



/ OCTOBER 2023

MID-SOUTH LUTHERAN



LCMS/Erik M. Lunsford

GOD'S ENDLESS FORGIVENESS



Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola
District President

It's amazing how God pleads with us sinners in every way He possibly can. When I was recently conducting one of our Tuesday sermon studies, a participant said, "Why does God keep forgiving us, even though we continue to sin?" Think about it: God approached Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden when they were playing spiritual hide-and-seek. He confronted them with their sin. But that's not all! In His mercy He promised them the Seed who would crush the deceiver — the serpent's head — in order that He might save them and bring them back to Himself.

Scripture reveals other examples of His grace. God met with Abraham over supper to tell him He was going to be a father even at the age of 100. God divided the waters of the Red Sea to bring His people through dry ground. He sent prophet after prophet to Israel. Although the people abused and murdered His messengers, God decided before creation to send His Son. Surely He thought the world would respect His Son.

Instead, God's Son took upon Himself the people's hatred and the full storehouse of God's wrath against sin, not because He was constrained to bear it, but rather He chose to bear it for our sake. How much more could He do for us, as he says in Isaiah 5:4: "What more was there to do for My vineyard, that I have not done in it?"

If we're not led to repentance and return to the foundation of faith, we are truly hard-hearted. God's Word begs us to repent and return to Him. Because we sin, we are truly hard-hearted. Our forefathers knew it. Recall that the prophet Hosea was commanded by God to marry a prostitute. Her name was Gomer. Even after being married to Hosea, Gomer had gigantic fidelity problems. Yet God commanded Hosea to continue to love, cherish and indeed chase after her, begging her to return to him no matter how humiliating this might have been.

But this is the picture of our God. He suffered all humiliation and bore our sin so that we might live with Him as His bride, in whom there is neither spot nor blemish despite our sin. To us God says:

How can I give you up ... How can I hand you over ...? My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender. **HOSEA 11:8**

See how God responds to our hard-heartedness as we run to everything temporal and not His Word. He has not handed us over to our wickedness. He continues to chase after us

See **MESSAGE**, Page 2

Honoring our church workers

As you know, your LCMS congregation is part of a regional group of congregations, ministries and church workers called the Mid-South District. You can think of the Mid-South District as your congregation's extended LCMS family!

Just like your congregation, the Mid-South District engages in ministry, driven by the mission to "provide leadership, resources and encouragement for reaching the lost for Christ's Kingdom and equipping the found for service in our churches, communities and the world."

A significant emphasis of district ministry is encouraging and supporting our church workers. Since October is Church Worker Appreciation Month, the Mid-South District is inviting you to share a gift in honor or memory of a worker. **If there is a Lutheran pastor, teacher, principal, director of Christian education or other church worker who has impacted you in a special way, you can share a gift in their honor!**

This unique opportunity is being provided as a way to celebrate district ministry — and highlight the cooperative effort that it takes to make this ministry happen. The work is made possible both by mission commitments from district congregations and support from generous donors like you.

If you would like to honor or memorialize a church worker through a gift online, please visit mid-southlcms.org/give and designate your gift to IMPACT: District Ministry Month. You can also note the church worker to honor or memorialize on the form. If you prefer to mail a gift, please detach and include the completed form below with your gift. Watch for a list of honored workers on the district website in December and in an early 2024 issue of *The Lutheran Witness*!

Please accept my gift in support of
Mid-South District ministry (the IMPACT Fund):

☐ in HONOR of

☐ in MEMORY of

Worker's name: _____

Worker's congregation or school and city, state: _____

Please mail this form with your check payable to the
LCMS Mid-South District (Memo: IMPACT) to:

Mid-South District • 1675 Wynne Road • Cordova TN 38016

MESSAGE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

just as Hosea chased after Gomer, his prostitute wife. In our human nature, we are Gomers in our relationship to God.

God will always stand by His promises to us, even if we are abusing them. This is the point that Jesus is making in Luke 16. This is what it means for God to be with us, that we receive all and everything from Him — our life, daily sustenance and our identity in Him. We may give away what is His. We cannot outgive God's generosity. Even if you think we are cheating Him or ignoring His Means of Grace, God's undeserved grace and mercy comes by His faithfulness, even if we're not.

