

LUTHERAN LIFE

The Newsmagazine of the
Florida-Georgia District
of The Lutheran Church
Missouri Synod
2014 | Volume 3



HAITI *Hope & Help For A Nation*





The Mission of the Florida-Georgia District is to serve, assist, and encourage congregations in the ministry of Jesus Christ. People of the Florida-Georgia District are equipped, empowered, engaged... connecting people to Jesus. *Lutheran LIFE* is the official newsmagazine of the Florida-Georgia District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. *Lutheran LIFE* is designed to inform LCMS church and school members of the activities, the personalities and resources offered by the Synod and the District. *Lutheran LIFE* may also provide a forum for Lutherans to express their views and ideas on a wide range of topics. We welcome and encourage your letters and editorials emphasizing that the views and opinions expressed are not necessarily shared by Synod or District personnel or by the editors, churchworkers or personnel of the Synod's or District's congregations or schools. *Lutheran LIFE* is published bimonthly. Editorials, news items and photos are encouraged. Please send scanned photos of approximately 300 DPI as a .jpg attachment rather than embedded in your emails. Or mail your photo print in a good quality resolution to our address below. Advertising is welcome and encouraged; rates and information are available from *Lutheran LIFE's* office. Changes of address including e-mail changes, additions or deletions should be directed to our office.

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District Welcoming New Candidates, Vicars

Several District churches will welcome vicars to their ministry team this summer, offering these pastors-in-training an opportunity to continue their education while providing service to the people and pastor of their assigned congregation. Three District churches will be blessed with new pastors serving their first calls after graduation from Seminary. Details on page 3.



Concordia Seminary / St. Louis candidates and vicars who will be serving in the Florida-Georgia District include (front, l-r) Jeffrey Carlson, Dawn Carlson, Shea Pennington, Brittany Harris, Mark Harris, District President Rev. Gregory Walton; (back, l-r) Stephen Reynolds, Rachael Aspeslet, Hannah Obermann, Joshua Obermann, Jordan Thomson, Kevin Thomson, Elizabeth Pettit, Joshua Pettit.

Candidate Roberto E. Rojas with District President Greg Walton at Concordia Theological Seminary/ Fort Wayne



Updates and news of the events, churches, schools, people and ministries of the Florida-Georgia District are available online

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LCMS Florida-Georgia District

DISTRICT CAPSULES

by Greg Walton District President

Calling Congregations

Grace/Atlanta, GA..... Sole Pastor
Zion/Fort Myers, FL..... Senior Pastor
First Lutheran/Gainesville, FL..... Senior Pastor
Good Shepherd/Gainesville, GA..... Sole Pastor
Grace/Jacksonville, FL..... Sole Pastor
Lake Oconee/Lake Oconee, GA..... Sole Pastor
Beautiful Savior/LeHigh Acres, FL.. Sole Pastor
Holy Trinity/Lutz, FL..... Sole Pastor
Faith/New Port Richey, FL..... Sole Pastor
Trinity/Orlando, FL..... Youth Pastor
St Paul/Peachtree City, GA..... Sole Pastor
Good Shepherd/Sarasota, FL..... Sole Pastor
Faith/Sebring, FL..... Sole Pastor
Our Savior/St Petersburg, FL..Assistant Pastor
St. Mark/Tucker, GA..... Sole Pastor
Our Savior/Zephyrhills, FL..... Sole Pastor

Calls Issued

Good Shepherd/Gainesville, GA
Rev. Peter Weeks as Sole Pastor

Faith/Hialeah, FL

Rev. Artidoro Mesones as Associate Pastor

Grace/Jacksonville, FL

Rev. Jeffrey Skopak as Sole Pastor

Beautiful Savior/LeHigh Acres, FL
Rev. William Gauger as Sole Pastor,

Holy Trinity/Lutz, FL

Rev. Paul Biber as Sole Pastor

Faith/New Port Richey, FL

Rev. Todd Frusti as Sole Pastor

Trinity/Orlando, FL

Rev. Luke Jacob as Associate Pastor

Good Shepherd/Sarasota, FL
Rev. David Constien as Sole Pastor

St. Mark/Tucker, GA

Rev. Enwood Nevis as Sole Pastor

Martin Luther Chapel/Marathon, FL
Rev. Anthony Mandile as Sole Pastor

Zion/Fort Myers, FL

Rev. Curtis Deterding as Senior Pastor

Calls Accepted

Epiphany/Lake Worth, FL
Rev. James Weist as Sole Pastor

Faith/Hialeah, FL

Rev. Artidoro Mesones as Associate Pastor

Calls Declined

Holy Trinity/Lutz, FL
Rev. Duncan McLellan as Sole Pastor

Beautiful Savior/LeHigh Acres, FL
Rev. William Gauger as Sole Pastor

Holy Trinity/Lutz, FL

Rev. Paul Biber as Sole Pastor

Faith/New Port Richey, FL

Rev. Todd Frusti as Sole Pastor

Candidates Placed

Shepherd of the Coast/Fort Lauderdale, FL
Pastor Elect Stephen Reynolds, Sole Pastor

Our Redeemer/Ocala, FL

Pastor Elect Joshua Pettit, Associate Pastor

Zion New Life/Winter Garden, FL

Pastor Elect Roberto Rojas, Sole Pastor

Vicars Placed

St. Paul/Boca Raton, FL
Andrew Howe

Trinity/Fort Lauderdale, FL

Jeffrey Carlson
Amigos en Cristo/Immokolee, FL
Saint Luc Charelus

Bethlehem/Jacksonville Beach, FL

Joshua Obermann

Hope of Life/Naples, FL

Herminio Pagan

Hope/Plant City, FL

Shea Pennington

Mt. Calvary/Warner Robins, GA

Kevin Thompson

Grace/Winter Haven, FL

Mark Harris

Transferred to Other Districts

Amanda BangertOklahoma (C)
Justin Bangert.....Oklahoma (C)
James G. Zickfield.....Missouri (C)

Ordained/Commissioned Minister Initial Assignments

Dcs. Raquel Esther Eusebid
Concordia Seminary, Deaconess
Messiah/Tampa, FL (C)

Dcs. Yolima Sanabria
Concordia Seminary, Deaconess
Messiah/Tampa, FL (C)

Dcs. Flor Marina Sanabria
Concordia Seminary, Deaconess
Messiah/Tampa, FL (C)

Dcs. Diana Maria Bermudez
Concordia Seminary, Deaconess
Messiah/Tampa, FL (C)

Ordained/Commissioned Minister Installations

Rev. Eric T. Eichinger, Pastor
Bethel/Clearwater, FL(O)

Removed from the Roster
Frank Ahrens, Resigned (C)
Rev. Robert S. Miller, Called to Glory (O)

Change of Status within the District

Rev. Richard S. Knapp
from Active to Candidate (O)

Rev. Dr. Henry Baum
from Active to Candidate (O)

Dcs. Kathleen S. McCoy
from Active to Non-Candidate (C)

Eunice F. Mathews
from Active to Candidate (C)

Michelle R. Durheim
from Non-candidate to Candidate (C)

* Note: In district data above,
C = Commissioned Minister;
O = Ordained Minister

Hope & Help For A Nation

Do you remember a time in your life when God changed your perspective or broadened your horizon? We read in Isaiah 42:16 — “I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them.”

It’s not often that I find myself feeling “blind.” Recently (in photo, from left) Daniel Reichard, Mark Brink, Doug Kallesen, and I met Helen Roenfeldt (not pictured), Executive Director of Mission Haiti, in Haiti. Our intent was to better understand the country’s culture and people and be effectively equipped to serve our Haitian brothers and sisters in the Florida-Georgia District. It was a life-changing experience.

I experienced a variety of emotions during our brief visit, ranging from exuberant joy as we saw the faith of God’s people to extreme sadness as we saw the depths of poverty. Much of our time was spent in Gonaives, a three-hour trek from Port au Prince. We saw a variety of ministries that have been assisted by many of you through your generous support.

We worshipped in a small mission church in a section of Gonaives called Jubilee. Ironically, it was among the most impoverished and needy places we visited. In spite of this, the people were innovative and engaged. With the help of Mission Haiti, some had begun small businesses to care for their families and the church. We attended the inaugural worship service at the mission church that had been dedicated the

week prior. Many people see the value in education, and this little congregation is reaching into the neighborhoods and helping provide a solid Christian education for the children. As we were leaving the school, a little girl approached the pastor and stated that she would like to go to the orphanage. It wasn’t that she didn’t have a mother, but her mother couldn’t care for her. This little girl saw this as an opportunity to get out of her lifestyle to a better, more stable life.



Florida-Georgia District executive team with Orlieus, who donated land for the Lutheran church and school.

Most people were gracious and welcoming. We visited some remote areas, and met Orlieus, a gentleman who was 120 years old and had acquired quite a bit of land. This gentle old fellow was living in a mud hut, sleeping on the dirt floor, cooking over a campfire — a very simple life compared to most people we know. Yet, he was probably one of the richest men we ever met. He had donated much of his land, about 15 acres, for a community garden. With the help of Mission: Haiti, residents of the area are raising funds for an operational irrigation system. Families will have a plot to raise their crops, feed their family,

share with others and take any surplus to the community market to sell. Orlieus donated land for the little church and school as he just felt that the church needed the land more than he did.

I experienced so many eye opening, humbling stories. We met people who had so much to complain about, yet instead we found them with smiles on their faces and a deep and abiding faith in Jesus. Often I found myself thanking God for the faith of these folks,

while praying that God would bless their efforts. In the midst of so many difficult circumstances, they counted it a privilege to serve Jesus and trust in Him. It made me think of Paul’s word to the Corinthian Christians when he wrote, “And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their

ability.” (2 Co 8:1–3)

While there are some limitations to the comparisons, it was clear that there is genuineness to their faith and life in Jesus. Each place we found faith filled people, trusting in Jesus in the midst of very difficult circumstances.

