

LUTHERAN

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

2013 | Volume 1

LIFE





Every congregation is a church in mission, and every member is a missionary; with all of us working together under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, empowered by His Gospel to share His love. **Lutheran LIFE** is the official communications instrument of the Florida-Georgia District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. **Lutheran LIFE** is designed to inform LCMS church and school members of the activities, the personalities and resources offered by the Synod and the District. **Lutheran LIFE** may also provide a forum for Lutherans to express their views and ideas on a wide range of topics. We welcome and encourage your letters and editorials emphasizing that the views and opinions expressed are not necessarily shared by Synod or District personnel or by the editors, churchworkers or personnel of the Synod's or District's congregations or schools. **Lutheran LIFE** is published bimonthly. Editorials, news items and photos are encouraged. Please send scanned photos of approximately 300 DPI as a .jpg attachment rather than embedded in your emails. Or mail your photo print in a good quality resolution to our address below. Advertising is welcome and encouraged; rates and information are available from **Lutheran LIFE's** office. Changes of address including e-mail changes, additions or deletions should be directed to our production office.

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E-Mail photos and news to:
LutheranLife@aol.com

Communications Director, John List
Editor-in-Chief, Eileen Bishop

Florida Georgia-District LCMS
Lutheran Ministries Center
5850 T.G. Lee Blvd, Suite 500
Orlando, FL 32822
Toll-Free: (877) 457-5556

www.flgadistrict.org

District President, Greg Walton
School Ministry, Mark Brink
Mission & Outreach, Doug Kallesen
Finance/Administration, Dan Reichard
Congregational Services, Dave Weidner

DISTRICT CAPSULES *by Greg Walton District President*

CALLING CONGREGATIONS

St. Paul/Boca Raton, FLDCE
Trinity/Delray Beach, FL Associate Pastor
Our Redeemer/Ocala, FL Associate Pastor
Living Water/Sanford, FL Sole Pastor
Trinity/Summerfield, FL Associate Pastor
St. Mark/Tucker, GA Sole Pastor

CALLS ISSUED

Dr. Joel Dietrich
from St. Paul/Peachtree City, GA as DCE
Rev. Mark Rabe
from Trinity/Albany, GA as Sole pastor
Rev. Dr. John Roth
from Estero, FL as Mission Planter
Rev. Daniel Thews
from Zion/Fort Myers, FL as Senior Pastor
Rev. Craig Bode
from Trinity/Fort Pierce, FL as Sole Pastor
Rev. Scott Holder
from Oak Road/Lilburn, GA as Sole Pastor
Rev. Craig Boehlke
from Redeemer/Melbourne, FL as Sole Pastor
Rev. Russell Johnson
from LC of the Redeemer/Vero Beach, FL as Sole Pastor

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from Redeemer/Melbourne, FL as Sole Pastor
Rev. Russell Johnson
from LC of the Redeemer/Vero Beach, FL as Sole Pastor

TRANSFERRED TO OTHER DISTRICTS

10/17/2012 Phillip E. Larsen to Pacific-Southwest

TRANSFERRED FROM OTHER DISTRICTS

8/13/2012 Rev. Jonathan Horsman from Mid-South
10/6/2012 Rev. Mark L. Rabe from CalNevHawaii
10/1/2012 Thomas F. Schnetzer from Atlantic
12/1/2012 Amanda Ruth Shears from English
11/12/2012 Helmut E. Schieber from Kansas

CHURCH CHANGES

8/1/2012 St. John the Apostle/Buford, GA
New Church Start – Circuit 2 – Atlanta, GA

ORDAINED/COMMISSIONED MINISTER

INITIAL ASSIGNMENTS
11/18/12 Mary P. Zabel
Teacher, Epiphany/Lake Worth
11/18/12 Rev. Craig H. Bode
Pastor, Trinity/Fort Pierce, FL
11/11/12 Rev. Mark A. Rabe
Pastor, Trinity/Albany, GA
11/25/12 Rev. Craig R. Boehlke
Pastor, LC of the Redeemer/Melbourne, FL

CALLED TO GLORY

11/14/2012 Donald J. Sagehorn
11/29/2012 Rev. Larry J. Trout
11/09/2012 Rev. Mario Perez-Arche

CHANGE OF STATUS WITHIN THE DISTRICT

7/31/12 Robert Drew Achong from Active to Candidate
11/11/12 Rev. Harlan R. Schoenrock from Active to Emeritus
11/6/12 Rev. William Reinhardt from Candidate to Emeritus
10/12/12 Noel N. Johnson from Active to Candidate
11/26/12 Esther Barg from Candidate to Non-Candidate
11/26/12 Sara Oxley from Candidate to Non-Candidate

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

LUTHERAN LIFE

Are you getting your Lutheran LIFE fix? Lutheran LIFE comes out six times per year. We want your congregation and school news, photos, ministry ideas and reports. We need sponsors to continue our growth! Would you consider becoming a Florida-Georgia District sponsor of our Newsmagazine? We want to continue to bring you all the good news from the

congregations, schools and ministries around the Florida-Georgia District and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod to our pastors, teachers, vicars, deaconesses, students and parishoners. Please contact John List at 561-212-2112 or by email at LutheranLife@aol.com for more information or to discuss your sponsorship ideas.

John Roth Accepts Call as Estero Church Planter

“And they devoted themselves to prayer, to the apostles’ teaching, to the breaking of bread...” Acts 2:42

For more than three years the Estero Design Team has been meeting, planning and praying for a new mission to emerge that will reach the Estero Community and Florida Gulf Coast University. Now that mission has a leader: Rev. Dr. John D. Roth has accepted the call from the Florida-Georgia District to serve as Mission Developer for the Estero Mission.

More than 18 candidates were considered for Estero, according to District Executive Director of Outreach Doug Kallesen. Eight were interviewed and only one – Roth – was called.

“The Estero Design Team had prayed for more than two years that God would lead them to the right person.” Kallesen said. “John was the right person, and God had been leading the Design Team to him for some time.

Roth, who is currently senior pastor at First Lutheran-



Gainesville, FL, will begin his new ministry in mid-February. He has served previously in mission, campus ministry and larger church settings. He is currently a District Vice President and had previously served as Secretary of the District.

“As we plant new churches today in the Florida-Georgia District, we seek to answer four basic questions,” Kallesen said. “Do we have the right person for this mission? Are we in the right place for starting a mission?”

Have we developed the right plan for the mission to succeed planning with the end in mind from the beginning? Is this the right time for this mission to begin, are all factors agreeable pointing to a strong successful start?

Church planters today are placed in resource-rich environments, are provided coaching and networking opportunities as well as additional training in church planting boot camp and are held accountable for mission progress by the District’s Mission Advisory Council and Executive Director of Outreach.

“We try to set them up for success every step of the way,” Kallesen noted. “God has additionally blessed the Estero Mission with several circuit churches that will offer additional support along with the SW Outreach Council.

