at all times under the Law. But it's impossible to make up for errors. No one except Christ can keep the Law 100 percent of the time.

Mark Twain once said that if getting into heaven is a matter of always being good, we'd all stay out and our dog would get in. Being good enough or doing enough good to get into heaven is humanly impossible.

But God has a much better way for us all to get to heaven. After all, what would we rather trust: God's way or some concoction we come up with?

St. Paul says that the substance and purpose of the Law is fulfilled through Jesus Christ. The only obedience acceptable to God is perfect obedience — the way Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law on our behalf.

Paul writes:

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. **ROM. 10:4**

Jesus did *all* things perfectly for us so that we don't have to worry about something we can't possibly do.

So if it's mathematically impossible for us to fulfill the Law, and the human way of doing good works doesn't get us to heaven, what does?

The answer is so simple and easy. Over half the people of this nation missed it. Paul writes:

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law ... the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. **ROM. 3:21-22**

That's it! Salvation comes by believing



Jesus Christ is our Savior. Salvation that comes from trusting Christ — which is the message we preach — is already within reach. In fact, Scripture says:

"The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart." **ROM. 10:8**

But didn't we say that getting to heaven has to be by God's way? There's a much deeper sense to Paul's message. He writes:

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. **ROM. 10:9-10**

What does it mean to confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe God raised Him from the dead? Does this mean a person who never has the ability to speak can never be saved? Does it mean a person who is deaf or profoundly mentally incapacitated and unable to speak will never see salvation?

Absolutely not. Scripture says that even the demons believe in Jesus Christ, but they tremble. This believing must be more than an intellectual knowledge that there's a Man named Jesus Christ. So what does Paul mean?

It means we're fully aware that we can *never* be saved by observing the Law. It means that what our heart believes and tongue confesses is that we're unworthy sinners in need of a Savior. It means that no matter how much good we might think we do in this life, it can't reach the 100-percent perfection God requires for those who live by the Law. It means that not only do we sin, but as Psalm 51 says, we are conceived sinful and separated from God. We need a Savior, who alone is Christ the Lord.

The heart of the Gospel is that God loved us so much that He sent His only Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall have eternal life. Christ's perfect

obedience is the high bar that's only acceptable to God. Nothing less will do.

We can't earn God's love or make ourselves good enough to be acceptable to Him. God offers the means by which we're made acceptable. Even better than that, He gave us the means by which we're made inheritors of His eternal and glorious kingdom.

Unfortunately, *USA Today* missed that point. God is love and He's not for sale. The question isn't how good we are or how good we must be. The question of eternal life is "Is Jesus our Savior?"

Do we place Christ's perfect obedience to fulfill all the Law for our sake above any confidence in our actions, thoughts or deeds? Do we acknowledge that we're born sinful and can never achieve perfection by our natural human means? Do we confess that God only forgives sins through the merits of Jesus Christ, and that the only justification for any man, woman or child is through the perfect sacrifice of Christ on the cross and His resurrection in glory?

That's what it means to believe and confess, given only by the gift of faith from the Holy Spirit. That's what it means to say that every infant child, every profoundly mentally debilitated person, every deaf or mute person, or anyone with any kind of limitation has faith by the power of God's Holy Spirit and the gift given through His Gospel and proclamation of His Word.

This is pure grace proclaimed in the pure Gospel. There's absolutely nothing in all of creation that will separate us from that kind of love that is ours through Christ Jesus our Lord.

No one can find perfection. Unless a person is led by God's Word and Spirit, there is no hope or peace. God offers life and salvation by His grace through faith in Christ. God has given to us His holy Word and the Gospel's proclamation.

Through the perfection offered by our Savior Jesus Christ in His Means of Grace that He entrusted to His church, we may all be joined together with Him eternally. Christ Jesus is our only means of salvation, the peace and hope of the Reformation for us today and forever.

Preparing to SHARE the Gospel



How could you turn an everyday conversation toward spiritual matters?

By Bennett Rolan

Editorial Manager, Bible Study Fellowship
(This article concludes a 3-part series.)

