

A person wearing white robes is shown from the waist down, kneeling on a brown carpet. They are holding a wooden pitcher in their right hand, pouring water into their left hand held palm-up. The water is falling into a dark, shallow basin on the floor. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

# LUTHERAN LIFE

**2015 | Volume 1**  
The Newsmagazine of the  
Florida-Georgia District  
of The Lutheran Church -  
Missouri Synod

**SERVANT**  
LEADERSHIP



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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## In Memoriam

### Roy Lidbom

Rev. Roy A. Lidbom, 71, passed away on January 31, in Perry, GA, where he and his wife, Jo, had recently moved.

Pastor Lidbom was born in Queens, NY. He attended Concordia Preparatory School and Concordia Junior College, Bronxville, NY; Concordia Senior College, Fort Wayne, IN; and graduated from Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, IL, in 1969.

Pastor Lidbom was ordained on July 20, 1969, and served all of his ministry in the Florida-Georgia District — including vicarage at Grace Lutheran Church, Winter Haven, FL. His first call was to St. Paul, in Apopka, FL, where he served from 1969-1971. He



was pastor of Faith in New Port Richey, FL, from 1971 until retiring from full-time parish service on May 11, 2008.

Pastor Lidbom served as Circuit Counselor and on the Board of Directors for the Florida-Georgia District as well as on several advisory committees.

He was preceded in death by his son Mark A. Lidbom in 2008. Surviving are his wife, Jo, his son Paul, daughter-in-law Anna and two grandchildren, Baylor Mark and Britton Grace, Atlanta, GA.

A February 6 Memorial Service celebrating Pastor Lidbom's life was held at Faith/New Port Richey with a second Memorial Service on Saturday, February 21, Christ Lutheran/Perry, GA. ■

### Ron Fink

Rev. Dr. Ronald F. Fink, 77, died at his Drums, PA, home on December 27, 2014.

A graduate of Concordia Theological Seminary when it was located in Springfield, IL, Dr. Fink served congregations in Iowa and New York before being elected President of the Atlantic District of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. He served for 13 years in that position.

In 1989, Dr. Fink accepted the call as Senior Pastor of Trinity in Downtown Orlando, where he served until retiring from full-time ministry in 1999. In recent years



he served as vacancy pastor at several congregations.

Surviving are his wife of past 53 years, the former Mildred "Millie" Wheeler; daughters, Terri Vangor and her husband, William, Mahopac, NY; and Debbie Hambridge and her husband, Les, Arlington, VA; son, Timothy Fink and his wife, Kristie, Casselberry, FL; daughter-in-law, Sherry Fink, Front Royal, VA; and ten grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by a son, John Fink, who passed away in 1999. ■

## Laura Zirbel Newest Member of LCEF Team

Laura E. Zirbel is the new Florida-Georgia District LCEF Loan Consultant, assuming the duties of the retiring Mary Byrd. Zirbel's first day in that expanded role was February 16 – two weeks prior to Byrd's last day on February 28.

A member of the District finance team since 2013, Zirbel was named bookkeeper on August 1 first of that year.

"Laura has proved to be a very competent and hard-working person," said Daniel J. Reichard, District Executive for Administration and LCEF Vice

President. "She has helped unravel and streamline several procedures, assisted with many other projects, and provided her expertise in other areas of finance."

Zirbel, who has a BA in Mathematics from Bethel College /St. Paul, MN, has more than 20 years of for-profit and non-profit experience in accounting, administrative operations and real estate. She also has eight years of experience as a Board Member for ASON International, a non-profit mission organization located in Melbourne, FL.



Zirbel and her husband live in Winter Park with their three children. ■

## DISTRICT CAPSULES

by Greg Walton District President

### Calling Congregations

Grace/Atlanta, GA..... Sole Pastor  
First/Clearwater, FL ..... Sole Pastor  
Holy Cross/Jacksonville, FL ..... Sole Pastor  
Beautiful Savior/LeHigh Acres, FL ..... Sole Pastor  
Faith/Parrish, FL..... Sole Pastor  
Our Savior/St Petersburg, FL..... Assistant Pastor  
Messiah/Tampa, FL..... Senior Pastor

### Calls Issued

Faith/New Port Richey, FL  
Rev. Thomas Wenndt as Sole Pastor

Trinity/Summerfield, FL  
Rev. Dan Kelm as Senior Pastor

St Paul/Lakeland, FL  
Rev. Ron Pennekamp as Senior Pastor

### Calls Accepted

Faith/New Port Richey, FL  
Rev. Thomas Wenndt as Sole Pastor

Trinity/Summerfield, FL  
Rev. Dan Kelm as Senior Pastor

St Paul/Lakeland, FL  
Rev. Ron Pennekamp as Senior Pastor

### Calls Declined

Grace/Atlanta, GA  
Rev. Jon Rusnak as Sole Pastor

Faith/New Port Richey, FL  
Rev. Justin Bell as Sole Pastor

### Transferred to Other Districts

Rev. Ernest Houpper ..... Southern (O)  
Rev. Anthony Masinelli ..... Rocky Mountain (O)

### Transferred from Other Districts

Mrs. Mary E Hilgendorf ..... South Wisconsin (C)  
Mr. Duane H Hilgendorf ..... South Wisconsin (C)  
Mrs. Kimberly Bortz ..... SELC (C)  
Rev. Justin Robert Pahl ..... Missouri (O)  
Ms. Betty K Johnson ..... Mid-South (C)

### Ordained/Commissioned Minister Initial Assignments

Rev. Thomas R. Boeck  
Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, Pastor – SMP  
Faith/Marietta, GA (O)

### Change of Status within the District

Rev. Mark Abram from Active to Emeritus (O)  
Rev. Dr. Jeffrey C. Moore from Active to Emeritus (O)  
Mrs. Lisa Moore from Active to Emeritus (C)

### Called to Glory

Rev. Mark A Wessling (O)

### Removed from the Roster

Dcs Sara Oxley, Resigned (C)  
Ms. Michelle Pitts Removed (C)  
Ms. Marsha L Fick, Removed (C)

### Change of Status within the District

Mr. Richard Kiesel,  
from Candidate to Non-Candidate (C)

Rev. Mark Jurkowski  
from Active to Non-Candidate (O)

Mrs. Carol J Schroeder  
from Active to Candidate (C)

Ms. Emily Toms  
from Active to Non-Candidate (C)

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

I am amazed at how the work of the church has changed in my lifetime. I grew up in a community where Christianity was the norm.

Not that everyone practiced their Christian faith, but there was a general acceptance of Christian values and even, to some degree, an expectation that people would attend worship services.

## Engaged in the Master's Business

It's a different world today. Church is often an afterthought if thought of at all. It challenges the way we "do" church today, and if we keep trying to do things like we used to, expecting the same results, we will be disappointed.

What kind of exciting plan does your ministry have to equip, empower and engage your congregation to connect people to Jesus? How do people know that your ministry is alive and open for business? Someone has asked the question, "If your church disappeared from your community today, would it be missed tomorrow?" That's a tough question, but one I encourage you to wrestle with as we serve Jesus.



In a post-church world church can no longer be done the same manner it once was. Don't misunderstand me: may we never compromise our Christian values or our doctrinal standards.



At the same time, may we learn to apply them with grace, hating sin, but loving sinners with the love of Jesus.

We live in such a pluralistic society with a wide variety of values, some we may agree with and many that we don't. People

in all our communities have so many conflicting messages coming at them from so many different sources. Our faith is constantly challenged on so many levels, whether it is Sunday morning soccer practices or worshipping the gods of the greens or believing we owe ourselves a day at the beach away from the stresses of life.

As one church sign put it, "Don't let worry kill you, let the church help." Maybe that isn't the best way to come at it, but often we do. Issues that seem so black and white to many Christians are not so clear to others. Some of the issues confronting the church today have been around for many years but were once considered taboo by the church, and yet in our day these are considered by many as non-issues. For far too long the church's approach has been seen as one of arrogance and self-righteousness.

Many non-believers see the church as a judgmental institution looking down at the unregenerate people all around us. In fact, many young people have left in droves because of the perception that the church is hypocritical, too political, too exclusive, old-fashioned and unconcerned with social justice.

