

# LUTHERAN LIFE

2016 | Volume 2  
The Newsmagazine of the  
Florida-Georgia District  
of The Lutheran Church -  
Missouri Synod



# VICTORY





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](mailto:LutheranLife@aol.com)

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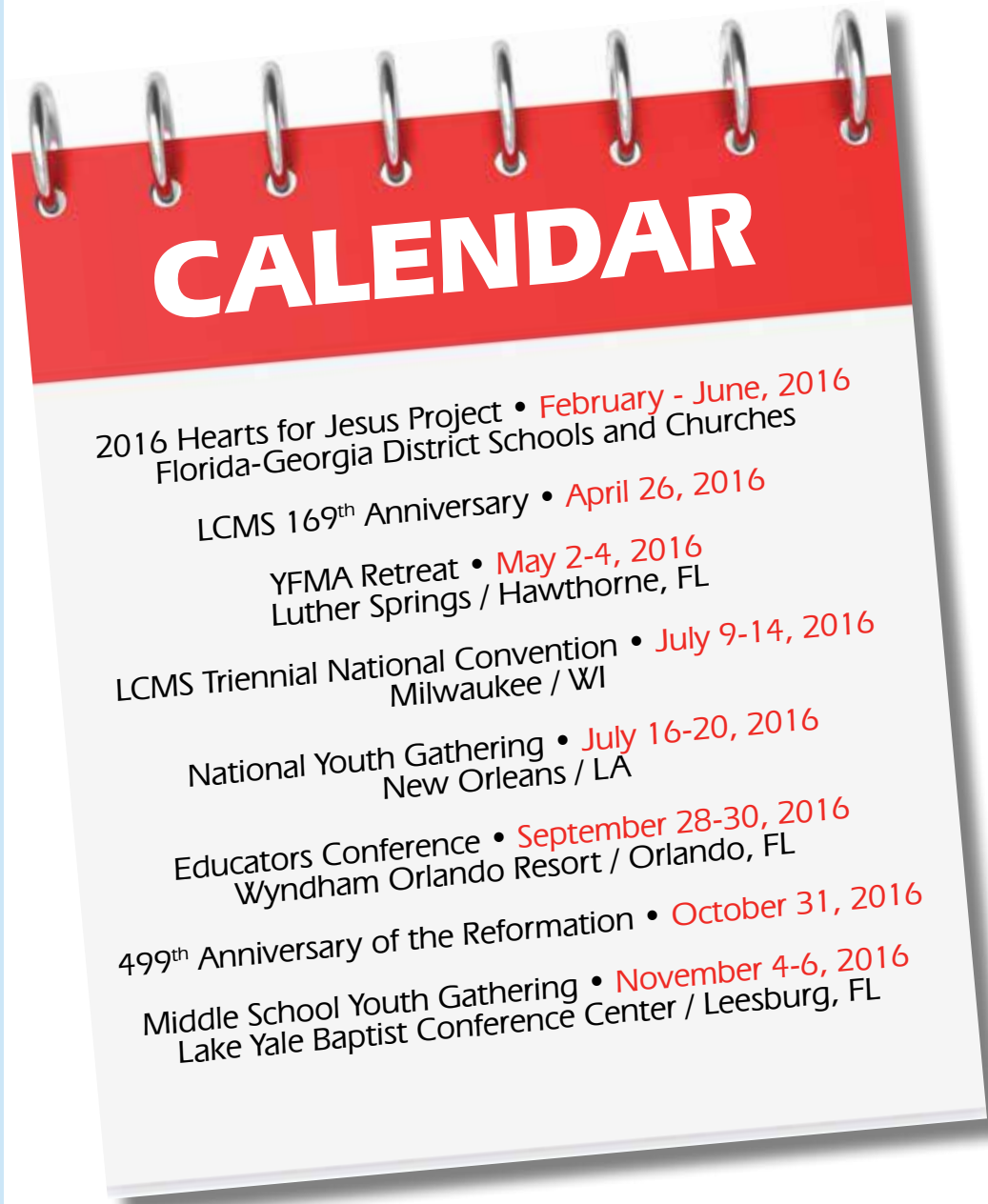
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*PLANNING UNDER WAY – Delegates to the 66th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod will meet at the Wisconsin Center in Milwaukee from July 9-14 under the theme "Upon This Rock: Repent, Confess, Rejoice." The theme is based on Matthew 16:18: "On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The convention will open with a worship service. Business will be conducted each full day. On July 11, Concordia University Wisconsin/Mequon will host an evening event on its campus.*



- 2016 Hearts for Jesus Project • February - June, 2016  
Florida-Georgia District Schools and Churches
- LCMS 169<sup>th</sup> 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
- 499<sup>th</sup> 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  
Faith / Dunedin, FL..... Sole Pastor  
St Paul / Lakeland, FL..... Associate Pastor  
Faith / N Palm Beach, FL..... Sole Pastor  
St John / Ocala, FL..... Senior Pastor  
Faith / Parrish, FL..... Sole Pastor  
Trinity / Orlando, FL..... Senior Pastor  
Trinity / Summerfield, FL..... Associate Pastor  
Grace / St Cloud, FL..... Sole Pastor  
Our Savior / St Petersburg, FL... Asst Pastor  
Messiah / Tampa, FL..... Senior Pastor  
Trinity / Toccoa, GA..... Sole Pastor

### Calls Issued

Faith / Parrish, FL  
Rev. Paul Biber as Sole Pastor

Our Savior / Plantation, FL  
Rev. Mark Abram as Senior Pastor

Messiah / Tampa, FL  
Rev. Mark Adrian as Senior Pastor

Messiah / Valdosta, GA  
Rev. Frank Kinast as Sole Pastor

### Calls Accepted

Our Savior / Plantation, FL  
Rev. Mark Abram as Senior Pastor

Messiah / Valdosta, GA  
Rev. Frank Kinast as Sole Pastor

### Calls Declined

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

**Transferred from Other Districts**  
Ms. Leah Welter / Iowa East (C)

### Church Changes

Zion/Newnan, GA **Closed**

### Ordained/Commissioned Minister Installations

Ms. Leah Welter DCE  
Grace / Winter Haven, FL (C)

Rev. Daniel McPherson Pastor  
Redeemer / West Palm Beach, FL(O)

### Called to Glory

Rev. Victor O. Mennicke (O)

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

## Discussion, Prayer Planned in Orlando

A prayer march for persecuted Christians and Jews is planned for Sunday, April 17, from 3:30-7:00 pm at Orlando's Lake Eola Park. The event is free and open to the public.

Participants will gather at the band shell on Rosalind Ave. and walk for an hour.

"The march will end at the Lake Eola band shell at approximately 5:00 pm, where we will hear from an international group of speakers who know persecution first hand and will tell their stories," said Rev. Bruce Lieske, founder of the sponsoring organization, Burning Bush Ministries.

"We will also be praying for the persecuted and the persecutors. Churches and other concerned organizations are invited to participate."

A Round Table Discussion on the topic is scheduled for Saturday, April 16, from 6:30-8:30 pm at Trinity Lutheran Church at 123 E. Livingston St. in Orlando.

"Religious persecution of Christians and Jews has reached epidemic proportions in the Middle East, Africa, North Korea, Iran, Europe and Asia," Lieske emphasized. "Our international panel of experts will give a rare insight into this problem rarely discussed here in Central Florida.

"There will be a robust question and answer session."

Invited speakers include: Elisabeth Sabaditsch Wolff (Austria); Julie Dass (Pakistan); Shahzad Gill (Pakistan); Dr. Wasfy Michael Ashraf Ibrahim (Egypt); Nicholas Papanicolaou (Order of St. John); Rabbi Jonathan Hausman; and Senator Alan Hays.

For additional information contact Lieske at 407-359-0449 or Alan Kornman at 407-702-0494. ■



*TRAINED AND READY – Shown here are the newest Florida-Georgia District Lutheran Early Response Team (LERT) members. They completed their training at Messiah/Tampa on February 27. Congregations interested in hosting a LERT training session are asked to contact John Elliott in the District Office. "We are especially looking for congregations to host one of these training events in Southeast Florida or the Jacksonville/Savannah areas," Elliott said. He can be reached at 407-258-5054 or [jelliott@flgadistrict.org](mailto:jelliott@flgadistrict.org).*



As we celebrate this season of Easter, I can't help but think of the Old ABC Wide World of Sports phrase, "The thrill of victory...the agony of defeat." That's what Easter really is — a thrill for those who know Jesus as Savior, and how He defeated sin, death and the devil. Jesus chose us to live the victorious life.