Start by thinking about someone in your own life who desperately needs the Gospel, and how you might turn an everyday conversation toward spiritual matters.

Begin with four simple truths:

1. The truth about God
2. The truth about sin
3. The truth about Jesus

And finally,

4. The truth about our response

When we reflect on the powerful love and sacrifice of Jesus, we can respond in faith and repentance and experience true transformation!

Faith – Placing our full trust and confidence in Jesus. God’s gift of faith comes with His power for a new life (Eph. 2:8). His people move forward as forgiven and eternally secure, depending on Him to lead according to His will for our lives (John 3:16).

Repentance – Turning away from sin to move forward with God and serve Him as Savior, Lord and King. When

we confess our sins to God in prayer, we experience God’s forgiveness. In this forgiveness, we find the freedom to live differently.

Transformation – Through faith and repentance, the Holy Spirit transforms how we think and act. Our perspective changes. Our goals are different, and our actions look more like Jesus’ over time (Rom. 12:1-2; Eph. 1:13-14, 18-20).

Reflect on your own response to the Gospel. How did God transform your life? How can your story offer hope to others?

How to prepare

Spend some time reflecting and praying through the Gospel. Ask God to give you clarity and wisdom. Pray for opportunities to share. Ask God to prepare people in your life to receive His Good News by faith. Practice speaking these four truths in simple language:

THE TRUTH ABOUT GOD: We are totally dependent on God, our holy Creator, who has an absolute claim on us.

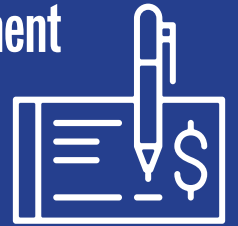
THE TRUTH ABOUT SIN: Our sin separates us from God and we need to be reconciled to Him.

THE TRUTH ABOUT JESUS: Jesus Christ, the only God-Man, has provided the only way for us to be reconciled to our Creator God.

THE TRUTH ABOUT OUR RESPONSE: Though we can’t control how someone will respond to the Gospel, we can be prepared to share when God gives us an opportunity.



Congregation mission commitment receipts
as of July 31, 2022 (7 months)



Anticipated amount (58% of budget)	\$885,435
Actual receipts	\$852,870
Over (under) anticipated amount	(\$32,565)

Use of mission commitment receipts

Allocated to Synod for world missions	\$241,278
Allocated to Tanzania	\$14,583
Retained for district ministry/mission support (70% of receipts)	\$597,009
Total receipts	\$852,870

Mission commitment receipts comparison

Actual receipts as of July 31, 2022	\$852,870
Actual receipts as of July 31, 2021	\$871,616
Over (under) prior year receipts	(\$18,746)

‘One in Christ’

The seventh LCMS Hispanic National Convention was held Aug. 2–5 in Orlando, Fla., under the theme “For We Are All One in Jesus Christ.” The event, organized by the Hispanic Missionary League (HML), seeks to gather the Latino congregations, institutions, missions and ministries of the LCMS for the promotion, strengthening and support of the Lutheran Hispanic community.

A new HML Board of Directors was elected and seminars were provided for the attendees. Rev. Brandon Martin, pastor of Spanish ministry at Salem Lutheran Ministries, Springdale, Ark., presented a breakout session on reconciliation.

IN PHOTO: Mid-South District attendees included, from left, Rev. Ricardo and Priscilla Granado of Trinity, Memphis; Pastor Martin and Rev. Bill Zwick, district executive director of Missions and Ministry.



Rescuing lost souls in a secular culture

Shared by the Board of Evangelism of First, Little Rock

On May 26, 1940, Operation Dynamo began, which was the evacuation of thousands of Allied soldiers from the beaches of Dunkirk, France, to rescue them from the massive German forces surrounding them. When British Prime Minister Winston Churchill called for small vessels to assist the Royal Navy, 850 “Little Ships” responded, including fishing boats, lifeboats, pleasure cruisers, ferries, tugs and barges.

The British estimated that only 45,000 troops could be evacuated, but in nine days they evacuated over 338,000 soldiers. This rescue was heralded by Churchill as “a miracle of deliverance.”

