

LUTHERAN LIFE

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

2017 | Volume 2





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

LUTHERAN LIFE

Lutheran Life Publishing:
971 SW Pepperidge Terrace
Boca Raton, Florida 33486

<http://flgadistrict.org/lutheran-life/>

E-Mail photos, news, address updates to:
LutheranLife@aol.com

John List & Eileen Bishop
Editors

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

www.flgadistrict.org

District President, Greg Walton
School Ministry, Mark Brink
Mission & Outreach, Doug Kallesen
Finance/Administration, Dan Reichard
Business Manager, John Elliott
Legal Counsel, Rusty Huseman

Mark Your Calendar! September 28-30,



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

COME BE RE-FORMED WITH PROFESSIONAL AND LAY LEADERS AT THE FLORIDA-GEORGIA DISTRICT PRESIDENT'S EQUIP CONFERENCE!

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

We invite and encourage 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

Victor Belton Named Concordia New York VP for Leadership, Campus Pastor

Rev. Dr. Victor J. Belton is joining the administration of Concordia College New York as Vice President for Leadership and Campus Pastor.

In announcing Belton's appointment, Concordia President Dr. John A. Nunes said that the "new position expands future opportunities for Concordia to rise purposefully in its historic mission of preparing people for lives of service to the church and society. Pastor Belton's work will focus on nurturing the vocational and the spiritual flourishing of the students, staff and faculty."

"Belton embodies a genuine passion for young people as well as for inter-generational ministry in diverse settings," said Rev. Dr. Joshua Hollmann, Chair of Concordia's Theology Department. "He has served notably as a formal and informal mentor and spiritual guide to many individuals for many years."

For the past 27 years Belton has served as pastor of Peace/Decatur, GA. He has long been an active presence in the community, including being convener of the DeKalb Consortium of Churches and chair for both Partners in Action for Healthy Living and DeKalb County Community and Human Development Citizens Review Board.

Known as a talented orator, highly sought-after conference speaker

and notable man of prayer, Belton has traveled on mission projects to Ethiopia and South Sudan. He served for 12 years (2004-2016) on the national Board of Directors for the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

Belton and his wife, the Honorable Wenona C. Belton, an Associate Judge in the Fulton County Juvenile Court, have been married for 39 years. Together they raised a child, Michael Bridgett, during his formative years. Bridgett resides in Saint Louis.

A native of Washington, DC, Belton graduated from Concordia New York in 1982. He received his Master of Divinity in 1986 from Concordia Seminary/St. Louis. Concordia New York in 2006 awarded him an honorary doctorate.



Rev. Dr. Victor Belton and Dr. John Nunes at Concordia New York

Belton will be installed at Concordia on September 24; the preacher will be Florida-Georgia District President Gregory Walton. ■

DISTRICT CAPSULES

by Greg Walton District President

Calling Congregations

Grace/Arcadia, FLSole Pastor
Faith/Dunedin, FLSole Pastor
Our Savior/Griffin, GASole Pastor
Faith/Hialeah, FLSole Pastor
Our Redeemer/Lake City, FLSole Pastor
Holy Trinity/Lutz, FLSole Pastor
Marco/Marco Island, FLAssociate Pastor
Woodlands/Montverde, FLAssociate Pastor
Christ the King/Orlando, FLSole Pastor
Trinity/Orlando, FLSenior Pastor
St Paul/Peachtree City, GASenior Pastor
Rivercliff/Sandy Springs, GAAssociate Pastor
Beautiful Savior/Sarasota, FLAssociate Pastor
Redeemer/Stuart, FLAssociate Pastor
Trinity/Toccoa, GASole Pastor
Lakeside/Venice, FLAssociate Pastor
Redeemer/Vero Beach, FLSole Pastor

Calls Issued

Grace/Arcadia, FL
Vicar Anthony Arias as Sole Pastor,

Holy Trinity/Lutz, FL
Rev. David Faulkner as Sole Pastor

Peace/Naples, FL
Rev. Dr. Karl Galik as Sole Pastor

Lakeside/Venice, FL
Rev. Brady Finnern as Associate Pastor,

Calls Accepted

Peace/Naples, FL
Rev. Dr. Karl Galik as Sole Pastor

Calls Declined

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

Transferred to Other Districts

Ms. Janet A Wolbert Northern Illinois (C)

Transferred from Other Districts

Rev. Lyle D. MullerMid-South (O)
Ms. Theresa M. Greer Michigan (C)
Rev. Thomas C WaynickMissouri (O)

Church Changes

Hispanic Lutheran Mission
at Grace/St. Petersburg, FL Closed.

Ordained/Commissioned Minister Initial Assignments

Ms. Anne Dobbins — Concordia Texas
Principal, Good Shepherd/Titusville, FL (C)

Emeritus

Rev. Michael R. Thurau (O)
Mrs. Mary P. Zabel (C)
Mrs. Sara Perez-Arche (C)
Mrs. Ellen Mattheus (C)
Mr. Roy Heflin (C)

Change of Status within the District

Ms. Kristi Stanski Active to Candidate (C)

LIFELINES

Can there be any more glorious news for Christians than the death and resurrection of Jesus? It is the very thing upon which our hope and faith is predicated. The season of Easter is a wonderful time to remember that we have a new life in Jesus.

The first time I visited Israel and had the opportunity to walk the Via Dolorosa, the Way of the Cross, I was



amazed at what a moving journey it was. Walking in the very places where Jesus carried His Cross on the way to Golgotha — an agonizing walk He made for me — was incredible. The things I had read about since I was a child in Sunday School, that my parents had taught me, that I had heard countless sermons on, that I had even preached about, all



of a sudden took on an even greater significance. These weren't just some historical facts that took place in a faraway land a long time ago. They were events that came alive in a whole new way.

Walking in the Garden of Gethsemane, imagining the pages of Scripture coming to life as I thought about the agonizing hours leading up to the capture of Jesus, seeing the olive trees, some which may have



even been there, if not in reality, at least in my mind, when all those events unfolded. I will never forget being in the place regarded as the high priest's palace, and being led down into the stone carved holding cell where Jesus was likely held. They have added some light to it, but once we were in there, and crowded in with several groups, they turned the lights off and it was pitch black. We began to get a sense of what a desolate place it really was.

We saw the place where they scourged prisoners, with a channel cut to accommodate the blood of the victim. It made the suffering and agony of Jesus come to life in a very real way.

Crucifixion was a terrible and gruesome punishment. An upright beam was placed in a hole in the ground and secured. A victim would be laid with his hands on the cross

beam, and spikes would be driven into his quivering flesh. Then a rope would hook it onto the cross beam and it would be towed up to the right height. When the cross beam was in place, they would nail it to the upright. Placing the victim's feet together, they would nail his feet into the upright and there he would die. It wasn't the puncture marks that would kill him. What made this form of punishment particularly cruel was that a man would die by suffocation as the weight of his own body, struggling to catch a breath, would simply wear out. His weight would

pull him down so as his feet rested against the nails it would increase the blood flow and cause excruciating pain. As he would rise up to catch his breath, the pain of the nails would make his body drop. Up and down, up and down he would rise trying



to catch breaths and then back down submitting to his pain of the crucifixion. Eventually the body would no longer have

the strength to endure. In the case of Jesus, He had been abused and beaten before they nailed Him to the Cross. He was weak and bruised. Jesus had already been whipped with 195 lashes. Imagine how difficult it was for Jesus to speak, much less breathe, as He labored, in great pain and with a broken spirit as He slowly suffocated to death.