In fact, the other day I was thinking about what a great feeling it is to be chosen by God in Jesus for eternal life, despite how I often let Him down. Even on those days when I feel like the world is against me, when I feel like a failure, I can take refuge in His grace and mercy — and so can you.

In Jesus we are victorious. Even if you were the last one drafted for the kick ball team; even if you didn't get the promotion; even if you have failed at something or let someone down; even when you've sinned, in Jesus, you are a victor!

New York Senator William L. Marcy, referring to the victory of the Jackson Democrats

in the election of 1828, made popular the phrase, "To the victor go the spoils." That seems to be how many live their life today. They want to be victorious at any cost — even if it means stepping on people, breaking relationships, bending the rules, letting nothing stand in their way.

That seems to be the way in the political realm. If you're like me, you're already getting tired of the

commercials on television touting this or that candidate for President of the United States. All the back-biting and name calling seem like such childish endeavors. In the end, there will be a winner, and there will be a loser. We seem to encourage that kind of mentality in the world, focusing on winners and losers.

None of us likes to be considered a loser. I enjoy comedian Jerry

You... almost won.' 'Of all the losers, you came in first of that group.' 'You're the number one ... loser.' 'No one lost ... ahead of you.'" It's an amusing perspective, but if you've ever lost a contest, come in second place or failed to qualify, you know that it stings. It not only hurts our pride, but also our self-esteem. It can make us want to give up. No one likes to be a loser.

what we've done, or in some cases failed to do, we are sinners, and just so you know, the wages of sin is still death. We are those who constantly let God down, whether we intend to or not. We will always come in second when it comes to keeping God's commands. When we think that we're good enough, the truth is, "Of all the losers, you came in first of that group..." As hard as we sometimes try, we are dead in our sin. With Paul we are tempted to say, "Wretched man that I am. Who will save me from this body of death?"

Into the vacuum of our despair our God comes with a message of good news. He doesn't leave us hopeless at the foot of the Cross on Good Friday. The message of Easter is that we, too, can have a victorious life in the Resurrected Jesus. We are not losers; in fact, we aren't even lost because in His grace and mercy Jesus found us and claimed us and redeemed us from our sin. He has cleansed us and transforms us from the status of losers to victors. In the Risen Jesus we can stand as victors rather than victims. We can have peace and joy that many in the world don't know. This is what fills our celebrations long after the stores put away the baskets and plastic eggs. Jesus rose and now gives His victory to each of us by faith.

Now we get to apply the phrase, "To the victors go the spoils." I'm not talking about material possessions or financial blessings, or really anything related to this world. We are only visiting this planet. God has been preparing a place for His children for a long time. I'm really talking about eternal security, being confident of our future, not having to fear death and being able to stand up to the flaming arrows of the evil one. Our life in Jesus while we are here is to be one of servanthood. It's our great

privilege and honor to proclaim with joy the message of our Risen Savior as we engage in the Master's business.

As victorious people, or maybe better put, as people of the Victory, you and I are sent to the world to bring the victorious Easter message of hope to an often hopeless world. Jesus rose victoriously conquering sin, death and the devil, giving new life to all who put their trust in Him. Now we no longer have to live in fear or feel like a loser. Nobody does! We are given, by grace, the victorious life that Jesus purchased for us with His own life. It is finished. He has won it. But so many people around us don't

yet know and haven't yet heard. God has chosen us, every one of us, to tell others, and in a variety of ways. Recently I heard someone explain evangelism

as just "showing up" and allowing God to use me when and how He desires. We don't have to have some Gospel outline memorized or patter down. We simply need to share, from our hearts, and be the victorious people we were created to be. It's being or becoming the people Jesus rose to make us, living in the power of His Spirit, doing the good deeds God prepared for us to walk in. This sharing isn't forced or unnatural, but conversation and concern that flows from a heart that has been forgiven and given a second chance. It's not always explicit or direct, but is often aimed at establishing a relationship that might open an opportunity to share more down the road.

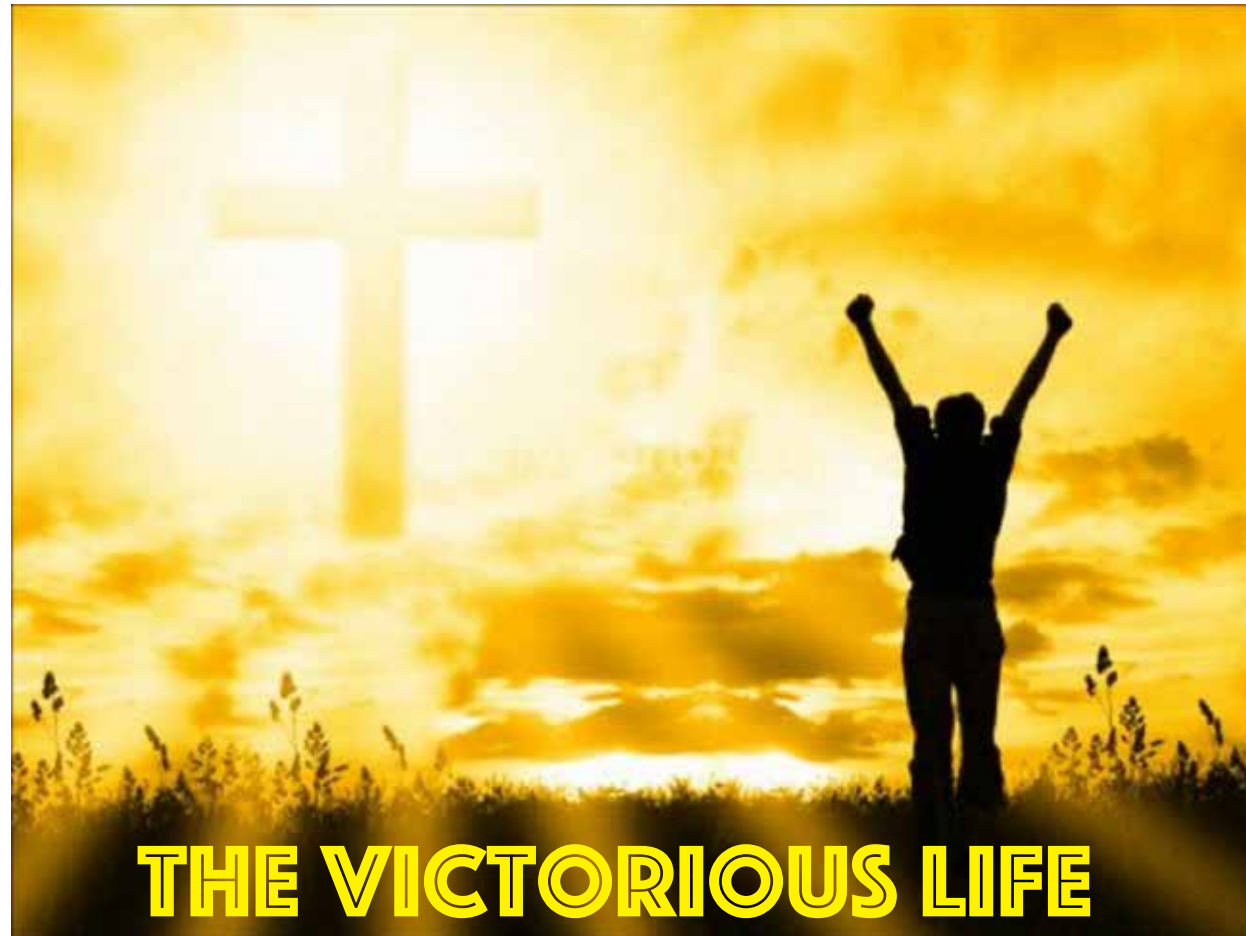
Ultimately, God is in charge, and we can be confident of that. As Jesus said, "And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit." [Mark 13:11 (ESV)]

God already knows your abilities. He's more interested in your availability! Make yourself available to Him.

We are victorious people — not because of what we've done, not because of who we are, but because of whose we are. We belong to the Victor, Jesus, who is alive forevermore, and now gives us the same words that He spoke to His disciples before ascending into heaven. He says, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." [Matthew 28:18–20 (ESV)].

We go in His authority, as people of the Resurrection, bearing His victory. We are no longer losers — Jesus has given us a joyous and victorious life.

May we be blessed as we live in it and connect people to Jesus, at Easter time, and all the time! ■



## THE VICTORIOUS LIFE

Seinfeld's take on losing. He says, "The Olympics is really my favorite sporting event, although I think I have a problem with that silver medal. I think, if I was an Olympic athlete, I would rather come in last than win the silver. If you think about it ... if you win the gold, you feel good. If you win the bronze, you think: 'Well, at least I got something.' But if you win that silver, it's like: 'Congratulations!

