



/ SEPTEMBER 2023

# MID-SOUTH LUTHERAN



## God, our Father, protect the children



**Rev. Dr.  
Roger Paavola**  
District President

Our humble prayers usually begin with a greeting, something like, “Dear Father” or “Dearest Lord Jesus.” But the Lord’s Prayer begins with a testimony to God, and with the benefit of faith we say, “Our Father who art in heaven.” By teaching us to pray in this way, Jesus is saying that we are simultaneously praying to God our Heavenly Father *and* commending our petitions to Him, through Christ, in faith.

St. John wrote:

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. **JOHN 1:12**

Our Lord Jesus often proclaimed God as *our* Father. Jesus redeemed us; God the Father made us for His purpose (Eph. 2:10); and the Holy Spirit leads us in our sanctified life by His baptismal grace.

We would never have thought to pray, that is, to ask Almighty God

to do something for us, but Jesus teaches us that our Heavenly Father invites us to speak to Him as children speak to their own fathers (Matthew 7). He promises to hear us. Who would dream of such a thing, that the God who created the most intricate details of the entire cosmos would have the time and inclination to answer our slightest cry for grace and mercy?

By human nature, we’d have no expectation that He would hear us. But God doesn’t leave us mired in the sins we have all inherited from Adam. He created us as His children. He adopted us into His family in our Baptisms. When our Heavenly Father sent His Son to become the atoning sacrifice, He joined Himself to our humanity for the sole purpose of paying the awful penalty of our sins. He sent His Son so we would become His children and eat at His table in eternal glory. St. Paul wrote:

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”

**GAL. 4:4-6**

The historical structure of the entire universe focuses on the centrality of God’s own Son incarnate. Since we are created and redeemed to be His children, God willingly hears our prayers. His gracious desire is for us to pray to Him as an earthly father would desire to hear his child speak to him. Just as little children ask their parents for any-

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## MESSAGE

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thing they need, we can ask for God's providence in all we need from Him. By the grace of God in Christ Jesus, we've gone from being enemies of God to being His dear children by His grace.

Our Heavenly Father is troubled if we don't pray. We've been called by God to help form those precious lives of our children whom He has entrusted to our care, that they may learn to pray to our Heavenly Father. Because we've dedicated ourselves to Christian education, we have been empowered, engaged and equipped with all the necessary tools to bring God's Word into those precious lives that they cannot get anywhere else.

As Christian parents, grandparents or interested members of the body of Christ, we can (and should) introduce these children to a close and lasting relationship with God. We can (and should) tell them of an unending love of God in Christ. He is still the only One who suffered and died so that they can have life everlasting in Him.

Our Heavenly Father desires for us to teach the next generation about His Son's incarnation, suffering, death and resurrection for us poor sinners. Everything that is needed to be done for life, forgiveness and salvation was done for us by our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Therefore, among the greatest gifts we have are that of a healthy marriage and, in accordance with God's grace and will, the blessing of raising children in the Christian faith.

A group from our office recently watched "Sound of Freedom," a powerful film based on the remarkable story of Tim Ballard, a former Homeland Security agent who embarks on a mission to rescue children from sex traffickers. His relentless pursuit of justice exposes the dark underbelly of this growing global crime. The true story left an indelible impact on us and a deeper resolve in the fight against human trafficking, as was noted in one of the resolutions at the 2021 district convention. That resolution was then up for consideration and adoption at



Mid-South District staff, along with family, attended a showing of "Sound of Freedom" in July. From left, Pat and Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, Steven and Julie Tyler, Angela Fowler, Missy Washburn, Renae McElwain, Paul Reaves and Sheila Adcock. Not pictured is Marlin McElwain (photographer). Across the nation, the movie has opened eyes and stirred hearts on the horrific reality of human trafficking, especially for the most vulnerable victims — children. The film's timely release complements the Mid-South District's ongoing efforts to raise awareness about the atrocities of human trafficking.

the Synod Convention in Milwaukee this summer.

In 2006, Ballard went on his first mission to rescue victims of human trafficking, posing as a potential customer in order to infiltrate a child sex trafficking ring in Colombia. His efforts were largely successful with the rescue of dozens of children and the arrest of their traffickers. Ballard eventually left his government position and founded Operation Underground Railroad (O.U.R.) in 2013. He and his network collaborated with law enforcement worldwide to conduct rescue missions, gather evidence and support international efforts to bring about the prosecution of human traffickers.

The story depicts Ballard's unwavering determination to find "the one child." It is based on the true pursuit of a child named Gardy. In the film's beginning, real security camera footage shows various scenes of child kidnappings. Such incidents do occur in the realm of human trafficking. According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, reports of human trafficking have been documented in all 50 states! Predators have been documented as

**A human trafficking awareness event will be held Sept. 30 at Holy Trinity, Rogers, Ark. Details and a registration link are available at [mid-southlcms.org](http://mid-southlcms.org)**

posing as soccer coaches, trusted teachers, neighbors, uncles, aunts and, in some cases, parents.

