

# LUTHERAN LIFE

2015 | Volume 6

The Newsmagazine of the  
Florida-Georgia District  
of The Lutheran Church -  
Missouri Synod



*Keep your lamps trimmed and burning!*



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 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 — if possible via e-mail: [LutheranLife@aol.com](mailto:LutheranLife@aol.com)

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The 2016 *Hearts for Jesus* Florida-Georgia District chapel offering will help build the sixth Garuna School (GS) in Steung Treng, Cambodia. This new five-classroom facility will be used for the school, as a Luther Institute Southeast Asia (LISA) Bible training center, for a congregation and as a site for adult vocational training classes.

This *Heart for Jesus* project is also sponsored by Thrivent Financial.

Sponsorship opportunities are available for those interested in helping a child from an extremely poor family – those with incomes of less than \$2 per day – be able to hear the Gospel and to receive an education in a Christian school.

For more information please visit the Florida-Georgia District website at [flgadistrict.org](http://flgadistrict.org). ■



## District Congregations Honored at Atlanta LCEF Leadership Conference

Three of the four LCMS congregations presented with the 2015 LCEF Partnership Award at the Lutheran Church Extension Fund Fall Leadership Conference, November 20-22, in Atlanta, are part of the Florida-Georgia District.

Presented with the 2015 Partnership Award were:

- Downtown Trinity Church & School/Orlando, represented by Bruce Hahn;
- Living Faith Church / Cumming, GA, represented by Pastor Timothy Droegemueller;
- Christ Church / Perry, GA, represented by Pastor John Lehenbauer;

- Mt. Hope / Bloomington, MN, represented by Daniel Ritter.

The LCEF Partnership Award acknowledges a congregation's overall relationship with LCEF across each of the three primary areas of service: investments, loans and ministry support services.

"We designed this award to spotlight the incredible outreach congregations accomplish with LCEF at their side, embracing their vision of serving His people," said President/CEO Rich Robertson. "We are just a small part of the true work of ministry being accomplished." ■



Pictured with Florida-Georgia District President Greg Walton (far right) at the 2015 LCEF Fall Leadership Conference are (l-r) LCEF Florida-Georgia Vice President Daniel J. Reichard; Jim Ingersoll; Pastor Tim & Susan Droegemueller of Living Faith/Cumming; Renee & Pastor John Lehenbauer of Christ/Perry; Bonnie & Bruce Hahn of Trinity/Orlando; Katie DeWitt (between Bonnie & Bruce Hahn) and Sheryl DeWitt of Redeeming Life Maternity Home/Sanford.

**CALENDAR**

- Real Life College Faith**  
January 15-17, 2016 ..... University of Florida / Gainesville, FL
- Early Childhood Directors Conference**  
February 5-6, 2016 ..... Downtown Trinity / Orlando, FL
- 2016 Lutheran School Music Festival**  
February 26, 2016 ..... Trinity / Rockledge, FL
- Stewardship Summit**  
February 26-27, 2016 ..... Faith / Marietta, GA
- Veterans of the Cross**  
March 7-9, 2016 ..... Life Enrichment Center / Fruitland Park, FL
- LCMS 169<sup>TH</sup> Anniversary**  
April 26, 2016
- District Educators Conference**  
September 28-30, 2016 ..... Wyndham Hotel / Orlando, FL

## DISTRICT CAPSULES

by Greg Walton District President

<p><b>Calling Congregations</b></p> <p>Trinity/Albany, GA..... Sole Pastor Faith/Hialeah, FL..... Sole Pastor St Paul/Lakeland, FL ..... Associate Pastor Faith/North Palm Beach, FL ..... Sole Pastor St John/Ocala, FL ..... Senior Pastor Faith/Parrish, FL..... Sole Pastor Our Savior/Plantation, FL..... Senior Pastor Trinity/Summerfield, FL..... Associate Pastor Grace/St Cloud, FL ..... Sole Pastor Our Savior/St Petersburg, FL..... Assistant Pastor Messiah/Tampa, FL ..... Senior Pastor Trinity/Toccoa, GA..... Sole Pastor Messiah/Valdosta, GA ..... Sole Pastor Grace/Winter Haven, FL..... Associate Pastor</p> <p><b>Calls Issued</b></p> <p>Faith/Hialeah, FL Rev. James Edge as Sole Pastor</p> <p>Our Savior/Plantation, FL Rev. Mark Abram as Sole Pastor</p> <p>Grace/St Cloud, FL Rev. Ronald Benson as Sole Pastor</p> <p>Redeemer/West Palm Beach, FL Rev. Daniel McPherson as Parttime Interim</p> <p><b>Calls Accepted</b></p> <p>Faith/Hialeah, FL Rev. James Edge as Sole Pastor</p>	<p><b>Calls Declined</b></p> <p>Our Savior/Plantation, FL Rev. Mark Abram as Sole Pastor Grace/St Cloud, FL Rev. Ronald Benson as Sole Pastor</p> <p><b>Transferred to Other Districts</b></p> <p>Rev. Bruce Crabtree..... Southeastern (O) Rev. Martin Springer ..... Northern Illinois (O)</p> <p><b>Transferred from Other Districts</b></p> <p>Rev. Theodore O Geheb ..... English (O)</p> <p><b>School Changes</b></p> <p>Open Arms/Sandy Springs, GA..... Closed</p> <p><b>Ordained/Commissioned Minister Installations</b></p> <p>Mrs. Karen Arndt Teacher at Faith/Marietta, GA (C)</p> <p>Rev. Juan A Gonzalez Pastor at Beautiful Savior/Lehigh Acres, FL (O)</p> <p>Rev. John E Mackowiak Pastor at Christ the King/Largo, FL (O)</p> <p>Rev. Philip J Rigdon Pastor at First/Clearwater, FL (O)</p>	<p><b>Emeritus</b></p> <p>Rev. Dennis Liebich (O)</p> <p><b>Called to Glory</b></p> <p>Rev. Roger Froebe (O) Rev. Amado Lomba-George (O) Rev. Dr. Martin Schmidt (O)</p> <p><b>Removed from the Roster</b></p> <p>Ms. Sarah Anne Montgomery ..... Resigned (C) Mrs. Elizabeth Chitwood ..... Resigned (C) Rev. David D Hansen ..... Resigned (O)</p> <p><b>Change of Status within the District</b></p> <p>Ms. Mary Sandfort Active to Candidate (C)</p> <p>Mr. Robert Fischer Active to Non-Candidate (C)</p> <p>Ms. Sharon A Nesman Candidate to Non-Candidate (C)</p> <p>Ms. Debra F Bird Candidate to Non-Candidate (C)</p>
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\* Note: In District data above:  
C = Commissioned Minister; O = Ordained Minister

# LIFELINES

Is there anything more beautiful than Christmas lights twinkling in the darkness?

I was staying in downtown Atlanta before Thanksgiving and they already had decorations up to celebrate Christmas. Early one morning, about 5:30 a.m., a group of us were walking in the quiet, dark morning. Downtown Atlanta is remarkably quiet at that time of day. As we approached Centennial Park on our way back to the hotel, we saw the beautiful twinkling lights shining in the darkness, making that darkness cheerful and giving us a renewed vigor in our steps. There's something special about walking in the lights of Christmas.

One of my favorite things about the holiday season is the wonderful and rich music that proclaims the birth of Jesus. It is so joyful, and it carries such promise and hope. As a high school student I was introduced to portions of Handel's *Messiah*. I was totally enthralled with the beauty and the witness of this masterpiece. Then, when I

was a student at Concordia New York, I was reintroduced to the entire work and was blessed to participate in a performance of *Messiah*. George F. Handel brought the words of Scripture to life. To this day it is one of my favorite pieces. Over the years it has been recorded numerous times and has become such a part of the holidays for so many as it brings Scripture to light. This beautiful music directs us to walk in the light of Christmas.

The prophet Isaiah wrote, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." These are great words of hope and comfort that point us to our Savior, Jesus.

## Walking in the light of Christmas

Amidst all the glitz and glitter that often fills holiday celebrations, we dare not miss the real reason for the season. Christmas is all about Jesus, reminding us that God sent Him to us as a light in the world of sinful darkness. Jesus is the first and best Christmas Light who came to guide our path as we walk in the light of Christmas.



One of the fascinating things we find in this post-church world is that preparation for Christmas seems to begin earlier and earlier.

This year the so-called "Black Friday" sales began long before Thanksgiving, and retailers couldn't wait to open on Thanksgiving Day. Certainly there is an anticipation of profit during these days that carry some businesses through.

I sometimes wonder, though, if this obsessive need to create the "perfect" Christmas doesn't somehow reflect the gnawing longing for something better, for something more, for something greater. Like the changed Ebenezer Scrooge, deep down we want our lives to count for something.

Even for the most non-religious people, Christmas is understood as a time of giving. They may not realize that God gave us the greatest gift in Jesus, but the season seems to evoke a greater sense of selflessness. For instance, at Christmas time we find that many people seem to have a greater propensity toward caring for human needs. We find folks who would otherwise ignore those in need dropping a few dollars into the kettle, or perhaps adding a dollar on their grocery bill to help some organization that is feeding the hungry or attending to some medical issue.

For some perhaps it is simply that the focus is on the family, making sure that the love that may not always be evident through the year is clearly seen before years end. Yet, there are still others whose joy and care for others are the same year around because they've learned to walk in the light of Christmas.



The truth the Angels announced to needy shepherds is still as powerful and valid a message as ever. "Fear not, for behold, I bring

you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." We need not live in fear of darkness. We can walk in the light of Jesus. John tell us, "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." We need no longer live in fear and darkness, Jesus comes to enable us to walk in His light.