There is a parallel to our nation today as we are besieged by an encroaching secular culture that seeks to steal our faith, kill our bodies and destroy our souls.

- ▶ Our nation legalized gay marriage and celebrates homosexuality in government, mainstream and social media, our military, major corporations, Hollywood, and educational institutions.
- ▶ June is designated as Gay Pride Month, a double abomination to the Lord (homosexuality and pride). Also, 98 U.S. embassies recognize and celebrate Gay Pride Month.
- ▶ 62% of American adults favor same-sex marriage.
- ▶ A recent survey revealed an astonishing 16% of Gen Z Americans identify as LGBT, compared with 2% of boomers.
- ▶ We have killed over 65 million unborn babies, promoted abortion to other countries and embraced transsexuality and transhumanism, all abominations to our Lord.
- ▶ Over half of church attendees look at internet pornography.



- ▶ Church attendance has dropped from 70% of our population in 1960 to 20% now. Also, 28% of those who were regular church attendees pre-pandemic have not attended in person or watched an online service even once since restrictions were put in place.
- ▶ 37% of millennials have no religious faith at all.

And yet the need is great. About 70% of all Americans are angry every day, 31% report they’re “really angry” every day, and half of our population is angrier than they have ever been.

Just as Churchill called all the private owners of “Little Ships” to rescue the soldiers trapped at Dunkirk, we are called by our Lord to reach out with the love and truth of Christ to rescue lost souls — friends, family, acquaintances — from a culture that opposes God and sends people on the broad path to the lake of fire.

That is why we are here. Be bold. Be strong. Be courageous and walk with the Lord.



BLESSINGS in Oak Ridge

Rev. Chase Lefort was installed as senior pastor of Faith, Oak Ridge, Tenn., on Aug. 7. He is serving his first call after recently graduating from Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind. Pictured are, from left (front row) Revs. David Grave, St. Paul, Wartburg; John Frietag, emeritus; Dr. Roger Paavola, district president; Chase Lefort; Philip Bohlken, emeritus; George Smith, Faith associate pastor; (back row) Michael Miller, Redeemer, Harriman; Adam Woldt, The Point, Knoxville; Paul Kritsch, Chapel of the Good Shepherd, Sharps Chapel; Derek Roberts, Praise, Maryville; Paul Muench, emeritus; and Paul Becker, Concordia, Kingsport.

District congregations receive life grants

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) has announced that 37 congregations have received grants during Phase 1 of the 1 John 3 Initiative Million Dollar Life Match. The program, which offers a total of \$1 million in matching grants, seeks to support LCMS congregations involved in providing beginning-of-life care in their communities.

Three of those congregations are in the Mid-South District. **Our Savior, Nashville**, was chosen for its efforts in supporting foster care and adoption in collaboration with local agencies. **Grace, Clarksville, Tenn.**; and **Praise, Maryville, Tenn.**, were each chosen for their collaborations with pregnancy resource centers.

Grants were awarded in four categories:

- Congregational projects directly caring for families experiencing challenges at the beginning of life;
- Partnerships with LCMS Recognized Service Organizations;
- Supporting foster care and adoption in collaboration with local agencies; and
- Collaborations with local pregnancy resource centers.

The 37 recipients were chosen after a careful review process that included input from staff of the LCMS Office of National Mission, LCMS district presidents or their representatives, and district life coordinators.



LCMS/Erik M. Lunsford

“It is exciting to learn about the variety of mercy work being done by LCMS congregations across the country and to partner with them to expand their capacity,” said Deaconess Dr. Tiffany Manor, director of LCMS Life Ministry, who is overseeing the grant program.

“There are some very creative projects that are providing spiritual, emotional and physical care. All of the projects chosen share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with people in the communities.”

Additional grants will be awarded during two more phases of the Million Dollar Life Match. A second set of applications is currently undergoing

the review process, and applications for the third phase will be accepted Nov. 1 through Jan. 22. All LCMS congregations are encouraged to apply.

Learn more about the 1 John 3 Million Dollar Life Match at lcms.org/serve/grants/life-grant.