The importance of being aware of child or any form of human trafficking as a crisis is of utmost importance for us, not only in our nation, but especially in the Christian church. "Sound of Freedom"

serves as a powerful catalyst, inspiring viewers to take action. This film shines a bright, laser-like light on the harsh reality of human trafficking and highlights the precious gift of the nuclear family designed for us by our Heavenly Father — a family that is seemingly in danger of assault on many fronts.

Our prayers for preservation of the traditional nuclear family, for the protection of our children, and the end of the exploitation of any human life, especially our children, will be heard by our Heavenly Father. "God's children are not for sale!" is not only a line from the movie, it is our fervent prayer in our role as parents and members of the body of Christ, the church. Pray, teach, lead and guide our next generation in the safety and place of the family in our homes and the family in our churches.



# 'Leaving a legacy'

A great challenge for individuals and families today is not only how to make ends meet in a time of high inflation, but how to plan for and leave a legacy that will live on into the future. On June 24, First Lutheran Church, Little Rock, hosted a seminar, "Leaving a Legacy," launched by First pastor Rev. Ron Bacic, who shared the biblical basis for stewardship of time, talents and treasure — and leaving a legacy.

Featured speakers included Michael Videll and Kyle Kilpatrick, financial advisors with Thrivent, and Bethany A.

Pike, an attorney with The Elrod Firm. They emphasized the importance of taking a close look at



**Michael Videll of Thrivent enlightens listeners at First's "Leaving a Legacy" seminar.**

our finances, wills and related papers; and described several financial instruments that can benefit individuals and families as well as tax-advantaged ways to donate to churches or charities. The seminar was followed by an informal lunch, provided by a Thrivent Action Grant.

The seminar was very well received, and the speakers offered a lot to consider toward becoming better stewards of our resources and leaving a legacy that will continue after we pass into eternity.



## Hymn festival is Oct. 15

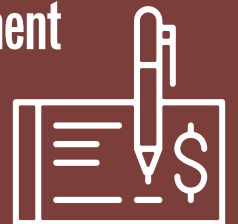
Grace Lutheran Church, Little Rock, will host a Hymn Festival at 3 p.m. on Sunday, Oct. 15. More information is coming soon.

Rev. Dr. Todd Peperkorn, professor at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, will be the guest pastor. The organist will be Jacquelyn Magnuson of Grace.

For more information, visit [gracelutheranlr.org/hymn-festival](http://gracelutheranlr.org/hymn-festival).

## Congregation mission commitment receipts

as of  
June 30, 2023  
(6 months)



Anticipated amount (50% of budget)	\$782,135
Actual receipts	\$734,954
Over (under) anticipated amount	(\$47,181)

### Use of mission commitment receipts

Allocated to Synod for world missions	\$210,070
Allocated to Tanzania	\$10,417
Retained for district ministry/mission support (70% of receipts)	\$514,468
Total receipts	\$734,954

### Mission commitment receipts comparison

Actual receipts as of June 30, 2023	\$734,954
Actual receipts as of June 30, 2022	\$722,329
Over (under) prior year receipts	\$12,625

## MISSIONS



**LUTHERAN INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP (LIME) • MADAGASCAR**

We always praise our Lord Jesus Christ our Good Teacher for His marvelous love and the partnership between the Mid-South District and LIME. Pictured are students who made their oral defense in May (with Pastor Randrianasolo, who is third from left).

These are young people now educated and prepared to be future leaders in their country, including young women who, because of religious restrictions, would not even have these opportunities in their home countries.

Our staff has discussed admitting even more students for 2023-24 despite nonstop inflation.

Please enjoy these blessings from our Lord Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God and our Mid-South District partners for making this possible.

**Rev. Joseph Randrianasolo**  
LIME Director



Mid-South District students who attended Christ Academy at CTSFW are, from left, David Vandercook, Allyssa Vandercook, Andrew Abraham, Sarah Gebhardt, Gabriel Abraham and Vivian Marshall.

# Future church workers?

The 24th annual Christ Academy for high school students was held at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Ind., June 18–July 1. Fifty-seven young men participated in Christ Academy: Timothy School, while 35 young women participated in Christ Academy: Phoebe School.

The two-week program consists of catechesis, worship and having fun together. It serves to aid high-school-aged men and women who are considering becoming pastors and deaconesses or are just interested in theology.

They worshiped with the seminary community in Kramer Chapel four times a day, and learned from 17 seminary professors and a panel of local pastors and deaconesses.

