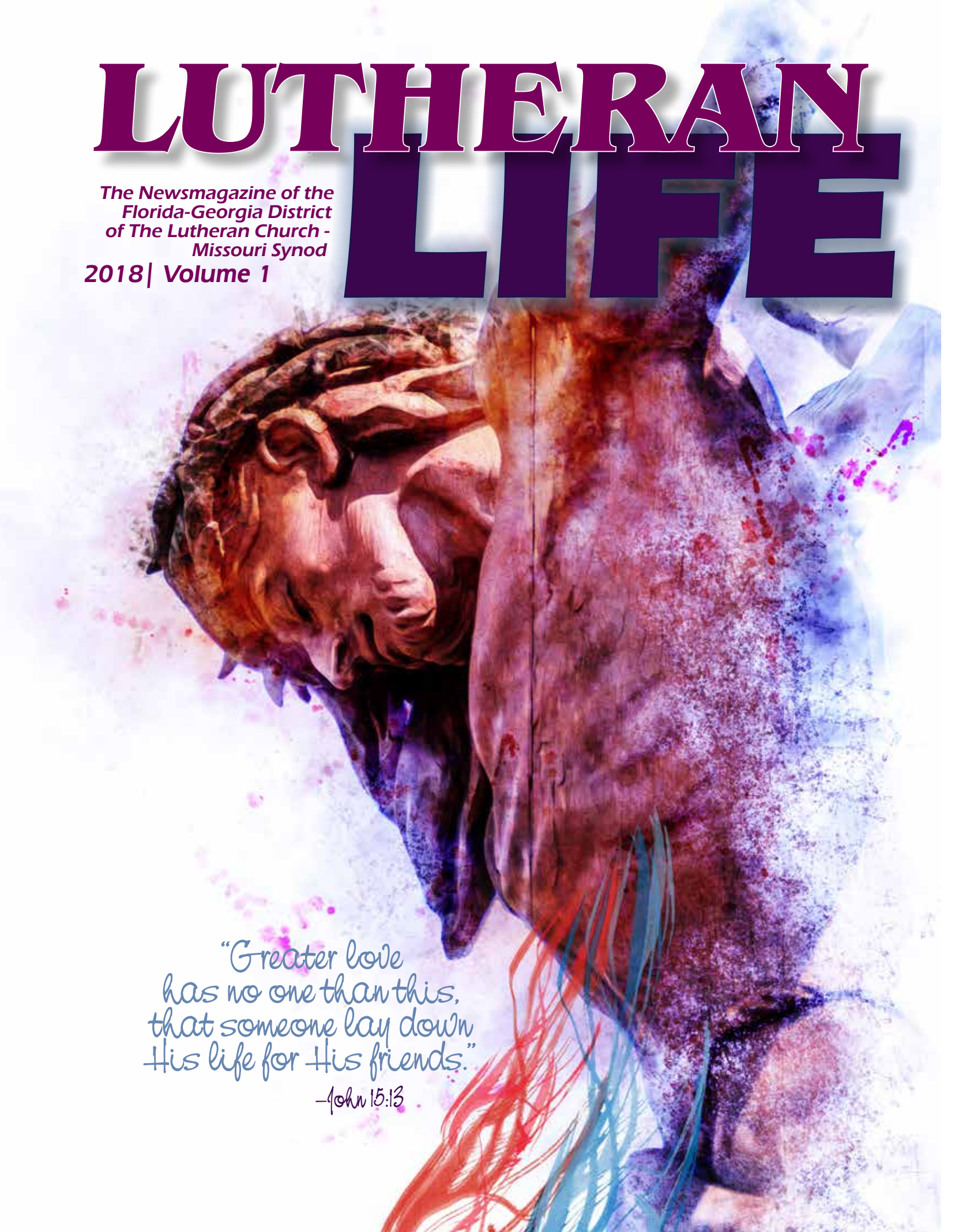


LUTHERAN LIFE

The Newsmagazine of the
Florida-Georgia District
of The Lutheran Church -
Missouri Synod
2018 | Volume 1



"Greater love
has no one than this,
that someone lay down
His life for His friends."

-John 15:13



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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florida georgia DISTRICT CAPSULES

by Greg Walton District President

Calling Congregations

Faith/Hialeah, FL Sole Pastor
Trinity/Holly Hill, FL Sole Pastor
Lake Oconee/Lake Oconee, GA Sole Pastor
Our Savior/Lake Worth, FL Sole Pastor
Oak Road/Lilburn, GA Sole Pastor
Christ the King/Orlando, FL Sole Pastor
Live UCF/Orlando, FL Campus Pastor
Faith/Parrish, FL Sole Pastor
St Paul/Peachtree City, GA Senior Pastor
Our Savior/Plantation, FL Sole Pastor
Rivercliff/Sandy Springs, GA Associate Pastor
Trinity/Savannah, GA Sole Pastor
Redeemer/Stuart, FL Missionary to Port St Lucie
Epiphany/Tallahassee, FL Sole Pastor
Lakeside/Venice, FL Senior Pastor

Calls Issued

Grace/Jacksonville, FL
Rev. Michael Popp SMP as Associate Pastor

Marco/Marco Island, FL
Rev. Thomas Boeck as Associate Pastor

Our Savior/Plantation, FL
Rev. Bruce Alberts as Sole Pastor

Trinity/Toccoa, GA
Rev. Roland Vega as Sole Pastor

Redeemer/Vero Beach, FL
Rev. Christopher Kollman as Sole Pastor

Calls Accepted

Grace/Jacksonville, FL
Rev. Michael Popp SMP as Associate Pastor

Marco/Marco Island, FL
Rev. Thomas Boeck as Associate Pastor

Trinity/Toccoa, GA
Rev. Roland Vega as Sole Pastor

Redeemer/Vero Beach, FL
Rev. Christopher Kollman as Sole Pastor

Calls Declined

Our Savior/Plantation, FL
Rev. Bruce Alberts as Sole Pastor

Transferred to Other Districts

Rev. Michael S Hageman Kansas (O)
Rev. Jeffrey H Carlson ... North Wisconsin (O)
Mrs. Leslie M Sullivan Texas (C)

Transferred from Other Districts

Rev. Norman B Barnette .Rocky Mountain (O)
Rev. Brian A Albrecht Northwest (O)

Church Changes

St. John the Apostle/Buford, GA
Initial Membership
Northeast Circuit

Ordained/Commissioned Minister Initial Assignments

Rev. Timothy M Faile, Colloquy,
Pastor: Living Faith/Cumming, GA (O)

Rev. Michael S Popp,
Concordia Seminary SMP,
Pastor: Grace/Jacksonville, FL (O)

Ms. Mary A McCain,
Concordia Irvine,
DCE: Faith/Merritt Island, FL (C)

Ordained/Commissioned Minister Installations

Rev. Roland D Vega,
Pastor: Trinity/Toccoa, GA (O)

Emeritus

Rev. David H Kehret
from Active to Emeritus (O)

Rev. Ronald P Scheer
from Active to Emeritus (O)

Rev. Randy Winkel
from Active to Emeritus (O)

Called to Glory

Rev. Bernhard F Kurzweg (O)
Mrs. Betty Lou Kelly (C)

Removed from the Roster

Ms. Elizabeth F Haney (C)
by Action of the District President
Rev. Sung Cho (O)
by Action of the District President

Change of Status within the District

Ms. Annalisa Fitzsimons
from Active to Candidate (C)

Rev. Luis A Diaz
from Active to Candidate (O)



DISTRICT CALENDAR

2018 Hearts for Jesus Project
Flood Bucket Program
District Wide

2018 High School Youth Gathering
What's Next?

February 2-4, 2018

Marriott Sawgrass Resort,
Ponte Vedra Beach, FL

School Music Festival

February 23, 2018

Grace Lutheran Church
St. Petersburg, FL

Veterans of the Cross Retreat

March 5-7, 2018

Life Enrichment Center
Fruitland Park, FL

Interim Pastors Training

Spring 2018

Orlando Area

Florida-Georgia District Convention

June 22-24, 2018

Orlando

National Lutheran Church Workers
Conference

July 8-11, 2018

Minneapolis, MN

2018 Educators Conference

September 26-28, 2018

Daytona Beach Hilton Resort



VOC Committee Finalizing Details

Retired church workers inside and outside the Florida-Georgia are preparing for the 2018 Veterans of the Cross Retreat, an annual gathering hosted by the Florida-Georgia District.

This year's Retreat is set for March 5-7 under the theme "Risk Takers in Re-Formation," encouraging participants to be bold in the spirit of Martin Luther. Pastors, teachers and other professional church workers of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod are invited to gather at the Life Enrichment Center in Fruitland Park, FL, for the three-day retreat.

