

LCMS CONVENTION PREVIEW

LUTHERAN

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

2013 | Volume 3

trusting His
promise

BAPTIZED
IN WATER

ONE WITH HIS RISING

SEALED BY THE SPIRIT

HEIRS OF
SALVATION



BORN
OF THE
FATHER

Freed &
Forgiven



The Mission of the Florida-Georgia District is to serve, assist, and encourage congregations in the ministry of Jesus Christ. People of the Florida-Georgia District are equipped, empowered, engaged... connecting people to Jesus. **Lutheran LIFE** is the official 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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DISTRICT CAPSULES *by Greg Walton District President*

Calling Congregations

Trinity/Delray Beach, FL.....Associate Pastor
Zion/Fort Myers, FLSenior Pastor
Marco Lutheran/Marco, FL.....Assistant Pastor
Faith/New Port Richey, FL.....Sole Pastor
Prince of Peace/Orlando, FL.....Senior Pastor
Trinity/Summerfield, FL.....Associate Pastor
St. Mark/Tucker, GA.....Sole Pastor

Calls Issued

Rev. Steve Hulke
from **Trinity**/Summerfield, FL, as Assoc Pastor
Rev. Michael Saleminck
from **Faith**/New Port Richey, FL, as Pastor

Calls Accepted

Rev. Richard S. Knapp
from **Grace**/Key West, FL, as Interim Pastor
Rev. Dr. H.E. Baum
from **Holy Trinity**, Lutz, FL, as Interim Pastor
Rev. Dr. James Stolenberg
from **Lake Oconee**/Lake Oconee, FL, as
Interim Pastor
Rev. Robert Maulella
from **St. Paul**/Peachtree City, GA, as Interim
Pastor
Rev. Don Hinchey
from **First**/Gainesville, FL, as Interim Pastor

Calls Declined

Rev. Jeffrey Scheich
from **Trinity**/Delray Beach, FL, as Assoc Pastor
Rev. Dr. Brian Kneser
from **Zion**/Fort Myers, FL, as Senior Pastor
Rev. Steve Hulke
from **Trinity**/Summerfield, FL, as Pastor

Transferred to Other Districts

Stacy L. Larsen to Minnesota South (C)
David Giesekeing to Southern (C)
Rev. Dr. Gary L. Danielson to English (O)
Rev. Paul Zimmerman to Indiana (O)

Transferred from Other Districts

Rev. Allen Freudenburg from Mid-South (O)
Laurie J. Steinke from Michigan (C)
Rev. Robert Stuenkel from Rocky Mountain (O)

Church Changes

Estero Mission/Fort Myers, FL,
New Church Start in Circuit 17 – Southwest

Commissioned Minister Initial Assignments

Mr. Wynn T. Derong from Concordia-Texas
as **DCE Good Shepherd**/Gainesville GA (C)

Ordained Minister Installations

Rev. Richard C. Carlton Pastor
as Pastor at **King of Kings**/Jasper, GA,
Florida-Georgia District (O)
Rev. Richard S. Knapp
as Interim Pastor at **Grace**/Key West, FL (O)

Change of Status within the District

Donna L. Koren
from Candidate Non-candidate (C)
Sarah E. Koehneke
from Candidate Non-candidate (C)
James Mahler
from Candidate to Non-candidate (C)
Deborah Schrank
from Candidate to Emeritus (C)
Rev. Paul Zimmerman
from Active to Emeritus (O)

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

Sims Receives Call to Ascension

Florida-Georgia District member
Raleigh Sims was among the eight
students in the Specific Ministry Pastor
Program (SMP) who
received their first calls
during morning chapel
on April 12, at Concordia
Seminary-St. Louis. He
is the new Assistant
Pastor for Ascension
Lutheran-Casselberry.

The SMP program,
which involves close
collaboration between
congregations, districts
and the seminaries, is
designed to meet the need for pastors
in mission and ministry opportunities
where a pastor with a seminary
degree may not be available.



An SMP student serves as a vicar
during his first two years in the program
and takes instruction (mostly by Internet)

and meets with an
assigned pastor-mentor.
After completing eight
seminary courses during
that period, he will be
eligible for ordination and
a call to his vicarage.

During the next two
years, he completes
continuing education
under the supervision of a
mentor-pastor. Even after
completing the program,

he continues under the supervision of
a general pastor. SMP graduates are
serving in various ministries throughout
the Florida-Georgia District. ■

Partnership with Lutheran Hour Ministries

District Outreach Initiative Launches

by Doug Kallesen, Executive Director for Outreach

Florida-Georgia congregation
members were invited to the
spring round of regional pastors'
gatherings to hear about the
launch of an Outreach Initiative
in partnership with
Lutheran Hour
Ministries (LHM).

"The excitement
for new possibilities
and strategies for
reaching the lost was
palpable," reported
District Executive
for Outreach Rev.
Doug Kallesen
of the two-day
events, which attracted
approximately 300 participants.

"We are piloting new ways
to equip congregations to
build bridges to the lost in their
communities with the goal of
sharing the Gospel with them and
helping them grow to be followers
of Jesus Christ," continued Kallesen,
who has been working with LHM's
United States Ministries Director
Rev. Dr. Mark Larson for nearly two
years in developing the program.

"By the grace of God, the
number of people being saved in

the Florida-Georgia District will
have doubled by the end of 2015!"

A 2012 study conducted by
The Barna Group identified three
key behaviors and attitudes

in congregations
leading to new
believers. Those are:
Consistent Follow-up –
These churches keep
in contact with those
not yet connected to
the body of Christ in
a way that leads to
stronger relationships
and connection
to the church.

Culture of Outreach – Through
preaching and prayer,
training and storytelling, the
congregation grows in its love
of fulfilling God's mission.
Community Connection – These
congregations study, are active in,
and love their communities. The
five conferences were intended
to provide results from the Barna
study and recommendations based
on it and to give the District pastors
and lay members an opportunity
to provide additional input.



"Congregations who were
not able to attend their regional
conference aren't going to miss
out on the opportunity," Kallesen
added. "A plan is being created
for those congregations to be
able to implement the Outreach
Initiative in their area."

"This truly has the potential
of creating a culture of mission
and outreach throughout
our District. Our goal is truly
connecting people to Jesus!" ■

Three Phases of the Outreach Initiative

Phase 1
Begins September 2013
Consistent Follow-up:
Track & grow contact list
leading to new believers
Develop Culture of
Outreach: Build mission
spirit by preaching & prayer,
training & storytelling

Phase 2
Begins January 2014
Continue Phase 1
Community Connection:
Build bridges to connect
to your community by
learning about its needs
& developing ministries to
serve in love

Phase 3
Begins March 2015
Continue Phases 1 & 2
Mass Media Campaign:
Having honed outreach
skills, congregations
partner with LHM in a
media campaign to connect
even more people with the
Gospel of Jesus Christ

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.

Refreshing Christians To Share

Over the last few weeks and the next few weeks to come we will once again see students graduating from a variety of institutions on a multitude of levels.

Some will graduate from Kindergarten, looking forward to the beginning of their educational career. Others will be graduating from Middle School or High School, looking to the next step of their journey in a new realm. Some will be or have graduated from college, and now have the whole world before them.

The commencement ceremonies are especially significant when you recognize that a commencement is not the completion, but rather a beginning or a start. In the academic world, it's the start of new life having achieved a level of education.

In a sense, each Sunday morning, as we gather for worship, is a commencement. We are sent as missionaries out into the world for the sake of Jesus. We gather each week to be fed on the Word and Sacraments so that we are empowered to serve Jesus in the various places He puts us in any given week. It may be in our home or neighborhood; it may be at our job where our witness for Christ is carefully under scrutiny; it may be in the places we shop or do business. The world is watching, just as we will watch our young men and women who graduate move on to amazing things in their lives.

Here's what I've learned: the world is always watching how we live our faith in Jesus. How we actually live out our faith and how the world sees it isn't necessarily always the same thing! In other

words, sometimes our words and our actions don't match. The world is very critical of the church in our day, and we, to some degree, have earned that moniker.

But here is an amazing statistic. In a recent Lutheran Hour Ministry (LHM) survey conducted by Barna Research an astounding 97% of surveyed members of the Florida-Georgia District clearly understand



the fact that we are saved by grace through faith because of all that Jesus did for us on the Cross. This is an unusually high number, which nationally is only 62% among Lutherans of any stripe. This is a solid indication that people in the Florida-Georgia District comprehend God's plan of salvation, that they know their sins are forgiven by the blood of Jesus, and that they grasp that the only way to heaven is by a vibrant faith in Jesus alone.

The truth is, the Barna people were so surprised that they had to go back and check their facts — and the fact is, 97% of the people surveyed — some 1300 — were clear on this point. I can't even begin to tell you how proud that makes me — proud of our fine pastors who are teaching and proclaiming the clear and powerful message of salvation; but also proud of our men and women, boys and girls who boldly profess that faith. This is an affirmation of our vision to equip, empower and engage,

connecting people to Jesus!

Another conclusion drawn from this survey states that 91% of those surveyed understand that we have an individual responsibility to share the good news about Jesus. This is also a very gratifying statistic. However, a less than stellar third statistic shows that while we understand God's grace and plan of salvation and our privilege and responsibility to share the good news, less than 50% actually do it! That would be like graduating and never doing anything beyond that. It happens, but when it does it's often a sad result.

In His Pentecost sermon in Acts 3, St. Peter proclaims a message that reminds us all of our calling in Jesus. He writes, "Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago." (Acts 3:19-21)

These words point us to the basic need in all of our lives — to repent. It's a need that becomes tantamount to us because we are sinners, subject to the wrath of God and the only solution is Jesus. This metamorphosis is all about turning away from our selfishness and personal agendas and turning toward Jesus and living for Him.

As we do this we experience *times of refreshing* in His very presence. It happens, at least for me, each time I worship, and especially as I approach the altar and receive the real presence of our Lord Jesus in, with and under the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper. Here Jesus comes and refreshes me, as my sins are again forgiven in

Jesus With A Hurting World

a visible, tangible way, and I am refreshed by His Holy Spirit.