They had opportunities to form lasting friendships through group activities like bowling, various team sports, and a formal banquet dinner

followed by English country dancing. Lastly, the Christ Academy students participated in service projects on campus and around Fort Wayne.

The program's leaders encourage prayer and support on behalf of these students as they discern future work in the church.

"We especially thank and praise God for keeping these young men and women steadfast in the true faith," said Rev. Matthew Wietfeldt, CTSFW vice-president of Admission and Christ Academy director. "We pray that the Lord would continue to work through the pastors, teachers, and workers of our church to continue to send out laborers into His harvest. To God be all the glory."

The next Christ Academy will be held June 16–29, 2024. For more information, visit [ctsfiw.edu](https://ctsfiw.edu) and click the "Events" tab at the top of the page; or send an email to [christacademy@ctsfiw.edu](mailto:christacademy@ctsfiw.edu).



## Celebrate Grandparents Day on September 10

By Lauren Robertson  
Media and Marketing Chair,  
LWML Mid-South District

Growing up, I was blessed to live in the same town as both my maternal and fraternal grandparents. We spent holidays together, often with both grandmothers sitting together, and my grandfathers telling stories nearby.

But it wasn't just on holidays that we spent time together. They came to my softball games and my brother's baseball games, and helped my parents by picking us up after school. What a blessing it was that I grew up with both sets of grandparents who were good friends with each other.

My grandparents took us to church on Sunday mornings so we could be in Sunday school. When traveling with my grandparents to see family out of state, we were still in church on Sunday mornings. My grandparents' faith was a vital and visible part of their everyday life. They served at church in many capacities with their Bible in tow.

They continue to influence my life today. I think of them often when singing in church or driving by a special place we would all visit as a family.

And now my children are able to experience the same blessing with both sets of grandparents living in our town. My children never got to meet my grandparents, but I like to think they are getting to know them through my parents.

Grandparents' influence can be a priceless blessing to their grandchildren, so this Grandparents Day remember to send a card or call them if they are still here on earth — even though you should probably make those phone calls more than once a year!





## 100 years of St. John's

St. John's, Russellville, Ark., began a weekend celebration of their 100th anniversary on June 3 with a dinner at the Pope County Senior Citizen Activity Center in Russellville, where Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, Mid-South District president, presented St. John's pastor Rev. William Ringer with a certificate recognizing the historic landmark.

Guests were entertained and photographed before dining at tables adorned with historic photos of St. John's members. Justin Drittler, congregation pres-

ident, welcomed everyone and recognized special guests Pastor Paavola and his wife, Pat; Stephanie Weiser, widow of Rev. Les Weiser, former St. John's pastor, and their son, Shawn Weiser; and Rev. Tim and Janet Henning of Trinity, Mena, Ark.

Current and former members provided a nostalgic program, sharing stories and personal memories of St. John's. Entertainment was provided by David Cox, Camp Trinity director, and his daughter, Maggie Davis, and granddaughters Gwyneth and Lottie.

The June 4 worship service at St. John's was led by Pastor Ringer and Rev. Darrell Kobs, emeritus, with Paavola preaching. The St. John's choir performed, and its confirmation class served as acolytes, torch bearers and crucifer.

A reception in the fellowship hall followed, hosted by ladies of the congregation. A video created by Justin Drittler, with photos curated by Lauren Robertson from the St. John's archives, was shown during the reception.

The organizers gratefully acknowledge Thrivent and the three Action Team grants that helped cover some of the celebration expenses.

## 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](mailto:mwashburn@mid-southlcms.com) or 901-373-1341, ext. 3101.

Visit [ministrysafe.com/lcms](http://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.



## DISTRICT NEWS

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**Rev. Jeremy McDonald** was installed as pastor of Zion, Ulm, and Our Savior, Brinkley/Rich, Ark., on July 8. Ordained as a Specific Ministry Pastor in 2018, Pastor McDonald recently graduated from Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind., having received his Masters of Divinity (MDiv). Pictured are, from left (front row) Revs. Jim Belles, Dr. Roger Paavola, Jeremy McDonald, Kent Schaaf, Stewart Marshall, Kevin Conger; (middle row) Mark Goble, Chuck Neugebauer, David Vandercook, Bryan Payne; (back row) Kory Janneke, Emil Woerner and Donald White.



**Chapel of the Good Shepherd, Sharps Chapel, Tenn.** celebrated the 50th anniversary of Rev. Paul Kritsch's ordination on June 18. Rev. Michael Miller, district fourth vice-president, preached and Rev. David Graves, Knoxville Circuit visitor, served as liturgist. From left, Revs. David Graves, Michael Miller, Paul Kritsch, Ray Krieg, Dennis Bottoms and Chase Lefort.