First-time retiree participants are being offered a special discount on the registration fee — \$50 per person or \$100 per couple.

On the program for this year's Retreat are Rev. Dr. Dale Meyer, President of Concordia Seminary/St. Louis; Dr. Robert Scudieri, former LCMS North American Missions Director; Julie and Jay Dass, representing Voice of Faith Mission speaking on Muslim evangelism. An additional seminar by Dr. Paul Foelber and Dr. Lyle Mueller will focus on "Seniors Witness to Seniors."

Registration information is available on the District website at flgadistrict.org under the Connect tab. For more information, call the District President's office at 407-857-5556 ext. 8. ■

Members of the Veterans of the Cross planning committee include (in photo above from left to right) Pastor Earl Steffens, Pastor Bob Besalski, Pastor David & Judi Mennicke, Cyndy and Pastor Rich Pieplow, Gladys & Omar Dittmer, Pastor Bruce & Barbara Lieske. Not pictured are Carl & Maggie Rau, Dorothy Freeman, Bill & Brenda Mataug.

Send Your Congregation
and School News & Photos!

LUTHERAN LIFE

LutheranLife@aol.com

Have you ever wished you could know the future? One of my favorite movies in 1985 was "Back to the Future," about Marty McFly, a 17-year-old high school student, accidentally sent 30 years into the past in a time-traveling DeLorean invented by his close friend, the maverick scientist Doc Brown. The plot takes Marty through a series of adventures,

their homes in Jerusalem and sent to Babylon for the rebellion of the people. They would be in



prosper... When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place" (Je 29:5-10, NIV).

God wanted to make clear to His people that although they didn't know what was ahead, He had already, in His gracious providence, made provision for them. They were to live in that land, settle in, and not isolate themselves from the place God had put them. The only thing was that God wanted them to remain faithful to Him.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

but in the end he must make certain his teenage parents-to-be meet and fall in love so he can get back to the future. In the end, it all turns out well! The truth is, we often don't know what the future holds, but we find our confidence in the One who holds our future!

In the often used, but always appropriate, prophecy of God from Jeremiah 29:11, we hear, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "" (NIV).

Many of us are familiar with this verse but often fail to realize the circumstances of the recipients. These were the exiles whisked from

Babylon 70 years before returning.

These were captive people who were forlorn and despondent. However, God assures them that they are the future. In fact, God gave them specific instructions. He said, "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will

In other words, they were to be in the Babylonian world, but not of the world. God's promise was that as they did what He asked, He would continue to bring prosperity on them. He would bless them, and make them a blessing! We all have a desire to know what the future holds. I'm at that stage of life where I begin to wonder what the next few years will bring for my parents who have faced some serious health threats of late.

Like many of you, I wonder where I will be in the future, what my grandchildren will grow up to be, when Jesus will return, and so much more. It's always good



to think about the future and prepare. Someone has said that failing to plan is like planning to fail. Of course, there are also those who say, "If you want to see God laugh, tell Him your plans..." I think both are correct actually.

We have a responsibility to make plans for the future, always in the knowledge that God's plans supersede all of our plans. Jesus told a parable that reflects this something about that in Luke 12:16-20.

The King James Version of Scripture translates Proverbs 2:18 like this: "Where there is no vision, the people perish: But he that keepeth the law, happy is he."

(The ESV puts it this way: "Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law.")

So let me share with you a little vision I have for the Florida-Georgia District as we look to the future. I want you to imagine with me what it would be like to see our churches growing again, people getting excited about the Gospel and being connected to Jesus. As I look to the future I see more and

more leaders in the District being equipped, empowered and engaged for the mission of connecting people to Jesus.

Specifically I am challenging us to think into the future by encouraging each region of our District to consider **two new ministry starts each year over the next five years.** The result would not only be 50 new ministry starts, but think of all the souls reached with the good news of Jesus! I am not suggesting that we necessarily start 50 new churches over the next five years, although I would be very happy if we could and make them all sustainable.

What I am suggesting, with the help of Five Two (www.fivetwo.com), is that we begin looking at the opportunities to reach people for Jesus all around us. It may be a new church plant, or it may be revitalizing an existing ministry. It may be starting a new non-profit like Redeeming Life Maternity home did in Sanford, FL a few years ago. It is not a congregation, but is impacting lives in a very significant way with the love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ.

What are the needs in your community that could be an avenue to share the love of Jesus? It may even be a for-profit business. Some have opened coffee shops that serve everything from espresso to double latte caramel

macchiato during the week, but have worship space on the weekend. People who wouldn't enter a church have less fear of entering a coffee shop!

This happens to be the 70th Anniversary of the Florida-Georgia District. The District began in February 1948 because people moving to Florida believed the mission of the Church. Pastors covered wide areas of terrain in those days, and often had worship services in places that were hours apart, often traveling rugged roads so that they could share the love of Jesus. In those days the focus was clear—people needed the good news of Jesus, and we had good news to share.

Much time and investment were placed into building relationships with people and then teaching them the faith. People moved into the community, built homes, planted gardens and increased in numbers. And God blessed it!

Often today, as churches have become institutionalized, there is an expectation that you must first follow our rules and then we'll decide if we want to enter into a relationship. People are considered outsiders until they are insiders. Friendliness often extends only to those we already know. And people wonder why churches are shrinking. We've forgotten that the main thing is to keep the

main thing the main thing! In 1 John 2:12-6 we read, "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. Whoever says 'I know Him' but does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in Him, but whoever keeps His word, in Him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in Him: whoever says he abides in Him ought to walk in the same way in which He walked."

As I look to the future, I see God's people growing in that Word and striving to keep Jesus in the center of all we do, while not compromising anything. Every church has the capacity to grow as God's people work together for the sake of His kingdom.

This is God's plan, not to simply have us gather together, but to gather us for the purpose of strengthening us and sending

us out into the world to proclaim Jesus.

Now is the time. Join me as we lay our plans at God's feet, praying to Him and trusting Him to honor them according to His own Word. He knows the plans He has for us, plans to prosper us and not to harm us, plans with hope and a future.

Look to the future with me as we abide in Jesus as His equipped, empowered and engaged people, eager to connect people to Jesus! Amen?



Looking toward our future together!

GREG



Business, Worship, Celebration on District Convention Agenda

Pastoral and lay delegates from Florida-Georgia congregations will elect officers of the District and consider various resolutions at the 33rd District Convention, set for June 22-24 at the Wyndham on International Drive in Orlando.



Preaching at opening worship on Friday evening will be Rev. Christopher Esget (left), Sixth Vice President of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod representing the East-Southeast Region. District President Greg Walton will preach at Sunday morning’s communion worship. LCMS President Matthew Harrison (right) will present a Synod report.

Congregations may nominate candidates for the following positions within the noted geographic and service boundaries:

- ❖ President from the Florida-Georgia District (ordained);
- ❖ Vice President from the Florida-Georgia region of the congregation (ordained);
- ❖ Secretary from the Florida-Georgia District (ordained);
- ❖ Two lay representatives from the Florida-Georgia region of the congregation (lay);
- ❖ Two commissioned representatives from the Florida-Georgia District (commissioned);
- ❖ Nomination Committee members from the District (2 ordained; 2 commissioned; 4 lay).

All nominations are due in to District Secretary Rev. Jay Winters by March 24 with a copy to District Presidential Administrative Assistant Kathy Keene.

Forms and submission information are available on the District website

(flgadistrict.org).

March 24 is also the deadline for congregations and circuit forums to submit overtures to be

delegates along with alternates by March 24. These forms and more information are also on the District website.



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JESUS

floridageorgia
District Convention • June 22–24, 2018

considered as resolutions at the Convention.

Voting on the elections and overtures will be one pastoral and one lay delegate from each District congregation. Congregations must submit the names of their

The theme of the District convention is “Chosen with Purpose, Abiding in Jesus,” based on John 15: 12-17.

“Each day of the Convention will have a focus,” said Florida-Georgia President Greg

Walton. “Day one is on His Abiding Presence. Day two is focused on Abiding Faith — how we live out our calling. Day three is focused on Abiding Love — the love that God delivers in Word and Sacrament with which He send us into the World.”

Integral to the Convention will be worship and Bible study times. Fellowship opportunities are also on the agenda. Servant of Christ awards will be presented to a District commissioned minister of religion, a lay person and a pastor. The Convention is open to all members of the Florida-Georgia District — including ordained and laity who are not voting delegates and commissioned ministers. Registration opportunities will be available once that process opens for the Convention. ■

March 24th is the deadline for all nominations and overture submissions to be considered as resolutions at the District Convention.

