

LUTHERAN LIFE

2016 | Volume 1

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





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 in the Master's business ... 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, 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. *Lutheran LIFE* is published bimonthly. 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

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Mission & Outreach, Doug Kallesen
Finance/Administration, Dan Reichard
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Legal Counsel, Rusty Huseman



John Elliott, Florida-Georgia District Business Manager, is a member of the Spring 2016 Cohort Specific Ministry Pastors (SMP) program at Concordia Seminary / St. Louis. Class members were recognized during February 3 chapel for receiving their vicarage assignments. Elliott will be serving his vicarage at St. Luke's / Oviedo. Elliott is pictured above left with his wife, Gayle, and at right with classmate Lawton Thompson —after their February 7th installation at St. Luke's Lutheran/Oviedo.

CALENDAR

2016 Hearts for Jesus Project • February - June, 2016
Florida-Georgia District Schools and Churches

Veterans of the Cross • March 7-9, 2016
Life Enrichment Center / Fruitland Park, FL

LCMS 169th Anniversary • April 26, 2016

YFMA Retreat • May 2-4, 2016
Luther Springs / Hawthorne, FL

LCMS Triennial National Convention • July 9-14, 2016
Milwaukee / WI

National Youth Gathering • July 16-20, 2016
New Orleans / LA

Educators Conference • September 28-30, 2016
Wyndham Orlando Resort / Orlando, FL

499th Anniversary of the Reformation • October 31, 2016

Middle School Youth Gathering • November 4-6, 2016
Lake Yale Baptist Conference Center / Leesburg, FL

DISTRICT CAPSULES

by Greg Walton District President

Calling Congregations

Trinity/Albany, GA Sole Pastor
St. Paul/Lakeland, FL Assoc Pastor
Faith/N 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.. Assoc Pastor
Grace/St. Cloud, FL Sole Pastor
Our Savior/St. Petersburg, FL. Ast Pastor
Messiah/Tampa, FL Senior Pastor
Trinity/Toccoa, GA Sole Pastor
Messiah/Valdosta, GA Sole Pastor

Calls Issued

Redeemer/West Palm Beach, FL
Rev. Daniel McPherson as
Part-time Interim

Lutheran Counseling Services/Orlando, FL
Rev. C. Scott Gress
as Consultant and Leadership Coach

Christ the King/Labelle, FL
Pastor Rev. Nicholas Moskovites
as Pastor

Grace/Naples, FL
Rev. Mark Eisold
as Associate Pastor

Our Savior/St. Petersburg, FL
Rev. Steven Patton
as Assistant Pastor

Calls Accepted

Lutheran Counseling Services/Orlando, FL
Rev. C. Scott Gress
as Consultant and Leadership Coach

Redeemer/West Palm Beach, FL
Rev. Daniel McPherson
as Part-time Interim

Christ the King/Labelle, FL
Pastor Rev. Nicholas Moskovites
as Pastor

Grace/Naples, FL

Rev. Mark Eisold as Associate Pastor

Transferred to Other Districts

Ms. Audra Mulder.. Southeastern (C)
Ms. Carol Felderman..... Ohio (C)

Transferred from Other Districts

Rev. Dr. Randall MuellerS Wisconsin (O)
Mr. Timothy GabbertSoutheastern (C)
Mr. Herman E KoenigEnglish (C)
Mr. John Hanke Pacific Southwest (C)

Church Changes

Bethlehem Haitian/Immokalee, FL
started 10/25/2013

Trinity Lutheran/Port Charlotte, FL
started 8/31/2015

Hope of Life/Naples, FL
closed 7/12/2015

School Changes

Lake Wales /Lake Wales, FL
closed 11/25/15

Ordained/Commissioned Minister Initial Assignments

Rev Min Soo Kim (O)
Concordia/Irvine
Pastor, Living Faith Korean/Cumming, GA

Rev Saint-Luc Charelus (O)
Concordia Seminary/St. Louis
Pastor, Bethlehem Haitian/Immokalee, FL

Ordained/Commissioned Minister Installations

Ms. Diane Swartz (C)
Teacher, St. John/Ocala, FL

Rev. Joseph C. Song (O)
Pastor, Stepping Stone Mission/Duluth, GA

Rev. James Middle Edge (O)
Pastor, Faith/Hialeah, FL

Rev. Brian Gauthier (O)
Missionary, Office of International
Mission/St. Louis, MO

Rev. Nicholas Moskovites (O)
Pastor, Christ the King/Labelle, FL

Emeritus

Rev. Alan R Koch (O)
Rev. Donald Hinchey (O)
Ms. Katherine Schlotterbeck (C)

Called to Glory

Rev. Dr. William Hassold (O)
Rev. Norman Heintz (O)

Change of Status within the District

Mrs. Emily Abraham (C)
Active to Non-Candidate

Mr. Todd Bortz (C)
Candidate to Non-Candidate

Mrs. Kim Bortz (C)
Candidate to Non-Candidate

DCS Angela Schulz (C)
Candidate to Non-Candidate

Ms. Debra Blackwood (C)
Candidate to Non-Candidate

Ms. Jessica Anderson (C)
Active to Candidate

Ms. Alexandra Schmidt (C)
Active to Non-Candidate

* Note: In District data above:
C = Commissioned Minister;
O = Ordained Minister
Assoc = Associate Pastor
Ast = Assistant Pastor

What I have increasingly noticed over the past few years is that before the celebration of Christmas has even officially happened, many retailers are already stocking their shelves for Valentine's Day.

It makes me think about the common ground between Christmas and Valentine's Day. They both are about love, and they both tell a story of grace. They are both about the *Father heart of God!*

John, the so-called Apostle of love, reminds us, "God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him would not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:16) The Father's love was so great that He sent Jesus to be among us and become

make sense to him, and he was too honest to pretend otherwise. He just could not swallow the Jesus story about God coming to earth as man.

"I'm truly sorry to distress you," he told his wife, "but I'm not going with you to church this Christmas Eve." He said he'd feel like a hypocrite. That he would much rather stay home, but that he would wait up for them. He stayed, they went. Shortly after the family drove away in the car, snow began to fall. He went to the window to watch the flurries getting heavier and heavier, then went back to his fireside chair and began to read his newspaper. Minutes later he was startled by a thudding sound. Then another and another. At first he thought someone must be throwing snowballs against his

and galoshes, trampled through the deepening snow to the barn, opened the door wide, and turned on a light. But the birds did not come in.

He figured food would entice them in, so he hurried back to the house, fetched bread crumbs, sprinkled them on the snow making a trail to the yellow lighted wide open doorway of the stable. But to his dismay the birds ignored the bread crumbs and continued to flap around helplessly in the snow. He tried catching them, tried shooing them into the barn by walking around them waving his arms — instead they scattered in every direction except into the warm lighted barn.

Then he realized they were afraid of him. To them, he reasoned, I am a strange and terrifying creature; if only I could think of some way to let them know they can trust me ... that I'm not trying to hurt them, but to help them. How? Any move he made tended to frighten them, confuse them. They just would not follow. They would not be led or shooed because they feared him. If only I could become a bird myself, he thought. If only I could be a bird and mingle with them, speak their language, tell them not to be afraid and show them the way to the safe, warm barn. But I'd have to be one of them, so they could see and hear and understand.

At that moment the church bells began to ring. The sound reached his ears above the sound of the wind. He stood there listening to the bells pealing the glad tidings of Christmas. And he sank to his knees in the snow and realized that this is exactly what God did — He became one of us to tell us not to be afraid and lead us to a safe place.

I love that story because it reminds me that as God became a man in Jesus to reach us, we, too, can become incarnational in the world around us for the sake of Jesus. The *Father Heart of God* continues to care for those whom we often overlook. His love and grace extend beyond the church into the world so that more people might hear, know and believe. Such a love motivated a priest named Valentine.