Yet the truth is, in one sense, we are all losers — every one of us. Jesus is the only exception. He is the perfect, sinless One, who willingly allowed Himself to look like a loser, even though He is the Victorious Lord of all. We are not! Scripture reminds us that we are sinners. Paul writes, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." That includes every one of us. No matter where we are or

*In the Risen Jesus we can stand as victors rather than victims.*



*See you soon at the empty tomb!*  
**GREG**



# What is a Coach?

In the last issue of *Lutheran Life* we dealt with the question of leadership and how that can play out in the church. This time we will talk about the word “coach” in the title “coaching leader.”

Throughout history there have been many names to describe various helping skills. We talk about teachers, mentors, consultants, counselors, pastors, advisors and so on. With the exception of counseling, most involve sharing information or “telling” people some information and often “telling” them what to do. Often this is exactly what is needed! One needs an informed voice to give the proper information or instructions.

The trouble comes when someone who “tells” another what to do endeavors to also lead (or even simply to influence others). Followers inevitably react in much the same



Another way to describe the challenge of leaders is that no one washes a rented car. If it is not your idea, there will be considerably less “ownership” and passion in carrying out the idea, task or decision.

So what should a leader do? Preach the law and get more stern with people so they will be “guilted” into it? Not likely. So how will people serve passionately, creatively and joyfully? If the answer isn’t telling them what to do, then what is it? How can one influence and

lead in a healthy way? There is another helping skill. It’s called coaching. No, not like the sports coach who calls in the plays and tells the players what to do at practice. Furthermore we are not talking about “coaching” where the coach is totally passive and wants everything to come from the one being helped.

We are talking about a coach who helps people to change without telling them what to do. A coach helps people to do

- 1) what they want to do,
- 2) what they should do by God’s grace and,
- 3) what they must do in a more focused, intentional way.

A coach helps people to explore and discover and connect the dots on each of these steps. This kind of coach helps by asking questions. They are clarifying questions, questions of purpose and priority, questions of focus, questions that challenge assumptions and questions that urge concrete intentional actions, follow up and accountability.

It can be a tough journey when you have a coach walking along side you. But it is a great way to be a good steward of your time and talents and even your treasures. Clients tell me they are more focused and intentional, productive and even happier. Some sample questions for you and your board, committee, team or church might be:

- Where are we really? Where by God’s grace could we or should we be?
- Then what are we going to say “yes” to and what are we going to say “no” to?
- What could get in the way? How can we be prepared to address that if it does? What kind of support do we need to stay on track? ■

*Rev. Scott Gress is called by Lutheran Counseling Services as an independent contractor in the areas of leadership training, consulting and coaching. Contact Scott through LCS (407- 644-4692 lcsfl.com) or through email, scottgress@me.com or find contact info on his blog page scottgress.com.*

# Congregational Grant Applications Sought by Wheat Ridge Ministries

Wheat Ridge Ministries is seeking grant applications for its Joshua Grant program.

The program offers up to \$5,000 in funding for new health and human care ministry projects. The deadline to apply is May 31, with grant awards made in July 2016.

Wheat Ridge Joshua Grants provide \$1,000 to \$5,000 in matching grant funding over a one-year term. The congregation or organization requesting funding must contribute matching funds equal to 50% of the Wheat Ridge grant award. These grants are awarded to programs that are:

- New (less than 3 years old) and innovative;
- Addressing a health or human care need demonstrated in their community;
- Led by a congregations, organizations, and agencies with connections to the Lutheran community.

Joshua grantees receive:

- Up to \$5,000 in matching funding for a ministry program;
- Professional program development consultation from Wheat Ridge staff;
- Promotion and networking within the Wheat Ridge community.

Complete information is available on the Wheat Ridge website — [wheatridge.org](http://wheatridge.org). Questions may be sent to [grants@wheatridge.org](mailto:grants@wheatridge.org).

Wheat Ridge Ministries is a leader, powerful catalyst and vital resource for efforts by the Lutheran community to stimulate the initial development of sustainable health and human care ministries, through which increasing numbers of people around the world experience wellness of body, mind and spirit made possible in Christ. ■

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## LCMS President, VP Nominations Announced

LCMS Secretary Raymond Hartwig on March 10 announced the names of nominees for the Synod president, first vice president and five regional vice presidents.

The presidential election will take place before the Synod's July 9-14 convention in Milwaukee. Vice presidents will be elected at the convention.

Nominated for president were Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison, the incumbent president; Rev. Dr. Dale Meyer, president of Concordia Seminary/St. Louis and former speaker for The Lutheran Hour; and Rev. Dr. David P.E. Maier, president of the Michigan District.

Two Florida-Georgia pastors top the nomination list for East-Southeast Region Vice President: Rev. Dr. Victor Belton and Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Skopak. Belton, who has served on the LCMS Board of Directors for three terms, has served as pastor of Peace/Decatur since 1991. Skopak has been senior pastor of Grace/Jacksonville since the fall of 2014. ■



1. Victor Belton  
2. Matthew Harrison  
3. David Maier  
4. Dale Meyer  
5. Jeffrey Skopak

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## Laudamus Spring Concert Tour Visits District

The spring tour for Laudamus men's choir from Concordia Seminary/St. Louis visited six Florida-Georgia District churches from February 21-25.

The group sang for worship services and special concerts — including some chapel sessions at the Lutheran schools. They presented an eclectic program entitled "Ride On, King Jesus" that represented the church's song from many different genres. Composers included Bruckner, Christiansen, Fauré, Hogan and more.

At each Georgia and Florida concert location, a Seminary recruiter was available to talk with prospective students and anyone interested in church work opportunities. They provided information on the admissions process and answered questions about Concordia Seminary.

Laudamus is a select choir of 14 seminarians preparing for full-time service as pastors in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. The choir is directed by Jim Marriott, the Seminary's Director of Musical Arts.

Two of the singers have ties to the District: Lee Hopf is a member of Mount Calvary/Warner Robins and Andrew Howe of Frankenmuth, MI, served his vicarage in 2014-15 at St. Paul/Boca Raton.

Marriott also has a background with Florida-Georgia, serving as Minister of Music at Bethlehem/Jacksonville Beach from 2004-07.

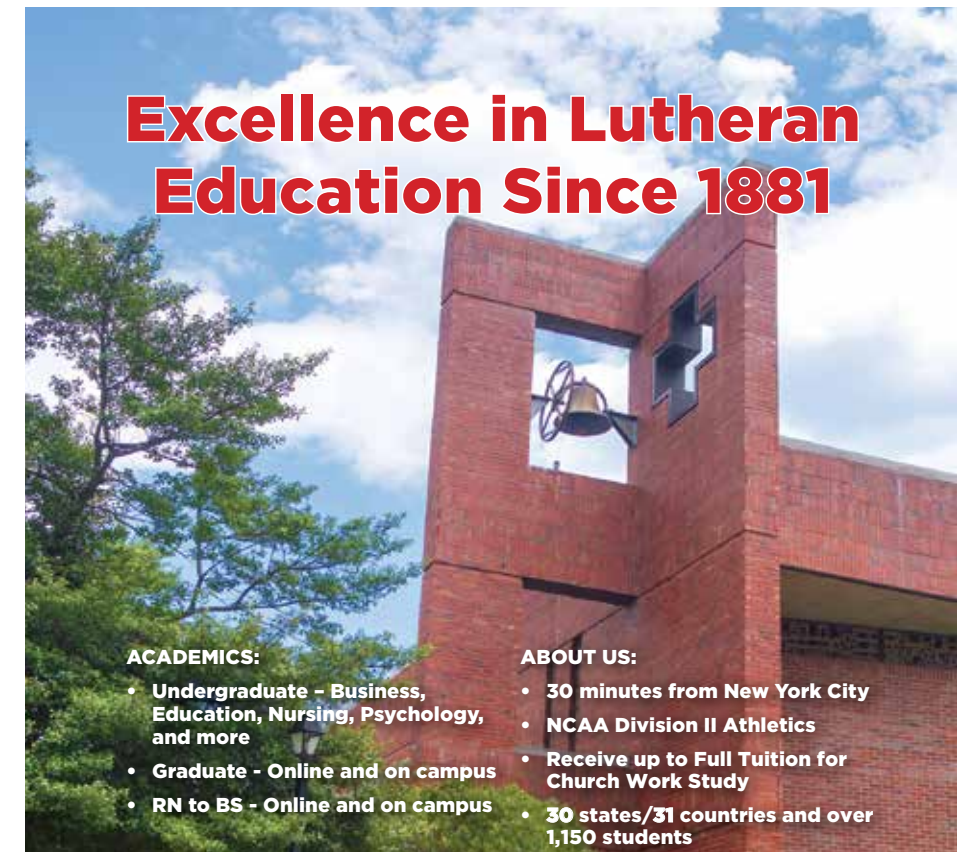
"Music is a precious gift from God," Marriott said. "It is an honor and privilege for us to share the Gospel message through the beauty of music. We pray that the Holy Spirit uses our performances to strengthen faith and encourage us all in our discipleship of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, as we witness God's love to the world."