Walking in the light of Christmas isn't just a seasonal thing for us as believers in Jesus

## for the New Year!

Christ. One of the dangers we face is to allow it to become something that we "rise to" for a time, only to "get back to normal" once the Christmas lights are put away for the year. Every moment of every day we are called to walk in the light of Christmas all year long so that the light of Jesus shines through us.

My favorite Epiphany hymn reflects this: "I want to walk as a child of the Light, I want to follow Jesus, God set the stars to give light to this world; the star of my life is Jesus. In Him there is no darkness at all, the night and the day are both alike. The Lamb is the light of the City of God, Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus!"

What if somewhere in your home or office you left a small string of lights up that could remind you of God's gift in Jesus, who is the Light of the World, and who calls us to walk in His light? What if there were reminders around you to say that Christmas is more than a seasonal thing, but it's



a lifestyle? Christmas is really about how God took on our human flesh to walk among us in order to save us. He entered the darkness of this world and willingly allowed Himself to be sacrificed on the Cross to assure us of His grace, His love, and His forgiveness. We no longer have to walk in darkness because we have the light of Christ, by grace, living within us.

The challenge is to let His light shine through us as we walk in the light of Christmas, not just in the weeks and months leading up to our celebrations, but all year long throughout our life's journey. In my fifty plus years I have received many Christmas gifts that I thought, at the time, were exactly what I needed or wanted. If I were asked to produce a list of what those things were, and where they currently are, I would be hard-pressed to do it.

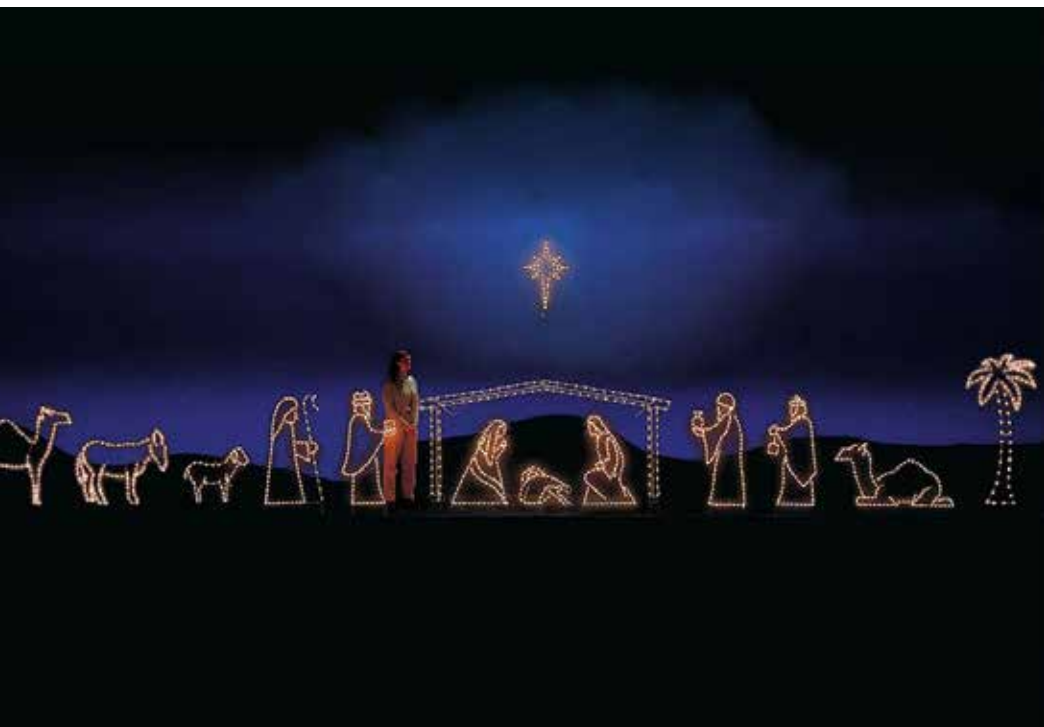
However, the light of Jesus still shines as brightly now as it did when I first comprehended it, as bright as it did when the shepherds first heard it, brighter than the Christmas lights in Atlanta that shine so beautifully in the darkness. Those lights point us to the true Light — Jesus, who by grace enables us to walk in His Christmas light.

Christmas is such a joyful time for so many. For us, the joy isn't found under a tree, but rather in the One who bore the tree so that we could walk in the light of Christmas.

May His life and His light shine on you and in you as you celebrate, not just during these days that lead up to our celebration or even the weeks or months that follow, but may the joy of Christ's birth fill our hearts and lives all year long as we walk in the light of Christmas!



In His  
Awesome Light!  
GREG



## New Financial Aid Options Help Seminary Students

Concordia Seminary/St. Louis added eight new awards to its financial aid offerings beginning with the 2015-2016 academic year. Known as Regent Grants, these awards will be offered to students who demonstrate the greatest potential.

Up to four students will be awarded full tuition. Four additional awards will reduce the cost of tuition.

The new Regent Grants are available to incoming students enrolled in the



Master of Divinity and Alternate Route programs. Regent Grants will be awarded by the Seminary's scholarship committee and will be automatically renewed for one pre-vicarage year and one post-vicarage year.

To determine the recipients of these awards, the scholarship committee will review students' academic records, recommendations, faculty interviews, church and community involvement.

This fall Seminary President Rev. Dr. Dale A. Meyer

announced the start of the "public" phase for 'Generations: The Campaign for Concordia Seminary.'

With a goal of \$180 million — the largest in the institution's 176-year history — the campaign will provide funding to build endowments, increase annual support and expand library and learning-technology initiatives.

"The campaign aims to ensure that future generations have healthy, loving, Gospel-proclaiming congregations to nurture and sustain them in their heavenward way," Meyer said. "Our singular mission is to prepare pastors who are ready for ministry, who can proclaim the Gospel in a relevant and compelling way and who love the people God calls them to serve." ■

## Concordia Selma Adding Nursing Program

Concordia College Selma has announced plans to expand its academic reach with a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing (BSN) to be established in the near future. This program is being designed for individuals who have already been licensed as Registered Nurses and want to pursue a Baccalaureate of Science Degree in Nursing.

Heading up this new program is CCA's Health Sciences Division Chair, Dr. Constance Smith-Hendricks. Smith-Hendricks, who has been a

nurse for more than 40 years, has also taught at the Auburn University School of Nursing.

"I have said we need a nursing program in this area for the last 20 years, so I am just excited to have the opportunity and be the one selected to come and hopefully make this dream a reality," Smith-Hendricks said.

A proposal for the program has been submitted to the accrediting agency Southern Association of Colleges and Schools-Commission

on Colleges (SACS-COC). Concordia is hoping for approval and implementation of the program by summer term 2016. If approved, it will be the only BSN program in the area.

Upon approval, the BSN program will join Concordia's other baccalaureate programs of Business Administration, Teacher Education, Criminal Justice, and Social & Behavioral Sciences. ■

## Concordia Wisconsin President Streaking on Campus

Concordia University Wisconsin President Patrick Ferry is making headlines for running — specifically, for running every day since December 20, 2012. This activity is a 'thing' called 'streaking' in the running community, complete with its own organization, Streak Runners International, along with a registry and a newsletter that highlights some of the remarkable people with the longest streaks imaginable.

"It's just a matter of persistence, really," said Ferry, 56, the longtime president of Concordia University and father of five.

"I often compare it to flossing. It's something I have to do before I go to bed." Ferry, who averages about 4.5

miles a day, keeps a running log. Twice this year, he ran a marathon — the Boston Marathon and the Milwaukee Lakefront Marathon.

He also does a few half marathons every year.

Running is a Ferry family activity: daughter Hannah runs and has done an Ironman triathlon. Her husband Zach Meineke, twice a Milwaukee Lakefront Marathon medal finisher,

won the St. Louis half marathon.

Ferry is shown here on his 1,000th-day run with members of the Concordia cross country team and students from throughout the University. ■



## Nunes Elected Concordia NY President

Rev. Dr. John A. Nunes has been elected unanimously by the Concordia College-New York Board of Regents to serve as the school's ninth president.

Nunes, 52, for the past two years has served as the Emil and Elfriede Jochum Chair at Valparaiso University and plans to finish the current academic year before assuming the Concordia presidency on July 1, 2016.

"What a marvelous opportunity God is giving me; to serve at Concordia College-New York, a forward-looking, 21st century community of learning. I love that this school is peerless with respect to student diversity and deeply rooted in the values that make Lutheran higher education exceptional." Nunes said.

Nunes, an ordained LCMS

minister, was President and Chief Executive Officer of Lutheran World Relief from 2007 until 2013. LWR is an



Rev. Dr. John and Monique Nunes

international, non-profit organization working to end poverty and injustice worldwide.

Prior to joining LWR, Nunes

taught theology at Concordia University Chicago and served as a management consultant, urban parish pastor and community organizer in Dallas and Detroit.

He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Concordia-Ann Arbor; a Master of Divinity degree from Concordia Seminary/St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada; and both Master of Theology and Doctor of Philosophy degrees from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago.

Nunes is the author of *Voices from the City: Issues and Images of Urban Preaching* and, with his wife, Monique, the children's book *Little Things Make Big Differences: A Story about Malaria*.

Monique Nunes on July 1, 2016, will begin serving as Director of International Programs at Martin Luther School/Maspeth, NY. ■

## Paul Miles Leading Wheat Ridge Ministries

Paul C. Miles assumed the office of President and Chief Executive Officer of Wheat Ridge Ministries on October 26.

Most recently the Vice President for Development at Make-A-Wish® America, Miles is the fifth president of Wheat Ridge. He succeeded Dr. Richard Herman, president since 2006, who retired on November 1.