Many former churched people have left congregations for similar reasons. Rachael Evans, a Millennial Christian, writes in a CNN blog, "I would argue that church-as-performance is just one more

thing driving us away from the church, and evangelicalism in particular...

"We're not leaving the church because we don't find the cool factor there; we're leaving the church because we don't find Jesus there."

God became incarnate, meaning He took on human flesh, in Jesus. He did that because of His immense love for each of us. In His grace He chose us and calls us as His holy people so that we "may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." (1 Peter 2:9) Our purpose and privilege is to proclaim Jesus. We have to become incarnational in our thinking, even more so in our doing. We have to become the "little Christs" that Luther spoke of in the communities where God has planted us.

We actually have to engage in the Master's business. His business has never been about being satisfied as the church. From the very start, as He was about to ascend into heaven, the final instructions Jesus gave His disciples was to go into the world to reach others with this good news. That now includes each of us!



Congregations, when they are struggling for survival, have a tendency to turn inward. Few of our congregations began as a way to serve themselves. As I read through the history of our congregations almost all of them began with a desire to reach people with the good news of the gospel. Over time that missionary fervor seems to fade as conditions change. Rather than functioning the way that God designed us,

reaching out to focus on those on the outside and connecting them to Jesus, we instead focus on ourselves, our likes and desires, what best suits us, and we allow that to lock not only us, but also Jesus, in the walls of the church.

In Luke 19 we have the parable of the 10 Minas that is often used for stewardship emphasis. While there is certainly application there, as I was reading through Luke 19 last Fall as we began to prepare for the upcoming District Convention with a focus on mission and outreach, verse 13 jumped off the page at me. There we read, "Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas, and said to them, 'Engage in business until I come.'" It became clear to me that each of us, having been called by Jesus, the Master of the harvest field, are to Engage in the Master's Business.



This is the theme of the 2015 District Convention.

In the parable, the master provides the resources for these servants. They didn't earn them, probably didn't deserve them, they were given them, but with an express purpose. These minas were to be invested on behalf of the master. He was expecting a return.

Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:10, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared

beforehand, that we should walk in them." The parable tells us what happened to the servant who did nothing with what he was given. He lost it all. The master says, "I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away..."

At the Convention we will again establish the mission heart of God who has called us to tell the good news of Jesus and shine His light into the darkness of this world.

"A new commandment I give to you," Jesus said, "that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35)

It begins with us learning to love each other, first in our homes, in our congregations, in our community, and in the District and Synod. If what the world around us only sees is constant bickering and back-biting, wouldn't they get the impression that this is what "being church" is all about? We need to operate in the love and forgiveness of Jesus!

God has richly blessed us in the Florida-Georgia District with wonderful resources and opportunities. Those resources may not be financial or material, but each of us has the capability of sharing the love of Jesus with someone. Who of us, having knelt at God's altar, received the precious body and blood of Jesus to strengthen our faith and assure us of His forgiveness, doesn't have something to share with the world? How can we keep such good news to ourselves? As we grow in faith

and learn to be more incarnational, reaching into the communities around us, living out His love in our own lives, we learn to better invest all that God has given us to engage in the Master's business.



That's my challenge to this District. Mine is an elected office, and I, like you, am a poor, miserable sinner. The District in Convention always has a choice as to how they want to go forward. Should you choose to elect me to serve you again, you know in what direction we will continue to move. It's all about connecting people to Jesus, and we best do that as we engage in the Master's business. I believe that our Master is, and always has been, in the people business. You and I have been chosen by Him to reach more people—not to fill pews and meet budgets, but rather to build God's Kingdom for all eternity.

It's all about Jesus folks. It always has been, and it always will be. So join me as we focus our attention on engaging in the Master's business. It will bless your personal life, it will bless your congregation, it will bless our District and Synod, but mostly it will bless God's heart as we obey His call and build His kingdom!



With you...  
in the mission!  
Greg

# New Florida-Georgia Mission Starts Under Way in All 5 Regions of the District

It is exciting to see what God is doing across our District with 12 new starts at varying stages. Some are exploratory, others are already worshipping or holding Bible study.

## Region One:

- St. John the Apostle in Buford GA
- Christ the King in Commerce GA
- Fort Gordon GA
- North Macon GA

## Region Two:

- Nocatee, FL

## Region Three:

- Live UCF, Orlando FL
- South Orlando Four Corners area
- West Palm Bay

## Region Four:

- Thrive Florida Gulf Coast University, Estero FL
- Lakewood Ranch FL
- North Port/Rotunda FL

## Region Five:

- South Port St. Lucie

Other areas are being explored. Local input and locations are always welcome and appreciated. Through the work of the Mission Advisory Council (MAC), mission dollars are more available to plant churches.

Pray to the Lord of the Harvest for the fields are “white unto harvest,” but the laborers are few. Pray for church planters and willing local lay people who can assist in the start-up of new missions.

## Outreach Initiative Snapshots

❖ Small Group Bible studies are under way using “God Connects” at Amazing Grace/Oxford, FL.

❖ Joint Lutheran Hour Ministries/ Florida-Georgia District Staff meeting was held at the District Office on February 19.

❖ Outreach Initiative

Goals are to celebrate 3,500 new believers joining our 200-plus District congregations in 2015 and to see an increase in Sunday morning worship and Bible Study.

❖ Congregational Outreach Proponents are being sought to

represent your congregation in partnership with the District and LHM. Contact the District Office

## MISSIONPOSSIBLE

by Rev. Doug Kallesen  
District Executive for Mission & Outreach

407.857.5556 x6.

❖ Voice of Faith fundraiser held in Naples to start an outreach center to Muslims in Florida.

❖ Grandparents’ Night is held at First / Inverness to work with community school age

grandchildren to provide a mentoring, loving relationship.

❖ Rebecca’s Garden of Hope now

has more than 100 congregations around the country that work with school age children to mentor, provide life skills, love and encouragement with Bible study.

❖ Missional Community “Taster Events,” have been held in several



Winners of the canoe / fill the jar race at Marty’s Men’s Retreat hosted by St. Paul / Lakeland at Luther Springs Conference Center.

settings and congregations to show how through Bible Study, Fellowship — Life on Life Together, Outreach Servant events a congregation can disciple its members while reaching its community. This can and is being done across racial, age and economic differences. If you would like to know more contact me at

407.857.5556 ext 6.

❖ St. Paul / Lakeland hosted Marty’s Men’s Retreat at Luther Springs Conference Center from January 23-25. I was pleased to serve as Presenter on discipleship, Pastors Ron Pennekamp and Zong Yang led Sunday worship.

❖ “Joining Jesus on His Mission”

author Greg Finke began leading a discipleship process at St. Paul/ Lakeland in February.

❖ Hope/ Plant City feeds the homeless and is recognized by the local newspaper!

❖ New Mission Starts as noted above.

Your prayers and support are coveted and will advance the cause

## District Continues

St. Michael Lutheran Church / Fort Myers, FL, hosted the most recent Lutheran Early Response Training (LERT) in the Florida-Georgia District. With the completion of that January 17 session, the District now has 174 trained LERT Team Members.

“We plan on putting several individuals through a Train the Trainer session so that we can visit individual congregations to complete this initial training throughout the

District,” said John Elliott, Florida-Georgia Business Manager and LERT Coordinator.

Once these trainers are certified, congregations will be able to schedule training dates with the District office and have a trainer sent to their locations.

“Additionally we are looking to establish Lay Disaster Coordinators by Region within the District,” Elliott continued. “The Regional

Disaster Coordinator will assist the District office in the coordination of congregation preparation efforts as well as coordination by and between congregations in their Region in disaster relief efforts should a disaster occur.”

Lay persons interested in serving as a Disaster Coordination within their District Region should share that with their Pastor for recommendation to the Circuit Visitor. ■

## Disaster Response Training



With the addition of these attendees at the January Lutheran Early Response Training in Fort Myers, there are 174 LERT Team Members in the Florida-Georgia District.

## Seminary's Annual St. Baldrick's Event Benefits Cancer Research

Two barbers and 32 'shavees' generated more than \$7,000 for St. Baldrick's Foundation during Concordia Seminary / St. Louis' fourth annual head-shaving event on February 6. St. Baldrick's Foundation is a childhood cancer research charity.

