

LUTHERAN LIFE

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

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by Greg Walton District President

Calling Congregations

St Paul/Boca Raton, FL Assoc. Pastor
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
Our Redeemer/Ocala, FL Sole Pastor
Live UCF/Orlando, FL Campus Pastor
St Paul/Peachtree City, GA Senior Pastor
Rivercliff/Sandy Springs, GA Assoc. Pastor
Trinity/Savannah, GA Sole Pastor
Epiphany/Tallahassee, FL Sole Pastor
Lakeside/Venice, FL Senior Pastor

Calls Issued

Lake Oconee/Lake Oconee, GA
Rev. Daniel Wehmeier as Sole Pastor

Christ the King/Orlando, FL
Rev. Timothy Brown as Sole Pastor

Faith/Parrish, FL
Rev. Patrick Pooch as Sole Pastor

Our Savior/Plantation, FL
Rev. K. Anthony Durante as Sole Pastor

Redeemer/Stuart, FL
Rev. James Weist as Missionary
to Port St Lucie

Calls Accepted
Christ the King/Orlando, FL
Rev. Timothy Brown as Sole Pastor

Faith/Parrish, FL
Rev. Patrick Pooch as Sole Pastor

Our Savior/Plantation, FL
Rev. K. Anthony Durante as Sole Pastor

Redeemer/Stuart, FL
Rev. James Weist
as Missionary to Port St Lucie

Calls Declined
Lake Oconee/Lake Oconee, GA
Rev. Daniel Wehmeier as Sole Pastor

Transferred Out to Other Districts
Rev. Thomas S Hackett Michigan (O)
Mr. Philip J Klopke Texas (C)
Rev. Jeffery C Moore Michigan (O)
Ms Ann E Henny South Wisconsin (C)
Rev. Dennis J Goff Indiana (O)

Transferred In from Other Districts
Mrs. Julie Bedard Southern Illinois (C)
Rev. Murray Brindle Eastern (O)

Ordained/Commissioned Minister Initial Placements

Rev. James Leggett
Colloquy Committee for Pastoral Ministry
Pastor, Our Saviour/Miami Shores, FL (O)

Rev. Richard Boyd
Colloquy Committee for Pastoral Ministry
Pastor, Epiphany/Tallahassee, FL (O)

**Ordained/Commissioned
Minister Installations**
Ms. Dehlia K DeLeon
Deaconess, Grace/St. Petersburg, FL (C)

Mrs. Julie Bedard
EC Director, Amazing Grace/Oxford, FL (C)

Rev. Thomas Boeck
Associate Pastor, Marco/Marco Island, FL
(O)

Rev. Christopher J Kollmann
Pastor, Our Redeemer/Vero Beach, FL (O)

Ms. Kimberly A Newman
Teacher, Faith/Eustis, FL (C)

Status Change within the District
Rev. Benjamin Schroeder
From Active to Candidate (O)

Ms. Sarah Haneline
From Active to Candidate (C)

Ms. Reta M Sollenberger
From Active to Candidate (C)

Called to Glory
Ms. Martha, J. Rupperecht (C)
Rev. Ronald W Brusius (O)

Reinstated to the Roster
Ms Michelle V Pitts (C)

Removed from the Roster
Rev. Sung Cho (O)
By Action of the President

Rev. Ebengo Bonga (O)
By Action of the President

Ms. Sharon Preston (C)
Resigned Voluntarily

School Changes
Amazing Grace/Oxford FL
Opened Early Learning Center

Daniel J. Reichard to Assume New LCEF Role

Daniel J. Reichard, Florida-Georgia Vice President of Lutheran Church Extension Fund and Executive Director of Finance, has been named LCEF Regional Vice President-East Region. That appointment is effective April 30, 2018.

Reichard began his work with LCEF in 2010 and has served the Florida-Georgia District as District Vice President and Executive Director of Finance since that time. Prior to joining the District staff, he spent almost 30 years in a variety of positions, from entry-level accountant to senior leadership positions as Chief Financial Officer and Controller of several multi-million-dollar manufacturing companies.



Dan and Andrea Reichard with their two grandchildren

Reichard holds an accounting degree from Northwood University in Midland, MI, and an MBA from Western Michigan University. He also holds a Certified Public Accountant certification from the State of Wisconsin and is a Certified Management Accountant.

"Dan has done an outstanding job in his role as the District Vice President of Lutheran Church Extension Fund," said Florida-Georgia President Greg Walton. "We thank Dan for his service to our District and wish him well as he begins this new venture. As God has provided for LCEF in sending Dan, I am confident that He is already been fashioning our future as well!"

Reichard and his wife Andrea live in Orlando and are member of Trinity/Orlando. They have two married sons and two grandchildren. ■



James D. Franskousky
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Insurance • Tax • Tax Resources
Money • Lifestyle



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DISTRICT CALENDAR

Interim Pastors Training
Spring 2018
Orlando Area

**National Lutheran
Church Workers Conference**
July 8-11, 2018
Minneapolis, MN

2018 Hearts for Jesus Project
In 2018 we will be supporting the Flood Bucket Program which has been helping families, churches and schools in times of natural disasters.

Florida Georgia District 70th Anniversary
Celebrating 70 years 1948-2018

**Retreat for Professionals
in Youth & Family Ministry**
May 7-9, 2018
El Caribe Resort
Daytona Beach, FL

2018 High School Youth Servant Event
June 17-22, 2018
Baptist Camp Center
Fort Myers Beach, FL

2018 FLGA District Convention
June 22-24, 2018
Wyndham Orlando Resort
Orlando, FL

Lay Leadership Summit
August 23-25, 2018
Embassy Suites
Lake Buena Vista South

2018 Pastors Conference
September 24-26
Daytona Beach Hilton Resort
Daytona Beach, FL

2018 Educators Conference
September 26-28, 2018
Daytona Beach Hilton Resort
Daytona Beach, FL

How

do you describe yourself to people? None of us are one dimensional. For instance, if you ask me who I am, depending on the circumstances I might answer with any of the following: I am a pastor, a husband, a son, a father, a grandfather, a man, a student, a teacher, a golfer (some may disagree with that one), a

changing landscape of self-description as we live, grow and mature — especially in regard to our faith, as we are transformed by His grace and love.

In a similar way, no one word can adequately describe who Jesus is. Yes, He is Lord, but He is also our Redeemer. Jesus is the Crucified One; the Alpha and Omega; the Master; the Savior; the Lamb of God; the Prince of Peace; the Bread of Life; the Living One; the Way, the Truth, and the Life; to name just a few.

character of Jesus. When Jesus tells us that He is the Light of the World, we don't equate that with a light bulb, but maybe with the sun as it shines its light on the universe or even more so with the radiance of His presence, how He illuminates our lives (think Moses) and gives us the joy of His presence.

Of all the "I am" statements of Jesus my favorite is that of the Good Shepherd. It reveals the compassionate heart of Jesus and how His heart longs for each one

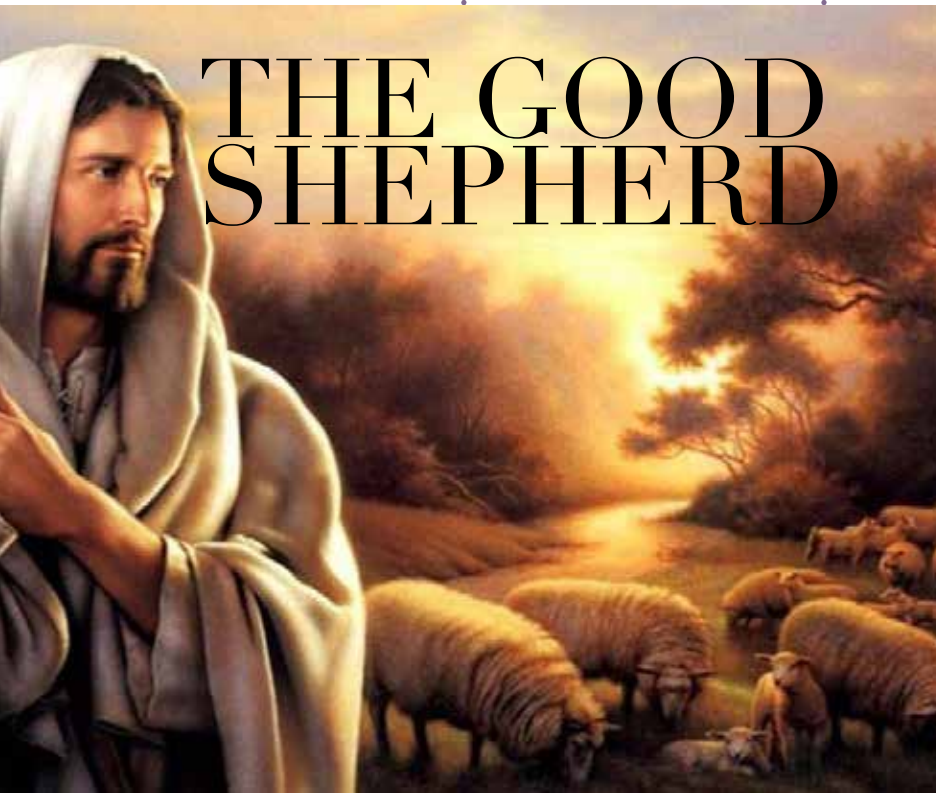
of us and desires us to live in unity with each other. This is a picture of the kind of Savior we have in Jesus, one who cares for us with a deep and abiding love.