What a witness for the Church in the United States! Many churches today face a variety of challenges, both spiritually and fiscally. We are told that we are living in a post-church world, where the culture that most of us grew up in is no longer the prevailing influence. Many of us remember when our congregations were brimming with youth and

The People of Haiti Are Faith-Filled People Trusting Jesus In the Midst of Difficult Circumstances

young adults; today, in many places, I hear of ministries with little energy and opportunity to reach into their community. People are tired and discouraged, often without passion or vision. This is characteristic of a post-church world.

Today congregations struggle with how to raise volunteers, how to motivate and encourage financial support, and how to bring the reality of our faith and practice into the context of today’s world without compromising beliefs, traditions and values. At times it is easy to despair and wonder if God has abandoned His Church. We have raised a generation of people who feel that church shopping is their right.

God’s promises are sure, and He has said that He will never leave us or forsake us. God hasn’t abandoned His Church, but we have often failed Him and fallen short in living as His people. There are many reasons for the seeming demise of a particular congregation, but the truth is, Jesus promised that the gates of hell would not prevail against His Church. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

How do we reverse the trends that many of us find ourselves in today? I believe that it begins with taking a hard look in the mirror. Are we living out God’s plan for His Church? Are we making it about us or are we keeping it focused on Jesus? Is Sunday morning an obligation or a launching point to live out His mission each day in the context He places us?

What we often find is that many have a very low threshold for commitment and loyalty to an institution. Could it be that we’ve focused on the wrong things? What if we focused once again on the promise of the Gospel? What if we proclaimed and focused on

God’s love and grace and building a relationship with Jesus? God has given us all we need to reverse the trends by allowing Jesus to live in us and through us. As we join together in serving Jesus and living out His joy, we see His people grow, His Kingdom grow and because of that His Church grows as well.

When Israel returned, by God’s grace, from exile, the Pharisees arose as the keepers of the law. The desire and intent, I believe, were to protect God’s people from ever having to leave their land again and be taken into exile because of disobedience to

God’s law. Over time the concern for the people for whom God wrote the law was replaced by concern for simply keeping the law. I have often thought that it might be interesting to start a mission congregation and call it “Cheers.” It would be a place where everybody knows your name and they’re always glad you came. The focus would be on building

relationships, building community, without compromising doctrine or beliefs. As I reflect on my childhood, that’s how my parents taught me. It wasn’t a matter of sitting me down and hammering away at what our family believed. My parents modeled it, they lived it out, and as they nurtured and cared for me, I learned to do things like they did. Certainly there were times when they needed to sit me down and administer the law, but mostly what I learned from them was through a

loving relationship that shaped me day by day.

I see that in Jesus. He daily shapes me as He expresses His love, forgiveness and grace to me on a regular basis. There are definitely times when God’s law comes to bear on me, but what transforms me is His grace. What “gets” to me is His love. What moves me is His forgiveness and willingness to pick me up and set me back on the path He’s carved out for me. Perhaps our congregations would grow stronger if we did less defending of our faith and simply lived that faith out with all our might in the name of Jesus.

That’s what I saw in Haiti—people who not only experienced God’s grace and freedom from the curse of Voodoo, but who freely were living that faith out in their simply and often challenging lives. As the great Yogi Berra once said, “You can learn a lot by watching...” Indeed we can. But Jesus said, “Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them!” May our Lord Jesus continue to open your eyes to the life-changing experiences all around you as you build relationships and share your faith in Jesus. ■



With you on the journey of grace!
Greg





LCH Explores Different Approach to Funding Ministry



Shown here are the first residents of the LCH's Girls' Orphanage with Director Mademoiselle Weslande (back row). The facility was dedicated in May. All these girls are from the street girls of Jubilee and have suffered extreme hunger and abuse. They are now safe, getting medical care, enjoying three meals a day and looking forward to starting school.



With its innovative approach to funding, The Lutheran Church of Haiti is able to underwrite 95 percent of its day-to-day ministries.

The Creole-Star Guest House in Gonaives is a powerful illustration of the success of this approach. The Lutheran Church of Haiti owns and operates this facility.

Another excellent example of the LCH's self-sufficiency is the road grader shown in the photo above. A significant part of the day-to-day ministry costs of 225 Churches, 100 schools, three orphanages and various other ministries are underwritten by the LCH's quarry, concrete block, sand, rock and gravel businesses.

In fact, it was LCH construction equipment that cleared most of the earthquake damage in Leogane, near Port-au-Prince, after the 2010 earthquake. The LCH worked closely with The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod's Lutheran World Relief and Human Care organization.

Another significant benefit of having a Haiti-based funding system is that members of LCH congregations have employment opportunities. Unemployment in Haiti is a serious ongoing challenge.

The LCH does welcome assistance in new ministry start-ups, the construction of new (and upgraded) ministry facilities and in developing ways to spiritually and physically improve the lives of Haitian people.



A ministry of Faith Lutheran/ Gonaives, Haiti, Concordia Lutheran School is one of 100 schools operated by the 225 congregations of The Lutheran Church of Haiti (LCH) throughout the island nation. Concordia serves the local community as well as residents of the nearby LCH Boys and Girls Orphanages.

Orlando – shown at the far left – was one of the first men in Jubilee to be rescued by the Gospel. “He is a testament to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit,” said Mission: Haiti Executive Director Helen Roenfeldt. Once a Voodoo RaRa gang leader in Jubilee, Orlando was, by his own testimony, a thief and a murderer, spending six years in a Haitian prison. Now he is the unofficial “mayor” of Jubilee and a leading business man, employing six people in his mattress renovation business. Shown with Orlando and one of his workers at his business are (back, left to right) Florida-Georgia Executive team members Daniel J. Reichard, Greg Walton and Doug Kallesen.



Mission: Haiti's microloan program helps those who have no opportunities for a job. Applicants — primarily single moms and grandmothers — apply for a loan of \$50-\$100. They must have a business idea that fits in the community. A committee consisting of the local pastor, an elder and the microloan loan supervisor reviews applications and determines who receives what loan amount. Loan recipients attend meetings and are supervised to assist in their success. Business people have three months grace before beginning their loan repayment. Some businesses established with microloans in Jubilee are a hot dog stand, kitchen good sales and making frames for box springs.



Florida-Georgia District President Greg Walton and District Executives Doug Kallesen, Mark Brink and Dan Reichard visited the newly opened girls home in Gonaives with Mission: Haiti Executive Director Helen Roenfeldt. After living in the facility for just two days, these former street girls said they never want to leave: they are receiving three meals a day and clothing, have a safe place to sleep and they will start school in the fall.



Worshippers at the newly built and dedicated church in Jubilee during a recent service. Florida-Georgia District team members President Greg Walton, Executive Director for School Ministries Mark Brink, Executive Director for Outreach Doug Kallesen and Executive Director of Finance/LCEF Vice President Dan Reichard participated in the service during their recent visit to the island nation.



During their visit to Haiti, members of the Florida-Georgia District executive team joined local residents in prayer at the Poto Orphanage property. President Greg Walton is shown facing the camera left center; in the front with their backs to the camera are Dan Reichard (left) and Mark Brink (right).





Mission: Haiti Efforts Reaping Benefits

in Education, Health, Outreach



Editor's note: A week before the Florida-Georgia District executive team of President Greg Walton, Mission Executive Doug Kallesen, School Ministries Executive Mark Brink and LCEF Vice President Dan Reichard visited Haiti, another Lutheran team was in the country. Here's a summary of that visit.

Members of an April 26-May 3 Lutheran mission trip to Haiti packed powerful outreach and ministry efforts into their short visit.

The mission team included nine Americans — Mission: Haiti Executive Director Helen Roenfeldt, who led the mission trip; Rev. Darrell Stuehrenberg, pastor of Bethlehem/Fort Myers, FL; Paramedic John Rougeux of Central Florida; Dr. Nancy Swisher of Wisconsin; Church Youth Director Tamara Howes and pharmacy student Danielle Green, both from Michigan; RN Alice Layne of North Carolina; and jewelry store owners Oz and Brenda Hefner. Rougeux and Stuehrenberg are members of the Mission: Haiti Board of Directors; all nine travelers have served on previous Haiti mission teams.

The group landed in Port-au-Prince on April 26, where they connected with the other members of the team: Lophane Laurent, Roenfeldt's key resource/contact person in Haiti for mission trips and president of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church/Port-au-Prince; Noel Dufort, security expert; Francois Sophonie, translator; driver Richard St. Juste; and Jean Enock Berus, translator.



Sunday morning worship at Faith/Gonaives was a "lively and powerful service," said Stuehrenberg. The home church of LCH President Rev. Revenel Benoit, Faith's four-story building that houses the sanctuary along with other outreach ventures: computer and secretarial schools, radio and television stations. Initial foundation preparations have begun on a new Faith church site a few miles away.

30 third-year seminarians in the afternoon. On Monday and Tuesday, the rest of the mission team headed to the village of Bassin-Manyan outside of Gonaives to operate two days of a medical clinic. The clinics welcome all patients. Occasionally, a patient is taken by a mission team member and translator to the public or private hospital or a doctor in Gonaives. The mission team has some limited funding to pay for this outside care.

On Tuesday afternoon, the Hefners taught a course on Christian Marriage to the community of Bassin-Manyan in the church facilities. A dinner social that evening provided an opportunity for the mission team members to interact with the Seminary students and their families.