Annual Haiti Mission Trip Produces New School

Members of St. Paul/Weston made their annual trip to Haiti in January, this year with a destination of Colminy.

In just under a week team members — who were joined by some volunteers from the west coast — built chicken pens and completed a school building. In between those tasks, they interacted with the school students and community residents, attended an uplifting worship on Sunday and shared the love of Jesus through words and actions.

The trip was coordinated through Mission: Haiti, a faith-based non-profit, tax-exempt organization that grew out of the Florida-Georgia District and is led by Executive Director Helen Roenfeldt.

Mission: Haiti has been working in Haiti since 1999. The organization is dedicated to the long-term success of the Haitian people and has various projects under way throughout the year. More information is available on Facebook or at missionhaiti99.com. To get involved, make a contribution or donation, sponsor a project or inquire, please email missionhaiti99@aol.com. ■



Worship on Sunday with the local community.



Working on the chicken pens.



Students at the Colminy School got a geography lesson and a blow-up globe of their own.



The team that helped complete the school building.



Mission team members take a break to have fun with the children in Colminy.

On one of my trips to Israel we drove up to the Golan Heights, an area of dispute between Israel and Syria. Alongside the road were multitudes of orange triangles. I asked the guide what they were. He said that they marked the location of land mines, a residue of recent fighting. The remembrance of those orange triangles prompted me to consider a metaphor.

Are there "land mines" in our society, and if so how are they marked, and whose responsibility is it to identify them?

Paul warned the Corinthian church to not follow "a Jesus other than the one we preached." (2 Cor. 11:4) We don't know what the false apostles of his time were teaching, but we do know that there are false apostles, false teachings and fake Jesus today.

There are destructive religious – societal "landmines" we must identify and mark. We should be familiar with



COURAGE FOR TODAY

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

the tenets of other religions, realizing that, contrary to popular opinion, we do not all worship the same God.

For example, Mormons, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, believe that Jesus is the Savior of the world, but that

His sacrifice on the cross for sins was insufficient and that we must add good works to be saved. They believe Jesus is the Son of God, but that the Son, Father and Holy Spirit are separate, unconnected entities and that there are many gods, the result of "eternal progression." This is a different Jesus.

Muslims believe that Jesus was

born of a virgin, did miracles, was a prophet and lived a perfect life. He is Islam's Number 2 ranking prophet behind Muhammad, a Seventh Century military leader. But Muslims do not believe Jesus ever died on the

cross for our sins. He went directly to heaven and will return in the end times to fight against all non-Muslims, break all the crosses and kill all the pigs on earth.

Would you not agree that this is a different Jesus?

Today there are other spiritual-societal land mines: gender confusion issues, treating government as a god (as did the ancient

Romans), Secularism (I am my own god) and Naturalism (nature is my god).

When I lived in Seattle, the environment, and Mt. Rainier in particular, were given god-like adulation by some.

We must imitate St. Paul and identify these land mines that would lead us and others away from Jesus.

The ancient prophets — like Ezekiel and Jeremiah — were compelled to be warners. Ezekiel 33:1-9 makes it crystal clear that the watchman must identify when the "sword is coming" lest he say nothing, and then he will be accountable for the

bloodshed that comes. For example, read history, read the Koran of the Muslims and read the newspaper and you will see that the sword of Islam is coming to our country.

Above all the Gospel of Jesus, our Lord and Redeemer, must be preached. But it is not enough to just preach the Gospel. We must be alert and discern the times like King David's men: "men of Issachar, who understood the times and knew what Israel should do." (1 Chronicles 12:32)

When there is danger afoot, be it a tornado or a land mine or false teaching, someone must sound the alarm. ■

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.
1 Peter 5:8



Fort Wayne Seminary Hosting Visit for Potential Church Workers

The biannual Prayerfully Consider Visit hosted by Concordia Theological Seminary/Fort Wayne for men and women considering a career in professional church work is set for March 14-17.



Kramer Chapel

The three-day visit is open to potential students considering pastoral or diaconal service, whether they are still in college or looking at church work for a second career. Prayerfully Consider offers an opportunity to learn with student life is like at Concordia as attendees live in the dorms, eat in the dining hall, attend classes, worship in Kramer Chapel, explore the campus and Fort Wayne area and visit with current students and faculty.

There are no costs for the event except travel to the campus. The Seminary provides housing and meals, which include participants' spouses if they accompany the potential students.

For more information, contact the Admission Office at admission@ctsfw.edu or 800-481-2155. ■



Bucket Brigade — Another 102 flood buckets were recently added to the Florida-Georgia supply of disaster provisions, bringing the total on hand to more than 500. And that total is "even after we used more than 200 for Hurricane Irma," reported John Elliott, District Business Manager and Disaster Relief Coordinator. Flood buckets have been sent throughout Florida and Georgia as well as to other disaster sites in the US. ■

Hymnfest Planned in Sanford

Lutheran Church of the Redeemer/Sanford is sponsoring its 5th Annual Hymn Festival entitled "Sing a New Song" and featuring composer and organist David Ludwig on Saturday, February 24.

The church is located at 2525 S Oak Avenue in Sanford. A wine and cheese reception will follow the festival.

For more information, call the church office at 407-322-3552. ■

District Students Benefit from LWML Scholarships

Each year, students from Florida-Georgia, SELC or English District congregations who are preparing for full-time church work in the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod are invited to apply for an LWML District scholarship.

Recipients of the LWML District scholarship for this year grouped by school are:

CONCORDIA SEMINARY/ST. LOUIS

- Stanley Allen of Redeemer/Stuart, SMP year 2
- Gregory Barto of Woodlands/Montverde, MDiv year 2
- Joel Dietrich of St. Paul/Peachtree City, SMP year 2
- Christian Einertson of Timothy/Woodstock, MDiv year 2
- Alex Fisher of Holy Trinity/Tampa, STM, year 2
- Joshua LeBorious of Mount Calvary/Warner Robins, Mdiv, year 1
- Peter LeBorious of Mount Calvary/Warner Robins, SMP year 1
- Eduardo Martinez, MDiv year 2
- Devin Murphy of Gloria Dei/Davie, MDiv year 4
- Samuel Sessa of Gloria Dei/Davie, MDiv year 4

CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY/FORT WAYNE

- Alexander Blanken of Gloria Dei/Davie, MDiv year 2

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

- Nicholas Sinatra of Faith/Marietta, Education, freshman

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY WISCONSIN

- Nicholas Utech of Redeemer/Stuart, Master's in counseling

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY SEWARD

- Jeannelle Condame of St. Luke's/Oviedo, Education, senior
- Gracie Griffin of Christ/Perry, Education, freshman

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY IRVINE

- Kristen Schmidt of Trinity/Athens, DCE colloquy

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY TEXAS

- Christian Bartholow of Faith/Merritt Island, DCE senior

Two new categories were awarded this year, according to LWML Scholarship Chair Lois Ford: Master's in Christian Counseling and the colloquy program. ■

District Board Begins Preparations for District Convention, 70th Anniversary

Meeting in the Florida-Georgia offices in Orlando January 19-20, 2018, members of the District Board of Directors approved the balanced budget for the fiscal year, began discussions on the 2018 District Convention and heard of preliminary plans for a 70th anniversary celebration.

Devotions, Bible study and fellowship were also agenda items for the two-day meeting. Board members unanimously approved a balanced budget of \$2,889,000 for the fiscal year that begins February 1, 2018. That budget is based on congregational support of \$2,100,000 — the same amount planned for the last fiscal year.

Expenses include \$1,400,000 for mission, a total that encompasses a 20% tithe with 17% going to the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and the remaining 3% for District revitalization. Mission spending of \$980,000 is projected, which includes campus and social outreach ministries of the District.

Daniel J. Reichard, Executive Director of Administration for the District, emphasized that the District has “no debt. Special funds are fully funded and being spent appropriately,” he said. “Staff monitors expenses very carefully which is why we are in this cautiously optimistic situation.”

Upcoming District Events

The District will meet in convention June 22-24, 2018, under the theme “Chosen with Purpose: To Abide in Jesus!” Planning is under way, with staff meetings beginning January 23 leading to a retreat in February. Each day of the

convention will have a focus based on the Convention theme, which is taken from John 15:12-17, the passage where Jesus give His disciples His one command: to love one another.



Convention Bible study leader will be Dr. Dale Meyer, President of Concordia Seminary/St. Louis

Bible study leader will be Dr. Dale Meyer, President of Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, with Rev. Doug Kallesen and Trinity/Orlando serving as host for the Convention worship service. Rev. Pat O'Brien will serve as Parliamentarian, and Rev. Ken Green of Prince of Peace/Orlando as Judge of Elections.