Many people have heard the story of the Crucifixion many times,

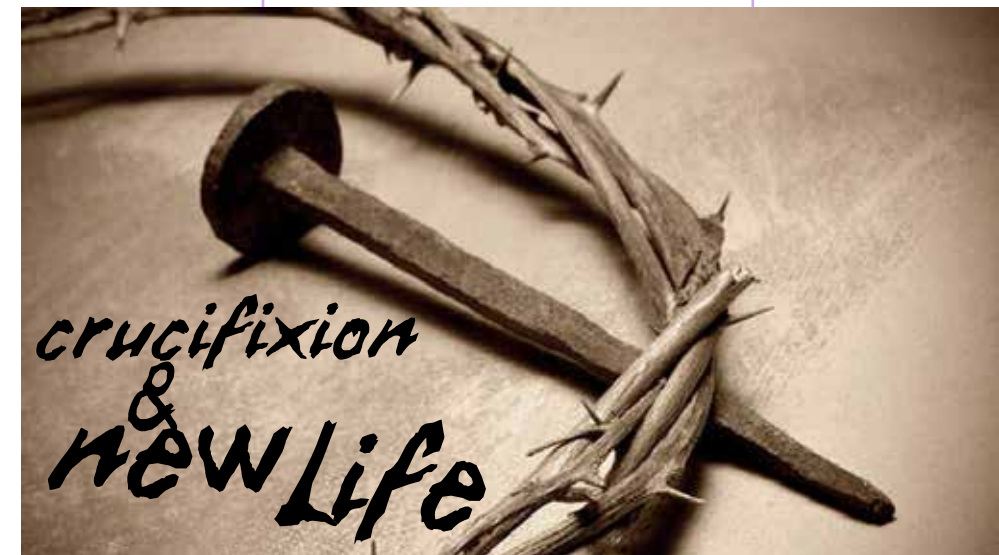
but we have often sanitized the details to make it more palatable. When you see the chiseled out rock conduits that flowed with the blood of victims flogged mercilessly, when you comprehend the utter despair and the reality of the unimaginable pain that Jesus experienced just for you, taking on the punishment that we have rightly deserved, it's simply impossible to go on living in our sinfulness. When we truly stop and reflect on the cost Jesus willingly paid for our sin, it has the power to change your life. How can one take for granted a faith and life that was attained at such a costly sacrificial price?

Congregations have begun their move from the celebration of Easter to Ascension Day, and on to Pentecost. On a Pentecost Day more than 40 years ago I was confirmed in my faith in Jesus. I stood before the congregation and before my Lord and made a profession of faith. By grace I have not forgotten those vows, even if I haven't always honored them as I would like. My confirmation verse, from Galatians 2:20, reads, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." About 10 years later, when I was ordained into the holy ministry this verse would take on a renewed significance for me. However, as I saw the ancient and holy sites in Israel years later these words of Paul spoke to me once more in a powerful way.

Certainly we aren't physically crucified like Jesus, but on that Cross He took my sinful thoughts,

attitudes and actions and made this great exchange. It's as if Jesus has said, "My child, I will take all those things in your life that separate us and destroy them so that you can live in fellowship with Me. In fact, I'll stay with you and live in your heart forever."

Jesus does now live in our hearts by faith, and though we often struggle to live out that faith in a sinful world, God has chosen us and calls us to new life. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:4-5, "For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened — not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who



has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee." The implication of this is that as we grow closer to God through the power of the Spirit, the stronger we become as those crucified with Christ and now living in Him.

We are living in a fascinating time as it relates to our faith in Jesus. Christianity, which was long the dominant profession of people in the United States, has been on a major decline over the past decades. According to Pew Research Center, the changes will not be quick to turn around. In a recent report they write, "To be sure, the United States

remains home to more Christians than any other country in the world, and a large majority of Americans — *roughly seven-in-ten* — continue to identify with some branch of the Christian faith. But the major new survey of more than 35,000 Americans by the Pew Research Center finds that the percentage of adults (ages 18 and older) who describe themselves as Christians has dropped by nearly eight percentage points in just seven years, from 78.4% in an equally massive Pew Research survey in 2007 to 70.6% in 2014. Over the same period, the percentage of Americans who are religiously unaffiliated — describing themselves as atheist, agnostic or "nothing in

particular" — has jumped more than six points, from 16.1% to 22.8%. And the share of Americans who identify with non-Christian faiths also has inched up, rising 1.2 percentage points, from 4.7% in 2007 to 5.9% in 2014. Growth has been especially great among Muslims and

Hindus, albeit from a very low base."

What is really interesting is that while many have stopped attending church, many still claim their faith, but with a new found freedom. With the rise of what some have called "web religion" people now have the option to participate at a level of their own comfort and satisfaction without any responsibility or commitment. This "me and Jesus" attitude, while not all bad, misses the whole point of the Christian community that Jesus Himself established as He modeled life together in community beginning with twelve disciples. The issue that I have heard from some former church people is that

the church is too judgmental, too hypocritical, and interested more in self-preservation than in reaching hearts for Jesus. The question of why worshipping communities decline seem often to be met by

passionate about bringing the Gospel to people who needed to hear about Jesus regardless of any religious affiliation.

Some might argue that there is really no difference. Yet, statistically if a congregation is begun with a mission fervor, a Kingdom mentality, and a deep desire to reach all people for Jesus, it will find ways to do amazing ministry. If the only goal is to establish a Lutheran congregation, without any sensitivity to the needs of the surrounding community, the congregation will become seen as a more exclusive place available only to the “right” people, whether intentional or not.

No matter where your congregation falls, whether one extreme or the other, or somewhere in the middle, it’s clear that the old “churched” model, when the church was respected and held a position of authority, really has little impact in our world today.

congregations with an attitude of its “their” problem, and not “ours.” The truth is, often it really is “our” problem, rather than “theirs.” How we are perceived by people outside of the Church really does matter. There are eternal lives at stake.

Often when I visit with a congregation celebrating an anniversary I will do some research to learn about how they were planted, and why. Generally it falls into two categories. One is because there was no Lutheran presence or community, and people wanted to offer their community the blessings of a Lutheran Church. The other reason was because people were

We still have much to offer the world around us. We remain the church of the Reformation and understand the value of God’s grace and love in Jesus. Perhaps we need to really scrutinize to see if there are things within us or our parish that somehow need to be crucified with Jesus to enable Him to shine through and draw people once again to the Cross.

The challenge is to move people in congregations that have often become so comfortable with an inward focus to becoming outwardly focused for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus. As Rick Warren wrote in his book, *Purpose Driven*

Life, “It’s not about you!” In this year of celebrating the Reformation our theme is a great one: “It’s still all about Jesus!” I have yet to visit a community where everybody is churched, knows Jesus and is secure in their eternity. In other words, there’s work to be done, and we’re the ones that Jesus has chosen to do this. In John 15:16, one of my favorite Bible passages, Jesus says, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you to go and bear fruit — fruit that will last...” If you read those words and you believe God’s Word, then you, reader, are the you that Jesus is referring to! In fact, He not only chose you, but He was crucified for you!

The cost of the crucifixion was great, but it is the very motivating factor for us to go in the name of Jesus to tell the world of His sacrifice and love. In 1707 Isaac Watts, reflecting on the amazing sacrifice of Jesus in the crucifixion penned these words, “When I survey the wondrous cross; On which the Prince of glory died, My richest gain I count but loss, And pour contempt on all my pride.” This is a beloved hymn, but more than just a beautiful hymn, it’s a reminder that we, too, have been crucified with Christ. Watts ends his hymn with these words, “Were the whole realm of nature mine, That were a present far too small; Love so amazing, so divine, Demands my soul, my life, my all.”

May that be true for each of us as we think about the cost of the crucifixion and may it motivate us to proclaim our new life in Jesus. May God bless this Easter season in your faith and life as you live for Jesus and as Jesus lives in you!



See you at the empty tomb!
GREG

LSG Names John Moeller CEO

Lutheran Services of Georgia has announced the selection of Rev. John Moeller as its new Chief Executive Officer.

In this key leadership role, Moeller will steer the statewide organization as it looks to expand and enhance its services and programs and to strengthen its position as an industry leader. Moeller began his position effective February 15. At that time, Gary Johnstone, who had served as Interim CEO, resumed his position as Chief Operations Officer.