In John 10:11-16 Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf

coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd."

Growing up in the country, my siblings and I were actively involved in 4-H. It was through this that we raised sheep. Our sheep were kept in a fenced field and except for the few times they escaped their enclosure, which was never any fun, their pasture was a pretty defined and confined area. We would regularly feed them with pellets of grain in addition to the grass they grazed on; they were pretty independent, meaning that we didn't spend many hours of any day caring for them. We knew our sheep, but I would hardly classify myself or any of my siblings as good shepherds. Far from being our life or our livelihood, the sheep were more like a hobby. We learned a lot from raising those sheep for the few years that we had them.

Our Good Shepherd has redeemed us with His blood, shed on the Cross, to show us the extent of His love.



sinner in need of grace, I am a redeemed believer in the Risen Savior, Jesus Christ and I suppose the list could go on. Each of these titles describe a different part of who I am.

No one statement could fully describe who we are as individuals. There is a constantly

On numerous occasions Jesus identified Himself with "I Am" statements like, "I am the Door" or "I am the Light of the World." The "I am" statements of Jesus give us tremendous insight into His person.

Each of them is a descriptor that tells us something about the



Despite our propensity to wander away, He still gently calls us and loves us. Our Good Shepherd isn't looking to preserve a sheep pen. He isn't as concerned about the kind of lumber we use or the type of nails in the fence. Instead, His concern is for the sheep, which influences everything else. In other words, Jesus isn't so much concerned with the facility we gather to worship in as He is in those who gather to worship Him. His concern is always for the sheep of the flock, for their welfare, for their physical and spiritual care, for their growth and wellbeing. His desire is always to enlarge the flock, to add to it, to make sure that more and more sheep understand His great love and how He willingly sacrificed His all for each one.

Jesus frees us as His flock to roam the world and encourages us to explore the opportunities He presents us as we seek to reach others in need of the Good Shepherd. He trusts us, as He cares for us, and sends us into this world with the good news, but always expects us to respond to the sound of His voice. This is the voice that still says to His sheep, "Go, and as you go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you..."

Our Good Shepherd

also says, "And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd." I believe Jesus always intended that His Church would be missional and not institutional. Although He was likely a carpenter, trained by His earthly father, Joseph, Scripture never shows us Jesus building any buildings. His focus was always on people and building relationships. Over and over Jesus shows us He is filled with compassion for people. Whether it was through miraculously healing someone, or using His dying breath to commend the care of His mother, Mary, to John, Jesus cared about His sheep.

Now He calls us, His sheep, to live in that love for each other and to reach out to the world around us in that love. Jesus said, "By this will all people know that you are My disciples, if you love one another." A disciple was one who was devoted to the Master, and Jesus desires those who believe in Him to become like Him. That's what discipleship really is! Each of us has a calling to a life of discipleship.

Can you imagine what the world would be like if all believers in Jesus listened to the voice of the Good Shepherd and His call to reach the world with His love? On Easter Sunday we boldly and proudly announce that "Christ is Risen; He is

Risen indeed." It's more than something to say — it is a transformative reality. His Resurrection means that we will live forever, that our sins have been completely forgiven and wiped away. It means that He is our Good Shepherd, who laid down His life for the sheep. All that was purposeful. Jesus rose so we could not only abide in Him, but also share this wonderful good news of new life with the world.

We have an opportunity to share the love of Jesus every day. As we celebrated the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation we were reminded that "It's still all about Jesus!" This is what our District is all about. Our vision is to equip, empower and engage to connect people to Jesus. The goal isn't to preserve our past, but to grow the Kingdom for the sake of Jesus. The goal of our mission and ministries is to reach more people with His love and forgiveness, reflecting our Great I Am, the Good

LIFE LINES

"The hired hand sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees."

— John 10:11-16



Shepherd, Jesus.

As a District celebrating our 70th Anniversary we also have an opportunity to proclaim the bold truth of our loving and forgiving Good Shepherd, Jesus. As we meet together in convention, as we work to equip, empower and engage to connect people to Jesus, may it be said of us that the love of the Good Shepherd is evident in us! ■



In His Peace.
GREG



Florida-Georgia District in Strong

Meeting April 13-14 for the final time before the upcoming triennial convention, the Florida-Georgia District Board of Directors heard reports of ongoing activities before focusing on actions related to the June 22-24 gathering.

"There are many activities swelling around as we gather," Florida-Georgia President Greg Walton told Board members, "but none more important than the District Convention, which will consume some of our time, especially dealing with overtures already submitted. Now comes all the details."



BOARD ROOM

by John List
District Communications Director

Just two months into the new fiscal year, the Board heard that expenses continue to be carefully monitored and budgetary goals are being met. Daniel J. Reichard, Executive Director of Administration, emphasized that the District continues to have "no debt."

Board members review the District's two critical targets of Leadership and Outreach at each meeting. Walton's report to the Board focuses on these targets.

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.*

▲ The District hosted 23 workers and their spouses at the March 2-3 New Called Workers Retreat. "It was another opportunity for workers to not only identify with other workers, but to learn about the various missions and ministries in Florida-Georgia and to see 'what the District does.'" Walton said.

▲ The final session of the 2018 Emergent Leaders Training from April 3-5 was attended by "a solid mix of pastors, lay and commissioned workers," Walton reported.

▲ The fourth and final session of the PLI Missional

Leader Learning Community was in early April in Orlando. The focus was on raising and strengthening leaders.

▲ The District Youth Ministry Council is hosting a retreat for individuals who are engaged fulltime in youth and/or family ministries from May 7-9 at El Caribe in Daytona Beach. DCE Jeremy Becker of St. Paul/Weston is heading the planning committee. Mark Brink, Executive Director of School & Youth Ministries, and Cindy Hammerstrom, administrative assistant, will be participating from the District office.

▲ Planning is continuing for the August 23-25 Lay Leadership Summit at the Embassy Suites, Orlando Lake Buena Vista South. The tentative schedule includes four breakout sessions of 11 workshops each.

▲ Planning is also under way for the September 24-26 District Pastors Conference at the Hilton Daytona Beach prior to the Educators Conference. The focus is on reaching those, especially among youth, who were brought up in the church, still believe but no longer attend worship services with any regularity.

▲ The 2018 District Educators Conference is set for September 26-28 under the theme "Urgent Care," rooted in Titus 3:14: "Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order to provide for urgent needs and not live unproductive lives."

▲ Florida-Georgia School Ministries is partnering with Mission: Haiti on an April 15-17, 2019, Haitian Lutheran Educator Conference. The goal is to increase the number of participants from Haitian Lutheran school from just more than 50 in 2017 to at least 75.

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.

▲ More than 100 youth attended the February 2-4 District High School Gathering.

▲ Amazing Grace/Oxford will open an Early Childhood Center this August. Building dedication is tentatively set for July 29. Julie Bedard was installed as the Director on February 4.

▲ Five Two regional gatherings — designed to breathe "oxygen" into each of the District's five regions and help participants brainstorm the possibilities of new mission



CHOSEN WITH
PURPOSE
ABIDING IN
JESUS

floridageorgia

Position Heading into Summer Convention

starts — are underway. “Some wonderful ideas are emerging,” Walton told the Board, “and reinforces the reality that starting two new ministries in each region is achievable.”

▲ Plans for the 70th Anniversary of the Florida-Georgia District are moving forward. The observance will begin Pentecost 2018 and conclude Pentecost 2019, with a focused celebration at the District Convention.