Seminary President Dale A. Meyer, three staff members and two faculty members joined

Concordia students as 'shavees.' Two female staff members surprised attendees by issuing a challenge: if they could raise \$500 that evening, they would shave their heads. The audience responded to the challenge and met the goal in swift fashion; the two women were the last to succumb to the razors that evening. ■



Concordia Seminary President Dale Meyer before and after his stint in the barber's chair.

## Grace-Filled Florida Retirement



**LUTHERAN HAVEN**  
Living & Growing in Christ

Nestled in Central Florida since 1948, Lutheran Haven celebrates its long tradition of comfortable and affordable retirement for Lutherans.

Current Residents enjoy:

- The Christ-centered, faith-based community where residents continue to find ways to serve
- The warm, friendly and inviting location and atmosphere
- The active, maintenance-free lifestyle
- The continuum of services offered – Independent & Assisted Living, Skilled Nursing & Home Healthcare

Reservations have begun on a new two-story independent living apartment home complex and the grand opening of a new Memory Care Unit will be held early this summer. Contact us for more information or stop in for a visit.

2041 West SR 426, Oviedo, Florida 32765  
1.800.272.5676 • marketing@lutheranhaven.org

## District Calendar of Events

### 2015 High School Youth Gathering

March 13-15, 2015  
Westin Lake Mary  
Lake Mary, FL

### Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Birthday

April 26 / Commemorating the April 26, 1847, signing of the LCMS' constitution at First Saint Paul Lutheran Church / Chicago

### 2015 Florida-Georgia Convention

June 12-14, 2015  
Astor Crowne Plaza  
Orlando, FL

### National Lutheran Youth Workers Conference

July 12-15  
Astor Crowne Plaza  
New Orleans French Quarter

### Educators & Pastors Conferences

September 23-25, 2015  
St. Paul Lutheran Church & School  
Lakeland, FL

### LWML District Retreat

September 25-27, 2015  
Sirata Beach Resort  
St. Petersburg Beach, FL

### Regional Outreach Conference #2

November 13-14  
Orlando

# FLORIDA-GEORGIA CAMPUS MINISTRY NEWS

## Reflection on a Shooting

### Mary Rowley, Campus Missionary at Florida State University

At 12:30 AM on November 20, a gunman entered Strozier Library at Florida State University. He shot and injured three people before being gunned down by law enforcement.

The students in our campus ministry here were quite shaken up by this incident, but they responded with flying colors. They didn't forget about God or those in their circles of influence. They attended prayer vigils, reached out to their friends and supported each other. They did a lot of listening, crying and recounting of their experiences.



It's now months later, and the shooting is very much "old news." I haven't heard mention of it since the spring semester began. Our students have moved on. Such is college life: nothing lasts. There are always new students coming in and old students graduating

and moving away. There are new events and concerts and games and stories and people. Why talk about something that happened months ago?

Everything is different now.

Here's the reason: nothing lasts – nothing but the hope of Christ.

This incident shook our students to the core. They looked to the church to find meaning, and we gave them hope: The Hope. It may be two and more months later, and everything else may have changed for them, but that Hope is still there. The next time they go through a hard break-up or fail a test or receive a rejection letter – the next time they're feeling hopeless – they can go back to November 20 and remember the Hope they found. Even better, they can share that story of Hope with their friends, as they did that day.

This Hope is something every college student needs. College is a difficult time of life with many changes, and students truly need a constant. Whether you're a parent, teacher, youth leader, pastor, relative or friend, make sure the college students in your life have this Hope. Connect them with the campus ministry in their area via [lcmsU.org](http://lcmsU.org) so they can hear this life-saving message. ■

## Sharing Blessings

### Thrive @ Florida Gulf Coast University Gives Back to Community

Thrive / Estero, FL, gives 25 percent of its offerings from members and worship to ministries and missions outside of its own ministry. "We truly want to bless our community and world," said Rev. Dr. John Roth, missional pastor of Thrive. He is shown here presenting a check to Karen Watson, executive director of Our Mother's Home of SW Florida, Inc.

The mission of Our Mother's Home is to transition teen mothers and their children from foster care and human trafficking to stable, happy and productive lives by providing a safe and nurturing home, education, parenting support as well as physical, mental and spiritual care.



Thrive also recently gifted the Amigos en Cristo Center / Immokalee with a check to help support its mission to immigrant populations. Thrive is a mission congregation that worships on the campus of Florida Gulf Coast University in Estero, FL. ■

# Thrivent Financial Renews Habitat for Humanity Partnership in 2015 with \$12 Million Commitment

Thrivent Financial will commit \$12 million in 2015 to Habitat for Humanity to support the Thrivent Builds with Habitat for Humanity partnership, which provides funding and volunteers to help construct or repair homes across the globe. The partnership will be entering its 10th year in 2015.

“It’s inspiring to see Thrivent members and others continuously give of their time and talents to help families in local communities and around the world have safe, affordable housing,” said Brad Hewitt, President and CEO of Thrivent. “Our significant partnership with Habitat for Humanity is one way we demonstrate our commitment to living generously.”

In 2015, the funding will support the construction of 121 homes, the repair of up to 450 homes and 120 worldwide trips through the three Thrivent Builds programs: Thrivent Builds Homes, Thrivent Builds Worldwide and Thrivent Builds Repairs.

- Thrivent Builds Homes is the largest of the three programs and focuses on improving communities by helping Habitat build homes in partnership with low-income families across the nation.
- 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.



2015 Thrivent Builds Home Locations

Habitat for Humanity Affiliate Name	Affiliate City	Affiliate State
Newnan-Coweta HFH	Newnan	GA
North Central Georgia, HFH	Roswell	GA
Palm Beach County, HFH	West Palm Beach	FL
Manatee County HFH	Bradenton	FL
Marion Co., Inc., HFH	Ocala	FL
HFH of Greater Miami	Miami	FL

- Thrivent Builds Repairs provides for the repair of 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

partnership between Habitat and Thrivent Financial has touched lives and communities all around the world,” said Jonathan Reckford, CEO of Habitat for Humanity International. “We are so grateful for the commitment Thrivent has made to help thousands of people build a pathway out of poverty.”

Since the partnership’s inception, Thrivent and its members have committed \$213 million and 4.4 million volunteer hours to help create safe, decent and affordable housing with 4,000 Habitat families in 34 countries around the world.

Thrivent Financial remains the largest nongovernmental supporter of Habitat for Humanity International.

For more information about Thrivent Builds programs or to volunteer, visit [Thriventbuilds.com](http://Thriventbuilds.com)

*Pictured above left: The new Thrivent Builds home on Susan Lane in Doraville, GA, literally came up out of the ashes. Thrivent members, along with Thrivent Financial representatives Jeff Huenniger and Don Goldsmith, were among the hundreds of volunteers who helped build a home where a burned-out house once stood. Volunteers also came from Trinity Lutheran, Christ the Lord, Epiphany Lutheran Suwanee, Christ the King, All Saints and Oak Road Lutheran churches. The dedication of the home, built through the Gwinnett Habitat for Humanity affiliate, included special guests Gwinnett County Commissioner Lynette Howard and Atlanta Falcons running back Warrick Dunn.*

# Inaugural Class Hones Leadership Skills for Ministry



Les Stroh



Daryl Pichan



Sue Easton



Kurt Bickel

Ten days of intensive leadership training equipped 23 ministry leaders from the Florida-Georgia and Southeastern Districts with valuable insights and powerful new skills to expand the impact and reach of those ministries.

These professional and lay church workers comprised the first *Emergent Leadership* class, a program of the Florida-Georgia District.

Leadership is one of the ministry targets of the Florida-Georgia District. The Emergent Leadership program was developed at the request of President Greg Walton as part of Florida-Georgia’s commitment to grow healthy leaders, utilizing the best training available from spiritual and behavioral science disciplines. The program was developed and is being taught by a team of respected consultants that includes Kurt Bickel, Sue Easton, Daryl Pichan and Les Stroh.

A \$25,000 grant from the Thrivent Financial

Foundation supported the development of the program.

“We believe leadership should equip the whole person as they develop skills that address issues of organizational dynamics and personal growth to better sustain ministry in a post-church culture,” said Walton, who along with the other members of the District’s executive team completed the course.

“Strong leadership equips congregational leaders with a greater ability to serve and also with the skills necessary to reproduce leaders for sustainability of ministry in the place they current serve.”