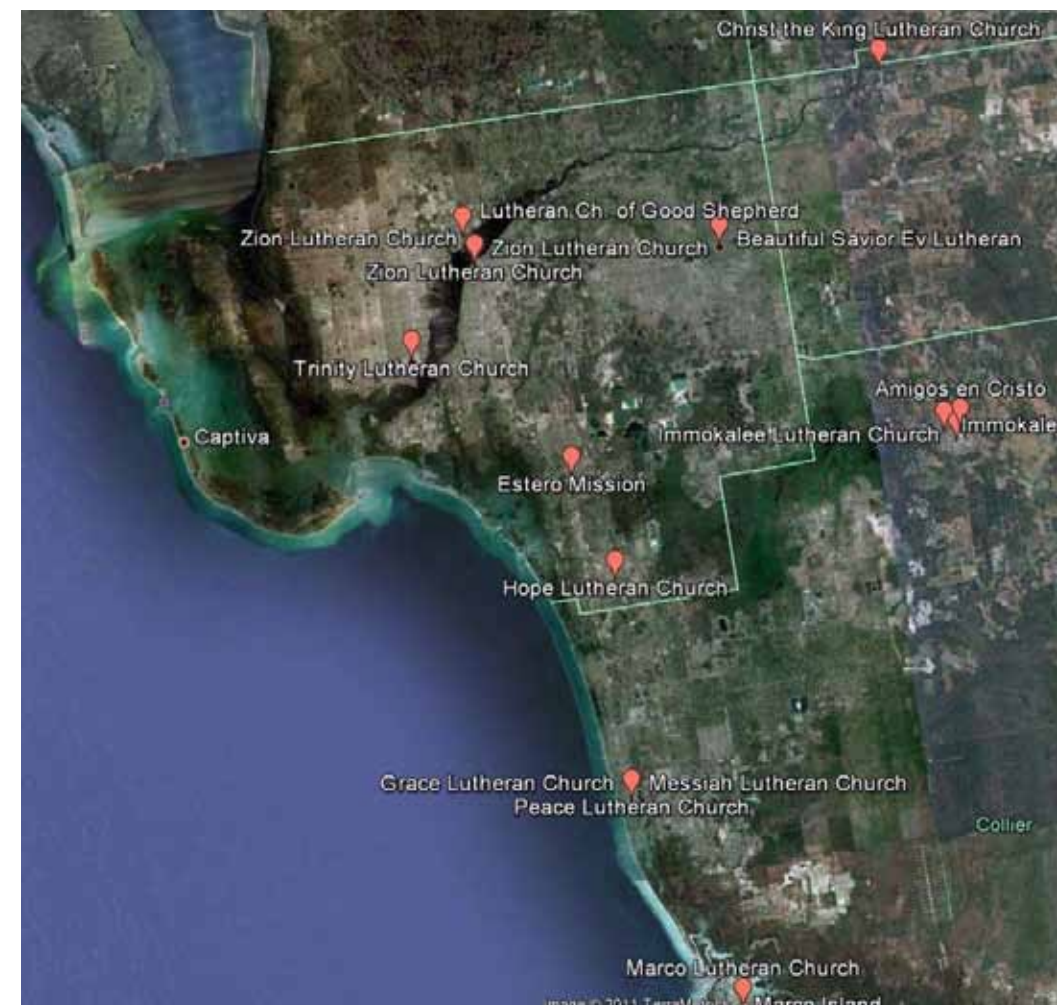
“There is great excitement building up over this new mission for which God has been opening many doors. We are looking for the names of students attending Florida Gulf Coast University who may have a Lutheran background to organize a Lutheran Student Organization on campus.”

Kallesen continued, “We are also gathering the names of people who might want to consider being a part of this new mission in some way. Please forward these names to Pastor Richard Browning at prb.hope@gmail.com.

“Everyone is encouraged to keep this mission and missionary in your prayers!”

Joining Kallesen on the Estero Design Team are Rev. Richard Browning of Hope Lutheran-Bonita Springs; Dale Mast, Richard Wagoner, Jim Elliot and Tom Schlotterbeck of St. Michael’s-Fort Myers; Jim Kroencke of Zion-Naples; FGCU Founding President Dr. Roy McTarnaghan and his wife Beverly.

“Each of these individuals has brought to bear differing gifts, insights and talents,” Kallesen concluded. “All will continue to work with Pastor Roth to launch this ministry.” ■



With the beautiful season of Christmas 2012 now a mere memory, it's time to look forward into the New Year with hope and anticipation of all that the Lord will do in each of us — in our families, in His Church and in the world around us.

Imagine what it must have been like for Mary and Joseph with the baby Jesus, so vulnerable, and yet so feared that Herod wanted Him dead. The story of the Magi marks the celebration of the Epiphany and is a wonderful reminder of God's grace in unusual circumstances.

I love the phrase made popular a number of years ago, "Wise men still seek Him!" *It's true!* As the Psalmist said, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." May God grant each of us His wisdom as we look to all the opportunities that are before us in the year ahead.

Each of us has before us a clean slate. You can't change the past. A lesson I learned from my children when they were small is that you can't unsay unkind words spoken; you can't undo deeds done in anger or frustration; you can't make up from being too busy and not sharing enough time with them.

However, while you can't change the past, you can choose the future. You decide how often you'll do personal devotions or exercise. You decide how much you'll weigh or what you will eat. You determine the words you speak or the things you do. You have control over your temper and frustration level.

You, ultimately, control how you will schedule and use your time.

Now is the time to make good decisions about how you will move forward into the New Year.



The word, "epiphany," is not one we often use in every day speech.

The official dictionary definition for epiphany is "to show" or "to make known" or even "to reveal." However, we better understand the word as suddenly "getting" something. An epiphany is a realization, recognition, like driving an unfamiliar route in a different part of town and finally coming to an intersection you remember. All of the sudden the light goes on and you feel confident because

made the promise in Genesis 3:15: "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." We call this the protoevangelium, or the first Gospel.

Now, with the birth of Jesus, God's plan was made clear. In fact, it was made Incarnate. When the angels announced to the weary shepherds the birth of Jesus, it was an epiphany. When God led the Magi to follow the star that led them to Jesus, it was an epiphany. As we daily spend time in God's Word we continue to have epiphanies as God reveals more of Himself to each of us.



In the Epiphany story the Magi, or as some refer to them, Wise Men, had some difficult decisions to make.

Matthew writes: After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the

Jews? We saw His star in the east and have come to worship him."

When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born.

"In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the

prophet has written: "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel."

Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him.

Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route" (Mt 2:1-12).

The Magi had to make a decision when they left King Herod. Something apparently didn't ring true in Herod's feigned desire to worship Jesus. Perhaps that's why we often consider them wise men. Have you ever considered that their initial inclination may have been to go back and report to Herod, but after they saw Jesus they had an epiphany?

In other words, God revealed Himself to them in Jesus and it changed not only their minds, but also their hearts. Yes, they

offered Him gifts, but more than that, I want to believe they offered their very selves to Him.



Maybe you heard about the three small boys who were in a Christmas play at Sunday School.



They were triplets who were a handful. They were cast as the three wise men and they were to give their gifts to baby Jesus. The first boy stepped forward, held out the gift in his hands and said, "Gold." The second boy stepped forward,

held out his gift and said, "Myrrh." The third boy stepped forward, held out his gift and said, "Frank sent this."

The real point is that the gifts these Magi brought weren't nearly as important or valuable as what each had received. So, no matter what we offer to Jesus, it can't compare with what He has offered to each of us.

I read a story about a man who lost his wife the month before Christmas of 1930. After she passed away he was lonely and heartsick. But mostly, he worried about the type of Christmas his three little girls would have. When Christmas morning came, they opened their presents with unusual enthusiasm and merriment and when they had finished opening the last gift, the oldest said, "We know how much you miss Mama. We have a surprise for you."

They scampered away. After a few moments a voice called out from the bedroom, "Close your eyes." When he opened them, he saw standing before

him the Three Wise Men. His oldest daughter said, "We have no gold." "Or myrrh," the middle daughter said. "Or incense," said the youngest. "And so" they said in unison with their arms spread wide open, "We bring you us!"

The man bent down, trying to hold back the tears in his eyes and scooped them up in his arms, embracing this wonderful gift he had just received. He then recognized that it's not the gifts we give or even how we might feel, but it's about what God has done for us. Christmas is about what we've received in Jesus that makes a difference. Epiphany is about recognizing the true value of that gift, and then making it known to the world around us.



Perhaps true wisdom, as we begin this New Year, is recognizing again the gift we have been given in Jesus, and sharing that with the world around us. If we want more peace, if we want more joy, if we want more faith, grace and hope, it's all found in Jesus. God has revealed Himself to us in His Son, Jesus. That is true wisdom for this Epiphany season!

