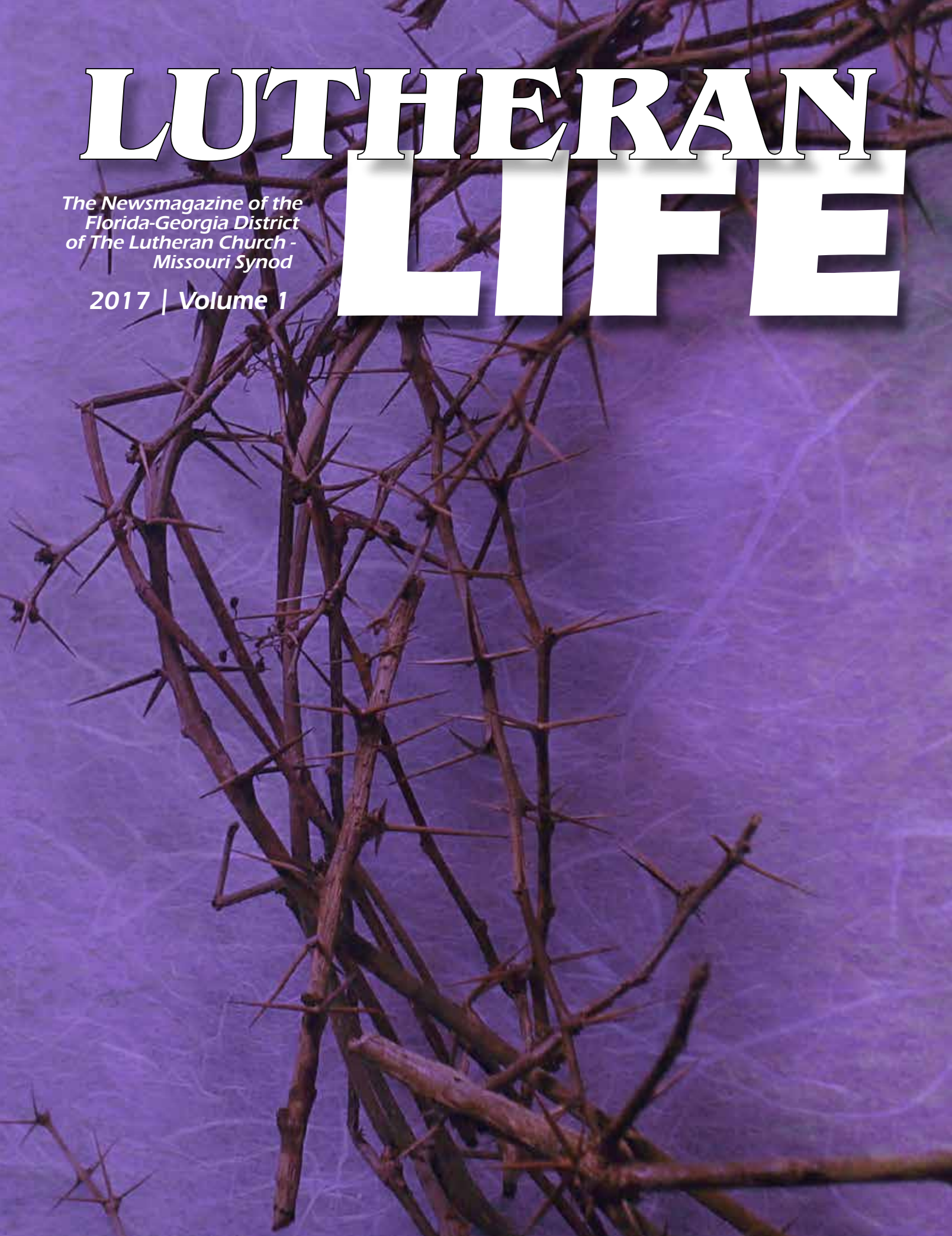


LUTHERAN LIFE

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

2017 | Volume 1





The Mission of the Florida-Georgia District is to serve, assist, and encourage congregations in the ministry of Jesus Christ. People of the Florida-Georgia District are equipped, empowered, engaged in the Master's business ... connecting people to Jesus. Lutheran LIFE is the official newsmagazine of the Florida-Georgia District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Lutheran LIFE is designed to inform LCMS church and school members of the activities, personalities and resources offered by the Synod and the District. Lutheran LIFE may also provide a forum for Lutherans to express their views and ideas on a wide range of topics. Lutheran LIFE is published bimonthly. News items and photos are encouraged. Please send scanned photos as a .jpg attachment rather than embedded in your emails. Or mail your photo print in a good quality resolution to our address below. Advertising is welcome and encouraged; rates and information are available from Lutheran LIFE's office. Changes of address including e-mail changes, additions or deletions should be directed to our office — if possible via e-mail: LutheranLife@aol.com

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Save The Date! September 28-30, 2017



- ✓ **EQUIPPED** with tools.
- ✓ **EMPOWERED** with others.
- ✓ **ENGAGED** in the world.

COME BE RE-FORMED AT THE FLORIDA-GEORGIA DISTRICT PRESIDENT'S EQUIP CONFERENCE!

District pastors, educators and lay members will come together in a conference that offers opportunities for professional church workers as well as practical workshops to train church members in congregational tasks. Breakout sessions will be offered for all leadership positions, offering practical, strategic and implementable ideas that will work in most congregations.

We invite you to be part of an energizing three-day event where you will be

EQUIPPED with the best of ministry tools available and **EMPOWERED** alongside hundreds of others **ENGAGED** in the world around you with the best news: *The Gospel of Jesus Christ!*

More information on speakers, breakouts and registration is coming soon. Visit our website for details:



Marriott Resort Sawgrass Ponte Vedra Beach, FL

CALENDAR

Hearts for Jesus
January - June, 2017
District Schools and Churches

Veterans of the Cross
March 6-8, 2017
Life Enrichment Center/Leesburg, FL

2017 LWML Convention
June 22-25, 2017
Albuquerque, NM

High School Youth Servant Event
July 9-15, 2017
Atlanta Area

President's Equip Conference:
Reforming Living Stones
September 28-30, 2017
Ponte Vedra Beach, FL

500th Anniversary of the Protestant Reformation
October 31, 2017

DISTRICT CAPSULES

by Greg Walton District President

Calling Congregations

Faith/Dunedin, FL.....Sole Pastor
Our Savior/Griffin, GA.....Sole Pastor
Faith/Hialeah, FL.....Sole Pastor
Our Redeemer/Lake City, FL.....Sole Pastor
Holy Trinity/Lutz, FL.....Sole Pastor
Marco Island/Marco, FL.....Associate Pastor
Woodlands/Montverde, FL.....Associate Pastor
Peace/Naples, FL.....Sole Pastor
Trinity/Orlando, FL.....Senior Pastor
St Paul/Peachtree City, GA.....Sole Pastor
Redeemer/Stuart, FL.....Associate Pastor
Trinity/Toccoa, GA.....Sole Pastor
Lakeside/Venice, FL.....Associate Pastor

Calls Issued

Faith/Dunedin, FL:
Rev. David Woolsey as Pastor

Our Savior/Griffin, GA:
Rev. Daniel Ramsey as Pastor

Trinity/Orlando, FL:
Rev. Mark Mueller as Senior Pastor

Lakeside/Venice, FL:
Rev. Adam Parvey as Associate Pastor

Calls Declined

Faith/Dunedin, FL:
Rev. David Woolsey as Pastor

Our Savior/Griffin, GA:
Rev. Daniel Ramsey as Pastor

Trinity/Toccoa, GA:
Rev. Thomas Beaverson as Sole Pastor

Lakeside/Venice, FL:
Rev. Adam Parvey as Associate Pastor

Transferred to Other Districts

Mr. Wynn T Derong Texas (C)
Mr. Lamar Q Stewart Southeastern (C)
Ms. Heather Bleier..... Texas (C)
Rev. John E Mackowiak Michigan (O)

Transferred from Other Districts

Ms. Kay A Jacobson..... Northern Illinois (C)
Rev. Jeffery C Moore Missouri (O)
Rev. James E Shaw Texas (O)
Mrs. Lisa Moore Missouri (C)
Ms. Judy E Patterson Indiana (C)
Ms. Lois E Lindeman English (C)
Mr. Ralph A Grewe Indiana (C)
Ms. Tamara Worthington Pacific Southwest (C)
Mr. Steven D Armbrust..... English (C)

Church Changes

King of Kings/Jasper, GA
Member of Atlanta North Circuit

Pelican Lutheran Church/Naples, FL
New church start, member of Southwest Circuit

Ordained/Commissioned Minister Initial Assignments

Ms. Alexis Dippel — Concordia/Chicago
Teacher, Trinity/Delray Beach, FL (C)

Ms. Crystal Jones — Concordia/Chicago
Teacher, Trinity/Orlando, FL (C)

Mrs. Clarissa B Kollbaum — Concordia/Nebraska
Teacher, Grace/Winter Haven, FL (C)

Mr. Zachary Kollbaum — Concordia/Nebraska
Teacher, Grace/Winter Haven, FL (C)

Rev. Angel M Ramos — Colloquy, St. Louis, MO
Pastor, Faith/Clewiston, FL (O)

Ordained/Commissioned Minister Installations

Rev. Joseph M Adams
Pastor, Christ the King/Largo, FL (O)

Rev. Brian Stolarczyk
Pastor, Lutheran Church
of the Cross/Port Charlotte, FL (O)

Rev. Angel M Ramos
Pastor, Faith/Clewiston, FL (O)

Rev. Jeffery C Moore
Pastor, Our Savior/Plantation, FL (O)

Ms. Cassandra A Moore
DCE, Our Savior/St. Petersburg, FL (C)

Ms. Sharon A Nesman
Teacher, Grace/St. Petersburg, FL (C)

Rev. John D Roth
Pastor, Thrive/Estero, FL (O)

Mr. Phillip Klopke
DCE, Thrive/Estero, FL (C)

Emeritus

Rev. John E Mackowiak (O)
Rev. Mark H Abram (O)

Mr. Joe Guagliardo (C)
Mr. Charles M Rhinehart (C)

Ms. Lynn M Mook (C)
Mrs. Janet Carlton (C)

Mrs. Susan Glasnapp (C)
Mrs. Kristen Martin Vega (C)

Called to Glory

Rev. Alan W Havekotte

Change of Status within the District

Ms. Beth Albrecht.....Active to Candidate (C)
Mr. Wynn DerongActive to Candidate (C)
Mrs. Francesca L Knutson .Active to Candidate (C)
Rev. Michael R Thurau..Candidate to Emeritus (O)

The last time I was in Israel was about five years ago. I am always fascinated by the terrain. In some ways it isn't much different than places on our own continent. What is unique is the history that is hidden under every corner and in every stone. Particularly in the southern desert areas of Judea, in that wide open wilderness, my imagination would run wild wondering if the craggy cliffs in the distance once hid a young King David, fleeing from King Saul. In my mind I become a bit Indiana Jones-ish as I think about hidden antiquities just waiting to still be discovered as you travel a road less traveled.

