



MID-SOUTH LUTHERAN



Remember the Reformation

Of all the things that we might celebrate in October, does anyone remember the Reformation? Every Oct. 31, we Lutherans hold a special service to commemorate what happened in Germany in 1517. An outspoken theology professor and monk named Martin Luther nailed 95 theses to the door of the Wittenberg Chapel. With the sound of that hammer hitting the nail, a firestorm blew across Europe that changed the world. It was an effort to return to God's Word for the proper understanding of God's grace, and a return to the original foundation of the Christian church and its Gospel of grace.

As we worship more than 500 years later, we can look around and wonder



Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola
District President

if the Lutheran church is still Lutheran. Is everyone who claims to be Lutheran really Lutheran? We see all kinds of changes that took place over 1,500 years ago and wonder ... do we need another Martin Luther? As he took a stand against the false leadership and false teachings of the church, and put the Bible into the hands of the public, we see how he challenged the Pope's teachings and his leadership in the church.

But here, in our times, we need to remember the Reformation's main point. It wasn't about education, sociology or culture. The Reformation was simply about returning to the grace given to us in the Gospel. That's what it still should be about today. Reading the 95 Theses, one that stands out is Thesis 62 — "The true treasure of the Church is the Most Holy Gospel of the glory and the grace of God."

As confessional Lutherans, we talk about

the Gospel and the grace of God in our churches. Luther's father worked hard to give him the opportunity to become a lawyer. But young Martin told him he was going to become a monk. He then took to his studies with great vigor, so the problem began.

He soon discovered what was lacking in his life, and how much sin wracked his life. But by reading Romans, he would have known exactly how to apply the Gospel message of condemnation and Law to his life:

Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

ROMANS 3:19-20

God's Law was clear. The problem was the 16th-century church was not teaching what the Bible actually says about our salvation in Christ. The more Luther learned of his sin, the more he tried to fix the problem by himself. He tried everything, like sitting with his confessor for hours. He tried recounting every single sin. It was an impossible task. But the more he tried to please God with his own desperate actions, the more he fell into deeper despair. He became angry at God, wondering how could God set up such strict rules, all the while knowing we would never be able to satisfy Him and that we always fall short.

Then Luther read Psalm 51, in which the Word allowed him to see that there

See **LUTHER**, Page 2

LUTHER

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

is another side to God. Not only does God's Word pronounce standards of holiness and purity that we cannot attain on our own, but God also gives us the answer for the problems of our sins. The first verse of Psalm 51 was especially powerful for him:

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.

Luther re-discovered the centrality of the biblical message that God loves His people. He forgives His people. Even though we are poor, miserable sinners, God in His grace offers us Jesus Christ's righteousness. The church had erroneously taught Luther (and everyone else) that in order to please God, one would need to work at being good — doing penance, visiting holy relics and punishing oneself.

None of it worked. We're still sinners, left to ourselves. The Gospel changes this. God gives salvation, not as a prize, but as a gift. God gives the sinner forgiveness for the sake of Christ Jesus. Our hope in the promise of salvation is totally in Christ. God sent His Son to be the substitutionary sacrifice for sin. His love for us washes away our sin by His Son's death. In the "Happy Exchange," God replaces our sins with His Son's purity.

In St. Paul's letter to the Romans this promise is spelled out beautifully:

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.

ROMANS 3:21-25

This is the centrality of the Reformation — the centrality of

God's Word as we receive the Gospel's grace by faith. Even though the Law shows we justly deserve God's eternal punishment, God has given us His grace because His Son became the sacrifice for our sins. We receive His forgiveness, not by what we do or what we deserve. Romans says we receive God's grace that is "to be received by faith." This faith itself is an undeserved gift from God.

Our Reformation work continues. The Gospel message of salvation is so different from today's worldview.

So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in Him: "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." They answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?" Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." JOHN 8:31-36

Today, all of us need a Reformation reminder. We need to be witnesses of God's grace so the world can hear what God says, does and promises us in His Word. It's easy to get lost in the flurry of what happens to

us in a decaying temporal world. We get tired trying to fight the encroachment of secular humanism in our lives.