Our dearest Lord Jesus offered His lifeblood for us while writing us into His last will and testament. He brings us together in His holy Christian church to receive His overflowing abundance and grace. We are continuously invited by God to come so that we might participate in the precious gift — the shed blood that we would receive as

we gather around the altar. Only truly repentant and redeemed sinners need approach this great antidote to death's final sting. The prescription of immortality is served here.

Christ serves us with His own hands. Into our emptiness, He pours the life-giving blood of His supper. He spreads His covenant of Baptism over our wickedness, covering us with the blood of His mercy and atoning sacrifice. Upon our tongues, He lovingly places the consecrated bread that is His body. Christ Jesus has promised that this is the bread that comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. Jesus said:

"I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." **JOHN 6:51**

See how God has gone to the wildest, most outlandish lengths to win us back to Himself. God would desire that all people be saved! But what is more is that God is sustaining, that you and I should come to receive His

grace and mercy for our life now in our life everlasting.

This October, we once again turn our attention to these doctrines that set apart our Lutheran churches from the rest of the world. We preach, teach and confess the answer to the question, "Why does God keep forgiving?" It is not any worthiness or merit on our part that God graciously offers us His forgiveness and the blessed hope in His promise of life everlasting.

Through His apostle, St. Paul, God reminds us:

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. **EPH. 2:8-9**

This is the foundation of the Reformation and the blessed hope of God's provision on this pilgrimage and the promised entrance into His eternal presence in glory. Celebrate this hope and share it with those who still live in fear and darkness, that they may come to the light of our life in Christ Jesus.

LWML

MISSION GRANTS UPDATE

Students in Haiti receive a school lunch through Trinity HOPE, a current district mission grant recipient.



By Lauren Robertson

Media and Marketing Chair,
LWML Mid-South District

In June 2022, LWML Mid-South District convention delegates approved a mission goal of \$130,000 for the following mission grants:

- ▶ Financial Aid for Professional Church Workers
- ▶ Cultivating Innovative New Ministry Programs
- ▶ Camp Trinity Camperships
- ▶ Change Point Pregnancy Center (Hot Springs, Ark.) – Purchase of Mobile Unit
- ▶ Welcome Home Chattanooga – Groceries for Residents
- ▶ Pregnancy Resource Center (Maryville, Tenn.) – Medical and Program Services
- ▶ Hope House (Crisis Pregnancy Center, Kingsport, Tenn.) – Roof Repair/Replacement
- ▶ Eagle Rock Retreat (Tallassee, Tenn.) – Accessible Walkway Project
- ▶ Compassion Closet of Oak Ridge (Tenn.) – Operational Expenses for Foster Care Resource Closet
- ▶ Ascension Lutheran-Edison School Partnership (Madison, Tenn.) – Safety Improvements for School Facility
- ▶ Trinity HOPE – Spiritual and Physical Food for Children of Haiti
- ▶ Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind. – Support for the Food Co-op

- ▶ Concordia Seminary, St. Louis – Support for International Students' Education Costs
- ▶ Lutheran Bible Translators – Translation of the Bible in Cameroon

With five months left in this biennium, we have only \$15,000 left to raise to meet our goal. When we fully fund the approved grants, we can move on to those grants that did not receive enough votes for approval.

Go to the “Missions” tab at midsouthlwml.org and select “Mission Grants” from the drop-down menu. Click the link at top for a chart of the mission grants, which includes those that were not selected.

The mission grant process has started for the 2024 LWML Mid-South District Convention. You have until Nov. 1 to get your mission grant request to your zone president, who must turn in mission grant applications to Sandra Arnold, LWML district third vice-president, by Dec. 31.

All the information you need can also be found at midsouthlwml.org. At the “Missions” tab, select “Mission Grant Request Forms” from the drop-down menu. Please read through the guidelines before submitting. Questions may be sent to missiongrants@midsouthlwml.org.