Laudamus' tour included performances at Mount Calvary/Warner Robins; Abiding Savior/Gainesville; Grace/Jacksonville; St. Paul/Boca Raton; Grace/Naples; and Prince of Peace/Orlando. ■



Laudamus Director Jim Marriott with singers Andrew James Howe, Matthew Bohlmann, Gerard Bolling, Alex Schrader, Jim Marriott, Chris Jung, Jeff Burgess, Josh Rusnak, Paul Albers, Joshua Reifsteck, Nikolai Gibbons, Lee Hopf and Adam Robert Thompson at St. Paul/Boca Raton.

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# An Old Thing for a New Day in Church

At His ascension following His resurrection, Jesus would place His Church in the hands of the disciples — for that and for all following generations. He commanded, “Go and make disciples, baptizing and teaching them all things whatsoever I have taught you and lo, I am with you always!” (Matthew 28:19-20)

Where should the Lord’s business of discipling take place? I think that it is in the midst of life, in our churches and homes, that discipleship occurs. The early church met daily at the temple and in their homes. (Acts 2:42)

Jesus ate and fellowshiped at the home of Zacchaeus the tax collector, teaching about God’s forgiveness and love. Jesus gathered huge crowds — but it was His 12 disciples and sometimes the inner circle of Peter, James and John that He informally met with and trained more deeply. He died for the entire world, but He left His church to the men He trained for more than three years.

Much of Jesus’ ministry was conducted in homes and private gatherings: Mary and Martha after the resurrection of Lazarus; the home of the Pharisee with the visiting woman who anointed His feet with costly

perfume; sending His disciples out two by two. These and other Biblical examples show the importance of the home in discipleship and outreach.

Jesus left His church in the hands of fishermen, a tax collector and other common, everyday people. We need to be reminded that we, too, believe in the priesthood of all believers and that pastors are given to the church to teach and train the saints for their works of ministry to the body of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11, 12)

We need to see that like our Lord, connecting people to God doesn’t always happen at church. Sometimes, in fact often, believing and discipling happen outside the physical church location, and it’s not only a pastor thing when people are brought to faith. Faith is the work of the Holy Spirit as He “calls, gathers and enlightens.” The Holy Spirit uses all of us as His vessels, His witnesses to carry His saving message to a dying world who will not darken our doors.

What old thing will lead to a new approach in this post Christendom time? Taking the gospel into our daily lives, our homes, our church, the workplace; living our lives out as Christians where we live. I am talking

about a pastor thing and a lay thing, not an either/or but a both/and.

Look at the chart below. In a Christendom church model, which most of us use, worship is the primary entry point. That one hour a week is the main event to attract and disciple new believers and members. The next item is membership, where we catechize, teach and train. This leads to a Bible class or small group and finally into service in the church.

Much of what is done in this system is informational teaching. For many this model does little to transform lives because the teachings and scriptural principals taught are not practiced in daily life as Jesus did with His disciples. Consider the feeding of the 5,000: with five loaves and two fish, Jesus commands the disciples to feed the crowd and bring them to Him. At the end of the day, the disciples get in a boat without Jesus. He catches up to them during the night walking on water and tells them to not be afraid. He invites Peter to come on the water. Peter takes that step of faith, then sinks when he takes his eyes off Jesus and sees the size of the waves. Jesus pulls Peter up and asks, “Oh you of little faith, why did you doubt?” (Matthew 14:13ff)

Jesus had told them about faith, they saw what faith could do from five loaves and two fish — 5,000 were fed — but faith became real and personal when Peter took that step in belief only to fall because of doubt. That’s transformational and changes lives.

The chart indicates a Post-Christendom approach that shows an old thing where life, in relationship to other disciples, can be lived out. The chart shows that people are attracted to or enter the church through relationships. This leads to the old thing: meeting with other disciples to live out life, eating, fellowshiping, learning and serving others wherever life happens. Inside the missional community is a place where life transformation can occur. The truths

of God learned at church and within the group are lived out; they are practiced in the context of life inside the safety of the small group.

The small group or missional community is the old thing that happened in Acts 2 — they met daily at temple and in homes. This model is not only informational but is rooted in life transformation.

The missional community deals with three primary areas: up – our relationship with God; in – our relationship, fellowship and life with other believers; out – our life in service to others as a witness to Jesus. This puts us into action; we want to

worship God and grow in our knowledge, and to seek out church membership to further serve Him. We also want to serve our fellow man.

The Gospel is God’s power unto salvation, and faith comes by hearing and hearing through faith. Conversion is a God thing, but we also need to look at Jesus’ model of discipleship. It’s not just taught ... it’s lived out! Isn’t that what Jesus means when He tells us in John 15 to “abide in Him!”



**MISSION POSSIBLE**

by Rev. Doug Kallesen  
District Executive  
for Mission & Outreach

How did Jesus do it? He established a movement that outlived His followers and was passed on from generation to generation around the entire world. A movement that would begin in the very city that had crucified Him. His message is transformational – life changing! ■

## Best Practices in Ministry / Phoenix

What do you call a gathering of more than 2,000 Lutherans? Best Practices in Ministry conference.

The Florida-Georgia Executive staff attended this conference and found other District pastors and lay people from places such as Prince of Peace/Orlando, Trinity/Lake Placid, Peace/Okeechobee, Hope/Plant City and Grace/Jacksonville. Hundreds of workshops were presented. The music, worship, preaching and speakers were superb — and it was free. The only cost was travel and lodging.



Florida-Georgia District Executive Director for Mission & Outreach Doug Kallesen (left) with Rev. Jim Buckman at the 2016 Best Practices Conference in Phoenix.

I met up with my good friend and colleague, Pastor Jim Buckman, and we discussed his new iPrayU app available on Android and iPhones. Now complete with training videos inside the app, it is easier to navigate.

With iPrayU you can register your congregation, enter and receive prayer requests. You can do a community prayer survey, and the application will list requests and their locations.

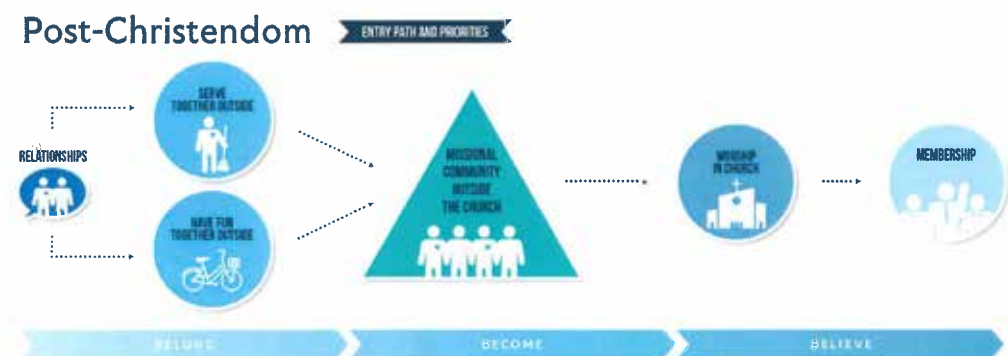
Pastor Buckman’s youth group did a prayer survey in a neighborhood near the church. As the youth entered the prayer and house address, he could see them popping up on a google map and see where his youth were. He said from this survey there were about 150 prayer requests.

What he told me next spoke to my heart — about how to truly connect people to Jesus and to your church. Pastor Buckman went to the prayer survey street and walked up to a house he saw on his phone where a prayer had been requested. He knocked on the front door, and an elderly gentleman answered. Pastor Buckman introduced himself and said that he understood that prayer had been requested for someone named “Alice, who has Parkinson’s.”

Pastor asked “How is she now? I came by to see if there is anything else we could do.” The elderly gentleman said, “Pastor, come in, I want you to meet her and talk to her a little...” About 15 minutes later the gentleman brought out his otherwise bedridden wife and introduced her to Pastor Buckman. He prayed for her, talked with her and her husband about faith in Jesus and said he would send an elder to them for weekly Bible study. “Since you can’t come to church, our church will come to you!”