One of the things that I found particularly interesting was the variety of stones throughout the country as we traveled. I have a small collection of stones, including some from the path leading to Masada, from the trail along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, from the stroll in the Garden of Gethsemane and from the track through the fortress of Solomon in Megiddo. Each stone was significant in its character and beauty, and each was very unique. One can't help but wonder if these stones were the very ones around when Jesus

walked the land. While I know it's probably not plausible, it does cause my imagination to run wild.

Each stone did not randomly arrive in that place, but was put there by the Creator, and with purpose. Perhaps that's why you find more variety of stones on the shoreline of Galilee, and what appears to be shale on the path leading to the crest of Masada. Together they created a path that, for our trip, culminated at the place where Jesus was crucified, and

He Himself was challenged in the rocky wilderness, as Satan took his best shot at trying to destroy God's plan. While Jesus won the victory, the battle continues to rage on all around us, and the devil continues to assault God's children, distracting and destroying faith, tearing at the fabric of the Church on earth.

The rocky road of Lent beckons us to walk cautiously, but joyously, down that road less traveled, trusting our Lord to lead us through

A few years ago Edith and I were traveling, and we landed right behind a tornado in Michigan that had knocked out the electricity. We were meeting friends who picked us up and said that the hotel we were all booked in had no electricity. After searching for alternatives, we ended up back at this pitch black hotel with others who had booked a room with no place else to go. The manager had to take us to our rooms in total darkness. Armed with a flashlight, the manager led us to the third floor, and we all followed closely because in the darkness we couldn't see.

That's really a great picture of our need to stay close to Jesus, not just during Lent, but all the time. He is the Light who shines in the darkness and takes us carefully and safely through the rocky road of life and guides us during this season of Lent. However, the journey is more enjoyable as we walk together as brothers and sisters, in fellowship and unity with one another, allowing Jesus to shine more brightly as His light flows through us collectively and bear witness of His love in a dark world.

As we make our way on this Lenten journey think of all the stumbling stones that could prevent us from learning all that the Lord has to teach us. The same stones that could endanger us can also serve as a curb, to keep us on the pathway for a safe arrival at our destination. Perhaps another image to guide us is to consider each rock as a stepping stone that the Lord places before us to lead us to His presence.

Peter tells us that each of us are like those stones, created with purpose. We are each unique in our own right and precious to our Creator. In fact, Peter tells us that we are being built into a spiritual household (1 Peter 2:5) but with great purpose. We are called on to offer spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ. Paul tells us, in Romans 12:1-2, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers [and sisters], by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable

to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

The best thing we can offer God, this Lententide, or anytime, is ourselves! Yet, often this is the road less traveled. As we focus on Lent, a season of repentance, it's a great time to reflect on how much farther we still have to go as we seek to become more Christ-like. God continues to shape us, to chip and chisel away re-forming us as His living stones, so we are better equipped to connect people to Jesus!

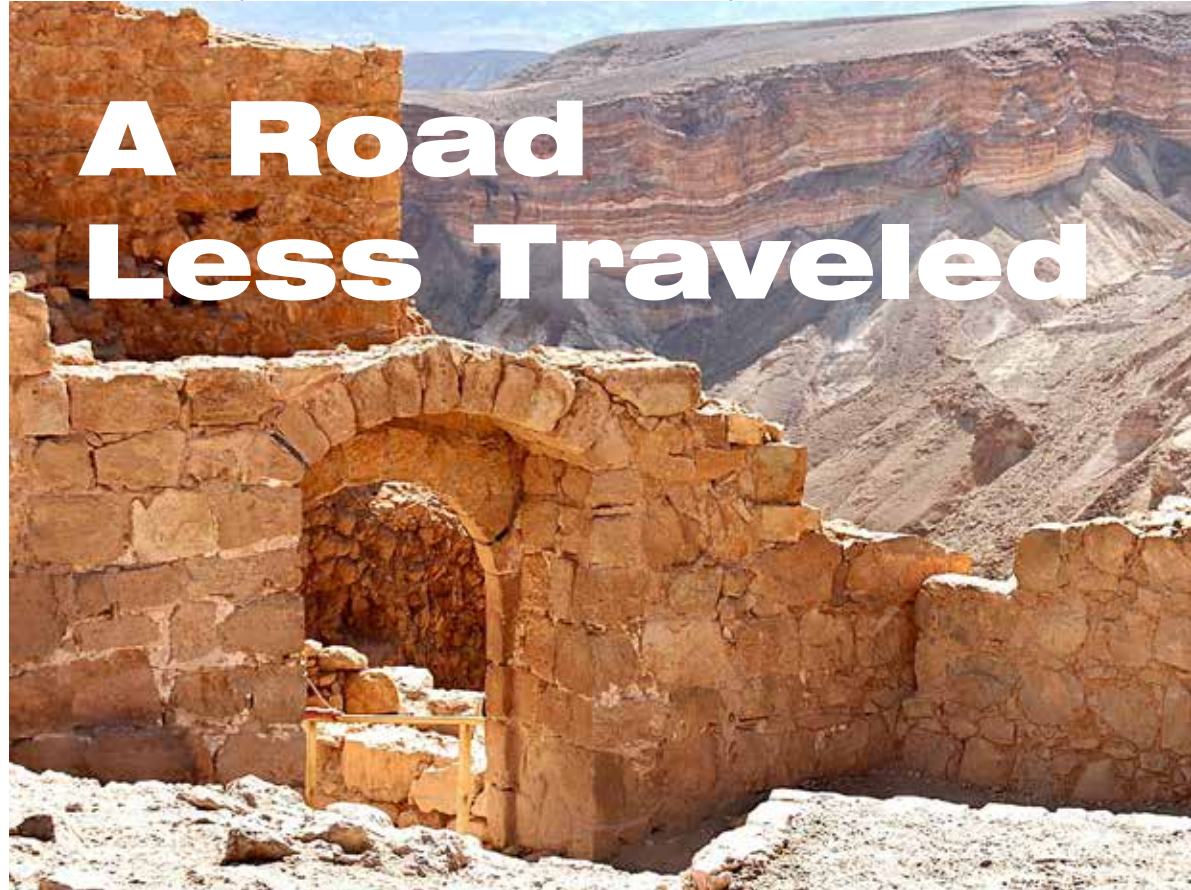
During this year-long celebration of the Reformation, our focus, like our Synod's, is on this theme, "It's still all about Jesus!" While we should celebrate our heritage with great pride, and all the blessings that have come to the Church through Luther and the Reformation, let's be careful to not forget that it's all about Jesus, our Rock and Redeemer! Jesus is the One who called us and set us apart to be His people so that through each of us His light might shine. He is re-forming us as living stones!

This fall, September 28-30, we are trying something new in the Florida-Georgia District. Every third year we combine our pastors and educators conferences and call it the President's Convocation. This year we are ratcheting it up a notch to focus on the priesthood of all believers. Simply put, the Equip Conference departs from our typical conference in that we are intentionally inviting the laity to participate, and we have very practical workshops to train our laity

in congregational tasks. We hope to have breakouts for all leadership positions, with practical, strategic and implementable ideas that will work in most congregations.



A Road Less Traveled



then where He was resurrected. It was quite a journey!

Lent is also a journey that leads us to the Cross of Jesus. It gives us focus once again on the ultimate cost He paid for us in His death and the victory accomplished in His resurrection. However, like a craggy rock, the Lenten path is not a smooth one for most. It is fraught with challenges and trials that shows us again and again how dependent we are on our Lord Jesus.

the darkness into His light. We are living in dark times when our faith is challenged all the time. Daily each of us are confronted with mixed messages that tell us that what once was considered sin according to God's Word is not so bad. We have allowed sin to creep in so that it has become a comfortable part of life. Satan lures us into this darkness gradually blinding us to the consequences until we are left totally in the dark.

Let me restate this: In addition to this conference offering opportunities for professional church workers, we are adding an additional element specifically geared to equipping lay leaders. Imagine how empowering it would be for the priesthood of all believers to come as a team, leave as a re-formed team, and be inspired to further engage in Master's business!

We are God's living stones, being shaped and re-formed to conform to the image of Jesus. May this Lenten journey inspire your faith and life as you travel the road less taken, and like living stones, begin again to be built into a spiritual household for Jesus!



*Blessings this
Lenten Season*
GREG

District Board Approves Budget

Meeting in Orlando for the first time in 2017, the Florida-Georgia District Board of Directors arrived the evening before the start of the January 27-28 session to join Circuit Visitors for a Reformation Kick-off dinner. A highlight of the evening was a visit from Dr. Martin Luther as presented by Rev. Gary Schuschke of St. Luke's/Oviedo.