Valentine was a priest at the time of Claudius II, who was known for his

persecution of the church. Claudius had issued an edict that prohibited marriage of young people. Apparently Claudius was of the opinion that unmarried soldiers fought better than married soldiers. Also, Rome, at that time, was a very permissive society. Polygamy was popular as well as all manner of deviance.

Sound familiar? The Christian Church wrestled with what to do about this circumstance. Valentine took it upon himself to marry couples secretly in the church in spite of the edict. When he was caught he was imprisoned and tortured. He was to be tried for treason.

While in prison legend says that one of the men who was to judge him was a man called Asterius, whose daughter was blind. Valentine was supposed to have prayed with and healed the young girl with such astonishing effect that Asterius himself became Christian as a result. However, it wouldn't stop the execution. In the year 269 AD, Valentine was sentenced to a three-part execution of a beating, stoning and finally decapitation all because of his stand for Christian marriage.

The story goes that the last words he wrote were in a note to Asterius' daughter. He inspired today's romantic missives by signing it, "from your Valentine."

Valentine was a servant who sought to portray the *Father Heart of God*, meeting people where they were as he cared for their needs. His story reminds us of God's great love for each us, unmerited and undeserved, but freely given. John, the Gospel writer, would later write this to the Church: "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God

so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and His love is perfected in us." (1 John 4:7-12)

As we continue into 2016, reflecting on Christmas, confronted by a secularized view of Valentine's Day, may we be moved to focus on the *Father Heart of God* that saw our neediness and sent Jesus to be our Savior. May we remember these celebrations as more than retail opportunities or times for focusing on ourselves and our love. May these days focus us on God's great love for us that serves as our motivation for loving others in His name.

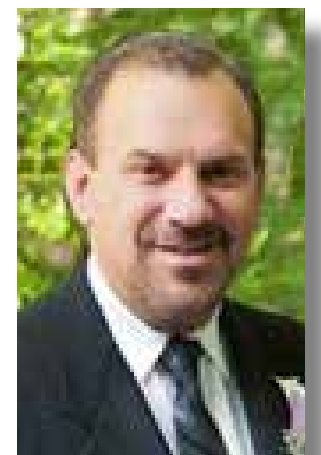


We are living in a post-church age, when the congregations seem to be dwindling and membership is in decline. The statistics are dismal. While there are a multitude of reasons for this decline, one that is repeated over and over again when people are asked why they are leaving the church, is a lack of connectedness. People don't feel welcomed, or they feel judged, or they are not accepted into the existing cliques. Granted, some of that responsibility rests on individuals. The church also bears some responsibility in too often failing to allow our words and actions to match. Often people have heard what we've said, but don't see that put into practice in our lives.

When God's people reflect His heart, it impacts lives for eternity. This is the year to make a difference. This is a year to focus on individual discipleship working on how I, personally, can impact others for Jesus wherever I am. So often we've looked for programs or strategies to attract people to our congregation. The most attractive thing each of us can do is simply reflect the love of Jesus in our daily life. This is what draws people.

During this recent Christmas holiday the Waltons were blessed to have our family together in our home. It was the very first opportunity to host our one-year-old granddaughter. We could tell her how much we love her, though I'm not sure she fully grasps our words. But she knows our actions, and we took every opportunity to show her how much she is loved. I'll bet she will want to come back to Edie and Pop's house because she was loved. Wouldn't it be exciting to see people flocking to our churches because they find them to be a haven of love and acceptance? It can happen as we grow in our personal walk with Jesus and reflect the *Father Heart of God*.

I pray that as we look forward to this New Year which is still unfolding before us, that it will be a year filled with God's grace and love for you, and that having received, you will share it with people around you. Jesus became like us to save us from our sin, which He magnificently did at the Cross. Now He calls us to be His incarnational people, living our faith in ways that draw others to Jesus. So be engaged in the Master's business as we work together to connect people to Jesus! ■



In His Peace!
GREG

The Father Heart of God



like us.

Maybe you've heard the following parable, allegedly told by Paul Harvey, and a great reminder about the *Father heart of God*:

This is about a modern man, one of us; he was not a scrooge, he was a kind, decent, mostly good man, generous to his family, upright in his dealings with others. But he did not believe in all that incarnation stuff that the Churches proclaim at Christmas time. It just didn't

living room window.

When he went to the front door, he found a flock of birds huddled miserably in the snow. They had been caught in the storm and in a desperate search for shelter they had tried to fly through his large landscape window. He couldn't let the poor creatures lie there and freeze. He remembered the barn where his children stabled their pony. That would provide a warm shelter — if he could direct the birds to it. He quickly put on his coat

Gress Joins LCS as Consultant, Leadership Coach

Lutheran Counseling Services, in partnership with the Florida-Georgia District, has called Rev. C. Scott Gress to serve as an independent contractor to add to its leadership training, consulting and coaching services.

"I'm looking forward to what Scott can bring to LCS and the larger community," said LCS Executive Director Rev. Dr. Rick Armstrong.

A regional counseling agency, LCS is a Recognized Service Organization of the LCMS with satellite offices throughout central Florida. The

organization recently celebrated its 25th anniversary.

LCS provides faith based individual and family counseling and works with numerous church bodies, judicatories and local churches to promote healthy congregations and day school ministries. LCS has been tapped to provide crisis and ongoing support services for caregivers and others struck by community and national disasters and crisis situations.

Gress' 22 years of pastoral ministry experience include 17 years

as senior pastor of a larger church and parochial school. He served for 11 years as a Florida-Georgia Circuit Counselor and for one year as the District's First Vice President.

Gress graduated from Concordia Seminary / St. Louis and earned his Master's in Organizational Leadership at Palm Beach Atlantic University. He is certified through the International Coach Federation.

Gress and his wife, Maria, and their two sons reside in Boynton Beach, FL. ■

We've titled this column "The Coaching Leader" but what is a Coaching Leader?

That's a great question! But for this first article we'll take it step by step and talk about the last word first.

A leader is someone who moves a group of people to a different place. They exert influence and initiate change. It is hopefully to a better place and a change that helps to accomplish the purpose of the group (church, school, board, committee, ministry etc). Just keeping the "machinery running" is management. It is very important to have good management in the church! But it is different from leadership.

who barks orders and insists on their way, to the other end of the spectrum where we see those who will do almost anything to avoid appearing demanding.

Sometimes in the church, the leader (pastor or lay leader) shows up as a confident, "I know what we should do" leader. Sometimes that can be a breath of fresh air as it brings clarity of purpose and direction. Or in the extreme it can sometimes become an unhealthy "command and demand" kind of leader. But more frequently, pastors (and lay leaders), are often wired to be caring people (or shepherds), seeking to be at the other end: participative leaders.

They might even define themselves as servant leaders but that's probably not what they are.

The unspoken reality is that frequently these kinds of leaders want everyone to agree and don't

want to upset anyone. It sounds good, but seldom brings about positive change. So leaders acquiesce to just about anything. People get frustrated and little gets done. No one is really happy. Nothing really changes.

What are the options instead? Become more outspoken? Start "getting tough" and "tell others what to do"? For those that have tried to make that shift they have found out that it is uncomfortable and doesn't work for very long. Think "Mutiny on the Bounty" or more often in the church, a quiet backing off of involvement or even worship by the crew/members.

And that is where we in the church often get stuck. What to do?

1. First get clear on what kind of leader you really are. Examine your behaviors (not just what you say). Ask trusted people to honestly tell you what they see.
2. Get an honest assessment on where you are as a ministry and where you are really headed. What is the real (de-facto) priority or vision evidenced by what you do? Is it peace at any cost? Is it the budget? Losing members? The Gospel? Are you just trying to hang on? Happy and satisfied but kind of stagnant? It is time to admit reality.
3. Determine where you want to go instead. Be realistic. By God's grace what could it be in one or two years? What are you willing to do in order to get there?