Rev. Doug Kallesen and Trinity/Orlando will serve as host for the Convention worship

Plans are in the early stages for the District's 70th Anniversary, which will be celebrated from Pentecost 2018 (May 20) through Pentecost 2019 (June 9).



Former District Secretary, Rev. Pat O'Brien will serve as Parliamentarian

Critical Targets

Board members review the District's two critical targets of Leadership and Outreach at each meeting along with success indicators for both. The President's report to the Board focuses on these two critical targets.



Rev. Ken Green of Prince of Peace/Orlando will serve as Judge of Elections

Leadership: District and congregational leaders are loving, visionary people of the Word, models of healthy Christ-centered living and



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life-long learners committed to equipping and empowering others to join in fulfilling the Church's role in God's mission.

◆ Richard Boyd and Chrystal Presley have both completed the Lay Deacon Program through Concordia Bronxville. Boyd is the first LLD to go through the Synod's SMP Colloquy. Deacon James Leggett was also certified through the Colloquy program. Another Colloquy program graduate — Rev. Esteban Mesa — is being installed in the District.

◆ St. John the Apostle/Buford, GA, was chartered on December 4, 2017.
◆ The District is hosting the Phase III training session for pastors who have completed Phases I and II of the Intentional Interim Pastoral Training through the National Association of Intentional Interim Pastors.
◆ Developing a process for orientating non-Lutheran workers in District schools to the LCMS understanding of the faith and what it means to be in ministry in a Lutheran school is the task of the C2.4 Task Force. They expect to have this completed before the District Convention.

◆ Emergent Leaders 2018 began in January and will conclude in March. The 14 individuals represent

a solid mix of pastors, laity and commissioned ministers.

◆ With a focus on raising and strengthening leaders, the fourth and final session of PLI will be held in April of this year. The group is focusing on building missional communities and reaching more people with the love, grace and forgiveness of Jesus.

◆ The District Youth Ministry Council is planning a retreat for

◆ A Lay Leadership Summit to help equip and encourage lay leaders in their local ministries for the sake of Jesus is set for August 23-25 at the Embassy Suites Orlando Lake Buena Vista South.

Approximately four breakout sessions with 11 workshops



BOARD ROOM

by John List
District Communications Director

each are planned.

◆ District Pastors Conference is set for September 24-26 at the Hilton Daytona Beach prior to the Educators Conference.

The Educators conference — September 26-28 — has chosen the theme “Urgent Care.”

◆ Lutheran Education Association will hold a conference in Orlando March



District President Greg Walton and First Vice President Dave Brighton consult

11-13. Florida-Georgia District Executive Director of School Ministries Mark Brink will be a part of the gathering.

◆ 2018 District Servant Event will be in SW Florida from June 17-23. This gathering will accommodate about 75 participants who will be working at Zion/Fort Myers and Thrive/Estero.

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 know the love of Christ to all people.

◆ One of the areas that the District is targeting with the Five Two team is Miami-Dade, reaching into the Fort Lauderdale region. This is a part of the District that has seen dramatic shifts in population, and it has had a negative impact of churches there. Oscar Benavides, who has joined the staff of Five Two, will be working with pastors in those circuits to strategize and see what might be

done to start new ministries and connect more people to Jesus.

◆ Three mission areas are actively being worked: Lake Wood Ranch, which adjoins both Sarasota and Bradenton; Port St. Lucie Cornerstone Missions, the daughter of Redeemer/Stuart; and try Hispanic Atlanta where a Missionary at Large is being considered.

◆ 2018 District Servant Event will be in SW Florida from June 17-23. This gathering will accommodate about 75 participants who will be working at Zion/Fort Myers and Thrive/Estero.

◆ 2018 Hearts for Jesus project is benefiting the District's Flood Bucket Ministry. Many schools in Florida and Georgia are designating chapel offerings that will be used to purchase supplies.

◆ 2019 LCMS National Youth Gathering is going to be in Minneapolis. Joe Guagliardo will be serving as the Florida-Georgia District Coordinator and will be the primary contact person for youth leaders in congregations as the event nears. ■

Upcoming District Board Meetings

- ◆ April 13-14
- ◆ District Convention June 22-24
- ◆ August 16-18
- ◆ November 2-3
- ◆ January 18-19

“Ok, ok. I get it,” says the church leader. “We don’t seem to be getting many visitors to church anymore. Ok, almost no

to attract people. The idea was that if people came, they would like the church then they would stick around. But while those

to inviting them to the worship service. But if not the church, then where and what do you invite them to?

Well, if people are spiritually hungry and seeking community

(because studies also show that our society is

WHY AREN'T WE GETTING ANY VISITORS?

one if I'm honest. That means that people aren't going to just drop in and worship at our church anymore, nor will they be around to migrate to leading some of our activities. It's just not going to happen.”

may be very good things, and your church does indeed have nice people, simply inviting people was probably more helpful when church going was a societal norm. Today, people just don't seem interested.

They aren't interested because in today's world, going to church is not just optional but odd. In other words, it is not the norm for people to attend church on Sunday. Most statistics show far fewer than 20% of the population attending church on Sunday. Yet while church attendance is down, studies also show



Young Adult Groups

So now what? Great question. The above church leader is beginning to fully appreciate the reality of the situation. They see that things really are different today. The ranks are getting thinner. Now what?

A logical idea is to say we just need to invite people to church. That's what we did in the past. Maybe you remember friendship Sunday, special guest speakers/preachers or special sermon series or music where you hoped



Community Guest Speakers

people are still spiritually hungry and people are seeking Christian community outside of the Sunday morning service. Certainly people should go to church but this is the reality.

So the coaching leader takes notice. They understand that the starting line for bringing people closer to Jesus should really begin prior

incredibly lonely), then the wise church leader will think to invite others to other smaller activities and events first the neighborhood clean up, the food pantry, the tutoring or Rebecca's garden activities, the fellowship events, the small group Bible study, the operation Christmas child work, etc. are all places to start.



people's desire to do something meaningful and helpful and make a difference. They are



often less threatening and awkward for people who are new and allow casual conversation that can go deeper.



The COACHING LEADER

by Rev. Scott Gress
Lutheran Counseling Services
Leadership Coach

Then as relationships develop, as spiritual conversations are on the rise, an invitation to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus on a Sunday morning is certainly appropriate. Perhaps even a baptism is in order!



In-Home Bible Study Groups

So the wise church leader will 1) seek to identify and create opportunities for service and fellowship outside of Sunday morning. Then 2) they will help other church members to see that inviting and bringing people to those things is the new first door into the church. ■

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



The 2018 Lutheran Hour Ministries Tournament of Roses Parade float was entitled “Bringing Christ to the Nations.” The float featured a boat with Jesus controlling the rudder, steering and directing His followers from many daily walks of life to use their skills and talents, their passions and pleasures to make a difference in the lives of others. Riders included individuals

who portrayed “Making a Difference,” including a comfort dog and handler, a Sunday School teacher and child, a leader of a food bank, a medical professional and a Lutheran Pastor. The boat sail featured a map of the world with dots representing locations that LHM has International offices along with a Cross. The theme of the parade was “Making a Difference.”

Concordia NY Launches Program for Students with Intellectual, Developmental Disabilities

Students with intellectual and developmental disabilities will soon have a new option for pursuing higher education: Impact U.

Concordia College New York is taking applications for its inaugural class of Fall 2018.

To develop the program, Concordia partnered with Bethesda Lutheran Communities, a Christian organization and a national leader in providing support to those with intellectual and developmental disabilities to help them live the lives they want. Concordia's program will be modeled after Bethesda College, a successful post-secondary education certificate program the organization runs at Concordia University Wisconsin.

The program will prepare students for employability in a career path and increase their independent living skills. Students will graduate in two years with a Certificate of Applied Learning and a resume of work experiences.

Initially scaled for a class of up to ten, the program will focus

on 18- to 24-year old students with a range of developmental disabilities including autism and intellectual disability.

With person-centered planning and support, students will live in the dorms and participate fully in campus life, while attending classes designed to expand general knowledge and promote the growth of thinking and problem solving skills. Students will gain work experience through on- and off-campus internships and paid jobs, participate in campus service projects, and also have the opportunity to audit select Concordia College classes.

Dr. Stephanie Squires, Concordia's Dean of Teacher Education, is leading the development of Impact U. She expects students completing the



program to attain several outcomes critical to employability and independent living. These include social and emotional growth; an enhanced ability to problem-solve, self-advocate and make decisions; heightened spiritual awareness; greater knowledge of community resources; and a lifelong connection to Concordia College as valued alumni. ■

What do all of you Lutherans know about the LWML mite boxes? A lot, a little, nothing at all? Well, let me tell you a little bit about them.