“The LSG staff and Board are thrilled to welcome John ... as we continue in our commitment to serve many of Georgia’s most vulnerable populations with an unwavering passion and the highest quality of services,” said Rev. Dr. David Hardy, Chair of the LSG Board of Directors. “John has a reputation in the community as a visionary leader and as a builder and grower of organizations.”



“Our Board and senior leadership unanimously agreed that John is the dynamic leader needed to propel LSG to the next level – to grow its programs and improve its services, so that ultimately we can better serve our clients and our community.”

“Lutheran Services of Georgia is known throughout the state as a leader in the program areas it serves,” said Moeller. “I’m honored to have the opportunity to lead this established and respected organization into the future.”

A veteran of the nonprofit industry with extensive experience leading faith-based organizations, Moeller comes to LSG from Action Ministries in Atlanta, where he served as President and CEO for the past five years. Prior to Action Ministries, Moeller served as CEO of MUST Ministries

in Marietta for ten years. ■

District Youth Reminded They Are “Chosen”

From February 18-20, Florida-Georgia District students and adults gathered in Daytona Beach for the high school youth event themed “Chosen.”

During the three days, students were led by speakers Rev. Matt Popovits and Abi Tesafaye along with the band The Great Romance on a journey through 1 Peter 2:9: “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.”

Youth and adults participated in four plenary sessions as well as an assortment of workshops. The beachfront venue provide recreation for the weekend, as did planned games and social activities.

Dave Timmerman of Faith/Viera headed the planning team for the Senior High Youth Gathering. Support for the event was provided by Lutheran Church Extension Fund, Florida-Georgia District Executive Director School Ministries Mark Brink and District Administrative Assistant Cindy Hammerstrom. ■





District Continues Growth in Multi-Cultural Ministry



Let's take a look at living out the Great Commission — "Go and make disciples of every nation..." (Matt 28:19) In this article we will explore how this is happening inside the Florida-Georgia District. We will focus on ethnic ministry in our midst.



MISSION POSSIBLE
by Rev. Doug Kallesen
District Executive
for Mission & Outreach

"After this I looked, and behold a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb...'" (Rev. 7:9ff)

We in the Florida-Georgia District have a taste of heaven, where

people from many nations, tribes and languages assemble weekly to worship the Lord Jesus Christ. Our District has identified, trained and invested in leaders to serve as missionaries in 13 different Hispanic ministries. We will soon be calling

a missionary-at-large to the greater Atlanta area to reach seven or more other Hispanic groups located in the area.

Our District also has eight Haitian ministries that speak Creole

or French with a dash of English, four African American, three Asian ministries and one Bahamian! It is truly humbling and stimulating to see the dedication and passion with which these leaders serve. Many are worker priests, their congregations use shared space and operate with limited resources and equipment. These ministries are making a positive impact in our District. One of our Haitian churches is the second largest in its circuit and is self-supporting!

This article will focus on our Hispanic ministry in Tampa, led by Pastor Miguel Sanabria, an immigrant and became a U.S. citizen. He calls that day one of the happiest days of his life. I recall how, with pride, he showed me his citizenship papers. He also managed to complete his seminary training through the Center of Hispanic Studies, Concordia Seminary/St. Louis and has now planted ministries at Messiah/Tampa, Hope/Plant City, Family of Christ,

Family of Christ West (formerly St. Matthew). He hopes to plant at least two more. God has also blessed this ministry with two vicars, John Cobos and Miguel Sanabria, Jr., six certified deaconesses, six secular deaconesses, and six secular deacons.

With this team, every ministry site holds worship services, conducts visitation, Bible study, along with service and training throughout the week. During the past two years, classes have been offered to the Spanish community to improve job skills, allowing participants to become better assimilated. A small grant from LCMS helped make this possible. Here is a list of classes they hold:

- ◆ English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
- ◆ HV/AC training for technicians to go to work
- ◆ Immigration assistance
- ◆ GED (High School Equivalency)
- ◆ Cooking and Sewing
- ◆ Parenting

They contribute substantially to the overall finances of their ministry and also receive mission support from the Florida-Georgia District, the SELC District and partner churches. Events include Latin Night, where food is offered from all the nations represented in the congregation, including South and Central America. The evening features Spanish music, singing and dancing and serves both as a fundraiser as well as fellowship with the Anglo members in the partner churches.

A summer concert is being planned in 2017 and has the hopes of attracting many people who have no church home.

Outreach to the community and youth includes a soccer league directed by Vicar Miguel Sanabria Jr. The Lutherans won first place last year! I was told that more than 500 people attended the tournaments from the area and that this is definitely connecting people to Jesus.

The two vicars are in their final class and will soon be ordained and are slated to serve in the four Hispanic ministry sites in the Tampa Bay area. They are also being trained for cross-cultural work within an Anglo congregation. Both men are bilingual and are well suited for this type of ministry.

John Cobos and Miguel Jr. will likely be worker priests in the future. John currently owns a commercial cleaning business.

Our partner churches each provide space and place for ministry, as well as ministry assistance. This is certainly true of Messiah Lutheran Church/Tampa who has partnered with this Hispanic ministry from the earliest days under Rev. Jim Guelzow and now under Rev. Mark Adrian.

This congregation also opened up the doors of their facility when the seminary held classes in Tampa. Lay leaders have helped this ministry serving in positions such as treasurer.

We are grateful for the work of Concordia Seminary/St. Louis — Center for Hispanic Studies, especially Rev. Leo Sanchez and Rev. Mark Kempff. Their timely assistance, support and leadership helped Hispanic ministry grow throughout our District.

I hope that this article gives you a brief glimpse into how the Florida-Georgia District is living out the Great Commission. To God be the glory! ■

District Educators Share Insights With Haitian Peers During Holy Week

Mission: Haiti and Florida-Georgia School Ministries collaborated on an early April conference in Haiti for teachers of Lutheran schools in that island nation. While usually among the top students while in school, Haitian teachers often have no formal training. This conference offered approximately 50 Haitian educators valuable teaching insights and direction. The visiting team included District President Greg Walton; Mission: Haiti Executive Director Helen Roenfeldt; Mark Brink, District Executive Director School Ministries; Rev. Rick Armstrong; Karen Smith; Lois Ford; Susan Brockberg; Janet Voightman; Kirsten White; Sarah Bevis; Anne Dobbins; Todd Sickles. A complete followup will be in the next issue of *Lutheran LIFE*. ■



Annual Love Fest Welcomes Honored Guest “Mite Box”

Holy Cross/North Miami hosted its LWML Annual Love Fest — a festive evening of friends, food, games, dancing, music and fun — on Saturday, February 18. This yearly



event is the church’s Valentine’s “Ladies Evening Out.”

Special guest at the 2017 Love Fest was the LWML Mite Box, that small cardboard container whose contents help fund mission grants that impact thousands of people.

“We always invite our Tropical Zone LWML sisters, friends outside of church, and this year we invited the Florida-Georgia District officers and a group of Holy Cross young ladies,” reported Jennefer Lenchner, LWML President at Holy Cross. “Some of the guests, who are not church goers, and some of the young girls, asked about the LWML!” The Holy Cross women have been looking for ways to promote the



mites, so they decided to ask Love Fest participants for a mite donation at the party instead of including the usual gift exchange.

“More mite money was donated in one night than several months of mite giving from the entire church,” Lenchner said. “And here’s a helpful hint — we use our Thrivent Action Dollars to pay for food and party goods.” ■

Mission: Haiti Speaker Highlights SW Florida Spring Rally

On Saturday, March 18, approximately 100 women from congregations in the Southwest Florida Circuit of the Florida-Georgia District gathered at Bethlehem/Fort Myers, for the Lutheran Women in Mission Spring Rally.

Bethlehem hosted the Rally in partnership with Christ the King/LaBelle. Women from as far away as Marco Island were in attendance.

It was a busy day of food, fellowship, worship, inspiration and mission challenge.