What is the counter-attack? It's with the only offensive weapon in the armor of God: His Word! The truth of God's

“We thank God for using Luther to start a reformation. We thank God for returning people to the Good News of Christ's grace and mercy. We thank God we still live in and give witness to the Reformation.”

Word is that His Son has freed us from the indelible stain of sin. He paid the dreadful price out of His love for us. He willingly shed His blood and died for our sins on that horrible, cruel cross. This Reformation message is simple: It's all about Jesus.

It's impossible for us to contribute to God's free gift of salvation in Christ Jesus. We can't save ourselves and put trust in our own abilities, activities or

sensibilities. We totally rely on God to love us, save us and hold us to Himself unto life everlasting. That's what we celebrate on Reformation Sunday! It's all about exactly what God has done for us in Jesus Christ.

We thank God for using Luther to start a reformation. We thank God for returning people to the Good News of Christ's grace and mercy. We thank God we still live in and give witness to the Reformation. There are those who might call themselves Lutherans. And there are millions of others who even

deny that there is a God. There are billions who deny Jesus Christ as the Savior of all the world. Yet God's grace and mercy impacts our lives every day. Life, forgiveness and grace in Christ are why the church continues to exist.

When life becomes a politically despised gift, we can only pray, "Lord Jesus, come soon!" While political debaters espouse taking liberty with sacred, innocent human lives, can we share with those slaves of sin and darkness that the Son of God calls them to repent and receive the same joy we have received because of Christ Jesus, the Giver of our life? Happy Reformation!





BCC conference coming to Cordova

The Black Clergy Caucus (BCC) of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod will hold its fall conference Oct. 21–24 at Grace Celebration Lutheran Church, Cordova, Tenn.

Rev. Russell Belisle, pastor of Cross of Calvary Lutheran Church, Memphis, and fellow BCC members are looking forward to welcoming the attendees.

For more information, contact Pastor Belisle at russell.belisle@mlh.org. Learn more about the BCC at bcc-lc.org.

ONE GENERATION TO ANOTHER

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2024

LUTHERAN HYMNODY CONFERENCE

9:00 AM - 2:30 PM
 Cost: \$10/person
 Registration form available at
www.gracelutheranlr.org/hymn-festival

HYMN FESTIVAL

3:00 PM
 Cost: Free to attend

Grace Lutheran Church
 5124 Hillcrest Ave
 Little Rock, AR 72205





Rev. William Weedon,
Presenter



Kantor Jacquelyn
Magnuson, Organist



Off to Germany!

The Lutheran Institute of Management and Entrepreneurship (LIME) in Madagascar, which is supported by the Mid-South District, recently held graduation for students who will now work in Germany. Along with their usual coursework, the students were also taught German. The Goethe Center, which promotes the learning of German and is located in Antananarivo, Madagascar, appointed Razanabao Elisa Mary Davy to teach German at LIME. She travels to Germany for training.

In the photo above, standing are, from left, Razanabao Elisa Mary Davy; Rev. Dr. Joseph Randrianasolo, LIME president; Rev. Mahay Jaonary, Malagasy Lutheran Church (FLM); and Rev. Dr. Andriamiharimanana Fidinaiina Berthier, dean of the FLM Graduate School of Theology.



A student is congratulated upon receiving his diploma.

Congregation mission commitment receipts

as of July 31, 2024 (7 months)

Anticipated amount (58% of budget)	\$912,491
Actual receipts	\$863,984
Over (under) anticipated amount	(\$48,507)

Use of mission commitment receipts

Allocated to Synod for world missions	\$244,612
Allocated to Tanzania	\$14,583
Retained for district ministry/mission support (70% of receipts)	\$604,789
Total receipts	\$863,984

Mission commitment receipts comparison

Actual receipts as of July 31, 2024	\$151,856
Actual receipts as of July 31, 2023	\$129,029
Over (under) prior year receipts	\$22,827

Prioritizing health and wellness



Robin Moyer
Deaconess Intern

The 1986 movie “Crocodile Dundee” starred Paul Hogan as Mick “Crocodile” Dundee and Linda Kozlowski as Sue Charlton, a reporter. Sue travels to Walkabout Creek, Australia, to interview Mick, and after several comedic antics, invites him to New York City to test his survival skills.