Board interaction with the Circuit Visitors continued the next morning as the two groups met by circuits to discuss challenges and opportunities facing the church today.

The Board meeting included Bible study on engaging in the Master's business as well as daily prayers and devotions. Florida-Georgia Executive Director for Schools Mark Brink brought Board members up to date on activities in District, noting that the number of Synodically trained teachers continues to decline.

Critical Targets

Last November, the Board unanimously approved the incorporation of the Critical Target of Congregations into Leadership and Outreach. With that approval, District staff is able to focus on Leadership and Outreach for the sake of congregations. Success indicators are:

Leadership — District leaders show an annual increase in the number of objective continuing education benchmarks completed. Demographic and generational diversity among leaders in the District increases annually.

Outreach — District congregations report at least 3,500 adult confirmations and professionals of faith annually.

Leadership

Desired outcome: District and congregational leaders are loving, visionary people of the Word, models of healthy Christ-centered living and life-long learners committed to equipping and empowering others to join in fulfilling the Church's role in God's mission.

- District Stewardship Advisory Council is being rebuilt as the group explores ways of encouraging participation in a 500th Reformation appeal. "We have much too large a percentage of our congregations that contribute nothing to the District," said Florida-Georgia President Greg Walton. "Our desire is to educate and build a stronger partnership with all the ministries in the District."

- The **New Workers Retreat** on January 20-21 initiated and introduced new Florida-Georgia workers. Attending were one vicar, six commissioned and 14 ordained workers along with 10 spouses. Participants talked about the ministry philosophy in the District, the critical targets and the vision for ministry.

- The third round of **Emergent Leader Training** is scheduled for April, May and June. At the time of the Board meeting, 10 people were registered for the training. The program is designed for pastors, educators and laity. Walton reported that the dynamics of the mix "have been very beneficial as each participant group has learned from each other. It is definitely a factor in helping us meet our critical target to raise up leaders."

- Mission: Haiti and the District are collaborating on a **Haitian Lutheran Teachers Conference** themed "La Promesse de Dieu: Espoir et un Future!" (A Hope and a Future!). A 13-member team is expected to travel to Haiti for the conference. The planning team is preparing for 60 Haitian Lutheran educators to attend.

- Louise Weber — a member of Zion/Fort Myers and a former Lutheran school educator and administrator in the United States, Hong Kong and Shanghai — is chairing the **District Resolution C2.4 Task Force**, Orientation of

non-Lutheran Workers in Lutheran School Ministries. The goal is to produce a certification process for non-rostered, non-Lutheran teachers in the Florida-Georgia District to ensure they understand the unique Lutheran distinctive.

- The May 1-5 **Spring Regional Pastor's Conference** will host Rev. Darrell Zimmerman from

Grace Place Wellness ministry to share a sample of what a retreat is like and to introduce an opportunity for congregational wellness retreats. This is sponsored in part by the District Wellness Network

- Plans are under way for the **President's Equip Conference**, a renewed version of the President's Convocation. The focus will be on the Priesthood of All Believers, "a great way to celebrate the 500th Anniversary

for Upcoming Fiscal Year

of the Reformation," Walton emphasized. The conference is set for September 28-30 at the Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort & Spa in Ponte Vedra, FL. (See page 2 of this issue for more information.)

Outreach

Desire outcome: Living out their faith in Jesus with urgency and joy, the people of the Florida-Georgia District eagerly invest, both individually and corporately, in bold and intentional service and witness to make know the love of Christ to all people.

- Nearly 500 youth and adult leaders attended "Unshaken and Stirred," the 2016 **Middle School Youth Gathering**. Gathering attendance is trending upward; the projected attendance was significantly exceeded. DCE Leslie Sullivan of Christ The King/Largo led the planning team.

- The 2017 Heart for Jesus project will benefit the **Comfort Dogs Ministry of Lutheran Church Charities**. Most of the schools in the District will designate chapel offerings from February to the project.

- The **Mission Advisory Council** met January 10-11 at the District office to approve mission grants for 2017, to meet with Five Two and to discuss potential new mission for the upcoming year. A full report is included in District Executive Director for Outreach Doug Kallesen's column on pages 8-9 of this issue.

- Work is under way on a **District-Wide Outreach Conference**, which would be held regionally in multiple locations.

- The 2017 **District High School Youth Servant Event** is scheduled during the week of July 16 in the Atlanta area. DCE Kami Mogelvang of Naples, FL, is working with a team of colleagues on the event planning.

- **iNeighborhood** training continues as Dr. Bruce Jaeger and Kallesen work with congregations and circuits across the District on outreach efforts to increase their ability for community outreach. To date, presentations have been made in Jacksonville, Orlando and Clearwater.

Budget

Discussion and a review of current and projected revenue and expenses for the District preceded unanimous approval of the Work Plan for the new fiscal year. Part of that discussion centered on how to encourage Florida-Georgia congregations currently contributing zero dollars to the District to come into partnership.

Total revenue is projected at \$2,767,000 — a slight increase of \$23,000 for the budget year ended January 31, 2017. The balanced budget shows expenses at the same number.

Just under 50% of the projected expenses are designated for Missions. ■



New Board Member — Board members unanimously approved the appointment of Tamie Worthington of St. Paul/Peachtree City, GA, to fill the vacancy created by Lamar Stewart's taking a call outside Florida-Georgia. She will be the third at-large Commissioned Minister on the Board.



Walk for Andi — Board members, some with spouses accompanying them, met in advance of the 8:30am start of the Saturday portion of the meeting for a Symbolic March for Andi's Army. This walk around the lake fronting the District office building was in support of Andrea Reichard, wife of District Executive Director for Administration and Florida-Georgia LCEF Vice President Dan Reichard, who is undergoing cancer treatment. Andi briefly addressed the combined Board/Circuit Visitor session on Friday, emphasizing her reliance on the Lord and referencing her theme Bible verse: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:11)

Holy Spirit Impacting Outreach

The book of Acts is a mission manual of how God's Church spread from a few to the farthest reaches of the Roman Empire. Under the power and working of God the Holy Spirit, missionaries such as Paul started many new churches and set up gospel centers.

Today, in the Florida-Georgia District, God the Holy Spirit is on the move with new starts, campus ministry and existing ministries that faithfully proclaim Christ and Christ crucified. Over the next year, we will highlight Florida-Georgia mission churches with feature stories. Hopefully we'll all become better acquainted with God's mission in this place and perhaps it will stir up something in your place of mission, the local church! In this issue I will give you an overview of what missions we are funding and planning for in 2017.

Missions

The Mission Advisory Council (MAC) met in January at the District Office to approve mission grants for 2017 and to discuss potential new missions for the upcoming year.



Participants at the recent outreach training event at First/Clearwater, which included prayer walking and canvassing, learning about iNeighborhood and Small Group models that support and help new visitors assimilate.

Included in this projection for up and coming missions are:

New Upcoming Missions on the Horizon

- South Port St. Lucie: Redeemer/Stuart, the mother church, is actively calling a pastor
- Lakewood Ranch: Beautiful Savior/Sarasota is planning to call a worker for this mission
- Missionary-at-Large to Hispanics for the Greater Atlanta area: There are plans to call through the District with a partnership of churches
- North Macon: Mt. Calvary/Warner Robins will likely serve as the mother church

Campus Mission Grant Applicants

- Christus Victor, University of GA
- University Lutheran, Florida State University
- Live UCF, University of Central FL
- Thrive, Florida Gulf Coast

Missions

- Hope/Jacksonville
- Emmanuel Haitian/Delray Beach
- Messiah Hispanic, four locations
- Immokalee Haitian & Bethlehem

- Haitian, Immokalee
- Redeeming Life/Sanford, FL
- Pelican/Naples FL
- Living Faith Korean/Cumming, GA

Special Mission

- Stepping Stones Mission Atlanta

Mission grants are made possible through the Florida-Georgia District budget, which is directly supported by congregations of the District. Thank you for your support! Included in these mission grants are campus ministries, current mission support, new mission starts and special mission opportunities. Much is being done with limited resources. A debt of gratitude goes out to our MAC team members who have been wise stewards of these resources: Roger Walker chair, Barb Stoepelwerth, Deaconess Ligia Borges, Alana Stokes, David McLeod, Rev. Tom Beaverson, Rev. Paul Burtzlaff, Rev. Kevin Koenig, Rev. Tim Droegemueller and me.

Outreach / iNeighborhood

Bruce Jaeger, a consultant to the Florida-Georgia District, and I continue to work with congregations and circuits across our District on their outreach efforts to their communities. We should make every effort to connect people to Jesus.

Presentations have recently been made in Jacksonville, Orlando and Clearwater. For more information, contact the District Office.

The recent First Clearwater outreach training event included prayer walking and canvassing, learning about iNeighborhood and Small Group models that support and help new visitors assimilate. Every piece of the training was tied to connecting people to Jesus.

Future Outreach ideas being considered are:

- Ongoing training, with online training being discussed.
- Coaching for leaders using iNeighborhood.

in Florida-Georgia District

- Network of iNeighborhood congregations, circuits, leaders networked to offer encouragement and accountability.
- Publicity to the entire District to inform church leaders and laity about outreach resources.
- Circuit Visitor and Board of Director meetings.
- Circuit presentations.
- Web and Social Media.
- *Lutheran LIFE*.

Congregational Visits

Let me know how we can help you in your outreach plans. It is all about connecting people to Jesus!

Lutheran Hour Ministries

Bruce Sutherland, LHM Regional Manager, stopped by to discuss LHM plans for outreach. LHM has a new initiative called THRED, which was launched on February 1. LHM



Members of the Florida-Georgia Mission Advisory Council

Check it out on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/ourTHRED>) or visit the website at THRED.org for more information

Also coming is an outreach project targeting the millennials who have largely been absent from our local churches. Online missionaries (my term) will serve as volunteers who will offer a Christ centered witness to individuals in chat rooms seeking counsel or support.