CONGRATULATIONS!

We share with you the Mid-South District pastors who will celebrate ordination anniversaries in 2022. We rejoice and give thanks to God for the gifts these men provide to His church.



65 YEARS

Rev. Paul Donner (*emeritus*)
Paducah, Ky.

Rev. John Schulz (*emeritus*)
Knoxville, Tenn.

55 YEARS

Rev. James Evers (*emeritus*)
Oak Ridge, Tenn.

50 YEARS

Rev. Peter Ave-Lallemant
Faith, Fairfield Bay, Ark.

Rev. Philip Bohlken (*emeritus*)
Knoxville, Tenn.

Rev. Gary Heckmann (*emeritus*)
Cookeville, Tenn.

Rev. Paul Muench (*emeritus*)
Knoxville, Tenn.

45 YEARS

Rev. Jan Munch (*emeritus*)
Athens, Tenn.

Rev. Dr. Mark Press
Holy Trinity, Bowling Green, Ky.

40 YEARS

Rev. Keith Enko (*emeritus*)
Lebanon, Tenn.

Rev. Bradley Heinecke
Shepherd of the Hills, Horseshoe Bend, Ark.

Rev. Stewart Marshall
Trinity, Pine Bluff, Ark.

Rev. Richard Mayer
Messiah, Pea Ridge, Ark.

35 YEARS

Rev. Steve Harmon
Bethlehem, Johnson City, Tenn.

Rev. Paul Leigeber
Faith, Union City, Tenn.
Trinity, Dyersburg, Tenn.

Rev. H. Christopher Sheets
Good Shepherd, Chattanooga, Tenn.

Rev. Russell Shewmaker (*emeritus*)
Gravette, Ark.

30 YEARS

Rev. Jon Bischof
St. Matthew, Corning, Ark.

25 YEARS

Rev. Mark Goble
Christ the King, Memphis, Tenn.

Rev. Clarence Martin (*emeritus*)
Bartlett, Tenn.

Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola
Mid-South District president
Cordova, Tenn.

Rev. Andrew Smith
Cookeville, Tenn.

20 YEARS

Rev. Tracy Nelson
Our Savior, Nashville, Tenn.

Rev. M. Chad Philipp
St. Paul, Gillett, Ark.
St. Luke, DeWitt, Ark.

Rev. Kent Schaaf
Grace, Little Rock, Ark.

15 YEARS

Rev. Donald Coulter
Athens Lutheran Church, Athens, Tenn.

Rev. Christopher Gorshe
Bella Vista Lutheran Church,
Bella Vista, Ark.

Rev. Jeffrey King
Our Shepherd, Searcy, Ark.

Rev. David Vandercook
Shepherd of Peace, Maumelle, Ark.
Trinity, North Little Rock, Ark.

10 YEARS

Rev. Dr. Richard Davenport
Our Redeemer, Fort Smith, Ark.

Rev. Donald Welmer
First, Chattanooga, Tenn.

5 YEARS

Rev. Eric Rudsenske
Concordia, Jackson, Tenn.

Rev. Adam Woldt
The Point, Knoxville, Tenn.

Rev. JohnDavid Zischke
Restoration, Fayetteville, Ark.

WELL DONE,
GOOD AND
FAITHFUL
SERVANTS

LWML



LCMS/Erik M. Lunsford

Honoring our shepherds

By Lauren Drittler
Media and Marketing Chairman,
LWML Mid-District

October is Pastor Appreciation Month. This is an opportune time to recognize the men leading our churches. Throughout the years, you or your congregation may have done something to honor your shepherd — and we want to encourage you to keep this going!

You don't need to limit yourself to doing things in October or recognizing only your pastor. Acknowledging other church workers is also worthwhile.

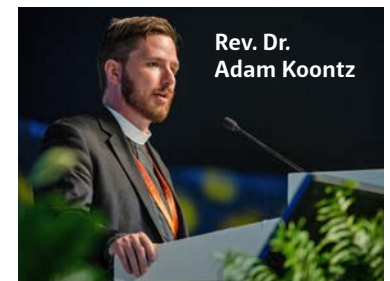
As LWML, we have many pastors who support our organization as counselors in our zones as well as the district. Sending a thank-you card or an email is an easy way to acknowledge these men. And let us not forget the pastor's

family — their wives and children. Show them some appreciation this month and throughout the year.