Pastor Buckman told me about other ways he is using the iPrayU app to connect people to Jesus and provide transformational life change. His congregation gathers after a survey to pray for the gathered petitions and then to look for ways their church might address the specific concerns and needs. He says, “If we are the body of Christ we shouldn’t be surprised when Jesus uses us to be a part of His answer to their prayer.”

More information about the iPrayU app is available via videos posted on YouTube. You can also go to your app Store and download it for free. ■





# LWML Member Kidnapped, Held for Ransom

"Mite-tilda" has been kidnapped! We need your help!

"Mite-tilda" is our Mite Pig. She has been known to show up in the craziest places looking for mites. She loves to be fed, but now someone has kidnapped her. We received a demand letter telling us that we needed to collect \$28,325.50 in order to get her back.



## FUTURE & HOPE

by Joan Koch  
LWML District Vice President  
for Communications

We have no idea who these kidnappers are, or where they are holding "Mite-tilda." A picture was received with "Mite-tilda" in a cage and her eyes covered. We need prayers to find her, but we need our LWML \$5 bills to help collect the ransom amount. Please send in your mites to our Financial Secretary, Nancy Hughes. Remittance slips are

located on our website at: [www.flgalwml.com](http://www.flgalwml.com). Thank you so much for your help. We really need "Mite-tilda" back.



On another note, we recently sent some of our LWML Florida-Georgia District Executive Committee and members of the Space Coast Zone to present the final mission grant check to the Brevard Rescue Mission. We were so glad to be able to present this check to them, and in return we received a wonderful tour of

their facility.

Representing the LWML were Joan Koch, Debi Coran, Bunnie Koelsch, Phyllis Derda and Dorothee Jones. Joan, Debi and Phyllis are on the Space Coast Zone Executive Committee; while Joan, Debi, Bunnie and Dorothee are on the Florida-Georgia District Executive Committee. ■



Above — The ransom photo of "Mite-Tilda" — the Florida-Georgia District LWML mite pig.

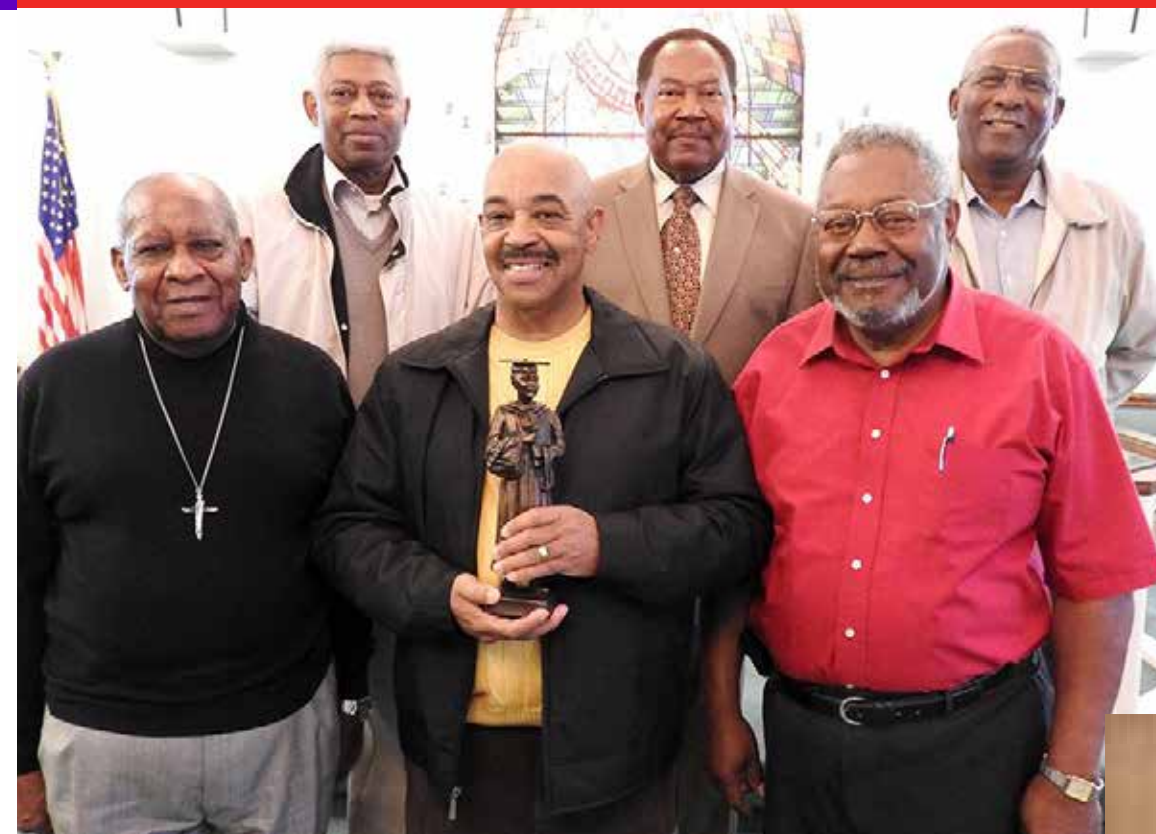
Shown below at the mission grant presentation to the Brevard Rescue Mission are (l-r) Joan Koch, Debi Coran, Bunnie Koelsch, Phyllis Derda, Pam Whittington from the Brevard Rescue Mission, and Dorothee Jones.



### Church-Work Scholarships

Florida-Georgia college students studying for full-time church work at a Concordia University System school are invited to apply for an LWML scholarship. Updated information is available on the District website; the link to the application form is <http://flgadistrict.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/2016application.pdf>

Due date for the 2016-2017 academic year is June 1, 2016. ■



LCMS Black Clergy Caucus members — and former students of famed missionary-educator Dr. Rosa Young — pose for a photo with a statue of Young, who died in 1971. Funds raised through sales of the statues will go toward erecting a life-size statue of Young on the campus of Concordia College Alabama. Pictured are (front, l-r) Rev. Dr. Bryant Clancy, St. Louis; Rev. Paul Anderson, Chicago; Florida-Georgia District Fifth Vice President Rev. Frank Marshall of Jacksonville; (back, l-r) Rev. Dr. McNair Ramsey, Selma; Rev. Dr. Ulmer Marshall, Mobile; Rev. Dr. James Brown of Pensacola. ■



**RAST REAPPOINTED** — The Board of Regents of Concordia Theological Seminary/Fort Wayne unanimously reappointed Rev. Dr. Lawrence R. Rast Jr. as president for the next five years. "One of the greatest blessings of serving in this office has been to work alongside the faithful and gifted people of the CTSFW community," said Rast, who has been Seminary president since May 2011. "My greatest joy remains the relationships I enjoy with our students who will serve as pastors, deaconesses and lay leaders in the LCMS and in our partner churches throughout the world." ■

## Need funds for a life event?

Open a Lutheran Church Extension Fund Family Emergency StewardAccount®



Financial needs are part of life. LCEF can help you be ready.

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

Lutheran Church Extension Fund

10733 Sunset Office Drive  
Suite 300  
St. Louis, MO 63127-1020



## LWML District Convention Scheduled for September 30 - October 2 at PGA/Palm Beach Gardens

The LWML Florida-Georgia District Convention will be held at the PGA National Resort and Spa in Palm Beach Gardens, FL. Business includes elections for a new president, vice presidents, a financial secretary and a pastoral counselor.

Host zones are hard at work already, and the Executive Committee has been busy securing wonderful speakers, song leaders and special entertainment for this event. Make sure to get your delegate information to your Zone President quickly; find a Young Woman Representative; and most of all YOU need to come. Registration forms will be available in the Spring edition of the Evangel. ■



# Youth Gatherings Not Just for Teens

Do you know where the largest gathering of LCMS people occurs?

If you guessed the LCMS National Youth Gathering, you would be correct. Every three years since 1980, the LCMS has hosted a National Youth Gathering for the young people of our church body. This summer more than 23,000 young people and adults will be gathering in New Orleans from July 16-20 to worship, learn, serve and celebrate their faith IN CHRIST ALONE.

This is not only the single largest gathering of young people in our church body, but also for adults. Most of the adults who attend are NOT paid church workers. They are volunteers who have a passion to help the next generation grow in their faith in Christ Jesus. They give up their vacation time, family time and lots of sleep to make sure the young people of our church know that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. If you are one of those adults . . . thank you!

These statements also hold true for our District youth gatherings. More than 450 youth and adults attended the middle school gathering, and 300 were at the high school gathering. While most people

see these gatherings as a great way to encourage the faith of our young people (and they do!); it is also the largest gathering of adults in our District who are not paid to be there.