Ministries that will be impacted by the ordained, commission and lay leaders whose skills were honed during the 65 hours of instruction range

from urban and mission churches to established congregations and schools, from District and campus programs to urban outreach efforts that address neighborhood issues.

“I am going back to Baltimore better equipped and confident about the approaches that I need to take in addressing many of those unaddressed issues

healthier way, balancing being and doing.”

One of the lay participants was Renee Varga, an accountant from Clermont, FL, who is active in her congregation as well as with LCEF and serves as the treasurer of the District. She described the program as “an amazing journey of self-reflection, awareness and learning ... all presented in an



in my ministry,” said Rev. Andrew T. Okai.

Bob Boyd, a principal in Lakeland, FL, said he “learned and grew in key areas of leadership, particularly leading through change, using knowledge of relationship triangles to respond to conflict in a

immediately usable format. As I shared, there isn’t a day that goes by that I don’t or can’t use something that I learned at EL.”

The second Emergent Leadership class will begin during the first quarter of 2015. ■

# LSF Reaches Students in Need at Charter School

Charged with the mission to bring God's healing, hope and help to those in need in the name of Jesus Christ, Lutheran Services Florida offers a variety of services including charter school programs.

Christopher J. Card, LSF's Chief Operating Officer, shared this story about one of the second-grade

students at agency's Excel Charter School in Belle Glade, FL

"Lisa [not her real name] came to us last year having been told by her previous school that she was not able to learn to read and would likely never complete school. Her family is very poor, and in the Belle Glade community Lisa may very well have been another statistic of failure.

"However, she has a very caring mother who was distraught and had been searching for help but could not afford tutors or private education. She brought Lisa to our school the first year we opened. Through an intensive reading program available

at our charter school and a very loving environment Lisa has thrived.

"I was privileged to see her in the role of Master of Ceremony at the recent Excel Charter School awards event. She introduced all the speakers, teachers and the students receiving awards. She recently scored a 4 out of 5 on the state reading exam. It was a very proud day for Lisa and her mother, one of many more to come."

LSF offers programs and services that help runaway and homeless youth, immigrants and refugees, those with substance abuse and mental health issues and benefiting child welfare. Through all of its programs and services LSF reaches more than 120,000 individuals each year.

"There are many stories like Lisa's that the people from the Lutheran community have helped us bring to fruition as we partner together in this ministry of love, service, and faith," Card concluded. ■



# Grant Helps LSG Refugee Program

Lutheran Services of Georgia recently received a three-year grant from Wheat Ridge Ministries to support the Enhanced Cultural Orientation (ECO) program for newly arrived refugees.

After refugees arrive in the United States, they need support to learn how to navigate U.S. culture and adjust to life in their new communities. Federally-contracted refugee resettlement agencies such as LSG are required to cover a checklist of orientation topics. While most agencies cover these topics in a one-day or less "crash course," LSG recognized that this was not enough and in March 2013 launched the Enhanced Cultural Orientation program to better serve refugees.

ECO provides new arrivals with nine intensive cultural orientation workshops over a three-week span. Workshops cover essential topics such as USA law, housing and personal safety, public transportation, domestic violence laws, USA Citizenship and Immigration Services requirements, budgeting and banking in the States and coping with stress.

Childcare is provided, along with

interpreters in multiple languages, ensuring that participants are able to focus on and understand the lessons.

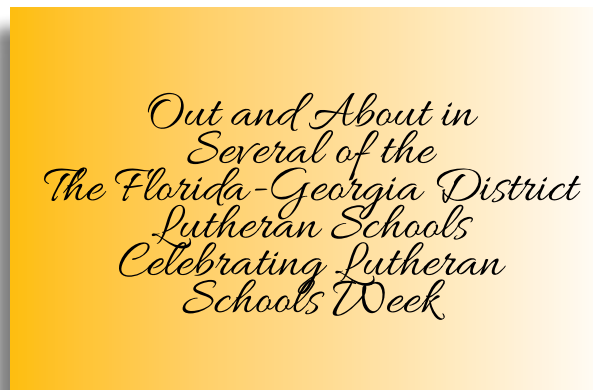
ECO offers direct food relief in a compassionate, convenient and culturally-sensitive way. Although refugees are eligible for the temporary Georgia Supplemental Nutrition Program (SNAP) while they seek employment, it can take several weeks before these benefits are approved and can be accessed. With funding from Wheat Ridge Ministries, LSG will either provide grocery store gift certificates or one bag of culturally appropriate staple food items, such as rice, beans, oil, salt and juice, per week for the first two weeks for each family represented at the workshops.

Unlike many cultural orientation programs, ECO does not separate refugees according to their country of origin. Instead, refugees from various ethnic groups are encouraged to build relationships and learn together.

Wheat Ridge Ministries is a nonprofit organization that helps health and human care initiatives get off the ground by providing the initial funding and support they need to thrive. ■



ECO class members posing with their Certificates of Completion



THE EAGLES of St. Paul Lutheran School / Peachtree City, GA, kicked off their National Lutheran School Week celebration with spirit day and by doing service projects. Students concentrated their efforts on projects on campus and at the Midwest Food Bank. Some of those working at the Food Bank are shown here.



CRAZY HAT & SOCK DAY was part of National Lutheran Schools Week at Shepherd of the Coast Christian School / Fort Lauderdale – and staff members jumped right into the fun! During the week book characters came to life for Literary Day, during which the preschool children enjoyed The Cat in the Hat reading Dr. Seuss books.



JESUS WITH OPEN ARMS was the subject of a special National Lutheran Schools Week display crafted by the event committee of Holy Cross Lutheran School / North Miami, FL. The display was filled in with photos of all of the 353 students, the faculty and staff and Holy Cross.



## Boca Raton's Service Project Aids Wounded Warriors

St. Paul/Boca Raton, FL, students chose the Wounded Warriors' Project as their service project for National Lutheran Schools Week. St. Paul's 375 boys and girls challenged each other to see who could collect the most coins. Each day, the coins were weighed and the separate totals announced.

"The challenge energized the students and the competition grew throughout the week," reported Sue Merritt, one of St. Paul's first-grade teachers.

Grand totals calculated at the end of the week were:  
 Total coin weight.....685 pounds  
 Boys..... 400 pounds  
 Girls ..... 285 pounds  
 # of coins collected..... 95, 635  
 Money Raised .....\$3,550.25

Other NLSW activities included an opening songfest, daily dress-up themes and a prayer walk around campus to offer petitions for family, friends, school, church, community, country and the world. ■



Caden Carretto dressed as Jonah on Bible hero day.



St. Paul students Aiden O'Day (left) and Emily Shegota with the coins collected for the Wounded Warriors Project



## Daily Themes Mark Stuart's Week of Observation

In celebration of National Lutheran School Week, students at Redeemer Lutheran /Stuart, FL, enjoyed a different theme each day.

The week kicked off with comfy, cozy Reading Day. Students dressed accordingly and even brought stuffed animals and pillows for the day. For Beach Day Tuesday, tropical attire was the mode. While bathing suits were not allowed, students

who paid a \$1 fee were able to wear flip flops.

For Wednesday's School Spirit Day, students wore spirit shirt, jeans and green and white accessories to show their Ram pride. The dress code switched to flannel shirts, jeans, cowboy boots and cowboy hats for Western Day on Thursday.

Capping the week was Track & Field Day. The sport boosters served lunch that day. ■

Below — A comfy, cozy Reading Day launched National Lutheran School Week at Redeemer/ Stuart.



## Marietta Celebrates With Pirates, Princesses, Grandparents & Farm Day

THEMED DRESS-UP days were part of the National Lutheran Schools Week celebration at Faith Lutheran / Marietta, GA. The week opened with Farm Day and proceeded through Sports, PJ and Pirates and Princesses Days. Friday was Grandparents Day. Shown here on Pirates & Princesses Day are Jenna Mullane, Faith's Spanish teacher, and Cheryl Bruno, who teaches the three-year-old class and is the volleyball coach. ■



## Plantation Hosts Pet Parade, Chapel Baptismal Festival

As part of its National Lutheran Schools Week celebration, Our Savior Lutheran / Plantation, FL, incorporated a Baptismal Festival into chapel. On that Wednesday five students and one parent were welcomed into the family of God through the waters of Holy Baptism.