In Memoriam

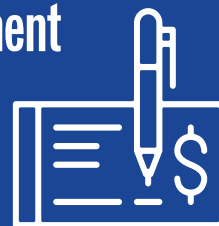
The Mid-South District offers prayers of peace and comfort for the family and friends of Rev. M. Peter Ave-Lallemant, who was called to glory on Aug. 15. A loving husband, devoted father and faithful servant of the Lord, Pastor Ave-Lallemant served congregations in Nebraska, Missouri, Georgia, Tennessee and Arkansas during his 51 faithful years in ministry.



Thanks be to God for Pastor Ave-Lallemant and his years of service in faith.

Congregation mission commitment receipts

as of
July 31, 2023
(7 months)



Anticipated amount (50% of budget)	\$912,491
Actual receipts	\$862,899
Over (under) anticipated amount	(\$49,592)

Use of mission commitment receipts

Allocated to Synod for world missions	\$244,286
Allocated to Tanzania	\$14,583
Retained for district ministry/mission support (70% of receipts)	\$604,029
Total receipts	\$862,899

Mission commitment receipts comparison

Actual receipts as of July 31, 2023	\$862,899
Actual receipts as of July 31, 2022	\$852,870
Over (under) prior year receipts	\$10,029

INSTALLATIONS

Rev. Vincent Shemwell was installed as pastor of **Bethlehem, Johnson City, Tenn.**, on June 25. Celebrating were, from left (front row) Revs. David Graves, St. Paul, Wartburg; Ed Maanum, First, Knoxville; Dr. Roger Paavola, district president; Vincent Shemwell; Chase Lefort, Faith, Oak Ridge; Dr. Roger Reckling, emeritus; (back row) Paul Becker, Concordia, Kingsport; Dennis Bennett, emeritus; Mark Kophamer, Redeemer, Elizabethton; Steve Harmon, emeritus; Michael Thurau, emeritus; Adam Woldt, The Point, Knoxville.



Rev. Clarence Martin was installed as pastor of **Messiah, Memphis**, on July 23. Pictured are, from left (front row) Revs. Jim Belles, Grace Celebration, Cordova; Dr. Roger Paavola, district president; Clarence Martin; Russell Belisle, Cross of Calvary, Memphis; (back row) William Zwick; Neil Vanderbush, emeritus, Memphis; Mark Goble, Christ the King, Memphis; and Clayton Seller, Faith, Collierville.

Synod will cover **MinistrySafe** fees

The LCMS Office of National Mission recommends Synod congregations and schools strongly emphasize awareness and prevention of child sexual abuse. To help with these efforts, National Mission is pleased to announce fully funded memberships with MinistrySafe, a national organization that equips congregations and ministries to better protect children from sexual abuse.



All LCMS congregations and schools have access to the online MinistrySafe resources at no cost through 2024.

For more information about the training, contact Missy Washburn at mwashburn@mid-southlcms.com or 901-373-1341, ext. 3101.

Visit ministrysafe.com/lcms to activate your ministry's membership under this special offer. After selecting "Start Your MinistrySafe Membership," select "Organization Membership \$250." The billing page will allow you to enter the access code LCMS2023, which covers the cost of the membership.

Congratulations!

We share with you the Mid-South District pastors who will celebrate ordination anniversaries in 2023. We rejoice and give thanks to God for the gifts these men provide to His church.

55 YEARS

Rev. Kenneth Haydon (*emeritus*)
Eureka Springs, Ark.

Rev. Arthur Kaufmann (*emeritus*)
Bristol, Tenn.

Rev. Stephen Stov (*emeritus*)
Rockwood, Tenn.

Rev. David Tews (*emeritus*)
Horseshoe Bend, Ark.

50 YEARS

Rev. Barry Hildebrandt
Cross of Christ, Chattanooga, Tenn.

Rev. Paul Kritsch
Chapel of the Good Shepherd, Sharps Chapel, Tenn.

45 YEARS

Rev. Dan Elkins (*emeritus*)
Olive Branch, Miss.