"I am humbled and energized to continue the good work of Wheat Ridge Ministries," said Miles. "Our world is suffering in many places, and it is a privilege to serve with our donors, ministry partners, congregations, board and staff in the work God has placed in front of us.

"Connecting people to ministry opportunities in a world where we often feel farther apart is a challenge I am eager to face with the dedicated partners of Wheat Ridge. I look forward to devoting my efforts to expand the impact of our work and engage a broader community in the ministry of our organization."

Miles has a 25-year career serving non-profit organizations around the world. During his almost four years

as Vice President for Development at Make-A-Wish® America, he was responsible for all individual and foundation giving, including direct mail, digital, annual giving and grants, mid-tier, major and planned giving. In addition, he served as staff lead for the development subcommittee of the Make-A-Wish® America Board of Directors and was a member of the Senior Leadership Team and the Grants Committee.

Prior to his tenure with Make-A-Wish® America, Miles spent 22 years with CCS Fund Raising, an international consulting firm that works with non-profit organizations on a wide-range of development needs.

Other organizations he worked with include the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod; Concordia Theological Seminary/Fort Wayne; and Baylor Healthcare System, Dallas.

Miles graduated from Concordia University Chicago, where he later

served on the Foundation Board of Directors and the President's Advisory Council. His board service also includes Lutheran World Relief, Baltimore, Maryland; Chicagoland Habitat for Humanity, and various congregational boards. He has been a frequent speaker and trainer in the field of resource development.

Miles and his wife, Sonja, lives in Naperville, IL, with their three children. ■



Current Wheat Ridge President, Paul Miles (center), with the two previous presidents, Dr. Richard Herman (left) and Dr. Richard Bimler

# Thrivent Action Teams Program Mobilizes Volunteers for Positive Change

Last year Thrivent Financial introduced Thrivent Action Teams to its members to conduct hands-on service projects, fund-raisers and educational events.

“In our Florida and Georgia Region we are expecting to end 2015 with 2,200-2,500 Thrivent Action Teams,” reported Mary Weibel, MSW, FIC, the Region’s Community Engagement Manager.

The program was launched as an encouragement for Thrivent members to bring people together to make a positive change by taking action in their

communities. The Thrivent seed money must be used to get the project started not given to the cause as a grant or used to purchase items to give to a need.

Another program guideline is “one action team, one project,” Weibel noted. “Multiple members cannot apply to receive Thrivent Action Team kit resources to be used toward the exact same project.”

She continued, “Thrivent members can identify a project or cause they are passionate about and apply for their own Thrivent Action Team to receive

pre-approval, then recruit others to help with the project.”

Thrivent Action Teams average around 14 volunteers. Thrivent provides invitations, t-shirts, banners, name tags and everything needed to get the Action Teams started along with \$250 of seed money through a Community Impact Card to purchase volunteer supplies.

For more information on how you can Live Generously through Thrivent Action Teams, please visit: [www.thrivent.com/actionteam](http://www.thrivent.com/actionteam). ■



At left — Thrivent consultant Greg Bickhart of Peachtree City, GA, headed a Thrivent Action Team for a successful food drive at Real Life Center. Community members brought donation to the stores — many purchased inside. Thrivent is a non-profit supporter of local radio station Joy FM, who provided live coverage of the event.



At right — Allyson and Mike Clifford headed a Thrivent Action Team that worked with CrossFit Cumming, GA, in sponsoring an Operation Christmas Child Shoebox packing party. Area children (shown right) worked on filling the shoeboxes, as did some of their parents.



## Engaged in the Master’s Business

# Veterans of the Cross Will Convene in Leesburg March 7-9, 2016

Retired church workers and their spouses will be gathering at the Methodist Life Enrichment Center, Leesburg, FL, from March 7-9, 2016, for the annual Church Worker’s Retreat — Veterans of the Cross.

The retreat was established in 1979 by the late Florida-Georgia District President Dr. Lloyd Behnken to stimulate retired professional church workers with relevant ministry and senior presentations while helping people connect with friends from years past.

The theme for the 2016 retreat will be “Engaged in the Master’s Business.”

Dr. Daniel Gard, President of Concordia University Chicago, will be the keynote speaker. In addition, Concordia University Chicago will be the representative of the Concordia University System at the retreat.

Rev. Dr. Gerhard “Mike” Michael, Jr., President Emeritus of the Florida-Georgia District, will be the Bible study leader. The focus will be on the parable of the talents.

An evening of entertainment will be provided by humorist Jan Struck. Participants will also be able to choose from a number of break-out sessions that will appeal to a variety of interests.

A highlight of each retreat is the presentation of Behnken Medallions to “veteran servants” in four categories: pastor, teacher, church at large and lay person.

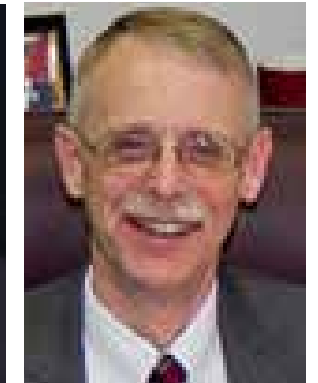
Retreat registration is now available online through the District website, <http://flgadistrict.org>. Newly retired workers are encouraged to contact the Florida-Georgia District office at 407-857-5556, ext. 8 with any questions. ■



Jan Struck



Gerhard Michael



Daniel Gard

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## On Millennials

An ongoing conversation in *Lutheran LIFE* to reach the millennial generation: college, 20s, 30s.

WORK! It's part of life, we all have to do it and we at one time or another complain about it! We also notice that millennials don't seem to approach work and careers like older generations did. What's up with that?

Well first, let's clarify the topic a bit. We all have multiple vocations, ways that we live out our calling as God's kids on earth. Missionary, cat owner, Pastor, son, brother, friend... etc to name

be part of organizations that are making a difference. We can no longer assume that people sitting in our pews are convinced that their congregation is doing good in the world. We can't even assume the folks who are active in the church know what the church does for the world.

Ask these two questions:

1. What is my church doing for the world?
2. How are we telling those stories?

Keep up the good work!  
Continue to do the work God has



revcreative  
by Rev. Billy Brath  
www.revcreative.org

my list. Yours is similar, I'm sure, because all Christians' first calling is "missionary" and then somewhere down the list is a vocation you may get paid for. We should constantly be reminding ourselves of this way of seeing work, because no matter where you clock in, you are a missionary for Jesus.

It is true that millennials, of which I am the oldest – high school class of 2000 – seem to bounce between jobs like never before. We also report as not being happy with the jobs we have. You can Google the articles to see the research, but one major point has emerged: we want to do meaningful work. In other words, we want to see that what we are doing is making a difference in the world.

Now this isn't an article to assist my peers in job placement; rather it's for us in the church to recognize that millennials want to

called your church to do. Rejoice that we work together as the Florida-Georgia District along with the LCMS at large. Just remember to tell the stories and bring young people along to be a part of the work as well.

Talk about how great fishing is, tell me a fishing story, then bring me along and let me fish too.

God's guidance and blessings on all you do in the Lord's name!

*Billy Brath works with churches and leaders to develop and produce creative ministries that work to effectively reach the culture today. Formerly a dancer/performer, with an undergrad degree in secular Religious Studies, and experience in digital arts & design, he is currently Pastor, Urban Missionary and church planter in Orlando, FL. ■*

## Church Planting Ongoing Throughout District

Vibrant outreach and ministry is thriving in our District! Here are some updates of ongoing mission work.

### Grace/Naples

Grace/Naples has accepted the role of being the Mother Church to the emerging Golden Gate Mission in Naples.

The congregation voted unanimously to serve in this capacity and is partnering with the Florida-Georgia District in developing an outreach center for the Golden Gate area, which is a mix of Anglos, Spanish and Haitian residents. Grace has extended a call to Rev. Mark Eisold of Lima, Peru. A former church planter in Arkansas, Pastor Eisold currently serves as an LCMS International Missionary to Lima.

Grace Senior Pastor Keith Lingsch explained, "We are excited to play such a significant role in planting another daughter congregation, and I am still amazed that we voted unanimously. It's a God thing."

The Golden Gate mission will use Messiah's former facilities. Messiah (also known as Hope of Life) closed in June this year, and the facilities were left to the District. The Florida-Georgia District determined that there was a viable ministry opportunity and began to pray and discuss this further with SW Circuit congregations – and Grace/Naples in particular.

We pray that Lord will bless these efforts to connect people to Jesus, and that He will bless Grace and Pastor Eisold in this call process.

### Church Planter Visits

Rev. Mark and Amy Adrian from Bremerton, WA, toured three of our potential new mission starts in Florida-Georgia on October. I chauffeured the couple from the Disney/Four Corners mission on to Port St. Lucie, ending in Lakewood Ranch, which is near Redeemer/Stuart. Each mission site is unique and gives a flavor for our mission potential.

Driving also gives me time with the planter to share mission strategies on what they would



do "here." Each mission site pulls together their local mission team and gives a tour of the area, leaving time for fellowship and questions and answers with the planter.

Rev. Henry Biar of Rochester, MN, will be coming our way in mid-January for a similar tour of the area. This is done to familiarize the planter with our District and each of these missions. It is a precursor for a possible call as church planter to one of these new start sites. It also assists the congregation in preparing to serve as a mother church or satellite congregation.

### Greater Atlanta Metro Hispanic Missionary at Large

Several workers have been identified and contacted by the District about the exciting mission opportunity in Greater Atlanta. The Hispanic population continues to grow in this area, and we have no ministry to reach out to these residents today.