▲ Registration is open for “Restore,” the 2018 District High School Servant Event. A limit of 72 participants will engage in leading a Vacation Bible School, working at a food bank and with Habitat for Humanity, doing odd jobs and working at Echo Farms.

▲ The 2018 Hearts for Jesus project will benefit the District’s Flood Bucket Ministry. Many Florida-Georgia schools designate chapel offerings that will be used to buy supplies.

2018 DISTRICT CONVENTION

The theme for the Convention is from John 15:12-17: Chosen with a Purpose — to Abide in Jesus. Each day will have a different focus:

▲ **Day one: His Abiding Presence**

▲ **Day two: Abiding Fruit**

▲ **Day three: Abiding Love**

Board members worked on refining overtures into resolutions to be considered at the June 22-24 gathering. Resolutions will be grouped under three topics: Mission and Outreach, Ministry and Leadership, Administration and Theology.

Floor committees for each of the areas will present the resolutions for consideration and action at the Convention.

Another main focus for Convention delegates will be the election of District leadership, including President, Regional Vice Presidents, Secretary, Region Lay Representatives, At Large Commissioned Representatives and Nomination Committee.

Worship, Bible study and fellowship are incorporated into the Convention schedule. Rev. Christopher Esget, Sixth Vice President of the LCMS, will preach at the opening worship. Rev. Doug Kallesen and Trinity Lutheran/Orlando will be the host for the worship services. LCMS President Matthew Harrison is expected to be at the Convention on Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning.

More details on the resolutions and candidates nominated for the leadership positions will be featured in the next issue of Lutheran LIFE. ■



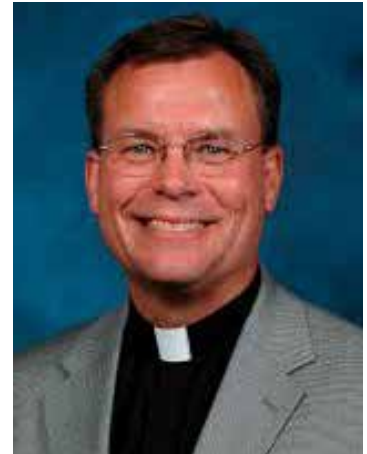
Rev. Christopher Esget, Sixth Vice President of the LCMS (Southeast Region), will preach at the opening worship of the convention on Friday.



Rev. Doug Kallesen and Trinity Lutheran/Orlando will be the host for the worship services. Pastor Kallesen is also the convention chaplain.



Rev. Gregory Walton, Florida-Georgia District President, will preach Sunday at the convention’s closing worship.



Rev. Dr. David Maier, president of the Michigan District LCMS will serve as the Bible Study leader for the convention.



Rev. Dr. Dale Meyer, president of Concordia Seminary/Saint Louis, will serve as the convention essayist.



Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison, president of the LCMS, will be a special guest of the convention.

Another frustrating program didn't go off as you had expected or desired. The food wasn't right. The invitations went out late (or didn't go out at all). No one seemed to give attention to the



The COACHING LEADER

by Rev. Scott Gress
Lutheran Counseling Services
Leadership Coach

sound system needs. It didn't work right. I'm embarrassed. I'll never do that again. I'll never work with them again. It just isn't worth the frustration or the effort to do anything around here. This place is just so frustrating! And so the disappointment, the anger and the emotions start to swell.

Not good.

So what do we do with that?

What do we do with those emotions and frustrations?

Sometimes people who were associated with programs or activities that were obviously not the best will do one of a few things: A few will blame themselves and quietly go on as normal. Some will get angry and start to blame and point fingers. It may be behind people's backs or it may even be on social media. Nevertheless, the anxiety and anger spreads. Others drop out for a while — drop out of talking to others, of being in contact or even drop out of worship. Still others

drop out for good! I'm never going back there! Not good at all.

So what can one do instead when things don't work?

The coaching leader realizes that personal growth and learning rarely if ever take place when things go well. But it can skyrocket when things don't go as expected. So what can a pastor or lay leader do when something goes south?

Let's start with the opposite scenario first. When things go well, it is a great idea to gather all those who were involved and contributed to the

them. After all, if someone forgot to do something, are they the only one who bears responsibility? In all honesty, no. The best teams work together, keep in touch, watch each other's backs and give encouragement. So when you get together, facilitate a dialogue with open questions: What happened? What went well? What didn't go well? How may have each of us contributed to the situation? To whom do we need to apologize? What can we learn? What will we remember to do next time? What can we thank God for? What can we pray for? How can I show love and forgiveness to you in the midst of this time?

How we respond to mistakes or embarrassing situations will

powerfully impact the culture and mood at our churches. Pausing to reflect together can be transformative. We're not perfect. We are forgiven. We can forgive one another. We can also learn from one another. In a place where

we preach the love of Christ, this situation is a perfect opportunity to live deeper into that love, see our own blind spots, seek and receive love and forgiveness and watch God do amazing things.

Sometimes I think God allows things to not be perfect just so we can grow. How will you respond?



event or program and celebrate what happened. It affirms people. It shows appreciation and it gives all an opportunity to give praise to God for their gifts and the positive outcomes.

Yet when things don't go well, there is an equally if not more important opportunity to gather. No, not to grill and humiliate the person who forgot to send out the invitations or organize the food that didn't show up.

Rather, to learn the lessons from what happened and celebrate

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

Today is such a beautiful day outside. The weather is cool, the sun is shining brightly. What is not to love about Florida in the winter months? This is the time of year we love in Florida and so do many snowbirds. Our churches temporarily swell with them, and our tourist attractions love to have them come to visit. Most of all they love to be here away from the snow.

So that started me thinking, what other things do they do while they are here besides going to tourist attractions? Are they active in a church? Are they active in the LWML societies? Are they active as volunteers?

I, personally, volunteer at our local hospital one to two days a week depending on the need in my area. I am the chairman of surgical services and work in the Pre-Op area of the hospital — and I love it. As I was sitting at the surgery waiting desk yesterday, I started thinking about encouraging our volunteers. But I was not thinking about the hospital volunteers. I was thinking about volunteers that help at church, and in our LWML societies. I believe all volunteers will continue to serve as long as they feel their efforts are accomplishing something, that their talents are appreciated and that they are making a difference. Do you agree with this statement?

The LWML Pledge says it perfectly, I think. "In fervent gratitude for the Savior's dying love and His blood-bought gift of redemption we dedicate ourselves to Him with all that we are and have; and in obedience to His call for workers in the harvest fields, we pledge Him our willing service wherever and

whenever He has need of us. We consecrate to our Savior our hands to work for Him, our feet to go on His errands, our voice to sing His praises, our lips to proclaim His redeeming love, our silver and our gold to



FUTURE & HOPE

by Joan Koch
LWML District Vice President
for Communications

the LWML. Our District will be holding our convention in September. We will be needing volunteers to help in many areas of that convention, not only as a delegate for your zone but also as a participating member of LWML.

These gatherings allow us to organize to "go on His errands!" In addition, you have an opportunity to see friends that perhaps you only see once at year at one of our events. And, if you serve as a delegate, you will vote on important work our District will carry on.

So, if you are ready to do work for Him in His harvest fields, sing His praises, do His errands, then really consider serving in this area where you are so very much needed. ■

Volunteering for the Lord's Work Brings Joy

Why Volunteer?

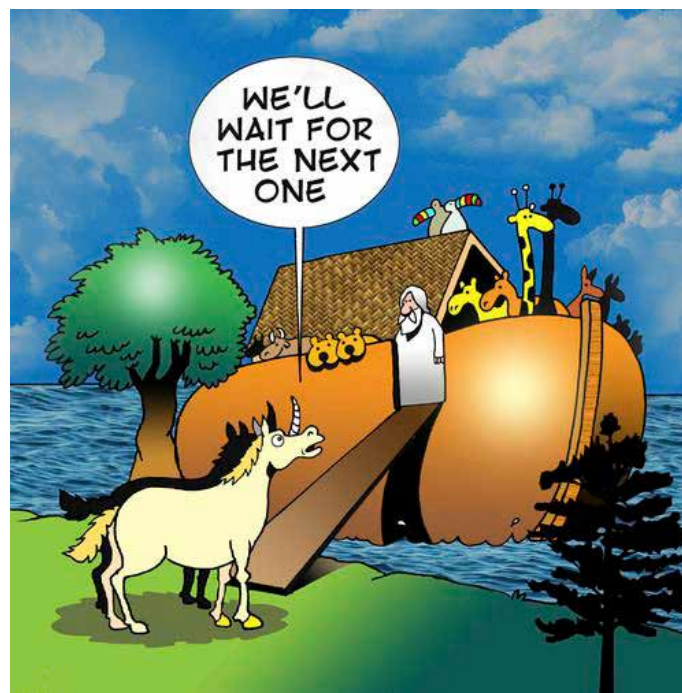
& Why not? People volunteer with us for many different reasons, but they've all got one thing in common: it's about you being willing to accomplish what God has called you to do - be a part of His Kingdom.

"Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

- Colossians 3:23-24

extend His Kingdom, our will to do His will, and every power of our life to the great task of bringing the lost and the erring into eternal fellowship with Him. Amen."

We have pledged ourselves to work for Him. We are workers in His harvest fields. He has need of us. We sing His praises, we do His errands. We proclaim His redeeming love. What I am really getting at is that we are in need of volunteers in



Church Veterans

Highlighting each Veterans of the Cross Retreat are the presentations of the L. Lloyd Behnken Medallions to honor workers for their service to the Lord and His Church. The awards are named in memory of Rev. Lloyd Behnken, who served from 1974 until his death in 1985 and became the first full-time Florida-Georgia District President. During his presidential tenure, the decision was made to start a retreat for emeritus workers. These awards are named in his honor.

This year's Medallion honorees were:

Rev. Walter Volz — Ordained

With a career that combined parish ministry with service as a Navy Chaplain, Volz came to the Florida-Georgia District in 1980 to serve Our Savior/Plantation, where he was Senior Pastor until his retirement in 2001. During his tenure as Senior Pastor, a full pre-school through eighth-grade Lutheran School was established and a multi-million-dollar expansion and renovation of Our Savior's facilities took place. Since 2001, Volz has been a speaker for Food for the Poor.

Larry & Ruth Dexheimer — Commissioned

Larry Dexheimer's service in the Florida-Georgia District began when he accepted the call to Lutheran High School of Pinellas County in 1982. Four years later, he joined the faculty of St. John Lutheran School/Ocala, where he served until retiring in 2010. In 1968, Larry met Concordia River Forest graduate Ruth Ann Vogel at a Lutheran Educator's Conference in Atlantic

City. They were married in 1969. When the Dexheimers moved to Ocala, Ruth taught art at St. John and served as organist until 1997. She taught at the Madison Street Academy of Visual and Performing Arts in Ocala until 2012. Larry and Ruth serve as organist and leading services at Forest Lutheran and also at the Lodge assisted living home.

William L Gaik — Lay Worker

A career accountant, Bill Gaik in December of 1966 was commissioned as an Ensign in the United States Navy, serving until 1969. He was awarded the Navy Achievement Medal for his contribution as a communications officer during the Vietnamese conflict. Gaik served on the Florida-Georgia Board

of Directors for 12 years and was a member of the LCEF Loan Committee. At the 2015 District Convention, he was the lay recipient of the Doulos Tou Christour award.

Rev. Dr. Dale A. Meyer — Church at Large

Dr. Dale Meyer began his teaching career at Concordia Seminary/St. Louis as a guest instructor in 1979. He served as the Gregg H. Benidt Memorial Chair in Homiletics and Literature from 2001-2005, and in 2004 was named interim president before being chosen as Concordia's tenth president in 2005. He has served on numerous boards and



Above left, The Walter Volz family: Daughter-in-law Nancy; Walter; wife Gloria; daughter Kristin; and Medallion presenter, Pastor Darrell Stuehrenberg.



Lower left: The Dexheimer Family: Ruth (far left) and Larry (far right), who carried a hoe to indicate that he saw his role as tiller of the soil and planter of the seed, with son and daughter-in-law Philip and Amanda and their children.

Honored for Service

committees for the church at large; was a Synodical Vice President; is a former speaker of the *Lutheran Hour*; and was the host of the television show, *On Main Street*. His many published works include *Timely Reflections: A Minute a Day* with Dale Meyer. ■



Dr. Dale Meyer (above left) receives his medallion from Florida-Georgia District President Gregory Walton



Above: David Ludwig, Jr. provided music for the conference.

Far left: Julie Dass and her sister Farhat Naseen represented Voice of Faith, the second recipient of the VOC retreat offering.

Near left: Rev. Richard Pieplow, chair of the Veterans of the Cross planning committee

Below far left: Rev. Dr. Robert Scudieri

Below near left: Roger Dow, senior gift planning officer of Concordia Seminary

At right: District LCEF Administrative Assistant Debbie Talbott with Rev. Robert Steinke, winner of the Apple iPad given away by LCEF.



Veterans of the Cross Focus on Being “Risktakers in Re-Formation”

Retired LCMS professional church workers and spouses gathered for the 2018 Veterans of the Cross were encouraged to be bold in the spirit of Martin Luther, a theme tied to the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation that was celebrated last year.

While most of those at the March 5-7 event at the Life Enrichment Center in Fruitland Park, FL, hailed from the Florida-Georgia District, there were participants coming from as far away as New Jersey and Indiana.

The “Risktakers in Re-Formation” theme was explored by Julie Dass from Voice of Faith.

She emphasized the importance of speaking up and not remaining silent when given the opportunity to share your faith. Copies of her new book *The Despicable Missionary*, which described the difficulties in her life as a Christian girl growing up in Muslim dominated Pakistan, were available at the retreat.

Dr. Dale Meyer, president of Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, shared his personal journey as a parish pastor to his current position. Noting the decreasing enrollment at the two LCMS seminaries, he spoke of the need for congregations to identify and recruit men for the pastorate.

The worship service sermon by Rev. Kent Fuqua focused on using our hands, gifts of God, for His service.

Dr. Bob Scudieri shared stories of courageous, faith-filled missionaries from abroad who have paradoxically come to the United States to share the Gospel with our post-Christian culture. Devotional leader Earl Stefens challenged the Veterans with his humorous and insightful devotions to take risks in sharing the Gospel. Paul Foelber and Lyle Muller alerted participants of the need to share the Gospel with seniors, many of whom are not Christians.

Planning is already under way for the 2019 Veterans of the Cross

At about the same time that Saul Alinsky published his infamous political playbook, *Rules for Radicals*, the notable Christian author Francis Schaeffer published his 1976 book, *How Should We Then Live?* Alinsky's first book was dedicated to Lucifer, but Schaeffer's book was dedicated to Jesus Christ. This essay narrows Schaeffer's thoughts to "How should we then speak?"

The Bible is filled with good advice about speaking. Recently I tangled with a telephone solicitor who followed his script



COURAGE FOR TODAY

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

scrupulously. After I had denied the first request for \$25, the second request for \$15, and the third request to "send you an envelope and put you down for \$10" I saw it as an opportunity to share biblical wisdom. In a courteous context I said "Jesus is the way, the truth and the life" and when I say no I mean no as Jesus told us: "Simply let your yes be yes and your No, No." I totally forgot the part about "anything beyond this comes from the evil one." (MATTHEW 5:37)

One of the most powerful verses in Scripture is: "Speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ." (EPHESIANS 4:15) A simple unpacking of that sentence exhorts us to speak the truth, and not be silent. In spite of what God expects — and

How Should We Then Speak?

the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution affirms ("Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof;

or abridging the freedom of speech") — we all tend towards a cowardly collapse into silence and signal our virtue by being politically correct. But be alert to the

Divine caveat! Speak the truth in love, not like a hammer but like the highly advertised "My pillow" — firm but without pain.

of Islam. The accepted definition of Islamophobia means "fear, hatred or prejudice against Islam or Muslims." The accusation, then, of being an "Islamophobe" is tantamount to being a bigot or racist. The result is that it becomes socially unacceptable to criticize the religion of Islam.

But why should Islam be exempted from criticism? Every religion or ideology should stand the test of critical examination. We can protect people with laws against slander and libel, but it is absurd to protect ideas and ideologies by calling them "hate speech."

Silence is not always golden. Sometimes silence is cowardice. Peter and John were not silent after they were imprisoned for speaking of Jesus. They were compelled to give a deposition of their activities before the Sanhedrin. Peter said of Jesus: "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." (ACTS 4:12)

We have role models today of truth speech in Syria, Iraq and other countries where Christians are speaking the Name of Jesus and being imprisoned, tortured and beheaded. They follow in the spirit of St. Paul who said:

"I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile." (ROMANS 1:16) How should we then speak? ■



For example, we can be intimidated by deceptive slogans, like "Islamophobia," a cliché which was coined by the Islamic community in the 1980s for the purpose of preempting any criticism

New Seminary Programs to Cover Full Tuition

Both Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod seminaries have announced new programs effective with the 2018-2019 academic year that will provide full tuition coverage for incoming residential pastoral and diaconal students.