Next time — What is a "coach"? ■



The COACHING LEADER

by Rev. Scott Gress
Lutheran Counseling Services
Leadership Coach

We've all seen a variety of leaders and leadership styles. It can range from one end of the spectrum to the other extreme. It can be from a "command and demand" or "my way or the highway" kind of leader,

Thrivent Financial Announces \$312 Million in Dividends

Eligible members of Thrivent Financial will receive an estimated \$312 million in dividends in 2016. This figure represents a 32% increase from last year's dividend distribution of approximately \$237 million.

Thrivent's structure as a membership-owned fraternal benefit society allows it to return a portion of its surplus to eligible members in the form of dividends.

"We are extremely pleased to be able to provide such a

significant increase in dividends to our members, especially in a low interest rate environment," said Randy



Randy Boushek

Boushek, chief financial officer at Thrivent.

The 2016 dividend scale was recently approved by the organization's board of directors and reflects the organization's continued financial strength and stability. Solid business fundamentals, including rigorous expense management, strong investment practices,

and careful underwriting of new business, contributed to the creation of surplus.

Thrivent has paid \$2.8 billion in dividends over the last 10 years; the organization has paid dividends every year since 1913.

Dividends are distributed annually, on or near the date individuals initially purchased their eligible insurance products. Dividend payouts may enable contract owners to purchase more coverage, reduce the amount of future premium payments or receive a check in the mail. Not all options are available on all contracts, and dividends are not guaranteed. ■

MSYG Encourages Youth to be Fearless



A report on the annual MSYG event by DCE Megan Skelton of St. Luke's / Ovideo

Fearless — more than just a requirement for the adults willing to chaperone a weekend with sixth, seventh and eighth graders. It was the theme woven throughout the games, activities and sessions designed to help middle schoolers grow in their faith at the 2015 Middle School Youth Gathering.

Each year, the Florida-Georgia District hosts the Middle School Youth Gathering over the first full weekend in November. This year, just more than 450 people from all over Florida and Georgia came to Lake Yale Baptist

Conference Center and discovered how Fearless we can be because of how fearless Jesus was for us.

From the awesome band and incredible speaker to crazy fun games and exciting inflatables, middle schoolers were engaged in activities designed just for them. The Servant Event that gathered school supplies, personal hygiene items for disadvantaged children and adults living in the forest was an incredibly moving sight. The young people let their guards down, and they were able to experience God in a whole new way.

One youth leader reported, "I had one girl in tears when she realized that she was in 8th grade and wouldn't be able to go to another Middle School Youth Gathering. God does some crazy cool stuff in the lives of these teens, and I love hearing the stories come out."

Another youth leader commented, "They will talk about it until next November's gathering!"

When asked about their experiences at the Middle School Youth Gathering, my youth said:

"I really had a fun time and learned a lot about my faith. I had an amazing time with my friends and growing close to Christ. The band was awesome. The

food was on point. Everything was fabulous.

"If you haven't been, you should definitely go to learn about Jesus in a really fun way. What an incredible experience to grow in your faith!"

Not only are the middle schoolers' lives transformed, but high schoolers and adults are impacted as well. Adult leaders were able to spend some time in breakouts just for them in addition to deepening relationships with their youth group. More than 30 high school students were chosen to attend as junior guides, developing their Christian leadership skills. This annual event has a far-reaching impact in our District.

My prayer is that your congregation would be able to take part and experience the joy that comes with this ministry. ■



Eisold Coming to District as Mission Developer

Rev. Mark Eisold, who with his wife Sandi has been serving as a missionary in Peru through The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, will be installed as Associate Pastor of Grace / Naples, FL, on February 28.

An experienced mission planter, Eisold will be serving in that capacity as he leads the former Messiah Lutheran/Golden Gate. During the Eisold family's five years in Peru, the mission grew to include three congregations.

Both Florida natives, Mark and Sandi Eisold met at First Lutheran / Gainesville. He graduated from Concordia Seminary / St. Louis in 2003 and served his first call as pastor and mission developer for Our Savior / Cabot, AR. She has her master's degree in elementary education.

They have two children, Annalise and Erik. ■

At right — Mark and Sandi Eisold with their children Annalise and Erik



The Flood Bucket Challenge ... 2016

In cooperation with LCMS Disaster Response, the Florida-Georgia District invites congregations to join the effort to assemble 2,000 or more Flood Buckets to assist mercy efforts to those affected by flooding. Each congregation is asked to put together at least 15 Flood Buckets.

A Flood Bucket costs \$15-\$20 to prepare; most supplies can be picked up at a dollar store.

The target date for the Rally of Flood Buckets will be on or near April 18. Registration forms and details on preparing the Flood Buckets are available on the District website at <http://flgadistrict.org/floodbuckets/>.

For further information contact John Elliott at the District office (877-457-5556) or overall program coordinator, Joel Mathews, at 813-215-8098 or jkmathews6610@gmail.com. ■



Last year District Congregations assembled 650 Flood Buckets that were sent to Columbia, SC, providing desperately needed assistance to hundreds affected by the devastating floods of November 2015.

District Board Approves 2016 Budget

Meeting in Orlando on January 29-30, the Florida-Georgia District Board of Directors unanimously approved the work plan for the budget year ending January 31, 2017.

Total revenues are projected at \$2,744,000 — down from the previous year's number of \$2,755,800 — with expenses also at that number. Congregational support — projected at the same \$2,100,000 as the previous year — is the biggest source of support, according to District Executive for Administration Daniel J. Reichard.

"Approximately 40 District congregations pledge \$0 support," Reichard added.

Mission grants, campus ministries and mission loans/net account for \$600,000 of the budget, reflecting input from District President Greg Walton, Executive Director of Mission & Outreach Doug Kallesen and the Mission Advisory Council. Two new campus ministries are included in the budget: LiveUCF and Thrive/Estero.

The commitment to national Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod is budgeted at \$357,000, which at 17% of the projected support from Florida-Georgia congregations is up a percentage point from the previous year.

Living a Discipling Life

President Walton led a Bible study that he entitled *Engaged in the Master's Business: Living a Discipling Life*. He noted, "If we are to engage in the Master's business, we must constantly learn from the Master — Jesus. This involves spending time in His Word, in prayer and even in fellowship with other believers, striving to become imitators of Christ."

Walton also led a discussion on the state of the Church, during which Board members delved into that topic as it relates to the Church in general as well as the LCMS and the Florida-Georgia District in particular.

Our challenge, Walton said, is "how we can be advocates in those

communities where God has placed us. We need to promote partnerships with congregations so we can do the ministry God has placed before us.

"As we engage in the Master's business, we can make an eternal difference."

Upcoming LCMS National Convention

Board members reviewed 19 overtures that needed to be considered for presentation for this summer's LCMS national convention in Milwaukee. Seven of the overtures were mandated by the 2015 District Convention.

Leading the discussion was District Secretary Jay Winters, who served on a committee with District Vice President Jon Zehnder and District Council Rusty Huseman.

Leadership

A third session of Emergent Leaders will begin in April of 2016. The process has been expanded to include other District of the LCMS.

The Executive Staff is attending the Best Practices Conference February 17-21 in Phoenix, AZ. District LCEF Vice President and Executive Director for Administration Dan Reichard is one of the presenters.

Planning is under way for the 2016 Educators Conference, themed "All Things to All People" and set for September 28-30 at the Wyndham Resort in Orlando.

Congregations

Dr. Mark Schreiber, former director of the LCMS' Armed Forces Ministry, is heading the District task force on Operation Barnabas. The goal is to get services to veterans in District congregations as well as to those actively serving in the military.

The second District Stewardship Summit is set for February 26-27 at Faith / Marietta.

Florida-Georgia youth attending this summer's National Youth Gathering in New Orleans will gather at Mardi Gras World for the District event. They will take a tour and learn how floats are made, make their own Mardi Gras masks, enjoy lunch and mingle with youth from other congregations in the District.



BOARD ROOM

by John List
District Communications Director

Outreach

District Executive Director of Outreach Doug Kallesen has launched a monthly blog to highlight Florida-Georgia's emphasis on outreach and partnership with Lutheran Hour. The first segment — Connect — was sent January 16. February's issue will deal with Connections.