Special speaker was Helen Roenfeldt, Executive Director of the Mission:Haiti, an outreach ministry established by the Florida-Georgia District in 1999. This mission society reaches out to

the people of Haiti with the love of Christ in a variety of ways.

Displayed along Bethlehem’s Fellowship Hall walls were the 130 dresses and 75 shorts that had been previously prepared by a dynamic sewing team composed of members from Bethlehem and Christ the King for future Mission: Haiti medical mission teams.

Bethlehem’s Women’s Guild President Sharon Kranz and Bethlehem’s Secretary, Donna Lewandowski (along with her husband, Roger) directed preparations for the rally. Terri Gerlach headed the team that coordinated both the breakfast and lunch. Many other Bethlehem women served as hostesses and Rally workers. ■



Spring Calendar Full for LWML

Spring is the time when things start to happen for the LWML.

We have an LWML Convention this year in Albuquerque, NM, from June 22-25. Registration has now opened, and we encourage you to check out all the registration possibilities at www.lwml.org, as well as all



FUTURE & HOPE

by Joan Koch
LWML District Vice President
for Communications

the other information available, such as the candidates for office. Our own Senior District Counselor, Pastor Tod Shouse, is on the ballot for pastoral counselor for the LWML. We are very excited about that!

There will be excellent speakers, great servant events and lots of fellowship with people from all over the country. It’s a great time to see friends that you don’t see frequently. How can you not want to worship with at least 3,000 fellow LWMLers? It is such an amazing time!

This will be the first time my husband and his oldest daughter will be coming with me. I am so excited to share this wonderful event with both of them. I know that they will be coming home more enthusiastic about the LWML. I hope that you will join us in Albuquerque. I know you will love it!

We also have our District Retreat this year, and I would like to invite you to come to Jekyll Island, GA, on September 28-October 1 to the Villas by the Sea. Registration will open until May, and important information will be included in the next *Evangel*, so it will be easy to start making your plans for the event! Eden Keefe, Vice President of Christian Life for LWML will be our retreat leader. I have heard that we will have a special guest at the retreat: a visit from Lizzie, our Lutheran Church Charities K-9 Comfort Dog. We hope to see you in September at Jekyll Island. ■

The choice isn’t always obvious!



Sometimes the right property isn’t easy to identify.

Real estate broker John List expertly guides clients through myriad challenges to secure the home that meets their needs. He knows and understands market conditions, the importance of being near excellent schools, churches, retail, recreational, financial and business centers. John takes the time to learn each client’s goals before researching available properties and connecting them to those that best answer their needs. His personalized service continues through every step of the process until a successful closing. John is equally adept at selling homes, offering 30 years of proven experience backed by a powerful marketing program and an extensive broker network. If you’re considering the purchase or sale of a home, call John today.



John List for Douglas Elliman
John@JohnList.com
561.212.2112 • elliman.com/johnlist
444 E Palmetto Park Road
Boca Raton 33432

LCEF Announces National Student Marketing Competition Winners

Top honors in this year's Lutheran Church Extension Fund National Student Marketing Competition were awarded to Concordia University Texas, whose team claimed first place in 2016 as well.

Seniors Taylor Schmidt, Carlos Munoz, Jacqueline Knell and Race Mellman presented a coordinated campaign built around direct mail ads, a web community for churches on lcef.org and church maintenance tracking software. The winning presentation concluded with a Golden Hat award to the best church facility manager, complete with a video celebrating the essential, but often forgotten, church role.

In describing all of the students who participated, LCEF President and CEO Rich Robertson said, "They never disappoint. The intensity is always top level. We are in debt to them for all the great ideas."

The April 3 competition began at 8:30 in the morning at

the International Center in St. Louis, headquarters for the LCMS, with team Concordia St. Paul. Following were teams from Concordia College-New York, Concordia University Nebraska, Concordia University Ann Arbor, Concordia University Irvine, Concordia University Wisconsin, Concordia University Portland, Concordia University Chicago and Concordia University Texas.

Each participating team developed a unique comprehensive campaign, taking advantage

of LCEF's regional structure to create a marketing campaign to increase Church Improvement Loan originations.

Second place was won by Concordia University Irvine. Seniors Grant Worthington, Jesse Hall, Case Bruton, Alexis Martinez and Celina Stratton presented a comprehensive campaign involving two videos — one with a feature role for Robertson; print ads with the tagline "and now a prayer for the roof fund," an infographic and a social media plan.

Concordia College-New York took third place with a solid campaign called "Rooted in Faith, Growing Through Partnership." The campaign centered on the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, urging church growth was essential to support the next 500 years.

Team New York boasted the most international flair. Senior David MacKenzie is from Jamaica; Senior Valeriia Chebon is from Ukraine; Antoneta Syku, Albania; and Senior Samantha Sommer, New Hampshire.



Concordia University Texas repeated as victors in the competition



Second place honors went to Concordia University Irvine



Concordia College New York students won third place

In the movie Sister Act, Whoopie Goldberg plays a nun who is hiding out in a convent in an inner city neighborhood.

She works with other nuns and she begins to influence the others. At one point there is a key scene where she and the other nuns and the monsignor meet with the mother superior to get permission to do something different. Goldberg's character says they, "want to go out and meet the people." To which the mother superior gasps.

They were in a scary neighborhood and she was concerned about their safety. The monsignor says they will face those challenges head on (and trust in God)! "As if we could stop you..." They say to the mother superior.

Yet in the real world there is often something stopping the church



Go Out and Meet the People?

The coaching leader sees that personal transformation is not a one time event and the value of modeling the way. The solution is not an invitation or a flashy event that hopefully will translate into faith and faithful worship. It isn't a "they come to us" but rather a "we come to you" proposition. It is a shift in perspective and behavior.

It is exactly like Whoopie Goldberg's, "go out and meet the people." But why? Well if people are not coming in (because they are not looking for what you are offering) and you and other members are not bringing friends...then the only other option is to go and make new friends!

It is in

from simply going out and meeting the people. Our pattern is to invite people to worship or to something else happening in the church. Great! But how is it working? How much inviting is happening? We all fall into the pattern in our current relationships where others know what we do and we know what they do. We might invite them to a craft sale or annual activity or wedding or other one time event but not much beyond that. Often for our friends and for us our relationship patterns and worship patterns are pretty set and our churches are plateaued or worse. So what do we do?

making new friends and new relationships with people where church revitalization begins.

So just to be clear, the people who are also open to meeting new people are usually the folks in your community who have a reason to also make new friends. They may be new residents or they may be the rare person looking for a church home. More often though they are the people who have a human need that they cannot meet

alone: food, shelter, transportation, sobriety, clothing, education, support in their time of trial or grief and so on. Coincidentally this is also what God has called his church to be: those who care for widows and orphans and those who are hungry and naked and hurting.

The coaching leader will want to come alongside those who are beginning to learn new patterns of behavior like going out and meeting the people. They will do this through modeling the way, encouraging others and supporting their efforts. At the same time, the church will be salt and light for the community surrounding the church. New relationships will mean new opportunities and God willing, new people joining God's family for eternity.



The
COACHING LEADER
by Rev. Scott Gress
Lutheran Counseling Services
Leadership Coach

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

W

hen I broach the subject of Islam in a critical way most people are disinterested, or perhaps afraid to discuss it lest they be labeled as intolerant, or what is worse — an Islamaphobe.

In spite of all the contrary historical evidence — past and present — we are repeatedly told that Islam is a peaceful religion. Muslim imams reach out to Christian clergy and seek “dialogue” and “understanding.” People commonly say that they know a Muslim family and they are nice people, courteous, good neighbors.

So, why should we care that America has 3,000 mosques and a rapidly growing Muslim population? Why rock the boat of ecumenical harmony and perhaps offend somebody?

With Ezekiel 33:1-6 as our reference point, let me explain why we should care. Islam divides the world into two groups: the House of Islam (ostensibly peaceful) and the House of War. The House of War comprises all societies not dominated

by Islam. Islamic theology (sharia law) obligates every Muslim to use persuasion, legal means, emigration (called *hijara* by Muhammad) and frequently violent *jihad* to change a society to Islam.