Using state-of-the-art software, these internet missionaries can connect with people seeking help and continue the conversation and when possible connection to a Christian and

congregation in their local area.

We have two new resources: a church planting resource "*Mission Field: USA — A Resource for Church Planting*" authored by Rev. Steve Schave, which is available through the District Office; a new book, "*Revitality*" by Rev. Mark Woods, will be here soon — more information will be forthcoming.

The Multi Ethnic Symposium at Concordia Seminary/St. Louis was well attended by several Florida-Georgia pastors and church workers. Presentations were made by Rev. Victor Belton, Rev. Adolfo Borges and Rev. Bob Scudieri. Nearly 200 people were present for this two-day symposium that addressed the changing American culture. ■



MISSION POSSIBLE

by Rev. Doug Kallesen
District Executive
for Mission & Outreach

describes this online discussion-based outreach as: We create & curate content that discusses the many areas of where life & faith intersect — with the goal of creating a dialogue between folks of all backgrounds.



Some of the participants and speakers at the Multi Ethnic Symposium at Concordia Seminary/St. Louis

LCMS Bids Farewell to Two Trailblazing Leaders

Dr. Jean Garton and Dr. Betty Duda were well known inside and outside of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod for their passionate devotion to service and to their Lord.

They each recorded impressive “firsts” in their years of service, inspiring other women to become involved in church service at the congregational, district and national levels.

Dr. Garton, 87, passed away on December 23, 2016 just two days after entering the hospice facility at which she had once volunteered not far from her home in Benton, AR.

Dr. Duda, 84, died peacefully December 24, 2016 after entering hospice care at her Cocoa Beach, FL, home a few days earlier.

Dr. Jean Garton

Co-founder and president emeritus of Lutherans for Life, Dr. Garton was LFL’s first president from 1978 to 1995. She was the keynote speaker at this year’s LFL national conference and received the *Dominus Vitae* award honoring her “lifelong, Gospel-motivated labors to affirm God’s gift of life.”



Dr. Garton was the first woman to serve on an LCMS board, the Board for Public Relations (1969-80), and chaired the Synod’s Task Force on Women (1974-81), President’s Commission on Women (1984-94), Office of Government Information Advisory Council (1986-92) and Task Force on Ministry with Families (1987-88).

She served two terms on the LCMS Board of Directors (1995-2007) and played a key role in the establishment of the Synod’s Office of Government Information in Washington, DC, and its Commission on Women.

Dr. Garton also served on numerous other boards and committees, authored dozens of articles in some 30 publications as well as chapters in books on abortion, family life and youth ministry. She recorded daily commentaries, “Speaking of Life,” on the Jubilee Radio Network (1991-96) and was a popular guest on “Focus on the Family” with Dr. James Dobson.

She held honorary doctorates from Concordia Seminary/St. Louis and Concordia Theological Seminary/Fort Wayne. In 1985 she was named “American Churchwoman of the Year” by Religious Heritage of America, and in 1978 was among the “Ten Most Influential Lutherans in the U.S.”

Dr. Garton’s survivors include three children: Dale (George) Hetzel, Dru (Paul) Filiberto and Donn Garton; seven grandchildren; and seven great-grandchildren. Her husband of 62 years, Rev. Horace “Chic” Garton, died in 2012, and their son Dean died in 1979.

Dr. Betty Duda

With a resume that spanned service inside and outside of the LCMS, Dr. Duda was a former national president of the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League (1987-1991) and served as Florida-Georgia District LWML president and mission projects director.



Dr. Duda was the first woman elected to the board of Concordia College-New York, which she chaired for five years. She also chaired Lutheran World Relief and the Lutheran Association of Missionaries and Pilots as well as Florida civic organizations including the Junior League of Orlando, Loch Haven Art Center, Civic Theater, Community Coordinated Childcare and the Central Florida Zoo.

Her service on numerous church- and community-related boards included those of Concordia University Chicago; Concordia University St. Paul; Wheat Ridge Foundation; Aid Association for Lutherans; People of the Book Lutheran Outreach; Mill Neck Manor; Reedy Creek Improvement District at Disney World; Winter Park Hospital; Rollins College; Sun Bank of Seminole; University of Florida Foundation; YMCA; and Christian Service Center.

Dr. Duda was awarded three honorary doctorates for her untiring service, from Concordia College-New York, Rollins College/Winter Park and Concordia University St. Paul.

Survivors include Dr. Duda’s husband of 64 years, John; five daughters — Beth (Jon) Wareham of Merritt Island, FL; Linda Nichols of Geneva, FL; Pam (Brad) Jovaag of Gainesville, GA; Leslie (Kip) Schnake of Viera, FL; and Jennifer (Bill) LaGrange of Oviedo, FL; nine grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. Dr. Duda was predeceased by her daughter, Janet.

Editor’s Note: I was blessed to count Betty Duda and Jean Garton as friends and mentors. While this tribute summarizes their impressive service, it does not convey the warmth, the humor, the zest for living, the love that these two special sisters in Christ put into their every effort and relationship. They will be missed. — EB ■

District Welcomes Two New Vicars

Two of the ten Specific Ministry Pastors (SMP) students of the 2017 spring cohort at Concordia Seminary/St. Louis who received vicarage assignments in early February will be serving in the Florida-Georgia District.

-Joel Dietrich, St. Paul Lutheran Church/ Peachtree City, GA, and

-Laird Van Gorder, The Lutheran Church of the Holy Trinity/Macon, GA.

The SMP program of Concordia Seminary is a four-year distance-education program in which men receive academic training in the setting in which they will continue to serve following ordination. The program is designed to meet the needs of the church for pastors in mission and ministry opportunities where a pastor with a seminary degree may not be available. Local pastor-mentors work with SMP students to provide day-to-day guidance, encouragement and prayer. ■



Above — Among those receiving their vicarage assignments were two SMP students who will be serving in the Florida-Georgia District: (third and second from right, back row) Laird Van Gorder and Joel Dietrich.

The choice isn’t always obvious!



Sometimes the right property isn’t easy to identify.

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Ministry Milestones: District Congregations

Several congregations across the Florida-Georgia District celebrated milestones in their ministry recently. Festive dinners, visits from former pastors and members and special speakers were part of many of these celebrations.

Saint Michael/Fort Myers

The theme "Growing in the Son" commemorated the 75th Anniversary year of Saint Michael/Fort Myers, FL.

The congregation officially formed on Saint Michael and All Angels Day in 1941, providing the inspiration for the congregation's name. Members marked 75 years of ministry on September 24-25 with weekend events including:

- A celebration that began at the congregation's roots with church members visiting the homebound.

- Following the Saturday 5:30 worship service on September 24, there was a dinner with music and dancing the gym for all ages including children. Memories were shared through photos and memorabilia from 75 years of ministry.
- A special combined worship on September 25 was followed by a continental breakfast and 75th Anniversary slideshow.

Saint Michael's story traces back to near the turn of the 20th century when traveling missionaries visited Fort Myers and discussed the possibility of starting a congregation there. The challenge was that no bridge spanned the Caloosahatchee, so transportation was by boat only. It was not until 1931, and the completion of the Edison Bridge,

that Lutherans renewed their efforts in this area. The city was canvassed and worship services started with an average of seven in attendance.

In 1939, Rev. H.E. Hartman from Trinity Lutheran/Delray Beach led a delegation of 38 Walther Leaguers to Fort Myers to call on 800 families. They helped organize a new Lutheran Mission, and the Florida-Georgia District assigned a full-time missionary in 1940. In September 1941, Rev. Art Weber arrived to lead the small congregation.



On September 29, 1941 Saint Michael Evangelical Lutheran Church was officially chartered. Within six months, the members dedicated the first sanctuary. By 1953, the original church was sold and a new sanctuary was constructed.

In 1956, kindergarten classes were begun, and Saint Michael Lutheran School was established. By 1964 the school had grown to a complete nine-grade elementary parochial school. The final move came when the current Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall (now the Office Center) were built in 1968. The Education Building followed in 1978. In 1994 the Anderson/Eichler Fine Arts and Athletic Center was constructed. Saint Michael purchased an adjacent building adjacent in 2006

to house the Preschool 3-4 year olds. In 2012 Little Saints Early Learning Center for infants – 2 year olds opened.

As the oldest Missouri Synod congregation in Southwest Florida, Saint Michael has had the privilege and opportunity to daughter seven congregations: Good Shepherd/North Fort Myers, Zion/South Fort Myers, Grace/Naples, Bethlehem/East Fort Myers, Trinity/Cape Coral, Beautiful Savior/Lehigh Acres and establishing the Lutheran Church in the Dominican Republic.

Rev. Jon Zehnder has served Saint Michael for one-third of its history. He was honored for his 25 years of service at the congregation in January of this year.

Concordia/Kendall, FL

A vibrant, multi-ethnic church in suburban southwest Miami, Concordia has been in ministry for six decades.

Congregation members and friends celebrated the 60th anniversary of Concordia the weekend of January 28-29.

On Saturday, a festive 4pm worship was followed by a catered meal. The celebration continued on Sunday with a joint worship service and continental breakfast.

Part of the Concordia's 60th anniversary celebration included the burning of the mortgage.

Participating in the worship services were current Concordia Pastor Christopher Patterson as well as his two predecessors — Rev. Dr. David Mueller and Rev. Robert Maulella — along with Rev. Doug Kallesen, Executive Director of Outreach for the Florida-Georgia District.

Mueller was called to Concordia in September of 1988, serving until his retirement from full-time parish ministry in October of 1996. He is now a preacher on behalf of the poor

Celebrate Special Anniversaries

through Food for the Poor of Coconut Creek, FL.