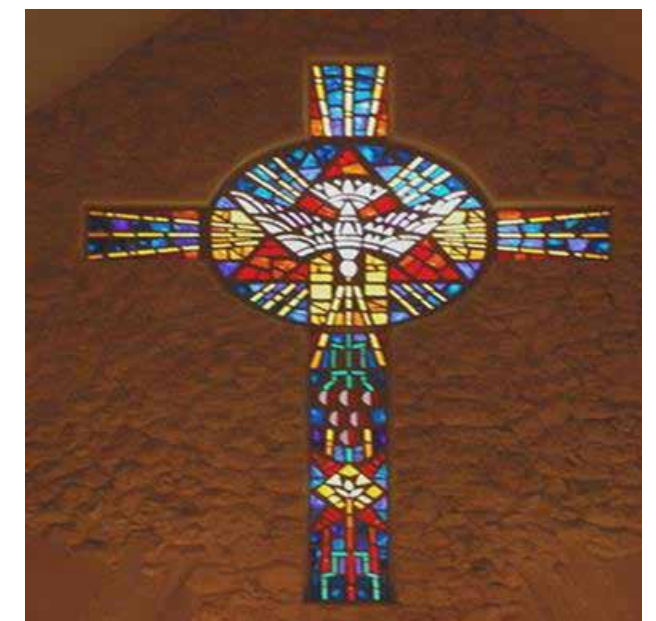
**MISSION POSSIBLE**

by Rev. Doug Kallesen  
District Executive  
for Mission & Outreach

to Hispanic people, not to start a stand-alone separate Hispanic congregation. In this way costs for facilities at multiple locations can be minimized, if not eliminated. We can stretch our mission dollars by investing them into the worker and the ministry.

This is an exciting time in our Florida-Georgia District as we see the Kingdom of God swelling with new mission opportunities and there are more on the list. Thanks to our District congregations who faithfully support our Kingdom work across the District. God is truly at work! ■

Left — Redeemer/Stuart Mission Team assembled with Rev. Mark and Amy Adrian  
Below — Stained glass cross highlights Grace/Naples.



- The need is there!
- The opportunity is there!

Initial conversations have been held with several congregations in this target area asking them to consider an outreach ministry to their Hispanic population through a missionary at large who would be bilingual. Conceptually his role would be to serve as a catalyst to bring a Gospel presence at several locations

## Planning Under Way for LWML 75th Anniversary

In 2017, LWML will celebrate 75 years of serving the Lord with gladness.

A special committee met in St. Louis in November 2015 to create and outline plans for the year.

The committee members are: Edie Norris, chairman; past LWML Presidents Betty Duda, Ida Mall, Gloria Edwards, Virginia Von

Seggern, Linda Reiser, Janice Wendorf, Kay Kreklau; Kristy Carter; Amy Gill; Carolyn Blum; Caroline Honeycutt, Archivist-Historian; Rev. Robert Mundahl, Pastoral Counselor; and LWML President Patti Ross.

A 75th Anniversary logo, designed by graphic artist Amy Gill, was unveiled during the meeting. The LWML 75th Anniversary logo



represents the many facets of the LWML, which includes the faces of women throughout the ages that have been placed together to reflect the Light of Christ to the world.

“The committee has begun plans to mark the wonderful milestone of the LWML’s 75 years of rich history,” said Norris.

“Reflecting on the work of the women who have joyfully served through the years, we will celebrate the many blessings God has provided for the LWML to share His Word around the world yesterday, today, and as He wills, into the future. We hope everyone will join the celebration at the 2017 LWML Convention in Salt Lake City.” ■

## District Youth Ministry Council Organizes

This new column in *Lutheran LIFE* will focus on the work of the District Youth Ministry Council. Columnist Jeremy Becker, DCE at St. Paul/Weston, FL, chairs the DYMC.

The Florida Georgia District values the importance of youth ministry. This is evident in youth ministry staff at the District level, the equipping of volunteers to lead

to coordinate youth ministry efforts in the District. The DYMC will equip, empower, and engage the youth of the church for lives of Christian discipleship. To ensure that the purpose of the Florida Georgia District ministry is carried out, the DYMC will accomplish this by assessing the needs of the youth of the church, developing a plan of action based on the assessed needs, implementing the plan, and evaluating the results.

I’m am very excited and encouraged to be working with a great group of people on the Council: Josh Blankenship (Thrive

Community/Estero), Mark Brink (District Executive for School Ministries), Annalisa Fitzsimons (Living Hope/Kennesaw), Joe Guagliardo (Faith/Merritt Island), Cindy Hammerstrom (District office), Mike Miessler (Trinity/Orlando),



events for youth, and programs that have been put together to help youth grow in their relationship to God and service to others.

The District Youth Ministry Council has been appointed by President Walton and established



Jeremy Becker

Nick Moss (St. Paul/Lakeland), Josh Pettit (Our Redeemer/Ocala), Rachel Schildwachter (Trinity/Orlando), and Megan Skelton (St. Luke/Oveido).

We ask for your prayers and support as we work to carry out our goals in order to serve the youth in our District. We also ask for your thoughts, suggestions and ideas that might help and encourage us to do this in a way that might please God and serve this District. ■

## National Youth Gathering Project Funded



Participants at the 2016 LCMS National Youth Gathering will be packing 500,000 meals though Feeding Children Everywhere, a project funded by more than 268 individuals and organizations.

Feeding Children Everywhere was founded by Don and Kristen Campbell with a mission to empower and mobilize people to assemble healthy meals for hungry children. More than 38 million meals have been distributed in 37 countries. ■



LCMS YOUTH GATHERING  
NEW ORLEANS · JULY 16-20 2016

## High School Students Offered Glimpse of College Life

High school juniors and seniors belonging to Florida-Georgia congregations are invited to spend three full days at the University of Florida for Real Life College Faith — a weekend designed to give students a glimpse into life as a Christian in college.

Hosted by the campus ministry at First Lutheran/Gainesville, Real Life College Faith is filled with college testimonials, campus experiences, games and activities meant to facilitate fun, friendships and discussion.

Guest students will have opportunities to connect with other college-bound high schoolers and current students at UF and Santa Fe College who are active participants in the church. Attendees will learn

what it’s like to have a “college faith” and maintain and grow their relationship with Christ while taking on the pressures and stress of a new chapter of your life.

“Real Life College Faith helped address my concerns about adjusting to my freshman year,” shared Julia Salt, UF freshman and RLCF 2014 participant. “I learned how to incorporate my faith into my college experience.”

Real Life College Faith is set for January 15-17, 2016. The \$30 registration fee covers some meals and any materials provided during the weekend. Lodging is not included; arrangements are in process with a nearby hotel.

Registration deadline is January 8, 2016.

Additional information and registration link is available at <http://flgadistrict.org/real-life-college-faith/> or contact Jacob Goetz at [jmcgoetz@gmail.com](mailto:jmcgoetz@gmail.com) or (352) 376-2062. ■



# Lutheran Counseling Services Celebrates 25 Years of Ministry

# 25

“It was a wonderful time for celebrating God’s presence and power working through Lutheran Counseling Services from the past into the future,” said LCS Executive Director Rev. Dr. Rick Armstrong, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, of the October 10 event celebrating LCS’ 25th anniversary.



LCS Executive Director Rick Armstrong

On that Saturday evening, 145 people gathered around the theme “Grace-Healing and Hope” for song, conversation, celebration, food and renewal of the partnership and ministry at LCS. Many people also sent gifts, well-wishes and thanksgivings for the work and ministry of LCS in the central Florida

community and beyond.

Florida-Georgia District President Greg Walton and Florida-Bahamas Synod Bishop Bob Schaefer served as co-emcees, bringing inspiration and gratitude for the partnerships and ministry among their churches and people.

The thread of grace and hope was woven by the music of David Ludwig from Redeemer Lutheran/Winter Park. Rev. Dr. Mel Jacob, the founding Executive Director of LCS, brought a message of grace and healing.

“Those gathered honored past and present Board members and staff members and celebrated the foundation set by long time treasurer Bob Waggoner,” Armstrong continued. “A wonderful video prepared by Dr. Jim Katt reminded those present why we do what we

do by pulling together our theme – Grace-Healing and Hope – in powerful ways.”

Armstrong closed the evening with a message focused on the call for “the future to which God points us.”

He said, “‘Those we serve’ has been the focus these past 25 years

and ‘those we serve’ will be the focus as our future continues. ‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’ That’s a powerful promise for each one of us, as it’s a powerful promise for those we serve and our organization into the years to come.

“For 25 years, LCS professionals have been allowed to work with those who struggle with doubt, despair, depression, loss, uncertainty, broken relationships and the effects of an imperfect world that will always be imperfect,” Armstrong continued.

“God’s grace allows LCS to offer a place of safety to explore the options and resources available to them. That includes God’s forgiveness, love and the strength to venture into new directions and new perspectives, with hope and healing in their times of transitions.”

LCS has 10 locations throughout Central Florida, with a dedicated Board of Directors that meets at least quarterly and 11 staff members. Work at the Plymouth Seniors Housing in Winter Park is in its fifth year. Established three years ago, the LCS school ministry program serves three schools.

In the last four years LCS has grown from 2,200 to 2,700 sessions a year. Other services include consultations and assessments, crisis and disaster response, workshops, retreats and church worker care for many denominations here and internationally.

“Those we serve are grateful for the partnerships we have with donors, churches, foundations and organizations because without these partnerships we can’t fulfill the vision of ‘Sharing God’s Healing and Abundant Grace in Our Community,’” Armstrong concluded. ■

# Lutheran Hour Ministries Regional Outreach Conference Ignites, Sends Participants

“God mightily worked in Orlando bringing more than 200 people to the Regional Outreach Conference,” summarized Rev. Doug Kallesen, Florida-Georgia District Executive for Outreach of the November 13-14, 2015 event themed SENT.