The week opened with a snow day. On Tuesday, Our Savior students celebrated that God made each of them unique by wearing crazy socks and hats.

Thursday featured a pet parade as students brought in companions of all shapes, sizes and species. Friday Field Day exercises capped the week.

In photo above right — the youngest students at donned animal costumes as they watched the older students parade their pets. ■



## Teacher Scavenger Hunt Part of NLSW at Faith / Eustis

Faith Lutheran School / Eustis, FL, teachers were the target of a scavenger hunt during 2015 National Lutheran Schools Week activities. Students followed clues to locate their teachers at various campus locations.

Other NLSW events at Faith included a book character parade; Teacher Swap Day, with students having a different home room teacher for one class period; reading buddies; dress crazy day; and red shirt day.

Faith students and faculty also celebrated the week in chapel.

In photo at right — students and faculty celebrated NLSW together in chapel. ■





# District LCEF Congregation Advocates Gather for Weekend of Education, Fellowship, Worship

Approximately 30 LCEF Congregation Advocates from around the Florida-Georgia District gathered in Orlando for a weekend themed “Engaged in the Master’s Business.”

“That’s the theme of this year’s Florida-Georgia District convention,” said Daniel J. Reichard, LCEF Vice President and District Administration Executive. “It also very accurately describes the role of the LCEF Congregation Advocate and our weekend of education, fellowship and worship.”

An LCEF Congregation Advocate is the public relations connection between his or her church and the District LCEF team. The goal of the annual Advocate weekend is for those serving in this volunteer role to grow in their understanding of the mission of LCEF in efforts to support the

church in fulfilling its mission of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Joining Reichard as presenters at the various sessions of the 2015 Florida-Georgia Congregation Advocate weekend were:

- Gregory S. Walton – District President
- Rev. Ingo Dutzmann – First Lutheran Boston (Keynote speaker)
- Becca Jones – LCEF Senior VP Marketing & Customer Service
- Robyn Linke – LCEF Direct of Public and Customer Relations
- Rev. Dennis Bartels – LCEF Consecrated Stewards
- Greg Beste – LCEF Architectural Advisory Committee
- Rev. Dr. Karl Galik – LCEF Capital Funding Services

- Kathy Keene – Demographics
- Don Bergwall and Robert Pinckney – Congregation Advocates
- Woodlands Praise In Motion team from Montverde
- Pam Moksnes – LCEF Vice President Gift-Planning Services
- Steve Heemann – LCEF Southeastern District Vice-President



Molly Millard & Kiara Denholm of St. Paul / Peachtree City

At left — discussion groups were a big part of the two-day event. Below — Harry & Peggy Barkley of Christ / Perry



A highlight of the weekend was the presentation of awards to Congregation Advocates in various categories, including:

- **STAR PERFORMER** – Paul Sicca St. Paul / Lakeland – 68 New Investors
- **ROOKIE OF THE YEAR** – Lyle Mueller Amazing Grace / Oxford



Rev. Ingo Dutzmann with Vicky Piller of Ascension / Casselberry

## MAINTAINED, GAINED, OBTAINED NEW INVESTORS

- Marv Timm – Our Redeemer / Augusta
- Harry & Peggy Barkley - Christ / Perry
- Bruce Hahn – Trinity / Orlando
- Lyle Mueller – Amazing Grace / Oxford
- Laurie Steinke – Redeemer / Englewood
- Doug Fuge – Good Shepherd / Gainesville
- Jean Weinrich – All Saints / Blairsville
- Diana Geiger – Trinity / Delray Beach
- Don Bergwall – Savior of All / Cartersville

Below — Paul & Judy Sicca - St. Paul/ Lakeland Award Winner with LCEF VP Dan Reichard.



- Jack Martin – First / Gainesville
- Vicky Piller – Ascension / Casselberry
- Molly Millard & Kiara Denholm – St. Paul / Peachtree City
- Carl Scheuman – Peace / Naples
- Clifford Skarr – Christ Our Savior / St. Augustine
- Rick Van Matre – Lamb of God/ Lithia
- Renee Varga – Woodlands / Montverde
- Laird Van Gorder – Mount Calvary / Warner Robins

“We would like to express our sincere gratitude and thankfulness to our Presenters and Congregation Advocates who attended the LCEF Florida-Georgia Congregation Advocate Weekend,” Reichard concluded. ■



## Paid Summer Internships Offered to College Students

Applications are being accepted for the LCEF Summer Internship Program. These paid job opportunities for college students are offered for Information Technology, Lending and Real Estate Management, Marketing and Ministry Support.

More information is available on LCEF’s website: <http://lcef.org/internship/>. Deadline for applicants is April 3.

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Learn more at [lcef.org](http://lcef.org) or call 800-843-5233.



### LCEF—Florida—Georgia District Team:

- Daniel J. Reichard, Vice President, [DReichard@flgadistrict.org](mailto:DReichard@flgadistrict.org) \*
- Laura Zirbel, Loan Consultant, [lzirbel@flgadistrict.org](mailto:lzirbel@flgadistrict.org) \*
- Debbie Talbot, Administrative Assistant, [dtalbot@flgadistrict.org](mailto:dtalbot@flgadistrict.org) \*
- [flgadistrict.org](http://flgadistrict.org) \* (877) 457-5556, ext. 4

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## Concordia Nebraska Campaign Tops Goal

Concordia University Nebraska raised \$42.3 million in gifts, pledges and deferred commitments during its *Blessed to be a Blessing* campaign, which concluded on December 31, 2014.

The campaign, which had an overall goal of \$38 million, sought to raise \$6 million for capital projects, \$17 million for operations and \$15 million for endowment. It surpassed its goals in each of those areas, raising \$6.4 million for capital, \$19.8 million for operations and \$16.1 million for endowment.

The largest campaign component, gifts for operations, enabled Concordia to address immediate priorities and provide increased support to its students during the campaign.

Endowment gifts received during the campaign enable Concordia to provide competitive financial aid to students, recruit and retain talented faculty and staff, and provide additional resources for university programs. ■



THE BIBLE ... GOD'S STORY was the theme of the Lutheran Hour Ministries float in the 2015 Tournament of Roses Parade, held January 1 in Pasadena, CA. This was LHM's 65<sup>th</sup> year of participation in the parade, where it continues to be the only Christian float. LHM was awarded the Princess' Trophy as the most beautiful float 35' and under.

## Former District Exec Wheat Ridge's Rick Herman Announces Retirement



Dr. Richard Herman, president of Wheat Ridge Ministries since 2006, has announced plans to step down from his position as of September 1, 2015.

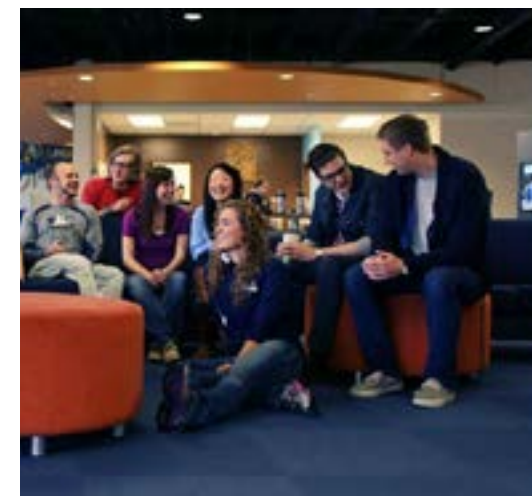
Herman joined Wheat Ridge in 1992 as vice president and was appointed to vice president/chief operating officer in 2002. When he

was elected as president in 2006, he became the fourth president in the history of Wheat Ridge Ministries, succeeding Dr. Richard Bimler, who served in this role from 1991-2005.

Herman served various ministries in the Florida-Georgia District before joining Wheat Ridge. He began his professional career as a teacher, then principal of Lutheran High School of South Florida / Fort Lauderdale.

He also served as principal of St. Paul Lutheran School / Boca Raton, FL. In 1986, he accepted a call from the Florida-Georgia District as Executive Director for Parish Services, a position he held until he joined Wheat Ridge Ministries.

Herman and his wife, Debra, a professor of art at Concordia University Chicago, are the parents of two daughters, Kristy and Katie. ■



Concordia University Nebraska students enjoy spending time in the Janzow Campus Center, where renovations were made possible through gifts to the *Blessed to be a Blessing* campaign.