Christina Rossetti in her poem, "In the Bleak Midwinter" wrote, "What can I give Him, poor as I am? If I were a shepherd, I would give Him a lamb; If I were a wise man, I would do my part. But what can I give Him? Give Him my heart!"

May God grant you an epiphany moment each day in the year ahead that draws you back to Jesus and His Cross. ■



WISDOM

from the

Season of Epiphany

you know where you are.

It's an "aha" moment. Most people have experienced them.

The season of Epiphany celebrates how God manifested or revealed His plan of salvation in Jesus Christ to the world in a clear way. The plan hadn't changed — it was still the same plan that the Father shared with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden when He

With You on the Journey!
Greg

District Headquarters Relocates

Effective December 21, 2012, the Florida-Georgia District headquarters will be located in a suite of leased offices in the Citadel I Building at 5850 T. G. Lee Blvd, #500, Orlando, FL 32822.

Noting that the sale of the District's Orlando office building "may come as a big surprise," President Greg Walton in an email message and posted on the Florida-Georgia website shared the following background on the reason for this action and move.

The building on Monetary Drive served as home for District staff and activities since its dedication in 1990. We have been blessed mightily in this location as the building served as the location for so much of the work of the District through meetings of boards, committees, task forces and commissions, not to mention the day-to-day work of the staff. We praise and thank God for His provision

of this building for this vital work of the Florida-Georgia District.

All of us are aware that things change over time and we have experienced major changes in the community in which our current building stands. When the Darden Corporation vacated the office park in which we are located, we were advised to consider relocating. We have seen increasing levels of crime, vandalism and other troubling activities. Within the last two years the building has been broken into several times, and we have experienced significant losses of equipment and other valuable items. Most recently, we have become increasingly concerned for the safety and security of our staff and visitors to the building as the level of criminal activity has increased in our immediate area.

For that reason and for several others concerning the stewardship

of God's resources we asked the District Board of Directors back in April 2012 for authority to pursue the sale of the building and ultimate relocation of the offices in a site better suited to serve our needs as an office location. Dan Reichard, Vice President of Administration and John Elliott, Business Manager worked with CNL and accomplished the sale of the building. The new owners are the Florida Veterinary Medical Association. They are thrilled with the opportunity to move to larger headquarters where they will be better able to accomplish their mission. We pray God's blessings upon them as they take up residence in the building.

The new office space is located just off Semoran Boulevard and north of the Beachline (SR 528) Expressway. We will occupy less than 8,000 square feet of space on the fifth floor of the building. This will

After Sale of Office Building

be more efficient use of space for us, and we will be located conveniently close to hotels, restaurants and other support services for our volunteers who come to our offices regularly to participate in the work and ministry of the District. And the big benefit will be the close proximity to the Orlando International Airport for our staff and guests. The building houses a variety of other businesses including another nonprofit religious organization, The Association for Biblical Higher Education. We look forward to getting to know our neighbors there and being part of the office building's community. There is much to do as we make this move.

John Elliott is doing a great job of organizing our move into temporary office space within the Citadel building while our permanent space is renovated and made ready for our occupancy sometime in early April. Our staff will do everything



in its power to insure that the move does not impact our service and support of your ministries.

We ask for your prayers and support as we make this major

change, all the time trusting in the words of the Psalmist, "Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain..." Psalm 127:1. ■

President Walton Leads Service of

For more than 20 years, the uniquely shaped chapel at The Lutheran Ministry Center in Orlando served as the place for daily morning devotions for staff and visitors to the building as well as special celebrations and commemorations.

The Good Shepherd Chapel, aptly named for the beautiful two-story stained glass window depicting the Good Shepherd that graces the exterior wall, has been a constant at the District Office through changes in administration and staff, as well as important and often tragic events



Florida-Georgia staff and guests filling the staircase of the former District office building on the day of the Service of Decommissioning are (top to bottom) Debra Talbot, Kathy Keene, Steve Cecchetti, Deaconess Lois Diebel, Mark and Mary Beth Brink, Rev. Dr. Gerhard and Joan Michael, Paulette Isaacs, Cindy Hammerstrom, John Elliott, Desiree Kallesen, President Greg and Edith Walton, Dan and Andrea Reichard, Rev. Gerald and Marlyce Seaman.

in the community and nation like September 11, 2001, and most recently, a candlelight commemoration of the victims of the Sandy Hook Elementary tragedy.

With the sale of the building it was time to pack and move on to the new office space located just north of the Orlando International Airport.

Consequently, District President Greg Walton led the staff and assembled guests in a Service of Disposition just prior to noon on Monday, December 17. Giving thanks

Disposition of District Office Building

for God's many blessings that have occurred in the building and the ministry that was conducted within its walls (in photo on right), President Walton graciously removed and decommissioned the worship elements including the cross and wall crucifix, the Advent wreath, a ceramic communion ware set which was a gift from one of the national conferences held in Orlando, a banner constructed by Dr. Deb Herman from Concordia University Chicago and the altar paraments which were lovingly crafted by staff member Lynda Voss from School Ministries. These items along with the stained glass window, which was carefully removed the prior week and stored, will be integrated into the worship space at the new offices.

During the service Executive Director of School Ministries Mark

Brink shared a brief history of the building including several personal remembrances of times shared in ministry there. Others in the group told humorous or interesting anecdotes and stories from their experiences in the building.

Special guests included two former district presidents, Rev. Edgar A. Trinklein and Rev. Dr. Gerhard C. Michael, Jr.; Rev. Gerald Seaman, former Executive Director of Missions and Outreach; and former member of the board of directors John Burkey. Joan Michael and Marlyce Seaman joined their husbands for the festivities as did current staff member spouses Edith Walton, Cathy Weidner, Mary Beth Brink, Desiree Kallesen, Andrea Reichard and Kent Hammerstrom.

Also attending were others who had worked in the building at one time or another included

Paulette Isaacs, Deaconess Lois Diebel and Steve Cecchetti.

The ceremony was followed by a luncheon in the Board of Directors Conference Room on the second floor hosted by President Walton and his wife Edith. ■



Milestone Celebration at Lutheran Church of Nassau

Florida-Georgia District President Greg Walton and Outreach Executive Doug Kallesen were in Nassau, Bahamas, on December 2 to celebrate the Lutheran Church's rich 50-year heritage and presence in the island city, especially with its Vacation Bible School.

President Walton delivered the anniversary service message, and Rev. Kallesen assisted in the worship service along with Pastor Sam Boodle and a variety of church leaders. Attending the anniversary service for Lutheran Church of Nassau were dignitaries such as Area Representative and Member of Parliament Arnold Forbes as well as The Honorable Philip Davis Deputy Prime Minister and his wife Ann.

Several musicians of



Shown here after the worship are (l-r) Florida-Georgia Executive Director for Outreach Doug Kallesen; Arnold Forbes, Member of Parliament; Ann Davis with her husband The Honorable Philip Davis, Deputy Prime Minister; Rev. Samuel Boodle, Nassau Lutheran pastor; District President Greg Walton; and Kevin Simmons, Congregational President.



Pastor Sam Boodle was one of the worship leaders for the anniversary service.

great national fame in Nassau complimented the worship service including key board, slide trombone, saxophone, three steel drummers and soloist. The festivities ended with a feast of food.

In a separate meeting with church leadership and Pastor Boodle the

question was raised, "You're celebrating the first 50; what's going to happen in the next 50?"

The congregation began to dream and it was good for them to try on some new ideas. There is a lot that could happen, a new mission, outreach to a growing Haitian population but most importantly connecting with the residents of Nassau.

The Chinese are also showing up in great numbers to renovate the island's hotels (3,000 now with a peak of 8,000).

