

# LUTHERAN LIFE

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

2018 Volume 3  
September/October

*Celebrating*

70  
CHOSEN

*Abiding in His Presence  
Abiding in His Fruit  
Abiding in His Love*



CHOSEN WITH  
**PURPOSE**  
ABIDING IN  
**JESUS**

**floridageorgia**

District Convention • June 22-24, 2018

*33rd District Convention Report  
2018 District Annual Report*



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 e-mails. 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](mailto:LutheranLife@aol.com)

# LUTHERAN LIFE

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# floridageorgia DISTRICT CAPSULES



by Greg Walton District President

## Calling Congregations

Faith/Hialeah, FL ..... Senior Pastor  
Bethlehem/Jax Beach ..... Assoc. Pastor  
Epiphany/Lake Worth ..... Senior Pastor  
Oak Road/Lilburn, GA ..... Sole Pastor  
Our Redeemer/Ocala, FL ..... Sole Pastor  
Epiphany/Tallahassee, FL ..... Senior Pastor  
Lakeside/Venice, FL ..... Senior Pastor  
Mt Calvary/Warner Robins, GA ..... Assoc. Pastor

## Calls Issued

Lake Oconee/Eatonton, GA called  
Steven Hayden as Sole Pastor  
Trinity/Holly Hill, FL called  
Paul Sizemore as Sole Pastor  
Epiphany/Tallahassee, FL called  
Stephen Becker as Senior Pastor  
Oak Road/Lilburn, GA called  
Jason Taylor as Sole Pastor  
Live UCF/Orlando called  
Raleigh Sims as Campus Pastor  
Messiah Hispanic/Tampa, FL called  
Miguel Sanabria, Jr. as Associate Pastor

## Calls Accepted

Paul Sizemore as Sole Pastor  
at Trinity/Holly Hill, FL  
Steven Hayden as Sole Pastor  
at Lake Oconee/Lake Oconee, GA  
Raleigh Sims as Campus Pastor  
at Live UCF/Orlando, FL  
Miguel Sanabria, Jr. as Associate Pastor  
at Messiah/Tampa, FL

## Calls Declined

Miguel Sanabria, Jr. as Sole Pastor  
at Faith Hialeah, FL  
Jason Taylor as sole Pastor  
at Oak Road/Lilburn, GA

## Transferred Out to Other Districts

Anna Stapleton .....Indiana (C)  
Brittany Strohschein ..... Minnesota South (C)  
E Enwood Nevis ..... Michigan (O)  
Zachary Kollbaum ..... Nebraska (C)  
Justin Tayon ..... Nebraska (C)

## Transferred In from Other Districts

Stephanie Edgar ..... Montana (C)  
Gerald Renken ..... Central Illinois (O)  
Mary Dahn ..... Texas (C)

## Ordained/Commissioned Minister Initial Placements

Katherine Warnke as Deaconess to  
Christ Our Savior/Griffin, GA  
Allison Seeliger as Teacher to  
St Paul/Boca Raton, FL  
Andrew Kubowicz as Assoc Pastor to  
St Paul/Boca Raton, FL  
Laura Wiederrich as Teacher  
to St Paul/Peachtree City, GA  
Claire Fuhler as Teacher to  
Faith/Marietta, GA  
Austin Dukes as DCE to  
Faith/Marietta, GA  
Ericka Dukes as Teacher to  
Faith/Marietta, GA

## Ordained/Commissioned Minister Installations

Rev. David Kehret to  
Trinity/Fort Lauderdale, FL (O)  
James Richards to  
St Paul/Boca Raton, FL (C)  
Stephanie Edgar to  
Grace/Jacksonville, FL (C)

## Status Change within the District

Alyssa St Georges  
From Active to Candidate (C)  
Amanda Duseberg  
From Active to Candidate (C)  
Clarissa Kollbaum  
From Active to Candidate (C)

## Emeritus

Larry Ueltzen (C)  
Jeffrey Krempler (C)

## Called to Glory

Rev. Edwin Nicklas (O)

*Send Your Congregation and School News & Photos!*

# LUTHERAN LIFE

[LutheranLife@aol.com](mailto:LutheranLife@aol.com)

## Walton Elected to Fourth Term Florida-Georgia District President, Receives Honorary Doctorate from Concordia/New York

President Gregory Walton was elected to his fourth term at the district's 33rd convention, June 22–24 in Orlando. He was elected on the first ballot.