European society is being changed today by means of sharia courts, no-go zones (non-Muslims not allowed), rapes, immigration and violence — all of which are foreshadowed in the bloody history of the religious-ideology called Islam.

By extrapolating current history and the high birth rate of Muslim families many scholars believe that Europe will be under Islamic control by 2050. Fortunately most of the Muslims in our country are westernized, unorthodox Muslims who do not faithfully follow the more violent dictates of the Koran and the *hadith* (traditions of Muhammad).



WHY WE SHOULD CARE

by Rev. Bruce Lieske
District Chairman of Task Force
on Muslim Evangelism

God cares and “desires all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.” (1 Timothy 2:4) At 1.6 billion Muslims are the largest unreached people group on earth. They walk in darkness, deceit and destruction with no knowledge of a gracious, forgiving God who seeks to have a personal relationship with them.

Their god, Allah, is a slave master who hates sinners and all non-Muslims. Our God is a personal friend, brother, Father who loves the sinner and calls him into an eternal friendship culminating in heaven.

When a deacon from a Boca Raton Armenian church attended St. Paul Lutheran for the funeral of his son’s best friend, he appreciated Pastor Steve Carretto’s Gospel centered message of hope and love.

Two months later, two Muslim women of Turkish descent attended that Armenian church and asked for instruction in the Christian faith. The deacon met with them. Yet while the women had chosen

the Armenian church because of the shared language, they wanted to be instructed in English.

Remembering Carretto’s message from two months earlier, the deacon and his wife brought the two women to St. Paul. “He had begun the instruction, including sharing the Lord’s Prayer and Apostle’s Creed,” Carretto said. “His words to me were, ‘You finish the work.’”

Carretto is doing just that, sharing scripture and answering the women’s questions. When one of the woman said, “Baptize,” her friend agreed. “It reminded me of the story of Philip and the Ethiopian,” Carretto said. “‘See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?’ That was the Ethiopian’s question, and Philip responded by baptizing him.”

“We had a simliar situation. I filled the baptismal font, and with a witness from the office attending, baptized both women.”

Since then, the women have been in worship at St. Paul. One of the women has brought her husband to church with her and has asked how he and their children can also be baptized.

“As 1 Corinthians 2 tells us, the Spirit of God is active,” Carretto emphasized.”



St. Paul's baptismal font

We should not fear Muslims or avoid the challenge of sharing God’s love. Most Muslims do not practice orthodox Islam and are not terrorists. But they are blind to the grace and love of the true God. Surely you would help a blind person cross a busy intersection.

Speak *and show* the grace of Jesus to your Muslim friend. Establish a relationship and when an opportunity presents itself share your faith. That is our mission as a chosen people “that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” (1 Peter 2:9) ■

Note: If your congregation would like to sponsor a seminar on this topic we have presenters available. You may contact us at blieske7@bellsouth.net.



Thomas Waynick Installed as Pastoral Institute CEO

Rev. Thomas Waynick was installed as CEO of the Pastoral Institute in Columbus, GA, on February 19.

He is the third ordained clergyman to receive a “specialized pastoral ministry” (SPM) call from the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod’s Board for National Mission since such calls were authorized by the 2013 Synod convention.

The Pastoral Institute is a nonprofit community- and faith-based agency with a staff of 60 clinicians and support-staff members under Waynick’s supervision. According to Waynick, it focuses on “spiritual integration in mental-health services.”

Prior to joining the Institute’s staff, Waynick served in the U.S. Army — most recently as the garrison chaplain at its Fort Benning base. Before that assignment, he served for two years as the Pentagon chaplain at the Pentagon in Arlington, VA. From 2004-2009 he was the clinical director of the Family Life Training Center at Fort .

A licensed marriage and family counselor, Waynick is a 1982 Master of Divinity graduate of Concordia Theological Seminary/Fort Wayne. He earned master’s degrees from the University of Central Texas and the U.S. Army War College. ■



Participating in the installation were (l-r) Rev. Larry Townsend, Rev. Thomas Waynick, Rev. Eric Estes, Florida-Georgia District President Greg Walton and Rev. Brad Arnholt.

CHURCH IMPROVEMENT LOAN

Church Improvement Loans are limited to congregations and include:

- Maximum 10-year term
- Up to \$150,000
- 24 months at Cost of Funds (COF) adjusted annually
- LCEF COF plus up to 2.5% adjusted annually for remaining term
- Payments fully amortized over term

Church Improvement Loans can be used on:

- Critical repairs that can lead to substantial damage and cost if not fixed in a timely manner.
- Upgrades that enhance your church’s appearance and comfort.
- Projects that improve energy efficiency and save money in the long term.



CHURCH IMPROVEMENT LOAN

FROM LUTHERAN CHURCH EXTENSION FUND (LCEF)

It could be a poorly ventilated chapel, water-stained roof or broken down bathroom — but it needs to be fixed for three reasons:

- 1 Prevent bigger problems down the road.
- 2 Turn people off or away.
- 3 Relieve unnecessary stress.

For example, not fixing a leaky roof can lead to mold and mildew, rotting out joists and studs, compromising electrical wires and fatiguing drywall.

Update your church to become welcoming to your current and potential members.

Let’s be honest, unless you fix your repair, you’re always going to be thinking about it.

If you would like more information about LCEF’s Church Improvement Loan, please contact us or visit lcef.org/church-improvement.

Daniel J. Reichard—District VP dreichard@flgadistrict.org
Laura Zirbel— Loan Consultant lzirbel@flgadistrict.org
Debra Talbot—Admin dtalbot@flgadistrict.org
Phone: (877) 457-5556 ext 4

FLORIDAGEORGIA

REGIONAL NEWS

*Out and About in the
Florida-Georgia District*

District Represented at Annual Hunger Walk/Run

Georgia congregation members were among the almost 130,000 participants in the **33rd annual Hunger Walk/Run 2017 5K**, March 5, in downtown Atlanta.



This annual event, which began in 1984, is a project of the Atlanta Community Food Bank with a goal to unite the community to raise awareness and critical funds for local hunger relief. Proceeds from the event benefit the Atlanta Community Food Bank and other local nonprofit organizations that support food pantries, community kitchens, shelters and other programs for people in need of food assistance.

These benefiting partner organizations help recruit participants and receive a percentage of the funds raised to support their direct hunger relief programs.

In its 33 years, Hunger Walk/Run has raised more than \$8 million for hunger relief — enough to provide 32 million meals! ■



Vice President:
David Brighton
Mount Calvary/Warner Robbins

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

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

NE Georgia Circuit Visitor:
David Wesche | All Saints/Blairsville
Atlanta N Circuit Visitor:
Jeffrey Jordan | Rivercliff/Atlanta
Atlanta S Circuit Visitor:
Larry Townsend | Christ Our Savior/Hampton
E Central Georgia Circuit Visitor:
Roger Schwartz | Our Redeemer/Augusta



One of the trademark features of the Trinity Woods Summer Day Camp — the C&W Train — was renovated in early March by a crew from **Lutheran Church of the Holy Trinity/Macon**. The train is called the C&W Train in honor of the two volunteers who build the engine almost 20 years ago. This year after the crew repainted the engine and rebuilt the bridge behind the train, the new “logo” was attached to the engine. ■



Living Faith/Cumming engaged their servant hearts and hands in downtown Atlanta on March 11, serving those in needs.



More than 30 students at **Grace School/Jacksonville** were inducted into the Jr. Excel Club on March 1.

This is the first year that the school has joined the national program, whose members are dedicated to improving their schools, communities and country through volunteerism. Excel Club's focus is on Exchange's four programs of service: Americanism, youth activities, community service and the prevention of child abuse.