On a future visit the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Area Resident and Member of the

MISSIONMOMENTS

by Doug Kallesen, Executive for Outreach
Florida-Georgia District LCMS

Parliament will meet with church leadership and Florida-Georgia District representatives. This will be a visit outlining Nassau's vision and the role of the church for the community. We pray much will come of this meeting. ■

Below: The church was filled to capacity for the celebration service.



LISA Continues Training Program, Considers Expansion

Although six months have elapsed since the Florida-Georgia District convention, the delegates' endorsement of the ministry of Luther Institute of Southeast Asia (LISA) remains most gratifying. I write to express my thanks for the prayers, encouragement and financial support that has been given.

Certainly the convention offering and other gifts which have followed since have been most helpful for us to undertake our ministry effectively. These gifts have amounted to approximately \$10,000. Since LISA is funded by voluntary contributions and not by Synod or District budget allocations, this support is most welcome.

In this report I wish to share briefly highlights from the LISA ministry since the convention that you may sense how the ministry is progressing.

In August, under the auspices of the Lutheran Heritage Foundation and Lutheran Hour Ministries, together with James Fandrey, executive director of LHF and Ted NaThalang, LHF's Asia regional director, I made presentations to the 30 attendees at a conference of the Association of Theological Educators of Myanmar (ATEM) on the theme, "The Reformation and Its Theology." We introduced them to Lutheran theology through presentations on *Luther's Small Catechism* and the *Augsburg Confession*, which had been translated into Burmese by LHF.

Our hope is that as we cultivate relationships with leaders such as these and those scattered Christians who identify themselves as Lutherans, we might be able to extend the LISA program to Myanmar as well.

During trips to Southeast Asia in August and late October-early November, I was able to assist in the interviews of 13 men who had recently completed a three-year theological training program with Rev. Dr. Fungchatou Lo, LCMS missionary to Cambodia. Students had come from a variety of Christian backgrounds, seeking basic theological education. Other members of the interview team included Rev. Carl Hanson, LCMS Asia-Pacific area theological education facilitator, Rev. Vanarith Chhim, president of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cambodia (ELCC), and Dr. Lo. The interviews were the concluding piece in the students' evaluation.

Those wishing ordination

MISSIONMOMENTS

by Gerhard C. Michael, Jr., Executive Director
Luther Institute of Southeast Asia (LISA)

into the pastoral ministry of the Lutheran Church will be making application to the ELCC. While still young and small, the ELCC is the only nationally organized Lutheran church in Cambodia and is actually an outgrowth of the LISA program.

At the end of August, Rev. Carl Hanson and I spent a week with the national teachers from Thailand and Cambodia. We met in Bangkok at LISA's office and introduced them to two courses in Year Two of the LISA curriculum: Principles of Biblical Interpretation and the Gospel according to St. Matthew.

The first course is designed to help students learn how to "Read the Bible with Understanding," the title of the textbook we used, and the second is to gain skills in interpretation by studying one gospel in particular. Two key

questions running throughout the course were, "Who is Jesus?" and "What does it mean to follow Him?" In this way we are seeking to teach Christology and discipleship through thorough Bible study.

Since that Teachers Meeting in August, a new cohort of students has begun their studies. Our combined student population now numbers about 100, which meet in eight different groups, with class size ranging from three on the low side to 35-38 on the high side.

In an endeavor to establish strong indigenous leaders and efficient administration of the program, the LISA Board in its December 11 meeting approved a position description for the role of country or ethnic group coordinators.

Upon request of Missionary Lo in Phnom Penh, we will be exploring the possibility of using the LISA program to provide theological education for the Hmong population in Southeast Asia.

With the growing opportunity to expand our program and with our commitment to make it a quality, Biblically grounded, Christ-centered, mission-minded, Lutheran theological education program, your prayers and gifts are requested and encouraged. Gifts for LISA may be sent to the Florida-Georgia District, 5850 T.G. Lee Blvd., Suite 500, Orlando, FL 32822. Please note LISA on the memo line of your check.

Periodically I plan to share reports with you on the work we are doing in Southeast Asia. Should you desire more information in the meantime, please feel free to contact me at gmjrf1ga@aol.com. I will be happy to respond. ■

Now is the day of salvation

The 2013 LCEF Fall Leadership Conference will be held in San Antonio in November.

LCEF Fall Conference Focuses

More than 700 delegates and guests gathered in Orlando in November for the **2012 Lutheran Church Extension Fund Fall Leadership Conference**, a three-day gathering themed “Time,” based on II Corinthians 6:2: “Now is the day of salvation.”

Keynote Addresses & Workshops

In the opening night keynote address, U.S. Senator and recent U.S. presidential hopeful Rick Santorum told audience members that he knew The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. “I admire you. I thank God for you ... What you are doing in this organization is one of the few rays of hope in our country. ... I feel blessed to be here at a time when our country needs us.”

Key values in today’s America have moved away from faith and family, noted Santorum, who



received a standing ovation. Faith has been “compartmentalized ... and is not to be integrated into the lives of each one of us.”

He continued, “What you do here is make a statement and support ministries through the Lutheran Church that do go out and

proclaim the Gospel and minister to people in all aspects of their lives ... You are on the front lines of work that is absolutely necessary to keep our country free, safe and prosperous.”

In his address the following morning, LCMS President Matthew C. Harrison talked about the challenges and opportunities facing the Synod. Membership continues to decline and is “aging.” On the plus side, Harrison shared results of a national survey that showed the LCMS as rating among the highest for those who share their faith and remain faithful to their churches.

According to Harrison, “We face the most sobering moment in the history of our church body.” He encouraged the audience to “repent ... bear witness ... have mercy.”

LCEF President Rich Robertson, who hails from St. Paul-Peachtree City, GA, shared that because of “loyal investors and committed borrowers” LCEF has continued to serve the capital needs of the LCMS and its ministries. For fiscal year ending June 30,

total LCEF assets were more than \$1.8 billion, with investor payables exceeding \$1.6 billion.

After an overview of LCEF outreach to victims of Superstorm Sandy, Robertson noted that the organization also responds to ministries and church workers in need by providing assistance

through a natural-disaster and rebuilding program.



Referencing the conference theme, Robertson encouraged the audience to “speak openly of our faith.”

“Let’s put aside what divides us,” Robertson said, “and be a community united in purpose. Let’s be confident that ... He has prepared us for such a time as this.”

International leadership/customer service authority and author Mark Sanborn was the final keynote speaker. “Good leaders equip others to lead ... Leadership is an invitation to greatness that you extend to others,” he told Conference attendees.

Sanborn shared his six keys for effective leadership: self-mastery; ability to create shared focus; power with people, not over people; persuasive communications; strategic execution with consistent application; and service.

The key to “great movements in the Kingdom,” Sanborn said, is not a mission statement but “a mission. You need a why.”

Small-group sessions addressed topics including After 500 Years: Our Time to Shine in Wittenberg; Bible Study: A Time for Everything; It’s Time to Focus on Personal Discipleship and It’s Time to Share Christ in Our Schools ... Witness Always.

on Time for Outreach, Witness



LCEF Awards & Elections

Living Faith-Cumming, GA, was recognized with one of the 2012 LCEF Million-Dollar Congregation Awards.

The Arthur C. Haake Leadership Award went to Mary Byrd, loan specialist with the Florida-Georgia District.

During the LCEF annual meeting, James Ingersoll, former Florida-Georgia treasurer, was re-elected to the Board of Directors.

Worship & Praise

Florida-Georgia District President Greg Walton

preached at the Sunday morning communion worship. In a message entitled “Time Keeps on Slipping into the Future,” he encouraged worshipers to make it a priority to “share Jesus with family and friends.”

Echoing other Conference speakers, Walton noted that “now is the time... the consequences are eternal.”