Pastor Walton was taken by surprise by his alma mater, Concordia/New York, when the Rev. Dr. John Nunes, president of Concordia/New York and representatives of the Board of Regents for Concordia NY, Rev. Christopher Esget, Mr. Rich Robertson, and Ms. Sherry Frasier, honored Rev. Walton with an honorary doctorate of humane letters.

Also elected were:

Rev. David C. Brighton, senior pastor of Mount Calvary Lutheran Church in Warner Robins, Ga., as first vice-president, Region 1;  
Rev. Jon Zehnder, senior pastor of St. Michael Lutheran Church, Fort Myers, Fla., second vice-president,

Region 4; Rev. James Rockey, pastor of Amazing Grace Lutheran Church, Oxford/The Villages, Fla., third vice-president, Region 2;  
Rev. Stephen Carretto, senior pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Boca Raton, Fla., fourth vice-president, Region 5; and Rev. Charles T. Reich, senior pastor of Grace Lutheran Church, Winter Haven, Fla., fifth vice-president, Region 3. ■



*Members of the Board of Directors and Circuit Visitors are installed by President Walton at the conclusion of the 33rd district convention.*



## DISTRICT CALENDAR

### 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

#### 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

#### 2018 Middle School Youth Gathering

November 2-4, 2018

Lake Yale Baptist Conference Center  
Leesburg, FL

#### 2019 New District Workers Retreat

District Office

Orlando, FL

March 1-2, 2019

#### 2019 Veterans of the Cross Retreat

Life Enrichment Retreat Center

Fruitland Park, FL

March 4-6, 2019

#### 2019 District School Music Festival

Friday, February 22, 2019

St. Paul Lutheran Church & School  
Lakeland, FL

#### 2019 National Lutheran Youth Gathering

July 11-15, 2019

Minneapolis Convention Center  
Minneapolis, MN

More than 70 years ago a handful of men had a vision to better serve the people living in Florida and Georgia by carving out a new district from the Southern District. Early on it included only Florida, but quickly became known as the Florida-Georgia District.

The 33rd Regular Convention of the Florida-Georgia District in June 2018 was an exciting opportunity to be together to kick off a celebration of the 70th Anniversary of the Florida-Georgia District. In February 1948, pastors and laymen representing 20 congregations gathered at Trinity Lutheran Church, Orlando, FL, to form the 34th district. The formulation of a new district was a display of an ever-growing Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and a recognition of the need to provide leadership on a smaller scale.

Southern District President Holls noted that four pastors had been providing leadership for Lutherans throughout the state of Florida, and commended their missionary efforts. Those four included Pastors H.W. Niewald, Conrad Kellerman, George Trapp, and P.G. Heckel. He also conceded that exploring mission efforts in Georgia was difficult due to distances, and that Grace/ Atlanta and Redeemer/ Columbus would serve as mission bases for future mission drives. Both of those congregations remain very active to this day!

What began on those historic steps at Trinity in Orlando has multiplied ten-fold in size and scope in the past 70 years.

This district really began with a very simple goal — to connect people to Jesus.

There were large numbers of Lutheran Christians relocating to the Southern climes of Florida, but there was also a deep and abiding missionary zeal that drove men and women to reach into their ever expanding communities to share the love of Jesus.

In fact, the first President of the District — Rev. Conrad Kellerman — who was then serving St. Matthew/Miami, not only talked about mission, but had been personally involved in mission stations which included Key West and Ft. Myers.

If you delve into the early history of the Florida-Georgia District, almost without fail, those who accepted a call to these states at that time saw themselves as missionaries entering the mission field. And it was a wide open mission field then, and with new challenges and opportunities, it remains a mission field for us today!

One might say that mission work was a “convention” of our forefathers in the District, meaning it was customary. It was the norm and passion to reach new people and serve them with the Gospel. At times it seems they were “unconventional” in organizing their work.

These pioneers often employed new, innovative and creative techniques to reach the lost. People would likely say today, “We never did it like that before...” What remained at the very heart of all they did was proclaiming Jesus and sharing His love.

As you see the early growth of the Gospel in the Florida-Georgia District, it almost appears as if they were catching

fish in a barrel. There was an eagerness to be part of what God was doing. Schools were planted, and families served. People who were touched by the Gospel shared their faith and many came to know Jesus. Still today I meet people who attended one of our Lutheran schools in Florida in the early 1950s, and they share the impact it had on them which continues to this day!