Kallesen is meeting with potential mission planters and working with potential mother churches throughout the District to address new starts.

The next Board meeting is scheduled as a conference call on Friday late afternoon, April 8. ■



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First-Time Muslim Ministry Outreach Conference Well Attended

Living Faith Lutheran Church / Cumming, GA, hosted the first Florida-Georgia District Muslim Ministry Outreach Conference in conjunction with the District Task Force on Muslim Ministry.

Presenters were Rev. Bruce Lieske and Dr. Tim Furnish of Stockbridge, GA. The event was attended by more than 70 people from local LCMS congregations. I also attended and found it to be very informative and balanced, not fear or hate based, and providing information on what Islam teaches and how we as Christians can respond with the love of Christ to Muslim people.

Pastors commented how much they learned. Lay people asked — when will we meet again?

This was very well received! Many were surprised by things both Christianity and Islam hold in common, including Jesus. In Islam He is a prophet, but only a prophet who will return on judgment day. In Christianity, Jesus is Lord of Lords and upon His return every knee will bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord. The Conference gave an overview of the main teachings of Islam framing both the biblical narrative as well as the current historical narrative.

Dr. Furnish is an expert in Middle Eastern culture, a published author, radio and television personality and advisor the U.S. government. Rev. Lieske chairs the Muslim Ministry Task Force, is founder of Lutherans in Jewish Evangelism and has served in Jewish evangelism throughout Synod for decades.

The Muslim Ministry Task Force was formed to:

- Educate people on the teachings of Islam;
- Empower Christians to live not in fear of Islam but rather in faith in Jesus Christ who is omnipotent – God Almighty;

• Engage Christians in outreach to their Muslim neighbors, co-workers and friends, daring even to love them as Christ loves us.

The Task Force plans to hold these Outreach Conferences in each of the District's five regions. If you or your church is interested in learning more, contact Rev. Bruce Lieske at 407-461-2944. ■



MISSION POSSIBLE

by Rev. Doug Kallesen
District Executive
for Mission & Outreach

Below — shown at the Muslim Outreach Conference are (l-r) speakers Rev. Bruce Lieske and Dr. Tim Furnish with Task Force members Rev. Doug Kallesen and Isaac Baroi.



Mission Advisory Council Begins Work



The Mission Advisory Council (MAC) met at the Florida-Georgia District office from January 5-6 for orientation and to handle mission grant requests.

MAC serves to assist me in mission development and funding. Roger

- Rev. Tim Droegemueller Region 1
- Rev. Kevin Koenig Region 4
- Deaconess Ligia Borges Region 3
- Alex Limbaugh Region 2
- Alana Stokes Region 5
- David McLeod Region 5
- Rev. Tom Beaverson Region 2

2016 for Hispanic ministry in greater metro Atlanta. Work is likely to begin also in Macon and in Newnan, GA, by 2017.

I thank the Lord for every dollar that is provided for mission work in the Florida-Georgia District and for our congregations and individuals who support this work through their tithes and offerings to the District. Our missions are shining the light of the gospel in the darkness surrounding people who were formerly disconnected from Christ. ■



Walker serves MAC as chairman, and the council is made up of laypeople, a deaconess and pastors from each of the five regions of the District, including:

- Roger Walker (chair) Region 3
- Rev. Paul Burtzloff Region 4
- Barbara Stoeppelwerth Region 1

This year MAC approved grants for four Campus Ministries and eight Missions. Other new starts are being initiated in 2016/2017 in Lakewood Ranch, FL; Golden Gate Naples, FL; Port St. Lucie; and possibly in the Four Corners Disney area. In Georgia a missionary-at-large will be called in

Above — The Florida-Georgia District 2016 Mission Advisory Council: (front, l-r) Roger Walker; David McLeod; Alana Stokes; Paul Burtzloff; Ligia Borges; (back, l-r) Barb Stoeppelwerth; Tom Beaverson; Kevin Koenig; Cindy Hammerstrom and Doug Kallesen, District support team.

Planning Under Way for LWML Florida-Georgia District Convention

Now that we are into the new year we ponder various questions. What will happen this year? What will be our goals? Do we have special things that will happen this year? There will be many things that are so normal, birthdays, anniversaries, special vacation plans already being planned, etc.

better plan for me. I now tend to ask God for His assurance in a plan that I have formulated.

This past year was a good example of that. My husband decided that he finally wanted to retire. He just kind of threw that out there one evening on a drive home.

Wow!

So after the first rounds of discussion, we started to pray, asking for guidance as to what He wanted us to do. What did I want? What did God want? Lots of communication

between the three of us! My husband, me and God. Did we all want the same thing? Did God really want my husband to retire? The answer turned out to be yes, it was time to retire. God really showed us His plan for what He wanted us to do.

Now as the LWML Florida-Georgia District begins planning for its convention in September 2016, we have been praying that all will work out the way that God wants it to and we will continue to pray until the convention.

Do we have a place to hold the convention? Yes, Palm Beach Gardens is the spot. Have we been there before? Yes. The PGA Resort and Spa in Palm Beach Gardens.

Mark your calendars now!

September 30 – October 2, 2016. More information will be forthcoming about the convention so make sure to look on our website for that information: www.flgalwml.com.

The District LWML would like to wish each of you a very year filled with blessings from God. ■

LWML District Scholarships - 2016

Concordia Seminary/St. Louis
Alexander Fisher, Tampa - Sem V
Devin Murphy, Hollywood - Sem II
Samuel Sessa, Davie - Sem II
Joseph Warnke, Dawsonville - Vicar
Tom Boeck, Marietta - SMP

Concordia Theological Seminary/Fort Wayne
Greg Bauch, Jacksonville - Sem IV

Concordia/Bronxville
Jonathan Munnicha, Fayetteville - Pre-Sem

Concordia / Mequon
Aaron Hickey, Chuluota - Pre-Sem

Concordia / Austin
Christian Bartholow, Rockledge - DCE
Skylar Smith, Plant City - DCE

LUTHERAN NATIONAL NEWS

Campus Visit Planned for Future Pastors and Deaconesses

2016 DCE Conference Slated for May at Concordia Nebraska

DCEs and other parish professionals who are interested in enhancing the intentionality and effectiveness of Christian education in the church are invited to attend the 2016 Heartland DCE Conference at Concordia University Nebraska from May 19-21. Keynote speakers include Dr. Thom Rainer, Thom and Joani Schultz and Dr. Phil Schwadel. Registration is \$100. Go to www.cune.edu/heartlandDCE for more information. ■

Those considering the vocation of LCMS pastor or deaconess are invited to attend the Prayerfully Consider Campus Visit at Concordia Theological Seminary / Fort Wayne from March 31–April 2.

There is no charge for the event.

“The men and women who attend our Prayerfully Consider Campus Visit come from a wide variety of backgrounds,” said Rev. John Dreyer, Seminary Director of Admission.

“Some will be finishing their undergraduate studies this spring, others have been working in the secular world and are now considering service to Christ and His Church as a pastor or deaconess.

“One thing they all have in common is that they are seeking answers to questions they have about seminary education and this event is a great place to get those answers.”

Those attending this campus visit will have the opportunity to worship daily with faculty, staff and students in Kramer Chapel, sit in on classes, visit with current students and meet one-on-one with the director of Financial Aid.

Reservations can be made by contacting the Seminary at Admission@ctsfw.edu or 800-481-2155 to make reservations. More info is available at www.ctsfw.edu/PCV. ■

FUNDRAISER EXCEEDS GOAL —

For the fifth year in a row, Concordia Seminary / St. Louis participated in the St. Baldrick's Foundation head-shaving fundraiser, with President Dr. Dale A. Meyer (back row, far left) leading students, faculty and staff members who volunteered to be “shaves.” Proceeds from the January 28 event topped the \$10,000 goal to help fund research to find a cure for childhood cancers. ■



Evita Gonzalez Joins District Board of Directors

Evita Gonzalez of Lehigh Acres, FL, has been appointed to the Florida-Georgia District Board of Directors as a lay representative for Region 4. She replaces Beverly Nyce, who has relocated out of Florida.