Concordia Seminary/St. Louis

Made possible by the generosity and support of donors, the new program at Concordia Seminary guarantees financial aid at least equal to the cost of tuition for all Master of Divinity (M.Div.), Residential Alternate Route (RAR) and Diaconess Studies students effective this fall.

“Some of our future pastors and deaconesses don’t receive enough financial aid to cover their tuition bill in full,” said Seminary President Dr. Dale A. Meyer. “This new policy will cover that shortfall, relieving that burden and, I pray,

opening the door to more students down the road who can put the worry of how to pay for their Seminary education behind them.”

All Seminary-based financial aid, including the grant established under the new policy, are grants and not loans and therefore do not need to be paid back. The amount each student receives will vary based on his or her tuition shortfall. Other expenses incurred, including housing, insurance, books and other necessities, are the responsibility of the student.

Concordia Theological Seminary/Fort Wayne

Beginning with the 2018-19 academic year, tuition for all incoming, residential pastoral ministry and diaconess students at Concordia Theological Seminary will be paid in full.

“In 2013, with the help of a grant from the Lilly Foundation, we did an exhaustive study of student debt that drove us to establish 100% tuition support as one of the goals of our strategic plan,” said Seminary President Dr. Lawrence Rast, Jr. “Where there is a plan, God provides.”

By partnering with districts, congregations and individuals in the Church, Concordia is able to offer a grant that will provide 100% tuition cost for first-year, incoming students. The Seminary acts as both first and third payer in this relationship, first providing aid that covers 77.5% of tuition, after which outside aid is applied. Once LCMS District aid and all outside scholarships have been added, the Seminary covers any remaining tuition cost through the new grant.

Concordia Selma to Close After 95 Years

Concordia College Alabama in Selma will close its doors at the end of the Spring semester of 2018.

After 95 years, the College announced the decision was made with “heavy hearts and deep regret” because of financial reasons. According to Concordia’s Chief Transition Officer, Dr. James E. Lyons, CCA has been developing a closure plan to assist students, faculty and staff affected by the closure.

For the past few years, Concordia’s Board of Regents along with administration had worked to find ways to bolster the financial position of the institution. Officials also confirmed they had begun searching for an investor with the hope that such a move would help to pay off the school’s debt, mortgage and allow for restructuring that would be needed to save the institution.

According to the official Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod statement, “the Synod must continually evaluate how it allocates its limited resources in the face of so many worthy mission-and-ministry opportunities both at home and abroad.”

Concordia’s rich history traces back to the early 1900s when pioneer educator Dr. Rosa J. Young — the daughter of slaves who later would be known as “the mother of Black Lutheranism in America” — established a school for African-American children in Rosebud, AL. On November 13, 1922, the first classes of Young’s new school were held in a rented cottage in Selma. On September 20, 1925, the first buildings on the present campus were dedicated.

Alabama Luther College survived the Great Depression, but it had lost its college and been renamed Alabama Lutheran Academy. It was not long before the necessity of bringing a college education to African-Americans was again realized, and a program

of modernization was initiated, which resulted in the formation of Alabama Lutheran Academy and College. On July 1, 1981, Alabama

Lutheran Academy and College was officially changed to Concordia College.

Two years later, Concordia received accreditation as an associate-degree granting institution by the Southern Association

of Colleges and Schools. In 1994, SACS granted Concordia accreditation as a bachelor’s degree granting institution. Concordia continued to grow as a four-year institution, and in 2010, it acquired the property of the United Methodist Children’s Home, expanded the size of the campus from 22 acres to 57, as well as adding additional housing and historic buildings. ■



Christ Chapel at Concordia/Selma

Mission: Haiti Executive Director Helen Roenfeldt recently provided this summary of the ministry's in-country activities for 2017.

Community Health Outreach: At two outreach clinics — one in the central mountains, one in Jacmel — 700 patients were seen and 600+

2017 Another Active Year of Outreach, Accomplishment for Mission: Haiti

children received parasite medicine, vitamins, checkups and hygiene and nutrition education. Women received pre-natal/infant education and 100 clean birth kits were given out. Funds were provided for life-saving hospital medical/surgical care for 7 people.



Clothing was distributed to needy children near the Guest House and church in Jacmel.



Haiti Teachers Conference: Eleven Lutheran teachers from Florida, two Haitian teachers and several Florida-Georgia District Executives presented a three-day conference for 50 Haitian teachers in Port-au-Prince. Topics included Teaching Skills, Child Development, Lesson Planning, Crisis Management and more.

Jacmel Clean Water Project: Mission: Haiti facilitated drilling a deep well with a filtration system, water truck for

delivery, generator and solar power serving hundreds of people.

Faith Children's Home: The Girls dormitory was completed. Food, school supplies, clothing and health needs were provided for the year for 18 children.



LOrange Children's Home:

Mattresses, sheets, pillows and additional bedding were provided for 50 children. Additionally, 12 goats were acquired as a start-up herd toward self-support.

Livestock and Microgrants: A total of 30 goats were purchased for families and children's homes in four different locations. Three female pigs were purchased and bred for three families. Microgrants or start-up inventory started 13 small businesses in three different areas.

Humanitarian Aid/Food/Clothing/Shoes: The ministry provided food for 900+ families in four impoverished areas. Clothing and shoes were distributed to several hundred children.



Mission: Haiti Executive Director Helen Roenfeldt presents one of the 50 Haitian teacher who attended the 2017 Education Conference the canvas bag filled with supplies, hygiene basics and some fun things given to all participants. The bag, which was imprinted with the Mission: Haiti logo in English and in Creole, was from the Florida-Georgia District office.



At this year's February health clinic, patients waited under a huge mango tree while outside the church/school being used as the medical facility.

Schools, churches and homes:

Mission Haiti teams repaired three hurricane damaged schools, replaced one church roof and repaired/rebuilt two homes.

Education: Tuition was provided for four students in University as well as 16 children in primary or secondary school. An Adult Literacy program for 30 adults was sponsored in Colminy. School supplies were provided for dozens of children. Seminars for safe construction methods were sponsored in Les Cayes and in Port-au-Prince.

Partners: The Florida-Georgia outreach assisted the Haiti Lutheran Mission Society of Canada clear a 400-foot container of humanitarian supplies and facilitated the distribution of supplies to more than 20 church communities and three children's homes.

Mission:Haiti, which began as an outreach of the Florida-Georgia District, promotes self-sufficiency projects, medical care, nutritional and educational programs and health education for children and families. The organization has been working in Haiti since 1999. Roenfeldt, the former Discipleship Minister at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church/Davie, spends 40 percent of her time in the field in Haiti, coordinating teams and managing projects. ■



New women's clothes made in Peru were donated to help two women start a business.

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— Kent Hoyer

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Daniel J. Reichard

District Vice President

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Photos courtesy of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod/Erik M. Lunsford.

FLORIDA GEORGIA

REGIONAL NEWS

*Out and About in the
Florida-Georgia District*

Christ/East Point Celebrates Milestone

Christ Lutheran/East Point celebrated its 66th anniversary on March 18 with a special service and luncheon at the Double Tree Hotel in Atlanta. Leading the service was Christ Pastor Rev. Stephen Wiggins Sr.



Special guest preacher was Pastor Jeffrey P. Howell, who served the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod since 1988 as a classroom teacher and administrator in St. Louis and the greater Chicago area. He was ordained and called as pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church and School/Chicago in 2011. He now is also the Programs & Services

Director for Lutheran Special Education Ministries in Michigan where he provides leadership to Christian schools, administrators and churches in developing, coordinating and promoting effective inclusive education environments for students with various learning needs.

Christ Lutheran School serves students from the kindergarten through fifth-grade levels. Below — Rev. Stephen Wiggins led the anniversary service for Christ Lutheran's 66th anniversary ▲



St. Peter/Dahlonega Chartered as LCMS Congregation

March 18 was a day of celebration for members and special guests of St. Peter Lutheran Church / Dahlonega as the parish was chartered as a congregation of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod.

Pastor Gerhard Michael Jr. described the celebration as a “day of thanksgiving, to give credit to God for blessing the faithful work of so many over the past ten years to establish a Lutheran congregation here in Dahlonega. It’s time for us to rejoice!”