In one memorable scene, Mick encounters a woman who visits a therapist for her anxiety. Sue explains to Mick that she just needs someone to listen to her problems and says “I suppose you don’t you any shrinks in Walkabout Creek.”

Mick replies with a classic line: “Nah, back there if you got a problem, you tell Wally. And he tells everyone in town, brings it out in the open, no more problem.”

While not a recommended solution for dealing with anxiety in the United States, it offers us a glimpse into a different kind of community, one that is reminiscent of the Christian church. This is the community we are called to live in — a community of trust in our neighbor, where we receive forgiveness and care, and live a life in light of the Gospel and not in the darkness of anxiety.

Church worker wellness has become increasingly relevant in recent times. This focus on mental health and well-being is not surprising given the current social and political landscape. Our nation is filled with divisive rhetoric and social pressures, and our children face more external pressures than ever before.

Many are dealing with life transitions, such as new jobs or the shift from the freedom of summer to the back-to-school rush. Numerous pastors are experiencing the stress of transitioning to new congregations.

There is a saying: “Whether the change is good or bad, wanted or unwanted, planned or unplanned, it can still be stressful. It can still cause anxiety.” Webster’s Dictionary defines anxiety as “a feeling of

worry, nervousness, or unease about something with an uncertain outcome.” This feeling serves as the body’s warning system, signaling that something is different or potentially dangerous, even if the source is unknown.

Anxiety can be a temporary reaction to a specific situation or a chronic condition requiring professional attention. Left unaddressed, anxiety can lead to unhealthy coping mechanisms that negatively impact a person’s overall well-being.

At the 2023 LCMS convention, several resolutions were passed to address these concerns. One notable resolution, 1-06A, aims to “aid in providing for the welfare of pastors, teachers, and other church workers, and their families in the event of illness, disability, retirement, or special needs.” This resolution calls for district presidents and boards to develop plans for the care of church workers and their families, and the laypersons of their congregations.

To address these issues, Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, our district president, has appointed me as the health and wellness advocate for the Mid-South District. My role is to support and encourage church workers and laypersons in tackling mental health concerns — those who are being counseled and those who are providing care and support.

I will share information about opportunities, resources and grants available to support the mental well-being of pastors and other church workers. Our goal is to ensure that mental health concerns are taken seriously and addressed proactively.

Promoting health and wellness as a top priority within the district means nurturing the spiritual, emotional and physical well-being of church and lay workers. We are

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committed to providing an environment where individuals are encouraged to seek help and support when needed. Through it all, we rely on the promises of God, who assures us that He will guard our hearts and minds in ways that surpass all human understanding. We are encouraged to call upon the Lord and present our requests to Him, trusting in His peace. Throughout God's Word, we are given the assurance of peace if we rely upon Him.

The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. **PHILIPPIANS 4:5-7**



"Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." **MATTHEW 6:34**

For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. **ROMANS 8:6**

These verses remind us that anxiety and mental health challenges are part of being human, not signs of a weak faith. Instead, they provide comfort and reassurance that we can bring our struggles before God and rely on His strength and guidance, and also upon those He has placed in the world for our good.

In today's world, we face an array of challenges that test our mental, physical and spiritual resilience. The cultural and technological advancements that connect us also increase our exposure to information, stress and expectations. We rely on the church as a safe place where we receive God's promises. The Mid-South District's initiative to prioritize health and

wellness reflects a commitment to the holistic needs of its members. These resolutions are more than administrative measures; they represent a call to action for the church to be proactive in supporting its members through life's transitions and challenges.

As the health and wellness advocate, I am dedicated to encouraging an atmosphere in which church workers and laypersons have the opportunity to seek help and support when facing mental health challenges. Our mission is to equip our leaders and members with the resources and tools needed to

navigate the complexities of life with faith and resilience.