Wednesday and Thursday brought a change of venue for the mission team clinics to a newly constructed concrete block church building in Jubilee, an extremely depressed area on the edge of Gonaives. This medical clinic was much busier than its counterpart in Bassin-Maynay. Patients included an urgent case: a child who was a burn victim and needed to be transported to a doctor in Gonaives. At the end of the week, the child was doing much better.

On Wednesday afternoon the Hefners joined Stuehrenberg to present their Marriage Course to the third-year seminary students. They returned to the classroom on Thursday morning to present the class to the first-year students.

After dinner on Wednesday, the mission team attended the dedication of the new LCH Girls' Orphanage, located near the LCH Boys' Orphanage. The first of four planned girls' units houses 25 girls.

Seven girls, each coming from very dangerous living conditions, spent their first night at the orphanage on Wednesday evening.

Participating in the dedication were the Mission: Haiti mission team members, LCH President Benoit and Girls' Orphanage Director Mademoiselle Weslande along with Faith Lutheran's musicians.

The next afternoon, several mission team members accompanied Benoit to the remote community of Andre, outside of Gonaives. The LCH seeks to build a concrete block church to replace the current tin facility in this community.

On their last night in Haiti, the mission team celebrated the dedication of the new facility for Jubilee Church. The standing-room-only congregation included church and community members, several Gonaives area pastors and the Faith Lutheran music team. A gift of approximately \$10,000 from an American family — along with assistance from the LCH — funded the new concrete block building.

On their way back to Port-au-Prince on Friday morning, the mission team visited the remote village of Jean Louis and spent some time viewing the school and community. Mission: Haiti is exploring the possibility of participating in some ministry opportunities in this community. The community leaders have requested assistance to provide irrigation — the village is very close to a river — to assist with food production.

The next day the group — minus Roenfeldt, who stayed in Haiti to welcome the team from the Florida-Georgia District Office — headed back to the US.

Their collective message: "If you ever want to participate in the

'adventure of your life,' share the love of Jesus in a foreign land and make a huge impact . . . consider serving on a future Haiti mission team." Contact Helen Roenfeldt at 954-868-8218, hondee1@aol.com or visit the Mission: Haiti's [website: www.missionhaiti99.org/](http://www.missionhaiti99.org/)

Mission team at left (l-r) Noel Dufort, John Rougeux, Lophane Laurent, Helen Roenfeldt, Darrell Stuehrenberg, Francois Sophonie, Brenda and Oz Hefner, Alice Layne, Danielle Green, Nancy Swisher, Richard St. Juste, Enock Berus and Tamara Howes.

Far left, Dedicated on May 1, the new church in Jubilee — built at a cost of approximately \$14,500 — was the first Christian Church in the town.

Below, Rev. Revenel Benoit, LCH President and pastor of Faith/Gonaives, joined the worship music team during the April 27 service.



A four-hour drive brought the group to Gonaives, some 100 miles north. During their stay in Haiti, the team stayed in the two-story Creole-Star Guest House, which is owned and operated by the Lutheran Church of Haiti (LCH).

After worship, mission team members shared lunch and activity time with children from the LCH orphanage and school. Each evening the mission team assembled and sorted medical supplies for the upcoming days of clinics.

From Monday through Thursday, the mission team pursued different mission activities. Stuehrenberg headed to LCH Seminary, where — with the help of a translator — he taught a class on Jesus' Parables to 20 first-year students in the morning and



Roefeldt Will Visit Your Congregation and Introduce Mission: Haiti With Media Presentation

For the past 15 years, Mission: Haiti has been dedicated to glorifying God and transforming lives through our service to people in Haiti.

This independent faith-based 501(c)3 organization was established by the Florida-Georgia District to help support the growing Lutheran Church in Haiti. Advised by and accountable to the District, Mission: Haiti promotes self-sufficiency projects, medical care, nutritional and educational programs, and health education for children and families.

Mission: Haiti networks with other mission societies and humanitarian organizations to provide support, assistance, disaster relief, medical care, education opportunities and develop self-sufficiency projects administered through the Lutheran churches of Haiti.

Since its role as a medical relief provider and central organizer for relief supplies after the 2008 hurricanes and 2010 earthquake, Mission: Haiti continues to coordinate short-term missions and develop new projects seeking to connect individuals and congregations in the U.S. with people in Haiti.

"We believe that presenting the Gospel of Christ with our words and our work will bring glory to God and transformation to the lives of those giving and receiving the ministry of God's mercy," explains Helen Roefeldt, Mission: Haiti Executive Director.

Roefeldt welcomes the opportunity to visit District churches on behalf of Mission: Haiti. A professionally produced video about Mission: Haiti introduces Rev. Revenel Benoit, President of the Lutheran Church



For more information on Mission: Haiti, contact Helen Roefeldt at 954-868-8218, or hondee1@aol.com.

Mission: Haiti's website is: <http://www.missionhaiti99.org/>



of Haiti. He shares his personal story — a gripping witness of a boy who grew up in a Voodoo home in Haiti who was "put out" on the street as a teenager when he became a Christian. The video relates Benoit's journey to become a Lutheran pastor through training at Concordia Theological Seminary/Fort Wayne and his return to his native land to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The video also provides an overview of the day-to-day ministry of the Lutheran Church of Haiti. LCH pastor and teacher salaries are 95 percent supported

through funds generated in country. The LCH operates a number of businesses that support its professional pastors and teachers in addition to providing employment for church members.

Members of the Mission: Haiti Board of Directors — all active members of Florida-Georgia congregations — include Chairperson Karen Smith, John Rougeux, Donna Croup, Rosemary Johnson, Rev. Anthony Masinelli, Cheryl Masinelli, Sam Croup, Laurie Hartner and Rev. Darrell Stuehrenberg. ■

New \$12 Million Commitment Thrivent Reaches \$200 Million in Donations to Habitat for Humanity

Thrivent Financial will commit \$12 million in 2014 to Habitat for Humanity International through the Thrivent Builds with Habitat for Humanity partnership.



The funding will be utilized by three programs within the Thrivent Builds partnership: Thrivent Builds Homes, Thrivent Builds Worldwide and Thrivent Builds Repairs. From the partnership's inception in 2005, Thrivent Financial and its members have now committed more than \$200 million and more than 4 million volunteer hours.

Thrivent Builds Homes, the largest of the three programs, will benefit from \$7.8 million in 2014 to help build 126 Habitat for Humanity houses. The program focuses on improving communities by helping Habitat build homes in partnership with low-income families all across the U.S. By the end of 2014, the partnership will have constructed more than 2,000 Thrivent Builds Homes across the country.

Thrivent Builds Worldwide allows Thrivent members and others to give financially and volunteer their time as they travel to international or domestic locations for a week or more at a time to build Habitat homes and experience other cultures. In 2014, the Thrivent Builds Worldwide

program will send up to 115 teams funded by \$1.4 million. Including trips planned for 2014, nearly 1,500 homes will have been built in 33 countries through this program.

Thrivent Builds Repairs is the newest of the Thrivent Builds programs. Through this program, Thrivent members and others demonstrate generosity as they help repair existing homes in partnership with families who don't have the resources or ability

to make the repairs themselves. Partner families may include senior citizens, veterans, single mothers or others needing assistance. The Thrivent Builds Repairs program will complete up to 500 repairs with funding of up to \$1.25 million in 2014. Since its launch in 2012 through the end of 2014, up to 800 homes will have been repaired through this program.

"Our partnership with Habitat for Humanity is a great way for our members to express their generosity," said Brad Hewitt, president and CEO of Thrivent Financial. "It's one more reflection of our commitment to

strengthening communities here at home and around the world."

"We are so grateful for Thrivent Financial's long-term and generous support," said Jonathan Reckford, CEO of Habitat for Humanity International. "The Thrivent Builds partnership continues to make a difference in the lives of thousands of families around the world who now have hope for a brighter future."

Thrivent Financial remains the largest non-governmental supporter of Habitat for Humanity International.

For more information about Thrivent Builds programs or to volunteer, visit Thriventbuilds.com. ■

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A new place to serve

Boost Activity Night Offers Program for Families with Disabilities

Individuals and families confronting disabilities are being offered a time of respite, fellowship and friendship each month in a non-threatening environment through BOOST, a joint ministry of St. Paul Lutheran/Lakeland and Lift Disability Network of Orlando.

Each night includes a fellowship meal and a structured activity, then concludes with worship. BOOST Activity Nights aim to increase awareness of disabilities, allow more opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in activities alongside those without disabilities and give an opportunity for families with disabilities to worship together in a comfortable and safe environment.

“Basically we find folks won’t come to church with a disabled family member because it’s too much hassle, people may stare, sometimes the child is loud or vocalizes at inopportune times during worship... you name it,” said Becky Nelson, administrative assistant for St. Paul.

“The families are often alone in their struggles and love it when folks come alongside them and provide times of normalcy and rest.”

“I am so thrilled that God is

working to touch the hearts of God’s people to see the need to reach out to families who are touched in some way by disability,” said Crystle Feran, the St Paul member heading the ministry. “What a blessing to be able to begin a ministry partnership that is helping families struggling with disability receive the compassion, and mercy of Christ through loving volunteers willing to share their lives with those in need of a ‘BOOST.’”

The program launched in September 2013 with a 50’s style Sock Hop. In October, participants dressed in costumes and decorated pumpkins. November’s agenda included a Thanksgiving style meal and packing 104 boxes for Operation Christmas Child.

“We wrapped up the year with our Jingle Bell Hop in December with lots of music, dancing, fun and great food,” said Feran. “We started 2014 with a ‘Pajama Party.’