Rev. Johnny Graham
Zion, Ulm, Ark.; Our Savior, Brinkley, Ark.

Rev. Gene Henke (*emeritus*)
Nolensville, Tenn.

Rev. Robert Herring (*emeritus*)
Holiday Island, Ark.

Rev. Larry Rockemann (*emeritus*)
Knoxville, Tenn.

40 YEARS

Rev. Andrew Toopes
Holy Trinity, Bowling Green, Ky.

Rev. Thom Lakso (*emeritus*)
Knoxville, Tenn.

Rev. Charles Neugebauer
Christ the King, Memphis, Tenn.

Rev. Robert Pfaff (*emeritus*)
Wartburg, Tenn.

Rev. Robert Seaton
First, Cleveland, Tenn.

Rev. Larry Seiferth (*emeritus*)
Peoria, Ariz.

Rev. Terry Tieman
Grace Celebration, Cordova, Tenn.

Rev. Brian Truog
Christ Our Savior, Loudon, Tenn.

35 YEARS

Rev. Russell Belisle
Cross of Calvary, Memphis, Tenn.

Rev. Mark Krause
Salem Lutheran Ministries, Springdale, Ark.

Rev. Randy Loux
Chaplain, Clarksville, Tenn.

Rev. Steven Teske (*candidate*)
Little Rock, Ark.

Rev. William Wagner
Trinity, Columbia, Tenn.

25 YEARS

Rev. Douglas DeWitt
Faith, Thompson's Station, Tenn.

Rev. Robert Harbin
Faith, Collierville, Tenn.

Rev. Mark Wenzelburger (*emeritus*)
Garfield, Ark.

Rev. Philip Young
Redeemer, Nashville, Tenn.

20 YEARS

Rev. Paul Hass
Bella Vista, Bella Vista, Ark.

15 YEARS

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

Rev. Robert (Danny) Anderson
Grace, Knoxville, Tenn.

Rev. Shawn Found
LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces,
Little Rock, Ark.

Rev. Edward Maanum
First, Knoxville, Tenn.

Rev. Brandon Martin
Salem Lutheran Ministries,
Springdale, Ark.

Rev. Theodore McMinn
Shepherd of the Hills, McMinnville, Tenn.

Rev. Kevin McReynolds
Redeemer, Mountain Home, Ark.

Rev. Aaron Neugebauer
Redeemer, Paragould, Ark.
St. John's, Lafa, Ark.

Rev. Gregory Prauner (*candidate*)
Battle Creek, Neb.

Rev. Mark Rhoads
Christ Our Savior, Loudon, Tenn.

Rev. Gordon Smith
Our Savior, Morristown, Tenn.
Christ of the Cumberland, Harrogate, Tenn.

Rev. Jason Zirbel
Grace, Greenwood, Ark.

10 YEARS

Rev. David Graves
St. Paul, Wartburg, Tenn.

Rev. Joseph Jacks
St. Philip, Chattanooga, Tenn.

Rev. William Ringer
St. John's, Russellville, Ark.

Rev. Clayton Sellers
Faith, Collierville, Tenn.

Rev. Alan Thoe
Grace, Murfreesboro, Tenn.

5 YEARS

Rev. James Belles
Grace Celebration, Cordova, Tenn.

Rev. Timothy Hunze
Emmanuel, Hermitage, Tenn.

Rev. Jeremy McDonald
Fort Wayne, Ind.

Rev. George Smith
Faith, Oak Ridge, Tenn.

Rev. Gerald Stobaugh
Holy Spirit, Oak Ridge, Tenn.

Well done, good and faithful servants



Lutherans connect for flood relief

On July 18, Jan Simko, Mid-South District Disaster Relief coordinator, was shocked by what she saw on a weather channel. Mayfield, Ky., was flooded. Nearly a foot of rain had fallen on the city of about 10,000 people and surrounding areas the night before.

Jan and a Lutheran Early Response Team (LERT) had served in the aftermath of a devastating tornado in Mayfield in December 2021, and formed lasting friendships with those they met.