Because of this, the District Youth Ministry Council will assist our planning committees for future District youth events to recognize the value in offering training and support to the adults who bring their youth to these events. By equipping the adults who attend the District youth gatherings, we will have an impact on local churches that extends far beyond the event itself.

So if your church is sending a group to the NYG or a District Youth Event, please thank those adults who have sacrificed their time for a very worthwhile experience. ■



*This month's youth ministry column is by Nick Moss, Director of Christian Education at St. Paul Lutheran Church and School / Lakeland. Nick is a member of the Florida-Georgia District Youth Ministry Council.*

# LCEF Announces Personnel Changes

Susan Schaefer (near right photo) has been promoted to Assistant Vice President to the Executive Office and Elizabeth Martinez (far right) to full-time support role of Administrative Assistant for the Executive Office of Lutheran Church Extension Fund.

Schaefer will also be the LCEF Assistant Board Secretary and will support the Board at all meetings and gatherings. She has been an employee of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod for more than 13 years, most recently managing the LCEF Real Estate Department.

Martinez has been with LCEF for 2.5 years, working in an expanded position on a part-time basis. ■



# Georgia Stewardship Summit Offers Insights, Fellowship, Encouragement

Approximately 120 representatives of Georgia congregations gathered at Faith/Marietta from February 26-27 for a statewide District Stewardship Summit.

Keynote speakers for the event included Florida-Georgia President Greg Walton; Rev. Dennis Bartels, chairman of the District Stewardship Advisory Council; Lutheran Church

Extension Fund President/CEO Rich Robertson; Rev. Max Biesenthal, LCEF Senior Vice President-Ministry Support; and Rev. Mark Frith of Lutheran Hour Ministries.

Breakout sessions covered a range of topics dealing with stewardship.

A similar summit was offered for Florida congregations in 2015. ■



*District Executive Director for School Ministries Mark Brink and LCEF Vice President Daniel J. Reichard served lunch to Summit participants.*



*Debbie Talbot, Administrative Assistant to Florida-Georgia District LCEF Vice President Daniel J. Reichard, with Robert Pickney of Christ Lutheran/Perry.*

*Below — District Stewardship Summit participants interacting at Faith Church & School/Marietta*

*At right — Kathy Keene, Executive Assistant to District President Greg Walton, with Peggy Barkley of Christ Lutheran/Perry.*





## Recent LCEF Sundays



Christ the King Riverview



Beautiful Savior Sarasota



Lutheran Church of the Cross Pt. Charlotte

# LCEF SUNDAY

Lutheran Church Extension Fund exists for the sole purpose of empowering ministries in Kingdom work. Our goal each day is to identify opportunities to share our resources in order to expand God's Kingdom. We want to share how LCEF is empowering ministry through loans and ministry support programs in congregations, schools and ministries across the country. One way that we do that is by having an **LCEF Sunday** at your congregation.

### So what happens at an LCEF Sunday?

- LCEF will provide Bulletin Inserts and announcements for the upcoming visit.
- LCEF makes a presentation to your congregation. It could be before or after services or during the Bible Study class.
- The congregation provides a table for LCEF to display information and greet members.
- LCEF is truly your Ministry Partner. Coffee and donuts are on us!!

Call us today at (877) 457-5556 ext. 4  
to set a date for your LCEF Sunday!

## DEMOGRAPHIC STUDY

Demographic reports are offered through MissionInsite, LCEF's partner. When considering new mission opportunities, the data provided is essential to plan for growth, develop effective mission and ministry, plant new churches and reach more people. For established ministries, the data provided is essential in planning your marketing and communications plan, and reaching the appropriate audience.

MissionInsite's reports combine updated U.S. Census data, marketing research data and religious information to give you a complete and comprehensive look at the people in your community.

Start discovering your organization's ministry opportunities today!

**FREE**  
Demographic Study  
offered through  
LCEF



For more information, contact the Florida-Georgia District LCEF Team:

- Kathy Keene, MissionInsite Guru, [kkeene@flgadistrict.org](mailto:kkeene@flgadistrict.org)
- Debbie Talbot, Administrative Assistant, [dtalbot@flgadistrict.org](mailto:dtalbot@flgadistrict.org) (877) 457-5556 x4



# FLORIDAGEORGIA

## REGIONAL NEWS

*Out and About in the Florida-Georgia District*



← **GEARING UP FOR NYG** – The youth of Rivercliff / Atlanta presented a variety show on February 21 as to raise funds for the trip to the 2016 LCMS National Youth Gathering. More than 25,000 participants are anticipated to be in New Orleans for the July 16-20

↓ **FIRST PLACE INSPIRE FINISH** – The team from Faith Lutheran / Marietta was awarded 1st Place Inspire at Georgia State First Tech Challenge competition. After a challenging week when the team robot had electrical problems, the Faith competitors went from capturing 0 of 5 matches at a preliminary contest to winning 5 for 5 at the state competition.

## Ministry Reaches out to Deaf Worshipers

Trinity / Savannah has incorporated an interpreter into its 11am Sunday services to serve deaf worshippers in the community.

“Trinity Lutheran Church is excited to say that we will now be serving both the deaf and hearing communities,” said Pastor John Hopkins.

Serving in the worship is Debbie Barefield, a retired Certified Educational Interpreter who has been interpreting since 1993. She grew up and attended the Assembly of God

Church in Jacksonville, moving to Savannah, GA in 1980.

Barefield, who lost her hearing when she was three years old, grew up oral and later learned to use American Sign Language. She became an interpreter in the school system.

“Serving in church, Debbie believes volunteering is a way of doing the Lord’s work,” Hopkins said. “She wants to reach out by spreading the Word and love of the Lord.” ■



## LSG Kids Club Welcomes New Americans

The Lutheran Services of Georgia Kids Club was part of the welcoming committee at the 2016 New American Celebration at the Georgia State Capitol.

The celebration is an annual day of education and outreach for refugees and immigrants as well as the Georgia community members who support them. More than 200 volunteer participants learn about engaging with legislators and reach out with their opinions on why refugees should be welcome in Georgia.

The LSG Kids club performed during the 2016 event. The group, including kids from seven different countries, provides recently resettled refugee children a therapeutic and fun place to make friends and become acclimated to life in Georgia. ■

The LSG Kids Club performs at the 2016 New American Celebration. →



→ **PREPARING FOR THE HUNT** – Living Hope Lutheran / Kennesaw volunteers gathered on March 17 to assist in preparations for the church’s Community Easter Egg Hunt on Easter Sunday. Additional children’s events planned for that morning include a puppet show, pictures, a butterfly release and family brunch.



### REGION 1

**Vice President:**  
David Brighton

Mount Calvary/Warner Robbins

**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



## Life Group Ingathering Benefits Local Agencies

Life groups of Amazing Grace/Oxford often have a three-fold purpose: caring for one another through prayer and fellowship, study in the Word of God and a mission outreach endeavor.

The Bonnybrook Life Group took seriously the lessons learned from their recent five-session study on The Early Church. The small group members learned that the early church at the time of Paul and John grew because of the outpouring of love for one another.

The group sent delegations to Alpha Center for Women in Ocala and the Pregnancy Care Center in Leesburg, where they learned that each had differing urgent supply needs. With that information, group members prepared 10 educational sheets for each Life Group member to invite others to participate in the ingathering project.

On February 9 the group delivered the bountiful outpouring to the two agencies. ■

Some of the donations for the Life Group ingathering at Amazing Grace. ➡



## Preschool Program, Teachers Score High in Survey Results

Abiding Savior Preschool/Gainesville recently scored the highest of all the non-VPK programs in the 'Kindergarten Readiness' category of an area Preschool Survey.

Parents responding to the survey gave Abiding Savior high marks for the snacks and meals, the flexible and full-time schedules, playground and extracurricular features and for family involvement.

Abiding Savior Preschool's Renee Heinz at was voted as the best teacher for children under the age of two in Alachua County. Alyson Woodend of Abiding Savior was the runner-up in the over the age of two category.

"God has been good to us," said Gabriele Hein, Abiding Savior Preschool Administrator. ■

Abiding Savior Preschool teachers  
Alyson Woodend and Renee Heinz. ➡



## Annual Rummage Sale Brings Community to Church

Peace /Dunnellon members are preparing for the church's annual rummage sale on Saturday, April 9.