Did you know that the mite box was based on the Bible's account of the widow's mite? The mites are intended for offerings above and beyond the support given to congregations and the LCMS. The LWML has given millions of dollars to fund district and national mission grants during its 75 years.

recognized by the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. They had to adopt a new constitution and bylaws, requiring that 25% of all missionary contributions be given to the national organization, shared from the district.

The first mite box was pictured



Mighty Mite Boxes Fund Millions in Mission Grants

with a globe which represented the mission field of our church, and Clara Schmitt, the first LWML president, personally mailed 50,000 mite

boxes from her home. Can you imagine doing that? Wow! Hats off to President Clara!

During this time all LWML ladies were reminded to “put pennies in the box at the end of each day.” Now I know why we all put pennies in the boxes.

When my husband and I were at the seminary, I ended up being secretary/treasurer of the “Sem Wives” group. I hated counting those dirty pennies. Now I put in all silver change or even paper money in my mite box! Much better than pennies!

The box has changed its look over the years. But the raising of funds has not. While our new national goal is \$2.075 million, we also have a district mite goal as well. For this biennium it is \$175,000, and we are almost there. Our books close June 30 so join our LWML members in sending in your mites to our financial secretary, Linda. You can find remittance slips on our website



www.flgalwml.com.

We will be setting a new mite goal at our district convention which is being held September 28-30, 2018, at the Orlando Airport Marriott. Our theme is going to be “Strengthened, Helped, Upheld.” Our guest speaker will be Rev. William Wheedon and our Bible verse is Isaiah 41:10. More information will be coming shortly, but please put these dates on your calendar and join us.

We would love to see all of you there! ■

In Memoriam Former Board Member, Behnken Medallion Honoree Bob Miller

Albert L. “Bob” Miller of Boynton Beach, FL, passed away on December 31, 2017.

A native of Delray Beach, Miller was born on November 8, 1921, and was baptized five days later at Trinity Lutheran Church, where his grandfather was a founding member in 1904.

After high school, Miller enlisted in the US Army Air Corps where he served as an aircraft electronics technician on B-24 bombers in the European Theater during World War II. Upon completion of his military service he graduated from Bell



Isles College in West Palm Beach with a degree in business administration and spent the bulk of his career with Rinker Materials Corporation where he served at multiple management levels.

Miller was especially dedicated to Trinity and dedicated untold hours of service to the church, school, and its members. He served innumerable roles within Trinity through the years including congregational president, multiple chairman and board positions, Bible study leader, usher, communion assistant, construction foreman — and sang in the choir for 68 years. In 2009, he authored a history of Trinity Lutheran in the book *100 Years of God's Grace: 1904 – 2004*.

Miller served on the Florida-Georgia District Board of Directors and was honored with a Behnken Medallion at the 1997 Veterans of the Cross Retreat. ■

Buying or selling a home in South Florida?



Sometimes the right choice isn't always obvious.

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.



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40-Year Member of Florida-Georgia District
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444 E Palmetto Park Road
Boca Raton 33432



FUTURE & HOPE

by Joan Koch
LWML District Vice President
for Communications

In reading the history of how the mite boxes came to be (on www.lwml.org), I found it interesting that our mite box could have been inspired by various “cent” societies of the early 1800s, which urged members in its first letter to use their new mite box to raise funds. I believe it was a Baptist group called the Woman's Mission to Woman who started this idea. There was a garnet colored paper box which had an opening on the top and the words, “Woman's Mission to Woman,” in gold letters on the side.

In 1942 the Lutheran Women's Missionary League was formally

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The whole church watched with nervous anticipation as the visitors sat where the Kegleys have sat for 12 years.

Chosen with Purpose Abiding in Jesus

District LCEF Advocates Gather for Encouragement, Recognition, Fellowship

LCEF Advocates representing congregations throughout Florida and Georgia gathered in Orlando January 12-14 for their annual weekend under the theme “Chosen with Purpose Abiding in Jesus.”

District President Greg Walton opened the weekend with devotions focusing on John 15:12-15, where Jesus tells His disciples, “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.” Walton emphasized that this is the only command Jesus issued to His disciples. “Jesus didn’t command us not to sin or to give to the church ... His only command was to love one another.”

In this passage Jesus calls us friends, Walton continued. “Friendship is all about relationship and faith is all about relationship. As we abide in Jesus we want others to live in this relationship. LCEF Advocates are all about relationships, too

— relationships that come from abiding in Jesus.”

Keynote speaker for the evening was Andrea Huggett Reichard, who shared her year-long battle with and victory over breast cancer. In a presentation entitled “How I was Blessed by Cancer ... and learned to live more Christ-like in a crisis.”

Reichard credited the 2016 LCEF Fall Leadership Conference themed “Live Boldly” with helping her prepare for challenging year. Speakers at that conference inspired her “not to be a victim but to live boldly for Christ,” she said. The 2017 Fall Conference with its “Love Boldly” theme reinforced those blessings.

“I saw God’s hand in my walk from the beginning,” Reichard continued. Among the blessings she listed were quietness, friendship, renewed relationships and perspective. To God alone be the glory.” ■



LCEF Architectural Consultant Greg Beste is an experienced consultant to congregations about their campuses.



District VP Daniel J Reichard and LCEF Sr. VP District & National Operations Ryan McIvor presented a trophy to Star Performer Jon Boeche of Christ the King/Largo who brought in 25 new investors.



District President Greg Walton presented Chrystal Presley, LCEF Advocate for St. Paul/Jacksonville, with her certificate as a Licensed Lay Deacon.



District LCEF Administrator Debbie Talbot was recognized by Florida-Georgia Congregational Advocates for her constant enthusiasm and exceptional support.



Opening devotions were led by President Greg Walton, who was joined in musical accompaniment by Florida-Georgia District Administrative Assistant Lynda Voss



The weekend included the celebration of Florida-Georgia District’s two national Fred E. Lietz awards: Mission Project Award to Redeeming Life Maternity Home in Sanford, FL and the Individual Ministry Award to Pastor Dennis Bartels of Holy Cross/North Miami, FL



Grant Worthington of St. Paul/Peachtree City — who brought in 15 new investors — was recognized as LCEF Florida-Georgia District “Rookie of the Year.”



From left — Daniel Reichard gives a “thumbs up” to the 2017 LCEF National Fred E. Lietz Award winners: District Stewardship Chair Rev. Dennis Bartels, Rev. Ed DeWitt and Sheryl DeWitt of Redeeming Life Maternity Home. Participating in the congratulations is District President Rev. Greg Walton.



At left — LCEF Florida-Georgia District VP Daniel J. Reichard and his wife and event keynoter Andrea Huggett Reichard, who received a standing ovation following her testimonial.

At right — Congregational Advocates take a break from the weekend activities to gather around District LCEF VP Daniel J. Reichard



Florida-Georgia LCEF Congregation Advocates

- Tom Barlow Faith/Parrish
- Don Bergwall Savior of All/Cartersville
- Jon Boeche Christ the King/Largo
- Jon Brazee Christ/Cape Canaveral
- Joyce Brown Beautiful Savior/Sarasota
- Rick Charlton Hope/Jacksonville
- Kiara Denholm St. Paul/Peachtree City
- Stan Engle Living Faith/Cumming
- Lois Ford Faith/Eustis
- Doug Fuge Good Shepherd/Gainesville
- Diana Geiger Trinity/Delray Beach
- Evita Gonzalez Beautiful Savior/Lehigh Acres
- Bruce Hahn Trinity/Orlando
- Phyllis Hand Grace/St. Petersburg
- Liz Pfeffer Hope/Plant City
- Rusty Huseman Bethlehem/Jacksonville
- Eric Jenkins Mount Calvary/Warner Robins
- Dave Kuhlman St. Paul/Weston
- Dwayne Leininger Bethel/Clearwater
- Cliff Maker Redeemer/Bartow
- Jack Martin First/Gainesville
- Phanet Metayer Grace/Fort Lauderdale
- Paul Michelotti Journey of Life/Orlando
- Joyce Moore Trinity/Summerfield
- Lyle Mueller Amazing Grace/Oxford
- Christene Nauman Trinity/Trinity
- Robert Pinckney Christ/Perry
- Ben Place Zion/Fort Myers
- Mark Polzin LC of the Cross/Port Charlotte
- Crystal Presley St. Paul/Jacksonville
- Jim Raether Christ Our Savior/Griffin
- Carl Scheuman Peace/Naples
- Richard Seltzer First/Clearwater
- Paul Sicca St. Paul/Lakeland
- Jill Sims Ascension/Casselberry
- Cliff Skarr -Christ/St. Augustine
- Laurie Steinke Redeemer/Englewood
- Scott Tighe Timothy/Woodstock
- Marv Timm Our Redeemer/Augusta
- Renee Varga Woodlands/Montverde
- Grant Worthington St. Paul/Peachtree City
- Joni Zehnder St. Michael/Fort Myers