# FLORIDA GEORGIA REGIONAL NEWS

*Out and About in  
The Florida-Georgia District  
Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod*



## Myles Henderson on Rose Parade Float

Myles Henderson, a member of Peace Lutheran / Decatur, was one of the athletes representing Special Olympics USA chosen to accompany the award winning Kaiser Permanente float in the 2015 Tournament of Roses Parade.

Now 14 years old, Henderson first competed in the Special Olympics at the age of eight. In the years since then, he has learned to play and compete in track and field, basketball and tennis. He is looking forward to playing soccer and bowling this year.

Themed "Together We Thrive" the Kaiser Permanente float was honored as most spectacular in showmanship and dramatic impact in the 2015 Tournament of Roses Parade. ■

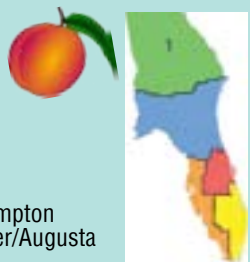


ALL SAINTS LUTHERAN / Blairsville will celebrate its 25th anniversary in 2015. Celebration events are planned throughout the year, culminating in worship on Sunday, November 1, with Florida-Georgia District President Greg Walton preaching. The congregation will also celebrate the tenth anniversary of Rev. David Wesche's ordination and service as the congregation's pastor in 2015. ■



## REGION 1 CONNECTIONS

Vice President: Rev. David Brighton | Mount Calvary/Warner Robins  
Laitly Board Member: Mr. William Gaik | Trinity/Toccoa  
Laitly 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



## Jake Smith Competes at State Science Fair

Jake Smith, an eighth-grade student at Faith Lutheran School/Marietta, became the first ever student from the school to be invited to compete at the state level science fair. He earned this honor when he won a first-place ribbon at Cobb-Paulding Regional Science Fair, held January 31 at Kennesaw Mountain High School. His topic was anti-magnetism. The State Science Fair will be held in March at the University of Georgia. Also competing at the regional level were Faith students Claire Atchison, O'Niece Roberts and Lucas Gedle. ■

## Correction on Christ the King Mission Plant

We apologize for our description of Christ the King Lutheran / Commerce, GA, as a "mission campus of Living Faith / Cumming" in an article headlined "Mission Congregation Dedicates First Facility" that appeared on page 29 of 2014 Volume 6 Lutheran LIFE.

Pastor Aaron Reinking of Christ the King shared this correct information: "Living Faith is a supporting congregation of Christ the King and they provided very valuable training for me as a mission planter."

"However, Christ the King is a mission plant of Trinity Lutheran and Christus Victor Lutheran Churches in Athens, GA. Their role is more direct in providing resources and in the case of Trinity, allowing me to participate in this important ministry as I am the Associate Pastor there."

Lutheran LIFE did not intend in any way to slight or omit Trinity Lutheran and Christus Victor Churches from the story nor to at all minimize their crucial contributions to the life of Christ the King.

Our sincere apologies for this error. ■



IAN MAPHET is the new Worship and Arts Leader for Living Hope Lutheran Church /Kennesaw. A native of Texas, Maphet was raised in Georgia and is "eager to see what God has in store with Living Hope." Pastor John Schubert has been the pastor of Living Hope since the summer of 2010. Among the congregation's ministries is an Open Arms Christian Child Development Center. ■

For additional information, please contact the Florida & Georgia Region at 407-942-1332

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**TWO-DAY SALE BENEFITS MINISTRIES** – First Lutheran / Inverness hosted its annual two-day rummage sale in early February. A Thrivent Action Event, the sale supports the ministry of the Women of First Lutheran. On sale this year were electronics, kitchen ware, books, jewelry, furniture, clothing and more. Proceeds will help support Kinship Care and Jessie's Place. Shown here are rummage sale workers and the Thrivent Action Team. ■

## 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



**AMAZING GRACE / Oxford** celebrated the gift of 19 new Missionary Partners, i.e. Members, on February 15. "The Lord continues to bless our prayers and efforts to reach out and share the transforming power of Christ with the world," said Pastor James Rockey. "Amazing Grace began a little over seven years ago to Transform lives through Christ for Today & Eternity, and now worships more than 150 with two services and has a membership of 184." ■

**SENIOR HIGH** youth of Grace / Jacksonville recently spent an afternoon of service work bagging 4,000 meals at Hunger Fight North Florida. The mission of the organization is to significantly reduce the number of hungry children and families in the First Coast and surrounding area. After completing their service project, Grace's youth enjoyed a great afternoon and evening camping at Hanna Park... concluding with a campfire. ■



## Potato Pancakes at Peace

Peace / Dunnellon hosted its 24th annual Potato Pancake Supper on Shrove Tuesday, February 17. The popular event features traditional potato pancakes or buttermilk pancakes, sour cream or syrup, ham, fruit cup, and dessert.

The ages old tradition of eating Potato Pancakes began as a way to use (and enjoy) the milk, butter and eggs which were once forbidden during the six weeks of Lent. ■



Cindy McKee serving desserts at Peace's Potato Pancake Supper while Gene Lutz and Charlie Dupstadt man the griddle for the pancake supper. ■



## Ashley LaBorde Leads St John/Ocala to Title

**ST. JOHN LUTHERAN SCHOOL** senior Ashley LaBorde led her team to the 2014 Class 2A state volleyball title. Among her other honors are a full scholarship to play at the University of North Florida, player of the year awards from the Star-Banner (all classes, Marion County) and the Florida Dairy Farmers (Class 2A, statewide). ■

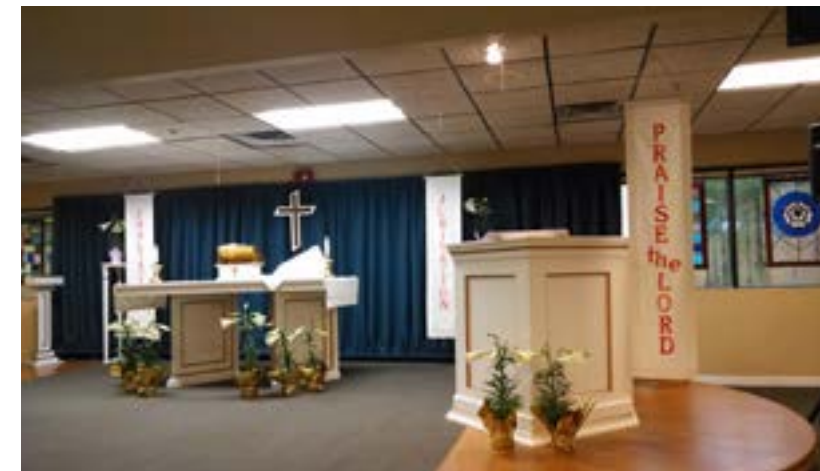
## Hope / Jacksonville Celebrates Charter

Under the leadership of Pastor Patrick McKenzie, Hope Mission chartered as a daughter congregation of Grace Lutheran Church/ Jacksonville on January 25.

The afternoon service message was delivered by Grace Pastor Rick Engel, who served as a founding pastor of the mission congregation along with Pastors Tim Droegemueller and Jeremy Lucke. Rev. Doug Kalleesen, Mission Executive of the Florida-Georgia District, led the chartering of the congregation.

"It truly was a celebration in a new location," Kalleesen said.

Now worshipping at 8570 Philips Highway in Jacksonville, Hope's ministry was started in January 2007 as a joint effort between the Jacksonville Outreach Council, Grace Lutheran Church and the Florida-Georgia District. Worship was launched November 30, 2008, and was led by pastors from Grace.



McKenzie has been serving as part time pastor to Hope over the past four years.