Now pastor of Faith/Sebring, FL, Maulella's first call after his 1997 graduation from Concordia Seminary/St. Louis was to Concordia. He shepherded the congregation until 2004.

Patterson, who served his vicarage at St. Luke's/Oviedo, graduated from Concordia Theological Seminary/Fort Wayne in 2005. He served at Greenwood Lutheran/Greenwood, SC, for three years until accepting the call to Concordia in 2008. Previously Patterson was the Director of Christian Outreach at several congregations.

Concordia operates an educational ministry that serves toddlers through kindergarten students.



Participating in the anniversary services were (l-r) Rev. Dr. David Mueller; Rev. Christopher Patterson; Rev. Doug Kallesen; and Rev. Robert Maulella.

Immanuel/Tavernier, FL

Members and guests of Immanuel Lutheran of the Upper Keys began the February 11-12 weekend of celebrating the congregation's 50th anniversary by worshipping, singing God's praise and the burning of the



Part of the anniversary weekend at Immanuel included the burning of the mortgage.

church's mortgage. Refreshments and fellowship followed that Saturday ceremony.

The Sunday Anniversary Service focused on 50 years of celebrating Jesus, with Immanuel Pastor Don Stier as the liturgist and Florida-Georgia District President Greg Walton the proclaimer. Amy Keisner signed along with the special music. Elaine Stier was the organist, with Monty Berg on trumpet. The choir presented a special song for the anniversary celebration.

Among the guests for the weekend was Rev. Mark Eisold, pastor of Grace/Naples and the son of Immanuel's founding pastor. The LWML was well represented by visitors who came to the Keys for the celebration.

Sunday's service was followed by a catered lunch and fellowship.

"Our congregation's mission here in the beautiful Florida Keys is

to bring Christ to everyone we can, in any manner possible," said Pastor Stier. "Although we are not a large church, we are big at heart, providing a Christian home for local Keys residents and the many thousands of visitors from all over the world who join us year round annually."

Immanuel features the only pipe organ in the Florida Keys north of Key West and is host to organ concerts and other important musical events throughout the year.



Above — Pastor Don Stier (left) and Florida-Georgia District President Greg Walton

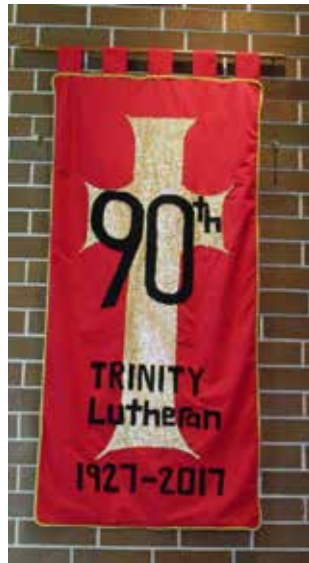
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Ministry Milestones: Congregation Anniversaries

Trinity/Fort Lauderdale

A festive afternoon worship on Sunday, February 11, marked the 90th anniversary of Trinity Lutheran/Fort Lauderdale — Broward County's oldest Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod congregation.



The service was led by Trinity Pastor Jeff Carlson, who has been at the church since 2014. Among participants were former Trinity Pastors Ralph Schmidt (1984-1986) and Thomas Hackett (2006-2015) as well as Trinity Haitian Mission Pastor Joshua Vilsant. Other clergy from Southeast Florida shared in the celebration with current and former members and friends. Special music was presented by the Trinity Church choir and by Trinity Lutheran Academy students and faculty.

Carlson preached on the Gospel lesson of Zacchaeus, noting that like that "wee little man," Trinity was a "wee little church" when chartered with 18 members in 1927. During its history, that wee little church has made an impact on its community.

Trinity was founded under the leadership of Pastor Dallas Gibson, who was installed on September 5, 1926. Less than two weeks later, a hurricane devastated South Florida, challenging the new congregation to help their community rebuild. Trinity was formally organized on January 9, 1927.



Among those celebrating Trinity's milestone was Verna Dellinger Gioseffi, who on January 5, 1928, became the first female baptized at the church. She is shown with her husband and Trinity Pastor Jeff Carlson.

A Lutheran school was founded in 1933 by Gibson's wife, Susan. Today Trinity Academy serves students from the early childhood through eighth-grade levels.

Multiple South Florida churches were begun with the assistance of Trinity's assistance: St. Mark's in Hollywood; Grace, Faith and Good Shepherd in Fort Lauderdale; Hope in Pompano Beach; Prince of Peace in West

Hollywood; Our Savior in Plantation; Miramar in Miramar; and Gloria Dei in Davie.

Trinity played a major role in the 16-year history of Lutheran High School of South Florida. This educational ministry was operated by approximately 13 Southeast Florida Lutheran congregations on the campus of Gloria Dei/Davie. ■



Pastors participating in the 90th anniversary service included (front, l-r) Ralph Schmidt, former Trinity Pastor and now Director of Development for LCMS Orphan Grain Train; Jeffrey Carlson, Trinity; Josue Vilsant, Trinity Haitian Mission; Thomas Hackett, former Trinity Pastor; Sequincy Pratt, Worship Leader at Good Shepherd/Fort Lauderdale; (back, l-r) Walter Volz, Pastor Emeritus of Our Savior/Plantation now speaker with Food for the Poor; Darrell Stuehrenberg, Bethlehem/Fort Myers; James Weist, Epiphany/Lake Worth; Jeffrey Moore, Our Savior/Plantation; James Tino, Missionary to Santiago, Chile with Global Lutheran Outreach; Stephen Reynolds, Shepherd of the Coast/Fort Lauderdale.

Credit Union Reaches New Milestone

The Lutheran Federal Credit Union reached a new milestone to open the new year — 2,000 members as of January 10.

LFCU was chartered in 2014, the result of years of brainstorming by various boards and senior management at the Lutheran Church Extension

Fund. Focus groups were conducted, and surveys completed by Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod members in all 50 states.

After a quiet launch in May 2015, the Lutheran Federal Credit Union



opened for all eligible members in January 2016.

The Florida-Georgia District was the first LCMS District to join the credit union. For more information, visit LutheranFCU.org or call 314-394-2790. ■

LCMS College, University Enrollment Dips Church Worker Enrollments Continues Decline

Even though total 2016 fall enrollment for The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod's 10 colleges and universities combined declined for the first time in 24 years, there's no reason to panic, according to Concordia University System President Rev. Dr. Dean O. Wenthe.

He explained, "That decline — in the context of so many years of growth — is not too great a surprise inasmuch as the competition for students in higher education has increased dramatically in the last few years."

Total graduate and undergraduate enrollments for all 10 Concordia University System (CUS) institutions is 35,717, a decrease of 1,590 students (4.3%) from fall 2015. The drops in fall numbers experienced by four of the 10 CUS schools are attributed to a number of different factors, according to CUS staff and the schools' spokespersons. Those factors include tuition freezes by state universities, marketplace trends regarding the demand for graduate degrees and data that suggest fewer students are seeking a private-school education.

In Wenthe's view, the drop in overall CUS enrollment this year "does not suggest a trend" and could very well turn around by next fall.

A trend and a concern to Synod leaders for many years is the continuing drop in the number of students pursuing church-work vocations. This fall's total of 1,331 church-work students is 24 fewer than last year, with drops among those studying to become pastors, teachers, directors of Christian education, lay ministers and directors of family life ministry. The only church vocation with more students this year is director of parish music, while two others stayed the same: director of Christian outreach and deaconess.

Wenthe acknowledged that "the task of attracting young men and women into church vocations is a front-burner concern throughout the church."

The solution, he says, "will be multifaceted and will include enriching the culture of the church by honoring and encouraging its full-time workers, identifying and supporting gifted youth early, appealing to their idealism and courage as Christian youth and more clearly underscoring the privilege of devoting a life to God and to matters eternal — wherein not only are lives made authentic in this world, but souls are delivered into Christ's life for eternal joy."

Not all CUS institutions reported declines:

- Concordia University at Ann Arbor, part of Concordia University Wisconsin since 2012, recorded a fall enrollment of 1,054, the largest in the history of the school.
- This year marks the eighth in a row of combined undergraduate and graduate enrollment exceeding 5,000 students at Concordia University Chicago and a new record of 5,603 students was set this fall.

Also posting increased enrollments were Concordia University Texas, Concordia College-New York, Concordia University St. Paul and Concordia University Nebraska. ■



Celebrating Jesus! — Lutheran Hour Ministries continued its tradition of entering a float in the Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, CA. Riders on the 2017 float included (seated on left side of float) Dr. Dale Meyer, President of Concordia Seminary/St. Louis and former Lutheran Hour speaker, with Patti Ross, President of the national Lutheran Women's Missionary League; and Dr. Greg Selz, speaker of the Lutheran Hour (seated in front).

LCEF Advocates Focus on “Creatively Investing in the Future”

Florida-Georgia LCEF Congregational Advocates — those members who help promote Lutheran Church Extension Fund and its variety of services — met in Orlando February 13-14 to be energized, informed and celebrated.

LCEF District Vice President Daniel J. Reichard welcomed the Advocates and led the two-day session. He also provided a marketing overview and investment details. District President Greg Walton led devotions, and Rev. Tom Eggebrecht of Ascension/Casselberry was the keynote speaker.

Presentations focused on various LCEF programs. Rev. Dr. Karl Galik provided an overview on Ministry Support, while Rev. Dennis Bartels shared information on the Consecrated Stewards program. Kathy Keene,



Administrative Assistant to District President Greg Walton, offered information on Demographics support available to congregations. Rev. Billy Brath led a session on VisionPath.

Materials were available for Advocates to review and take back to their congregations.

Round table discussions enabled the Advocates to share experiences, ideas and challenges.