Jan remembered Bryce Cramer, LERT chainsaw trainer and a member of Immanuel, Murphysboro, Ill., telling her about an LWML member in Illinois who had 80 flood buckets packed with essentials like bleach, rubber gloves, sanitizer, a scrub brush and other cleaning supplies. Jan jumped into action, contacting Bryce, who asked Pastor Stephen Boyken of His House Ministries in Mayfield if the buckets would be welcome. Boyken said yes, but they were needed within 24 hours.

Lutherans quickly connected with other Lutherans, forming a chain from Mary Hamilton, the bucket lady in Red Bud, Ill., through Bryce, and from Jan through Rev. David Appold, pastor of St. Paul, Paducah, Ky., who assembled his LERT crew to unload the buckets Bryce delivered the next morning. The



Mary Hamilton and Bryce Cramer began the flood bucket chain in Illinois. The buckets eventually made it to Paducah, Ky., where they were received by, (top photo) from left, Cramer, DJ and Jim Swant, Icy Gardner, Rev. David Appold and Ray Musgrave.

buckets were distributed to where they were most needed — 51 buckets to Mayfield residents, and 25 buckets to families in Fancy Farm, Ky., where His House Ministries has a school.

And along the way, the LERT team also cleaned up some tree damage for their Mayfield friends and neighbors.

Later, Jan connected the dots and marveled: “I live in Crossville, Tenn., Bryce lives in southern Illinois, Mary works at the International Center in St. Louis and, of course, St. Paul members from Paducah and Mayfield, Ky. — all of us came together to help! To God be the Glory!”

Making America GODLY AGAIN

By Rev. Paul Becker

Pastor, Concordia, Kingsport, Tenn.

In 1983, President Ronald Reagan gave a speech at the annual convention of the National Association of Evangelicals. He said: “A commitment to freedom and personal liberty ... is grounded in the much deeper realization that freedom prospers only where the blessings of God are avidly sought and humbly accepted. The American experiment in democracy rests on this insight.

“Its discovery was the great triumph of our Founding Fathers, voiced by William Penn when he said: ‘If we will not be governed by God, we must be governed by tyrants.’ Explaining the inalienable rights of men, (Thomas) Jefferson said, ‘The God who gave us life, gave us liberty at the same time.’ And it was George Washington who said that, ‘of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports.’ And finally, that shrewdest of all observers of American democracy, Alexis de Tocqueville, put it eloquently after he had gone on a search for the secret of America’s greatness and genius and he said: ‘Not until I went into the churches of America and heard her pulpits aflame with righteousness did I understand the greatness and the genius of America. America is good. And if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.’”

Forty years after Reagan’s speech reminding us of the need to be good, we have heard many speeches about the desire to make America great again, which could mean just about anything. For those of us whose thinking is shaped by the Word of God, we sense that something is missing, namely the need to be good, and going back even one step further, how we might become good by turning to God and changing



the way we think and act, that is, by becoming godly again.

How that might be done?

My son, if you receive my words,
and treasure up my commandments
with you, ... then you will under-
stand the fear of the LORD and find
the knowledge of God. For the LORD
gives wisdom; from His mouth come
knowledge and understanding; ...
he is a shield to those who walk in
integrity. PROVERBS 2:1, 5-6, 7B

On May 18, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Neal Gorsuch (in *Arizona v. Mayorkas*) described the results of not receiving God’s Word and treasuring His commands, what has indeed happened in our own country. He has the honor of being the only person of whom I am aware to describe what has happened to the liberties we hold dear. As in the practice of medicine, until an accurate diagnosis is made, proper treatment

and an eventual cure will remain hidden.

Gorsuch writes: “Since March 2020, we may have experienced the greatest intrusions on civil liberties in the peacetime history of this country. Executive officials across the country issued emergency decrees on a breathtaking scale. Governors and local leaders imposed lockdown orders, forcing people to remain in their homes. They shuttered businesses and schools, public and private. They closed churches even as they allowed casinos and other favored businesses to carry on. They threatened violators not just with civil penalties but with criminal sanctions too.