“Evita brings a wealth of talents

and energy to the Board,” said District President Greg Walton. “She is honored to serve.”

Gonzalez is a member of Beautiful Savior / Lehigh Acres, where her father Rev. Juan Gonzalez, is pastor. ■



FUTURE & HOPE

by Joan Koch
LWML District Vice President
for Communications



So many times, we do things that we think are right ... and they go wrong. Had we prayed about them first? Had we consulted with God about our plans or did we just plunge ahead with what we thought was right? I would venture to say that most times we just ventured ahead and then wondered why it did not work out.

God has our lives mapped out, and we tend to forget that. Over the years, after many failed plans, I have learned that God certainly has a



National Lutheran Schools Week

National Lutheran Schools Week provides the national network of nearly 2,300 Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod preschools, elementary schools and high schools with the public opportunity to proclaim and celebrate God’s work. This year’s celebration – January 24-30 – was themed “Life Together in Christ” based on 1 Corinthians 1:9:

“God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Here is a sampling of District schools celebrating this special week.



Above — **First Lutheran / Clearwater** — Singing and celebration were part of National Lutheran Schools Week at First / Clearwater.



Above — **Faith / Eustis** — The student body at Faith concluded the week in chapel – gathering for a photo that emphasized that they are living together under the cross of Jesus.



Above — Students at **Gloria Dei Academy/Davie** gathered for a group photo on Patriotic Day during National Lutheran Schools Week. The picture will be included in the care package being sent to a recently deployed Marine battalion.

Right — Pajama Day and Talent Show were highlights of the weeklong celebration at **Redeemer/Stuart**. “We have a lot of VERY talented Rams!” was the conclusion.



Celebrations Around Georgia & Florida

Below — **St. Paul / Boca Raton** kicked off the week with a chapel sing along. Other highlights of the week included appearances by the bands from Shine and Ignite from Boca Christian School and a parent picnic lunch. On Jesus and Jeans day students who wore Christian themed shirts could wear jeans to school. Throughout the week students collected socks and personal hygiene items for the homeless. Shown here on one of the themed days is Pre-K-3 teacher Susan Franskousky with Jack Frazer as “Splat the Cat” and Sloan Powers as “Baby Nurse Barbie.”



Below — **Shepherd of the Coast / Fort Lauderdale** enjoyed some wacky clothes and hair — providing an opportunity for student personalities to shine. Students also spent time during the week in service, making sandwiches for the homeless in the community.

Right — **St. Paul / Peachtree City** students had a great time with Western Day, Backwards Day and Dress Your Best Day. The students also crafted a Prayer Wall.



Below — **Trinity / Orlando** celebrated Crazy Sock Day and showcased creative and colorful footwear on both the students and teachers.



Below — One day of National Lutheran Schools Week at **Our Savior/St. Petersburg** was designated as Pajama Day. Students were also treated to Principal Jesse Crosmer’s ‘famous’ pancakes.



LCEF Congregation Advocates . . . Engaged in the Master's Business



LCEF District Vice President Daniel J. Reichard (left) congratulates Bruce Hahn of Trinity / Orlando for being named Star Performer for 2015 for recruiting 165 new LCEF investors.

Florida-Georgia Congregation Advocates for Lutheran Church Extension Fund gathered at the District office January 9-10 under the theme "Engaged in the Master's Business."

It was a weekend of education, fellowship, worship and recognition for the Advocates — dedicated volunteers who serve as the public relations connections between their congregations and the Florida-Georgia LCEF Team.

"This weekend is designed to help our Advocates grow in their understanding of the mission of LCEF and its efforts to support their congregations in fulfilling their mission of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ," said Daniel J. Reichard, LCEF District Vice President and Florida-Georgia Administration Executive.

"We have a great group of Advocates in our District — people who love their Lord and enthusiastically are engaged in the Master's business."

Joining Reichard as presenters for this year's Advocate weekend were:

- Rev. Gregory S. Walton – Florida-Georgia District President;
- Rev. Dr. Karl Galik – LCEF Capital Funding Services;
- Robyn Linke – LCEF Director Customer Relations;
- Paul Sicca Congregation Advocate – Star Performer 2015;
- Rev. Dennis Bartels – LCEF Consecrated Stewards;
- Kathy Keene – LCEF Demographics;
- Pam Moksnes – LCEF Gift Planning;
- Tom Buuck – CEO Lutheran Federal Credit Union;

A highlight of the weekend was the presentation of the annual awards to Congregation Advocates in various categories. ■



Pastor Dennis Bartels suits up for his presentation on LCEF's Consecrated Stewards program. Bartels is chairman of the Florida-Georgia District Stewardship Advisory Council and is pastor at Holy Cross/North Miami.



Right — Advocates Robert Pinckney of Christ / Perry and Don Bergwall of Savior of All / Cartersville.

Left — Advocates Doug & Sally Fuge Good Shepherd Gainesville (standing) with Chrystal Presley St. Paul Jacksonville (seated).



Advocate Annual Awards

Star Performer:

- Bruce Hahn, Trinity / Orlando with 165 new investors

Rookies of the Year:

- Phyllis Hand, Grace / St. Petersburg
- Joyce Brown, Beautiful Savior / Sarasota

Maintained, Gained, Obtained New Investors:

- John Brazee, Christ / Cape Canaveral
- Lois Ford, Faith / Eustis
- Lyle Storlie, Faith / Sebring
- Rick Charlton, Hope / Jacksonville
- Jay Wendland, Living Faith / Cumming
- Jeff Lewis, Trinity / Trinity
- Eric Jenkins, Mt. Calvary / Warner Robins
- Phant Metayer, Grace / Tabernacle
- Rick VanMatre, Lamb of God / Lithia
- Cliff Maker, Redeemer / Bartow
- Chrystal Presley, St. Paul / Jacksonville
- Laurie Steinke, Redeemer / Englewood
- Cliff Skarr, Christ Our Savior / St. Augustine
- Paul Michelotti, Journey of Life / Orlando
- Don Bergwall, Savior of All / Cartersville
- Dwayne Leininger, Bethel / Clearwater
- Carl Scheuman, Peace / Naples
- Scott Tighe, Timothy / Woodstock
- Dave Kulman, St. Paul / Weston
- Robert Pinckney, Christ / Perry
- Renee Varga, Woodlands / Montverde
- Marvin Timm, Our Redeemer / Augusta
- Jon Boeche, Christ the King / Largo
- Molly Millard, St. Paul / Peachtree City
- Kiara Denholm, St. Paul / Peachtree City
- Lyle Mueller, Amazing Grace / Oxford
- Doug Fuge, Good Shepherd / Gainesville
- Paul Sicca, St. Paul / Lakeland



Seeing the Impact

Many people invest with Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) to ensure ministries have the funds they need to continue making an impact on their community and for God's people.

Find the loan that your ministry needs.



Daniel J. Reichard
District Vice President
Florida-Georgia District
877-457-5556
dreichard@flga-lcms.org
lcef.org



LCEF is a nonprofit religious organization; therefore, LCEF investments are not FDIC-insured bank deposit accounts. This is not an offer to sell investments, nor a solicitation to buy. LCEF will offer and sell its securities only in states where authorized. The offer is made solely by LCEF's Offering Circular. Investors should carefully read the Offering Circular, which more fully describes associated risks. Lutheran Church Extension Fund-Missouri Synod (NMLS# 3444).