A formal pinning ceremony welcomed the new Grace members and officers, including Aria Douglas, who gave her first speech as president. ■

Peace Continues Shrove Tuesday Potato Pancake Supper Tradition

Members of **Peace / Dunnellon** are known for serving a potato pancake supper on Shrove Tuesday. This year the tradition continued as the church welcomed hungry diners from 4-7pm on February 28 to the 26th annual Potato Pancake Dinner.

"We all love making new friends, and meeting up with others we only see at our dinners, and we know this dinner is a community favorite" said Sheryl Lutz, Peace's PR Manager.

The menu included potato and regular pancakes, ham, applesauce, dessert and a choice of beverages including tea and coffee. Tickets at the door were \$7 for adults and \$2.50 for children 5 thru 12. Children under the age of 5 were admitted free.

"A frequent question year-round for Becky Williams and Jackie Hucker, who run the First Saturday booth, is if they have missed our potato pancake supper made with real potatoes," Lutz added. "They are happy to hear, 'No, it's coming up.'"

At right — Bob Sullivan and Gene Lutz serving dinner at Peace ■



Amazing Grace Women Learn to Pray in Color

Prayer is not an unusual focus for a retreat. Planners of February 24-25 Women's Retreat at **Amazing Grace/Oxford** elaborated on that focus with the theme "Praying in Color: Illustrating My Faith," with participants learning how to create visual reminders of their prayers.

Connie Denninger, a national presenter on Visual Faith, introduced the women to some new ways of bringing focus to prayer time and responding to God's love in Bible passages. Artistic talent was not a requirement.

The \$35 cost covered a continental breakfast, catered lunch, the coloring book and guide *Pray and Color*, colored pencils, markers and other utensils. ■



New VB Coach Welcomed in Ocala

Kimberlee Thomas is the new head volleyball coach at **St. John School/Ocala**.

An assistant coach at St. John last year, Thomas as a high school junior won top Marion County honors following her 2008 season at Meadowbrook Academy. During college, she was a star player at Warner University/Lake Wales and coached a local club volleyball team.

After graduating from college, Thomas for a year played volleyball in England while serving as a part-time coach at the University of Derby. She returned to the USA and resumed her club coaching job in Marion County. Thomas is the full-time social services director at The Centers. ■



Fundraiser Benefits School, Community

Abiding Savior Preschool/Gainesville hosted its 19th Annual Pie Supper in February, raising more than \$4,000.

Of that total, \$1,080 was donated to Meals of Hope. The remaining funds will be used to update the Preschool's bikes and bike trails on both playgrounds.

Abiding Savior Preschool offers classes for children from the age of two through Prekindergarten. Low student/teacher ratios afford each child individual attention as needed, with a maximum ratio of 8:1 for 4-year-old classes, 7:1 for 3-year-old classes and 6:1 for 2-year-old classes. ■



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

Community Outreach a Focus at Hope

Two events in the opening months of 2017 underscored the focus on community outreach at **Hope/Plant City**.

On January 31, the United Food Bank of Plant City, which in 2016 distributed more than one million pounds of groceries to the community, recognized area teachers who participated in the Food Bank's Fall Food Drive. During the event, which was hosted by Hope, awards were presented to area schools for most food collected and most collected per student for elementary, middle and high schools.

Receiving third place in the elementary school division was Hope member and Knights Elementary 5th grade teacher Jason Pfeffer, who led Knight's food drive efforts. Pfeffer, the son of Food Bank board member and

Hope's Senior Pastor, Rev. Dean Pfeffer, also received second place for the Knights for the amount of food raised per student.

Over Valentine's weekend, Hope hosted its annual Teddy Bear Sunday, intended to share the warmth and love of God with children in the community and beyond. This year, more than 170 teddy bears were divided between Plant City Police Department, Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office and Lutheran Student Ministry at UCF.



At the January award ceremony: (l-r) Rev. Dean Pfeffer; Jason Pfeffer; Mary Haysek Food Bank Director; George Banning, Chairman of Board for Food Bank.



A delicious dinner of corned beef and cabbage supplemented by rousing entertainment were the elements for a great night celebrating St. Patrick's Day on March 17 at **Our Savior/Zephyrhills**. The congregation is served by Rev. Tod Shouse. ■



Shown after Teddy Bear Sunday worship (l-r) are Thomas Goethe, Bryan Greatens, Kaylee Greatens, Andrew MacDonald and Keaira Griffin.

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

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



Trinity/Orlando students will soon have hyper-local ingredients on their lunch menu enhancing the school's healthy habits program, thanks to the DLR Group Professional Development Grant (PDG) program and Fleet Farming, Audubon Park. Garden prep and construction were recently completed, and a small group of parents, staff and students followed that preparation by planting seeds. ■



Members of all ages are benefiting from recent project completions at **Prince of Peace/Orlando**. The toddler playground used by students at the Prince of Peace Preschool has been resurfaced. After more than three years of planning and labor, the Prince of Peace/Orlando Möller Pipe Organ restoration was completed in late March. Prince of Peace Lutheran Church is East Orlando's multicultural community church and preschool, with traditional, contemporary and Spanish worship services each weekend. ■



Faith/Eustis invited area residents to join members for a free Family Movie Night community event. The Faith Triplex Cinema presented three age-appropriate movies for children, teens and adults. A free spaghetti dinner including drinks and ice cream was served. More than 150 were in attendance, with two-thirds of the crowd staying to watch a movie after dinner. ■



Redeeming Life Maternity Home/Sanford was the recipient of quilts crafted by two groups at Trinity Lutheran/Athens: the Sow and Sews sewing group and the Yarnworks knitting group. The gifts of love were presented to Redeeming Life Executive Director Sheryl DeWitt (left) by Brenda Malueg (right), a member of Trinity and the Sow and Sews, during the 2017 Florida-Georgia Veterans of the Cross Retreat. Redeeming Life was founded to offer hope and opportunity to single, expectant women in crisis. The facility provides a safe, comfortable home to women in crisis pregnancies as well as opportunities for them to gain the life skills necessary for success and an independent life. Each resident participates in education and/or employment planning, classes in financial literacy, cooking, household management, and opportunities for individual and spiritual growth. ■

LUTHERAN LIFE

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



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

Preschool Teacher Amanda Stoop Honored

Amanda Stoop, a teacher at Loving Arms Preschool of **Christ The King/Largo**, was recently named Gulf Coast Family's Teacher of the Month.

In describing why she was chosen for this honor, the publication cited her compassion, dedication and enthusiasm.

Stoop, who has been involved with the preschool since 2008, reported that her "favorite aspect of being a teacher is the relationships I have the opportunity to build with the students and their families. When I talk about students, past or present I often refer to them as 'my kids' because I do feel that way.



Teacher of the Month Amanda Stoop (far right) with Open Arms Preschool Director Jessica Miller and the Chick-fil-a cow.

"It's really rewarding to have the kids call out your name when you walk into a room or insist on a hug before you leave for the day. Connections count, and I am so blessed that this is part of what I am called to do every day!"

The daughter of a teacher, Stoop said, "I grew up admiring her and the art of teaching. From a young age I wanted to be a teacher; however, as I got older I also recognized just how tough, and important of a job educating another generation was.

"After several years of wondering what to do, God stirred in me a passion for teaching and it was then that I decided to return to school for my teaching certificate — and I haven't regretted it one bit!"

"Amanda's dedication to teaching has been a great asset to our program," Open Arms Preschool Director Jessica Miller said.

"And because she is so passionate in her teaching, her students and their families have a real heart and appreciation for her."



The Auction Gala fundraiser hosted by **Our Savior School/ Saint Petersburg** in early March was a fun and successful evening. Both silent and live auctions featured myriad items to bid on — from class project creations to the opportunity to be the principal for a day. ■



Bethlehem/Fort Myers welcomed five new members on March 12. Shown with Bethlehem Pastor Darrell Stuenrenberg (far right) are (l-r) Wende & Steve Williams, Linda & Chester Rust, Emy McComb. ■



Peace Celebrates Gaik Installation

Rev. Dr. Karl Galik was installed as pastor of **Peace/Naples** during a festive afternoon worship on April 2.