Barna Group President and majority owner David Kinnaman, author of *UnChristian* and *You Lost Me*, painted the landscape of life in the post-church American culture. Kinnaman, who is also lead research analyst for Barna, analyzed why millennials and gen x’ers are “turned off” by the church.

Rev. Greg Seltz, speaker of *The Lutheran Hour*, offered on-your-feet outreach training on Friday focused on “how to bring them back.” Seltz did a live Lutheran Hour broadcast

twice during the event and a third on Sunday morning during the Sending Service at Trinity/Orlando. He was available throughout the weekend to meet with ROC participants and discuss with them how to share Christ in today’s culture.

Rev. Billy Brath, pastor of LiveUCF, led devotional time on Friday and Saturday. Using John 20:21, he explored what it means to be sent by Christ to be His disciples.

Our Savior Worship Band, led by Matt Bengé, provided music throughout the conference.

ROC participants were offered 12 pre-lab workshops on Friday and 15 workshops on Saturday – all aimed at reaching the lost in today’s culture.

“Barna surveyed approximately 2,000 Florida-Georgia Lutheran

leaders three years ago and found that their churches held in common three best practices: culture of outreach, a connection to people who were not yet members and community engagement.

“The labs and workshops each centered on one of these Cs or best practices and are available to individuals, congregations and schools who want to review or explore more of these training events,” reported Kallesen.

Also available are more than a dozen training videos (four-five minutes each in length) with study questions also centered on the three Cs. To find these tools visit [www.lhm.org/outreachinitiative](http://www.lhm.org/outreachinitiative). For individual and congregational needs, contact Kallesen at 407.857.5556 x6. ■



Rev. Tim Morris of Alive in Christ/Columbia, MO, led a workshop on Power of Prayer Walking



Rev. Greg Seltz sent ROC participants out with the message, “The broken, confused, corrupt world doesn’t run your life when you are in Christ.”



Our Savior Worship Band provided music



Featured speaker David Kinnaman noted that Jesus saw the people and had compassion. “How can we see, understand and have compassion on millennials that have not had great role models? We have a responsibility to help this generation understand and find meaning in Christ.”



# Business Mixes with Worship, Praise at LCEF Annual Fall Leadership Conference



The men's choir from Stepping Stone Ministry provided special music at the closing worship service. Stepping Stone is led by Rev. Joseph Song.



Cindy Robertson, wife of LCEF President & CEO Rich Robertson, hosted the Women's Luncheon which featured speaker Gail McWilliams. This year, rather than give each woman at the luncheon a gift, the funds were donated to Redeeming Life Maternity Home/Sanford. Shown here with Cindy Robertson (right) are Sheryl and Katie DeWitt of Redeeming Life.

LCEF President and CEO Rich Robertson (left) — who hails from Atlanta and retains strong ties to St. Paul / Peachtree City and the Florida-Georgia District — led the annual conference. Here he chats with one of the keynote speakers, Jerry Schemmel who shared a dramatic story about how he has responded in God's love after a life-changing event: surviving a plane crash.



Leaders from across The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod gathered at the Omni Hotel at CNN Center/Atlanta from November 20-22 for the 2015 Lutheran Church Extension Fund's Fall Leadership Conference. The theme of the three-day event was "Respond in His Love," based on Galatians 5:13.

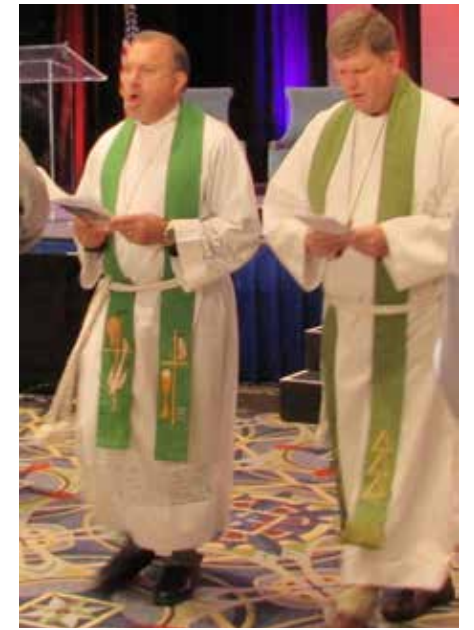
Nearly 700 participants were involved in the Conference, which began years ago with the requirement to hold a delegate business meeting every year and has become an inspiring and faith-filled annual event.

Keynote speakers included Jerry Schemmel, radio announcer for the Colorado Rockies and author of *Chosen to Live* and *The Extravagant Gift*; Gail McWilliams, author, speaker and national radio host; and Timothy Goeglein, vice president for external relations at Focus on the Family and senior fellow at The Heritage Foundation in Washington.

Preaching at the Sunday morning communion worship was Florida-Georgia District President Greg Walton. The service was led by St. Paul/ Peachtree City Senior Pastor Paul Stark. ■



Mark Abresch, minister of music at St. Paul / Peachtree City, provided music throughout the conference.



Florida-Georgia District President Greg Walton and St. Paul/Peachtree City Senior Pastor Paul Stark led the closing communion worship service.



Florida-Georgia District President Greg Walton catches up with good friend First Lutheran/Boston Senior Pastor Ingo Dutzmann

Conference participants prepared 600 personal care packages including notes of encouragement, blankets and care items for homeless served by Stepping Stones Ministry of Atlanta.



Keith and Kristyn Getty and their musical team presented a special concert from their fourth annual "Joy — An Irish Christmas" tour. LCMS President Matthew Harrison joined the Gettys on stage to provide banjo accompaniment for one of the songs.



Gail McWilliams shared her story of choosing the loss of sight to save the life of her unborn baby at the Women's Luncheon. "It comes down to convenience vs. legacy," she said, "and legacy wins every time. Choose joy... make joy and thanksgiving part of your lifestyle as you respond in love."





# District's Collected Flood Buckets

As the District Disaster Response Coordinator for the Florida-Georgia District, it

Okeechobee, FL, responded with their availability, and we had the driving resources we needed.



**DISASTER RESPONSE**  
by John Elliott  
Disaster Response Coordinator  
Florida-Georgia District

is my pleasure to relay the following story to you, the members of the Florida-Georgia District.

During the Synod's Annual Disaster Response Conference in St. Louis, Rev. Michael Meyer, Manager of Synod's Disaster Response, was dispatched to Columbia, SC, to help with the initial assessments. Two congregations, Holy Trinity/Columbia and Mount Olive/Irmo, were among the affected areas.

Rev. Meyer sent out a request for flood buckets on October 9. The Florida-Georgia District office quickly answered in the affirmative that we would respond with our supply of Flood Buckets as soon as possible. Michael Weber and Bob Middleton, both of Zion/Fort Myers, offered their assistance prior to the St. Louis Conference. As the buckets were in Winter Haven, FL, the call went out to LERT trained volunteers in the Central to South Florida region. Ron and Michael Meek of Peace/

After procuring two 16-foot box trucks in Lakeland, FL, we proceeded to the Burning Bush Outreach Center in Winter Haven where Pastor Kermit Rickenberg and volunteers from Grace/Winter Haven met us to load the trucks with the 650 flood buckets we had in storage at this facility. We started out for Columbia and overnights just outside Savannah, GA, that first night.

Bright and early the next day, we arose and drove to Trinity/Savannah to meet up with Pastor John Hopkins. Once there we loaded an additional 50 flood buckets into the trucks. After greetings, loading buckets and many thanks to Pastor Hopkins and Trinity for their donation, it was on to Columbia.

We arrived at Holy Trinity/Columbia around Noon on Tuesday and were met with large hugs by Pastor Christopher Burger. After greetings, discussion and planning, we left one truck at Holy Trinity, grabbed some lunch and took the second truck to Mount Olive/Irmo.

When we arrived there, we were met by Pastor Paul Sizemore, Pastor Jeffrey Wilson and a crew of volunteers. Mount Olive had made prior arrangements to get the buckets to those affected by the flooding by partnering with other congregations in the area. We quickly put 50 flood buckets in storage for Mount Olive members to distribute a little later and then headed to First

Baptist/Irmo to unload an additional 100 buckets in support of their relief efforts.

After that it was on to Union United Methodist, where we unloaded 180 buckets into their makeshift relief center. The final 20 buckets went into the back of a Mount Olive member's truck so he could distribute them to a hard hit neighborhood just down the road.

We stayed overnight in Columbia and rose early the next morning to gather back at Holy Trinity in Columbia to distribute flood buckets. There we were met by Pastor Burger and WLTX, Channel 19 News. Holy Trinity had been advertising the availability of the flood buckets for two days via local media, and WLTX picked up on it for a local interest story. Pastor Burger and I were interviewed, and then we proceeded to get ready to open up for the morning distribution at 8 am.

At 10am we had not removed the first bucket off of the truck, and we were beginning to wonder if we were going to bring all these buckets home to Florida.

However, the Lord had a different idea. At 10:30 am one lone gentleman on a bicycle showed up to inquire about the cleaning supplies we had available. After loading him up with a bucket, broom and mop, we asked him to pass the word in his neighborhood that we were here at Holy Trinity and were waiting to give out the supplies. He replied that he would do so.

Dear members of the Florida-Georgia District — what transpired

# Sent to Columbia, South Carolina

over the next three hours was amazing . . . people started coming. Slowly at first and then the line began to form. Within three hours we delivered into waiting and grateful hands 350 flood buckets full of your love and support.

Sure, the buckets had cleaning supplies in them but they also included the Gospel, the message that they were not forgotten and that Holy Trinity Lutheran would be there to help them going forward.

The oddest thing is that at 10 am when we hadn't distributed the first bucket, Pastor Burger went out to qualify a few requests for buckets and then to pick up his wife from her part-time job. Upon his return we were out of buckets. Unintentionally he had missed the entire distribution!