This refreshing comes as we spend time in His Word, learning, growing, reflecting and responding to Him as He gently teaches and guides our lives each day. This refreshing comes as I commit time to prayer for others, trusting God to act on His promises and care for the needs expressed in ways beyond my ability to imagine. Each time I'm refreshed Jesus reminds me that His blood covers my sin, and that I live now as His, forgiven and free, called to proclaim Him in the world as His baptized child.

We truly are baptized for this moment. That serves as the theme for the **65th Regular Synod Convention of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod**. What a great reminder for us that we live as God's chosen people, baptized and set apart for this time. Clearly the world around us continues to move farther from our Christian faith and the roots that have been part of this nation since its foundation.

The church culture that had favored us for so long is no longer predominant in our communities. Perhaps this is because many congregations have failed to carry out the command of Jesus to proclaim the good news. In recent times we've allowed interior controversies, doctrinal issues and power struggles to get in the way of simply sharing Jesus with our communities. We've become so enamored with providing for our facilities and making sure that they are comfortable for us that we've not moved out into our communities as the face of Jesus, caring and loving people with His love. Or, maybe it's simply fear or unawareness of all the opportunities around us.

Yet, it was for such a time as this that God saved us and

called us to be His very own! It's time to commence our service for Jesus. We are Christ's hands and feet in the world. We have been baptized for this moment!

There are many issues that will come before our Convention — some are no brainers, like extending missions in foreign fields. Others are a bit more controversial, like who is permitted to commune at our altars and how are we to participate in the public arena when tragedies strike?

These are difficult issues, and there are no quick and easy answers. Under God's Word, working together for the sake of Jesus, we can find workable solutions. Over all, though, our focus needs to remain on Jesus and His Cross. He

must be the focus and center of all we do. May our goal be to live out that wonderful hymn: *Lift high the Cross, the love of Christ proclaim, till all the world adore His sacred name!*

Could it be that our Convention could lead our Synod to a time of refreshing as we live out our baptismal covenant? I believe it can as we "fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfector of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the Cross, scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:2)

May that direction always be our prayer so that our eyes are ever on Jesus.

It's all about Jesus. It always was, and it always will be. With our eyes on Him then, maybe the Convention will be a commencement, a new beginning, enabling us in new ways to share the love of Jesus with a hurting and helpless world. We know the truth (at least 97% of us), now let's get that truth out into the communities



The Walton family celebrates a commencement in 2010 at Alex's graduation. From left, Greg & Edith's son, Tim, his wife, Megan, pictured with Alex, Edith and Greg. Missing is Alex's wife, Angie — married into the Walton family this past year.

in which God has placed us so that people can be equipped, empowered and engaged, connecting people to Jesus!

That will indeed lead us to times of refreshing in Jesus' name!

CONNECTING PEOPLE
TO JESUS ...
WITH YOU!

Greg



Membership to Elect Leaders, Determine Priorities at National LCMS Convention

An estimated 1,200 voting delegates will be among those gathered in St. Louis July 20-25 for the **65th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod**. The triennial national convention is the Synod’s principal legislative assembly.

Charged with the responsibility to consider and vote on various resolutions and leadership choices, delegates represent the more than 1.7 million confirmed members in almost 6,200 LCMS congregations in 35 districts across the United States. Each electoral circuit selects one pastor and one layperson as its voting delegates. Commissioned church workers are exempt from serving as voting delegates but may attend the Convention in advisory positions or as guest observers. The Convention is open to the public.

The theme for the 2013 Convention is **Baptized for This Moment**, taken from Peter’s Pentecost sermon as recorded in Acts 2:38–39: “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Himself.”

Much of the business of the Convention results from the work of nine floor committees, whose members prepare and present resolutions crafted from various overtures in addition to coordinating the nomination, registration and election processes. Nine floor

committees were assembled for this Convention, including Witness; Mercy; Life Together; Theology and Church Relations; Seminary and University Education; Administration and Finance; Structure and Ecclesiastical Matters; Registration, Credentials and Elections; and Convention Nominations.

ELECTIONS

Among the LCMS national leadership positions to be filled at Convention are: First Vice President; Secretary; Commissioned and Lay members of the Board of Directors; Ordained and Lay members of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations; Ordained and Lay members of the Concordia Historical Institute Board of Governors; Lay members of the Concordia Publishing House Board of Directors; Ordained or Commissioned and Lay members of the Lutheran Church Extension Fund Board of Directors; Ordained and Lay members of the LCMS Foundation Board of Directors; Ordained member of the Concordia University System Board of Directors; Ordained, Commissioned and Lay members of the Boards of Regents for the various Concordia Universities and LCMS Seminaries.

The presidential election will take place before the start of Convention, a procedure that is one of several changes to go into effect in 2013. Electing five Regional Vice Presidents is another change, as is the selection of candidates for the First Vice President position.

A chart on the adjacent page summarizes these changes.

Election of the Synod President will take place electronically (via the Internet only) during a four-day period — June 22–25 — by each LCMS congregation/parish’s two voting delegates to its 2012 district convention.

If no candidate receives a majority of votes, the candidate with the least number of votes will be dropped from the ballot and a second vote will be taken one week later. No other nominations will be accepted.

Two weeks before the start of the convention — on July 6 — the Synod secretary will share the results of the election first with the candidates, and afterward, with the public. The candidate receiving the majority of votes will become president-elect of the Synod.

The three candidates for president are:

Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison;
Rev. Dr. David P.E. Maier; and
Rev. Dr. Herbert C. Mueller Jr.

More information on these candidates is presented on the following pages, as is information on the Regional Vice President election.

**JUNE 22, 2013
FIRST BALLOT
TO VOTE FOR
PRESIDENT**

The National LCMS Convention



What’s Changed?

This summer’s convention will operate differently than in the past. Here are some of the more notable changes — and what remains the same

PAST CONVENTIONS

2013 CONVENTION

PRESIDENT

The president was elected at the convention by approximately 1,200 voting delegates.

The announcement of the presidential election

4 weeks prior to convention, approximately 8,200 voting delegates representing each congregation in attendance at last summer’s district conventions will begin to cast votes.

2 weeks prior to convention, the Synod’s secretary will notify candidates and the public of results.

FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT

Slate was composed of 5 ordained ministers receiving highest number of nominations and

Slate of five candidates are chosen by the president-elect and are taken from list of 20 ordained ministers receiving highest number of nominations and allowing their names to stand.

VICE-PRESIDENTS

4 Vice-Presidents were elected to assist the president.

5 regional vice-presidents — in addition to the first vice-president — will be elected to assist the president.

BOARDS

Board of Director positions were nominated and elected with no regional requirements.

The Board of Directors of synod and other boards now require nomination from their regions.

VOTING SYSTEM

Delegates at convention, using electronic hand-held devices that totaled votes automatically cast their votes for president.

Votes for president are cast prior to convention by voting delegates via a “secure and verifiable method” on the internet.

PRIORITIES

No official synodwide method existed for determining goals and emphases. Emphases or priorities were determined separately by each program or governing board.

Congregations, circuit forums, districts and the national convention participate in determining triennial mission and ministry emphases for the synod.

Meet The Three Candidates For Synodical President



Matthew C. Harrison

580 Spragues Mill Court
Ballwin, Missouri 63011
Born: March 14, 1962
Birth Place: Sioux City, IA
Undergraduate: Morningside
College, Sioux City (1984)
Seminary: Concordia
Theological Seminary [CTS],
Fort Wayne, IN (1989)
Year of Ordination: 1991

Harrison's first call was to St. Peter's-Westgate, IA, where he served from 1991 until 1995. For the next six years he was at Zion-Fort Wayne. In 2001 he became the Executive Director of LCMS World Relief/ Human Care, a position he held until his election as Synodical President in 2010.

Harrison earlier spent a year as a missionary to Native Canadians with the Lutheran Association or Missionaries and Pilots. He was on the LCMS Board for Missions from 1993 until 1995, and served as Founding President for the National Lutheran Housing Support Corporation from 2004 until 2010. He has been on the Board of Directors for Lutheran Services in America and for Lutheran World Relief. On the District level, he was a member of the Task Force on Rural Ministry and the Synod Nominations Committee.



David P. E. Maier

7108 Ryan Road
Whitmore Lake, Michigan
48189
Born: May 8, 1956
Birth Place: Levittown, PA
Undergraduate: Concordia
University, Ann Arbor, MI ['78]
Seminary: Concordia
Theological Seminary, Ft.
Wayne ['82]
Year of Ordination: 1982

Maier began his full-time ministry as pastor for Our Savior Lutheran-Marlette, MI, where he served from 1982 until 1984 when he accepted the call to St. Peter-Arlington Heights, IL. Maier returned to Michigan in 1989 as pastor of Our Savior-Lansing, a call he held until being elected Michigan District President in 2009.

Maier is a member of the LCMS Specific Ministry Committee and was the Council of President representative to the 2010 Convention Floor Committee on Seminary & University Education. His service to the Michigan District has included terms as Vice President and membership on the Board of Family Life and Circuit Counselor. For several years he was the Camp Dean at Michigan's Camp Arcadia.

Maier has been the speaker at numerous youth retreats and men's gatherings.



Herbert C. Mueller, Jr.

102 Front Street
Waterloo, Illinois 62298
Born: May 16, 1953
Birth Place: Grand Forks, ND
Undergraduate: Concordia College, Ann Arbor ['73]
Concordia Senior College, Fort Wayne ['75]
Seminary: Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis ['79]
Year of Ordination: 1979

Mueller's first call after was to Mount Calvary-Chicago, where he served as the sole pastor from 1979 until 1983 when he accepted the call to serve as Associate Pastor for Zion-Bethalto, IL. Seven years later he was called to Immanuel-Waterloo, IL, where he served as Senior Pastor until his election to Southern Illinois District President in 1994. He was still serving in that capacity when he was elected First Vice President of the Missouri Synod in 2010.

On the Synodical level, Mueller has served on the Commission on Ministerial Growth and Support, the Colloquy Committee and the Council of Presidents Program Committee. His service in the Southern Illinois District included terms as Secretary, First and Second Vice President. From 1997 through 2010 Mueller participated in six mission trips to Southern Africa.

How would you describe the biggest challenge facing The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod today?