“We are continuing to add volunteers and new special-needs families each month,” she concluded. “I am so excited to see what God has in store, and I look forward to seeing how He will continue to turn our darkness into brilliant lights of joy through His mercies each day!” ■

Below — BOOST participants and volunteers pray over some of the boxes packed for Operation Christmas Child.



Below — BOOST participants share a message of gratitude for the program.



John Frerking Honored with “Walk of Faith” Award as LIRS Marks 75 Years of Serving Immigrants, Refugees



Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service celebrated its 75th anniversary by hosting the Walk of Courage Award Gala on June 19 at the Hilton Baltimore.

The Walk of Faith Award was presented to Rev. John Frerking, long-time pastor of Faith/North Palm Beach and refugee resettlement champion. The Walk of Courage Award was presented to Rich Cho, General Manager of the NBA Charlotte Hornets and former refugee from Burma.

Gala sponsors included Thrivent Financial.

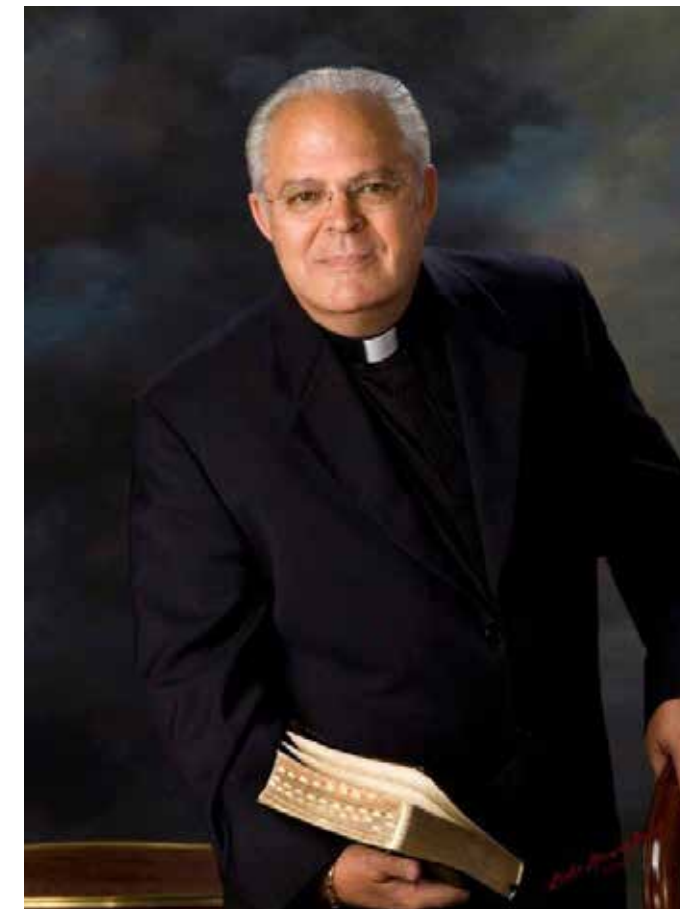
Founded in 1939, LIRS is nationally recognized for its leadership advocating with refugees, asylum seekers, unaccompanied children, immigrants in detention, families fractured by migration and other vulnerable populations, and for providing services to migrants through more than 60 grassroots legal and social service partners across the United States.

During its 75 years of service and advocacy, LIRS has helped more than 500,000 migrants and refugees rebuild their lives in America.

Frerking’s interest in refugee resettlement first began when his

home church, Ascension Lutheran/Charlotte, NC, sponsored a family from Estonia. He was fascinated by this family’s story and how dramatically different it was from his own.

While watching the fall of Saigon on 1975, he relived this past



experience as he viewed news reports showing terrified people trying to escape. He was serving as pastor of Faith Lutheran/North

Palm Beach. He decided he needed to do something so he called Lutheran Services/Florida, an LIRS’ partner, and began the process to sponsor a family.

Faith congregation rallied, and the first family was successfully resettled. This began a 30-year history of resettling families for this parish.

One of Frerking’s treasured resettlement stories involved a family from Vietnam. The father and his three sons were assigned to Faith for resettlement. The wife and the daughters were believed to have been lost at sea on the long journey to the US. Later it was discovered that everyone was alive and in the US. Frerking and his congregation witnessed the joy of reuniting this family.

Frerking also comforted a young family from Vietnam with two small children when the mother died of leukemia shortly after arriving in the US. The mother’s highest hope for her children was for them to graduate from college. What a joy

it is for Frerking to have been able to provide her children with assistance to see their mother’s dying wish come true. ■



Raising Awareness of Persecuted Christians

BURNING BUSH

by Bruce Lieske
District Task Force on Muslim Evangelism

We have all heard about the ongoing atrocities committed by Boko Haram, the radical Islamic group in Nigeria which captured 270 Christian girls. But in our entertainment-crazed, over-communicated American world of TV, hashtags and twitter we may not have known about the many other instances of Islamic persecution of Christians.

More than 100 Christian churches have been burned down in

privileges in Pakistan, or even imprisoned if they allegedly insult the deceased man, Muhammad. The Vatican estimates that 100,000 Christians are murdered every year because of



A few mothers of the kidnapped girls. The mass abduction of the teenagers, all aged between 16 and 18, took place in April after militants overpowered a guard at their boarding school in Chibok, north-east Borno.

March for Persecuted Christians and associated Prayer Rally on May 17 in Orlando, FL. Two hundred people turned out at Lake Eola on that Saturday

evening to walk in unity around the lake carrying signs with slogans like “STOP burning down churches in Nigeria” and “STOP burning down churches in Pakistan.” We had 120 signs in English and Spanish with 12 different slogans.

The prayer march was organized by a team led by Alan Kornman (a Jewish friend who identifies with suffering Christians, and who sees little difference between Antisemitism and the persecution of Christians) and myself.

The march concluded with a prayer rally at Trinity Lutheran Church and featured speakers and prayer leaders representing four different regions: Europe, Syria, Egypt and Pakistan. At one point in the service Sister Hatune Dogan, a Syrian Orthodox nun from Turkey, sang the Lord’s Prayer in Aramaic, the language of Jesus. She shared stories of her relief work among rape victims and oppressed Christians in Egypt, Syria and Iraq.

Elisabeth Sabaditsch-Wolff from Austria shared her story of how Europe is being Islamicized and freedom of speech is

being hindered. Julie Dass, a member of Faith Lutheran Church/Naples, spoke about the oppression of Christians in Pakistan.

The Body of Christ is hurting in many areas of the world. We all understand that if one part of our body hurts it affects all the other parts. I have suffered from gout. When my big toe hurt it greatly restricted my mobility. And if my eyesight is impaired my whole life changes. The same is true of the Body of Christ. St. Paul teaches us: “If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.” (1 Corinthians 12:26)

That is why God tells us: “Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.” (Hebrews 13:3)

The prayer march was a call to action, encouraging Christians to be silent no more. It must be the subject of another article, but it is clear to me that as Islam continues to creep into America, the persecution of Christians will grow here as well. It is time to speak up, to take action, and above all to pray. We are the church of Martin Luther, who boldly and courageously spoke his mind — about government, about Islam, about sin, about grace, about Jesus. ■



Bruce Lieske at the front of the March for Persecuted Christians

Egypt in the past year. The only Lutheran church in Pakistan was burned down recently, and Christians are regularly denied

their faith.

In response to the current global persecution of Christians, Burning Bush Ministries/Central Florida Branch sponsored a Prayer

North Miami Ministry Maintains Lutheran Presence in Challenging Circumstances

When Rev. Dennis Bartels accepted the call to Holy Cross Lutheran Church & School in 1986, it was one of six Lutheran congregations within a five-mile radius in North Miami, FL.

“Of the six, Holy Cross is the only one that has remained in the community, the only Lutheran influence,” Bartels said.

The inner-city church continues to share the Gospel in a community that has undergone a significant socioeconomic transformation. That change has been reflected in the church and school: the majority of the more than 320 students are Haitian-American, with most participating in the National School Lunch Program for free and reduced-price meals, served at Holy Cross.

To accommodate its dwindling budget, Holy Cross church and school staff work at 80% of the LCMS Florida-Georgia District pay scale, Bartels reported. Last year when the congregation was unable to sustain his salary, he taught full time in the school while maintaining his pastoral obligations.

Despite the community’s many changes and challenges, Bartels sees serving an inner-city church as one of his “greatest blessings.” In early March, Holy

“When you’ve been someone who hasn’t had enough to eat, you are very willing to share what you do have.”

Holy Cross coordinates the “Garden

“LCEF has been our lifeline to help us keep our facility in shape.” Bartels said.

Holy Cross members dream of the day when the staff no longer scours the church grounds for beer bottles and drug paraphernalia before students go outdoors for recess. Such trash is tossed from a neighboring apartment building deemed a haven for criminal activity by the North Miami police. An expanded



Cross confirmed 14 youngsters – including students whose families are not Holy Cross members. The youth mostly “came to the classes by themselves and got here on their own,” Bartels reported.

Another blessing: congregants’ strong sense of stewardship.

“They may not have much, but they sure know how to give,” Bartels said.

The congregation enthusiastically supports its food ministries. “Our little congregation worships 200 on a good Sunday and gives away 100 to 150 [Thanksgiving] baskets every year,” Bartels said.

of Eatin’,” a food pantry that serves about 30 families a week. The ministry relies on donations from congregants, schools and community groups.

Over the past 20-plus years, Holy Cross has turned to Lutheran Church Extension Fund for loan support for roof repairs, an air-conditioning upgrade, improvements to the school’s computer lab, installation of a security fence and more.

“A great encourager” is how Bartels describes Daniel J. Reichard, LCEF vice president for Florida-Georgia, with whom the congregation often works.

preschool, adult day-care and affordable housing are among the ministries the congregation would like to house in that property.