The conference closed with a performance from The Gettys, a Christian band ■



Photos — from far left:

LCEF President Rich Robertson with Florida-Georgia District President Greg Walton

LCEF Florida-Georgia District Vice President Dan Reichard with wife Andrea

LCEF Sr. Vice President Marketing Becca Jones (on left) presenting Mary Byrd with the Arthur C. Haake Leadership Award as Kathy Keene, assistant to President Walton, looks on

Living Faith-Cumming, GA, representative Jay Wendland (second from right) with (l-r) LCEF Board Chairman Randy Peterson, District Vice President Dan Reichard and President Rich Robertson

Members of the liturgical dance team from Woodlands-Montverde rehearse for the Conference worship

Singers-Songwriters Keith and Kristen Getty

Program Offers Early Stewardship Training

The Kids Into Discipleship and Stewardship (K.I.D.S.) Stamp Program provides a fun and exciting way to build God's kingdom through lessons in sharing, saving and spending.

K.I.D.S. features include:

- Young people receive their own K.I.D.S. stamp book to start their LCEF investment.
- Activity books are available to teach lessons about discipleship and stewardship.
- Program provides base for mission education as children learn about

the ministry opportunities for which they are investing.

- Teaches the basics of managing money and earning interest within a Biblical context.
- NEW K.I.D.S. participants receive their first order of stamps FREE (up to a \$100 value.) (Subsequent orders will be charged.)
- All supporting program materials (excluding stamps) are FREE.

Begin teaching stewardship education today! Simply use our www.lcef.org online K.I.D.S. Materials Order Form to order Stamp Program materials and the K.I.D.S. Count curriculum. ■

LCEF Mortgage Offered for Rostered Church Workers

LCEF is offering a 30-year fixed-rate mortgage for active and retired rostered church workers (RCW).

This Well-Qualified Buyer loan program is available for new-home purchases.

Participants gain peace of mind knowing that interest rate is set and that the program helps perpetuate the mission of LCEF. By also investing with LCEF participants earn a competitive interest rate and make the funds available for other church workers in the future.

Your true investment is in helping others just as others have helped you.

For program details and a list of states in which this program is available, visit lcef.org ■

Loans: A Cornerstone of the LCEF Mission

LCEF congregational loans are a cornerstone of our mission. By offering investments that help fund loans, LCMS members directly commit dollars to ministry. Our goal is to empower congregations in their Kingdom work.

LCEF strives to be a valued ministry partner by making loans available at the lowest possible rates, helping to serve the Lord and share the Good News of Jesus Christ!

Call 800-843-5233 or visit lcef.org for rates and information. ■

Mary Byrd Honored as Silver Eagle

Fall Leadership Conference attendees heartily congratulated Mary Byrd, Florida-Georgia District LCEF loan consultant, on receiving the Arthur C. Haake Leadership Award. Mary has served LCEF for more than 25 years at the national office in St. Louis and in her current home district.

"Mary represents the servanthood of Jesus in every step of the process as she gathers, prepares and supports our congregations through the loan process," wrote District President Greg Walton in the nomination narrative.

"Her insight into the workings of LCEF and the ministry of congregations has been an invaluable resource to us as we review the multiple loan requests that occur within our District," Walton wrote.

Mary said after the awards presentation that she was "humbled" by the honor and in a "bit of shock" since the award was a surprise.

LCEF District Vice President Dan Reichard said in his nomination, "Her experience and professional



Shown with honoree Mary Byrd (center) are (l-f) LCEF Board Chair Randy Peterson, Florida-Georgia District LCEF Vice President Dan Reichard, LCEF President Rich Robertson and former Florida-Georgia LCEF Vice President and fellow Silver Eagle Rich Neubauer.

approach combined with her customer focus and friendliness provide the Florida-Georgia District a huge advantage in the loan area.

"She is definitely a gift from God."

Kathy Keene, administrative assistant to President Walton, wrote, "Mary understands the vision that congregations have for seeking the lost and works diligently to help them achieve their mission goals."

The Haake Leadership Award program began in 1999 and pays tribute to the late Art Haake, an inspirational leader known for his spirit and love for the ministry of LCEF to serve the LCMS. He was dedicated to making a difference in things eternal. The award is presented to a past or current staff member. To date, 20 employees have received the honor and serve on LCEF's advisory group called Silver Eagles. ■

Supporting Your Ministry Needs with LCEF Lending

The needs for your ministry loans vary, but the Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) mission stays the same.

No matter the loan size, LCEF's loan specialists have the expertise and understanding to see you through the lending process with ease.

- Roof repair
- Energy efficiency updates
- Electrical maintenance
- Building expansion
- Heating and cooling updates



Learn more about your new or next LCEF loan—no matter the size—today. lcef.org

 Lutheran Church Extension Fund
Florida-Georgia District

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

Invested for a Higher Purpose, Funds Ready for Ministry

Thousands have invested in ministry through Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF). They invested to serve a higher purpose, not just draw a competitive interest rate.

Help put those funds to good use by aiding in the sharing

the Gospel; use LCEF as your ministry's lender of choice. LCEF has been a source of capital funding for LCMS organizations worldwide, offering ministries a place to borrow money for building purposes at interest rates they can afford. Our expert staff knows

how ministries operate and the unique challenges they face.

LCEF is thankful for God's blessings on the ministry of Church Extension. We pray that by the continued grace of God, LCEF can provide loans and ministry support that further expand His kingdom. ■

LWML Leaders Share PING Experience

By Trish Aamoth, Vice President for Communications

PING...PING... PING...PING...
PING...PING... PING...PING...
Get ready to be "PINGed!"

Florida-Georgia LWML President Bunnie Koelsch, Vice President for Mission Service Dawn Sandvig and Vice President for Communications Trish Aamoth were all PINGed at the Leadership 2012! They can't wait to share the experience with everyone in the Florida-Georgia District!

Past International LWML President Linda Reiser challenged LWML leaders from across the country to dream and make it a priority. The HOPE Team wants LWMLers to invite someone for a cup of coffee and get to know them, then to share the HOPE resources available at www.lwml.org. LWML President Kay Kreklau emphasized the values of fidelity, credibility, quality, sustainability and stability. Gretchen Jameson of purePR suggested mixing "old school" and "new school," as well as being sure we are the source of contagion by sharing our passion for LWML. The GO Team (Gospel Outreach) took the attendees on tour of the resources and information available at www.lwml.org

and encouraged all to check it out at least twice a month... that's how often new information is posted. The IT ladies also shared their expertise, so be sure to "like" LWML if you Facebook – facebook.com/TheLWML!

LWML Pastoral Counselors Whitby and Heckmann screened their videos that are now available at www.lwml.org under "Pastors in Mission." Rev. William Weedon,

LCMS Director of Worship, spoke about the path Christians travel on their way "home" and how they should travel that path singing and rejoicing, remembering that they know where they're going and should project it.



The weekend included singing; role play of inviting others to meet for coffee; impromptu public speaking. The three from Florida-Georgia met, and connected, with

LWMLers from across the county, as they praised and worshipped our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ – who is our message as we all serve Him through the LWML!



Heidi Floyd will be the 2013 District Retreat Leader.

Jackson International Airport. The East Central Georgia, North Atlanta and Northeast Georgia zones will host the event, under the theme from Psalm 42: As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God.

Heidi Floyd, Development Ambassador for the Vera Bradley Foundation for Breast Cancer, has been confirmed as the Retreat Leader. Not only is Heidi a best-selling author of *In a Word*—quiet

little thoughts about God, she was the inspirational speaker at the 2009 LWML convention in Portland and the humorous interrupter at last year's convention in Peoria.