Leading the service was Southwest Florida Circuit Visitor Rev. Richard Browning. Florida-Georgia District President, Greg Walton officiated. Peace's adult choir and several congregation musicians shared special music.

A post-service dinner followed in the Peace Fellowship Hall.

Most recently affiliated with Lutheran Church Extension Fund as a Vice President in Ministry Support, Galik was a parish pastor for many years before becoming Associate Director for Congregational Ministry for Grace Place Lutheran Retreats. He is a graduate of Concordia Seminary/ St. Louis and earned his doctor of ministry in leadership from Luther Seminary/St. Paul. ■

Seventeen pastors participated in the installation service, including l-r Bob Selle, Amigos en Cristos, Immokalee; Curt Deterding Zion/Fort Myers; Richard Browning Hope/Bonita Springs; Dennis Liebich, former pastor at Peace now living in North Port; John Roth, Thrive/ Esero; Karl Galik, Peace/Naples; District President Greg Walton; Andre Mezilus, Bethlehem Haitian/Immokalee; Darrell Stuehrenberg, Bethlehem/Fort Myers; Bob Scuderi, retired, a member of Peace/ Naples; Brad Hildebrandt, Faith/ Naples; Kevin Koenig, Marco/Marco Island; Mark Eisold, Pelican/Golden Gate; Juan Gonzalez, Beautiful Savior/Lehigh Acres; Charles Kanefke, Trinity/Cape Coral; Saint Luc Charelus, Bethlehem Haitian/ Immokalee. Not pictured is Tim Hartner, St. Paul/ Weston.

Forest Oaks Lutheran/Spring Hill recently received a check as part of the LCEF Shared Blessings Rebate program. A Shared Blessings Rebate allows eligible congregations like Forest Oaks to receive annual funds back for ministry. Florida-Georgia District Vice President LCEF, Finance & Administration Executive Director Daniel J. Reichard (left) presented the check to Forest Oaks President Judith Ward and Treasurer Jesse Ward. ■



Rev. Dr. Donald Hinchey from **Zion/Fort Myers** was the winner of the Apple iPad Mini presented by the Florida-Georgia LCEF at the District's 2017 Veterans of the Cross Retreat. LCEF District Vice President Dan Reichard made the presentation. ■



- 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

*Author's Night — Each year the children in the kindergarten class at **Peace Lutheran School/Okeechobee** write a book and have it published. This year they dedicated the book to Pastor John Hurst, who has served as Peace's shepherd since 1991. He is shown with Peace's Kindergarten teacher Letta Jordan and members of the class. Peace School, which is under the leadership of Director Karen Smith, opened in 1982. ■*



Trinity Receives 2017 Best of Fort Lauderdale Award

Trinity Lutheran Church has been presented with the 2017 Best of Fort Lauderdale Award in the Places of Worship category by the Fort Lauderdale Award Program.

Each year, the Fort Lauderdale Award Program identifies companies that have achieved exceptional marketing success in their local community and business category. These are local companies that enhance the positive image of small business through service to their customers and our community.

Various sources of information were gathered and analyzed to choose the winners in each category. According to program officials, the focus is on quality, not quantity. Winners are determined based on the information gathered both internally by the Fort Lauderdale Award Program and data provided by third parties.

Trinity earlier this year celebrated its 90th anniversary, a milestone that qualifies the church as Broward County's oldest Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod congregation. Sharing the campus with the church are Trinity Academy, which serves students from the early childhood through eighth-grade levels, and Trinity Haitian Mission. ■



Holy Cross School/North Miami welcomed some special visitors in March: former student Adam Constantine, Social Media Manager at Elon University and Professional basketball player for Vilpas Vikings; his brother Paul; and friend Brandon. Adam talked to the 5th – 8th grade students and shared his wit, wisdom and faith. ■



REGION 5



Vice President:
Steve Wiperman | 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



Shepherd of the Coast School and Church/Fort Lauderdale families joined for a FUNdraising 5k color walk on February 25. Promise Walk 2017 in Deerfield Beach supported the school program, which serves students from infants through eighth-grade levels. The program is under the direction of Christian School Principal Larry Ueltzen and Early Childhood Director Brenda Sorren. ■

District Board Teleconference

Meeting by conference call in early April, members of the **Florida-Georgia District Board of Directors** reviewed outreach efforts and upcoming events, including September's **President's Equip Conference**.

"Our continued focus on raising leaders and providing opportunities for congregations to engage in outreach serves our mission well," said District President Greg Walton.

Reports and discussion centered on the two critical ministry targets of Leadership and Outreach.

Leadership: 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.

◆ With a focus on raising and strengthening leaders, the second session of the **PLI (Pastoral Leadership Institute)** group — March 13-16 — focused on building missional communities and reaching more people with the love, grace and forgiveness of Jesus. The third session is scheduled for October.

◆ ECCE — **East Coast Common Endeavor** — is a cluster of LCMS Districts on the East Coast, including Florida-Georgia. "We are working together on a number of initiatives, among them supporting a program for leadership at Concordia College-New York," said Walton, "and we are working with folks in Portland, OR, to develop an East Coast Mission Training Center with a focus on equipping laity."

◆ The fourth round of **Emergent Leader Training** is being held April, May and June. At the time of the conference call, 18 people had registered — four of them from outside of Florida-Georgia. "The program is designed for pastors,

educators and laity, and the dynamics of this mix have been very beneficial as each participant group has learned from each other," Walton reported.

◆ The **Spring Regional Pastor's Conferences**, set for May 1-5, will host Rev. Darrell Zimmerman from Grace Place Wellness ministry to share with them a sample of what a retreat is like as well as to introduce an opportunity for congregational wellness retreats. Florida-Georgia District vice presidents have been an essential part of the planning as have Circuit Visitors.

◆ Florida-Georgia has been asked to sponsor a training session for those interested in interim pastoral training. The **National Association of Lutheran Interim Pastors** will be providing the training in the Orlando area August 14-18, 2017, and February 5-9, 2018.

◆ Plans are well under way for the **September 28-30 President's Equip Conference**. "This renewed version of the President's Convocation was renamed because of the desire to focus on equipping all church workers, *both professional and lay*, with skills that they can implement in their own parish settings," Walton noted. "The focus will be on the Priesthood of All Believers, a great way to celebrate the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation. The theme, from I Peter 2, is 'Re-forming Living Stones,' and will explore how the church will need to be reformed again and again as we move into the future, even as it has been in the past."

Outreach: 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 known the love of Christ to all people.

◆ The **2017 Hearts for Jesus** project will benefit the Comfort Dogs

Ministry of Lutheran Church Charities, who stood with the District during the difficult days after June 2016 Pulse shooting in Orlando. Most of the schools in Florida-Georgia will designate chapel offerings from the month of February to Hearts for Jesus.

◆ The **Nocatee Mission** is on hold after the resignation of Rev. Jeff Webb at Celebration Lutheran in Jacksonville, who was under consideration to be the mission planter. "We will keep Nocatee on our mission radar for the future," President Walton said.



BOARD ROOM
by John List
District Communications Director

◆ Redeemer/Stuart is the mother church for the **Port St. Lucie Mission** and is actively calling a pastor for this site.

◆ District Executive Director Missions-Outreach Doug Kallesen is working with Beautiful Savior/Sarasota on re-igniting the **Lakewood Range Mission**.

◆ Multiple visits have been made to **Hispanic Ministry/Tampa** to help the mission improve financial reporting and spending as well as full utilization of the staff, which includes two vicars, multiple deaconesses and deacons.

◆ **Haitian Mission Cluster** was held at Grace Tabernacle/Fort Lauderdale to discuss four topics: immigration, employment, job training and stewardship.

◆ **The Outreach Initiative with Lutheran Hour Ministries** is being reshaped and will primarily provide resources on the web through a portal. The new director is Rev. Tony Cook, formerly of Concordia Seminary/St. Louis.