FLORIDAGEORGIA

REGIONAL NEWS *Out and About in the Florida-Georgia District*



On December 3, 2017, the Lake Oconee Lutheran Church in Eatonton, GA hosted the Greensboro Chamber Choir directed by Alexis Ward for their presentation of Handel's Messiah. Lake Oconee Music Director Art Hargrove, pianist

Bradley Sowell and several members of the church were part of the Chamber Choir. This chorus was comprised of choirs from around the United States and other countries that presented the Messiah at Carnegie Hall in New York City on Sunday, November 25th. About 400 people attended, which is the largest gathering Lake Oconee has hosted to date. ■

REGION 1



- Vice President:**
David Brighton
Mount Calvary/Warner Robbins
- Laity Board Members:**
Jay Wendland | Living Faith/Cumming
Robert Chambers | Grace/Atlanta
- Commissioned Minister Board Member:**
Tamie Worthington | St Paul/Peachtree City
- 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



St. Peter/Dahlonega members went shopping for toys in December to contribute to the White Christmas program of Community Helping Place. Thrivent Financial provided an action team grant that the congregation more than doubled to use for the shopping. ■



Former Trinity/Savannah Pastor John Hopkins had a surprise reunion with Lizzie, the congregation's comfort dog, at the Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport in early January. Trinity launched its comfort dog ministry under Hopkins' leadership. Hopkins and Lizzie are shown in the center of the photo.



A highlight of the Christmas celebration at Trinity/Albany was the presentation of the Christmas program. The children of the congregation shared the story of Jesus' birth. ■

Amazing Grace Making Headlines with new Childhood Center

A spring completion date is projected for the new Early Childhood Center at Amazing Grace/Oxford.

Marla Adrian, a member of Amazing Grace's facilities committee, reported that classes for infants through VPK are set to begin in the fall.

Amazing Grace has announced that Julie Bedard will be the Director of the Early Childhood Center. Bedard, who is relocating to Florida from Illinois, has helped open three preschools previously.

"Amazing Grace just has a heart for children and we just really believe in early learning and the impact it can make on a child's life," Adrian told *The Villages Daily*. "It is in our heart to help them know about the love of Jesus and have that quality education."

The Florida-Georgia District began planning for the mission project of Amazing Grace in 2005. Rev. James Rockey was called as pastor in 2007 — and led the first worship service on November 11 of that year.

After seven years of worshiping in the Educational Annex of the First Baptist Church of Oxford, Amazing Grace purchased 10 acres of land for future ministries. Ground was broken for the new Worship Center in September of 2013, and the facility was completed in August of 2014. ■



Rev. James Rockey in what will be the Early Childhood Center for Amazing Grace/Oxford



Rev. Michael Popp was ordained on Saturday, December 16, 2017, at Grace Lutheran Church and School/Jacksonville, where he is serving as Associate Pastor. Florida-Georgia District President Greg Walton officiated and preached at the service. Walton also preached

for Grace's 25th Anniversary celebration which was originally scheduled for

Sunday, September 10, but rescheduled due to Hurricane Irma. Shown at the installation are (front, l-r) Grace/Jacksonville Senior Pastor Jeff Skopak, Grace/Jacksonville Associate Pastor Michael Popp, Florida-Georgia District President Greg Walton, (back, l-r) Hope/Jacksonville Pastor Patrick McKenzie, Chaplain Pon Chanthaphon with the LCMS Board for Mission Services in Jacksonville, Holy Trinity/Kingsland Senior Pastor Joel Meyer, Bethlehem/Jacksonville Beach Senior Pastor Dana Brones. ■



Youth from Ascension/Casselberry in late December took part in a Living Nativity in conjunction with youth from Community United Methodist. The event was open to the community. Earlier in the month,

Ascension's Crafty Quilters presented a check for approximately \$1,500 to The Christian Sharing Center. The group — pictured below — is a proud supporter of the community ministry. ■



REGION 2



Vice President:
Frank Marshall
St Paul/Jacksonville
Board Secretary:

Jay Winters, University Church
Student Center/Tallahassee

Laiety Board Members:

Donald Kaufman | St. John/Ocala
Lois Schaefer | Amazing Grace/Oxford

Tallahassee Circuit Visitor:

Frank Kinast | Messiah/Valdosta

First Coast Circuit Visitor:

Dana Brones | Bethlehem/Jacksonville

N Central Florida Circuit Visitor:

James Rockey | Amazing Grace/Oxford

REGION 3



Vice President:
Brian Kneser | Woodlands/Montverde
Board Treasurer:

Renee Varga | Woodlands/Montverde

Laiety 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

At right — Woodlands/Montverde presented its annual Living Nativity for three nights in December, attracting large crowds of members and community residents. The continuous walk-through tours from 6:30-9pm were open to the public at no cost. Donations of non-perishable food items were accepted for distribution to those in need in the community during the holiday season. ■

Below — Hope Lutheran/Melbourne and the children of Christ on Campus at Longleaf Elementary School had fun with pizza and the “Despicable Me 3” movie while giving to the community through their Toys for Tots donation. The evening also included writing Christmas cards to send to US troops. ■



Trinity Lutheran/Downtown Orlando hosted a free photo booth at the city’s Christmas Tree Lighting event. The interactive manger photo booth was one of several tents hosted by Trinity. ■

The youth of Faith/Merritt Island led an Advent worship for the congregation during the 2017 Christmas season. The 6th-12th grade students taught the congregation about the Advent Wreath with a vocal, violin and trumpet solo. ■



Hope Pastor, Congregation in the Headlines

On December 1, 2017, the Plant City community gathered for the annual Christmas Parade through the streets of its historic downtown. Leading the parade as Grand Marshall were Hope/Plant City Senior Pastor, Rev. Dean Pfeffer and his wife Liz. Pfeffer, who has been a part of the Plant City community since arriving at Hope 21 years ago, serves on various boards and is active in numerous organizations in the community.

According to Sharon Moody of the parade committee, “Rev. Dean Pfeffer makes a positive impact wherever he goes, and we are honored to have him represent our 2017 Christmas Parade as the grand marshal.”

One of the community boards Pfeffer serves on is for the United Food Bank of Plant City. On Sunday, January 7, he presented United Food Bank Director Mary Heysek with a check on behalf of the congregation.

The gift represented the Hope’s youth Christmas program offering, which was dedicated to the Food Bank’s Children’s Nutrition Program that provides groceries to area youth when school is not in session. Groceries to replace both breakfast and lunch are provided to families at the food bank. The offering that night totalled \$638, and a member of Hope came forward with an anonymous matching gift of \$500 for the program. ■



At left — Rev. Dean and Liz Pfeffer riding through Plant City for the 2017 Christmas Parade. Above — Shown at the check presentation in early January are Mary Heysek, Food Bank Director (center); Hope Senior Pastor Dean Pfeffer (right); Hope Associate Pastor Rev. Shea Pennington (left). ■

Prince of Peace Highlights Small But Mighty Angels Ministry

The Angels Ministry of Prince of Peace/Orlando chose a project back in June 2017 called “Hats for Homeless Schoolchildren.” The group received a grant from Thrivent Financial, set a goal of 500 hats — and surpassed that goal by 517 for a total of 1,017 hand-made hats.

The Angels worked all summer and fall along with partners Needles & Threads from the Renaissance Center in Orlando. The cause was helped by many donations of yarn. The group plans to make this an annual project along with the many items annually donated to the NICU of Winnie Palmer Hospital.

The hats for the schoolchildren were picked up by Christina Savino, OPCS Administrator of Homeless Education, on November 16, 2017. The 20 trash bags of donations filled her SUV. Her response? “Just in time for Christmas!”

These hats met a need and put smiles on many faces in December. In Orange County alone the annual average number of homeless school children is about 6,000. ■



Prince of Peace’s Angels Ministry (front, l-r) Helen Justice, Sonia Tellez, Nancy Plotnikoff, Lois Stanhope, Kay Ann Richards, (back, l-r) Joyce Miller, Mary Ellen Branneky, Lu Burchfield, Marge Estes. Not pictured: Peg Henderson, Kathy McCartin, Shirley Stockett, Connie



The second Sunday of Advent at Bethlehem/Fort Myers was very much a celebration as 12 new members were welcomed into the congregation. "The real blessing was that ten of the new members are year-around full time members, with two being winter associate members," said Bethlehem Pastor Darrell Stuehrenberg. Bethlehem usually welcomes new member twice a year, shortly before Christmas and shortly before Easter. This was the largest December New Member Group welcomed in many years. Shown here are new members (front, l-r) Craig & Tina Hanson, Norman & Rita Wellman, Andrea Bieger & Wolfgang Heiden, (back, l-r) Jack & Judy Young, Michael Pfaff, Marty Jurs, Diane Pfaff, Bob Jurs and Pastor Darrell Stuehrenberg.