In March 2008, Wayne and Nancy Kuhlmann of Living Faith Lutheran/Cumming headed up the endeavor to start what is now St. Peter. When the Lord called Wayne home, others stepped up to lead the mission forward.

“There were ups and downs; the congregation moved from the Country Cafe on the Square to Alicia Lane and then to North Grove Street, until almost three years ago, we relocated to 109 Tipton Drive,” Michael remembered.

“The Lord sustained our efforts, so that today, although our numbers may not be large, we are a well-rounded congregation. Regular worship, faithful study of the Word, mutual support, and healthy involvement in the community through our service and witness suggest that we seek to be a congregation ‘growing in the Lord.’ As such, Charter Sunday becomes a day of recommitment to ongoing growth in the faith and Christian maturity.”

St. Peter members and guests filled the sanctuary for the special 4pm charter service. ▲

REGION 1



Vice President:

David Brighton

Mount Calvary/Warner Robbins

Liaison 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



Members and friends of Faith Lutheran/Marietta celebrated the Passing of the Vest ceremony officially dedicated the congregation's Comfort Dog Ministry on March 11. Hope Comfort Dog was introduced to the congregation at the 8 and 11 am worship services.

Comfort Dog Hope was supported by Comfort Dogs Luke of Christ the Shepherd/Alpharetta; Lizzie of Trinity/Savannah; Sasha of Island Lutheran/Hilton Head and Job of Christ the King/Memphis.

After the 8:00 service, Faith's Comfort Dog Ministry hosted a meet-and-greet with a "Doughnuts for Dogs" theme; after the 11:00 service it was: "Hot Dog, our dog is here!"

LCC in Chicago trained eight members of Faith to be Comfort Dog handlers: Charlotte Bode, Sherri Booker, Julie Buchtrup, Becca Ford, Deloris Poss, Judy Rutz, Pastor Carl Schneider and Peter Amelingmeier.

Faith's ministry, as with the 100+ other Comfort Dogs in 60+ Lutheran congregations in 22 states, is a human-care ministry: "to bring the mercy, compassion, presence and proclamation of



'Hope' Comfort Dog is Welcomed at Faith/Marietta

Jesus Christ to those who are suffering and in need. Faith's Comfort Dog ministry will reach out to the community with visits to shut-ins, nursing homes, hospices, hospitals, schools, special needs programs and military/veteran organizations where the touch of a highly trained Golden Retriever will bring comfort to people are hurting.

The human/animal bond is special in that a dog is always accepting, non-judgmental, safe, and always confidential. Below left — Hope Comfort Dog was supported by Comfort Dogs Luke, Lizzie, Sasha and Job at her dedication into the ministry at Faith.

Above — Faith Pastor Carl Schneider (far left) with Hope and members of her ministry team. ▲



Members of Good Shepherd/Gainesville on March 11 spent hours package Homeless Blessing Bags. These will be used as part of the church's outreach to the community. ▲



An illustrative children's message was part of Easter worship at Hope Lutheran/Jacksonville. Hope is led by Rev. Patrick McKenzie. ▲



Construction is nearing completion on the 6,000-square-foot Early Learning Center of Amazing Grace / Oxford. On March 11, Pastor James Rockey gave a tour (left) of the facility for the 15 new members received into fellowship that day. A month prior — on February 4 — Julie Bedard was installed as the first Director of the ELC. Her background



includes more than 30 years of experience including starting similar ministries in three congregations. Shown (above) after the installation service are Mark Brink, Florida-Georgia Executive Director for School Ministries & Youth Ministry; Amazing Grace Pastor James Rockey; Amazing Grace ELC Director Julie Bedard; and Florida-Georgia District President Greg Walton. The ELC is scheduled to open August 1, 2018. This ministry will serve children from the ages of six weeks through PreK. ▲

Concordia St. Paul Choir Visits Valdosta

The Christus Chorus of Concordia University St. Paul was part of the Good Friday worship experience at Messiah Lutheran/Valdosta.

The visit was part of the 28-voice choir's weeklong tour through South Georgia and North Florida. It was the first time that the choir had been hosted by Messiah.



"I'm very pleased with the opportunity," said Dr. David Mennicke, Director of Choral Studies at Concordia. "We've been doing our choir tours in Holy Week for many years, and we found these services that we've been doing on Good Friday are very powerful for us and the audience that comes."

Mennicke said the service consisted of not only music but scripture. "The service itself is structured around the last seven words of Christ on the cross, so it has the seven words with choral responses and the hymns," he said. ▲

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:

Frank Kinast | Messiah/Valdosta

First Coast Circuit Visitor:

Dana Brones | Bethlehem/Jacksonville

N Central Florida Circuit Visitor:

James Rockey | Amazing Grace/Oxford



Children and friends of St. John Lutheran Church & School/Ocala gathered the weekend before Easter for the annual Easter Egg Hunt, which included other activities as well. The planning team provided a beautiful way to prepare for Holy Week and Easter. ▲



St. Paul/Jacksonville celebrated Pastor Stephen Wiggins Jr.'s seventh anniversary with the congregation with a festive banquet on January 29. Shown here are (left to right) Rev. Stephen Wiggins Jr. with his wife Loretta; and his parents Annetta and Rev. Stephen Wiggins Sr. ▲

A March 21st groundbreaking ceremony marked the start of construction on the new preschool playground for

Epiphany Lutheran Preschool/Tallahassee. The new facility was made possible by a legacy provided by Epiphany member George

Gauger. Construction began the next day. Special guests at the groundbreaking members of Gauger's family: daughter Lisa Lulofs,

son-in-law Bruce Lulofs, granddaughter Kari Starling and great-granddaughter Makayla, and George's wife, Ruth Gauger. ▲





Christ Lutheran/Lakeland Rummage Sale: The Mary-Martha Guild of Christ Lutheran held a rummage sale on February 10th with the assistance of the Youth Group and the Outreach Committee. The majority of the money raised — \$900 — was sent to Veterans/Soldiers of the Cross. That organization helps widows, retired or active pastors who suddenly are faced with a crisis. Mary-Martha also hosted a pulled pork dinner on March 3rd. Some of that money will be sent to the “President’s Circle” — a ministry of the Florida-Georgia District that provides the resources the District President needs to respond to emergencies in the lives of District church workers and ministries. ▲



The 2018 Women’s Retreat for Faith Lutheran/ Merritt Island in mid-March focused on Wendy Sue Fluegge’s “Divine Destinations.” Participants were taken on a journey that helped them get to know the love of their Pilot. ▲

Students at Faith/Eustis enjoyed a change of pace with the recent Rodeo Day. Indoor and outdoor activities, western themed clothes and fun were all part of the day. ▲



REGION 3



Vice President:

Brian Kneser | Woodlands/Montverde

Board Treasurer:

Renee Varga | Woodlands/Montverde

Liaity 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



U.S. Olympic Hall of Fame member, three-time Olympic gold medalist and member of the International Swimming Hall of Fame Rowdy Gaines visited Grace

Lutheran School/Winter Haven in mid-March. A Winter Haven native and graduate of Grace Lutheran School, Gaines spent time visiting with students. ▲

Powerful Impact of VBS Reflected in New Program at Ascension

Here's a story that underscores the way Vacation Bible School impacts ministry even long after it is over.

It's been quite a while now that the former preschool rooms in the Seaman Center of Ascension Lutheran Church/Casselberry have been sitting empty throughout the course of most every week.

"Church leadership, pastors and members have been praying and bringing forth ideas as to ways in which that vital space might be used for ministry at Ascension and to our general community," said Ascension Pastor Tom Eggbrecht. "A number of things were attempted and several relationships were built, but nothing solid ever panned out. Still, we hoped and prayed knowing that it's not necessarily a good thing to leave valued ministry space unused."

Now those prayers have been answered in a significant way. In January the director of a local Christian Preschool, Melissa Williams, approached Ascension's leadership and asked if her preschool could be housed in the available space. Her lease was running out at the Winter Park church where the preschool was located, and she was less than happy with the conditions of



Standing in front of the facility named for him are Ascension Pastor Emeritus Gerald Seaman, his wife Marylyce and their visiting Indiana niece Jill Lepper and her family at Easter.

the buildings and the response of the staff and members of the church.

"This is where Vacation Bible School comes in," Eggbrecht said. "Over the past few summers Melissa had been involved with our Vacation Bible School when she worked for another preschool that brings their

children to our VBS. So she knew about our church and about our facility. She remembered how nice our place was and how we no longer had a preschool. So she contacted us.