Harrison Responds

Many challenges face the LCMS, but none of them are new! Bearing witness to the full and free forgiveness of sins we have in Christ Jesus— together without losing our biblical, Lutheran soul in this increasingly hostile culture — is our greatest challenge. A recent Pew Forum study pointed out that 1 in 3 Americans under the age of 30 is religiously unaffiliated. Compare that with 1 in 16 of the WWII generation!

Recently, I've been intensely studying the slow demographic decline of the Missouri Synod over the past 40 years. Florida-Georgia has performed better than average, but has experienced steady decline since 1996, despite the addition of 25 or more congregations in the same period. It has become obvious that the chief reason for the decline is that Americans of European decent are marrying later and having fewer children. This is a cultural fact and has had the greatest numerical impact upon the LCMS in its history. This demographic challenge has had huge ramifications for how pastors are viewed and treated, for parochial schools, and for many other areas.

Church planting, congregational renewal, outreach for the salvation of souls, care of families, and the continued witness of a church body that gets the Gospel right, are beyond vital. H. C. Schwan (3rd LCMS President) spoke to the convention: "On Preserving Unity While Avoiding Either Faddishness or Sluggishness." That says it all. I say we get back to basics: Law/Gospel preaching; quality worship; active and empowered laity — in short: Witness, Mercy, Life Together. Let's play to our strengths. Let's be Lutheran. ■

Maier Responds

I'd like to answer that question by telling this brief story I remember reading or hearing. The story was about two brothers who each had

a son. For their sons' Spring Break they decided to go fishing at their favorite summer fishing hole in north Texas. To make it more fun the four of them decided to also camp in the camper on the rear of the truck of one of the brothers. Everything was fine and dandy until rising early the next morning with the expectation of a full day of fishing ahead of them, they opened the camper door and experienced an early north Texas spring storm with snow and 30 MPH winds. They closed the camper door and decided to play cards the rest of the day. The also did a little bit of drinking to pass the time. It wasn't an all-bad day, talking about fishing and how they would rather be on the water. The next morning the weather was just as bad with a little snow and a whole lot of rain. They spent their time like the previous day playing cards, doing a little reading, getting on each other's nerves all the more. By supper that night, with the wind a little warmer but still blowing, they not only stayed inside and didn't fish, but jabbed at each other with cutting comments and sarcasm and began "fighting." So they packed up and went home.

The "moral" of the story was, "When fisherman don't fish, they fight."

We've to stop fighting each other. God has called us to "fish," (Matthew 4:19; Mark 1:17) to take the truths of Scripture, especially that God loves the world - God loves sinners (even a one like me), to take that Gospel message - which is still the power of God unto salvation – and declare it to the world. To be sure doctrine is important. Our Synod's first President, C.F.W. Walther, recognized good doctrine as tantamount to a farmer having and sowing good seed: it is the only way to ensure a good harvest. BUT, having good seed, we must sow it (Matthew 28:18-20) – (we must fish), demonstrating our concern for those who face a

Christless eternity! I believe that God wants us to spend more time finding better methods for equipping, encouraging, and supporting our laity in the mission work within our neighborhoods and communities – especially as we face the rise of secularism and Islam – and less time examining the doctrinal purity and practice of others. *How we relate to one another says much about our theology, our God, and our relevance to the world.* (Cf.1 John 4:7-16). ■

Mueller Responds

Our greatest theological challenge is faithfully to live in our confession of Christ and His Word. What does this mean? We are heirs of an incredible treasure! Our Lutheran confessions are not over the Word of God, but we are pledged to them unconditionally because they drive us deeper into the Word. They extol Christ alone as Savior and, properly read, also drive us out into the world to bring this good news to all who will hear. This is why I am a Lutheran! Our theology keeps us in the Word of God and does the best job of bringing the healing Gospel of Christ to hurting and broken people. There is no dichotomy between doctrine and mission. If you count yourself "confessional," that's great! Now get out there and "confess!" If you see yourself as "mission-driven," wonderful! It's the command of Christ, now be sure you are out there with the "good stuff," the real treasure that God gives by grace alone, for the sake of Christ alone, received through faith alone in the One who died and rose for all. "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). We are called to believe this message ourselves, and challenged to move out into our communities and into a world of hurting people. ■



How would you work to bring greater unity to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod?

Harrison Responds

The Synod has been remarkably peaceful, especially for a convention year. Of course, we are not at all where we need to be. We began the Koinonia Project 2.5 years ago. Many districts, circuits and congregations are participating.* These groups have formed for clergy of differing views to come together to pray, talk and work toward greater unity for the sake of the Gospel. They follow the pattern used to bring unity to our Lutheran Church just after Luther died:

1. identify the points at issue;
2. state clearly the areas we confess together;
3. state clearly what we reject;
4. identify future action taken together, on the basis of Scripture and our Confessions.

We have gained an understanding as these groups have jelled with some groups accomplishing more than others. Most important has been pastors sitting down to talk in the spirit of Christian love, studying the Scriptures. I expect this summer's convention to heartily endorse the Koinonia Project, and that it will expand and produce good things.

I also expect that the Lord may well bring about greater unity among us, quite despite ourselves! As the climate for Christianity becomes more and more hostile in the U.S., we have been faced with intrusions on our religious freedoms, including: the HHS mandates that threaten the very existence of our health plans; gay marriage, which will become a major challenge to our ability to act according to our biblical convictions, both privately and in our church institutions; limitations on our military chaplains; the Hosanna Tabor Supreme Court case — which showed us the willingness of the government to intrude on the church's ability to hire commissioned ministers; increasing reports of IRS intrusions; and more. The Lord will use these difficulties to unite us. I noted this in the wake of my testimony before Congress last year. ■

Maier Responds

Unity is a gift of God. (Uniformity is not.) It is a wonderful gift, a blessed “grace” accomplished by the working of the Holy Spirit. God has chosen to work through the Means of Grace (the Word of God, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper) to bestow the blessing of salvation and all the other blessings that come with and through our salvation through faith in Jesus.

What a joy it would be to recognize that it pleases God when we live together in unity (Psalm 133:1).

Therefore, I would ask that, as a denomination, we find a time where we would repent of our sins — naming them, especially our sins against one another. It would then be my prayer and something that I would regularly emphasize, that we spend daily time meditating on God's Word where the Holy Spirit works and continues to transform us (Romans 12:2). Part of that regular emphasis and encouragement would be that we celebrate that unity and, through His power, pray for, and deliberately work towards, defending and maintaining His gift of unity. ■

Mueller Responds

The 2010 Convention of the Synod made significant adjustments in how we structure the work of the national Synod. We are still living into those changes and need to continue doing so. At the president's direction, we have been working to develop what we call the “Koinonia Project” designed to work toward resolution of some of those issues that cause dissension among us.

This effort to bring people together in theological discussion under the Word of God needs to grow into the future.

I believe one of the most important efforts we need to make along with the “Koinonia Project” is the strengthening of evangelical visitation. To that end, we could change the title “circuit counselor” back to “circuit visitor.” Counselors wait for people to come to them. Visitors, well, they visit. We need to develop evangelical visitation more effectively from the president on down. Where it is going well, we need to lift it up. Where improvement is needed, we need to encourage it. Effective visitation under God's Word can build toward unity for the sake of the mission. We are accountable to Christ and to one another. Whatever hard decisions in your future, in your congregation's future, we can face them with Christ-given courage. God gives His gifts freely and liberally! We are “baptized for this moment!” ■



**See the President's Report for the convention in the Convention Workbook, pages 1–13, available online at <http://www.lcms.org/convention>, where numerous participants are noted.*

Much is said — and written — about membership losses in the LCMS, with a failure on the Church's part to be ‘relevant’ to Christians in today's world being a strong contributing factor. How do you envision we change the culture of the Church to close the back door?

Harrison Responds

The culture is changing at such a rapid pace that some days it feels as though we can hardly keep up. The recent Pew Forum study of those with no religious affiliation demonstrates that America is on the same religious trajectory of decline that Europe suffered a generation and a half ago. And you can bet that many of the 1 in 3 under age 30 who are unaffiliated with a church include former LCMS Lutherans! The same study, however, tells us that fully 25% have traditional views on marriage etc., and that fully 10% are seeking a church. Regarding the “back door,” nearly half of those we baptize don't make it to church or Sunday School, and again a large percentage of those we confirm don't make it into regular attendance. The good news is, however, that among Protestants we have among the highest rates of retention among youth and again among those who do attend regularly. We also know that among all Protestants, our young people have among the highest positive views of their congregations.

There are many things for us to do. First, I've begun a thorough demographic study of the decline. There are a lot of myths floating about the Synod regarding causes for decline. It's also a sad fact that there is no comprehensive database for us to measure the efforts of the last 40 years to stem the decline. We need facts, not myths and hunches. Then, back to basics: back to Bible and catechism; a renewed emphasis on solid Law/Gospel preaching; helping clergy to hone their pastoral skills (continuing education requirements for clergy are being proposed at convention); evangelism, especially by our capable laity. We are emphasizing evangelical visitation by local pastors, circuit counselors, district presidents, and the Synod president—to encourage, admonish, comfort, and invite into the mission. Visitation and care is

especially vital to “close the back door!” As this happens more and more, two things will be vital: 1. Repentance. My sinful flesh gets in the way of the Gospel. Too many of our congregations are wracked with controversy and discord. And 2. Prayer. Jesus said prayer is the most important thing for the sake of mission. “Pray the Lord of the harvest send workers” (Matt. 9:38). And He will. ■

Maier Responds

It seems that many of our losses are from the younger generations or from those they influence. As I've talked with them, it's not that they don't see what we are doing in our world with what we believe, or worse yet, that we are content with being “right” in what we believe, but don't want to share it. They are action orientated. They truly do embrace Luther's “Here I stand”; but they also want to embrace and obey Jesus' “Here we go” (Matthew 28:18-20). It's a dilemma for them.

Today, the “Here we go” can best be accomplished through ‘acts of mercy’ directed towards those both within and outside of the church. This would be a deliberate way of letting our light (God's light within us, or reflecting His light) “shine before men, that they may see [y]our good deeds and praise [y]our Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16). We would be (and should be) living in such a way that we gain the privilege of sharing what motivates us — the love of God (2 Corinthians 5:14), and then also be able to point to the hope within us (1 Peter 3:15).