“They surveilled church parking lots, recorded license plates and issued notices warning that their attendance at even outdoor services satisfying all state social-distancing and hygiene requirements could amount to criminal conduct. Federal executive officials entered the act too. Not just with emergency immigration decrees. They deployed a public-health agency to regulate landlord-tenant relations nationwide. They used a workplace-safety agency to issue a vaccination mandate for most working Americans. They threatened to fire noncompliant employees and warned that service members who refused to vaccinate might face dishonorable discharge and confinement.

“Along the way, it seems federal officials may have pressured social-media companies to suppress information about pandemic policies with which they disagreed. While executive officials issued new emergency decrees at a furious pace, state legislators and Congress — the bodies normally responsible for adopting our laws — too often fell silent. Courts bound to protect our liberties addressed a few — but hardly all — of the intrusions upon them.”

So the next time you hear talk about how good or great America is or might be once again, let it slip off your tongue that in order to arrive at that desirable goal, we must first seek good and turn from evil, and thereby make America godly again.

Junior high retreat is Oct. 20-22

Junior high youth will learn about their Christian calling to love and serve others at the Linkt retreat, to be held Oct. 20-22.

The theme, “Love & Serve,” is based on Phil. 2:1-11, in which the apostle Paul admonishes followers of Christ to humbly put others first, following the example of Jesus who “emptied himself, taking the form of a servant” and “humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” Rev. Aaron Neugebauer, senior pastor of St. John’s, Lafe, Ark., is the retreat speaker.

Congregations of the Mid-South District are encouraged to bring sixth- through eighth-grade students to enjoy fellowship with youth from other Lutheran congregations, take in the beauty of creation on Petit Jean Mountain, and hear the life-changing Gospel.

Pastors and youth leaders can learn more at lutherancamp.org (click the “Linkt Youth Retreats” button at top).

Registration is by congregation, and church offices have received information and registration forms through email. Any congregation that did not receive the email is urged to email the camp office at director@lutherancamp.org.

Summer camp

Camp Trinity welcomed a record 270 summer campers (including 23

counselors-in-training) in 2023. Most of the growth came in family camps, in which the addition of the new retreat lodge has allowed the camp to accommodate more families.

Staff plans to repeat the new weekday family camp session for pastors’ and church workers’ families for the 2024 summer camp season. The other family camps are held on weekends for the convenience of working families. Grandparents have also been participating.

The application process for summer staff 2024 opens this month. Lutheran young adults, ages 18-25, looking for summer jobs — in which they can make a difference in the lives of children, youth and families — are encouraged to apply to Camp Trinity or any of the LCMS camps around the country. Applicants can fill out an employment profile at nloma.org, the website of the National Lutheran Outdoors Ministry Association.

Retreat lodge

The new retreat lodge at Camp Trinity has been busy with retreats, reunions and family camp, and it is booked for more events in the coming months. The lodge has 30 beds in six sleeping rooms, a large gathering room for fellowship and meals, a fully equipped kitchen, a large porch and a deck for relaxing.

Camp amenities, such as campfire



Campers sing “Peter was Rowing” during a Family Camp campfire.

rings, walking trails, sand volleyball court, disc golf course and gaga ball pit are available for lodge guests. Groups can also arrange for canoeing, archery/axe throwing and group initiative course exercises for an additional fee.

Guests can cook for themselves, or the camp staff can prepare meals and deliver them to the lodge.

Church groups or families are urged to book events early. The cost is discounted on weeknights (Sunday-Thursday). Groups can also reduce costs by bringing their own bedding and towels.

For availability, send an email to director@lutherancamp.org.



Advocating for children

Katy Faust speaks at the second Henkel Conference, held Aug. 7-8 at Ascension, Madison Tenn. Faust is founder and president of Them Before Us, whose mission is defending a child’s right to their mother and father. About 120 clergy and laity attended the conference, which features a multitude of speakers focusing on contemporary issues. The third conference is scheduled for Aug. 19-20, 2024. Visit ascensionmadison.com/henkel.html.

SHARE YOUR NEWS WITH US!

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 December 2023 issue by Oct. 15.