Hurricane Irma's September 2017 visit to Florida left a definite impact on the Amigos en Cristo ministry.

"Irma blew us out of our Bonita Springs office," reported Rev. Bob Selle, founder and CEO of the ministry. "It wrecked the modular unit that Hope Lutheran Church generously allowed us to use free of charge for the past 16 years."

Amigos en Cristo has moved its Bonita Springs Immigration office to Thrive Community Church in Estero.

"Pastor John Roth and the members of Thrive have been very gracious and helpful during this period of transition," Selle said.

The ministry's new address is: 20041 S Tamiami Trail # 1, Estero, FL 33928. An open house in January celebrated the move.

Amigos en Cristo celebrated its 20th anniversary last year with a record setting fundraising campaign that generated \$103,296 — exceeding the \$90,000 goal.

The Amigos Center was founded to be God's hands and feet by attending to the physical, mental, and emotional needs that many immigrant families face. The first center was a store front in Bonita Springs, doing case management. Soon the outreach branched out to offer legal immigration services. What started with three part-time employees and one location has now grown to span two counties.



Missionary Leads Cape Coral Bible Study

Rev. Mark Rabe, who serves as a missionary in Ethiopia, was the guest speaker for the Bible study group Faithful to the Word at Trinity/Cape Coral in early January.

Rabe teaches at Mekane Yesus Seminary in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The seminary is dedicated to training Lutheran pastors and other church workers to serve in Ethiopia.

Serving with her husband is Stefanie Rabe. Their four children — Noah, Gabrilla, Julianna and Matthias — join them in the mission field.

From November 2012 to April 2015 Rabe was pastor of Trinity/Albany, GA.

Below — Rev. Mark Rabe leads the Faithful to His Word class at Trinity/Cape Coral.



Regional Celebration Highlights 500th Anniversary of the Reformation

Approximately 400 people from 10 Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod congregations came together on Sunday, October 29, 2017, at Beautiful Savior/Sarasota to celebrate with worship and fellowship the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation.



Rev. Dr. John Nunes

Guest Speaker was Rev. Dr. John A. Nunes, President of Concordia College-New York. The theme of the celebration was the same as the title of his sermon: "It's Still All About Jesus."

The combined choirs from multiple congregations, several duets and an instrumental quartet provided inspirational music for the service. All of the pastors participated in distribution of Holy Communion. Fellowship followed the service with brats and German music.

Churches from the Florida-Georgia's SW Region 4 participating in the service were: Hope/Bradenton, Redeemer/Englewood, Church of The Cross/Port Charlotte, Trinity Lutheran of SW Florida/Port Charlotte, Faith/Punta Gorda, Beautiful Savior/Sarasota, Concordia/Sarasota, Good Shepherd/Sarasota, Lakeside/Venice.



REGION 4



Vice President:

Jon Zehnder | St. Michael/Fort Myers

Lay 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:

Philip Rigdon | First/Clearwater

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



Santa Claus visited the Lakeside Lutheran Preschool/Venice in late December. Students were treated to a Florida-style sleigh ride.



Members of Our Savior/St. Petersburg spent one Sunday afternoon in December taking Christmas joy to the community. A group of volunteers singers went Christmas caroling at the East Bay Rehabilitation Center.

First Lutheran Fall Service Project Assists Hurricane Victims in Puerto Rico

Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico with devastating force on September 20, wreaking havoc and leaving the island in the dark. Many residents have been without power for four months, and securing basic necessities has been challenging.

In response to the disaster, First Lutheran Church & School/Clearwater launched a fall service project Donations Drive to benefit Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Puerto Rico. School students brought their donations to the classrooms, while members took supplies to the church.



Prince of Peace in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico is served by missionary Rev. Matthew Ruesch. As pastor, he provides Word and Sacrament ministry to the congregation and directs evangelism and mercy efforts in the Mayaguez community. He also helps to identify new mission opportunities on the island.

Ruesch is joined in the mission field by wife Heather and their three children Isabella, Paul and Sofia.



First Lutheran's donations were delivered to Puerto Rico on January 10. Noted one of the delivery participants, "Most of the people in these photos still do not have power or water, and these are in the neighborhood of the church in Mayaguez. Please keep them in your prayers." ■



Above — Christian musician Don Wharton performed in concert at Hope/Hudson the afternoon of January 21. He is shown here with long-time friend Rev. T. Kent Fuqua, Hope's pastor. ■

Below — Our Savior/St. Petersburg is offering members the opportunity to learn sign language to be able to interact with the deaf community. The seven-week series of classes began in January at Our Savior East Bay after the 10am worship service. Interpreter Tess Crowder is teaching the series. ■



Faith/North Palm Beach Celebrating 60 Years of Ministry

This year marks the 60th year of ministry for Faith Lutheran/North Palm Beach.

The congregation began in January of 1958 when a group of 30



people from Redeemer/West Palm Beach decided to establish a mission congregation in northern Palm Beach County. Rev. Walter Schoech conducted services at Vogel's Funeral Chapel in Riviera Beach.

In September of 1958 the mission group purchase property at Ebbtide and U.S. 1 was purchased for \$33,000.

On Sunday, December 7, 1958, 54 members signed the Constitution and Charter. On January 3, 1960, Rev. Robert E. Wolter was installed as Faith's first resident pastor. That same year in April, Faith Lutheran Church was accepted into the membership of the Florida-Georgia District of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. Groundbreaking for the Fellowship Hall was held on December 18, 1960, and dedicated on Sunday, May 14 1961.

Faith Lutheran's kindergarten began in the fall of 1962 with an enrollment of seven students. In 1966 a second class was added. A new Christian Education Building was dedicated on Sunday, October 9, 1966.

In October of 1970, the congregation authorized a Planning Council to begin a preliminary study towards expansion of a new sanctuary. In March of 1971 the congregation approved the

engagement of architects and the purchase of the 100' x 300' parcel of land fronting U.S. Highway One. Groundbreaking services for the new sanctuary were held in April of 1974 on Easter Sunday.

Faith's sanctuary was dedicated on the third Sunday after the Epiphany and the Conversion of St. Paul — January 25, 1976.

In 1982, the congregation resolved to expand its facilities again

in celebration of its 25th year of ministry to be observed in 1985. Groundbreaking services for Faith Lutheran School and administration building took place on Sunday, May 20, 1984. Dedication services were held on Sunday, November 3, 1985, All Saints Sunday.

In 1994, the congregation directed its leadership to proceed with a program that became known as "Together We Grow." In the fall of 1996 an opportunity arose to purchase the Medical Arts building and adjoining property at 301 Ebbtide. The congregation decided to purchase the property and began renovation for the two-story Faith Lutheran Care Center. The congregation expanded its ministries to include toddlers under the age of three and senior citizens. The top floor of the care center houses New Day Adult Care and the bottom floor is home to toddler care, 6 classrooms, a play room and a reception desk.

In 2003 the congregation decided to expand yet again. The ageing Fellowship Hall was razed

and a multi-purpose building was constructed. The Frank E. Michel Family Life Center has a gymnasium, kitchen, multipurpose room, library and four classrooms. It can also be used as a shelter for the community when times of emergency. Groundbreaking services for the Frank E. Michel Family Life Center were held on December 3, 2006 and the building was dedicated on December, 30 2007. ■



Faith's new Tiki hut was completed to allow the children a shady spot in the sand on the playground..

REGION 5



- Vice President:**
Steve Wipperman | Our Savior/Lake Worth
- Liaison 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



Above — Students at Holy Cross School/ North Miami were challenged to raise \$2,000 in chapel offerings in December as a special offering for Good Shepherd Orphanage in Carefour, Haiti.

The students met that goal — and the funds were wired to the orphanage in late December.

Each year Good Shepherd Orphanage provides a Christmas dinner and a gift to 2,000 children from the nearby community. In addition, they have 35 residential students and they provide a daily feeding program to many children from the community as well as run a school.