FLORIDAGEORGIA

REGIONAL NEWS

Out and About in the Florida-Georgia District



Savior of All / Cartersville was represented in the city's 2015 Christmas Parade with a parade featuring a nativity scene, lighted Christmas tree and church members. Later in the month, the Sunday School presented its Candlelight/Flashlight Christmas program followed by a congregational dinner. ■



MARY HALL FREEDOM HOUSE, a nonprofit organization founded to help women break the cycle of addictions, poverty and homelessness for themselves and for their children, counts Rivercliff Lutheran / Atlanta as a faith partner. In December, women from Rivercliff visited Mary Hall Freedom House to share words of motivation, coffee, cookies and special gifts for residents. ■



MEMBERS OF Mount Calvary/Warner Robins helped serve more than 250 meals at the local Helping Hands Christmas dinner (above right). One of the outreach programs continuing in the new year is the Project Linus ministry: ladies at Mount Calvary make blankets that are donated to the Children's Hospital in Macon and also to Rainbow House and Hospice in Warner Robins. Shown above left are Mount Calvary members Linda Phillips and Diane Doyle during a recent fabric shopping trip for Project Linus. ■



REGION 1

Vice President:
David Brighton
Mount Calvary/Warner Robins

Laity Board Members:
Jay Wendland | Living Faith/Cumming
Robert Chambers | Grace/Atlanta

Commissioned Minister Board Member:
Lamar Stewart | Our Redeemer/Augusta

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

VISION

20/20

His mission. Our focus.

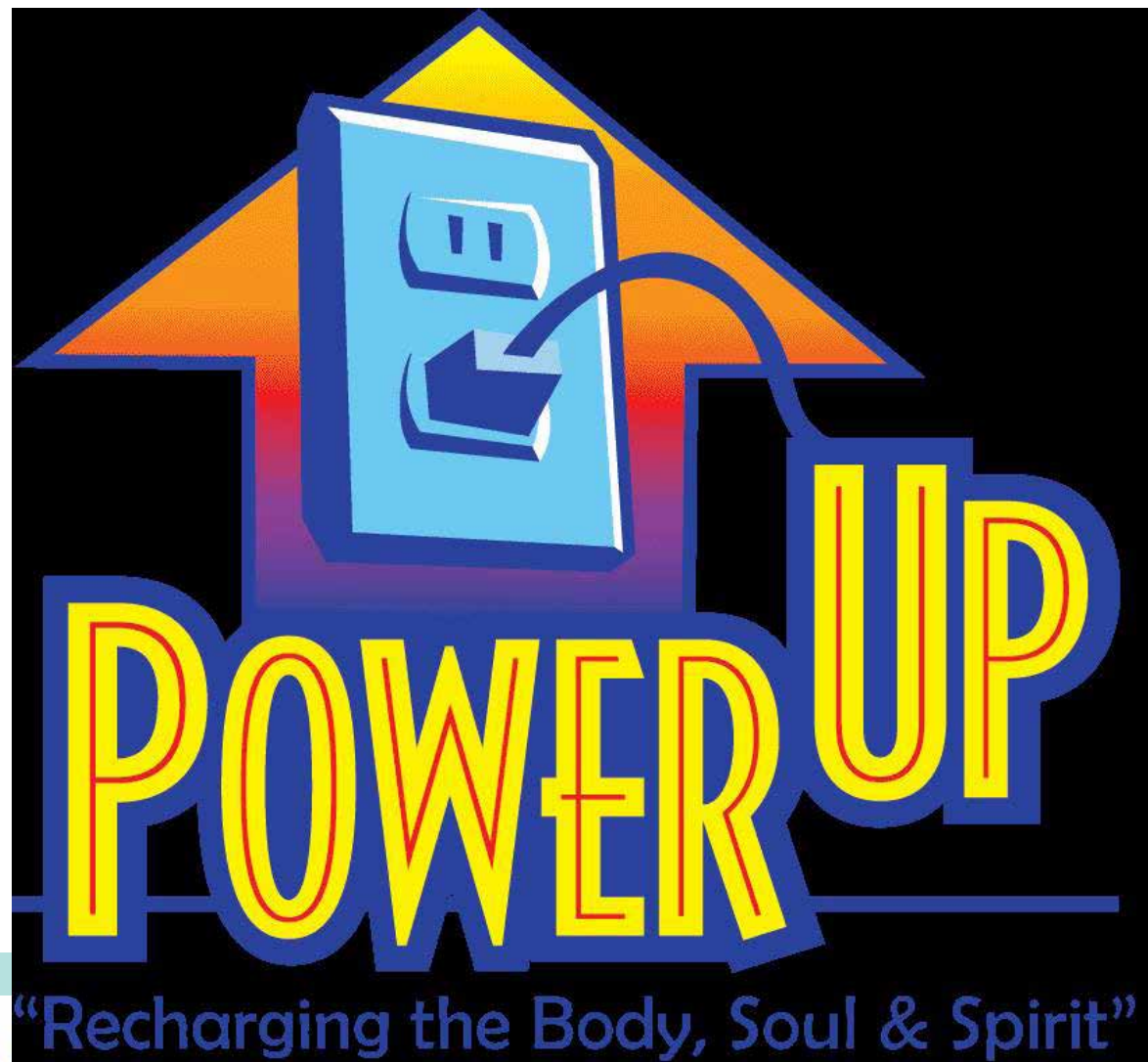
ST. PAUL Church & School / Peachtree City hosted a special 20th Anniversary Worship Celebration on January 31st with a Fifth Sunday combined 10am service. St. Paul School children and teachers sang during the children's message. The celebration included special music and presentations – with cake, coffee and punch at the fellowship time after worship. ■



MEMBERS OF Christus Victor Church and Student Center/Athens gathered in early December for Christmas caroling at Morningside of Athens, a senior living community. The carolers returned to Christus Victor to join in a congregational work day that included decorating the church and making cards for the Lutheran Services of Georgia Hope Tree gift recipients. ■



DINNER AND classes are part of the Power UP Wednesday evening program hosted by Epiphany Lutheran / Tallahassee. Dinner at 5:30pm is followed by class, with selections including Apologetics—Defending Your Faith, Conversational Spanish and Financial Peace University. ■



“Recharging the Body, Soul & Spirit”

Amazing Grace/Oxford Serves Christmas Cheer with Morning Coffee

Volunteers from Amazing Grace / Oxford gathered at the crack of dawn for two consecutive Fridays in December to greet area residents on their way to work with smiles, doughnuts and coffee.

“It was just a cup of coffee to get them going, give a word of encouragement and send them off for a great day,” said Amazing Grace Pastor James Rockey. “We want to love our whole community.”

According to Lois Schaefer, who chairs the congregation’s Outreach Ministry, the event was planned for two Fridays in December before the rush of Christmas began in earnest. “We wanted to bless people before all the rush of Christmas happened,” she explained.

More than 75 people were so blessed during the two Friday sessions – including a team of nearby construction workers. Other drivers who didn’t stop for the refreshments rolled down their windows and shared Christmas greetings. ■



Ron Biel, Lois Schaefer, Jane Nodar and Adrienne Madison prepare to serve coffee and doughnuts.



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

Peace Hosts 25th Annual Potato Pancake Supper



Peace Lutheran / Dunnellon hosted its 25th annual Potato Pancake Supper on Shrove Tuesday, February 9. The popular event features traditional made-from-scratch potato pancakes or buttermilk pancakes with sour cream, syrup, ham, applesauce, dessert and beverage.

The ages-old tradition of eating potato pancakes on the day before Ash Wednesday began as a way to use (and enjoy) the milk, butter and eggs which were forbidden during the six weeks of Lent.

Bud Koehlinger, an Elder at Peace, said, “With the experience of 24 previous potato pancake dinners, we believe our guests will agree that we serve a delicious supper.” ■

COOLER TEMPERATURES were ideal for a January gathering for young adults of St. Peter’s / Middleburg. The evening included dinner and study with fellowship and s’mores around a fire pit.





ASCENSION / Casselberry debuted a new sign recently. Funded by two donors, the sign enables Ascension to highlight services and events.