Some 25 Florida-Georgia congregations were represented at the Advocate Weekend, including:

- Savior of All/Cartersville, GA: Don Bergwall
- Christ The King/Largo, FL: Jon Boeche
- Beautiful Savior/Sarasota, FL: Joyce Brown
- Christ/Cape Canaveral, FL: Jon Brazee
- Hope/Jacksonville, FL: Rick Charlton
- St. Paul/Peachtree City, GA: Kiara Denholm/Molly Millard
- Faith/Eustis, FL: Lois Ford
- Good Shepherd/Gainesville, GA: Doug Fuge
- Trinity Downtown/Orlando, FL: Bruce Hahn
- Grace/St. Petersburg, FL: Phyllis Hand

At left — District President Greg Walton leads singing during the worship.

Below left — LCEF District Vice President Daniel J. Reichard congratulates 2017 Star Performer Phyllis Hand. She successfully recruited 25 new investors.

Below right — Advocates, presenters and leaders of the 2017 weekend.



Rev. Tom Eggebrecht of Ascension/Casselberry was the keynote speaker. He is the author of “Fully and Creatively Alive: How to Live a More Joyfully Fulfilling Life.”



Rev. Billy Brath led a session on VisionPath, an LCEF program that provides clarity in ministry passion, alignment in ministry purpose and action in ministry processes.



Eva Baker established TeensGotCents.com as a resource for teens to share information on planning and budgeting. She provided Advocates with an overview of the website.



Rev. Dennis Bartels of Holy Cross/North Miami led the session on Consecrated Stewards, the LCEF program that offers a full-congregation approach to stewardship education.

- St. Paul/Weston, FL: Dave Kuhlman
- Bethel/Clearwater, FL: Dwayne Leininger
- First/Gainesville, FL: Jack Martin
- Amazing Grace/Oxford, FL: Lyle Mueller
- Trinity/Trinity, FL: Christene Nauman
- Hope/Plant City, FL: Rev. Dean Pfeffer
- Christ/Perry, GA: Robert Pinckney
- St. Paul/Jacksonville, FL: Chrystal Presley

- Christ Our Savior/Griffin, GA: Jim Rather
- Peace/Naples, FL: Carl Schueman
- St. Paul/Lakeland, FL: Paul Sicca
- Christ Our Savior/St. Augustine, FL: Clifford Skarr
- Timothy/Woodstock, GA: Scott Tighe
- Redeemer/Augusta, GA: Marvin Timm
- Woodlands/Montverde, FL: Renee Varga



FLORIDAGEORGIA

REGIONAL NEWS

Out and About in the Florida-Georgia District



The Stepping Stone Choir kicked off the new year by joining the worship service at Christ the Shepherd on January 1. On Sunday, February 12, the Stepping Stone Choir Team visited Oak Road Lutheran Church for their 10:45 am worship. The Stepping Stone Mission, Inc. started in July of 2009 in response to God's call to serve the homeless. Stepping Stone, a Recognized Service Organization of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, is led by Pastor Joseph Song.



Dr. Victor Belton, pastor of Peace/Decatur, was a visiting faculty member recently at Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, teaching Homiletics II and Learning from Jesus. He was also a speaker at the January 24-25 Multiethnic Symposium on the Seminary campus. Belton, who has been serving Peace for almost 25 years, is a former member of the LCMS Board of Directors. He is a certified coach through the Center for United States Missions and works with other pastors to plan and implement prayer initiatives for the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. He helped begin a ministry in Sudan Africa along with Sudanese Evangelist Vicar Bafel Paul Deng. Belton's communities include involvement with the DeKalb Consortium of Churches, Partners in Action for Healthy Living and the DeKalb County Community and Human Development Citizens Review Board. ■

King of Kings/Jasper Celebrates Charter Sunday

With the heartfelt refrain, "Almighty God, to you be glory in the Church forever and ever, Amen!" worshippers at King of Kings Lutheran/Jasper joined in thanksgiving as the congregation was received as a member of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

The December 4, 2016, service was a celebration of music and the Word led by many who have contributed to the growth of the church from 14 members in 2010 to more than 75 members at the time of the chartering.

King of Kings Organist and Music Director Marcia Rubin opened the service with the prelude, "Holy, Holy, Holy." The congregation joined in singing "Come, Thou Almighty King," "The Church's One Foundation," "Rock of Ages Cleft for Me" and "Christ Is Our Cornerstone." Special music included "Grace Alone," sung by soloist Jackie Hauer of Timothy Lutheran/Woodstock, and "The Transfiguration" as the postlude played by former King of Kings organist Mack Beverly.

Rev. David Sieg of King of Kings gave the invocation. Founding member Carol Scheder recounted a brief history of the church, giving thanks for the guidance of the Holy Spirit at every step of the journey.



Participating in the chartering service were (l-r) Rev. Jeff Jordan, Circuit Visitor, Rivercliff/Atlanta; Rev. Steve Constien, Timothy/Woodstock; Rev. Ernie Knoche, King of Kings/Jasper; Rev. David Sieg, King of Kings/Jasper; District President Greg Walton; District Executive Director Missions and Outreach Doug Kallesen.

Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-16 (Unity in the Body of Christ) was read by King of Kings Elder Dan Rubin. Matthew 16: 13-19 (Peter Confesses Jesus as the Christ) was read by Rev. Jeff

Jordan, Circuit Visitor and pastor of Rivercliff/Atlanta.

Because of his special relationship with King of Kings as members were meeting in prayer and faith to form the mission church, Rev. Steve Constien of Timothy/Woodstock was invited to deliver the sermon. Prayers and blessings on behalf of the congregation were offered by Florida-Georgia District Director of Outreach Doug Kallesen. Rev. Ernie

Knoche of King of Kings gave the benediction.

The Rite of Chartering was led by Florida-Georgia District President Greg Walton, who called upon the congregation to live together as the body of Christ on earth, to work together to carry out His Great Commission and to love one another as Christ has loved us. Congregational President Peter Hoffmann signed the constitution of the LCMS on behalf of King of Kings.

Congregations from around the District shared greetings and blessings. A reception followed the services. ■



REGION 1

Vice President:
David Brighton

Mount Calvary/Warner Robbins

Laitly Board Members:

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

Commissioned Minister Board Member:

Lamar Stewart | Our Redeemer/Augusta

NE Georgia Circuit Visitor:

David Wesche | All Saints/Blairsville

Atlanta N Circuit Visitor:

Jeffrey Jordan | Rivercliff/Atlanta

Atlanta S Circuit Visitor:

Larry Townsend | Christ Our Savior/Hampton

E Central Georgia Circuit Visitor:

Roger Schwartz | Our Redeemer/Augusta

Disaster Training Offered

Two LERT and Disaster Response training events are planned for March and April.

- The Disaster Ministry of Messiah LERT training on Saturday, March 18, at Messiah/Tampa, FL. This will be combined with a chainsaw and muck-out training for those who are already LERT certified.
- Shepherd of the Coast/Palm Coast, FL, LERT training event on April 1. All LCMS congregations in the Palm Coast area are encouraged to contact Shepherd of the Coast to sign up and attend.

For more information on both events and to sign up for the Tampa training event visit www.MercyDisasterResources.org/Training



Rev. George Murdaugh was installed as interim pastor at Prince of Peace/Douglasville on January 8. Shown here after the service are (l-r) Rev. Larry Townsend, Circuit Visitor and pastor of Christ Our Savior/Hampton; Rev. Murdaugh; and Dr. Wilton Heyliger, pastor of Incarnate Word/Stone Mountain.

North Georgia Congregations Gather for “Equipping to Share”



Welcoming participants to the Everyday Evangelism workshop is Rev. Dr. Gerhard C. Michael, Jr., of St. Peter/Dahlonega. Seated to his right is Richard Cohrs, presenter from Lutheran Hour Ministries. Equipping to Share is the first course in the Mission U curriculum, whose purpose is to equip the laity for their role as witnesses to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Fifty-two people from six North Georgia congregations and mission churches gathered Saturday, October 8, 2016, in Dahlonega to participate in the Lutheran Hour Ministries’ workshop Equipping to Share: Everyday Evangelism.

Richard Cohrs from Lutheran Hour Ministries led the five-hour workshop, helping participants to discover opportunities for witnessing to their Lord — in the everyday round, in crisis situations, in the lunch room at work, on the golf course, in a doctor’s waiting room and so on.

According to Rev. Dr. Gerhard C. Michael, Jr., pastor at St. Peter, a mission plant in Dahlonega, which hosted the event at Dahlonega United Methodist Church, another plus of the workshop was that it assisted those attending to review the core content of the Christian faith, that a faithful and effective witness could be given.

Sponsoring the event in addition to St. Peter were All Saints/Blairsville; Good Shepherd/Gainesville; Living Faith/

Cumming; and King of Kings/Jasper. Also attending were a delegation of six from the new mission in Commerce, Christ the King. A Thrivent Action Grant provided support for the noon lunch and the cost of publicity.

An interesting byproduct of the seminar was that Dr. Laurel Hughes, general manager of the Christian radio station in Dahlonega, WCDG 88.7 FM, and a participant at the workshop, invited Cohrs to her station for an interview. “Before the month was out, arrangements were made for the Lutheran Hour to be broadcast each Sunday at 12 noon,” Michael reported. “Feedback from participants was most positive.”

A follow-up seminar will likely be planned for 2017 to help all the “priests in the royal priesthood be able to represent their Lord graciously and effectively,” according to Gail DeLuca, who handled the publicity for the workshop and serves as evangelism chair at Living Faith. ■

Below — LIVING HOPE/Kennesaw celebrated Presentation of Bibles Sunday on January 22. During the 11:15 am worship Bibles were presented to all children new to congregation and to those transitioning to first grade. Pastor John Schubert serves Living Hope.



Engaging the Reformation in an Information Age

“What is a Lutheran, anyway?”