Instead of abandoning its inner-city community, Holy Cross continues to serve “because we love the ministry,” Bartels said. “Our staff has true servant hearts.” ■

In above photo — Holy Cross Lutheran School students enthusiastically support the church’s “Garden of Eatin’” food pantry, an outreach to its North Miami neighborhood.

Teamwork Key in Moving Stalled Ministry Forward

Any relationship – whether it is between a husband and wife, parent and child, teacher and student – needs healthy communication in order to grow.

The same is true of a congregation, says Rev. James Kress, as members of Redeemer Lutheran Church/Englewood, FL, discovered with the help of LCEF's VisionPath.

Five years after a leadership change created a major ministry stall, Redeemer is moving forward.

The VisionPath experience is helping members communicate, focus on ministry and determine a clear direction to best serve their community and the Lord.

"Without VisionPath, we'd probably still be stuck in a meeting," Kress said of the relatively new LCEF experience that he credits with revitalizing ministry that had become stagnant.

With VisionPath and God's help, the pastor said, "we are confident we will produce good fruit for His kingdom."

Excitement 'Almost Palpable'

In 2007, Redeemer Lutheran continued to benefit from an earlier population boom in Englewood, located on the Sunshine State's gulf side, south of Sarasota. The growing congregation was looking to the future, including the potential of expanding ministry through its child care and development center.

But plans were put on hold – until the church council wanted to revisit those plans but was unsure how to proceed. That's when Redeemer members embarked on a half-day VisionPath event with LCEF's Vice President-Ministry Support Max Biesenthal.

"It started slow, but by the last hour and a half, there was so much dialogue going on [among members], that Max was just nodding his head and allowing members to talk about how best to extend God's kingdom," Kress said.

Biesenthal says the congregation's energy and excitement became "almost palpable."

"It was blazingly obvious that the Spirit was moving in the hearts of those in attendance to move in a particular direction," Biesenthal said.

"At the end of the event, they were ready to get going."

Through VisionPath, Redeemer has identified seven "organic" ministry paths, including expanding ministry to meet the needs of young families and children, and enhance spiritual care to the elderly.

Those paths already were in place but had been detoured, the pastor said.

"We can't accomplish everything at once. We have to set priorities," Kress said of the different paths.

Along with improving communication, the pastor sees congregants enjoying greater unity.

"Though we always will have challenges in ministry, the VisionPath experience opened up our minds to the idea that we can walk together to spread the Gospel," Kress said. ■

At left — Members of Redeemer/Englewood participated in an LCEF VisionPath experience and now have clearly defined plans to reach out to young families.



Discover the clarity you need to embrace God's vision for your ministry

Everyone has an idea. Everyone has an expectation. And the community has so many needs. And "We've always done things this way."

Sometimes, doing ministry is like looking through a kaleidoscope. Everything looks fragmented: a piece here and a piece there, colors colliding and images emerging and quickly fading.

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your ministry and the community you serve.

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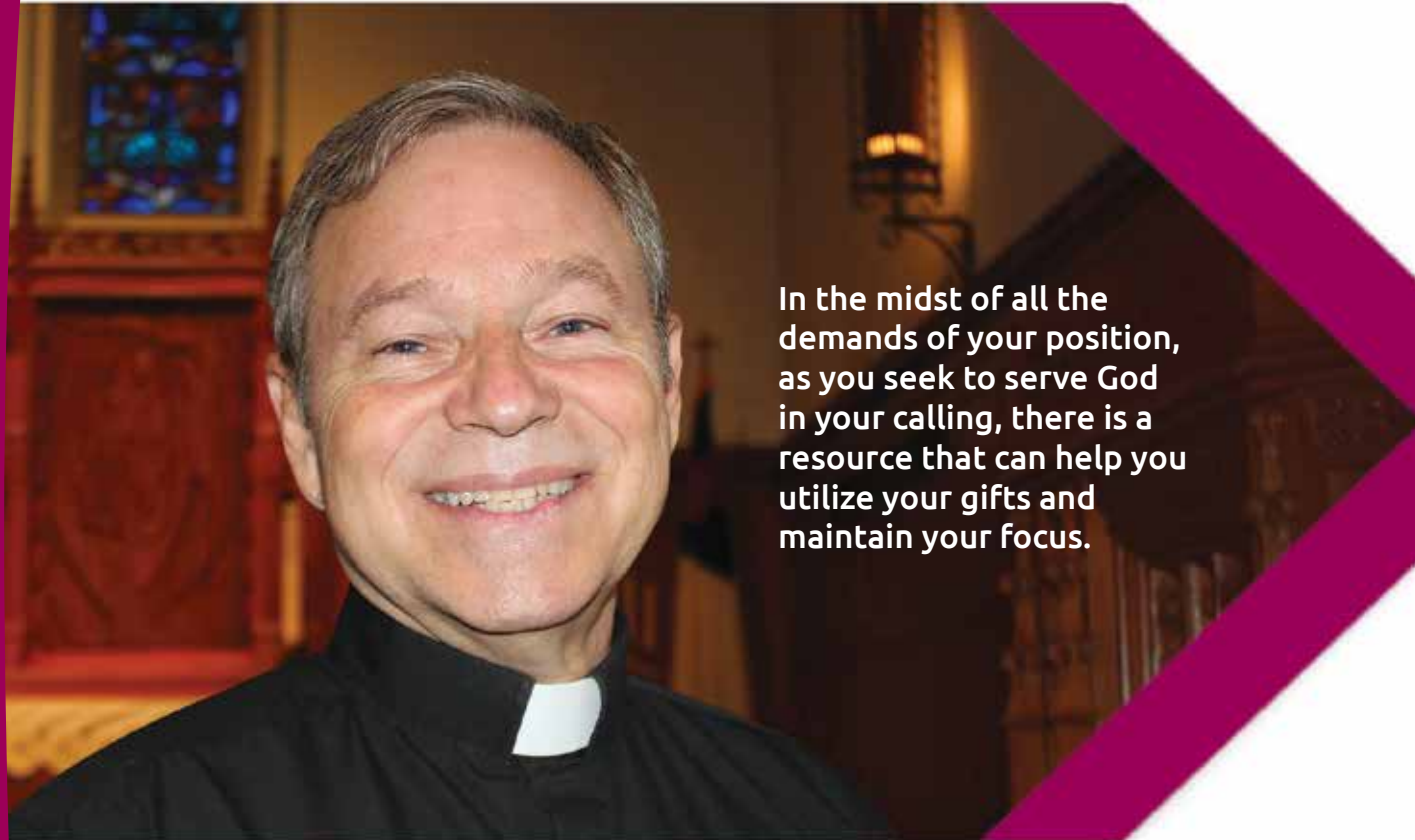
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 > Florida-Georgia district

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FLORIDA GEORGIA

REGIONAL NEWS

All Saints/Blairsville Prepares for Milestone Celebration in Renovated Sanctuary

Work has been completed on the renovation of the sanctuary at All Saints/Blairsville, GA. The project included installing new pews and carpeting.

“Not only was an aesthetic change accomplished, but we lost the creak of the 100-plus-year-old pews whenever the congregation was asked to stand,” said Pastor Dave Wesche.

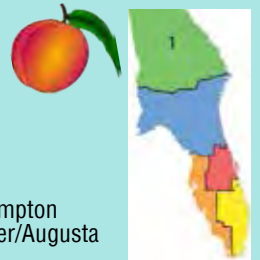
The former pews have been purchased by congregation members and refurbished for use in their homes.

“In this renovated worship space, we currently worship 130 people, using blended hymnody set in the traditional Lutheran liturgy found in the Lutheran Service Book,” Wesche added.

Now All Saints members are gearing up to celebrate the congregation’s 25th anniversary in 2015. Started in 1990 by a small,

REGION 1 CONNECTIONS

Vice President: Rev. David Brighton | Mount Calvary/Warner Robins
 Laity Board Member: Mr. William Gaik | Trinity/Toccoa
 Laity Board Member: Mr. Jay Wendland | Living Faith/Cumming
 NE Georgia Circuit Visitor: Rev. David Wesche | All Saints/Blairsville
 Atlanta N Circuit Visitor: Rev. Ray Borchelt | St. Mark/Tucker
 Atlanta S Circuit Visitor: Rev. Larry Townsend | Christ Our Savior/Hampton
 E Central Georgia Circuit Visitor: Rev. Roger Schwartz | Our Redeemer/Augusta



New pews and carpet were part of the renovation at All Saints/Blairsville, GA

dedicated group of Lutherans, All Saints numbered just 12 members at its inception. They met in a room at the Blairsville Civic Center during their first year.

In 1994, the first permanent building was constructed and was later expanded in 2002 to meet the needs of the steadily growing congregation.

All Saints will be celebrating its 25th Anniversary with a variety of special events culminating in worship on Sunday, November 1, 2015, in Blairsville, GA. ■



GOOD SHEPHERD/Gainesville hosted its first-ever Easter Sunrise Service this year (at right). More than 100 worshippers filled the courtyard to celebrate Jesus’ Resurrections. A week earlier, Good Shepherd members celebrated Palm Sunday and Confirmation Sunday during worship. Shown here with Pastor David Sieg (front, far left) and DCE Wynn Derong (front, far right) are the 2014 confirmands (front l-r) Renae Sheldon, Jackson Barkley, Tyler Pieschke, (back l-r) Laura Leigh Feeman, Evan Mershon, EmmaLyn Weisensel, Haylee Stephens.