The St. Paul Church & School / Lakeland family for the first time sponsored a Veteran's Gift Tree project for Christmas in 2015. Due to Pastor Ron Pennekamp's intentional efforts to connect with individuals in the Lakeland community, he met "Paul," from The Clark House. Although the main focus of The Clark House is serving homeless veterans, the organization also offers programs to help struggling families. In just a few weeks and with a Thrivent grant of seed money for the project, the St. Paul family donated gifts of clothing, shoes and necessities for 103 individuals, all beautifully wrapped. "It was all done anonymously so all the St. Paul people knew were things like 'size 8 women's shoe' or 'large jeans for a man,' yet they gave," reported Becky Nelson, administrative assistant at St. Paul. One veteran's family responded with, "... things like this let me know how God works still in this world." ■



LUTHERAN CHURCH of the Redeemer / Melbourne recently celebrated two special events. Debby Kellogg (left) who for many years has attended the church during the winter months, was baptized. The congregation also welcomed Betty Spickerman (right) as a new member. Both ladies are shown with Pastor Craig Boehlke. ■

Hope/Plant City Welcomes New Members

On Sunday, January 24, members of Hope / Plant City welcomed their newest brothers and sisters in the congregational family.

As the Epistle for that day spoke of the Body of Christ, Hope Senior Pastor Dean Pfeffer reminded the congregation that "none of us are here by accident. It's all a 'Godincidence' that brings us together with our varied gifts into this Body of Christ."

In December, Hope members gathered before an Advent service to fill shoeboxes with gift items for community residents. ■

Packing shoeboxes with Christmas gifts.

Shown below with Hope Senior Pastor Dean Pfeffer (far left, back row) are the congregation's newest members (front, left to right) Wendell & Pam Lattz; MaryLou Nash; Sheila Goethe; Holly & Madison Reese; (back, second from left to right) Pfeffer; Kayla Eaton; Mack Goethe; Sidney Mercier; Carol & Dennis Walkenhorst; Ryan & Mason Reese.



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

Touch-a-Truck Draws Crowd to Trinity's Downtown Campus

The 2016 Touch-a-Truck event hosted by Trinity / Orlando on January 23 attracted more than 2,000 people to the downtown campus.

"Our Parent-Teachers-Leaders, church and school staffers along with a huge base of Trinity family volunteers put together a fantastic community event welcoming guests onto our campus to share our church and school ministries with friends and neighbors, and to raise funds for Trinity Lutheran School," said Trinity Ministry Associate Chandra Gillenwater.

"What a great way to kick off National Lutheran Schools Week with a fundraising effort that resulted in \$10,000 for our school programs!"

Truck fans braved the coldest and windiest day of the year to learn about and explore 35 trucks, construction vehicles and public safety equipment. Hundreds who made their way into Trinity's sanctuary were greeted by Pastor Jim Martin and Justin Tayon, music and fourth-grade teacher at Trinity School.

"When a small group of kids were found kneeling at the altar rail, Pastor Martin jumped in to do a share and repeat prayer with them," Gillenwater reported. "And another young man got to take a turn playing preacher in the pulpit!"

Tayon played the church organ throughout the event and "was absolutely thrilled to have more than 60 kids and parents up in the choir loft asking questions and checking out how the organ works," Gillenwater added.



Patty Moser and Dr. Kevin Brockberg led tours of Trinity's Child Development Center, elementary and middle school programs.

"Our resident chef Rich Poole and his faithful team of helpers put out hot food and even some fantastic chili in the midst of the cold and wind," Gillenwater concluded. ■

Above — one of the many trucks represented. Below left — Plenty of children's activities kept all ages engaged throughout the event.

Below — Trinity volunteers helping at Touch-a-Truck included (l-r) Evan H., Maggie Bowles, Gladys Dittmer, Omar Dittmer, Debbie Holley, Ken Boggs and Peggy Trapp.



Woodlands/Montverde Surpasses Attendance Records for Living Nativity

MORE THAN 2,000 visitors broke attendance records at Woodlands/Montverde for their annual Living Nativity on December 9, 11 and 12. Continuous walking tours began at 6:30 pm. Admission was free; the congregation welcomed donations of non-perishable food items to benefit community members in need. Woodlands members of all ages participate in this annual event. Visitors enjoy endless tables of Christmas cookies ■



Saint Luc Charelus Joins Pastoral Bethlehem Haitian Team

Saint Luc Charelus was ordained into the pastoral ministry and installed as pastor of Bethlehem Haitian Church during an afternoon service on December 6, 2015, at the Immokalee Amigos Center.

Among those attending the service were Charelus' wife, Masinam, and one of their seven children; his mother; his brother; members of Bethlehem Haitian Church; and local clergy.

Rev. Jon Zehnder, Second Vice-President of the Florida-Georgia District, vested the new pastor with a red stole, symbol of the pastoral office. Rev. Richard Browning, SW Florida Circuit Visitor and Charelus' mentor for the past five years, performed the rite of installation.



Charelus joins Rev. Andre Mezilus as part of the pastoral team of Bethlehem Haitian Church.

Above — Rev. Saint Luc Charelus with his wife Masinam at the ordination/installation service.

Both pastors are bi-vocational, working in a secular job to support their families while still serving as pastor. Both Charelus and Mezilus are graduates of the Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (EIIT) at Concordia Seminary /Saint Louis.

"The model of bi-vocational pastors is a viable model for our ethnic ministries, especially because of the economically depressed population that our ethnic ministries often serve," said Rev. Robert Selle, pastor of Amigos en Cristo. ■

Below — (l-r) Vicar Karl Glander, Immokalee Lutheran Church; Rev. Robert Selle, CEO and pastor of Amigos en Cristo; Rev. Curtis Deterding, Zion/Fort Myers; Rev. Richard Browning, Hope/Bonita Springs; Rev. Keith Lingsch, Grace/Naples; Rev. Saint Luc Charelus, Bethlehem Haitian Church; Rev. Jon Zehnder, St. Michael's/Fort Myers; and Rev. Andre Mezilus, Bethlehem Haitian.



Bethlehem/Fort Myers Hosts Doug Larson Concert

Bethlehem Lutheran / Fort Myers presented singer, songwriter and storyteller Doug Larson in concert on January 24. The Sunday afternoon concert was followed by a potluck dinner.

"Even though we were competing with a play-off football game that afternoon, we had a nice turnout," said Bethlehem Pastor Darrell Stuehrenberg.

Thrivent Financial provided the potluck main course of ham and chicken, with side dishes and desserts donated by Bethlehem members.

Larson's wife, Michelle, was the technical coordinator for the concert.

"It was great having both Rev. Juan Gonzalez from Beautiful Savior / Lehigh Acres and Rev. Fred Koehler, former pastor of Christ the King / Labelle in attendance for the afternoon," Stuehrenberg added. ■



Singer/songwriter/storyteller Doug Larson and his wife Michelle (center) with Rev. Juan Gonzalez (left) and Rev. Darrell Stuehrenberg (right).

Hope Celebrates 40 Years of "Engaging in the Master's Business"

Members of Hope Lutheran / Hudson celebrated its 40th anniversary with a dinner program on January 31 at Spartan Manor.

Highlights of the festive evening included a special 40-year presentation by Hope President Bill Braun and thoughts on "Where Do We Go From Here?" from Hope Pastor Dr. T. Kent Fuqua. Dancing to the music of the All Shook Up Band concluded the evening.

This was the second 40th anniversary celebrated by Hope members in recent months. In November of 2015, they gathered to mark that milestone in Fuqua's ministry. A former Florida-Georgia District Vice President, Fuqua has served congregations in both states. ■



Dr. T. Kent Fuqua with his wife Arlene, who serves Hope / Hudson as choir director and director of parish ministries.



REGION 4
Vice President:
Jon Zehnder | St. Michael/Fort Myers

Laity Board Members:
Jeff Richards | Hope/Brandenton
Evita Gonzalez | Beautiful Savior /Lehigh Acres

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

Nicholas Moskovites Installed at Christ the King/LaBelle

Rev. Nicholas Moskovites was installed as pastor of Christ the King / LaBelle during a special afternoon service on January 10 – the Baptism of Our Lord Sunday.