The interesting thing is, the church is always relevant because it has Jesus and the truth of the Word of God. People need to see and hear about what's real and there is nothing more real or true than the message of the Gospel. But in the past, believing in Jesus and embracing the Word of God has been “comfortable” — very comfortable. Because of the challenges of this present age and the “shots”

— many of them major — taken at the Lord and our beliefs, we are not engaging our community with that truth spoken (witnessed) or shown through acts of mercy. We need to share our faith, be equipped to defend our faith, and be ready — with joy — to suffer for our faith. (See Acts 5:41) I think we will begin to stop our back door losses when we decide that God and His Word and His power and love are worth more to us than our “comforts”. ■

Mueller Responds

Our first order is to repent — to repent of our indifference to the needs of people and our slowness to believe that the Word of God truly works! Receiving His forgiveness, Christ calls us then to pray — “The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few, therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (Matthew 9:37-38). Why? Because Christ has promised to hear! And as we continue to pray, we will find that God intends to use us to support those workers He wants to send, and perhaps He also intends to send you and me! This also points to the need to visit and strengthen our congregations in God's Word. Healthy congregations reach out. Healthy congregations support missions (and seminaries!) beyond themselves. Healthy congregations help people see we are “baptized for this moment!” Healthy congregations do everything possible to reach the people around them with the Good News. And God is working it, in many ways and places across the Synod. People fed in the Word see the “fields white unto the harvest” (John 4:35), see the opportunities the world is presenting us to bring Christ-centered Lutheran theology. We seek to plant and revitalize distinctively Lutheran congregations, congregations that live out what we confess. Why? That's where the comfort is for hurting and broken people — in Christ alone. ■





How can we best be in the world today witnessing the love of Jesus f or all and being partners with our communities in times of crises?

Harrison Responds

I've been criticized for how I handled the Newtown crisis. That's fair. I'm not Jesus. I apologized for not handling it in a way that would have avoided so much negative public attention. However, let me point out two things: District President Yeadon and Pastor Morris handled this matter together under the cross and are at peace. The Council of Presidents published a unanimous statement of support for how we dealt with the matter together as brothers. Most significantly (unlike previous high profile events), there have been no charges filed. It's over.

As the former executive of LCMS World Relief and Human Care for a decade, I have very personally experienced the fact that world is beset by tragedy — tsunamis, bombings, shootings, tornados and in your case, hurricanes. We stood with Florida-Georgia in the heavy seasons in the mid 2000s. In these moments of tragedy, in particular, we as the Church have the blessing and challenge of being the mouth and hands of Jesus Himself. We remind the hurting that our Lord suffered for them. And we act in mercy. That's what Jesus did! (Mark 1:14-40).

As a former inner city pastor and founder of a nationally recognized neighborhood renewal effort, I know very well what the "rough edge of mercy" looks like. I know very well that we must be side-by-side with hurting people (Matt. 11:28). We in the LCMS have defined certain parameters for our participation in public worship, particularly with non-Christian religions. Luther said, "Doctrine is heaven. Life is earth." The teaching of the Bible stays the same, but life gets messy as we face horrible situations. If we step over an agreed-upon line from time to time, the remedy is easy. "Forgive me. I'm sorry for the offense. I acted for the sake the Gospel." Response: "I understand dear brother. Forgiven! Now how can I help you most?" "Pray for us, that God may open a door for the Word." ■

Maier Responds

We can best be in the world today by NOT waiting for crises to be a part of our communities. We should daily and deliberately be living out our faith, individually and as congregations, through acts of mercy and other demonstrations of God's love.

When crises come to our communities we would already be known for who we are — bearers of God's love, "doers" of God's love — and for what we believe. James 2:17-18 is helpful here: In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do."

We do not necessarily have to demonstrate our love for Christ and our partnership in our communities by officially joining in civic events or worship services when crises occur. However, I am also aware that every situation is different, and that from a distance I personally do not know all of what has transpired when crises occur in different communities. I also trust our highly trained clergy to make appropriate, God-honoring, decisions. ■



Mueller Responds

We cannot hide from today's world. The church must be out there in every way possible with a clear witness for Christ — with mercy and care at every opportunity — fueled by a life together in the Word of God and the blessed Sacraments, where Christ unites us to Himself.

Every congregation is placed right where God wants it, and is surrounded by people who do not know Jesus, or have become disconnected from Him. Synod and district support congregations in confessing Christ clearly while reaching out with passion to care for people. Witness without care falls flat. Mercy works apart from a clear witness are incomplete. And if a congregation (or Synod!) cannot live together in love, drawing from its communion with Christ, we will consume one another and have nothing left for witness and mercy. Authentic proclamation of the cross coupled with untiring care for people are the ways Christ connects with the world through us. Pastors and congregations need to be involved in our communities without compromise. We cannot participate in idolatry (1 Corinthians 10:14), or allow what we say or do make it seem as though Christ is one choice equal to many others. Christ alone rose from the dead and has the keys of death and hell (Revelation 1:18). At the same time, we must be visible in positive ways. ■

What do you see as the future of the LCMS?

Harrison Responds

This is a profound moment for the LCMS. We will continue to be challenged greatly by our times and culture. There simply are no easy answers. When I became president, we were borrowed against designated moneys some \$16 million. The Synod cannot operate that way. Currently that number is down to \$4.5 million and headed toward elimination.

We have streamlined and improved our national operations, from top to bottom. It is time to get our financial house in tip-top order so that we can have the flexibility to act nimbly as the mission demands. We must also like never before be accountable to one another and encouraging our districts, circuits, and congregations to be in mission.

We are observing a "tectonic shift" in world Lutheranism. Lutherans all over the world, tired of the loss of biblical substance in old partnerships, are coming to us. The Mekane Yesus Church of Ethiopia has asked that we provide leadership for their seminary system. They report 6.2 million members and will need thousands of new pastors over the next ten years. We have acted and provided them personnel. Our seminaries, universities, LLL, LWML, our many districts (like Florida-Georgia with its significant international relationships) are tremendous assets. The path ahead is difficult, but we are baptized for this moment.

My folks have been wintering in Florida the past few years. The first Sunday there, the pastor kindly introduced them. After church, a well-meaning woman came up to my mother and said, "We pray for your son every Sunday." Just as Mom was ready to thank her, she continued, "Is there some problem?" That gave us a really wonderful belly laugh! But it does point to a profound truth. "Pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest" (Matt. 9:38). Do you pray for your pastor? He needs it. Do you pray for your district and Synod? We need it! Pastors, do you pray for your people?

May the Lord Jesus drive us all to our knees so that we pray for the salvation of souls and for each other. "Seek ye first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). "Pray for us, that God may open a door for the word" ■

Maier Responds

I know, because of God's promises in His Word to us, that if we humbly turn to God in repentance, ask His forgiveness for where we have done wrong, and seek His kingdom and righteousness first (Matthew 6:33) God has an amazing and awesome plan for us: "I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:11).

I am convinced of this because by His "great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade — kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed." 1 Peter 3:3-7. This can be, and will be, our blessed future because God "is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us." Ephesians 3:20 Therefore, "to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen." (Ephesians 3:21. ■

Mueller Responds

The future of the Missouri Synod is in Jesus Christ, and the Spirit-given confession of His name before the world. We have a future because Jesus is leading us into the future. I have had the privilege of serving as pastor in three different congregations for a total of 15 years, plus the privilege of serving as a district president. Our future in Christ will grow from the Spirit's work in the Word through pastors, commissioned ministers and congregations joyfully serving in Christ's name.

Despite all the challenges before us, our future in Jesus is full of joy. Not only the joy that awaits us at Christ's return, but the great joy now of preaching law and Gospel, teaching all that Jesus gave us, visiting, caring for people, baptizing young and old, giving out Jesus' body and blood, living for Christ, serving in witness, mercy and our life together.

Most amazing of all is seeing the work of God's Spirit in His Word to move people from unbelieving skepticism to firm faith in Jesus Christ, a work of God at least as miraculous as raising the dead! But my greatest joy and hope for the future is simply to be found in Christ myself — together with my family and those God will give — to be raised with Christ, who gave Himself that we might be His forever. ■





Elections in the upcoming LCMS National Convention will expand the church body's Praesidium from five to six – a full-time First Vice President who works out of the St. Louis headquarters and five Regional Vice Presidents.

In the past, Vice Presidents Two through Five were elected by Convention delegates with no regional requirements. Effective with the 2013 Convention, the LCMS has been divided into five regions, each to be represented by a Vice President elected by the delegates for those geographic boundaries.

Florida-Georgia is part of the East-Southeast Region — Region Five, which also includes the New England, Atlantic, Eastern, Ohio, New Jersey, Southeastern and Southern Districts as well as congregations in Ontario and Quebec, Canada. SELC and English District congregations belong to the region in which they are geographically located.

East-Southeast Region Vice President nominees are:

Rev. Dr. David D. Buegler of Avon, OH. A 1972 graduate of Concordia Theological Seminary-



Rev. David Buegler officially inaugurates the B.D. (Bachelor of Divinity) program at Concordia Seminary during his service as Fifth VP of the LCMS

Meet the Five Candidates for

Springfield, Buegler from 1988 until 1996 served as Ohio District President. He was an LCMS Vice President from 2004 through 2010, and a past member of the Board of Regents for Concordia Theological Seminary-Fort Wayne.

Buegler, who has served congregations in Michigan and Ohio and is the former Executive Director for the Cleveland Lutheran High School Association, is a Trustee for Fairview/Lutheran Hospitals, Cleveland Clinic and a member of the Board of Directors for P.O.B.L.O. International Muslim Outreach and Community West Foundation, Cleveland. He and his wife, Susan, have two children. ■



Rev. Dr. Jon T. Diefenthaler finished his service as SE District President in 2012

Rev. Dr. Jon T. Diefenthaler of Columbia, MD. Diefenthaler, who graduated from Concordia Seminary-St. Louis in 1969, was Southeastern District President from 2003-2012 — serving as Vice Chair of the Council of Presidents from 2009-2012. He was an Assistant Professor at Concordia Theological Seminary-Springfield from 1972-1975.