Retreat information, costs and registration forms will be published in the 2013 Spring Evangel in February and posted on www.flgalwml.com as well. Mark your calendars now and save-the-date! ■



Florida-Georgia LWML President Bunnie Koelsch (left) and Vice President for Mission Service Dawn Sandvig at Leadership 2012

So, get ready, it's coming! PREPARE to be INSPIRED and NURTURED, and then to GO!!

2013 District Retreat

The 2013 Florida-Georgia District Retreat is set for the weekend of September 27-29 at The Lodge at Simpsonwood in Norcross, GA – on the north side of Metro Atlanta, just 35-40 minutes from Hartsfield-

LHM Teams with District on Outreach Initiative

Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM) and the Florida-Georgia District have teamed up to do a pilot initiative that addresses best practices for outreach in today's culture.

The initiative began with a survey of District church professionals and congregational membership by George Barna Research. After this information is compiled, a narrower, more in-depth interview will be held with select District churches. Once those are complete, resources, training and media campaigns will be designed to do outreach in a few locations across Florida-Georgia.

"The hope is that this information will help The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod address the loss of nearly 30,000 people who left our church body last year while welcoming and attracting new people into the Body of Christ," said Florida-Georgia District Executive Director of Outreach Doug Kallesen.

"In Florida and Georgia we have a combined population of more than 28 million people and we have grown the last decade by approximately 17% in each state. However, our District has lost 11% in communicant membership and 13% in baptized membership in the same period.

"Church attendance nationally is only 18% of our population. These staggering statistics are occurring across our nation and underscore the deep need of such a study and effort."

Kallesen concluded, "Our Lord has called us to go and make disciples of all people of all nations. Certainly our pilot project will bring abundant blessing to people across our church body but more importantly will impact eternity!"

"Thanks to everyone who helped out by taking the survey and to LHM for their partnership in this pilot project! Please keep this project in your prayers." ■

District Muslim Ministry Task Force Organizes

The District Convention affirmed the need of a Muslim Ministry Task Force that would *inform, empower and engage* people of the Florida-Georgia District in their witness to and with Muslim people. That task force met for the first time on December 5 at the District office in Orlando.

"I love to share my faith but must confess that I know very little about Muslim people who are now a part of my community," said District Executive for Outreach Rev. Doug Kallesen in affirming the need for the group. "After all what does Islam teach?"

Joining Kallesen on the MMTF are Jay and Julie Dass, Dr. Tim Furnish and Rev. Bruce Lieske.

A native of Saudi Arabia with Hindu and Muslim ancestors, Jay Dass is a committed Christian as is his wife Julie. She is from Pakistan and "knows what it is like to be a Christian growing up in a Muslim world."

Furnish, who trains U.S. military special operations teams on Islamic issues, is a Missouri Synod Lutheran and an expert on Islam, Islamic history and comparative Christian-Muslim issues – particularly eschatology, or "end of time" studies. He holds a PhD in Islamic, World and African history.

Lieske, the founder of Lutherans in Jewish Evangelism, is actively engaged in witnessing to Jewish and Muslim people on campuses and in the community.

"I am pleased to call this group together to address a growing need of how today's church," Kallesen said after the meeting. "Today we witness in a very pluralistic society that crosses over many different faiths, not merely denominational differences that exist among us as Christians."

The MMTF is ready to offer informational workshops to congregations, circuits, schools and community.

"We want to first inform Christians of the beliefs of Islam," Kallesen elaborated. "What is it that they teach? How do these teachings compare with Christianity? Do they believe in Jesus? Is it the same Jesus?"

"Next, the MMTF would like to empower and engage pastors, principals, teachers and the members of the Florida-Georgia District with training to winsomely share Jesus with Muslim neighbors, coworkers and friends. The MMTF will also provide information such as recommended reading, websites and so on. The group hopes to become a clearing house of such information."

For more information, contact Kallesen at dkallesen@flga-lcms.org or call 407.857.5556 ext. 2. ■

Thrivent Financial for Lutherans Receives Approval to Charter Federal Credit Union

Thrivent Financial for Lutherans has received approval from federal regulators to charter a member-owned, member-governed federal credit union. The transaction included the transfer of all of Thrivent Financial Bank's deposits and virtually all of its other liabilities and assets to the credit union, effective December 1, 2012.

The newly formed credit union will have approximately \$500 million in assets, making it one

of the largest faith-based credit unions in the United States.

As part of the transaction, all loan and deposit customer accounts held at Thrivent Financial Bank as of the transaction (including individual retirement accounts not serviced by Thrivent Financial Bank's Trust & Investment Services business) will be transferred to Thrivent Federal Credit Union. Existing trust accounts, investment management accounts and those individual

retirement accounts currently serviced by Thrivent Financial Bank's Trust & Investment Services business will continue to be serviced and supported at Thrivent Financial Bank, under a new name, "Thrivent Trust Company."

Thrivent Trust Company will be a wholly owned subsidiary of Thrivent Financial for Lutherans. Thrivent Federal Credit Union will not be owned by Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, but will instead be owned by its credit union members.

Current Thrivent Financial Bank clients will become member-owners of Thrivent Federal Credit Union upon the transfer of their accounts to the credit union. There were 46,422 clients as of October 1, 2012.

After December 1, 2012, anyone within the credit union's "field of membership" is eligible to apply for membership.

"Thrivent Federal Credit Union is a logical fit with Thrivent Financial for Lutherans' history of aligning faith and finances," said Todd Sipe, who will serve as president. "We will be able to offer a unique combination of financial expertise, competitive products and educational services, and shared values with our members. Our purpose will be to strengthen communities by helping members be wise with money so they can support the people and causes they care about."

Existing Thrivent Financial Bank clients will be receiving additional information about the transition, but are encouraged to call 800-984-9428 with any questions. ■



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For more information, contact:
Florida & Georgia Regional Financial Office
at 1-866-380-0558

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Veterans of the Cross Will Gather March 4-6

Retired church workers and their spouses will be gathering at the Methodist Life Enrichment Center, Leesburg, FL, from March 4-6, 2013, for the annual Florida-Georgia Church Workers Retreat – Veterans of the Cross.

The theme for the retreat and the focus of the Bible study will be "Pressing on Toward the Goal." Highlighting the retreat program will be Rev. Dr. Dean Nadasdy, president of the LCMS' Minnesota South District, and Dr. Rich Bimler, former President/CEO of Wheat Ridge Ministries. Rev. Jonathan Frusti,

senior pastor at Grace-Winter Haven, FL, will be the Bible study leader.

The Concordia University System will be represented by Dr. Tilahun Mendedo of Concordia College Alabama. The worship service will be led by Rev. Drew Ross of Our Savior-St. Petersburg.

David G. Ludwig Jr. will lead the Holden Evening Vespers.

"Retirees can look forward to inspiring Bible study, meeting old friends and gaining new ones, recreation, nature walks along beautiful Lake Griffin and evening

socials," said Chris Rau a member of the Retreat Planning Committee.

"Participants will also be able to choose from a number of break-out sessions that will appeal to a variety of interests."

Retreat registration forms will be mailed in January. Newly retired workers are encouraged to contact the Florida-Georgia District office (407-857-5556, ext 104 or <http://flgadistrict.org>) to ensure that they receive the information.

Online registration is encouraged. ■

New Enrollment Record for Lutheran Colleges

Combined enrollment at the 10 Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod colleges and universities for the current academic year represents another record: 29,597 students.

That 4.1% increase continues a 20-year trend of growing combined enrollment at the Synod's Concordia University System schools. Both the number of graduate and undergraduate students increased.

The number of students who identify themselves as affiliated with the LCMS increased by 31 students to 4,189. Students who are "other Lutheran" now number 2,127, an increase of 157.

The number of students in church-work programs continues to fall, from a total of 1,762 in 2011 to 1,654 this year, a drop of 108 students. Except for an increase of 54 students in fall 2010, that total has been dropping for at least the past 12 years.