Pictured are some of the residents of the Good Shepherd Orphanage in Haiti. ■

At right — Students achieving the Principal's List at Trinity Lutheran School/ Delray Beach received their awards at the beginning of the new year. The awards were presented in the Trinity sanctuary. ■



Above — A December treat for students at Redeemer Lutheran School/Stuart came in the form of a surprise visit by Officer Olson. She entertained the students by reading "The Night Before Christmas." ■



Breakfast with Baby Jesus was a highlight of the Christmas season at St. Paul Church & School/Boca Raton. Worshippers filled the sanctuary for the 9am service, then proceeded to the Family Life Center to visit Jesus, Mary and Joseph at the manger. Church members and staff participated as various characters to bring the nativity story to life. Jeff, Laura, Ainsley and Bradley Van Camp portrayed the Holy Family and an angel — with Ainsley's and Bradley's grandparents Clyde and Michele Barbieri portraying two of the shepherds. ■



Lake Worth's Our Savior Marks 90 Years in Ministry

Sunday, December 3, 2017, capped off a year of celebrating 90 Years of God's Grace at Our Savior/Lake Worth.

Florida-Georgia District President Greg Walton preached an uplifting message encouraging worshippers to actively share Jesus with their communities and the world.

"Former members and friends from around the state joined us in praising God for His marvelous, undeserved love," said Rev. Steve Wipperman, Our Savior's pastor since 2005. "Special music for the service included a trumpeter, our adult choir and our bell choir. President Walton and Edith also joined us for a catered dinner following worship."

The dinner was held under a tent on the site of Our Savior's former sanctuary, which was destroyed by Hurricane Wilma just weeks after Wipperman arrived in Florida in 2005.

"Pastor Walter and Gloria Volz shared greetings and former vicar, Dr. Paul and Joy Mueller shared their love and encouragement," Wipperman said. "Christian love expressed in handshakes, hugs and smiles highlighted our day. The Florida sunny weather was delightful and the food was good too."

Other anniversary events included a March 12 retrospective as Our Savior members took a collective look back and celebrated God's grace in the church's history. On June 18, the congregation celebrated God's grace with a picnic and worship service including daughter congregations, Salem Haitian, Epiphany and Son Life. ■



Pastor Wipperman leads the congregation through the anniversary worship.



Members and friends came together for a celebration anniversary dinner under a tent on the site of the former sanctuary.



Sharing the head table at the celebration dinner were (from left) Our Savior President Lee and Sherrill Disbury, Rev. Steve and Kristen Wipperman, Edith and President Greg Walton, Rev. Walt and Gloria Volz.

Stuehrenberg Honored for Four Decades in Ministry

Since his ordination into the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod 40 years ago, Rev. Darrell Stuehrenberg has served just two Florida-Georgia District congregations: Gloria Dei/Davie full-time for 33 years and now Bethlehem/Fort Myers on a part-time basis for the past seven years.

In celebration of this ministry milestone, Bethlehem hosted an anniversary worship and dinner on December 3, 2017. More than 175 people from across the country participated.

“The Bethlehem Church family truly pulled out all the stops to prepare for this service and the dinner that

followed in the Fellowship Hall,” Stuehrenberg said.

The anniversary celebration followed a Saturday Stuehrenberg Cousins Reunion that brought 45 family members from across the United States to Fort Myers.

Nineteen pastors were in attendance for the anniversary celebration.

Stuehrenberg cousins Paul and Lyle assisted the service. Rev. Dennis Bartels of Holy Cross/North Miami was the guest preacher.

The \$1,400 Sunday offering at the service was designated for Mission: Haiti, an outreach ministry that Stuehrenberg has been involved with since its inception. ■



Among those attending in the anniversary celebration were pastors (seated) Thomas Sheha, former with St. Joseph Polish Nat'l Catholic/Davie, FL; (first row, l-r) Curt Deterding, Zion/Fort Myers; Tom Slager, Community Presbyterian/Clewiston; Fred Kohler, retired; Juan Gonzalez, Beautiful Savior/Lehigh Acres; John C. Hirst, Peace/Okeechobee; (row two, l-r) Richard Arndt, retired; Andreas Thode, Living Faith/Pembroke Pines; Ted Wuerffel, retired; Darrell Stuehrenberg, Bethlehem/Fort Myers; Paul Stuehrenberg, retired - former Director of the Yale Divinity School Library, New Haven, CT; (row three, l-r) Bob Dickinson, retired; Jerry Lawson, Good Shepherd/North Fort Myers; Nicholas Moskovites, Christ the King/LaBelle; Dennis Bartels, Holy Cross/North Miami; Don Hinchey, winter pastor Zion/Fort Myers; James Weist, Epiphany/Lake Worth; Lyle Stuehrenberg, retired; Bill Miller, Director of a Hospice organization in Buffalo, NY.

Hurricane Relief Crosses Oceans, State Lines

In the aftermath of Hurricane Irma's destructive visit to the Florida-Georgia District last year, Lutheran schools from other parts of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod reached out with compassion and assistance.

around \$100.

“However, as David shared with Holy Cross Principal Sherri Mackey, the Emmanuel students really wanted to help so they collected three times the

anniversary of The Reformation,” Stark said. “I felt it was a goal that could be achieved, but had no idea how God was going to

bless it. We were able to present a check in the amount of \$860 to our friends at Grace Lutheran in Key West.”

That presentation was made in person as Stark, her husband Mike and their 19-year-old son Noah drove from Midland to Key West over the Christmas break to make the delivery.

“The church was very grateful to receive the financial gift,” Deb Stark continued, “Our Wednesday morning quilters sent five beautiful quilts to be given to families and another member put together several mason jars of Christmas candy.”

The Stark family also wanted to bless the church with Michigan made products, so there was a cookout following Grace's December 31 service. Everyone enjoyed Koegel hotdogs, Made Rite chips and Vernors. The Starks heard numerous uplifting stories on how families survived the hurricane after houses were washed into the ocean and cars floated away.

“There were piles of things along the side of the road like ovens, refrigerators, beds, chairs, wrapped with palm trees,” Deb Stark noted. “What impressed me the most was that they were happy people because they have such great trust and love in the Lord.”

She took back to St. John's gifts from Grace, including a big conch shell, coral and a colorful poster of Key West. ■



Grace Lutheran Pastor Gary Faith accepts quilts made by the Wednesday morning quilters of St. John's/Midland.

District Executive Director for School and Youth Ministries Mark Brink shared some specific instances of this care. “We had two Early Childhood directors take a week off to come and provide relief to some of the staff at Martin Lutheran Chapel Preschool/ Marathon.

“Emmanuel Lutheran School/Maui shared their pre-fall-break chapel offering with Holy Cross Lutheran School/North Miami,” Brink continued. “The school only has 137 students and according to Principal David Hobus the chapel offering is usually

usual amount and a check for \$249.27 was mailed to North Miami.”

Deb Stark, the DCE at St. John's Lutheran/Midland, MI, coordinated an effort to gather Sunday School offerings to assist Grace Lutheran Church & School/Key West. St. John's hosted a Grace Day on October 29, 2017. Sunday School children brought in their offerings, the church sponsored the Dirty Dozen — a smaller group of Midland's Men of Music — and combined the free will donation with the offering.

“My goal was \$500 to help mark the 500th



Mike, Deb and Noah Stark drove 3827 miles to present hurricane relief gifts to Grace/Key West.



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The BACKPAGE

Reformation Anniversary Mural Dedicated

Members and friends of Trinity/Lake Placid gathered on January 20 for the dedication of the church's "500th Anniversary of the Protestant Reformation" mural. Painted on a main outside wall of the church, the mural depicts important actions of Martin Luther and the Reformation.

Trinity's masterpiece is one of almost 50 murals that highlight many of downtown Lake Placid's buildings.

Leading the dedication ceremony was Trinity Pastor Richard Norris. Martin Luther impersonator Rev. Gary Schuscke

of St. Luke's/Oviedo did a presentation. A Southern Gospel singing group added music. The ceremony was followed by a German themed lunch hosted by Trinity. ■

Seven Lutheran pastors attended the mural dedication, including (below left-to-right) Darrell Stuehrenberg, Bethlehem/Fort Myers; John Hirst, Peace/Okeechobee; Anthony Arias, Grace/Arcadia; Richard Norris, Trinity/Lake Placid; Robert Maulella, Faith/Sebring; Gary Schuscke, St. Luke's/Oviedo; Scott McLean, Christ/Avon Park.

Congratulations



Jon Boeche
Christ The King Largo
25 New Investors
November 2017

WELL DONE
GOOD
AND
FAITHFUL
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 Lutheran Church Extension Fund
Florida-georgia district

One of many highlights of the January 12-14 Florida Georgia District LCEF Advocate Weekend was the presentation of the "Star Performer" award to Jon Boeche of Christ the King/Largo, FL. He brought in 25 new LCEF investors during 2017. More information on the weekend is featured on pages 16-17. ■