The journey toward health and wellness is a collective effort that requires the support and encouragement of the entire community. By standing on the promises of Christ, supporting our neighbors and being good stewards of God's gracious gifts, we will create an environment that fosters spiritual, emotional and physical well-being. Let us commit to walking this path together, knowing that we are never alone in our struggles and that God's peace will guide us through every challenge.

FALL MUSIC FESTIVAL

Fuel Your Worship With Music

CONCERT

11/16/2024 7 p.m.

Door Offering Taken Space Limited

**Festival Choir 🎵 Ensembles
Christian Bands**

Festival Director, Candace Sutter

Choir Director, David Whipple, Jr.

Christian Band Director/Performance Coach, Wynne Adams

Audio Engineer, James (Jammer) McLean

Christ Our Savior Lutheran Church

260 Wade Rd W Loudon

Registration/Tickets VISIT www.coslctn.org

865-458-9407

Musician participation contact:

Candace Sutter worshipdirector260@outlook.com



Let's celebrate **OUR PASTORS**

October always brings Pastor Appreciation Month to my mind. When we celebrated 80 years of LWML in 2022, I pondered how many pastoral counselors — national, district or zone — have served. It must be an astounding number! Let us praise God for sending those who teach and guide us through His Word!

How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

ROMANS 10:14-15

All pastors are special, but LWML pastoral counselors are extra special! Let's be sure they know how much they are appreciated, not just in October, but year-round.

Check out this mission servant activity for ideas by clicking here (or scan the QR code).



— Submitted by Candy Habich, LWML Mid-South District Media and Marketing Chair

Calling all young women!



We are looking for up to four Young Woman Representatives (YWR) in our district to attend the national LWML convention, to be held June 26-29, 2025, in Omaha, Neb. Instructions for applying may be found at midsouthlwml.org/ywrs. Questions may be sent to webmaster@midsouthlwml.org. Above, Candy Habich of the LWML Mid-South District is pictured with the YWRs who attended the 2023 LWML Convention in Milwaukee. From left, RJ Acomb, Habich, Mary Buddenberg and Stephanie Jones.

BE IN THE KNOW

Keep up with what's happening in the LWML Mid-South District by checking our web pages and subscribing to the quarterly newsletter, the *League Letter*, and the monthly eNews email.

WEBSITE: midsouthlwml.org **FACEBOOK:** facebook.com/msd.lwml
TO SUBSCRIBE: midsouthlwml.org/e_news

Also, connect with us at midsouthlwml.org/contact-us, or send an email to webmaster@midsouthlwml.org or president@midsouthlwml.org

FINANCIAL PEACE UNIVERSITY

The Mid-South District is pleased to partner with our congregations to bring Financial Peace University (FPU) to their members and guests through a special rebate program.

For congregations that offer FPU, the Mid-South District will offer a rebate for the cost of the class to individuals who complete the nine-week program.

The program is on a first-come, first-served basis until funds have been exhausted. Contact Angela Fowler at afowler@mid-southlcms.com to discuss scheduling a class or for more information.

LCEF has financial help for sabbatical

Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) is offering four ministry sabbatical scholarships through Grace Place Wellness. A ministry sabbatical is time set aside for a church worker to rest and be renewed for ministry, serving both the worker and the ministry he or she serves. Recognizing the toll ministry can have on a worker, LCEF is providing four ministry sabbatical scholarships of \$5,000 to help workers take their first ministry sabbatical.

Visit lcef.org/sabbaticalscholarship for the application. To learn more about planning a ministry sabbatical, visit lcef.org/sabbatical.



Rev. James Martin was installed as associate pastor of **Grace, Clarksville, Tenn.**, on July 28. Pictured are, from left (front row) Revs. Trae Fistler, Hopkinsville; Koh Yamamoto, Christ, Paris; Shawn Smith, Grace pastor; Larry Peters, Grace senior pastor; Patrick Cox, Cross of Christ, Chattanooga; Michael Dixon, emeritus; (back row) David Appold, St. Paul, Paducah, Ky.; Joshua Reifsteck, Immanuel, Murray, Ky.; Dr. Roger Paavola, district president; James Martin; William Winter, Peace, Greencastle, Ind.; Andre Frandle, candidate; and Jonathan Holmes, candidate.