Our Redeemer/Lake City Celebrates 50 Years



May 17 was an historic day for Our Redeemer Lutheran/Lake City, FL, as members and guests gathered to celebrate the congregation's 50th anniversary.

Our Redeemer's 50-year journey began in 1964 with Pastor Robert Besalski driving up from Gainesville to conduct afternoon services in the sanctuary of St. James Episcopal Church, an accommodation graciously provided for nearly a year.

In early 1965, Our Redeemer members learned of a church building being sold. The former First Christian Church structure was purchased for \$4500, then moved to a piece of property, leased for \$1 per year. The first service in that building was on May 16, 1965.

In mid-1980 a building committee's major goal was to locate property to build a new sanctuary. Searching revealed a plot/area that would meet current and future needs. A loan was secured from Lutheran Extension Fund, and the 11+ acres was secured as the site for a new sanctuary.

Through the manpower and expertise of Laborers for Christ – and with donations of money, time, talent and prayer from the congregation – a new sanctuary was dedicated on May 3, 1987. For the next 21 years, after the Sunday service the sanctuary was converted to fellowship area with tables and chairs, and then converted back to the sanctuary.

"This weekly conversion was not ideal," noted Our Redeemer member Judy Keener, "so in 2008 another building committee was asked to develop plans for a new sanctuary and permanently convert the existing sanctuary to a fellowship hall."

The building fund that had been set aside was not adequate to build without another loan.

"We had hoped not to finance, so a fund raiser was established – and still continues – of weekly

fish fry dinners to-go," Keener said. "This adventure became very popular and well supported by the community, adding considerable funds to the cause."

Additionally, there was a blessing of a substantial anonymous donation to the building fund. With these financial gifts, a new sanctuary was dedicated October 25, 2009, debt free.

During its half century of worship, Our Redeemer has been served by 19 pastors assisted by eight vicars. Rev. Bruce Alkire has been leading Our Redeemer for the past ten years.

"As with any 50 year span of time, members have experienced ups and downs, but never lost the desire to worship and pass the word," Alkire said. "Thanks be to God!" ■

REGION 2 CONNECTIONS

Vice President: Rev. Frank Marshall | St Paul/Jacksonville
 Board Secretary: Rev. Jay Winters | University Church & Student Center/Tallahassee
 Laity Board Member: Mr. Donald Kaufman | St. John/Ocala
 Laity Board Member: Ms. Lois Schaefer | Amazing Grace/Oxford
 Tallahassee Circuit Visitor: Rev. Mark Schultz | Epiphany/Tallahassee
 First Coast Circuit Visitor: Rev. Dana Brones | Bethlehem/Jacksonville
 N Central Florida Circuit Visitor: Rev. James Rockey | Amazing Grace/Oxford



Food-4-Kids Completes Thrivent Challenge

Peace Lutheran Church/Dunnellon was recently awarded a \$5000 "Lutheran Community Grant" from the Thrivent Financial for Lutherans Foundation.

The funding was awarded to Peace based on its effectiveness in addressing basic needs of the local community. Peace's application was submitted on behalf of the Food-4-Kids Backpack Project and will be used to support this program.

For every dollar raised by the Food-4-Kids program from donors between December 31, 2013, and March 31, 2014, the Thrivent for Lutherans Foundation provided an additional 50 cents, up to \$5000, in support of the Food-4-Kids Backpack Ministry.

The challenge, from Matthew 25:35-36 was: "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you invited me in. I was sick and you looked after me."

The primary charitable interest of Thrivent Financial for Lutherans Foundation



is assisting nonprofit organizations and those they serve in achieving economic security and sustainability.

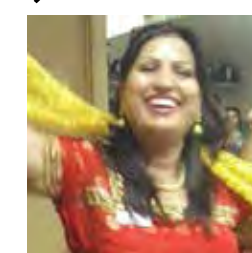
Fundraisers held by Food-4-Kids during the specified time period were: "Something Fishing Going On," Flea Market, Bob Evans Restaurant Event, "Change for Change," Skit, Tag sale, Bake sale, Auction, plus the ongoing appeal for funds. ■ Shown above are Peace members Jackie Hucker and Jan Pinkerton with Peace Pastor Terry L. McKee and Thrivent Representative Shannon Hudge.

Registration Ongoing for Upcoming LWML Convention in Jacksonville, Florida

The First Coast, North Central Florida and Tallahassee Zones of the Lutheran Women's Mission League will be hosting the 34th Biennial District Convention September 26-28 at the Wyndham Jacksonville Riverwalk.

"Plant Seeds & Share the Joy" is the theme for the weekend gathering.

Lutheran humorist Jan Struck, who has been teaching, motivating and entertaining audiences for more than 35 years will explore that theme in her presentation



From left, Jan Struck, Nancy Bogenhagen, Julie Dass.

"This is NOT the life I signed up for!" Nancy Bogenhagen, Vice President of Communication for the National LWML, will be speaking about social media. Julie Dass, a member of Faith/Naples, FL, who travels internationally to spread the Gospel, will offer insights into "Sharing the Gospel with Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs."

Agenda highlights will include a Mission Pledge Walk early Saturday morning; Gifts from the Heart/Ingathering for the Women's Resource Center of Jacksonville; and selection of mission grants recipients.

Registration information is available on line at flgalwml.com ■

GRACE/Winter Haven welcomed new members on March 9. Pictured (top l-r) are Matthew LaForest, Alan and Amy Baker and daughters, Mya and Alyson, Mark and Nicole Irby and sons, Maclain and Colin; (bottom l-r) Joyce and John Gilbert, Christopher Zinsmeister, Steve and Angie Nierman and son, Blake. Shown in the photo below right — Grace members taking prayer requests from community members at the congregation's Prayer Booth during the 4th Saturday Downtown Market in Winter Haven. Pictured here are member Elizabeth Dedrick, Deaconess Intern Melissa Jones, and Vicar Kyle Jones.



REGION 3 CONNECTIONS

Vice President: Rev. Dr. Brian Kneiser | Woodlands/Montverde
 Board Treasurer: Ms. Renee Varga | Woodlands/Montverde
 Laity Board Member: Mr. Jon Brazee | Christ/Cape Canaveral
 Laity Board Member: Ms. Sonia Tellez | Prince of Peace/Orlando
 Commissioned Minister Board Member: Lois Ford | Faith/Eustis
 Commissioned Minister Board Member: Nick Moss | St. Paul /Lakeland
 Space Coast Circuit Visitor: Rev. Gary Held | Risen Savior/Palm Bay
 Orlando East Circuit Visitor: Rev. Jeffery Moore | Trinity/Orlando
 Orlando West Circuit Visitor: Rev. Dr. Milan Weerts | Emeritus/Clermont
 Winter Haven Circuit Visitor: Rev. Dean Pfeffer | Hope/Plant City



Hope Commissions New Stephen Ministers

On Palm Sunday, April 13, the members of Hope Lutheran/Plant City joined in the Commissioning of five new Stephen Ministers for the congregation.

Their commissioning brings to approximately 25 the number of active Stephen Ministers serving the members of Hope and those engaged in ministry in the community.

A Stephen Minister is an individual who has undergone the basic 50 principles of Christian caregiving training to provide Christ centered, one-on-one care to those who are hurting or going through major life transitions. In addition to their basic training, Stephen Ministers meet on a regular basis for ongoing education and support as they bring that specialized care giving to those in need. In addition to this one-on-one care of Hope's Stephen Ministry program, some of the care givers serve as leaders for the congregation's GriefShare ministry.

According to Deaconess, Lynn Senkarik who leads Hope's Stephen's Ministry, "Our program serves as a vital link for so many people who just need that ear to listen and shoulder upon which to lean."

"Hope's Stephen Ministers are an extremely gifted group of individuals who bring Christ's love and compassion to everyone whom they serve."

Hope's Senior Pastor Dean Pfeffer noted that "our Stephen Ministry is not just for members of Hope, but is available to our community as well. There is no need for anyone to face the death of a loved one or any other life changing events on their own. Our Stephen Ministers are here to walk with you and beside you." ■

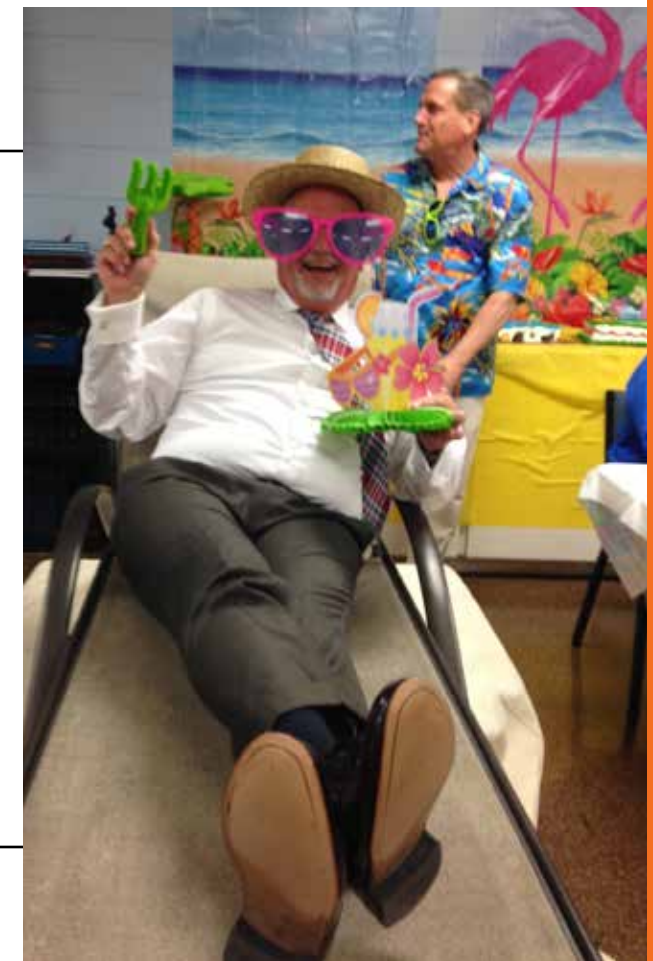


Shown following the Commissioning are new ministers (front, l-r) Brittany Arlow; Jesilynn Drake; Jerri Edelman; Tom Thomas; Stephen Ministry's leader Adene Benton; (back, l-r) Vicar Buck LeGreco, Deaconess Lynn Senkarik, Rev. Dean Pfeffer.