While circumstances, demographics and roadways have all changed dramatically, the mission spirit and opportunities for the Florida-Georgia District remain the same. Over the years it has been stated in a variety of ways, yet, it has always been about connecting people to Jesus. That focus continued during the recent convention of the Florida-Georgia District under the theme of “*Chosen with Purpose — Abiding in Jesus!*” There is no question that in His grace God chose us from before the foundations of the world to be His very own. In fact, Paul reminds us that it is our gracious God “who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Ti 2:4).

Jesus said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Mt 28:19–20).

This small word, *all*, seems to have been very clear to those in the early days of our district. They saw their goal as reaching *all people* by doing mission work in the Caribbean and

even in Cuba.

One of the first Bible verses that many of us learned is from John 3:16, “God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him would not perish but have eternal life.” Here Jesus made clear the desire of the Father to reach all people.

Faith should not be exclusive or exclusionary. God calls us to reach out to all people, regardless of economic status, regardless of nationality or race, regardless of how sinful, to share the good news of forgiveness and life that comes alone through faith in Jesus Christ by an act of God’s grace!

In April I had the privilege of celebrating the 50th Anniversary of Rivercliff Lutheran Church in Sandy Springs, GA. I have known each of the pastors who served there during the past 50 years, but I was shocked by information I learned as I prepared to be with them. This congregation began as a result of a pastor and educator conference on evangelism held in the Atlanta area in the early 1960’s where the workers actually went into that community, door to door, and canvased people to see if there was any interest in beginning a Lutheran Church. These missionary leaders did more than learn theory — they put it into practice, and as a result there have been numerous baptisms, confirmations, weddings, funerals and all kinds of worship opportunities.

As you look into our history, this is not an isolated incident. Many of our congregations began as a result of workers and laity

together reaching into a community to show the love of Jesus! They didn't just talk about it or encourage others, but they were actually there with boots on the ground, participating and leading the way. What an unconventional thought by today's standards!

Imagine what might be accomplished for the Gospel of Jesus if each believer in Jesus partnered to carry out the mission to connect people to Jesus. What might happen if instead of relying on others to do the work, we all stepped up and out to reach others with the love of Jesus.

The Apostle Peter wrote in 1 Peter 3:15, "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect..." (NIV).

Peter was specifically writing to encourage the Jewish Christians who had been dispersed, but he is also speaking to each of us! We have the privilege of sharing our personal testimony of the Risen Jesus with a world that is often wandering in hopelessness. We have been chosen with purpose! Part of that purpose is to abide in Jesus. This may give the impression that because we are chosen all we have to do is remain in Jesus. To abide means we remain steadfast and connected and we do it so we can be empowered by Jesus!

In John 15 Jesus gives us a picture of why this

is so important. When a branch is grafted into the vine, its purpose isn't simply to survive and feed off the vine. It is grafted in so it will have nutrients that will enable it to grow and bear fruit. So it is for each of us who have been chosen and grafted to the Vine, Jesus.



We are chosen to bear fruit. Jesus says to us, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last..." (John 15:16). We abide in Jesus because this is how we are empowered, through Word and Sacrament, to bear fruit for Him in the world. That fruit is simply to connect people to the Vine who is Jesus! This is our purpose in Him. It is the natural result of those who have been chosen. Fruitless branches, Jesus tells us, are worthless. Jesus says, "He cuts off every branch in Me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit He prunes so that it will be even more fruitful" (Jn 15:2).

We abide in Jesus in order that we may bear fruit for Him, doing the things that display His love, and connecting people to Jesus.

We saw it in action as we gathered in Convention. Each day we gathered around a different theme

to guide our work and celebration together. Friday the focus was on "Abiding in His Presence," as we gathered in the presence of Jesus to worship and celebrate our life together in Him. Jesus has guided our work, worship and celebration for the past 70

years, and we want Jesus to remain our focus into the future. It is all about Him! On Saturday we focused on "Abiding in His Fruit," as we did the work of a convention, dealing with most of the resolutions that are intended to result in fruit borne for His kingdom through each of us. He has

called each one of us to labor in His harvest field. Bearing this fruit for Jesus, especially in our day, means we think differently to reach a world that has gone through dramatic cultural shifts, and being prepared with servant hearts to work for His kingdom.