"Many blessings to our newest member congregation of the Florida-Georgia District," Kalleesen concluded. ■



**NEW MEMBERS** were welcomed recently at Messiah Lutheran / Valdosta. Pastor Joshua Brown leads Messiah. Two Sunday services are offered each week: modern worship at 8am and tradition worship at 10:30am. ■





WINTER HAVEN CIRCUIT congregations celebrated the Reformation with a joint worship service hosted by Grace / Winter Haven. Pastors in attendance include (l-r)

Tod Shouse, Tom Block (hidden), Dean Pfeiffer, Vicar Mark Harris, John Nunes, Ron Pennekamp, Jerry Munz, Jon Frusti, Zong Yan, Vicar Shea Pennington, Charles Reich. ■

EIGHTEEN NEW MEMBERS were recently welcomed at Grace Lutheran-Winter Haven. They are (row 1, l-r) Jackie Denny, Kristen

Jones, Heather Winchester, Jessica Wittcop. (row 2, l-r) Elizabeth Davis, Sharon Thomas, Connie March, Matthew Prisco, (row 3, l-r) Scott

Davis holding Kathryn Davis, Jarrett Thomas, Don March, Randy Loy, Joshua Steinbronn, Rafael Martin. ■



# District Execs Lead Trinity Chapel Service



Students at Trinity Lutheran School / Orlando were visited by Florida-Georgia District executives as guest leaders at a recent chapel service.

District President Greg Walton, Executive Director of School Ministry Mark Brink and Executive Director for Outreach Doug Kallesen shared in leading the service.

Walton reminded the students that Jesus came as the Light of the World to cleanse us so that we could be perfect in God's sight, and therefore join Him in heaven. Walton used an attention-grabbing visual to get his message across: he took a sheet of paper with a drawing of a heart with the word SIN inside it and tossed it into a lit candle. The flame — representing Jesus — engulfed the paper and symbolically sin, leaving no trace behind.

Kallesen spoke to the children about Epiphany and Jesus' baptism. Brink shared with the students information about Rebecca's Garden of Hope, the recipient of this year's Hearts for Jesus campaign. ■

In top photo — Mark Brink greets children at a recent Trinity / Orlando chapel service.

## REGION 3 CONNECTIONS

Vice President: Rev. Dr. Brian Kneser | 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 Pfeiffer | Hope/Plant City



ASCENSION LUTHERAN PRESCHOOL / Casselberry students were visited by the eye doctor recently. He told students about eyes and what happens at the eye doctor's office. The students also heard about the five senses and Jesus healing the blind man's eyes. ■

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## Amigos en Cristo Expands Immigration Services

Amigos en Cristo/Bonita Springs has expanded the scope of its immigration services. The ministry serves victims of domestic abuse while providing family-based, country-specific immigration services that have benefited thousands seeking a new life in the United States.

A third immigration specialist, Marie Josee Maurice, is now working out of the Bonita Springs office. A native of Haiti, she is fluent in English, French, Creole and Spanish.

United Way of Lee County, the Southwest Florida Community Foundation and the Bridge Fund of Bonita Springs and Estero have helped Amigos en Cristo launch a cooperative arrangement with the Abuse Counseling and Treatment Shelter of Fort Myers to help provide U-visas to eligible victims of domestic violence. The U-visa applies to immigrants who are the victims of certain serious crimes and who



have cooperated with authorities in the prosecution of the perpetrator. An immigrant granted a U-Visa will subsequently be given legal status to reside and work in the United States.

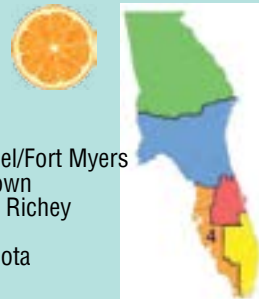
Pastor Bob Selle, Amigos Center founder and CEO, said, "The love of Jesus Christ compels us to extend a helping hand to the most vulnerable.

"Our service to the immigrant community is a tangible expression of God's love and concern for people of all nations. It is an expression of what we believe and the one in whom we have believed."

*In photo above — Newly hired Immigration Specialist Marie Maurice, U-visa Specialist Maria Herrera and Pastor Bob Selle*

### REGION 4 CONNECTIONS

Vice President: Rev. James Guelzow | Messiah/Tampa  
 Laity Board Member: Mr. Jeff Richards | Hope/Brandenton  
 Laity Board Member: Ms. Beverly Nyce | Marco/Marco Island  
 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



## OUR SAVIOR LUTHERAN



## CENTER STAGE

Mia Rose, a graduate of Our Savior Lutheran School / St. Petersburg, shared her vocal talents at a recent church worship service. She was joined by Ryen Linder, Miarose Fox, Teresa Wiggins, Tim Simmons, Dave King and Jordyn Zentz. One church with multiple ministries, Our Savior has two campuses that offer traditional and contemporary worship each week, including a sign language interpreted service for the deaf or hard of hearing. Our Savior Lutheran School promotes education in a Christ-centered environment for students age 2 through 8th grade.

## Thomas Wenndt Installed in New Port Richey

Rev. Thomas Wenndt was installed as pastor of Faith LC / New Port Richey during a celebratory afternoon service on January 31.

Liturgist for the service was Rev. Dr. David Brockhoff, Suncoast Circuit Visitor and pastor of Holy Trinity LC / Marsaryktown. Wenndt's friend Rev. Jose Rodriguez, Jr., pastor of Saint Stephen LC / Liberty, MO, preached. Rev. Robert Steinke, Faith's pastor emeritus, served as lector. Also participating in the worship were members of Faith Factor Worship & Praise Team.

A graduate of Concordia College-St. Paul, Wenndt received his Master of Divinity from Concordia Theological Seminary-Fort Wayne in 1988. His first call was to a congregation in New York.

Wenndt has served as chaplain for Lutheran Coalition, Habitat for Humanity in the Atlanta, GA area; vice president for the Cherokee-Pickens County, GA, chapter of Thrivent Financial; mission trip developer and coordinator for Timothy LC / Woodstock, GA; consultant for Concordia Technology Solutions worship

software; supply preacher and worship series author, especially for vacancy at St. Mark LC / Tucker, GA. He also did Interim pastoral Work prior to being called to Faith.

Wenndt and his wife Katherine have three grown children.

A celebration dinner followed Wenndt's installation service.

The week prior to Wenndt's welcome, members of Faith bid farewell to Rev. Gil Kuehn, their vacancy pastor of almost two years, at a luncheon following the 11am worship on January 25. Kuehn served Holy Trinity LC / Lutz before his retirement.

*Participating in the installation service were Pastors (l-r) Jose Rodriguez, Saint Stephen LC / Liberty, MO; Richard Arndt, a member of Faith; Gil Kuehn, Faith's vacancy pastor; Thomas Wenndt, Faith LC / New Port Richey; Pat O'Brien, pastor emeritus of First LC / Clearwater; Robert Steinke, pastor emeritus of Faith LC / New Port Richey; David Brockhoff, Holy Trinity, Marsaryktown; Edwin Harkey, Holy Trinity LC / Lutz.*





## Trinity/Lake Placid Creates “Hearts for Jesus” Bulletin Board



TRINITY TINY TOTS/ Lake Placid put together a bulletin board for this year's Florida-Georgia District Hearts for Jesus project benefiting Rebecca's Garden of Hope. The goal of Rebecca's Garden of Hope, Inc. Tutoring and Mentoring Program is to provide a template for other organizations free of charge, to help develop strong tutoring and mentoring programs where children feel safe and are encouraged to grow. ■

## Mission Project Takes Boca Raton Members to the Fields

Members of St. Paul / Boca Raton have been heading to the fields lately for the congregation's gleaning mission project. During a recent excursion, St. Paul members teamed up with Christians Reaching Out To Society (CROS), other local churches and community members to glean approximately eight tons of tomatoes and four tons of peppers. The gathered food helped feed the poor of Palm Beach County. Sylvia Jones, of St. Paul church and also one of the kindergarten teachers at St. Paul School, was part of the gleaning mission team as was her son, Michael (behind her) visiting from Georgia. ■



## Weston Celebrates New Sanctuary



Members and special guests filled St. Paul Lutheran Church / Weston on February 8 for a jubilant service of dedication of the new sanctuary.

Planned for about a decade, the new 34,000-square-foot sanctuary more than triples the size of the former space, allowing St. Paul to accommodate 100 more worshippers.

The new sanctuary features stained glass windows, a more prominent chancel with a cross, altar area and communion rail for people to kneel.

Three of the walls and half the roof of the original St. Paul sanctuary were left intact. Another wall was knocked down with changes to the ceiling configuration and roof design.