ASCENSION LUTHERAN PRESCHOOL/Casselberry members recently completed work on the innovative new Outdoor Classroom. Designed for fun and learning, the space includes the Water Wall and Butterfly Garden pictured here as well as a Tee Pee designed to hold plants, a Music Wall and a Tire Hill. The new classroom was dedicated in June.

Sunday, June 8, Hope, celebrated the 20th Anniversary of the ordination of Pastor Dean Pfeffer. Festivities included a special meal and tributes from church members and colleagues.





Easter SONrise Service — The 11th fairway on Timber Green Golf and Country Club was the setting for the 17th annual Easter SONrise Service hosted by Faith Lutheran/New Port Richey. Begun in 1997 by Dr. Hubert Temme (right in the insert), the service attracts upwards of 150 worshippers. For the past five years Rev. Richard Arndt (pictured left in the insert) has served as Temme's successor. Faith Factor, Faith's Worship and Praise Band, provides the music and amplification. Golf carts replace pews, and pets are welcome. The service has never been rained out — although Temme recalls that the first year the golf course sprinklers came on unexpectedly.



WORK IS UNDER WAY on the sanctuary renovation at Christ the King/Largo. The current facility has served the congregation since the early 1960s. Members voted in January of this year to remodel the building. Shown here is an artist's rendering of the new façade.



Circuit Pastors Deepen Haitian Outreach Understanding

A strong turn-out of 18 pastors of Southwest Florida classified the April Circuit meeting as one of the best attended of the year's monthly gatherings.

The meeting was hosted by Bethlehem Lutheran/Fort Myers. The session opened with a light breakfast and closed with lunch. Highlighting the session was a presentation from Helen

Roefeldt, Executive Director for Mission:Haiti, on outreach and ministry in that island nation. Mission:Haiti is the Florida-Georgia Mission Society that supports mission and ministry in Haiti. ■

REGION 4 CONNECTIONS

Vice President: Rev. James Guelzow | Messiah/Tampa
 Laity Board Member: Mr. Jeff Richards | Hope/Brandenton
 Commissioned Minister Board Member: Mr. Robert Ziegler | St. Michael/Fort Myers
 Suncoast Circuit Visitor: Rev. David Brockhoff | Holy Trinity/Masaryktown
 St. Petersburg Circuit Visitor: Rev. Arnold Piering | Emeritus/New Port Richey
 Tampa Circuit Visitor: Rev. Kevin Yoakum | Christ the King/Riverview
 Sarasota Circuit Visitor: Rev. Rossetter Leavitt | Beautiful Savior/Sarasota
 SW Circuit Visitor: Rev. Jon Zehnder | St. Michael/Fort Myers



THE ANNUAL EASTER EGG HUNT at Beautiful Savior Lutheran/Sarasota (below) was a rousing success. Thanks to member support and donations, the congregation had the opportunity to share the love and story of Jesus with more than 115 children and their families.



Attending the Southwest Florida Circuit meeting in April were (front, l-r) Paul Koepchen retired pastor, member at Zion/Fort Myers; Helen Roefeldt, Mission:Haiti; Juan Gonzalez, Interim Pastor at Beautiful Savior/Lehigh Acres; Rebecca Dupont, DCE, St. Michaels/Fort Myers; DCE Phil Koepke's sister visiting from St. Louis; Kami Mogelvang, DCE, Grace/Naples; Kevin Koenig, Pastor, Marco/Marco Island; Bob Scudieri, Pastor, Faith/Naples; (back, l-r) Bill Miller, Chaplain, Lee Memorial Hospital/Fort Myers; Nick Moskovites, Pastor, Christ the King/ LaBelle; Darrell Stuehrenberg, Pastor, Bethlehem/Fort Myers; Phil Koepke, DCE, Thrive/Estero; Peter Weeks, Pastor, Zion/Fort. Myers; John Roth, Pastor, Thrive/Estero; Jon Zehnder, Pastor, St. Michaels/Fort. Myers; Dennis Lebich, Pastor, Peace/Naples. Not pictured are Fred Koehler, retired pastor, member at Faith/Punta Gorda; Jerry Lawson, Pastor, Good Shepherd/ North Fort Myers

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Lutheran Church Extension Fund

Frank and Beth Ahrens Honored for Dedication, Service

Faith Lutheran Church & School/Fort Lauderdale on May 30 hosted an evening worship to honor Frank and Beth Ahrens for their decades of service.

For the past 24 years, both Frank and Beth Ahrens have been instrumental to the ongoing program for Faith's school and, in recent years, the congregation.

Their dedication and service have previously been recognized at the Florida-Georgia District level: Frank was presented the Ben Eggers Outstanding Educator Award for Administration in 2001, and Beth received the same award for Elementary Education in 2007.

The purpose of the worship, according to Rev. Darrell Stuehrenberg who led the service, was "to give God the glory for Frank and Beth Ahrens' 24 years at Faith Lutheran Church and School as they now depart to serve at Faith Lutheran School/Hialeah, FL."



Beth and Frank Ahrens (front) with (back, l-r) Sherry Mackey, Daniel J. Reichard, Rev. Tim Hartner, Rev. Dennis Bartels, Rev. Ken Fuehler, Rev. Darrell Stuehrenberg

REGION 5 CONNECTIONS

Vice President: Rev. Steve Wiperman | Our Savior/Lake Worth
 Laity Board Member: Ms. Karen Smith | Peace/Okeechobee
 Laity Board Member: Ms. Nancy Volz/Our Savior-Plantation
 Heartland Circuit Visitor: Rev. Richard Norris | Faith/Sebring
 Treasure Coast Circuit Visitor: Rev. Kenneth Larson | Emeritus/Lake Worth
 S Palm Beach Circuit Visitor: Rev. J. R. Jones | St. Paul/Boca Raton
 Gold Coast Circuit Visitor: Rev. Walter Volz | Emeritus/Plantation
 Monroe-Miami-Dade Circuit Visitor: Rev. Alan Sielk | St. Paul/Miami



Sharing words of thanks and recognition for Mr. and Mrs. Ahrens were Daniel J. Reichard, Florida-Georgia Administration and LCEF Vice President speaking on behalf of the District; Rev. Tim Hartner, Gold Coast Circuit Counselor and Pastor of St. Paul Lutheran/Weston; Sherry Mackey, Principal of Holy Cross Lutheran School/North Miami representing

the Lutheran School Principals and Teachers; long-time Faith/Fort Lauderdale Teacher, Karen Johnson, representing the school staff; and Charles Rogers, Faith's President representing the congregation.

During the service a Sacred Dance group from Faith/Fort Lauderdale performed. A large signing group from Holy Cross/North Miami presented two songs.

Andrew Culverell, Faith's organist, played a song he had composed in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Ahrens.

Also participating in the worship were Rev. Ken Fuehler, former Faith/Fort Lauderdale pastor now serving as Interim Pastor at Faith Lutheran/North Palm Beach, and Rev. Dennis Bartels, pastor of Holy Cross/North Miami.

A reception followed the worship.

The Faith Lutheran campus is now owned by Grace Tabernacle Lutheran Church, which is led by Rev. Bernard Julmiste. Grace Tabernacle will continue the operation of Faith Lutheran School this fall. ■

Ed Nicklas Retires from Our Savior, Plantation



Pastors Greg Walton, Tim Hartner, Scott Gress, Elmer Medley, Ed Nicklas, Jay Rader and Darrell Stuehrenberg

The Rev. Edward Nicklas celebrated his final Sunday at Our Savior Lutheran, Plantation, FL on Sunday, June 1 with a farewell worship and congregation luncheon. District President, Rev. Greg Walton, was the special guest preacher for worship.

Ed Nicklas came to Broward County in 2001, from Virginia Beach, VA — near where he and his wife, Jane, will be heading to establish their retirement home. Many fond messages of remembrance were shared by friends of Ed and Jane — some from their previous congregations. ■

Praying Hands and Hearts at Redeemer/Stuart Reach Out in Love

Redeemer's prayer shawl ministry — Praying Hands and Hearts — began with a question in 2009. Portia Nohejl asked fellow member Hannelore Hettig about starting a knitting and crocheting group to make prayer shawls.

Hettig's answer was an enthusiastic yes. Early in 2010 she received seven completed shawls. In May of that year, five knitters meeting at Hettig's home produced 10 shawls. When the group met again in August, they had 30 completed shawls, five baby blankets and seven baby hats.

On October 10, 2010, the shawls and baby items were blessed in both services.

Praying Hands and Hearts has grown to 26, both members and non-members of Redeemer. The group meets times a year at Redeemer.

All tallied Praying Hands and Hearts members have made 857 prayer shawls, 200 baby blankets, 405 baby caps, four afghans, 131 adult caps (for homeless and chemo/cancer), 12 scarfs for homeless, 11 lap blankets and seven plarn mats for the homeless. Members purchase their yarn, make up the beautiful designs and pray while they make the items.



The left over yarn is delivered to the Humane Society for another group to make blankets for dogs and cats.