On Sunday we focused on "Abiding in His Love," as we prepared to go to the places where Jesus has called us to serve. Jesus said, "You are My friends if you do what I command." This is a call to live in His love. Twice in this section of John's Gospel Jesus gives us the command to love each other. This is the command He is calling us to fulfill. We encouraged delegates to go into the communities and the places where He has called us to serve in His love — love for a world that desperately seeks His love, often without even realizing it. We go into a world that can seem devoid of real love. We live in a world darkened

by sin and selfishness. Each one of us are chosen with purpose, abiding in Jesus, so that, empowered by His Word and Sacraments, steeped in His promises, we can shine the light of His love into those dark places as we seek to connect people to Jesus!

The convention is over, but the celebration is just beginning. It's time! It's time to exercise our faith in word and deed. Telling people what we believe is the conventional way for us to communicate our faith. Showing people what we believe, and having them see what our words mean is a bit more unconventional. God has used unconventional people for the past 70 years in the life of the Florida-Georgia District to announce the promise of forgiveness of sins and new life that alone comes from Jesus. May we, like our forefathers before us, rise up to the challenges of our day as we live as people chosen with purpose, to abide in Jesus! ■



In His Love, GREG

## Today We Must Start New in Order to Reach New

Is God calling you to start a new ministry? Many people want to but don't know how to do it or if they can find support for it. The Florida-Georgia District and the FiveTwo Network are here to help you start a new ministry.

My name is Oscar Benavides, I am the Vice-President of Strategic Initiatives for the FiveTwo Network. FiveTwo is partnering with the Florida-Georgia District to fulfill President Greg Walton's exciting vision: to start 10 new ministries *every year for the next five years*. The Florida Georgia District is offering scholarships to offset some of the cost of the incubator and training for those that want to start a new ministry.

Start new ministries — Why? We want to start new ministries because new ministries reach more people for Christ. They connect more people to Jesus! We want to start new ministries because we want to see more baptized followers of Jesus. Church attendance is at an all-time low and the trend will continue. Most communities see the church as irrelevant to their lives. The

church is now at a time where people will not visit on Sundays to hear the Gospel. As a result, the church must go to the people. We want to start new ministries that reach out to where people live and work to that they will experience the love of Christ and the message of Christ.

How can we accomplish this? We — the District, our congregations and the FiveTwo Network are actively seeking lay leaders and pastors that have a passion for the lost and have some experience starting new things. FiveTwo provides assessments of all leaders, two years of coaching through the process of launching and extensive training and guidance for two years.

In the last three years, FiveTwo has helped churches throughout the United States start 23 ministries that include coffee shop ministries, new church plants, homeless ministries, church replants, ministries for trafficked girls,

mobile clinics and many more.

In 2017, FiveTwo launched its training incubator in Orlando. In 2018,



### FiveTwo NETWORK

by Oscar Benavides  
Vice-President of Strategic Initiatives

FiveTwo has held regional interest events in Ft. Myers, Tampa, Boca Raton, North Central Florida and Jacksonville. More than 120 people have attended these events and have brainstormed hundreds of ideas for new ministries.

A regional event was held in early August at Grace/Atlanta.

If you have an idea or the passion to launch a new mission/ministry start, I invite your inquiry at [obenavides@fivetwo.com](mailto:obenavides@fivetwo.com) or (972) 754-2830. ■

## LWML Late September District Convention in Orlando

The LWML FL-GA District will hold its 36th Biennial convention in Orlando, FL September 28 – 30, 2018 at the Orlando Airport Marriott Lakeside. We have been there before and loved

the location. It is close to the airport, a convenient location and fantastic for an AFTER convention shopping trip!

Our theme this year is Strengthened!

Helped! Upheld! based on Isaiah 41:10. "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

Have you ever felt "Strengthened" by God? How about "Helped" by God? Or even "Upheld" by God? There are so many times in all of our lives that we feel this way. But God is always there for us. He is always holding us up and giving us strength. He is the one doing all the work, not us.

This year we will be voting on new officers; Vice President Communications, Vice President Mission Service, Recording Secretary, Treasurer and a Junior Pastoral Counselor. While the current officer terms are coming to a close, we look forward to a new Executive Committee who will help our district grow. We will be saying goodbye to wonderful ladies (and a wonderful pastor) who have worked so hard for the district. But we

are excited that a new group of ladies (and a new pastor) will be joining us.

So why not come to Orlando in September and join us at the convention. It is a great time to hear what is going on in our district and vote on new officers and new mission grants. Registration

### FUTURE & HOPE

by Joan Koch  
LWML District Vice President  
for Communications

begins shortly. Look for the latest *Evangel* to come out approximately May 20th which will have the registration form in it and much more information.