During the construction period, services were held outside — even in inclement weather. ■

*Above — Pastor Tim Hartner led the dedication worship. The chancel Christus Rex is framed by stained glass windows. At right, Laurie Hartner, director of St. Paul's early childhood center, was one of the scripture readers for the dedication service.*



## REGION 5 CONNECTIONS

Vice President: Rev. Steve Wipperman | 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 | Trinity/Lake Placid  
 Treasure Coast Circuit Visitor: Rev. Kenneth Larson | Emeritus/Lake Worth  
 S Palm Beach Circuit Visitor: Rev. James Weist | Epiphany/Lake Worth  
 Gold Coast Circuit Visitor: Rev. Walter Volz | Emeritus/Plantation  
 Monroe-Miami-Dade Circuit Visitor: Rev. Alan Sielk | St. Paul/Miami

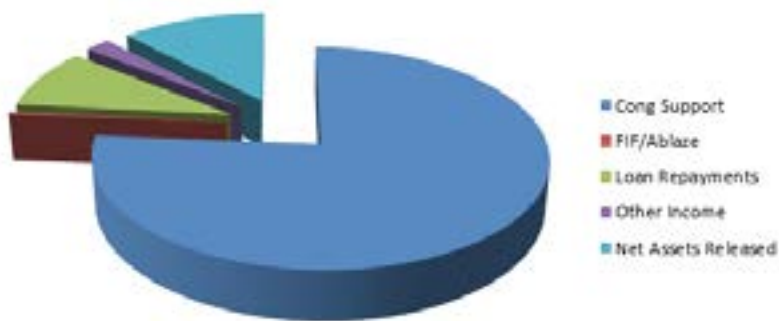


Meeting in Orlando on January 23-24, members of the District Board of Directors approved a Work Plan Budget for the year ending January 31, 2016, that projects revenue of

## District Board Approves New

Redeemer Lutheran / Miami, FL. Missions account for \$1.35 million of the expenses projected for the upcoming budget year, about half of which are dedicated to mission grants and loans. The amount budgeted for the Florida-Georgia District commitment to national Synod reflects an increase

Budgeted Sources of Income 2015



Budgeted Expense 2015



\$2,755,800 and \$2,755,800 in total expenses. That reflects a slight increase in projected expenses from the \$2,660,736 balanced budget for fiscal year ended January 31, 2015.

Revenue from congregations in the new budget remains at the \$2,100,000 level of the previous year. Actual revenue for the last fiscal year is projected to exceed that number by approximately \$600,000 due to the closing of

from 15% to 16% of Congregational Support. Other mission expenses include revitalization of congregations and support of ministries such as Lutheran Services of Georgia, Lutheran Services Florida, Mission Haiti and others.

“Bottom line, it’s more of the same,” District Executive for Administration Daniel J. Reichard told the Board. Expenses have been carefully monitored by staff and income has been on target resulting in a fiscal year ending without a deficit.

### Ministry Target: LEADERSHIP

*District and congregational leaders are loving, visionary people of the Word, models of healthy Christ-centered living and life-long learners committed to equipping and empowering others in fulfilling the Church’s role in God’s mission.*

- ◆ The Mission Advisory Council met in early January to hear presentations and requests and to make recommendations for 2015 grants. The MAC has identified 14 areas where new mission starts are being pursued.
- ◆ The Outreach Initiative is now entering its second year in the District. Florida-Georgia Mission Executive Doug Kallesen and Administrative Assistant Cindy Hammerstrom met with Lutheran Hour Ministries staff in St. Louis late last year. A joint staff retreat with LHM and District personnel in February focused on the Outreach Initiative and set the stage for common goals in the future.

◆ Rebecca’s Garden of Hope will be the recipient of chapel offerings from the 2015 Hearts for Jesus project. As of the Board meeting, 26 schools and more than 4,300 students have pledged to participate with more schools being added almost daily. The goal is to raise at least \$25,000 to support the work of Rebecca’s Garden of Hope, which provides tutoring and mentoring services to children who are under served.

◆ At the urging of school leaders throughout Florida-Georgia, the workshop series “Nurturing the Faith” will be revived in February 2016. It will be held in several locations throughout the District over the course of five days.

## Work Plan

### Ministry Target: CONGREGATIONS

*Congregations in the Florida-Georgia District are growing communities of welcoming, vibrant and faithful followers of Jesus.*

- ◆ District High School Gathering is set for March 13-15 in Lake Mary, FL. Led by DCE Jeremy Becker of St. Paul/Weston, FL, the planning team is working with Lutheran Hour Ministries and UnPaved to weave the elements of the Outreach Initiative partnership the District has with LHM into the event programming.
- ◆ The District Middle School Gathering, November 7-9, 2014, at Lake Yale Baptist Assembly, was attended by more than 500 students and chaperons. Leslie Leonard, DCE at Christ the King/Largo, led the team of youth ministry volunteers who planned the Gathering.

### Ministry Target: OUTREACH

*Living out their faith in Jesus with urgency and joy, the people of the Florida-Georgia District eagerly invest, both individually and corporately, in bold and intentional service to make known the love of Christ to all people.*

- ◆ The National Hispanic Conference is scheduled for July 28-August 1 in Tampa. The District has been involved in the planning process and will participate in supporting the event.
- ◆ Regional Outreach Conference #2 is in the planning stages with Lutheran Hour Ministries. The event is scheduled for November 13-14 in Orlando.
- ◆ The Muslim Ministry Task Force has established goals with action plans to raise awareness of the tenants of Islam, provide training to respond or provide positive witness to Muslims in our communities and consider establishing a Missional Community to reach Muslims.

### Engaged in the Master’s Business

Board members discussed plans for the 2015 District Convention, the focus of which will be outreach, according to Florida-Georgia President Greg Walton. The theme of the June 12-14 triennial gathering is “Engaged in the Master’s Business” — built on Luke 19:13, “Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas, and said to them, ‘Engage in business until I come.’”

“We will emphasize our privilege and responsibility to connect people to Jesus,” said Walton.

District First Vice President Jim Guelzow will serve as Convention Manager, with Kathy Keene, Assistant to the District President, the Convention Coordinator. ■



Dr. John Denninger, president of the LCMS’ Southeastern District, will be the guest essayist (right); Leading the Convention Bible study will be Dr. Kurt Senske (below right), author of *Wine and the*



*Word: Savor & Serve* and CEO of Lutheran Social Services of the South. A special presentation is planned from Cindy Steinbeck, author of *The Vine Speaks* and owner of the California Winery, Steinbeck Vineyards.





## The BACKPAGE

# Year-Long Celebrations Continue at St. Mark / Tucker

Members of St. Mark Lutheran Church / Tucker have celebrated several significant events recently – and are preparing to mark the congregation’s 50th anniversary in 2015.

Organized in March of 1965, St. Mark congregation’s first worship was at Tucker High School. The congregation met in a small farm house on its campus and in a local school until completing its first building, where the inaugural service was held on April 14, 1968.

In early 1980, construction began on St. Mark’s fellowship hall and church offices. In 1988, renovations were completed on the sanctuary and the cross of nails was dedicated. St. Mark celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2005.

Last year St. Mark feted Pastor Thomas Wenndt on his 25 years in the ministry. A presentation prepared for the occasion traced Wenndt’s ministry

from his 1988 graduation from Concordia Theological Seminary / Fort Wayne through service at various congregations in New York, Pennsylvania, South Dakota and

Illinois before accepting the call to St. Mark. He served at St. Mark until last fall and was installed at Faith / New Port Richey early this year.

Rev. Martin R. Springer was installed as St. Mark’s pastor last August. After active duty service in the US Air Force and work with an Air Force contractor, Springer entered Concordia Seminary / St. Louis in 1997.

Springer graduated from the Seminary in 2000 and served at congregations in Illinois and Missouri. He was most recently Senior Pastor of Trinity / Edwardsville, IL.

Springer is certified as a Stephen Ministry Trainer and as a Prepare and Enrich Pre-and Post-Marriage Counseling Facilitator. He actively supports various mission programs and has participated in three short-term mission trips to Kazakhstan, Haiti and Honduras.

Springer is married to the former Janice Hertlein of Saint Louis, who taught in the LCMS day school system for more than 35 years. ■



Rev. Martin Springer is pictured during his installation service at St. Mark. Behind the altar is the church’s distinctive cross of nails, made by a Florida artist to include hundreds of nails similar to those used to nail Jesus’ hands and feet to the cross.