That’s a question that the members of University Lutheran/Tallahassee have to answer on a regular basis, according to Pastor and Campus Minister Jay Winters.

As the students and non-students of University Lutheran met together to discuss how they might engage with the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, the idea came up to produce web based resources that help bring visibility and understanding of Lutheran theology to those who might not know about it.



WHAT IS A LUTHERAN?

“The great thing about building the web resources,” said Winters, “was that it gave us an opportunity to fill in the gaps in knowledge that some of our members even had about what we believe.”

As the website WhatIsALutheran.com grows, University Lutheran invites the Florida-Georgia District to participate in two ways: use the resource in churches as a way to engage both Lutherans and non-Lutherans in conversation and if you have people who are interested in writing

articles, “we would love the help — especially if you’re a NON-church worker,” Winters added. ■



Trinity/Summerfield held its annual Leadership Seminar for Officers and all Board members on Tuesday, January 17. About 50 members participated in the sessions during the day. Pastor Blair Clark talked about developing Small Group ministries in 2017. President Al Etzler reviewed the growth of Trinity membership, from 60 members in 1996 to 986 in 2016. Senior Pastor Dan Kelm facilitated table discussions as well. Shown here are (l-r) Kelm and Clark.



REGION 2

Vice President:
Frank Marshall
St Paul/Jacksonville

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

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

Tallahassee Circuit Visitor:
Mark Schultz | Epiphany/Tallahassee

First Coast Circuit Visitor:
Dana Brones | Bethlehem/Jacksonville

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

Servant Saturday Positively Impacts Downtown Orlando



The first Servant Saturday by Trinity/Orlando brought together 45 members who split into three teams to serve at the Coalition for the Homeless of Central Florida, Grand Avenue Primary Learning Center and the Orlando Union Rescue Mission Thrift Store.

The Grand Avenue Primary Center team worked inside and out, organizing and cleaning. A school representative noted that this was “the first time I had volunteers who would not stop working when it was time to go because they wanted to finish their tasks.”

The Orlando Rescue Thrift Store team worked in the store to shelve, stock and organize items. They were even available to help a customer pick a tie to wear with the shirt he bought for church the next day. The Trinity team serving at Coalition for the Homeless worked on meal preparation to provide lunch for 100 children and adults. Volunteers donated all the food, prepared and served the lunch — then cleaned up.

Nearly half the Trinity volunteers gathered for lunch at the neighborhood City Diner afterward to swap stories and enjoy a meal sponsored by Thrivent.

At left — Among the volunteers serving at the Coalition for the Homeless were (l-r) Mary Beth Brink, Carmen and Tony Ramiz, Mark Brink ■

The Crafty Quilters of Ascension/Casselberry in late January visited Pathways to Care, a Catholic Charities of Central Florida assisted living facility dedicated to providing quality healthcare, housing and hope to vulnerable homeless men, women and veterans in need of a safe place to heal from serious illness or injury. The Ascension group donated quilts to be given to the residents served by this outreach ministry.



REGION 3

Vice President:

Brian Kneser | Woodlands/Montverde

Board Treasurer:

Renee Varga | Woodlands/Montverde

Laity Board Members:

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

Commissioned Minister Board Member:

Lois Ford | Faith/Eustis

Space Coast Circuit Visitor:

Gary Held | Risen Savior/Palm Bay

Orlando East Circuit Visitor:

Ken Green | Prince of Peace/Orlando

Orlando West Circuit Visitor:

Milan Weerts | Emeritus/Clermont

Winter Haven Circuit Visitor:

Dean Pfeffer | Hope/Plant City

Outreach Programs Benefit Children in Need

Two recent Christ/Lakeland outreach projects touched the lives of children at home and abroad.

Christ's 2016 VBS ingathering was the collection of children's clothing for an orphanage in Honduras. Skylar Peterson and Delaney Peterson, members of the congregation's Girl Scout Troop 890, coordinated an effort to collect outdated McKeel Academy polo shirts. The goal was 100 shirts; the reality was more than 3,000 donations.

Christ shipped the shirts and other supplies to the orphanage in 600-pound batches.

An annual Christmas outreach project for Christ is a toy collection for the in-house children at Lighthouse Ministries, a Lakeland shelter for women and children.

Every fall, the congregation receives a list of two items that the children want and two items that the moms say they need. An Angel Tree is set up with tags that have this information. Members bring the donations to Christ for transport to Lighthouse.

Church members contribute wrapping paper, gift tags and tape for the moms to wrap the presents. Christ also provides either a Bible story book or Bible for each child, with names imprinted on the Bibles and a written message inside. ■



Above — Girls from Hogar Nazareno in Honduras model shirts donated by parents of McKeel Academy.

Below — Left to right: Pastor Jerry and Joyce Munz of Christ's Outreach and Missions Board with two of the workers from Lighthouse.



LUTHERAN LIFE

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

Hope Presents Gift to United Food Bank

On Sunday, January 8, the members of Hope/Plant City celebrated a special check presentation to Mary Haysek, Director of the United Food Bank of Plant City.

The gift was the result of the offering from the December 21, 2016, Hope youth Christmas program, with proceeds dedicated to the Children's Nutrition Program of the Food Bank. This program, benefiting those who receive free or reduced price lunch, provides both breakfast and lunch to families at the food bank.

The Christmas program offering was \$555, which was matched by a Hope member with an anonymous gift of \$500 for the program.

Hope members frequently provide assistance and support to the Food Bank as their Senior Pastor Dean Pfeffer serves on the Board of



Directors. Pfeffer's message the day of the check presentation focused on "Living. Boldly!" and he shared how the congregation through their love reflects how they live boldly in the Plant City community. ■

Above — Participating in the Hope

check presentation were (l-r) Mary Haysek, Food Bank Director; Hope Senior Pastor Dean Pfeffer; George Banning, Food Bank Board Chairman; Nora Trivunovich, Chair of Hope's Christian Growth Team; Hope Associate Pastor Shea Pennington.

Neighborly Outreach



Members and friends of Trinity/Trinity gathered together to come to the aid of a disabled elderly lady in New Port Richey who had received an eviction notice as a result of the deteriorating condition of the paint on her home. The HOA gave her 90 days to repaint the house exterior or to move out. The neighbors provided enough paint for the job, and Trinity provided the labor so that her home was repainted in a single day. She's now living securely in her repainted home. ■

Hymnals Dedicated — On Sunday, January 15, Bethlehem/Fort Myers, dedicated 50 new hymnals during the 9am worship. "In recent years we have been very short of hymnals during our busiest months, January through April," said Bethlehem Pastor Darrell Stuehrenberg, "but not now!" Former organists at Bethlehem made the contributions — Sean Hutchings in memory of her husband Bill, and Dorothy Riddle in memory of her husband Larry. ■

Stephen Ministers Commissioned — Messiah/Tampa commissioned four new Stephen Ministers into the one-to-one lay caring ministry that takes place in congregations. Stephen Ministry congregations equip and empower lay caregivers to provide high-quality, confidential, Christ-centered care to people who are hurting. Shown here are Messiah's newly commissioned Stephen Ministers (l-r) Ginger Derenthal, Janet Donahue, Sharyn Woodbrook and Paul Dworkin. Walter Halfmann is Messiah's coordinating leader for Stephen Ministry. ■



HATS FROM THE HEART — The Angels Ministry of Prince of Peace/Orlando finished their Thrivent Action Team project in time for Christmas giving to the many homeless citizens in the community. A total of 368 hats were crocheted and knitted for men, women and families living in shelters; another 100 hats were crafted for homeless children attending public schools. A heart was sown on each of the hats, with a card attached

reading: "One piece of yarn becomes a hat that was made just for you. A little prayer that it will keep you warm thru the cold days was said while it was being made. May God bless you!" Deliveries were made to the Orlando Rescue Mission for Men, Coalition for the Homeless Women & Families of Orlando, Covenant House, Salvation Army Men's & Women's Shelters, Good Samaritan Ministries and Orange County Public Schools. ■



20th Anniversary Challenge Topped — Amigos en Cristo surpassed its 20th Anniversary Challenge Grant goal of \$20,000 to end 2016 with a \$10,200 surplus. Judy Small, widow of longtime Amigos volunteer and board member Bob Small, offered to match any qualified gift during November and December dollar-for-dollar up to \$20,000. "We received 47 qualified gifts, including 30 new donors totaling \$25,192," reported Amigos en Cristo Founder and CEO Robert Selle. "Thanks to the generosity of all participants, her challenge grant resulted in a total gain of \$45,192. This helps us continue to provide the spiritual, legal and social services that assist immigrants to Southwest Florida to a successful life here in the United States and the Kingdom of God."



REGION 4



Vice President:

Jon Zehnder | St. Michael/Fort Myers

Laity Board Members:

Jeff Richards | Hope/Bradenton
Evita Gonzalez | Beautiful Savior /Lehigh Acres

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

Suncoast Circuit Visitor:
David Brockhoff | Holy Trinity/Masaryktown

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

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

Sarasota Circuit Visitor:
Rossetter Leavitt | Beautiful Savior/Sarasota

SW Circuit Visitor:
Richard Browning | Hope/Bonita Springs



Vibrant Ministry — “God is doing some amazing things here,” said Florida-Georgia District Executive Director of Outreach Doug Kallesen after a visit to Grace Tabernacle/Faith School in Fort Lauderdale. The school has 135 children enrolled, with worship attendance hitting 300-plus in the Haitian Mission Church pastored by Bernard Julmiste. An Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology | Concordia Seminary graduate, Julmiste is shown here (left) with Kallesen. ■



Above — “It’s easy to walk over the stick when it is low, much harder when it is high,” Holy Cross Pastor Dennis Bartels said in a recent children’s message. Living the life of a Christian of integrity is much the same way, Bartels emphasized. “It’s easy to have integrity when everything is going your way — much harder when things are not.” He encouraged the children to always be sure “your yes means yes and your no means no.” ■



Community Presence — Trinity Lutheran Church/Delray Beach has been a fixture in the local community since 1904. On January 13, Trinity Pastor Vince Putnam gave a blessing and helped cut the ribbon at the Cool Park located at NE 2nd Ave and Seacrest Blvd. ■



Rams Reaching Out — The Redeemer Lutheran/Stuart school choir and handbell groups, known as The Bells of Praise and Bells of Praise Too, sang and played for a variety of venues throughout the month of December. Their performance in Treasure Coast Square was a benefit for Tykes and Teens. The Redeemer students also entertained the residents of Stuart Lodge, Solaris Senior Living, Grand Oaks of Jensen and Palm City and Harbor Place at Port St. Lucie.