Can't wait to see you in Orlando. ■





## Florida-Georgia District Financial Highlights For the Year Ended January 31, 2018

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! As my time in the position of Business Manager for the Florida-Georgia District comes to a close, I'd like to take a moment to thank God for you, the Congregations of the Florida-Georgia District! During my tenure here, you demonstrated your support of the District with your time, talent, treasure, and prayers. Thanks be to God for your partnership in the Gospel! It is in this light that I offer up the following summary of The Florida-Georgia District Financials for FYE January 31, 2018.

### OVERVIEW:

Last year the District revenue did not quite meet projections. Yet, the District continues to operate with no real debt and all designated/restricted funds are fully funded. Expenses continue to be monitored closely, as the missions of the District are funded according to the budgeted plan.

### STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES:

Unrestricted support from congregations totaled \$2,074,614. While this is underneath the budgeted number of \$2.1 million, it is, by God's grace, an increase of \$107,696 over the prior year. Thank you!

Net assets released from restriction increased by \$189,463 year over year. This increase was largely due to missions and an increase in Disaster Response spending due to Hurricane Irma. Assets Released from Restriction are funds set aside by donors for a specific purpose. As such, these funds are not utilized to fund operating expenses. Accordingly, their usage can vary greatly from year to year.

Convention and Conference income decreased by \$91,058 over the previous year largely due to the consolidated nature of the President's Equip Conference. The majority of this conference was funded by Board Designated funds. Board Designated funds are not recorded as Net Assets Released from Restriction and thus are not part of the recorded income stream.

Total expenses for FYE 2018 were \$3,668,161 versus \$3,411,640 for FYE 2017, or an increase of \$256,521 year over year. This increase was mainly due to Disaster Response spending. The increase in the Congregation Services was attributed to the President Equip Conference and Disaster Response spending.

The change in Net Assets for the past fiscal year was \$906,345. This is solely due to an In-Kind property donation upon the closing of Hope of Life Lutheran Church in Naples, FL. A new mission, The Pelican Lutheran Church, is launching at this location. We are excited by their start and look to donate the property back into their hands as they get up and running.

### 2018 Work Program:

The highlights of the 2018 work program are as follows:

Congregation support continues to be budgeted at \$2,100,000. The District is also expecting a balloon loan payment totaling \$140K at the end of 2018. Net Assets Released from Restrictions is projected to be \$579K. Through unanimous support of the Board of Directors, the budgeted tithe on Congregational Support received at the District remains set at 20%. This is broken down into two components. Synod receives 17% of this support and the remaining 3% is budgeted to further fund District Revitalization efforts.

The Mission Grant budget remains at \$600,000 and supports twelve (12) approved missions throughout the District. As we move forward with the District's 70th Anniversary celebration plans, mission grants will become mission loans going forward. The Missions budget also includes support for seven (7) other Lutheran organizations (e.g., Lutheran Services Florida and Mission Haiti), as well as taking care of maintenance for our Campus Ministries and the Pelican Lutheran Mission.

We believe that this work program is fiscally responsible, within our current funding forecast and it continues to enable the District to continue its mission to serve, assist and encourage the congregations of the District in the ministry of Jesus Christ. The Board of Directors and District Staff continue to monitor expenses and will make necessary adjustments as required.

May God continue to bless our work together as we reach out to connect people to Jesus!



Respectfully Submitted,

*John Elliott*  
Business Manager

## Congregational Support Enables Mission & Ministry

The Annual Report of the District is often met by a variety of perceptions — positive and negative. Those who see it in a positive light understand that the District is simply trying to be transparent and report what has been received, from where, and the manner in which it has been used to serve the cause of Jesus' mission. There is no need to see it in a negative light. It simply is a reporting mechanism to assure the District is being the best steward possible of the funds it has received. That is our pledge to you, and our goal.

There is no greater desire among us than to use what God has provided to bless His ministry throughout the Florida-Georgia District. In the past year you may note that we invested many dollars into equipping ministries. We have commitment to raise up leaders to serve for the sake of the Gospel as we seek to connect people to Jesus. An example from this past year was the President's Equip Conference, where more than 700 people from across the Florida-Georgia District gathered to learn and grow together. Not only did this include Professional Church Workers (Pastors, Administrators, Teachers,

DCE's and others), but it also include more than 200 lay people — men and women with a passion and desire to learn how to grow as disciples to serve Jesus in their local parish.

The response prompted a resolution at the District Convention calling for ongoing training of our laity.