**Rev. Jerome Leckband** was installed as associate pastor of All Saints Lutheran Church and School, Jonesboro, Ark., on July 2. From left, Revs. Andrew Lehman, Joshua Leigeber, Paul Leigeber, Jerome Leckband, Dr. Roger Paavola, Jeffrey King and Gerald Heinecke.







**Rev. Joshua Reifsteck** was installed as pastor of Immanuel, Murray, Ky., on June 18. From left, Trae Fistler, Dr. Roger Paavola, Joshua Reifsteck, Andre Frandle and David Appold. Missing from the photo is Rev. Dr. Mark Press.



**Rev. Jacob Childers** was ordained and installed as associate pastor of Grace, Knoxville, on July 9. Pastor Childers (center) recently graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and is serving his first call. He is pictured with fellow Grace servants Revs. Danny Anderson (left) and Rich Elseroad.

**Rev. Michael Meyer** was installed as associate pastor of Youth and Families at Holy Trinity, Rogers, Ark., on June 11. From left, (front row) Revs. Scott Bruick, Michael Meyer, Eric Longman, Richard Mayer; (back row) Lynn Spencer, H.L. Bernthal, Albert Quoss, Duncan Cox, Joshua Willadsen, Brandon Martin and Dr. Paul Hass.



## Plan to attend *Set Apart to Serve* **VIRTUAL TOWN HALL**

The *Set Apart to Serve* (SAS) team is excited to announce a Synodwide virtual town hall on Wednesday, Sept. 27, 1–2 p.m. CDT, to kick off the next stage of the LCMS church work recruitment initiative.

SAS is a collaborative effort across the Synod to equip congregations and church

leaders in identifying, catechizing, encouraging and supporting boys, girls, men and women for ordained and commissioned church work vocations. The goal is to create an intentional culture of church worker formation and recruitment in every LCMS congregation, school and entity.

The town hall will include:

- ▶ A brief overview of SAS;
- ▶ A summary of what was learned during the SAS pilot program;

- ▶ A review of resources and tools to help LCMS congregations, schools and entities in raising the next generation of church workers; and
- ▶ An overview of next steps in implementing SAS in your congregation and school.

Please join the town hall on Sept. 27!

Watch your email for more details. Learn more about *Set Apart to Serve* at [lcms.org/sas](https://lcms.org/sas) or scan the QR code.



# Music festival is Sept. 30

All music lovers are invited to the sixth annual Music on the Mountain, to be held Sept. 30 at Camp Trinity. The festival will feature hours of music, including gospel, bluegrass, country, folk, blues and contemporary Christian. Music begins at 11 a.m. and will continue until late afternoon.

It's not too late for musicians who would like to perform to contact the camp office at [director@lutherancamp.org](mailto:director@lutherancamp.org). Performers can stay in bunkhouse cabins or in the campground at no charge Friday or Saturday night.

Admission to the festival is free, but donations will be accepted. Music on the Mountain is a Camp Trinity fundraiser.

Concessions, which will include drinks and snacks, will be open all day, starting at 11 a.m. Pulled pork sandwiches will also be available.

The festival includes a silent auction in which attendees can bid on great gift packages. Families and friends can also enjoy games together, including cornhole, sand volleyball, horseshoes and gaga ball.

Lodging is available for those who want to make a weekend of it. Call the camp office at 501-652-6304 to check availability and make reservations.

### Summer recap

More than 250 campers — a record — registered for Summer Camp 2023 at Camp Trinity, including 75 at three family camps. The sessions included a new Wilderness Camp, with an emphasis on outdoor skills and knowledge. Some of the sessions were taught by interpreters at Petit Jean State Park.



### Outdoor Classroom

The seventh semester of Camp Trinity's Outdoor Classroom for homeschool families kicks off Sept. 20 and runs through November. Campers will

explore the woods and waters of Petit Jean Mountain to learn about plants and wildlife native to Arkansas.

Although the schedule is still being developed, previous semesters have included speakers from the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, Petit Jean State Park, the Little Rock Zoo, Arkansas Archeology Station, University Extension, Arkansas Forestry Commission, and emergency services agencies.

Guests have also included artists and craftsmen demonstrating their skills, and musicians teaching about mountain music and other genres. Sessions are held on Wednesdays and Thursdays.

The past two semesters have filled up with more than 60 students. For the fall semester, the Wednesday sessions are full, but a few spots remained for the Thursday classes. As long as there's room, parents can sign up their children for individual classes or for the entire 10-week semester at a steep discount. Details can be found at [lutherancamp.org/for-home-schoolers](http://lutherancamp.org/for-home-schoolers).



Canoeing, hiking, swimming, horseback riding and games are all part of summer camp at Camp Trinity.

## SHARE YOUR NEWS WITH US!

Digital files, sent via e-mail, are preferred. Send email submissions to [LW@mid-southlcms.com](mailto: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 **November 2023** issue by **Sept. 15**.