After debriefing with Pastor Burger, we gave thanks to God for His provision and asked Him to look after those affected by the flood. After final hugs good-bye we headed

out on our way back home and stayed in Brunswick, GA that night. We arrived back in Central Florida the next afternoon and returned the trucks to the rental facility.

It is with a most thankful heart and with great joy that I give thanks to all the congregations and

volunteers that made this Flood Bucket delivery possible. Special thanks to Ron and Michael Meek, Bob Middleton and Michael Weber for your sacrifice of time and effort to drive all that way to Columbia and back, loading and unloading buckets with joy and love. ■



# FLORIDA GEORGIA REGIONAL NEWS

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

## All Saints Celebrates 25 Years of Ministry in North Georgia Mountains

Started by a handful of dedicated Lutherans in 1990, All Saints Lutheran/Blairsville recently celebrated the work that “God has done and continues to accomplish among the members in Georgia, North Carolina and Tennessee,” reported Pastor David Wesche.

Two celebration services on Sunday, November 1 were filled with fond remembrances, joyful praises and eager anticipation. The past was honored with former Pastor Chuck Houska preaching; Jean Weinrich, widow of former Pastor Ralph Weinrich, as lector in the early service; Pastor Steve Mazzaferro, son of the congregation, assisting; and the dedication of the Fellowship Hall in honor of All Saints first pastor,

Rev. William Schultz.

“Joyful praise was abounding with the congregational singing of *A Mighty Fortress, For All the Saints* and *In Christ Alone*; the anthems of the Adult and Bell Choirs; and the worship leadership of our Minister of Music, Carol Blackburn,” Wesche said.

“Now All Saints eagerly anticipates the next 25 years and beyond as Pastor Chuck Houska and President Greg Walton proclaimed God’s Word of being a ‘Therefore Congregation,’ one that is blessed to be a blessing as we ‘Engage in the Master’s Business,’” Wesche continued.

The anniversary celebration culminated in a banquet recognizing special guests and former members, including founding members Peggy Holem, Barbara Blackmer, Janice and Pete White, Elaine and Carl Neuhaus, Lillian Ursel, Inge Ruff, Bill

Sager, Verlee Jones.

Sally Wesche and the anniversary committee coordinated the anniversary weekend events as well as several significant celebrations earlier in the year, including a summer picnic recognizing Wesche’s 10th Anniversary of ordination and honoring Sheriff Mack Mason for his service to the county and dedication to the Lord. ■



All Saints Pastor Dave Wesche, Former All Saints Pastor Chuck Houska, Pastor Steve Mazzaferro, Rev. Greg Walton, President of the Florida-Georgia District



All Saints 25th Anniversary Committee (front l-r) Steve Curlee, Kit Curlee, Joyce Knappenberger, Judy Angelo, Connie Smith, Rheta Priem, Sally Wesche, (back, l-r) Bill Sager, Debby Eisel, Jack Mazzaferro, Kelly Mazzaferro, Carl Priem, Martha Beaudoin



## Civic Involvement Connects St. Peter’s Congregation to Community

St. Peter Lutheran/Dahlonega was one of the few nonprofit organizations to participate in the city’s Chamber of Commerce’s Business Connections Expo in November.

“We used the opportunity to tell folks about the custom of the Advent Wreaths — what was needed to make them and how to construct them,” said Rev. Gerhard Michael Jr., pastor of the young congregation. “The flyer we distributed gave them this information in printed form, with the invitation to join us for our Sunday and midweek Advent services.”

St. Peter members handed out Advent devotion booklets, with different ones for families with children and for adults.

“For the children, we had a jar filled with Hershey kisses,” Michael

said. “The child who guessed the number closest to the actual amount in the jar received the jar of candy. The door prize for our booth was a beautiful Advent wreath.”

“We found that many people in North Georgia were delighted to learn about the custom of the Advent wreath. With very few liturgical churches in our community, very few knew about the Advent season. One individual said she planned to make small Advent wreaths for the tables in the local nursing home.”

Helping the small mission congregation accomplish the Expo project was a Thrivent Action Grant.

“The activity was one more way that St. Peter Lutheran Church was reaching out to its community,” Michael said.

During the summer, St. Peter members renovated a former

doctor’s office into a very worshipful gathering room which can be used for services, fellowship events or as a classroom. Several of the exam rooms are used for Sunday School classes and an office; a conference room for Bible Class and meetings; and a kitchen to host Sunday night dinners for students from the University of North Georgia.

The new facility was dedicated on August 11, with a ribbon cutting ceremony including the Chamber of Commerce.

“We used that event to reach out to the 40-some medical and social service offices in our immediate neighborhood and invited them for lunch that day,” Michael reported, “We had about 30 folks come!” ■

Above — Rev. Gerhard Michael Jr. and his wife Joan — front center — officiate at the ribbon cutting dedication of the new worship facility.



### REGION 1

#### Vice President:

David Brighton  
Mount Calvary/Warner Robbins

#### Laity Board Members:

Jay Wendland | Living Faith/Cumming  
Robert Chambers | Grace/Atlanta

#### NE Georgia Circuit Visitor:

David Wesche | All Saints/Blairsville

#### Atlanta N Circuit Visitor:

Jeffrey Jordan | Rivercliff/Atlanta

#### Atlanta S Circuit Visitor:

Larry Townsend | Christ Our Savior/Hampton

#### E Central Georgia Circuit Visitor:

Roger Schwartz | Our Redeemer/Augusta

## Amazing Grace Members Partner with Public Schools

“They need to know...” That sentence reflects the heart and motivation behind the Amazing Grace/Oxford ministry at the local public elementary school.

Pastor James Rockey said he “rejoices” that many of those who are part of the congregation understand the value of going out and serving as the hands of Christ.

“They need to know that they are valued, loved and prayed for ... and that we are here for them,” said Rockey of those being served at the school.

Wildwood Elementary School is working to raise its school grade, specifically the reading scores.

“As some 80%+ of the students are in poverty and come from difficult family circumstances, working in partnership with the school staff is a way to encourage them and the students,” Rockey said.

Using contributions given for hands-on community outreach

projects and some Thrivent Action Team funds, Amazing Grace developed a plan with the school administrators. At the end of each quarter, Amazing Grace is helping the school recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of the top 125 students in AR (Accelerated Reader).

In October, Amazing Grace helped host a pizza celebration for the students and their parents. Each student picked a new hardback book as a gift.

“It’s doing ministry the way Jesus did,” Rockey concluded. “He went to where the people in need were and addressed their outward need first. So Amazing Grace is praying that this will not only meet a need here and now, but will create relationships and bridges that will impact lives for eternity.” ■

At right and below —  
Amazing Grace celebrating  
Advent By Candlelight

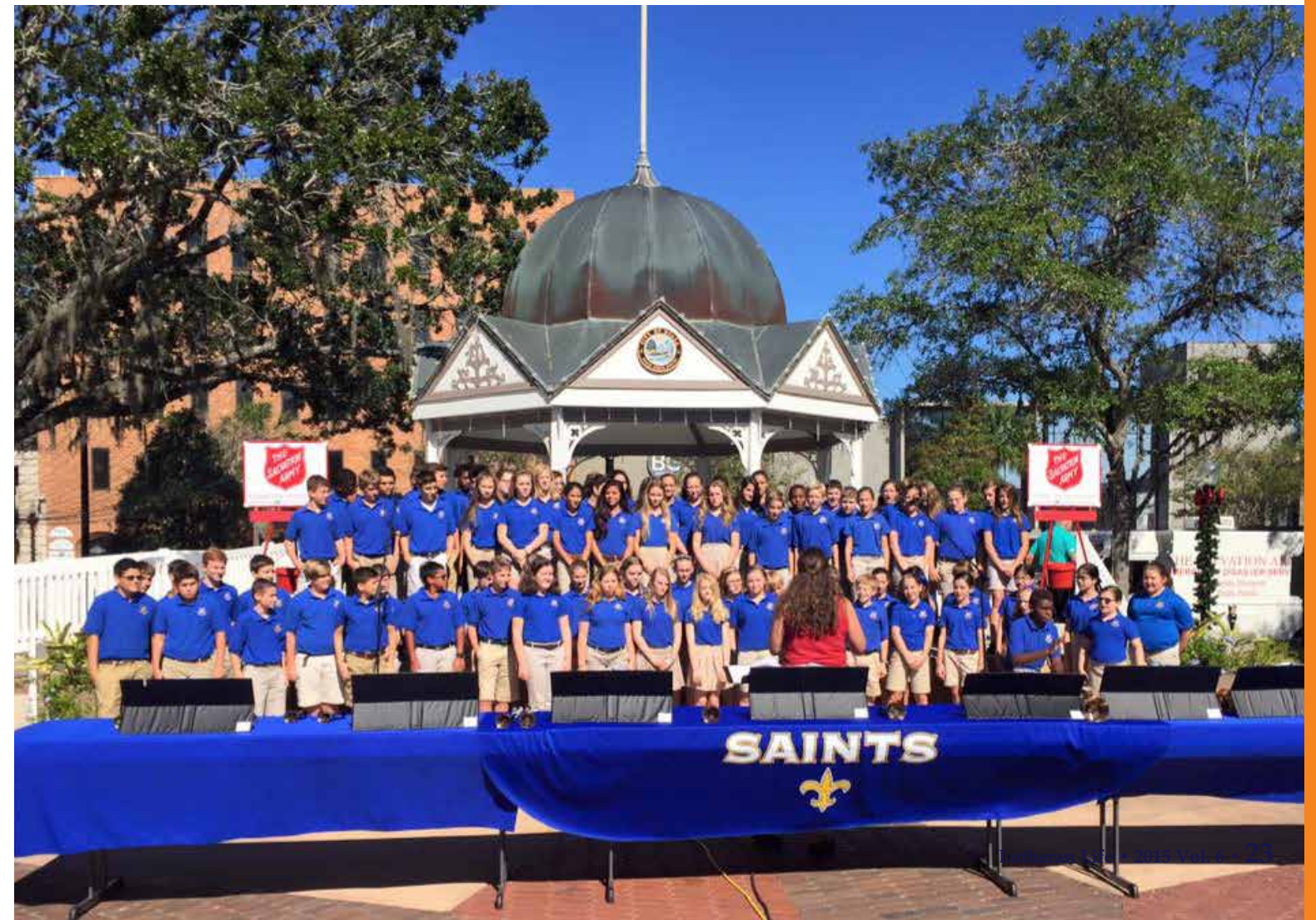


IMPACT YOUTH — Meeting in mid-November, youth from Abiding Savior/Gainesville packed 30 shoe boxes for Operation Christmas Child. Christmas holiday events for the group included caroling and a progressive dinner.