Rev. Steven Teske was installed as pastor of **Immanuel, Alexander, Ark.**, on Aug. 11. Pictured are, from left, Karl She, First, Little Rock; and Revs. Emil Woerner, Friends in Christ, Bryant; Steven Teske; Kevin Conger, Hope, Jacksonville; David Vandercook, Shepherd of Peace, Maumelle, and Trinity, North Little Rock; and Ronald Bacia, First, Little Rock.



St. Matthew, Conway, Ark., was blessed to receive 12 new members on July 28. Most of these individuals are new arrivals to Conway. Seven transferred in from other congregations, three joined by profession of faith, and two were adult confirmands. "We give thanks to the Lord of the church for adding these members to His flock at St. Matthew," said Rev. Kory Janneke, St. Matthew pastor.

Davis is new director

The Camp Trinity Board of Directors has named Aaron Davis the next camp director. Davis, who has served as operations manager since 2019, will begin his new role Jan. 1, 2025.

Known to youth by his camp name, “Mountain Man,” Davis will be the eighth on-site director of Camp Trinity, which incorporated in 1983 as Lutheran Camp on Petit Jean.

Davis enjoys leading camp activities, including archery, axe-throwing, canoeing, and teaching about camping skills and wildlife, but his favorite activity is proclaiming Christ to campers and guests.

“The best part of this ministry,” he said, “is being able to present the Gospel.”

Davis moved to Arkansas from Paducah, Ky., where he and his family attended St. Paul. He has spent the last five years learning about the operation of the camp and assuming an increasing number of responsibilities, including overseeing summer camp and Camp Trinity’s Outdoor Classroom for homeschool families in the spring and fall.

Davis graduated from the University of Arkansas at Fort Smith with a degree in organizational leadership. He is a member of the National Lutheran Outdoors Ministry Association and has attended conferences and training at sister camps around the country.

Maggie, Aaron’s wife, is also involved in the work at Camp Trinity, leading the music ministry and helping to lead the Outdoor Classroom. Aaron and Maggie have five children — Gwyneth, Charlotte (Lottie), Joseph, Jane and Arthur. Gwyneth and Lottie are both musicians who play for worship services, campfires for summer camp, and the camp’s annual festival, Music on the Mountain.

An avid outdoorsman, Davis enjoys hiking, hunting, rock climbing, weight training and basketball. Before moving to Arkansas, he was a Toyota salesman in Paducah, Ky.

David Cox, who has served as camp director for the past 11 years, will remain on staff part-time in 2025 to help with communications.



Aaron and Maggie Davis are pictured with their children, Gwyneth, Lottie, Joe, Jane, and Arthur.

Linkt junior high retreat is Oct. 25-27

The fall Linkt retreat for junior high youth has been moved back one week and is scheduled for Oct. 25-27. The theme is “Be Anxious for Nothing,” based on Philippians 4:6-7.

With the later retreat date, the registration discount deadline has been moved to Oct. 6. Registration is by congregation and is \$125 per person. The cost per person is \$150 after Oct. 6. The cost covers food, lodging and activities for the weekend.

Youth from congregations without a group attending can register separately and be assigned to another congregation’s youth group.

Registration forms have been emailed to district congregations. Individuals can

also request registration forms by emailing the Camp Trinity office at director@lutherancamp.org. Financial assistance is available for youth in need if their home congregations cannot provide.

Because the new date falls on the same weekend as Reformation Sunday, congregations can register for just Friday and Saturday. The Saturday evening worship service has been moved to immediately after supper, giving most youth groups time to drive home afterward.

The cost for Friday/Saturday-only registrants is \$100 through Oct. 6, and \$125 for those who register after that date.

For more information, visit lutherancamp.org/linkt-youth-retreats.

Share your news with us!

Digital files are preferred. Send email submissions to LW@mid-southlcms.com or send by postal mail to: Judy Otto; 150 N. Maury St.; Holly Springs, MS 38635

Send us your stories and photos for our December 2024 issue by Oct 15. Please ensure photos are submitted in high-resolution.