Moskovites had been serving as interim pastor for Christ the King for the past four years.

Joining the Christ the King family for the celebration were 12 pastor from area churches along with members of area Lutheran congregations including Faith / Clewiston, where Moskovites serves as vacancy pastor. Moskovites wife, Pamela, sang a solo and their son, Niko, was the acolyte for the worship.

District Vice President Jon Zehnder, pastor of St. Michael / Fort Myers, preached and installed Moskovites into his new pastoral role.

Southwest Florida Circuit Visitor and Hope / Bonita Springs Pastor Robert Browning officiated the service. Also participating in the service was Heartland Circuit Visitor and Trinity /Lake Placid Pastor Richard Norris. Their involvement represented the dual memberships of the congregations Moskovites serves: Christ the King is in the Southwest Circuit while Faith is in the Heartland Circuit.

Following the installation service, the Christ the King community hosted a celebration dinner in the fellowship hall for the capacity crowd. ■

Below — Pastors participating in the installation service included (front, l-r) Richard Norris, Trinity / Lake Placid; Charles Kanefe, Trinity / Cape Coral; Scott McLean, Christ / Avon Park; Nicholas Moskovites, Christ the King / LaBelle; Jerry Lawson, Good Shepherd / North Fort Myers; Juan Gonzalez, Beautiful Savior, Lehigh Acres; (back, l-r) Dana Narring, Faith / Punta Gorda; John Roth, Thrive Community / Estero; Fred Koehler, retired; Darrell Stuehrenberg, Bethlehem / Fort Myers; Jon Zehnder, St. Michael / Fort Myers; Richard Browning, Hope / Bonita Springs.



TRINITY CHURCH & SCHOOL / Delray Beach was part of the 2015 Christmas parade for Delray Beach. Shown here are members of the Trinity float team. ■



TOURNAMENT CHAMPS – The junior varsity boys basketball team of Redeemer School / Stuart won the T.C.A.C. tournament earlier this year. Team members are shown with championship trophy and Coach Nick Utech (back, left) and Athletic Director Ricky Mercado.



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



Trinity Celebrates Month of Baptisms

Trinity Church & Academy / Fort Lauderdale began 2016 with a "holy jump start from the Holy Spirit," according to Pastor Jeffrey Carlson.

"In January alone we had two baptisms scheduled for January 17th and one the following week on January 24th," he elaborated. "Each of these children is from an un-churched family."

Capping the month was the January 31st service during which "11 young Haitian people were welcomed into God's family here at

Trinity via baptism," Carlson added.

Carlson and Trinity Haitian Mission Pastor Josue Vilsaint together baptized the youth, who processed to the baptismal font and received special gifts from the congregation. Florida-Georgia District Executive for Outreach Doug Kallesen read the scriptures for the day. Former Trinity Pastor Tom Hackett led the prayers of the church.

Carlson gathered young worshipers around the baptismal font for the day's children's message.

Using different colored eggs that looked the same when broken into a bowl, Carlson emphasized that "Jesus loves us the same no matter what we look like on the outside. We are the same on the inside through baptism."

In his sermon, Carlson underscored that "the Great

Commission was given to all believers...It starts with baptism ... but it doesn't end with baptism. It goes on to teaching to observe all things Jesus commanded.

"The Holy Spirit is doing overtime here," he said of Trinity's local mission field. "We have an urgent responsibility to preach Gospel."

After the worship service Trinity members and guests gathered in the fellowship hall for the congregation's Fifth Sunday Potluck Luncheon. ■

Above — Trinity / Fort Lauderdale welcomed 11 youth into the family of Christ through baptism on January 31st. Shown with these youth are (back, l-r) Florida-Georgia District Executive for Outreach Doug Kallesen, Trinity Pastor Jeff Carlson, Trinity Haitian Mission Pastor Josue Vilsaint and former Trinity Pastor Tom Hackett.

Left — Pastor Jeff Carlson used different colored eggs to make the point that "we are all the same on the inside through baptism" in his children's message.



Faith/Hialeah Welcomes Pastor Jim Edge



Rev. Jim Edge was installed as pastor of Faith / Hialeah on January 10, 2016, filling a more than two-year vacancy. Rev. Steve Wipperman, Fourth Vice President of the Florida-Georgia District, installed Edge, with District Executive Director of Missions Doug Kallesen delivering the message.

Edge, who is bi-lingual, more recently served a congregation in Mercedes, TX, where he had done work in the church and school and was extensively involved in the community.

"The community embraced Pastor Edge for many reasons, including his undying love for youth and children," Kallesen said. "He was instrumental in getting a community ball field. His work with developing the Valley's railroad system was acknowledged by the Governor of Texas."

Faith has been vacant since the December 2014 death of Rev. Mark Wessling, and "was ready to receive their new shepherd," Kallesen

continued. "We honor the past while embracing the future," he reminded the congregation in his sermon.

On installation Sunday Faith also celebrated two baptisms, and an English and Spanish service was held.

"The school is in full swing under Principal Ruth Wessling and has already held a Christian concert for Lutheran School's week," Kallesen concluded. "Other outreach ideas are being explored."

Edge is joined in ministry by his wife, Dena, a musician who previously worked in a university setting. They have two children: Lydia, married living in Atlanta, and Clay living in TX. ■

Above — Celebrating the installation were (front, l-r) Rev. Herman Glienke (seated), who served as Faith's pastor from 1970 until his retirement in 1992; Deaconess Sara Perez-Archie, San Pablo / Miami; (second row, l-r) Rev. Wilfredo Rivera, Trinity / Cutler Ridge; Rev. Steve Wipperman, Florida-Georgia District Vice President and pastor of Our Savior / Lake Worth; Rev. Jim Edge, Faith / Hialeah; Rev. Alan Sielk, Saint Paul / Miami; Vicar James Leggett; Deaconess Jesse Perez-Lopez, Hospital del Alma / Homestead; (third row, l-r) Rev. Dr. Dennis Glick, Pastor Emeritus St. Paul / Boca Raton; Rev. Enrique Orozco, Saint Andrew / Hialeah; Rev. Benito Perez-Lopez, Hospital del Alma / Homestead; (back row, l-r) Rev. Dennis Bartels, Holy Cross / North Miami; Rev. Doug Kallesen, Florida-Georgia District Executive Director for Mission; Rev. Don Stier, Immanuel / Tavernier.

LUTHERAN LIFE

Please send your congregation and school news to LutheranLife@aol.com





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The BACKPAGE

New LFCU Serves All 50 States

The Lutheran Federal Credit Union was started to serve the members, congregations and entities of Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod communities.

“We connect the LCMS community together through modern mainstream banking which allows members to replace their secular banks,” said LFCU CEO Tom Buuck. “By actively using our products and services, members support LFCU in providing financial resources to others in the LCMS community.

“Along with becoming a member, we are able to offer low-cost lending needs to sponsor LCMS ministries.”

According to Buuck, the Lutheran Federal Credit Union is able to serve the LCMS community in all 50 states “by providing checking and savings accounts, debit cards, credit cards, provide low cost loans and much more.”

Buuck continued, “Our free online banking and free state-of-the-art mobile banking gives members access anywhere, anytime. Also, through our free Shared Branching Network, they have access to more than 30,000 ATMs and 5,000 Network Branches Nationwide.”

LFCU provides various services for congregations as well.

“We offer free checking accounts, free savings accounts, free debit cards, free mobile and online banking and low-cost credit cards for congregations,” Buuck concluded.

For more information, visit <http://www.lutheranfcu.org>. ■



From left — Amanda Middleton, operations manager; Jean Rutherford, VP Lending; Tom Buuck, CEO; and Dennis Hagemann, VP Finance.



Robyn Linke, Director for Customer Service for Lutheran Church Extension Fund, was one of the presenters at the 2016 Advocate Weekend for the Florida-Georgia District. See pages 16-17 for the story and more photos. ■