TRINITY/SUMMERFIELD welcomed new members on November 15th.  
The congregation is served by Pastor Don Kelm.

Middle school students from St. John Lutheran School/Ocala were part of the entertainment for the kickoff of the annual Salvation Army Red Kettle campaign. The students sang at the November 12 celebration at Down Town Square Ocala.



### REGION 2

**Vice President:**  
Frank Marshall  
St Paul/Jacksonville

**Board Secretary:**  
Jay Winters, University Church  
Student Center/Tallahassee

**Laity Board Members:**  
Donald Kaufman | St. John/Ocala  
Lois Schaefer | Amazing Grace/Oxford

**Tallahassee Circuit Visitor:**  
Mark Schultz | Epiphany/Tallahassee

**First Coast Circuit Visitor:**  
Dana Brones | Bethlehem/Jacksonville

**N Central Florida Circuit Visitor:**  
James Rockey | Amazing Grace/Oxford

## Team Hope/Plant City Joins YMCA Turkey Trot

On a warm and balmy Thanksgiving morning, more than 20 members of Hope/Plant City put on their walking or running shoes to take part in the local YMCA 5K Turkey Trot. Hope members who did not run/walk served as race day volunteers.

Hope again served as one of the primary sponsors of the event at the YMCA, where the church's Senior Pastor Dean Pfeffer serves as 1st Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors. He opened the race with a prayer.

"Our members wore their Hope Lutheran t-shirts that day as a witness to the community of our ministry to Connect People to Jesus," Pfeffer said.



Team Hope pose for a team picture before the start of the race.

Among the 20-plus Hope participants the following members placed in their age categories: David Booher, Daniel Pfeffer and Ian Matthews. Team Hope was

captained this year by Ian Matthews and Jason Pfeffer.

Plans are for Team Hope to participate in future races in the area. ■

## Faith Celebrates Retirement of Debt

Members of Faith Church & School/Eustis celebrated the fact that the loan on the Christian Life Center was paid off with a Rite of Retirement of Debt ceremony at each service on November 8.

The building was completed 11 years ago.

"The loan burning brings with it a good feeling," said Rev. Marc Kappel, senior pastor at Faith. "Paying off the mortgage represents a release from financial bondage, a true freedom and flexibility to use our resources in carrying out God's will for our ministry."

"Faith's giving members and a generous memorium made this possible." ■

At left — Rev. Marc Kappel presides at the Rite of Retirement of Debt for Faith's Christian Life Center.



## Faith/Merritt Island Re-Buries Time Capsule

On October 26, 2014, Faith/Merritt Island celebrated its "golden" anniversary with a well-attended banquet held at the Cocoa Beach Hilton. Special Sunday services preceded the event with Florida-Georgia District President Greg Walton, as guest speaker and Faith Pastor Russell G. Frahm as the liturgist. The celebration theme of "Faith as small as a mustard seed," was taken from Matthew 17:20.

Several of the founding members, now in their 80s, were able to attend. Also at the celebration was Ruth Sammetinger, widow of Faith's first pastor Rev. Carl A. Sammetinger, who served until January 1968.

Faith's celebration continued for 12 months, culminating on October 25, 2015.

On that Sunday, a newly fabricated, two-piece time-capsule – containing many meaningful artifacts including a 128-page history book written for the event, many photos, newspaper articles, a cell phone, kid's drawing, t-shirts and memorabilia – was buried.

The Merritt Island church began modestly with a small group in 1961 and grew slowly and steadily. In September 1964, the official first

meeting was held and the church name selected. Later that year, land was purchased by the District Mission Commission and by early 1965, Charter Sunday was observed with 52 adults registered.

Ground breaking for the sanctuary was held in July 1965 and the new "first" house of worship was dedicated that November.

Pastor Sammetinger was installed in June 1966. The following September a kindergarten was established, and the church continued to grow. Rev. Bruce Sommerfield was Faith's second pastor, serving until June 1976. Rev. L. Wayne Myers of Omaha was installed in February 1977 and served until his retirement in 1992. Rev. Russell G. Frahm succeeded Myers as Senior Pastor in 1988.



The new sanctuary was built in 1988 and dedicated in June 1989. Faith's membership more than doubled. In June 1995, a ground breaking ceremony was held for the Reeves Home, an eight-bedroom, 4,100-square-foot facility for the mentally challenged. Construction of a 6,800-square-foot, two-story Day Care and Classroom facility followed and dedication occurred in February 1997. The photo above shows the sanctuary that was dedicated in 1989. ■

## Ascension/Casselberry Celebrates LCEF Sunday



LCEF SUNDAY was celebrated in late October at Ascension/Casselberry. LCEF Florida-Georgia District Vice President Daniel J. Reichard (left) and District Attorney Rusty Huseman (right) visited the congregation to share information about LCEF. Ascension is led by Pastor Tom Eggebrecht (center). For information about hosting an LCEF Sunday, please contact Reichard at the Florida-Georgia District Office. ■



### REGION 3

#### Vice President:

Brian Kneser | Woodlands/Montverde

#### Board Treasurer:

Renee Varga | Woodlands/Montverde

#### Laity Board Members:

Tom Reagin | Hope/Plant City  
Katie Abercrombie | Prince of Peace/Orlando

#### Commissioned Minister Board Member:

Lois Ford | Faith/Eustis

#### Space Coast Circuit Visitor:

Gary Held | Risen Savior/Palm Bay

#### Orlando East Circuit Visitor:

Ken Green | Prince of Peace/Orlando

#### Orlando West Circuit Visitor:

Milan Weerts | Emeritus/Clermont

#### Winter Haven Circuit Visitor:

Dean Pfeffer | Hope/Plant City

## Prince of Peace's Pumpkin Patch Generates Funds for Ministry

Prince of Peace/Orlando hosted its 2nd Annual Pumpkin Patch fundraiser with the help of Thrivent Action Team funds October 18-31.

On October 17, some 550 pumpkins, gourds and swan gourds were unloaded at the sale site. Boy Scouts and church members "worked together to set up an attractive patch," said Lu Burchfield of Prince of Peace.

"We bought two bales of hay, a couple of corn stocks and decorated a lattice backdrop for picture taking. Many of our customers came from the surrounding neighborhood and our church members," she continued.

"However, we gained many customers who were just driving by looking for pumpkins and a nice display to take pictures of family and children."

Patch workers passed out stickers, postcards announcing worship service times and a postcard telling the Biblical story of the pumpkin.

"The smiles and favorable comments from our customers were gratifying and made us smile in return, especially watching the



children running through the patch and selecting their pumpkin," Burchfield added.

Fundraiser sales totaled \$5,649.50, an increase over the previous year. Funds will go toward ministry and missions. ■

Pumpkin patch workers included Dave Weidner, Ed & Marge Estes, Sonia Tellez, Mike Fleming, Don Lauher, Ellen Ponsford, Tom Ludwig, Kathy McCartin, Lisa Parton, Lois Snoot and Lu Burchfield.

## Trinity Celebrates Charter Sunday

October 18, 2015, was Charter Sunday for Trinity Lutheran Church of Southwest Florida (TLC) — just one year after a group of about 15 people gathered for a special Bible study led by a lay member.

After a couple of meetings, the group asked Rev. Earl Schmidt to lead their Bible studies and consider the possibility of future worship services. Schmidt, a retired LCMS pastor living in Port Charlotte, has been assisting TLC ever since.

During the past year, the group met at a local clubhouse before renting a room at the American Legion. The congregation name was chosen, and the new mission continued to grow.

Members used their time and talents to make various items needed for worship, from the communion ware and altar appointments to logo design. Hymns for worship were played with a synthesizer through the speaker system. The first choir performance was on Easter, April 5, 2015. A Sunday School was started with two children.

The search for a suitable property for a church was ongoing. With guidance from the Florida-Georgia District, TLC members negotiated the purchase of a bank property in west Port Charlotte, began a capital campaign and applied for a Lutheran Church Extension Fund loan.

Plans now are to remodel the existing bank building into a temporary worship site and activity center, with the goal of an early 2016 completion. At the dedication service those charter members who were at their northern homes on Charter Sunday will add their signatures to the charter.

Until then, TLC will meet in the rented room at the American Legion. ■



### REGION 4

**Vice President:**  
Jon Zehnder | St. Michael/Fort Myers

**Laity Board Members:**  
Jeff Richards | Hope/Brandenton  
Beverly Nyce | Marco/Marco Island

**Commissioned Minister Board Member:**  
Jesse Crosmer | Our Savior/St. Petersburg

**Suncoast Circuit Visitor:**  
David Brockhoff | Holy Trinity/Masaryktown

**St. Petersburg Circuit Visitor:**  
Arnold Piering | Emeritus/New Port Richey

**Tampa Circuit Visitor:**  
Kevin Yoakum | Christ the King/Riverview

**Sarasota Circuit Visitor:**  
Rossetter Leavitt | Beautiful Savior/Sarasota

**SW Circuit Visitor:**  
Richard Browning | Hope/Bonita Springs

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## Zion Welcomes New Members

Zion/Fort Myers celebrated New Member Sunday on November 22 with a worship service and reception.