◆ A focus group of pastors met with Kallesen to discuss the issues

Centers on Mission, Outreach

and needs facing smaller District churches. The goal is to be a catalyst for resources and networking to these churches and ministries via regular, low-cost means. **Florida-Georgia** has 205 churches; of the 187 reporting in 2015, 66% worship fewer than 125. Breaking the congregations down in another way, 51 are family sized with 1-50 in worship; 88 are pastor sized with 51-180 in worship; 33 are program sized with 181-399 in worship; 12 are corporate sized with 400+ in worship. "Much of this will be addressed at the President's Equip Conference next fall," President Walton said. "In early 2018 a specific conference for small churches will be planned."

◆ DCE Kami Mogelvang is spearheading the planning for the **2017 District High School Youth Servant Event**, which is scheduled for the week of July 16 in the Atlanta area.

◆ Dr. Bruce Jaeger and Kallesen continue to work with District congregations and circuits on outreach efforts to increase the ability for community outreach. Recent presentations have been made in Jacksonville, Orlando and Clearwater.

◆ An **Ethiopian Mission Society** is being organized through the Southeastern District, with the first meeting set for May 31. The Florida-Georgia District has been invited to participate because of the Ethiopian enclaves in Miami and Atlanta.

While **Funding the Mission** is not an official Critical Target of the District, it is crucial to reaching any of the targets. "Financial security seems to be a struggle for many of our congregations," Walton shared. "We continue to feel that impact at the District."

"One of the tasks we have is to teach biblical stewardship, giving not because of what we get, but rather because of what we have received in Jesus. Our giving isn't an obligation, but rather a response to what we have already received through the death and resurrection of our Savior."

Walton continued, "Jesus is our motivation, and He is the one who gathers us into this partnership. District giving enables us to accomplish more than any individual congregation could by themselves, as does our giving to Synod." ■



Grace Place Wellness Announced 2017 District Retreat

Grace Place Wellness will host its first 2017 Florida-Georgia District Church Worker Retreat from October 16-20 at the Holiday Inn on Lido Beach in Sarasota.

This retreat is for active church workers only; 16 spots are available for Florida-Georgia participants. There is a \$300 registration fee for this retreat, with scholarships available that will cover the fee.

Contact Beth McAnallen at 314-842-3077 or bmcanallen@graceplacewellness.org for more confidential information.

Register at <https://app.etapestry.com/cart/GracePlaceLutheranWellnessMin/default/>

Upcoming District Board Meetings:

- August 17-18, 2017, in Orlando
- November 3-4, 2017, in Orlando
- January 26-27, 2018, in Orlando
- April 13-14, 2018, in Orlando

• June 22-24, 2018, District Convention, Wyndham, Orlando

VETERANS OF THE CROSS

The 2017 Veterans of the Cross Retreat for retired professional church workers and their spouses brought 195 participants to the Life Enrichment Retreat and Conference Center, Fruitland Park, FL — the highest registration in several years. Themed “Engaged in the Master’s Business,” the March 6-8 event offered Bible study, worship, breakout sessions

and fellowship. Dr. Andrew Bartelt of Concordia Seminary/ St. Louis was the Bible study leader. Concordia New York President John Nunes was the featured speaker. Former Florida-Georgia District First Vice President Jim Guelzow preached at the worship service. Florida-Georgia President Greg Walton moderated a panel comprised of Rev. Dr. Dave

Benke, former president of the LCMS Atlantic District; Judy Benke; Sam Sipes, President and CEO of Lutheran Services Florida; Linda Kirk, CEO of Lutheran Haven/Oviedo; Rev. John Frerking; and Bartelt. The panel discussion focused on how those in retirement can and do continue to serve Jesus. “The worship was celebrative and the atmosphere was great,” said Walton. ■



With the wit of a stage comic, Rev. Ron Biel acted as master of ceremonies for most of the retreat and kept things light.



Rev. Richard Pieplow, chairman of the planning committee, recognized first-time attendees.



Concordia Seminary professor Rev. Dr. Andy Bartelt led Bible studies during the retreat.



Keynote speaker Rev. Dr. John Nunes, president of Concordia New York (right) poses with FL-GA District President, Rev. Greg Walton — both CNY alumni.



Rev. Dr. Paul Foelber rehearsed the Male Chorus and then led them in worship Tuesday evening.



Evening prayer was led by Rev. James Wiggins.



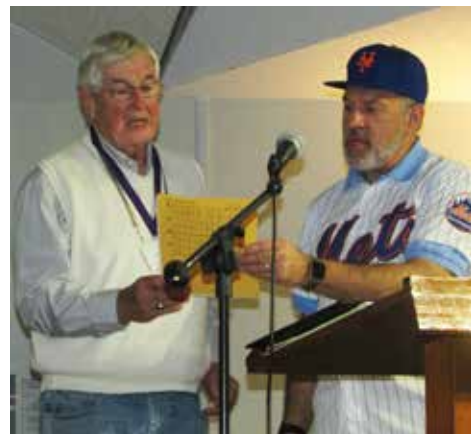
Ms. Monique Nunes gifted the audience with a moving Gospel song to close devotions for the evening.



Behnken Medallion Rev. Robert Jacobs with his wife, Ann, listen as Bob's biography is read to the audience.



Behnken Medallion honoree Richard Rath addresses the assembly.



Rev. Bob Besalski joins President Walton — not to sing “Take Me Out to the Ballgame” but to lead the retreat in “I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light.” Walton dressed as a NY Mets ballplayer to present Rev. Dr. David Benke with his award.



Judy and David Benke sing along before President Walton presented Dave Benke with the Church at Large Behnken Medallion.



Marge Freeman accompanied the Male Chorus and singing during worship.



A panel discussion with questions and answers from the audience involved opinions about the future of the church at large. From left, Judy and David Benke, John Frerking,

Will Diette, director of alumni and donor relations for Concordia New York (back row far left), gathered alumni from the school on stage for a group photo. Diette gave a multi-media presentation about the wide international reach of the student body.



John List (left) and Eileen Bishop List received the Laypersons Behnken Medallion. Mark Brink introduced them and as Eileen wasn't able to be present, John represented both of them.

At right, Martin Luther paid a visit to the retreat in a moving presentation by Re. Gary Schuschke.





The BACKPAGE

Lutheran Life
Florida-Georgia District
Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod
5850 T. G. Lee Blvd., Suite 500
Orlando, FL 32822-4410

NON-PROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
BOCA RATON, FL
PERMIT NO 1928

District Trains More Disaster Response Volunteers

Two Spring 2017 Lutheran Early Response Team (LERT) training sessions added more Florida-Georgia District members to the ranks of those prepared to help in times of crisis and need.

The District offers the training in cooperation and coordination with the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod Office of Disaster Response. The program's intent is to help congregations and individual members become better prepared for when a disaster strikes and to know how to respond not only within their congregation, but also in Word and deed within their greater community.

Graduates of the training receive Disaster Response credentials that enable them to enter disaster zones in coordinated LCMS teams to lend aid to those in need.

LERT training was offered on March 18 at Messiah/Tampa. On April 1, Shepherd of the Coast/Palm Coast hosted the session. The final spring training was set for April 22 at St. Luke's/Oviedo.

For more information, contact the Florida-Georgia District office or visit the District website — flgadistrict.org. ■

*LERT Training Graduates at Shepherd of the Coast/
Palm Coast*



LERT Training Graduates at Messiah/Tampa

LCEF Florida-Georgia Congregation Advocate Marvin Timm



Congregation Advocates have been at the heart of the LCEF ministry since 1902. An LCEF Congregation Advocate is a visible, local LCEF presence in his/her home congregation.

Marv Timm has shared the LCEF ministry as a Congregation Advocate for Our Redeemer for approximately 10 years.

If you would like information on how to become an LCEF Congregation Advocate for your congregation, contact Debbie Talbot at the Florida-Georgia District Office: (800) 857-5556 ext. 4 or dtalbot@flgadistrict.org



Lutheran Church Extension Fund
› florida-georgia district