Diefenthaler, who served congregations in Iowa, Virginia and Maryland, has been on the LCMS Board of University Education and on the Commission on Theology and Church Relations as well as on the Lutheran World

Relief Board of Directors. He is now on the Board of Directors for Luther Institute. Diefenthaler and his wife, Helene, have four children. ■

Rev. Dr. Robert T. Kuhn of Oviedo, FL. A 1963 graduate of Concordia Seminary-St. Louis,



Rev. Robert Kuhn is on the LCMS Board of Directors

Kuhn from 1995 until 2000 was First Vice President of the LCMS, assuming the President's office during 2001. The former Assistant Director of Development for Concordia University Chicago, he was Central Illinois District President from 1985 through 1995. Kuhn, who has served various congregations in Illinois, has been a member of the LCMS Board of Director since 2001 and will leave that position effective with this Convention. He and his wife, Judith, have three children. ■



Rev. Gerhard C. Michael Jr. is Executive Director of Luther Institute, Southeast Asia

Region Five Vice President

Rev. Dr. Gerhard C. Michael Jr. Michael, whose first call after his 1965 graduation from Concordia Seminary-St. Louis was as a missionary to Japan, was Florida-Georgia District President from 1997 until 2009. He served congregations in Wisconsin and in Georgia. For many years a member of the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations, Michael has also served on the Oversight Committee for DELTO and SMP Programs and is on the Board of Trustees for Lutheran Haven-Oviedo. He is the Executive Director of Luther Institute, Southeast Asia, a position he has held since 2011. He and his wife, Joan, have six children. ■

Rev. Dr. Dien Ashley Taylor of Bronx, NY. Taylor, a 2000 graduate of Concordia Seminary-St. Louis, is the Assistant to the President of the Atlantic District and pastor of Redeemer Lutheran-Bronx. He was elected First Vice President of the Atlantic District at the 2012 convention. Taylor was on the Concordia College-Selma Board of Regents from 2007 through 2012. He is a member of the Clergy Coalition of the 47th Precinct Community Council in New York City. ■



Rev. Dr. Dien A. Taylor was a Bible study leader for the LCMS' 64th Regular Convention

2013 National Offering Recipients Announced

Every three years, a synodwide financial gathering called the National Offering launches during triennial Convention worship services. The five gift designations for the 2013-16 triennium — each with a \$200,000 goal — are:

Together As Synod

These unrestricted gifts can be combined with other donations and invested where needed most according to the financial and programmatic priorities approved by Synod's Board of Directors. These gifts are one of the most cost-effective ways to deploy resources at the national and international levels. They are tightly monitored as they are expended and audited for appropriate use.

LCMS Global Mission

Restricted to supporting the work of the Offices of National Mission and of International Mission, these gifts will supply resources whenever and wherever specially designated gifts are not readily available. Immediately deployable, LCMS Global Mission gifts will sustain, strengthen and expand efforts both at home and abroad. Gifts are used according to the prioritized plans of each Office and in compliance with policies established by their respective, elected boards.

Lutheran Malaria Initiative

These funds will help empower LCMS mercy teams to join in a coordinated battle to end malaria deaths in Africa by 2015 — in ways that shine the light and hope of the Gospel on afflicted homes and communities. LMI focuses on education, prevention and effective, affordable treatments for malaria.

The Joint Seminary Fund

Over the past decades, the amount of unrestricted funding available through Synod's annual budget to support its seminaries has declined. Offerings to the Joint Seminary Fund will be disbursed to Concordia Theological Seminary/Fort Wayne and Concordia Seminary/St. Louis. Gifts are equitably divided between the two seminaries according to an agreed-upon formula and are unrestricted income available for use as their Regents see fit.

Global Seminary Initiative

This effort brings eligible partner church pastors to LCMS seminaries for advanced theological education and helps send LCMS seminary faculty to partner church seminaries. The Global Seminary Initiative also supplies the essential theological resources needed by students and professors in a partner church seminary.

LCEF Community Demographic Studies Help Congregations Plan & Grow

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!

Resources Available

Analysis Tools: Choose from preset geographies such as ZIP codes, U.S.

Census tracts, cities or counties or from your own custom geographies for reports.

Reports: The user-friendly, four-page **QuickInsite** Report provides just enough information for a first look at your area. A **FullInsite** report provides 18 pages of community demographic information integrating data, graphs and text analysis. The **ExecutiveInsite** Report provides a strategic analysis of your area around 12 "insites" that are essential for ministry planning. All data provided by MissionInsite contains current-year updates for population, households and families in the study area as well as age, income, ethnicity, phase of life (generational) and MOSAIC segmentation (lifestyle) information. Many variables are integrated into five-year projections.

ViewPoint: "Insite" into the beliefs, values and lifestyle preferences of the community selected. ViewPoint provides 120 current variables for religious practices, lifestyle preferences, personal preferences, life concerns and well-being, social values and charitable contributions. **Optional Congregant Plotting:** Plot your current church members/visitors on a custom map you create.

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Second National Student Marketing Competition Draws Six Team Participants

For the six Concordia University System teams who participated in the 2013 LCEF National Student Marketing Competition (NSMC), it was a chance to present the results of hours of research, planning, writing and rehearsing with the goal of impressing the panel of five judges and taking home a cash prize.

For a second year, the team from Concordia University-Irvine took the top honors in the April 12 competition held at the LCMS International Center. The team presented a creative plan that included the tagline "Making a Difference through Stewardship."

The NSMC builds upon the strong relationship LCEF has with Concordia universities and, as LCEF President/CEO Richard C. Robertson said, the students provide valuable insight into building awareness among younger members of the LCMS.

"All of these fine schools share with us ideas for our future," he said of the competition. "We want to stay relevant."

Earning second place was the Concordia University-Texas team, with third place awarded to the Concordia University-St. Paul team.

Also competing were teams from Concordia University-Chicago, Concordia College-New York and Concordia University-Wisconsin.

The teams worked throughout the semester researching and designing marketing campaigns meant to attract new LCEF investors from the Concordia University System, then traveled to St. Louis to present their final work. Each team delivered a polished 20-minute presentation of their strategic plans, creative work and budgets and participated in a question-and-

answer session with the judges. The students also watched the other teams present and attended chapel at the International Center.

The competition is an integral part of the students' class grades, as they learn from the experience through the task as well as receiving judges' feedback and videos of their presentations. LCEF provides cash prizes ranging from a \$5,000 first-place award to \$750 participation prizes. This is the second year LCEF has offered the competition. ■

Shown in photo above: Concordia-Irvine team members (l-r) Angelina Ortiz, Meghan Jones, Melissa Merrill and Caitlin Zank presenting their marketing plan. Their faculty advisor is Carolyn Shiery, assistant professor of marketing

LCEF A Place to Grow

Empowering ministries in Kingdom work is what happens through the dedicated investors at Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF). As your LCEF investments grow, so do the resources and services that are used to equip ministries in embracing God's plan and sharing His love.

Be a part of LCEF, where individuals and ministries come together to grow in the Lord.

Learn more today about LCEF as your place to grow.

Lutheran Church Extension Fund
Florida-Georgia District

Daniel J. Reichard, District Vice President
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lcef.org



www.facebook.com/lutheranchurchextensionfund



Burning Bush Outreach Center Opens Three Blocks from Grace/Winter Haven

“When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments” (2 Timothy 4:13).

The passage above, written by St. Paul to his friend Timothy, was

Relying upon volunteer labor to organize, catalog and mail out the books, each order that is filled contains a Christian tract. However, in recent months we experienced some positive growing pains. The

stock of books grew to more than 50,000 and it became limiting to locate books to mail out from several

the doctor did not bid! And the electrical contractor ceased bidding before our “limit” was exceeded. The house was obtained at a very favorable price.

Located at 112 Avenue D SE in Winter Haven, we have named the property **“Burning Bush Outreach Center.”** The building is in need of some general repairs, but it has great potential for several different kinds of Gospel outreach in addition to its primary use for “Books for Missions.” We will be looking for different types of volunteers to help us with this new mission

likely penned from a cold, dungeon in Rome. Paul needed the warm cloak which had been left behind – and he needed his scrolls, the ancient equivalent of books. We don’t know what the scrolls contained, but undoubtedly they were important to Paul for mission work, even as he languished in that cold, dark cell in Rome, awaiting execution.

Can we say that he needed Books for Missions? I think so! And that is the name of a new ministry which has formed in association with Lutherans in Jewish Evangelism.

Rev. Kermit Rickenberg, Branch Leader of Lutherans in Jewish Evangelism/Central Florida, established and leads the project. Books for Missions accepts donations of used and new books, then sells them on the Internet. The profits are used to support the mission work of LIJE, and in the future we anticipate that we will be able to fund other missions as well.

storage lockers in central Florida. A central location was needed



with sufficient storage space.

God provided. In March we were able to close on a bank-owned commercial property in Winter Haven, just three blocks from Grace Lutheran Church. We believe God helped us at the auction. Two other parties were bidding against us: a Jewish doctor whose clinic is next door to the property, and an electrical contractor. As the bidding proceeded, surprisingly

project: bibliophiles to sort, catalog and mail out books; carpenters and painters to help renovate the building; and above all folks who will “bring the scrolls (books).”

For further information contact Rev. Kermit Rickenberg at PastorRickenberg@yahoo.com and pray for us that the “Burning Bush Outreach Center” will be used by God to bring the good news of Messiah Jesus to many people. ■

Daughter Spotlights Need for Church to Help Single Mothers

When Katie DeWitt stood during the announcements portion of Sunday worship at Lutheran Church of the Redeemer-Sanford, FL, she shared news that was likely never expected from the pastor’s daughter.



Katie DeWitt looks forward to being a friend and mentor to women at the Redeeming Life Maternity Home who lack the support of faith and family that helped her when she was expecting Warner, now 3.

“I don’t remember my exact words, but I was going to be showing soon so I needed to let the congregation know about the baby and, more importantly, I needed their support,” said Katie, the daughter of Rev. Edward and Sheryl DeWitt. “It was one of those things where I think the Holy Spirit was guiding me to go ahead and get it out there.”

The Florida State University graduate had returned home with two bachelor’s degrees (in business finance and business management), a baby on the way and no wedding ring. Although Katie had told her parents about her unplanned pregnancy, the couple was surprised when she announced

it to the congregation. But they understood.