Shown at left, 30 new members have been added since May – 14 by transfer, three as associate members, six by baptism, six by adult confirmation and one by profession of faith.

Over the past year, Zion has been focused on a transformational process with an outreach emphasis through the Seasons of Discovery Program by Transforming Churches Network.

"With the Holy Spirit's guidance and help, Pastor Curtis Deterding, his staff and mission minded People of Passion are building bridges to the community with the Gospel message," said Cherie Jacobs, Zion office secretary/coordinator.

"We are blessed to see the new members added to our fellowship to enhance this transformation to a missional centered congregation." ■





## Juan Gonzalez Installed at Beautiful Savior

Rev. Juan Gonzalez was installed as pastor of Beautiful Savior/Lehigh Acres during an afternoon service on Reformation Sunday.

District President Greg Walton officiated and was the preacher. Rev. Richard Browning, SW Florida Circuit Visitor and pastor of Hope/Bonita Springs, was the liturgist. Guest organist, pianist and soloist was Fred Lucies from Hope/Bonita Springs.

Though Beautiful Savior has been in ministry since 1982, a new

church mission plant was begun on March 16, 2015. Gonzalez, who had been serving as interim pastor of Beautiful Savior before being called as pastor, describes the congregation as a “seed-planting missional church serving the Lehigh Acres community and surrounding areas.”

A 1988 graduate of Concordia Theological Seminary in St. Catherine’s, Ontario, Canada, Gonzalez has served congregations in Buffalo, NY; Miami, FL; and Brooklyn, NY. He and his wife, Eva, relocated to Southwest Florida in 2011 from New York City, where he served as Executive Director of Lutheran Services New York Alliance.

Sixteen area pastors participated

in the installation service, including Florida-Georgia District Executive Director of Outreach Doug Kallesen. A catered dinner under a tent on Beautiful Savior’s lawn followed the service. ■

Above photo — Pastors participating in the installation service included (front, l-r) Richard Browning, Hope/Bonita Springs; Doug Kallesen, Florida-Georgia District; Mark Gaertner, retired; Fred Koehler, retired; Juan Gonzalez, Beautiful Savior/Lehigh Acres; Greg Walton, Florida-Georgia District; Curt Deterding, Zion/Fort Myers; Jerry Lawson, Good Shepherd/North Fort Myers; (middle, l-r) Charles Kanefke, Trinity/Cape Coral; Bob Scuderi, retired; Vicar Karl Glander, Amigos en Cristo/Immokalee; Jon Zehnder, St. Michaels/Fort Myers; (back, l-r) Robert Selle, Amigos en Cristo/Immokalee; John Roth, Thrive/Estero; Mark Rabe, missionary to Ethiopia; Nick Moskovites, Christ the King/ LaBelle; Darrell Stuehrenberg, Bethlehem/Fort Myers.



## Cliff & Betty Berry Family Celebrates Another Successful Trinity Academy Annual Golf Tournament



This fall, Trinity Lutheran Academy — the school of Trinity Church in downtown Fort Lauderdale — opened its doors for its 83rd academic year.

Cliff Berry Sr. has seen many changes since the time he was a young student at Trinity. The school has educated four generations of the Berry family. Berry’s daughter Candy Church has taught at TLA for more than 35 years, including serving as principal. She spearheaded the recent

overhaul of the school’s technology, including the addition of a computer lab with 12 state-of-the-art computers and an IT department to instruct students in technological skills.

Each year, Cliff Berry, Inc. sponsors a major golf tournament to raise funds for school operations. The 2015 event on Saturday, October 10, attracted more than 100 golfers and included a silent auction. Proceeds from the tournament along with generous donations of many

individuals totaled \$35,392 for Trinity Academy. ■

In photo above — participating in the golf tournament check presentation were Trinity Academy students with (front, l-r) Cliff Berry Jr.; Candace Church, Principal; Chloe Malone, student and great-granddaughter of Cliff Berry Sr.; Pastor Jeff Carlson and Cliff Berry Sr.

## St. Paul/Boca Raton Supports Mission:Haiti, Will be Host Church in Tim Tebow's National "Night To Shine"

The Angel Tree at St. Paul/ Boca Raton supported the separate boys and girls orphanages sponsored by Mission: Haiti — an outreach ministry launched by the Florida-Georgia District in 1999. Each of the orphans at the two facilities will receive an Angel Tree Christmas gift; additionally,

funds were donated to cover the cost of bringing the presents into Haiti.

On February 12, 2016, the congregational will be an official host church for *Night to Shine* sponsored by the Tim Tebow Foundation, an unforgettable prom night experience, centered on God's love, for people with special needs, ages 16 and up, that will take place at more than 100 churches around the world. In 2015, 44 churches and 15,000 volunteers came together on one night, celebrating 7,000 honored guests with special needs.

"This prom night experience changed Valentine's Day weekend from simply a celebration of love, to a celebration of God's love," explains Pastor Steve Carretto.

"We will participate in the expansion of this ministry into a worldwide movement that allows people with special needs to shine, churches to shine, volunteers to shine, and most importantly, Christ to shine." ■



### REGION 5

**Vice President:**  
Steve Wipperman | Our Savior/Lake Worth

**Laity Board Members:**  
Karen Smith | Peace/Okeechobee  
Samuel Ludington/Holy Cross-North Miami

**Heartland Circuit Visitor:**  
Richard Norris | Trinity/Lake Placid

**Treasure Coast Circuit Visitor:**  
Craig Bode | Trinity/Fort Pierce

**S Palm Beach Circuit Visitor:**  
James Weist | Epiphany/Lake Worth

**Gold Coast Circuit Visitor:**  
Timothy Hartner | St. Paul/Weston

**Monroe-Miami-Dade Circuit Visitor:**  
Alan Sielk | St. Paul/Miami



## St Paul/Weston Donates to Seafarers' House Shoebox Christmas



A THRIVENT ACTION TEAM from St. Paul Church & Preschool / Weston on November 4 packed and wrapped toiletry boxes to be donated to the Seafarers' House Shoebox Christmas. Each box was prayed over and included a Thrivent sticker "Made with Love" or "From Hearts to Hands." Seafarers' House at Port Everglades hand delivers shoeboxes filled with socks, toiletries and holiday cheer to thousands of seafarers' who come from all over the world into Port Everglades. ■

## College Students Serve on Retreat

Just under 20 campus ministry students from Florida State University, the University of Georgia and the University of Florida recently converged for a service retreat in Warner Robins, GA, and Macon, GA.

The students worked with the Rescue Mission of Middle Georgia, a facility that serves a diverse population from homeless men to abused women and children.

Students worked specifically with the thrift store of the mission, separating and sorting donations that would be given to the residents of the mission or sold at the store to help with operating expenses.

The students additionally gathered for times of fellowship and Bible Study, including worshiping on Sunday at Mount Calvary/Warner Robins, GA. The fall service retreat is an annual event that is planned and executed by the students at Florida Georgia District campus ministries. ■

Top — Campus ministry students at Mount Calvary for Sunday worship during their fall retreat.

Right — Rev. Jay Winters of University Lutheran/Tallahassee (center) helps with separating and sorting donations.



LiveUCF hosted a gala November 14 to inform and raise support for this new campus church on the University of Central Florida campus. UCF is the second largest student population in the nation with 61,000 students coming from all 50 states and 148 countries around the world. Pastor Billy Brath and Laura Blank are called to the District as mission planters of LiveUCF, which currently worships around 35 students on Wednesday evenings at the student union. "Wednesday isn't the only thing we do," Brath said. "We are interacting with students throughout the week." Brath, Blank and student teams frequently spend their weekends visiting Florida-Georgia congregations to talk about campus ministry, raise support and make others aware of how to get involved with campus ministry in their area. Shown here are some of the LiveUCF students prior to the recent gala. ■





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## The **BACKPAGE**

# LCEF Honors Jim Ingersoll for Service to the Lord



Lutheran Church Extension Fund President and CEO Rich Robertson, Jim Ingersoll and Randy Peterson, Chairman of the Board of Directors for LCEF.

LCEF District Vice President Dan Reichard congratulates Jim Ingersoll, who was honored with the 2015 Fred E. Leitz Individual Ministry Award.

**A** highlight of the November 20-22 Lutheran Church Extension Fund Fall Leadership Conference was the presentation of the 2015 Fred E. Leitz Individual Ministry Award to James R. Ingersoll of the Florida-Georgia District.

Ingersoll was surprised by the honor, according to Daniel J. Reichard, Florida-Georgia LCEF Vice President.

“Over the past 25 years, Jim’s selfless, dedicated service to the

Lord has blessed the not only his congregation of Prince of Peace in Orlando, but the Florida-Georgia District, LCEF, the LCMS and the Orlando community,” said Reichard. “He truly demonstrates a servant’s heart.”

Ingersoll served as a member of LCEF’s volunteer Board of Directors for six years and is an advisor for the LCEF Florida-Georgia District Loan Committee. He served as treasurer of the Florida-Georgia for 12 years,

has been a part of the District’s Transforming Congregations Network and is a member of the Lutheran Haven Board of Directors.

This award was established in 1989 in honor of the late Fred E. Lietz, the first executive secretary of church extension, and later the first president of LCEF. After he retired from the LCEF presidency, Lietz served as the first Florida-Georgia District Vice President for LCEF. ■