"The ball was rolling. We went through proper vetting. We saw to it that Melissa carried her own liability insurance, that she was properly licensed, and that she appeared before the Casselberry Zoning Board for approval to move her preschool into our facilities. We discovered that her preschool has more than 20 students, with more on a waiting list."

All conditions were met — and Classical Christian Academy Preschool and Day Care began operations at Ascension on February 21st.

Ascension will see various benefits from the relationship beyond financial, Eggbrecht noted. "A fair number of families from the preschool are actively searching for a new church home. Young families will consistently

be on Ascension's grounds where we will be able to welcome and care for them.

"Additionally, CCA will provide many opportunities for Ascension members to help, serve, and support the school and welcome school families into worship." ▲

Trinity/Downtown Showcases Multi-Station "Walk With Jesus"

Members of Trinity/Downtown Orlando were able to get a better understanding of Jesus' last days on earth at the multi-station "Walk With Jesus" feature hosted on the Trinity campus March 24 and 25.

Planned and organized by the Outreach Ministry Team and staffed by volunteers at the various stations, "Walk With Jesus" was a multi-sensory journey through Jesus' last days on earth beginning with Palm Sunday in Jerusalem. Visitors sat down for the Last Supper, learned what happened in the Garden of Gethsemane, discovered the sacrifice of Good Friday and visited the empty tomb that first Easter morning.

The experience included tastings of food from Biblical times and the opportunity to take a selfie at a photo booth and post it on social media to invite others to worship during Holy Week. ▲



Special Sundays Highlight February at Hope/Plant City

On Sunday, February 11, the members of Hope/Plant City joined for the Celebration of Christian Marriage at their morning worship services.

Following a message on marriage from Senior Pastor Dean Pfeffer, based on Psalm 127:1 and Romans 15: 5-6, members were invited according to "years married" to come forward to the altar and renew their wedding vows. Members came forward celebrating from two to more than 60 years of marriage.

As a part of the celebration, a brunch hosted by Hope's Fellowship Ministry Team took place for all members of Hope. This celebration occurs at Hope every five years around Valentine's Day.

The next week — February 18 — Hope members hosted their annual Teddy Bear Sunday. The purpose of Teddy Bear Sunday is to share the warmth and love of God with children in the community and beyond. This year, more than 160 donated were given

to Eckard Connects, the largest child welfare agency in Hillsborough County, and then distributed to children in the foster care system.

"This annual event," according to 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."

Pictured at left are members participating in the renewal of vows service. ▲



Adding his bear to the "bear mountain" at Hope/Plant City is member Jackson Venrick.

Fundraisers Benefit Outreach Ministries at St. Paul/Lakeland

Two March event hosted by groups at St. Paul Lutheran Church & School/Lakeland generated funds for different outreach ministries.

A dedicated group of women and one enthusiastic man (below) held a very successful Rummage Sale in mid-March. The money raised will help fund a water project for a tiny village in a mountainous area in Guatemala and also supply some funds for the St. Paul food pantry. Thrivent Financial provided seed money to buy cookies,

coffee and apples for the guests and lunch for the workers.

St. Paul's 6th Annual Feed the Need event to help stock the shelves of local food pantries was another success. Worshippers at March 18 services at both St. Paul Lutheran and Christ Community Presbyterian were given the opportunity to be the hands and feet of Jesus by going to Lake Miriam Publix and buying for two local charities: kidsPACK and VISTE. Food sales exceeded \$25,000.

"Feed the Need helps us to feed more than the 1,700 children that we're feeding weekly because we have more than 3,900 registered homeless children in the Polk County school system," said Patty Strickland, kidsPACK executive director.

"It's incredible important," said Steve Bissonnette, president of Volunteers In Service To the Elderly (VISTE) of Feed the Need. "Obviously on a fixed

income at this point in their lives a lot of them need the extra groceries to get to the next social security check." ▲



An Easter egg hunt (right) was part of the weekend celebration at Beautiful Savior/Sarasota. Festive worship filled the schedule on Easter Sunday. ▲



Some of the Happy Sew 'N Sew's of Christ/Brookville and some of their handcrafted work.

Christ/Brookville Group Reaches Out With Handcrafted Care

The Happy Sew 'N Sew's, a group at Christ Lutheran/Brookville, is reaching out to Hernando County communities in a very special way.

The group meets twice a month to work on sewing projects that will make a difference to people in need, including adult cover-ups, walker bags, lap quilts, catheter bag cover-ups and crocheted cancer caps. As soon as enough items are completed, The Happy Sew 'N Sew's deliver them to assisted living facilities, nursing homes, private care group homes and hospice centers. The sewers have also made items for other individuals where a need was expressed to the group.

Members of the all-volunteers Sew 'N Sew's include members of Christ Lutheran as well as community residents. They range in age from the 60s into their 90s. They rely mostly on donated fabric, quilt batting, thread, yarn and other sewing essentials.

In December 2017, this group assisted the Hernando County Sheriff's department by providing dolls and stuffed animals that each had a little hand-made quilt with them. The Sheriff's office will use these in situations where there is a child or children who could benefit from a little handout of love. The Happy Sew 'N Sew's recently received a \$250 Action Team grant through Thrivent Financial to aid in the purchase of needed supplies and equipment for their ministry, and specifically that project.

Since this ministry started just over a year ago, the group has delivered 117 adult bibs, 41 walker bags, 57 lap quilts, 25 cancer caps and 30 catheter bag cover ups. They have recently reached out to the Hernando Homeless Coalition and will be assisting in that direction in the future as well. ▲

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:

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

Bethlehem/Fort Myers Celebrates Busy First Quarter of 2018

Bethlehem Lutheran Church/Fort Myers, has an ongoing relationship with four missions and ministries that are supported every month in addition to ongoing support to the Florida-Georgia District.

These ministries include: Mission: Haiti Amigos en Cristo, Thrive Church and the Fort Myers Rescue Mission. These ministries are occasionally supported with Bethlehem's monthly dinner profits, which in January netted \$1,638 with assistance from Thrivent Financial.

Those funds were directed to the Fort Myers Rescue Mission.

Bethlehem's Treasurer Tom Harder suggested that Bethlehem begin supporting the Rescue Mission some years ago. He had some contact with this ministry during the years that he delivered mail to that site as a letter carrier for the US Postal Service.

Bethlehem President Roger Lewandowski and Harder presented the check to Rev. Marjo Wooton of Fort Myers Rescue Mission on February 11.

A month later, on March 11, Bethlehem welcomed 10 new members — including four children. Six of the new members are year-around, full-time members, four are winter "associate" members. ▲



Above — New members welcomed at Bethlehem (front, l-r) Jase Albert and Malachi Sylver, (row two l-r) Caydence Albert, Jennifer Morosi, Terrance & Mykenah Sylver, Gwen & Carl Nicholson (back row) Pastor Darrell Stuehrenberg. Not pictured are Donald & Ruth Ann Thornton.

At left: The Bethlehem team with RFort Myers executive Rev. Marjo Wooton after the check presentation. ▲



March 19 was induction night for new National Junior Honor Society members at Saint Michael Lutheran School/Fort Myers. St. Michael serves students from the pre-school through eighth-grade levels. ▲



Rev. Thomas Boeck was installed as Associate Pastor of Marco Lutheran Church/Marco Island on February 18. Florida-Georgia District President Greg Walton presided over the installation.

Raised in Menomonee Falls, WI, Boeck attended Lutheran school as a child. He is a graduate of Concordia University Wisconsin and of Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, where he recently completed his coursework for a Master's in Theology and a minor in systematics.

Boeck served as the Associate Pastor at Faith Lutheran/Marietta from 2014 until accepting the call to Marco where he serves with Senior Pastor Kevin Koenig. Boeck and his wife, Sharon, have three grown children.