"This sale is always a huge event, which residents of Dunnellon and surrounding communities anticipate each year," said Liz Koehlinger, Peace's Public Relations Director. "The families and friends of Peace have been collecting items for a year for this sale." ➡

Part of the proceeds from the sale will go to missions. For additional information call the church office at 352-489-5881. ■



➡ ST. JOHN / Ocala recently welcomed 19 new members into fellowship. St. John Lutheran School serves students from the pre-k through grade 12 levels – the only Lutheran high school program in the Florida-Georgia District.



### 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





# Trinity Dedicates New Century Center

The \$7-million New Century Center of Trinity/Orlando was dedicated during a festive celebration following the 11am worship service on March 13.

This new facility houses Trinity's Child Development Center, which is recognized by Nemours Children's Health System as a leading provider of Nemours' Healthy Child Program.

Participants in the ceremony included Trinity Interim Pastor Jim Martin; School Board President and Task Force Chairperson Kathy Aber; Florida-Georgia District President Greg Walton; Orlando District 4 City Commissioner Patty Sheehan; LCEF District Vice President Daniel J. Reichard; CDC Executive Director Patty Moser; and Lake Eola Heights Historic Neighborhood District

Chairman David Martens.

LCMS President Emeritus Gerald Kieschnick was the featured guest preacher at the weekend's worship services.

Trinity's New Century Center was designed to seamlessly fit within the Lake Eola Heights historic district.

The church worked closely with area residents and city officials to ensure a streetscape look that reflects the neighborhood's character.

Now in its 32nd year, Trinity's Child Development Center is a main component of the new building. More than 300 students, ages 6 months to Pre-K, are enrolled.

Tours, lunch and entertainment followed the dedication ceremony. ■



Interim Senior Pastor Jim Martin opened the ribbon cutting ceremony with an invocation.



Kathy Aber, School Board President and Task Force Chairperson, offered a brief history of the project. Her late husband Wren is recognized for his vision and keeping the project moving forward with a memorial dedication inside the NCC lobby.

Left — Florida-Georgia District President Rev. Greg Walton blessed the building, quoting in part Psalm 127:1: "Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain." At right — Daniel Reichard, V.P. Lutheran Church Extension Fund, presented a plaque to recognize Trinity's ministry partnership with LCEF.



# Hmong Mission Celebrates Baptism Sunday

March 6 was a day of celebration for the Hmong Mission/Lakeland, with 14 baptisms officiated by Pastor Zong H. Yang.

Members of the Vue and Yang families were baptized during the service.

An outreach of the Florida-Georgia District, Hmong Mission is located on the St. Paul/Lakeland campus. The ministry will expand to Central Florida areas such as Brandon, Plant City, Tampa, Clearwater, Clermont, Orlando and Wauchula.

"We anticipate that thousands of Hmong people will relocate to this area in the next few years, and we will be ready to welcome them into God's family," Yang said. ■

Hmong group baptism (l-r): Vue family members, mother Yer and father David with children Kevin, Andy, Steven, Tony, and Lisa (standing in front of brothers); the Yang family, Chasity, Elijah, father Young, mother Diana with Tsim Txuj in front of mother. Khamla Yang. Also shown as the parents of Luka Perez (baby) and Luka's sponsors.



Below left — Elijah Yang looks on as his cousin Andy is baptized by Rev. Zong Yang.

Below — Young Yang is baptized as his wife Diana Lee watches with children (l-r) Chasity, Elijah, and Tsim Txuj.



## 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





## Teddy Bears Come to Hope/Plant City

Hope /Plant City hosted its annual Teddy Bear Sunday on Valentines weekend.

"The purpose of Teddy Bear Sunday is to share the warmth and love of God with children in our community," said Hope Senior Pastor Dean Pfeiffer.

This year the more than 170 teddy bears collected were divided between Plant City Fire & Rescue, Plant City Police Department and the Hillsborough County Sheriffs Office.

"This annual event has become such a tradition for us," said Pfeiffer. "Each bear is tagged with a note from Hope's Human Care Ministry Team and with the words of John 3:16 to remind the recipient of God's never ending love for us.

"It is fun to watch the adults come to church carrying teddy bears and to see the joy on their faces as they give that bear to a child in need." ■



Bethlehem recently welcomed 23 new members: Janet Cessna, George Fornoff, Larry & Sharon Goers, Lucille Kurtz, Douglas Johnson, Charles McConnell, Walter & Ruth Metz, Marny Miles, Lee & Pamela Preston, Robert & Sandy Richter, Rudy Rugenstein, David & Lorri Schwark, Robert & Debbie Wiersum, William & Linda Wiersum, Nicole Yde and Cassidy Johnson.

## Bethlehem Celebrates LWML, New Member Sundays

Members of Bethlehem / Fort Myers hosted two special days recently: LWML Sunday and welcoming new members.

Rather than celebrate LWML Sunday in October as is usual, Bethlehem marked the occasion in February when attendance is the highest with seasonal members in town. Everyone who shared a "Mite Box" financial gift to LWML mission projects received a pan with six freshly baked muffins as well as a free used book from the Bethlehem Women's Guild Used Book Shelves.

Helen Roenfeldt, Executive Director of Mission: Haiti, shared a presentation during the Adult Bible Class hour. On display were children's clothing crafted by Bethlehem and Christ the King/LaBelle members for donating to Mission: Haiti.

With the group of 23 welcomed on March 6, Bethlehem has brought 48 new members into the congregation in the past 13 months.

"These past two years have

certainly been a time of growth for this small southwest Florida congregation served by a part-time pastor," said Pastor Darrell Stuehrenberg.

The latest new member class


of full-time and winter members hail from 11 different states: Illinois, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Oregon, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Montana, Wisconsin, New York and Maryland. ■



Mission: Haiti Executive Director Helen Roenfeldt was guest speaker at Bethlehem's LWML Sunday.

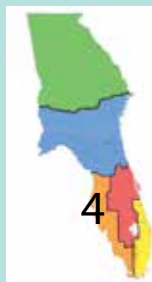
Shown above in front of Hope's "bear mountain" are members (l-r) Jules Kinkead, Madison Venrick, Joslin Kinkead and Jackson Venrick.



THRIVE/Estero is finishing preparations for its first service in new permanent space at Estero Ridge. Church members and volunteers helped with projects ranging from carpet laying to recovering the stage area. Thrive is served by Rev. John Roth, mission pastor; Phil Klopke, college minister; and Sam Rivera, worship leader. 



### 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





## Natural Prop Aids in Chapel Story

First-grade students of St. Paul School/Boca Raton led weekly chapel on March 16, sharing God's story of love with a sand dollar as an illustration.

Under the direction of first-grade teacher Sue Merritt and Jessica Claxton, the students pointed out the Bethlehem star in the middle of the sand dollar; the three holes representing where Roman soldiers put the nails into Jesus' hands; the one sliver where the soldiers put the spear into Jesus' side; and the Easter Lilly trumpet flower proclaiming that Jesus is Risen.

St. Paul serves students from the pre-K three to grade eight levels. ■

At top — St. Paul /Boca Raton first grade students with teachers Sue Merritt and Jessica Claxton.



**FIELD TRIPS** – Fifth-grade students from Redeemer Lutheran School/Stuart spent the day at Kennedy Space Center in early March. Redeemer's fourth-grade class visited the Castillo de San Marcos.

## Trinity Student Artists Share Talents at Street Painting Festival



A three-student team from Trinity Lutheran School/Delray Beach participated in the 2016 Lake Worth Street Painting Festival, February 20-21.

Trinity was one of the most than 100 area schools participating in the event that transforms the streets of downtown Lake Worth with more than 200 paintings that cover more area than any other festival of its kind in the United States. Street performers, strolling minstrels and musical entertainment added to the festive atmosphere. ■

At left — Under the direction of art teacher Sandy Berns (at right), Trinity student artists Cecilia Wagner, Sarah Bishop and Jasmine Louis decorated a Lake Worth street with a representation of the school's tiger mascot.



**FREE CAR WASH** – The youth at St. Paul /Weston raised more than \$5,500 at a free cash wash on February 27. No donations were accepted the day of the car wash; youth participants were paid by pledges per car. Pledges were accepted in advance, and the car washers were diligent in cleaning as many cars as they could for free on the day of fundraiser. Proceeds are earmarked for Servant Events, The National Youth Gathering in New Orleans and Spoke Folk Tours.



### 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



# District Students Showcase Musical Talents

More than 550 students from nine Florida-Georgia schools gathered on the Trinity Church & School/Rockledge campus on February 26 for the 2016 Lutheran School Musical Festival.

Performing in front of judges and audience members were 30 ensembles, including choirs, concert bands, orchestras, handbell ensembles and praise bands. Each performing group received a rating of superior,

excellent, good or honorable mention. The judges were band directors, choir directors and musicians from surrounding high schools, elementary schools and colleges.