The LWML website has resources to help with ideas if you want to try something new or different. Visit lwml.org/fall and scroll to the section "Gifts from the Heart." Here you will also see "Pastor Support and Involvement Ideas" and "Mission Service Activities" for Pastor Appreciation Month. Within these resources, you will find pastor survival kit ideas, words of encouragement to include in a greeting card, and printable cards.

There are many simple ways you can tell your pastor "Thank you" for all he does. Maybe make him a batch of cookies, share some of the produce from your garden, or give him a gift card to a local restaurant. The main idea is to show him appreciation for shepherding your church.

Camp Trinity to host retreat for fathers/sons



Rev. Dr.
Adam Koontz

FATHERS AND SONS (ages 8-plus) are invited to join Rev. David Vandercook, pastor of Shepherd of Peace, Maumelle, Ark., and Trinity, North Little Rock, as he hosts an Evanguard gathering on the biblical understanding of the patriarchy Nov. 18-20.

The guest speaker will be Rev. Dr. Adam Koontz, pastor of Trinity, Denver, and former professor at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.

The event will be held at Camp Trinity on Petit Jean Mountain. There will be opportunities for study, conversation, fellowship, prayer, indoor relaxation and outdoor adventure. Camp Trinity will offer canoeing, ax throwing, hiking and other fun outdoor activities.

For more information and to register, visit evanguard.org/f/an-evanguard-retreat-for-2022.

Christmas is coming!

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

Deadline for the December issue is Oct. 15.



Augsburg Fall Fest is Oct. 8

By Earl Schrock

The 15th Annual Augsburg Fall Fest will be held at Zion, Augsburg, Ark., from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 8. Fall Fest is a German-American heritage festival featuring German food and music, a silent auction and country store, bingo, a cake walk, antique vehicles, free kids' games, a petting zoo, craft and educational booths, and a Reformation bike ride.

All proceeds from the festival are divided equally between the River Valley Christian Clinic in Russellville and the Augsburg Food Pantry, which is sponsored by Zion's LWML. The 2021 festival raised over \$33,000.

The River Valley Christian Clinic provides free medical, dental, optometric and smoking cessation counseling to people who cannot otherwise afford these services. The clinic has its own pharmacy, which fills prescriptions from volunteer physicians. And it provides Christian counseling through local pastors who volunteer their services.

The clinic recently moved from its original site in Dardanelle to a newly renovated site in Russellville and serves people throughout the Arkansas River Valley area.

The Augsburg Food Pantry had its modest beginning in 1995 when Zion LWML members periodically took boxes of food to people who had fallen on hard times. It has grown to a large operation, especially for a small rural congregation.

Now known through the entire Arkansas River Valley area, the pantry provides food to 1,000 people from seven counties each month. There has been enormous growth in the number of people served since the pandemic and the subsequent rise in inflation.

Along with the proceeds from Fall Fest, the food pantry is funded through contributions from many individuals, other congregations and grants. In the fall of 2016, Zion began construction of a new building on the church property to serve as a warehouse for the Augsburg Food Pantry and as a multi-purpose community center. The new building is equipped with a large walk-in freezer that makes it possible to accept corporate donations of frozen food items which previously had to be turned down due to lack of adequate storage space.

The food pantry can now provide large quantities of protein-rich meats to families in need. In June, the food pantry applied for and received Designated Donation Partner status with Tyson Foods, which is providing up to three tons of chicken each month.

These two important mission efforts have received over \$150,000 each from the proceeds of Augsburg Fall Fest. Anyone who would like to contribute to these two charities may do so by sending a check to Augsburg Fall Fest, 93 Augsburg Road, London, AR 72847.

The festival committee invites everyone to attend and enjoy a family outing of food and fellowship on the grounds of Zion, Augsburg, located at the intersection of Highway 333 and Augsburg Road.