“She didn’t need them to forgive her, because she already knows she is forgiven, but she needed their support,” Sheryl said. Four years later, Katie, 26, serves on the board of Redeeming Life Maternity Home, the Christ-centered program for single, expectant mothers that Redeemer plans to renovate and open this coming August.

“If I didn’t have the support of my family and my faith, I don’t know how I would have made it,” Katie said. “I had a college education, a family that loves me, a congregation that supports me and a God who holds me — things that so many women don’t have.

“Because Christians condemn the sins of both sex before marriage and abortion, women who find themselves in situations similar to my own are often tempted to believe they have no place in the Church at all,” Katie continued. “When all we do is tell people what we are against, they never learn what we are about. This maternity home is an opportunity for the Church to share the grace we have all been given, and, for me, personally, an opportunity to return thanks.”

The six-bedroom maternity home — which Redeemer is using an LCEF loan to purchase — is located across the street from the church, with many multi-ethnic, low-income neighbors. The congregation is working closely with the local Crisis Pregnancy Center as its primary referral source. “Anyone can open a maternity home, but we are a Christian maternity home where we want to save lives physically and also for eternity,” Sheryl said. “We will actively share the love of Jesus.” Along with opportunities to grow in their faith, Redeeming Life will offer



Daniel J. Reichard with Sheryl DeWitt

women services to enhance their parenting and job skills.

Redeemer’s long-term vision includes providing housing for the mothers after they leave the home and starting a 24-hour child care ministry to help the women when they return to work. That ministry goal had been brewing with the DeWitts for years, long before their daughter’s unplanned pregnancy. Katie’s challenges helped motivate her parents and her congregation. “God put us in the right congregation at the right time,” Sheryl said.

Daniel J. Reichard, LCEF Vice President of the Florida-Georgia District, continues to work with Redeemer, including the possibility of purchasing nearby duplexes for potential ministry expansion. Redeemer’s “sanctity of human life message is so powerful, it deserves — and needs — a helping hand from us all,” Reichard said of the home, which depends on donations and grants.

To learn more about Redeeming Life Maternity Home, visit www.rlom.org or call 407-625-9880. ■

A Life Found – Another Prodigal Story

By Helen M. Roenfeldt
Executive Director of Mission: Haiti

He found her just where he knew she would be, trapped by rubble, naked in the dust, filth and ashes. She was only barely breathing; her body bruised, bleeding, broken. As he cautiously moved the heavy chunks of debris that held her body fast he could hear her moaning.

Now he got knelt down beside her, gently examining each wound being careful to cause as little pain as possible. When he was satisfied that his assessment was complete he sat down and drew her into his lap, cradling her head to his chest.

“I love you, I am here,” he whispered as he brushed the dust from her once beautiful face. Her eyes opened to see his face of love, sorrow and compassion mixed with the joy of finding her alive.

She began to weep. “I’m so sorry,” she said through labored breathing. “I was deceived and seduced. I thought he loved me. That’s what he told me. He told me that I was the most beautiful woman in all the world and if I came with him he would fill my life with all my heart desired, anything I wanted would be mine. He called me his Jewel. I was young, foolish and oh, so proud.”

“I know,” he said.

“But then, before I knew it I was his slave and he gave me to other men, horrible men, who danced with me and called me desirable but then abused and discarded me. After awhile no one wanted me and my once great lover mocked me in my pain and suffering, calling me worthless, disgraced, and ugly.

“By then no one wanted me; he said, I was nothing to him and he beat me cruelly then threw me into the night with nothing but this empty diseased body.

“I staggered to this place, and here I lay down what is left of me to await my end. I hear

the people pass by me on the side and their voices burn through to my heart. They say, ‘Look at her there, the once proud, beautiful Haiti. She danced with a thousand but now she is less than nothing, no one wants her. Let her call to her lover and see if he will rescue her.’

“They mock me even in their stares and ask. ‘Get up and dance for us Haiti! Show us your beautiful clothes and your powerful lovers! Where is your husband, Haiti? Where are your children?’ It seems I have waited long for death to come. I deserve this; I have been proud and reckless, rebellious, selfish and stubborn. I am so sorry, so very sorry,” she sobbed as she wept bitterly against his chest.

“I have always loved you, precious Haiti, my daughter. I have been calling to you from the first day. You ARE my beloved, and I will heal



Pictured here are the contents of the “spell room” of a Voodoo priestess who came to faith in Jesus. To renounce her old life, everything in the room was burned while the local church sang hymns and danced with joy.

your wounds, replace all your sorrow with joy and make you my bride.”

As he lifted her she felt his strength and warmth. She knew he was not lying. She knew the sound of a lie, and this man could not lie. She saw a clear crystal basin, big enough for both of them, standing where nothing had been before, sparkling in the sun! Somehow, he walked directly inside, carrying her. As he laid her in the life-giving water, she was sure she saw, if only for an instant, the crystalline blue waters turn black as midnight, then red as blood before becoming clean and pure again.

She felt her strength return, her body heal and without realizing, she was standing, looking into the eyes of the One who saved her!

“My Lord and my God,” she cried out with a joyful voice. Then she laughed out loud. It had been so long since she had felt joy. Now they were laughing together! As the water and basin simply dissolved from around them, she found herself in a glistening white garment looking for all the world like a new maiden bride she wondered, “How can this be?”

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold the new has come,” the Lord Jesus Christ said as He smiled and took His jewel, Haiti, the once and now again beautiful, as they turned from the dust, filth and rubble of what was, toward what now will be.

Not the End, To the Glory of God, the Great I Am. ■

Note and acknowledgement: The concept of Haiti as an abused lover came from a powerful presentation by the Youth of Faith Lutheran Church, Gonaives, Haiti, and may be part of a common folk story. This talented and dedicated group of young adults works diligently to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a land of darkness. Please pray for them.

District Mission Grants Receive Funding

As Vice President for Mission Service, Carol Alberts has the pleasure of delivering checks to recipients of the 2012-2014 Biennium Mission Grants. Recently, Carol was able to deliver two such checks.

One went to Carpenter’s Hands, a project of Grace Lutheran-St. Petersburg, FL. This dedicated group of youth and some adults repairs homes for the elderly – painting, installing flower boxes,

replacing rotten boards, etc. Their goal is to refurbish a minimum of six homes by building porches and wheel chair ramps, and painting and repairing the exterior.

The second check went to Rebecca’s Hope, a mentoring and after-school program which offers a holistic

approach to addressing the immediate needs of youth in “at risk” settings across the country. They place their emphasis on the mind, body and spirit of the child, nurturing and encouraging each one to build on a foundation of Christ.

Carol Alberts (right) presents LWML mission grant check to Sanya Parson, program director of Rebecca’s Garden.



JARED P. HARTMAN (center), a member of the 2013 graduating class of Concordia Theological Seminary-Fort Wayne, is the new Associate Pastor of Youth & Outreach for Grace Lutheran-St. Petersburg, FL. He is shown here with his wife Kelly (left) and Florida-Georgia President Greg Walton.

2013 LWML Convention

Pittsburgh — WOW! The clock is ticking, but there is still time to register to attend the LWML Convention, June 27-30,

LWMLUPDATE

by Patricia Aamoth
Florida-Georgia LWML VP Communications

in Pittsburgh. You’ll want to be there when the LWML gathers in convention for worship, Bible study and a host of other activities.

A highlight of every convention is the joining of hearts and voices in worship. The proclaimer for the Sunday worship is Dr. Victor Belton, pastor of Peace Lutheran-Decatur, GA. Dr. Belton is a member of the LCMS Board of Directors and enjoys working with other pastors and leaders to plan and implement prayer initiatives for the Synod.

Much planning has gone into every detail to make certain this will be a convention to remember! You won’t want to miss being “Quenched! by the Water” to return home inspired and renewed! All registration and convention details can be found by visiting www.lwml.org/conventions. See you in Pittsburgh!

Florida-Georgia President Bunnie Koelsch, Vice President for Spiritual Growth Karen Bowers, Vice President for Mission Service Carol Alberts, Junior Pastoral Counselor Todd Shouse and all the Zone Presidents will be representing our District.

Please, join us in praying for God’s blessings and the Holy Spirit’s presence as the convention conducts the business of LWML and selects the Mission Grants recipients for the 2013-2014 Biennium. ■

Transforming Faith and Money for Mission

by Larry Schaefer, for the District Stewardship Committee

The Biblical definition of “stewardship” can better be understood by also defining the role of a “steward.”

Joseph was a “steward” – an overseer, first overseeing all of the affairs of Potiphar’s house, and second overseeing all of the affairs of the pharaoh (Genesis 39-41).

We are servants of Christ and stewards... (1 Cor 4:1). “Put what remains into order, and appoint elders in every town as God’s steward.” (Titus 1:7)

Biblical “stewardship” and “stewards” have a comprehensive focus on the Mission of the Church. We are servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. (1 Cor 4:1) We are

reconciled by God through Christ to God... entrusting to us the ministry of reconciliation. (2 Cor 5:18-19)

We are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us. (2 Cor 5:18-19) Jesus says go to all nations baptizing and teaching in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. (Matt 28:18-20)

We are guided by the stewardship of St Paul in Ephesians 3: 1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles -- 2 if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace which was given to me for you; 3 that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. 4 By referring to this, when

you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit ; 6 to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in

His Son, His Spirit, His Sacraments, His time, His talents, and His money and property. Yes, time and money are needed to complete the mission of the church. Biblical stewardship, however, is much larger than looking at the “M” word, Money; it is seeing the larger picture of the “M” word, Mission.

Ephesians 3:20 Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, 21 to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen. Ephesians 3:20



Christ Jesus through the gospel, 7 of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God’s grace which was given to me according to the working of His power. 8 To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, 9 and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; 10 so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.

Stewardship is the wise management of the mission of the Church. The disciples went forth, doing mission; believing God would provide all the resources: His Word,

Various stewardship resources are available on the Florida-Georgia District web site at <http://flgadistrict.org/stewardship-resources/>

Stewardship is the wise management of the mission of the Church. Biblical stewardship is much larger than looking at the “M” word; MONEY — it is seeing the larger picture of the “M” word: MISSION!

Facebook Initiative Against Identity Theft Launched

Thrivent Financial for Lutherans is launching a new Facebook initiative to help people protect themselves from identity theft. According to a 2012 Javelin Strategy and Research survey, more than one in 20 consumers were the victims of identity theft last year.