In the photo above, Hannelore Hettig displays some of the completed projects of Redeemer's Praying Hands and Hearts ministry. ■

Dave Weidner Roasted Into Retirement

Family and friends gathered in early June to pay tribute to David Weidner's rich ministry career under the theme "Weidner's Wanderings — Celebrating A 40-Year Journey."

A DCE, Weidner served in the parish, as the National LCMS Youth Gathering Director and in various District level positions including Executive Director of Parish Ministries in Florida-Georgia. Most recently he was the Executive Assistant to the District President.

Joining the Florida-Georgia staff at the celebration were Weidner's wife Cathy and their children Kyle and Emily (photo 4); colleagues who had served with the guest of honor during his career; and members of the District Board of Directors.

District President Greg Walton (photo 7) was Master of Ceremonies and guitarist for the sing-along of popular songs with lyrics he had adapted to the occasion.

The 65 guests filled tables that were decorated in themes reflecting Weidner's career and interests — from Disney to Christmas to Indian Camp (photo 5). A trivia competition tested guests' knowledge of Weidner.

Weidner's District colleagues sharing memories of working in Florida-Georgia included (photo 1) Cindy Hammerstom, administrative assistant; Walton; Mark Brink, School Ministries; Dan Reichard, LCEF Vice President; and Doug Kallesen, Outreach.

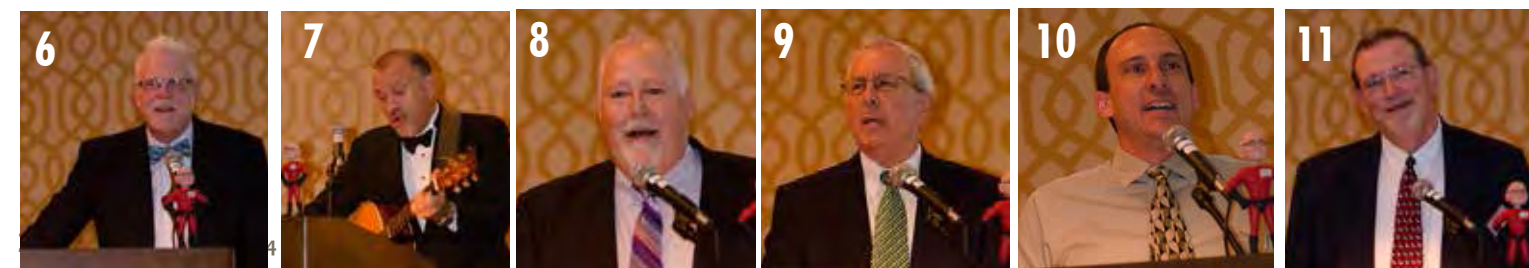
Also paying tribute to Weidner were Rich Bimler (photo 2), former President of Wheat Ridge Ministries; Rev. Ken Green (photo 3), pastor of Prince of Peace/Orlando where the Weidners are active members; DCE Jim Lohman (photo 6) who is serving on the LCMS Executive Staff; DCE Kurt Bickel (photo 8) of Cornerstone Consulting; Rev. Jim

Guelzow (photo 9), representing the Florida-Georgia Board of Directors; DCE Jeremy Becker (photo 10) of St. Paul/Weston, FL; and Rev. Rick Armstrong (photo 11) of Lutheran Counseling Services.

Reflecting on his career, Weidner shared that when he told his father he was going to work "telling kids about Jesus," the response was "Ok, then someday get a real job."

"I had a real job — and it was unbelievable," Weidner said. "Then I met Cathy . . . and the journey began. I am so proud of our children and so very humble to have traveled with Cathy for 40 years.

"We have been so blessed.. Now I'm looking forward to what God has planned for the next stage of our journey." ■



CONCORDIA SEMINARY-St. Louis honored four LCMS members at its May 23 Commencement Ceremony. Mr. Robert Becker and Mrs. Luanne Bole-Becker of Cleveland were presented the Christus Vivit award. Both have served their congregation, LCMS schools and many other ministries as board members, directors, event coordinators, mentors, mission trip leaders and more. Rev. B. Steve Hughey was given an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree. Hughey founded the Association of Lutheran Mission Agencies, Lutherans United in Communications, the Ysleta Hispanic Lutheran Mission and the Friends of the Border mission agency. He and his wife Grace presently work for the Central America Lutheran Mission Society. Rev. Donald K. Muchow, RADM CHC, USN (Ret) was presented with an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree. He served as the U.S. Navy's 20th Chief of Chaplains and received many awards



for his military service, including the Navy Distinguished Service Medal, the Defense Superior Service Medal, and the Legion of Merit. He also served on various boards for the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, as well as the

American Red Cross, the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, and the U.S. Navy Memorial Foundation. Shown here are (l-r) are Robert and Luanne Bole-Becker, Concordia Seminary President Dr. Dale Meyer, Rev. B. Steve Hughey, Rev. Donald K. Muchow. ■



LUTHERAN NATIONAL NEWS

Black Ministry Family Convocation in July

Worship, Bible study, workshops, plenary speakers, fellowship and business sessions highlight the annual LCMS Black Ministry Convocation.



Prominent on this year's agenda is Rev. Roosevelt Gray, Jr., who on November 1 of last year began serving as director of LCMS Black Ministry. He will be sharing his vision for the future of the ministry at

the Convocation.

Gray filled a position that had been open since 2010 when the

LCMS Board for Black Ministry Services was disbanded following the restructure mandated by the Synod in Convention.

Black ministry in the Missouri Synod began in 1877 – just three decades after the LCMS was formed.

In accepting the leadership role, Gray said he was "excited about the opportunity of working with our pastors, lay leaders, congregations, districts and synodical entities in resourcing and reaching all ethnic

groups – especially African-Americans – with the wonderful Good News of a God who loves them and has proven His love by giving us the greatest gift of all ages: His Son – Christ our Savior."

Additional information about the Convocation is available online at lcms.org. ■



Wanted: Renewal Management Team

Will you play a key role in bringing renewal to the people of the Florida-Georgia District President's Convocation?

That's the question being asked of District congregation members. The Renewal Management Team is a group of volunteers who will make all attendees of the 2014 Florida-Georgia District President's Convocation feel welcome, pleasantly surprised and wow'ed by experiencing personal contacts from team members throughout the course of each day of the convocation.

Specific duties will include welcoming and sending guests, encouraging participation in the Renewal Mall, providing support for the Tuesday morning 5-K race and being an Altar Guild volunteer or usher for the closing worship service. Benefits will include a free t-shirt, meals and interaction with the wonderful people of God.

Renewal Management Team meetings are planned for July 16 and August 13. Team Volunteers will receive additional information after they register on the Florida- Georgia District website: flgadistrict.org

The President's Convocation is held once every three years in the fall. All the pastors, administrators, teachers and lay people are invited to participate in this inspiring gathering of church workers and volunteers in District churches and schools. The 2014 President's Convocation will be held September 29 – October 1, at the Buena Vista Palace Hotel in Lake Buena Vista, FL. ■



District Issues Flood Bucket Challenge

In cooperation with The LCMS Disaster Response program of Synod, the Florida-Georgia District invites all congregations to join the joint effort to create 2,000 or more prepared Flood Buckets. These will assist LCMS Disaster Response mercy efforts to those affected by flooding.

While there is no set limit to the number of Flood Buckets each Congregation prepares, the District is asking each Congregation try to put together at least ten Flood Buckets.

Here are program details:
 - Congregations first decide how many Flood Buckets they wish to put together. Each Flood Bucket costs about \$25-\$30 to prepare, and there will most likely be a small transportation cost to get the buckets to a rallying point for pickup.
 - Congregations then contact the District office to order a sufficient number of stickers and devotionals for the number of Flood Buckets

that will be completed. Information needed includes the point of contact for the Congregation and their contact information. This is required to coordinate information for the rallying point and pickup. Preparation instructions can be downloaded from the District web site – <http://flgadistrict.org/floodbuckets>. It would also be helpful to prepare stickers that list the contents of your buckets.
 - Congregations are encouraged to advertise the program to members. Bulletin Inserts can be downloaded at the District District web site.
 - Volunteers need to be coordinated to put the Flood Buckets together. Both the LCMS Disaster Response sticker and the Content sticker should be affixed to each bucket. Congregations are



asked to take pictures of the event and share them with the District office.

- The buckets are then placed in storage, and the congregation lets the District office know how many are ready. The District will apprise all congregations of the plan to bring them to a Circuit Rally point and then coordinate the pickup. The target date for the Rally of Flood Buckets will be on or near August 30, 2015. Look for

information in *Lutheran LIFE* and on the District web site to see the work of many hands in acts of mercy toward our fellow man. For further information contact the District office and ask to speak with John Elliott. You can call 877-457-5556 x7 or write to him at jelliott@flgadistrict.org. ■



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The BACKPAGE

Music, Prayer Dominate St Paul / Boca Raton Inaugural Community Event

Members of the St. Paul/Boca Raton, FL, Praise Team launched a new outreach program in early June known as 1 Community.

The Sunday evening gathering in the city's downtown Sanborn Square featured powerful praise music and heartfelt prayer — with ample opportunity for witness and fellowship for the enthusiastic audience of church and community members.

St. Paul Pastor Steve Carretto offered prayers and led the singing.

On stage at the debut 1 Community event were (left to right) Cayla Stine, Francy Nino, Mike Babincak, Pastor Steve Carretto, Pam Martyna, Pam Landis, Ed Lata and Steve Landis. Dane Watson provided sound.

Those attending the 1 Community event were invited to come forward, light a candle and place it in the cross as they shared a silent prayer.