However, gains were recorded in three vocations: director of Christian education (up 15 students to 268), deaconess (up 7 to 32) and director of Christian outreach (up 2 to 15).

Other church-vocation totals include those seeking a Lutheran teacher diploma (down 76 to 1,056), pre-seminary students (down 34 to 178), lay ministry (down 16 to 50), director of parish music (down 3 to 28) and director of family life ministry (down 3 to 27).

Among the six CUS schools that reported gains in enrollment, Concordia University-Portland led the way with a 23.99% increase. Also reporting increases were Concordia-Bronxville (5%), Concordia-Irvine (8.2%), Concordia-Mequon (1.7%), Concordia-Chicago (6.2%) and Concordia-St. Paul (5%). Enrollment was down at Concordia-Ann Arbor (6%), Concordia Texas (2.78%), Concordia Alabama (15%) and Concordia-Seward (4.8%).

For more information about LCMS colleges and universities – and professional church-work careers – visit the website of LCMS University Education at www.lcms.org/cus. ■

Engaging Rural and Small Town Communities Event Announced

Beautiful Savior-Lehigh Acres, FL, will be hosting "Engaging Rural and Small Town Communities" on February 9 from 8 am until 3 pm.

Beautiful Savior Pastor A.J. Neugebauer and a congregational team have planned the day, which will cover topics including:

- Understanding your Community*
- Asset Mapping*
- Partnership Possibilities that create Ministry Opportunities*
- Leading Change and Dealing with Resistance*
- Where do we go from here?*
- How do we get there from here?*

Presentations will be made by members of the Rural Small Town Ministry team and the Florida-Georgia District staff with ample opportunity for interaction with participants.

"This outreach event provides advocacy for the smaller and rural churches of our District – and there are many," said District Executive Director of Outreach Doug Kallesen. "I attended a Rural Small Town Training event in Storm Lake, IA earlier in 2012 and found this training to be geared for the smaller church, appreciating the church's size, values, gifts, uniqueness, challenges and opportunities for the smaller church to provide very meaningful ministry."

"You are invited," Kallesen continued. "Tell your pastor, pastors tell your leaders. Be sure to be present if you are a smaller or rural ministry. This is a conference designed with you in mind."

A \$25 registration cost will include conference materials, speakers and lunch. To register contact the church office at 239-368-7897 or 215 Richmond Ave. North, Lehigh Acres, FL 33936-1312. Additional information will be posted on the District website (www.flgadistrict.org). ■

All Saints Reaches Out to Community

All Saints Lutheran-Blairsville, GA, members have been working to increase their connections into the life of the Northeast Georgia and North Carolina communities that the congregation serves.

On “Black Friday” November 23, a number of brave souls served some “Cups of Kindness” (i.e. hot chocolate) at the Wal-Marts in Blairsville and Murphy, NC.

On Saturday, December 8, the LWML showered the Women’s Enrichment Center, a local ministry caring for crisis and at-risk pregnancies and abortion prevention. They presented a number of baby items, including crocheted blankets, sweaters, and booties that the mothers earn by attending classes and counseling.

Finally the congregation adopted six foster children for the Christmas season and shopped to fill their Christmas wish lists, including some handcrafted toys.

In addition, All Saints has become a partner in the Ecumenical Food Bank and assists with food donations and volunteer participation in serving and engaging those in need with the compassion of Jesus Christ. ■



Pastor Dave Wesche and All Saints’ members Kelly and Jack Mazzaferro, Barbara Blackmer and Donna Sharkey hand out hot chocolate.

Weidner on Three-Month Sabbatical

After serving 39 years in youth and family ministry – the last decade with the Florida-Georgia District – David Weidner is taking a three-month sabbatical.

“The District encouraged congregations and schools several years ago to implement a sabbatical policy for their called workers and at the same time developed a policy for its own executive staff,” said Weidner, who is Executive Assistant to the President. “I am very grateful for the chance to step aside from the daily routine of my position as Executive Assistant to the President to experience some rest, reflection, regeneration and renewal through this special time away.”

Weidner will be visiting with several LCMS District presidents and their staff members as part of a study/learning project.

“I’ll be interviewing mid-level judicatory entities [districts, synods, conferences, regions] in an effort to discover how they plan to serve congregations in the post-Christian era, specifically what strategies and changes in



Cathy & Dave Weidner

REGION 1 CONNECTIONS



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

Churches Provide A “Home” for the Holidays for Students

Christ-Perry and Mt. Calvary-Warner Robins members opened their arms—and their homes—to three Concordia College-Selma international students who had nowhere to go for Christmas.

Fred Yeboa, of Ghana and Ntokozo Pamacheche and Mthokozisi Mlotshwa, of Zimbabwe, knew they couldn’t afford to go home for the holidays. When Christ Pastor John Lehenbauer learned that the students had nowhere to go, he immediately responded.

“It is a great blessing to be in a place where we can say to someone else at Christmas, ‘There is room at the Inn!’” he said.

Christ and Mt. Calvary members have shown their support for the students, who admitted they were a

little nervous going to an unfamiliar place. They have stepped right into the life of the congregation without hesitation—even joining choir practice the first night they arrived!

The students are staying with David and Susann Hall, who have nine children of their own—some who are also home on college break.

“Members of the congregation have been so welcoming and hospitable,” said Yeboa, who is a freshmen spending his first Christmas in the U.S. “I am thrilled and humbled by the love and concern shown to us.” The students have shared about their families and home countries with the community and the congregation and gone Christmas caroling at a local nursing home. “



Fred Yeboa shows his skills with the power tools in creating nativities.

The students have also learned a new set of skills—using power tools to create nativity scenes from plywood, which they have been selling to the community.

“Hosting these three students has opened the eyes of our congregation to the fact that we have a Concordia College near us,” the pastor said. “That will be positive exposure for Concordia in our congregation for years to come. Even as Ntokozo, Fred and Aubrey have shared their Christian faith and customs with us, we have received more than we will give these students.” ■

REGION 2 CONNECTIONS



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

approach are they implementing to be more effective in providing services and support to their constituents,” he elaborated.

“My hope is that I will be able to bring back to my work in the Florida-Georgia District some key learnings and insights that will help our staff serve congregations, schools and ministries more effectively in the future.” ■



2012 MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH GATHERINGS were held on consecutive weekends --- November 2-4 at the Lake Yale Baptist Conference Center in Eustis, FL, and November 9-11 at the Calvin Center in Hampton, GA. Shown here at the Florida Gathering with Florida-Georgia District President Greg Walton – who did an impressive stint on stilts -- are (l-r) Amazing Grace-Oxford members Kaitlin Rockey, Lois Schaefer, Elizabeth Rockey, Carie Levy, Julia Rockey, Evelyn Mohammed, Katie Levy. Both gatherings were well attended. ■

Hope Dinner Helps Hurricane Victims



Hope's youth serving up the Turkey Supper to arriving guests.

In the aftermath of Hurricane/ Superstorm Sandy, members of Hope-Plant City used their 18th Annual Turkey Supper to help bring relief.

The Supper, held on Sunday, November 4, served just under 800 people during the day with proceeds following expenses to benefit the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod's disaster response fund designated specifically for Sandy relief. As a result, a check for just over \$5,500 was sent to the fund.

FellowshipTeam Leader Cathie Warner recommended that the proceeds be donated to Sandy aid – a concept immediately approved by Hope's Board of Directors in an online meeting.

"God has so abundantly blessed us, now it's time for us to be a blessing to others," Warner said.

In addition to the dinner proceeds, guests also contributed to a love offering that was made available to aid in storm relief.