As a first step toward identity theft protection, Thrivent Financial will offer Facebook fans the chance to win an aluminum wallet that protects credit cards from radio frequency identification (RFID) readers. Each week until

June 30, fans can enter for a chance to win one of 1,000 wallets. Each week 150 wallets will be given away.

There will also be free articles about identity protection from a leader in consumer and business credit card reporting, as well as a link where members can enroll in one of two identity protection plans.

For more information or to check out the campaign for yourself you can visit [Facebook.com/Thrivent](https://www.facebook.com/Thrivent). ■



Randy Boushek, Thrivent Financial CFO

Thrivent Financial Moves Up on FORTUNE 500 List

For the 19th consecutive year, Thrivent Financial for Lutherans was named to FORTUNE magazine’s FORTUNE 500 list. The organization climbed up seven spots, based on annual revenues, to become the 325th largest company in the United States. The ranking was based on Thrivent Financial’s 2012 revenue of \$8 billion.

FORTUNE magazine listed Thrivent Financial as the sixth largest mutual life/health insurance organization in the United States and the 17th largest company headquartered in Minnesota.

“Our FORTUNE 500 ranking is just one sign of our ongoing strength and stability,” said Randy Boushek, chief financial officer of Thrivent Financial. “It is an affirmation of our commitment to success and the value we are able to provide our members.” ■



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1-866-380-0558

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Bethlehem Celebrates Ministry Milestone

A weekend celebration of love, remembrance and joy marked the 50th anniversary of Bethlehem Lutheran Church-Columbus. The festivities kicked off with a “Meet & Greet” spaghetti dinner on Friday night, with guest speaker Rev. Edwin Harkey and his wife, Miriam, of Lutheran Church of the Way/Raynham, MA, among the guests. Saturday’s banquet celebration at the Columbus Convention and Trade Center featured Harkey as the speaker, with LC of the Redeemer-Columbus Pastor Eric Estes offering the blessing of the meal and the benediction. Bethlehem Pastor Brad Arnholt opened the evening prayer; the celebration hymn was “Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus.”

A highlight of the evening was a surprise appearance and presentation by Georgia Congressman Sanford D. Bishop. Harkey assisted in Sunday’s celebration worship, with Arnholt preaching. At a fellowship after the service, Columbus Councilwoman Mimi Woodson presented the congregation with a City Proclamation. ■

Right: Rev. Ed Harkey at the banquet



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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
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

Peace-Decatur Reaches Out in Service

Georgia 85th District Representative Karla Drenner was on the Peace-Decatur campus on Saturday, April 13, for the 9am Eggs and Issues. That event kicked off a busy day on the Peace campus: from 11am until 3pm the congregation hosted the Partners in Action for Healthy Living EXPO. “A church encouraging and serving the community with

the Gospel, with food and with fellowship,” said Peace Pastor Victor Belton. “Thanks Jesus for the opportunity and thanks Jesus for willing servants.” Peace’s “willing servants” include Emma Burrus, who on Tuesday mornings is often found at home cooking soup and baking cornbread. After finishing in the kitchen, she drives from her home in Conyers to an apartment

complex a block away from Peace that is managed by the church. She brings the vats of soup and the fresh cornbread to a room in the apartment complex, where she and other volunteers serve meals to local residents in need. ■

Peace’s campus (below) was the site of the recent Partners in Action for Healthy Living EXPO.



St. John Saints Welcome Brock Marion as Head Football Coach

Former National Football League professional Brock Marion now heads the football program at St. John Lutheran-Ocala, FL. He started his first-ever official coaching position on January 1, 2013, replacing longtime local coach Dennis Meunier, who retired after the 2012 season.

Marion described his approach for *Ocala Magazine* as a “special program that combines spirituality with sportsmanship, and faith with football.” Marion is guided by his faith. He depended upon it during his 12 seasons in the NFL and is led by it as he now coaches the Saints. “My plan is to lead by example,” he said. “I cannot ask my players to do something I would not be willing to do myself.”

To be respected, Marion will respect first. He wants his players to always be prepared. He will show them first that he prepared and will expect them to be as well. One of the goals for the new coach is to instill character-building life lessons, such as how teamwork overcomes adversity. “Ultimately, whether they go on to play football beyond high school or not, these students will be prepared to deal with adversities of life through the discipline learned in sports



St. John Football Coach Brock Marion with one of the Saints.

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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

as well as through the Christian doctrine of the school,” he said. Marion enjoyed a 12-year career in the National Football League, including three Pro Bowl selections as a Miami Dolphin and two Super Bowl wins as a Dallas Cowboy. He bought an Ocala blueberry farm after retiring in 2005. The 42-year-old father of six said the opportunity to coach at St. John, a smaller Christian school, was the first offer that truly spoke to him after turning down several prior chances at other schools

to be a varsity assistant. He met Antony Fisher, St. John’s Athletic Director, in late 2012 at a charity game. A bit later he received the coaching offer from Fisher. After some prayer and contemplation, Marion accepted the offer. “He has all the football accolades,” Fisher told local media, “but I’ll go on record as saying football doesn’t define who Brock Marion is. It’s the Christian character that does, and that’s what’s special to us.” ■



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



ASCENSION LUTHERAN PRESCHOOL-Casselberry celebrated Founder's Day on April 25. Noel Lambert shared a message about Jesus during morning chapel. Students, faculty and guests all participated in the dedication of a new butterfly garden crafted in memory of Janet Neubauer, Ascension's pioneer preschool director.

FAITH LUTHERAN Church & School-Eustis earlier this year participated in the community celebration of the 111th Annual GeorgeFest, "Let Freedom Ring." The week-long celebration began on February 23 with a parade through Downtown Eustis. Faith's float proclaimed our freedom that comes through Christ Jesus.



GRACE LUTHERAN-Winter Haven recently sent more than 120 quilts, along with 69 Personal Care Kits, to Lutheran World Relief. Shown here with some of those hand-crafted quilts are (l-r) Karen Cokonougher, Elaine Cherry, Barbara Voll, Sue Andrews, Bobbie Goff and Linda Weburg.



Hope Lutheran-Plant City recently celebrated Teddy Bear Sunday, an annual event when members bring donated stuffed bears to church to be shared with those in need. Each bear is tagged with John 3:16. Previous recipients of those bears have included the Plant City Police and Fire Departments, Hope members serving in Iraq, school children in New York City following the 9-11 attacks, United Food Bank and Baptist Children's Homes. This year, Hope responded to a challenge to provide cuddly companions to patients at South Florida Baptist Hospital by donating almost teddy bears. "Teddy Bear Sunday is a great day for us to reach out into our community in a totally different, fun and exciting way," said Hope Senior Pastor Dean Pfeffer, "but most especially to touch those who may be going through a very difficult time and just need the love that one of these bears bring." ■



Steve Nierman, Chief Operating Officer of South Florida Baptist Hospital and a member of Hope's Elder's Ministry Team, with Hope members (bottom, l-r) Skyler and Caleb Christiansen, Alexis Christiansen, (back, l-r) Lana Hartmann, Keaira Griffin, Yulia Hartmann and Andrew MacDonald.



CHORISTERS from Milwaukee Lutheran High School added their songs of praise to Sunday worship at Prince of Peace-Orlando. The teens and their director were in Florida as part of their 2013 tour. ■

REGION 4 CONNECTIONS

BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN-Fort Myers welcomed 10 new members – representing six family units and including full-time and seasonal residents – during a recent Sunday worship. Pastor Darrell Stuehrenberg's sermon was titled, "God Says.... Do Something!!" and the adult choir sang the anthem, "We are the Church." Immediately after the service, the worshippers enjoyed a potluck brunch. Shown here are (front, l-r) Bob Vanderpool, Joanne Holt, Joanne & Darrell Erdman, Sharon Kranz, Lucille Schmalz, (back, l-r) Susan & Ron Hansing, John & Judy Wittenberg, Pastor Darrell Stuehrenberg. ■



Peace Receives 2013 Best of Naples Award

For the second consecutive year, Peace Lutheran Church & Early Learning Center won the 2013 Best of Naples Award in the Preschools category. Winners were determined based on information gathered internally by the Naples Award Program and data provided by third parties.

Nationwide, only 1 in 70 (1.4%) 2013 award recipients qualified as two-time winners.

Established as a ministry of Peace Lutheran Church, the Early Learning Center offers childcare for infants through Pre-K and is a state licensed Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten provider (VPK).

Peace Learning Center is located in a recently constructed 17,000-square-foot building. Cynthia Tillman is the director. ■



Christ Lutheran Marks 50 Years of Ministry

Christ Lutheran-Brooksville celebrated its 50th Anniversary on March 10 with an afternoon worship service and a catered dinner.

Florida-Georgia District President Greg Walton preached on transformation within the church and becoming a 21st century church. More than 200 people attended the dinner in the fellowship hall.

Christ Lutheran began as a mission led by a young minister from nearby Zephyrhills – Rev. Milan Weerts. He

was instrumental in helping a group of Lutherans meeting in a home in the Hill ‘n Dale development become a congregation that joined the LCMS in 1963. The first corporate service as Christ Lutheran was celebrated on Palm Sunday of that year.

A half century later, Christ Lutheran’s campus is located on more than five acres of land. Since its founding the congregation has been served by a number of ministers, with Rev. Richard Drankwalter leading the

parish for 20 years until he retired in early 2006. Drankwalter and his wife, Paula, attended the anniversary celebration along with several former pastors, wives and vicars.