LYF Youth Poll Results Reflect Headlines, Scriptural Stance

Results of the Lutheran Youth Fellowship poll conducted at the 2016 LCMS Youth Gathering in New Orleans were released via the LCMS in January of this year.

The LYF Youth Poll has been offered to participants at each triennial LCMS Youth Gathering since the first Gathering in 1980 and is intended to gauge attitudes, issues and concerns.

Sharing insights from that poll were Rev. Terry Dittmer, recently retired Director of LCMS Youth Ministry, and Rev. Mark Kiessling, Dittmer’s successor.

Among the released poll results:

Use of Time

- 42.5% spend 10 or more hours per week on sports.
- 27.8% spend 10 or more hours per week on other extra-curricular activities.
- 38.1% spend 10 or more hours per week studying, outside of school hours.
- 80.5% spend at least some time weekly in church activities (worship, Bible study, etc.).
- 61.1% spend at least some time weekly in church youth-specific ministry activities.
- 70.2% spend some time volunteering weekly.

Youth Concerns

Participants were asked to identify three top concerns from a list of 26 topics.

“Terrorism” was the top response among 27.7% of youth taking the poll; for the seven polls prior to 2016, terrorism had never made the top five issues. Second top response was “The Future,” at 25.8%; third was “College,” at 25.3%; “Abortion” was fourth, at 17.1%; and “My Faith,” at 15.7%, was fifth.

“My Faith” has surfaced as a concern on eight of the 10 polls that included this issue as an option, according to Dittmer.

Teaching the Faith

The poll asked young people what issues the Church should talk about more. Their top responses included:

- LBGT/sexual-orientation issues,
- abortion,
- sexual concerns,
- current events,
- politics,
- theology,
- terrorism,
- outreach,
- relationships
- other religions.



REGION 5

Vice President:

Steve Wipperman | Our Savior/Lake Worth

Laity Board Members:

Karen Smith | Peace/Okeechobee
Samuel Ludington/Holy Cross-North Miami

Heartland Circuit Visitor:

Richard Norris | Trinity/Lake Placid

Treasure Coast Circuit Visitor:

Craig Bode | Trinity/Fort Pierce

S Palm Beach Circuit Visitor:

James Weist | Epiphany/Lake Worth

Gold Coast Circuit Visitor:

Timothy Hartner | St. Paul/Weston

Monroe-Miami-Dade Circuit Visitor:

Alan Sielk | St. Paul/Miami

St. Paul/Boca Raton Hosts Night to Shine Prom

For the second consecutive year, St. Paul Church & School/Boca Raton was the site of one of the hundreds of Night to Shine Proms for People with Special Needs sponsored by the Tim Tebow Foundation.

The February 10 event — designed to offer an unforgettable prom experience centered on God's love for people with special needs ages 14 and older — brought 141 guests to the St. Paul campus.

Approximately 365 volunteers were involved in creating the experience.

Guests walked the red carpet into the festively decorated Family Life Center, where dancing and dinner were provided. Throughout the evening guests also had the opportunity to have their photos taken, ride in a limousine and do some Karaoke singing. A highlight of the evening was the crowning of all the guests as kings and queens of the proms.

"Incredible," summarized St. Paul Pastor Steve Carretto. "I want to give thanks first and foremost to our heavenly Father, who gives us this incredible mission and ministry but also joy in our everyday life to do the things He's called us to do.

"We are called to care for the person who is just right next to us, and being able to do that in this night is incredible."

Contributing to the St. Paul Night to Shine success were sponsors including the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Thrivent Financial, Lutheran Church Extension Fund and Chick-Fil-A.

Worldwide, 150,000 volunteers from 375 churches in all 50 states and 11 countries on six continents, celebrated more than 75,000 honored guests with special needs simultaneously around the world for the Third Annual Night to Shine sponsored by the Tim Tebow Foundation. ■



Thrivent Financial Announces \$319 million in 2017 Dividends

Eligible members of Thrivent Financial will receive an estimated \$319 million in dividends in 2017. This figure represents a 2% increase from last year's dividend distribution of approximately \$312 million.

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

"We are pleased to be able to continue providing increasing dividends to our members, especially with ongoing low interest rates," said Randy Boushek, Chief Financial Officer at Thrivent. "Despite this continued low interest rate environment, our overall investment, risk pooling and expense management results have been very favorable and now enable us to share that success with our members."

The 2017 dividend scale was recently approved by the organization's board of directors and reflects the organization's continued financial strength and stability. Solid business fundamentals, including rigorous expense management, strong investment practices and careful underwriting of new business, contributed to the creation of surplus to allow the organization to distribute back to the members who have contributed to its success.

Thrivent has paid \$2.9 billion in dividends over the last 10 years; the organization has paid dividends every year since 1913.

Dividends are not guaranteed.

Thrivent Financial is a financial services organization that helps Christians be wise with money and live generously. As a membership organization, it offers its more than 2.3 million member-owners a broad range of products, services and guidance from financial representatives nationwide. For more than a century it has helped members make wise money choices that reflect their values while providing them opportunities to demonstrate their generosity where they live, work and worship. ■



Randy Boushek, Chief Financial Officer at Thrivent



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National Lutheran Schools Week

Florida-Georgia District schools were part of the 2017 National Lutheran Schools Week, celebrating the impact of this established ministry.

Nationally, more than 2,100 Lutheran schools serve 250,000-plus students in early childhood centers, elemen-



St. Paul/Peachtree City, GA: Pajama Day featured a teacher slumber party in the PreK3 room.

tary schools and secondary schools. Additionally, three international schools serve students and families abroad in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Hanoi. The LCMS school system is the largest protestant school system serving children today.



Grace/Winter Haven, FL — Administrative Assistant Susie Woods and Principal Michael Rottmann were appropriately attired for Super Hero Day.

At right — Gloria Dei/Davie, FL — Kids Care Through Cards was the service project for the week. Gloria Dei students made cards for cancer patients and collected change to support the backpacks full of goodies to accompany the cards. The student made 476 cards and collected \$435.77.



Redeemer/Stuart — Themed costumes were the dress code for NLSW Decades Day at Redeemer.

Celebrates Christian Education

In the Florida-Georgia District, almost 9,500 students are served through:

- 38 early childhood centers;
- 27 elementary schools;
- 2 high schools (St. John/Ocala and Faith/Fort Lauderdale).



Faith/Eustis, FL — Younger students paired with older students to decorate rocks that were collected and formed into a rock cross celebrating Jesus as our Rock.



Trinity/Delray Beach, FL — Imaginative styles were the rule on Crazy Hair Day.



Holy Trinity/Tampa — Teachers got into the spirit of NLSW on "Rock Star Day."

Shown here are some of the District school activities during the January 22-28 celebration. ■



upon
this
ROCK
2016-17 National Lutheran Schools Week

St. John/Ocala, FL — Students arts and crafts focused on the theme, Upon This Rock.



Our Savior/Plantation — Kristin Volz, 4th and 5th grade teacher, with her students enjoying Snow Day on to open National Lutheran Schools Week.

Trinity/Orlando, FL — Approximately 300 grandparents came to Trinity to be celebrated on Grandparent's Day. The day began with breakfast in the courtyard, followed by classroom visits where grandparents participated in crafts and activities. VPK and K-8 students sang during a chapel service as Grandparent's Day came to a close.





Lutheran Life
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Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod
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The BACKPAGE

JOE GUAGLIARDO HONORED FOR MORE THAN TWO DECADES SERVICE IN FLORIDA-GEORGIA

Long-time Florida-Georgia District youth leader Joe Guagliardo was honored on his retirement at a January 8 dinner at Faith Lutheran/Merritt Island. A Commissioned Lay Minister in the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, Guagliardo was a youth leader in the District for 23 years including service at Zion/Fort Myers before coming to Faith/Merritt Island. He was also active in regional and District youth events and is a member of the Florida-Georgia Youth Ministry Council. Joining youth in paying tribute to Guagliardo at his retirement party were area youth leaders as well as Mark Brink, Florida-Georgia District Executive Director School Ministries. ■



Lutheran Church Extension Fund
Debbie Talbot,
Florida-Georgia Administrator
(877) 457-5556 extension 4
dtalbot@flgadistrict.org



February 5 was LCEF Sunday at St. Paul Lutheran Church & School/Peachtree City, GA. Sharing information about Lutheran Church Extension Fund and its services were (l-r) LCEF Board Member David Worthington; St. Paul LCEF Congregation Advocates Molly Millard and Kiara Denholm; and Tami Worthington, a member of the Florida-Georgia District Board of Directors. LCEF Sunday offers an opportunity for a member of the Florida-Georgia LCEF team to visit a District congregation to share information on the services that LCEF can provide for church workers and members. Church members are able to sign up on the spot, and get information about all the services available. A Congregation Advocate is a visible, local LCEF presence in his or her home congregation. For additional information about scheduling an LCEF Sunday or becoming a Congregation Advocate, contact Debbie Talbot, Florida-Georgia Administrator, at 877-457-5556 extension 4 or dtalbot@flgadistrict.org.