"In past years, Hope has always given 10% of all proceeds towards missions outside of the congregation," said Hope's Senior Pastor Dean Pfeffer. "This time we needed to move beyond and respond to those suffering physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually as a result of this disaster." ■

Y Y Y Y Y REGION 3 CONNECTIONS

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



30 New Members Welcomed in Winter Haven



Grace Winer Haven welcomed (front, l-r) Linda Davy, Caitlyn Lovegrove, Elaina Lovegrove, Audrey England, Amelie England, Carolyn "Ginger" Moore, Karen Doederlein, Steven Wyant, Larry Lehning,

(second row, l-r) Chuck Davy, Susan Kleber, Karleigh England, Marshelle Lorentz, Ken Lorentz, Heather Lehning, Ellen Mattheus, Kali Hattheus, Jeannette Bush, (third row, l-r) Ryan Dauss, Micah Korb, Lee Lovegrove,

Bert Lietzow, Matthew England, Chuck Evinic, Judi Evinic, Paul Nordby, Damon Mattheus, Alyssa Mattheus, David Bush. Not pictured is new member Rita Fitzsimmons.

Anniversary Celebrations Bring Charter Members to Fort Myers

Bethlehem Lutheran-Fort Myers celebrated its 30th anniversary on December 2 during morning worship followed by a program and potluck luncheon.

The congregation received written messages from Florida-Georgia District President Greg Walton and all of Bethlehem's previous pastors: Richard Neagley, Ray Borchelt, Paul Koepchen and Gerald Lawson.

Spread around the Fellowship Hall were tables filled with reminders of Bethlehem's history as well as the contents of the time capsule that was buried in 1987 when the first church building was dedicated.

Among those in attendance were four of the congregation's charter members: Eva Neumayer, Treva McVoy, Jean Hutchings and Paul Nystrom.

Bethlehem Pastor Darrell Stuehrenberg led the celebration worship service with assistance from Rev. Juan Gonzalez, a member of the congregation, and Rev. William Miller, chaplain at Lee Memorial Hospital in Fort Myers. Both men had served in Fort Lauderdale with Stuehrenberg, who was celebrating the 35th anniversary of his 1977 ordination. ■



Among those celebrating Bethlehem's anniversary with Pastor Darrell Stuehrenberg were charter members (front, l-r) Eva Neumayer, Treva McVoy, Jean Hutchings and (back) Paul Nystrom.

Culinary Clash of Cultures at Amigos Center

Amigos en Cristo Hispanic and Haitian volunteers in Immokalee treated the members of Trinity Lutheran-Cape Coral, to a special Advent meal on Wednesday, December 5.

More than 70 people enjoyed the homemade food. Trinity Pastor C. J. Kanefke focused the mid-week Advent worship service that night on Christmas traditions of Mexico and Haiti. "We see in these meals the unity of the body of Christ and an image of the celestial banquet that awaits us in Christ," he said.

Amigos en Cristo will host its Friends of Amigos Lunch and Dinner in March. The free, one-hour events are planned for Thursday March 14 at 6:00pm at St. Michael Lutheran Church & School-Fort Myers and Wednesday March 20 at 12:00pm - The Hilton in Naples.

Reservations are required. Please contact Leah at 239-297-9658, leah@amigoscenter.org; or Pastor Bob at 239-281-1664, bobselle@amigoscenter.org. ■



Members of Christ the King-Labelle and Pastor Nick Moskovites welcomed 12 new members on December 16. A pot-luck welcome brunch in the new Fellowship Hall followed the service. The new members



are Alan & Ellen Woods, Vernon "Pretz" & Frieda Stark, Bob & Martha "Marty" Jurs, Bill & Betsy Fortner, Lloyd & Gail Gidley and Cloyd "Buck" & Robin Knouse.

Y Y Y Y Y REGION 4 CONNECTIONS

Vice President: Rev. James Guelzow | Messiah/Tampa
 Laity Board Member: Ms. Maggie Bowles | Peace/Naples
 Laity Board Member: Mr. Jeff Richards | Hope/Brandenton
 Commissioned Minister Board Member: Mr. Robert Ziegler | St. Michael/Fort Myers
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Trinity Welcomes Pastor Craig Bode

Rev. Craig H. Bode is the new pastor for Trinity-Fort Pierce.

He most recently served for 31 years as pastor of Bethlehem Lutheran-Euclid, OH, on the outskirts of Cleveland.

Bode earned his B.S. in Psychology from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, and in 1980 graduated from Concordia Theological Seminary-Fort Wayne.

His wife, Mary, also attended the University of Illinois, receiving a B. A. degree in Psychology and Child Development.

The Bodes have two daughters and a son: Emily Hayes, who lives in Jensen Beach with her husband, Petri; Sara DeBord, who lives in Lakewood, OH, with her husband Adam; and Paul who lives in Canton, MI.

Trinity Lutheran will celebrate its 60th anniversary on January 27 at special event with District President Greg Walton as guest speaker.



Craig and Mary Bode



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Trinity's Open Arms Receives "Reader's Choice"

The Open Arms of Fort Pierce Early Childhood Learning Center, a ministry of Trinity Lutheran, was recently awarded named the Best Daycare Center in the Area.

The Reader's Choice Award was presented by the Hometown News of the Treasure Coast.

"This was a survey that went to all of the readers, and they had to fill in what their favorites were," said Loretta Arensen, Open Arms Director. "Their favorite places to shop, favorite places to eat, services, and so on.

"We were put in the 'In Season' magazine for 2012 as a winner as the Best Daycare Center."

Open Arms of Fort Pierce serves children from the ages of six weeks through five years. After-school care is available for elementary school age children. ■



Students at Open Arms Preschool show off some of the toys collected for the WPSL Christmas Kids Toy Drive.



- ✓ Independent Living Cottages
- ✓ Assisted Living Facility
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ASK US ABOUT OUR SHORT TERM
GUEST HOUSE RENTAL PROGRAM

This 4'x8' stained glass image of Jesus is in the lobby of Lutheran Haven's nursing home.

Lakeland Celebrates Century of Ministry

In celebration of the 100th year of ministry of St. Paul Lutheran-Lakeland, FL, staff and members in early 2012 launched a year of events to highlight what the congregation has done – and continues to do – to connect the community to Jesus.

Every second Sunday of the month was set aside to commemorate an era of the church, an area of ministry and welcome former church workers to that service. These services, called Living Our Legacy Sundays (LOL), highlighted the stages of change and growth as St. Paul started in borrowed spaces, moved to a small wooden structure, then a stone structure with a school addition, and in 2003, a larger sanctuary on its third, current campus.

St. Paul's videographer Jeff Miller

created movie dramas of the life of the Apostle Paul and interviewed members for vignettes recalling the details of each era of the congregation's growth.

During the year, St Paul members and school children completed service projects and displays of 100 of "something." Projects of 100 service hours, 100 letters written, 100 items given, 100 dollars collected for a charity and so on were celebrated. The last 100 project was the congregation working with VISTE (Volunteers in Service to the Elderly) to provide 100 meals to Lakeland residents.

November 4th was the final, major celebration. Just as the pastor of St. Peter's-Columbus, IN, came for the dedication of St. Paul's first sanctuary in 1913, St. Peter's current pastor, Rev.

Mark Teike, preached for the 100th Anniversary worship. He encouraged worshippers to be mission minded, to effectively run a life-saving station for those needing the grace of Jesus. ■

St. Paul members preparing 100 VISTE meals.



Rev. Zong Yang, Pastor of the Hmong Mission Society of Central Florida; District President Rev. Gregory Walton; guest preacher Rev. Mark Teike; and St. Paul Pastor, Rev. Ron Pennekamp celebrated the 100th Anniversary.

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Mary Byrd, Loan Consultant, Byrd7080@bellsouth.net; (352) 392-3316
Debbie Talbot, Administrative Services, dtalbot@lfga-lcms.org *
*877 457-5556 ext 4