One of five vicars trained at the church, Rev. Paul Meseke has been pastor of Christ Lutheran since the summer of 2006. ■



FAMILY FUN FEST 2013 – On Saturday, March 23, from 10am until 2pm, the Lutheran Church of the Cross and Lutheran Child Development-Port Charlotte held its annual free Family Fun Fest. One of the church’s outreach programs to the community, the event featured games, bounce house, slide and obstacle course, popcorn and cotton candy, crafts and ID fingerprinting. Also on site was a Touch-A-Truck event featuring trucks from various local companies and government agencies as well as motorcycles and classic cars. Children were provided free coloring books and balloons. Lunch – including ice cream – was provided at no charge to the 243 people – 99 of them children – who attended. ■



SHARING JESUS -- Members of Messiah Lutheran-Tampa host a luncheon for blind community residents on the fourth Saturday of each month. Volunteers pick up the six guests – including one Messiah member – and bring them to the church for lunch. “It is a time of friendship, networking and getting to know one another,” explained Messiah Pastor Jim Guelzow (far right in the photo). “We have a short Bible study after the luncheon then dessert. This ministry is a blessing to us and to the participants. It is just one more way of sharing Jesus and being the embodiment of His love.” ■

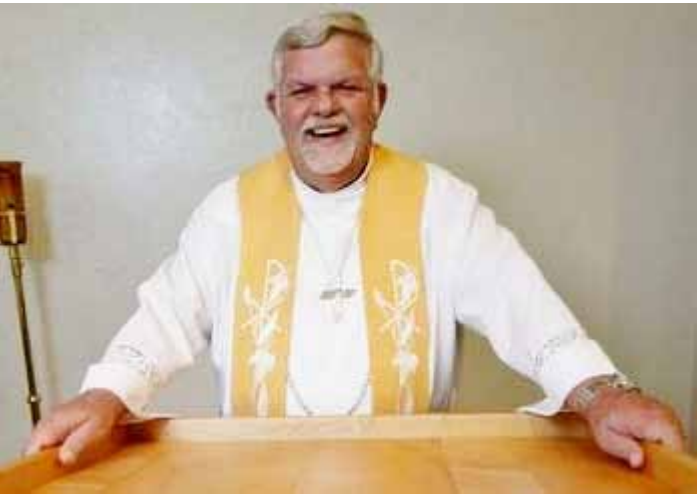
Trinity’s Norris Honored for 25 Years of Ministry

Rev. Richard Norris, pastor of Trinity Lutheran-Lake Placid and Heartland Circuit Counselor, was recently honored with a Proclamation of Recognition from the Highlands County Board of Commissioners in recognition of “his 25 years of service to the church and the community” during a dinner held in his honor.

The tribute was requested of the County Commission at the April 16 meeting by Trinity Lutheran Chairman Jack L. Richie, who has known Norris for almost 25 years and has been a friend for more than 15. The resolution was unanimously approved.

Norris, a New Jersey native, holds degrees from Concordia College New York and Concordia Theological Seminary-St. Louis. He served for five years as pastor of All Saints Lutheran-Billings, NY, before accepting the call to Trinity.

Norris has long been active in the community, including serving for a decade on the Highlands County School Board. In late 2011 he received his certification of completion for the Highlands County Sheriff’s Citizens Academy.



Rev. Richard Norris at Trinity’s pulpit.

training working with a rescue squad and as a certified EMT instructor in New York.

“Richard is a true leader and has given his heart and soul in service to the church and to the community,” said his wife, Susan, who started Trinity Tots Preschool 20 years ago.

“I am truly blessed to have walked beside him in his ministry for the past 33 years that we have been married.”

“I love these people,” Norris said of Trinity. “God has worked mightily in this congregation.”

Norris and his wife have four children: Timothy, Debbie, Brian and Sarah. ■

Y Y Y Y Y REGION 4 CONNECTIONS

Vice President: Rev. James Guelzow | Messiah/Tampa
Laitly Board Member: Mr. Jeff Richards | Hope/Brandenton
Commissioned Minister Board Member: Mr. Robert Ziegler | St. Michael/Fort Myers
Suncoast Circuit Counselor: Rev. David Brockhoff | Holy Trinity/Masaryktown
St. Petersburg Circuit Counselor: Rev. Arnold Piering | Emeritus/New Port Richey
Tampa Circuit Counselor: Rev. Kevin Yoakum | Christ the King/Riverview
Sarasota Circuit Counselor: Rev. Rossetter Leavitt | Beautiful Savior/Sarasota
SW Circuit Counselor: Rev. Jon Zehnder | St. Michael/Fort Myers



Y Y Y Y Y REGION 5 CONNECTIONS

Vice President: Rev. Steve Wiperman | Our Savior/Lake Worth
Laitly Board Member: Ms. Karen Smith | Peace/Okeechobee
Laitly Board Member: Ms. Nancy Volz/Our Savior-Plantation
Heartland Circuit Counselor: Rev. Richard Norris | Faith/Sebring
Treasure Coast Circuit Counselor: Rev. Kenneth Larson | Emeritus/Lake Worth
S Palm Beach Circuit Counselor: Rev. Douglas Fountain | Epiphany/Lake Worth
Gold Coast Circuit Counselor: Rev. Walter Volz | Emeritus/Plantation
Monroe-Miami-Dade Circuit Counselor: Rev. Alan Sielk | St. Paul/Miami



“He is a great person,” Richie said of Norris. “He has meant a lot to this community.

“He helps a lot of folks — he is a great Christian and has done a tremendous amount for the Sheriff’s Department through the Chaplain Unit.”

As head of the Sheriff’s Office Chaplain’s Unit, Norris works with three other area pastors to minister to the needs of the law enforcement employees and help with death notifications.

A volunteer with the Lake Placid Fire Department, Norris got his



REGION 5 CONNECTIONS

CELEBRATING THE RESURRECTION — Members and visitors of Immanuel/Tavernier gathered to celebrate Easter with services that began with sunrise worship on a cruise boat. The communion service, led by Immanuel Pastor Don Stier, was followed by a buffet breakfast. A second worship later than morning filled Immanuel's sanctuary. Stier reported that it was "the largest Easter attendance that I am aware of for Immanuel," with 86 at the sunrise service and 182 at the 10 am service – about 50 to 60 visitors. "This was a WOW Sunday in many ways," concluded Stier, shown here at the sunrise worship. ■

Pastors Collaborate on Outreach

Motivated by the desire to help his congregation more effectively reach out to members and beyond to the community, Trinity Lutheran-Fort Lauderdale Pastor Thomas Hackett invited four pastors to collaborate in a year-long program.

Those consultants include Rev. Dr. James Tino, Director of Global Lutheran Outreach; Rev. Kevin Ogle of Miramar Lutheran; Rev. Darrell



Rev. Tom Hackett

Stuehrenberg of Bethlehem-Fort Myers; and David Giesekeing, former Youth and Family Minister at Gloria Dei-Davie.

Located in Downtown Fort Lauderdale, Trinity is Broward County's oldest Missouri Synod congregation. It was begun in 1926 by Rev. Dallas Gibson, who served Trinity for 27 years before moving west about five miles to launch Faith. Hackett is the fifth pastor to serve Trinity, following Gibson, Rev. Dean Kasischke, Rev. Ralph Schmidt and Rev. Louis Abel.

Trinity Lutheran Academy is one of the oldest continuing parochial educational programs in Broward County. ■



Trinity Open Arms Helps Community

When Open Arms Early Childhood Learning Center was established by Trinity Lutheran-Fort Pierce in 2011, part of the mission was to help share with others to ensure a stronger community.

As a faith community, Open Arms Director Loretta Arensen and Trinity members decided to help with Feed My Sheep, a Mustard Seed Ministries program to help provide food for children and their families during summer months.

Trinity members helped gather items for the March 9 Feed My Sheep Auction, an effort supported by Arensen, her staff and the Open Arms students—who also created artwork to be matted, framed and sold at the auction.

Arensen noted that while the Open Arms students may not understand the impact their time and talent have on other children, "it's a way for them to become involved and learn to help others." ■

Shown above: The Feed My Sheep Auction Committee (l-r) Loretta Arensen, Director of Open Arms Early Childhood Learning Center; Pam Torell, Outreach Chairman and Co-Chair; BeBe Owen of Trinity Lutheran; Rev. Sharon Britcher of Mustard Seed Ministries; Claude Hesse, President of Trinity Lutheran; Dick Snook, CEO of Missionary Flights International.



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THE Back Page

Pastor Ron Schornhorst Honored

Rev. Ron Shornhorst led his last worship as Lake Oconee Lutheran pastor on April 28, just weeks after the congregation honored him at an April 13 retirement/ appreciation party. The festivities included a program and catered dinner.

Members and friends presented gifts and a special scrapbook to Shornhorst, who had served the congregation since its 2000 start. LOLC members Barney Ross and Bob Elkins led the program; Davis Mortensen, Kris Proper, Congregation President Dick Schneider, Music Director Brad Rudisail, Jerry Pailer and the LOLC Choir participated.

Echoing sentiments he expressed a few years ago about his LOLC ministry, Shornhorst said, "The Lord saved the best for last for me!"

According to Shornhorst, the satisfaction and pride he feels about his life now can be attributed to three things: a dear and loving family; a fulfilling parish ministry of more than 43 years; and being able to contribute to the local community through his service as law enforcement chaplain.

Shornhorst, who grew up in Evansville, IN, studied at Concordia Lutheran Junior College/Ann Arbor and Concordia Senior College/Fort Wayne. He met his wife Karen while both were students at Ann Arbor;

they married while he was a student at Concordia Seminary-St. Louis. Their son, Noel, is a graduate of Savannah College of Art & Design [SCAD] in Savannah.

Shornhorst served churches in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Arkansas and Oklahoma previous to his call to LOLC. After his arrival in Georgia, he became certified as a Chaplain after training



Pastor Ron Shornhorst

by the Peace Officers Standards and Training Council. His 10-year Chaplaincy has been "a blessing to the Putnam County Sheriff's Department," according to Sheriff Howard Sills.

The Shornhorsts plan to stay in Putnam County. He will continue to serve as Chaplain to the County Sheriff's Office as well as Chaplain for

Harmony Hospice in Eatonton. ■

A Gift From The Heart!

Now that the extra credit card bills from Christmas have (sometimes painfully) been paid, it might be the perfect time to make an adjustment from the heart and begin setting aside funds by using the monthly electronic deposit plan with LCEF's Family Emergency Steward Account. Along with this account being a perfect "rainy day" emergency fund account, it could also serve as an easy way to develop a Christmas fund. \$25 is all that is needed to begin this account with monthly electronic deposits to it of at least \$25 until the balance reaches \$10,000.

Wouldn't it be wonderful to head into next Christmas knowing you won't need to give your credit cards a workout? For more information on this LCEF investment — or any other type of investment — please visit www.lcef.org or contact us at the telephone number below.



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