Pastors participating (right) in the installation service were (front, l-r) Karl Glander, Immokalee Lutheran/Immokalee; Kevin Koenig, Marco Lutheran/Marco Island; Thomas Boeck, Marco Lutheran/Marco Island; Greg Walton, Florida-Georgia District President; Jerry Lawson, Good Shepherd/North Fort Myers; Mark Eisold, Pelican Lutheran/Golden Gate; Seth DeBartelo, Amigos en Cristo/Immokalee. (back row, l-r) Larry Kudart, Winter Pastor, Marco Lutheran/Marco Island; Jon Zehnder, St. Michael Lutheran/Fort Myers; John Roth, Thrive/Estero; Keith Lingsch, Grace Lutheran/Naples; Darrell Stuehrenberg, Bethlehem Lutheran/Fort Myers; Richard Browning, Hope Lutheran/Bonita Springs. ▲

Marco Welcomes Associate Pastor Thomas Boeck



Future's So Bright They Had to Wear Shades

Children of Christ The King/Largo sing of the risen Christ during 9:30 am Easter Sunday worship. That service is Christ the King's contemporary worship; traditional worship services are held at 9 and 11 am. ▲



James Leggett Ordained, Installed as Our Saviour/Miami Pastor

Worshippers filled Our Saviour Lutheran/Miami the afternoon of February 17 for the ordination and installation service of Rev. James Leggett as Pastor.

Leggett has been serving the congregation as a Licensed Lay Deacon for many years.

Florida-Georgia District President Greg Walton presided over the ordination and installation. In attendance were many area pastors, including Rev. Herman Glinke whose ministry began in Cuba. After Fidel

Castro expelled all American pastors in the late 1950s Glinke relocated to Southeast Florida where he served until retirement.

Our Saviour has been serving the Miami area since 1950.

In attendance at the ordination/installation service (below) were pastors (in wheel chair) Herman Glinke, retired from Faith/Hialeah; (front, l-r) Greg Walton, Florida-Georgia District President; Tom Hackett, retired from Trinity/Fort Lauderdale; Wilfredo Rivero, Sr, Trinity/Cutler Bay; Anthony Mandile,

Martin Luther Chapel/Marathon; James Leggett, Our Saviour/Miami; Enrique Orozco, St. Andrews/Hialeah; Erwin Perez-Arche, Bayshore/Miami; Christopher Patterson, Concordia/Kendall; (back, l-r) Juan Gonzalez, Beautiful Savior/Lehigh Acres; Dennis Bartels, Holy Cross/North Miami; Luis Santana, St. Matthews/Miami; Jim Weist, Epiphany/Lake Worth; Estaban Mesa, Faith/Hialeah; Benito Perez-Lopez, Hospital de Alma/Leisure City; Darrell A. Stuehrenberg, Bethlehem/Fort Myers; Alan Sielk, St. Paul/Miami. ▲



Participants in the Easter Egg Hunt hosted by Our Savior/Plantation searched high and low for their prizes. Our Savior's ministry includes a Lutheran School that serves students through grade eight. ▲

REGION 5



Vice President:

Steve Wipperman | Our Savior/Lake Worth

Laity Board Members:

Karen Smith | Peace/Okeechobee

Samuel Ludington | Holy Cross/North Miami

Heartland Circuit Visitor:

Richard Norris | Trinity/Lake Placid

Treasure Coast Circuit Visitor:

Craig Bode | Trinity/Fort Pierce

S Palm Beach Circuit Visitor:

Dennis Glick | St. Paul/Boca Raton

Gold Coast Circuit Visitor:

Timothy Hartner | St. Paul/Weston

Monroe-Miami-Dade Circuit Visitor:

Alan Sielk | St. Paul/Miami

Ladies — and one gent — of Christ Lutheran/Avon Park showed off their Easter Bonnets on April 1 after Divine Worship. Christ Lutheran had a record turnout for worship on Easter with 57 in attendance. Year-round membership has nearly doubled in the last two years, with the winter attendance also increasing. ▲



Our Savior/Lake Worth Hosts Oceanfront Sunrise Service

Our Savior Lutheran/Lake Worth hosted an oceanfront Sunrise Worship on Easter Sunday at Kreusler Park at the Beach in Palm Beach. The rising sun was a colorful backdrop for the altar set up on the sand along the shoreline, with Pastor Steve Wipperman and musicians facing the congregation. "What a blessing to worship Christ with so many others at a breathtaking location," Wipperman said. ▲





St. Paul/Boca Raton Hosts Third Night to Shine Prom



For the third consecutive year, St. Paul Church & School/Boca Raton was one of the churches participating in the annual Night to Shine prom for people with special needs hosted by the Tim Tebow Foundation.

This year's event — Friday, February 9 — was simultaneously presented by 537 churches in all 50 states and 16 countries, with 33 religious denominations represented. Some 90,000 special guests were treated as Kings and Queens for the evening, as more than 175,000 volunteers worked to ensure it was a

Night to Shine.

At St. Paul, more than 300 volunteers under the overall supervision of event coordinators Susan Franskousky and Sue Merritt made February 9 a night to remember for 165 honored guests. Accompanied by their assigned buddies, these guests walked the red carpet, danced in the festively decorated Family Life Center, enjoyed a catered dinner, sang karaoke, took limousine rides and were crowned king and queen of the prom.

Caregivers and parents were also special guests as they were treated to

a separate dinner and relaxation in a Respite Room with a closed feed of the dance floor.

Night to Shine launched in 2015 with 44 host churches and 15,000 volunteers honoring more than 7,000 kings and queens of the prom. St. Paul has already committed to participating in the 2019 event.

St. Paul Senior Pastor Steve Carretto (center of large photo) celebrates with special guests after the crowning ceremony at the 2017 Night to Shine. ▲



Easter Sunrise Worship for Epiphany Lutheran/Lake Worth included the baptisms of two children. "This was not planned," said Pastor Jim Weist. "God put on my heart to bring out the baptismal font at 12:30am that morning. God told me to share the Gospel and bring His people to me! At the baptisms, God and the angels were rejoicing with His light! Truly amazing. First unplanned altar call I've had on Easter!" Epiphany celebrated three baptisms at its two Easter services. ▲

Dr. Dennis Glick Named Gold Coast Circuit Visitor

Rev. Dr. Dennis Glick, pastor emeritus of St. Paul Lutheran Church & School/Boca Raton, has been appointed South Palm Beach Circuit Visitor. He will complete the term of Rev. James Weist, who had been pastor of Epiphany Lutheran/Lake Worth until taking the call to serve as Mission Planter for the Port St. Lucie Area. Glick formerly served as First Vice President of the Florida-Georgia District. ▲



The 2017 Food for All drive undertaken by Redeemer Lutheran Church & School/Stuart generated support from within the Redeemer family and the community. His Servants' Place — Redeemer's soup kitchen — received \$15,000 from Publix Super Markets Miami Division, which will enable the provision of hot, healthy meals and weekly fellowship to those in need in the community. Redeemer serves a free community meal every Thursday from 5-6pm for those in need. ▲

St. Paul/Weston Youth Busy During Holy Week

Youth of St. Paul Lutheran Church/Weston reenacted the last days of Jesus at a special event open to the community on Good Friday, March 30. Dressed in period costumes, the youth traveled to different locations throughout Peace Mound Park to present Stations of the Cross. Two days later, bright and early on Sunday morning, congregation members joined St. Paul



Youth for the congregation's Resurrection Run. All funds generated support St. Paul Youth Servant Events. Jeremy Becker, DCE, coordinates youth ministries at St. Paul. ▲



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Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod
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The BACKPAGE

Redeeming Life/Sanford Expands Ministry

Redeeming Life Outreach Ministries, Inc., of Sanford, a facility that provides maternity housing and program services to women in crisis pregnancies, has launched the next phase of its ministry vision: transitional housing. The organization purchased a second location to offer transitional housing, expanding its capacity to minister to women who graduate from the maternity home program and still need ongoing support and services critical to their stability and ability to become independent.



The purchase of this first transitional home was completed on January 16. The 1,700-square-foot home is undergoing renovations necessary for it to function as a home for up to three women and their babies. Improvements include expanding restroom

facilities, kitchen renovations, flooring and paint, as well as exterior upgrades and fencing.

“Once complete, we will celebrate our grand opening and welcome of our first residents,” said Redeeming Life co-founder and Executive Director Cheryl DeWitt.

‘Funding for the project comes from the generosity

of our donors, contractors, and members of the community who are passionate about providing options for pregnant women in crisis,” she added.

The goal of Redeeming

Life is to help women overcome barriers and to live happy, independent lives for themselves and their children. Since opening in December 2013, Redeeming Life has served 37 women with maternity home residency and intensive supportive services. ■



Two Florida-Georgia congregations received their Shared Blessing Rebates checks earlier this year. At left, Lyle Mueller, LCEF representative to Amazing Grace/Oxford, presented the LCEF check to Jeff Robinson, President. LCEF was also able to provide Forest Oaks/Spring Hill FL with a Shared Blessing Rebate Check. Shown here at right is Treasurer Jess Ward giving the check to Pastor Glenn Fischer.