Trinity hosted approximately 700 people for the festival, an impressive accomplishment for one of the District's smaller schools. Trinity Principal Jon Wareham credited Ann Henny, the school's music teacher, for

coordinating the successful event.

Participating schools included:

- Grace/Jacksonville;
- Grace/St. Petersburg;
- Holy Cross/Sanford;
- Immanuel/Brandon;
- St. John/Ocala;
- St. Luke's/Oviedo;
- St. Paul/Lakeland;
- St. Paul/Peachtree City;
- Trinity/Rockledge. ■



# Thrivent Member Network Brings More Florida & Georgia Activity

By Donna Hein and Kathleen Childers — Reprinted from the March 2016 issue of Thrivent Magazine

It's often said that a small group of thoughtful, determined individuals can change the world. And if you look at the volunteer efforts of Thrivent members and leaders in the Florida & Georgia Region of Thrivent Financial you'll know it's true.

It's been a year since the Thrivent Member Network rolled out in the Florida & Georgia Region. It's a new way for members to connect with each other and Thrivent, and to be generous in their churches and communities.

In 2015, members led 3,106 Thrivent Action Teams in the region, helping their communities in a variety of ways, from stocking food pantry shelves and providing personal care items to women's shelters, to supporting families with medical needs and cleaning up yards.

In addition to this newer option for generosity, members in the Florida & Georgia Region continued to participate in other Thrivent programs, like building six new homes and repairing 23 more through Thrivent Builds with Habitat for Humanity. And 12,462 members directed \$3,532,329 Choice Dollars® to 1,053 churches and organizations.

Because being a fraternal benefit society is all about coming together with other members, the region hosted several member events, ranging from a Thrivent Builds celebration and a day with NASCAR driver Michael McDowell, to a Jacksonville Suns baseball game and a Thrivent Day at the Atlanta Braves.

"We tested a few member events in 2015 to help our members come together along with demonstrating generosity with a nonprofit or cause," says Mary Weibel, manager of community engagement in the region.

"It's been a fantastic year of our members getting together and giving back to their churches and communities," says Scott Morris, who leads the Florida & Georgia Region. "Plus, we're getting more of our younger members to come out and join us as. It's been a fantastic year of our members getting together and giving back to their churches and communities." ■

One Year Later

*"It's been a fantastic year of our members getting together and giving back to their churches and communities."  
-Scott Morris*



Thrivent Action Team project benefiting Christians Help Foundation in Orlando.



Tom Kyle, Mary Weibel, Katherine Kyle, NASCAR driver Michael McDowell, Dan Johnson, Adam Klor, and Kathy Emanuelson at Grace Lutheran Church & School/Jacksonville.



Thrivent Builds Repairs project in Miami.



# Veterans of the Cross Focus on the Master's Business at Annual Retreat

Retired church workers and their spouses from 16 of the 35 districts of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod gathered March 7-9 for the annual Veterans of the Cross Retreat hosted by the Florida-Georgia District.

Floirda-Georgia President Emeritus Gerhard Michael Jr. led the 144 participants through Bible study, focusing first on "what shall we do in the interim."

Then he stressed the importance of the Holy Spirit.



Gerhard Michael

"Through baptism the Holy Spirit moves us to spread the Word and be Christ's witnesses," Michael said. "We are the Body of Christ in the world. Christ wants us to be in the forgiveness business."

Keynote speaker Rev. Dr. Daniel Gard, President of Concordia University Chicago, examined the

theme by looking at CUC students from the point of view of what their future will be in the church and the world. He alerted retreat participants to the culture of the millenialists and how it affects outreach ministry to them.

Florida-Georgia President Greg Walton shared highlights of the 2015 District Convention, noting that upcoming celebrations include the 500th anniversary of the Reformation and the 70th anniversary of the District.

The offering from the Eucharistic Worship Service will be shared by Concordia Chicago and Redeeming Life Maternity Mission in Sanford.



Richard & Pam Arndt

This VOC retreat marks the end of service for Rev. Dick Arndt and his wife Pam as leaders of the Planning Committee. They were thanked for their three years of service.

## Behnken Medallion Honorees

A highlight of the annual retreat is the presentation of Behnken Medallions to veteran servants in four categories: pastor, teacher, church at large and layperson. Honored this year were:



Pat & Edy O'Brien

◆ **Rev. Pat F.A. O'Brien**, pastor. O'Brien's third call in 1982 was to First Lutheran / Clearwater, where he and his wife Edy served until his retirement in 2006. During



Rick Herman, Pat O'Brien, Brenda & William Malueg

his decades in Florida-Georgia he has been a Circuit Counselor; served for 12 years on the Board of Directors, including nine years as District secretary; and District convention parliamentarian. He continues his ministry assisting in pastoral care at Zion / Tampa and providing District President Walton with counsel and insights on call lists from congregations.

◆ **William & Brenda Malueg**, lay leaders. William Malueg was confirmed, married and active at Redeemer/ Columbus for 25 years, serving in various capacities. He was part of a team that helped build a Wycliffe Bible Translators center in Columbia, South America in 1981. Since 1984 he has been active in leadership roles at Trinity / Athens, with service

including vice president, president, board of elders and president of the local Thrivent chapter. For 32 years he was with the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, retiring in 2008 as Deputy Director.

Brenda Malueg's service to Trinity / Athens has included Sunday School teacher and superintendent, chairing the Boards of Christian Education and Christian Service, LWML, Altar and Lydia Guilds. A professional teacher, she was instrumental in establishing Trinity Lutheran's Preschool and served as teacher and director for 20 years. Together the Maluegs have twice served with the Laborers for Christ as well as Thrivent Habitat for Humanity building projects and Interfaith Hospitality Network.

◆ **Leo Raschke**, teacher. A graduate of Concordia / Seward, Raschke served his entire 39-year career in the Florida-Georgia District as a teacher and/or administrator in four schools, beginning with St. Peter/Belle Glade; Our Savior/Lake Worth; and Immanuel/ Brandon. In



Leo & Jeanne Raschke

1989 he was called to St. Paul/Lakeland, where he served 26 years. He directed the relocation of the school and the construction of the buildings needed for an enrollment that reached 500 students in preschool through eighth grade. Now retired, he helps schools acquire accreditation and is a trained District Reconciler.

◆ **Dr. Richard Herman**, church at large. Herman began his teaching ministry at the Lutheran High School of South



Rick Herman

Florida in Davie, first as teacher and then as principal. He served as principal of St. Paul/ Boca Raton before joining the District executive team as Executive Director of Parish Services

in 1986. In 1993, Herman began his service at Wheat



David Mennicke on flute



Redeeming Life Maternity Home founders Ed and Sheryl DeWitt with RLMH Board member Deaconess Liz Borth (left)

Ridge Ministries, where he served as president from 2006 until his retirement just a few months ago. He is a former president of the Lutheran Education Association, has served as an Adjunct Professor at Concordia University Chicago and among other activities is the Board Chair for the Concordia University Foundation. ■



2016 Veterans of the Cross Participants

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# The BACKPAGE

## District Educators to Consider Being All Things to All People

Guest speakers, workshops, worship and fellowship will be on the agenda when Florida-Georgia teachers and administrators gather September 28-30 at the Wyndham Resort / Orlando for the 2016 District Educators Conference.

The theme — All Things to All People — is based on I Corinthians 9:19-23, where Paul says: “I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.”

To date, three impressive guest speakers have been confirmed — David Kim, Terry Schmidt and Paul Taylor.

“The participants of the 2016 Educators Conference will gain a sense of purpose and develop an authentic servant attitude, making a difference in their own lives and the lives of others,” said Mark Brink, District Executive Director of School Ministries.

“They will connect with each other and celebrate together the Gospel that empowers them to be all things to all people.”

Available on the District website ([flgadistrict.org](http://flgadistrict.org)) are the preliminary schedule and other general information. Watch *Lutheran LIFE* for updates. ■

- ◆ Dr. David Kim, a trainer and consultant for LCMS and mission organizations, is the Mission Director at LINC Houston. Kim is also an adjunct professor, regional coordinator and mentor for the Center for Hispanic Studies as well as mentor for EIIT at Concordia Seminary/ St. Louis.



- ◆ Terry Schmidt is the director of LCMS School Ministry. In that capacity, he oversees the ministry that serves more than 2,111 LCMS schools across the country.



- ◆ Dr. Paul Taylor, political analyst and Senior Fellow of Pew Research Center, is the author of *The Next America*, a new book examining generations and the United States' changing demographics.