Part of the fulfillment of this desire will be realized this year with the Lay Leadership Summit which was just held a few weeks ago — where more 150 lay men and women participated to be coached and trained in specific areas of ministry related to serving in the parish.

Our ability to do some of these programs is directly related to our tithe. The Florida-Georgia District has faithfully tithed 20% of all income. The first 17% goes directly to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. The other 3% is used within the District for revitalization ministries, such as the Lay Leadership Summit. Our tithe serves our mission both “at home” and “abroad” in the Synod.

Throughout the last year, in spite of challenges, the Florida-Georgia District has maintained a debt-free position and our restricted accounts remain fully funded. This has allowed us to operate and continue to do some awesome ministry despite any declines we have experienced. We funded more than \$36,000 in scholarships for students at our colleges and seminaries in this school year.

We are continuing to move away from Mission Grants into Mission Loans and our work with FiveTwo Network is helping us to challenge and grow ministry opportunities across the Dis-

trict. We are closer to achieving the goal of planting two new ministries in each region each year for the next five years.

We have seen this in ministries like a new Early Learning Center in Oxford, Florida; a new mission start in the Port St. Lucie area; and a growing Comfort Dog ministry now at Trinity, Savannah, GA; Faith, Marietta, GA; and most recently Trinity/Orlando.

In addition we have created, implemented, and invested in programs that strengthen our workers. The Emergent Leader program continues to provide leadership training for pastors, other church workers and laity. The District is directly involved with the planning and execution of vibrant youth events for our middle and high school students, already planning for the National Youth Gathering in Minneapolis, MN next July. These are critical as we energize and connect with our church leaders of tomorrow. Through our work together we have forged relationships with ministries like Grace Place Wellness, DOXOLOGY, PLI, and Intentional Interim Ministry training making them more available to our District and, at times, providing scholarships to make it easier for our people to participate and grow. We work directly with congregations and schools in the call process and placing workers to serve, along with participating in ordinations, installations, and other ministry celebrations. God is at work among us in a variety of ways!

At a time when congregations struggle to survive, we have many congregations that are growing and reaching into their communities with the love of Jesus. So many are making a difference, providing a witness, and connecting people to Jesus. For that we are grateful and thank God.

We are grateful for your partnership and support as we work together for the sake of Jesus, who suffered, died and rose again to assure us of forgiveness and new life, and empowers us to share that good news with the world all around us. We have been chosen with purpose to abide in Jesus. May God continue to bless our endeavors as we work together to equip, empower and engage to connect people to Jesus!

*Greg Walton*  
President,

Florida-Georgia District, LCMS

<b>Florida-Georgia District</b>	
<b>The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod</b>	
<b>District Budget</b>	
<b>For the Year Ended January 31, 2019</b>	
<b>REVENUES</b>	
Congregation Support	\$ 2,100,000
LCEF Program Income	270,000
Installment Loan Repayments	124,500
Net Assets Released from Restriction	578,600
Other	85,900
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>3,159,000</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>	
Synodical Pledge	357,000
District Congregational Revitalization	63,000
World & National Missions	1,010,100
School Ministries	245,300
Congregational Services	274,000
Mission & Ministry Support, Net	889,600
Ecclesiastical Administration	320,000
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>3,159,000</b>
<b>Change in Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ - 0</b>

# 2018

## DISTRICT ANNUAL REPORT

Florida-Georgia District The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Statements of Financial Position Audited Results			
	January 31, 2018	January 31, 2017	
<b>Assets</b>			
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$ 2,426,299	\$ 2,712,314	
Accounts Receivable	53,561	71,548	
Prepaid Expense	79,827	59,872	
Contributions Receivable			
From Split-Interest Agreements	196,127	170,604	
Loans Receivable	200,000	220,000	
Installment Sale Notes Receivable, net	116,435	224,030	
Property and Equipment, net	462,930	576,277	
Advance Sites	1,708,927	492,969	
Long-Term Investments	1,836,080	1,845,387	
Other Assets	762,339	681,548	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 7,842,525</b>	<b>\$ 7,054,549</b>	
<b>Liabilities and Net Assets</b>			
Accounts Payable	\$ 125,402	\$ 220,372	
Notes Payable	200,000	230,442	
Other Liabilities	265,331	258,288	
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>590,733</b>	<b>709,102</b>	
Undesignated	2,454,910	1,369,737	
Net Investment in Land, Buildings and Equipment	462,930	576,277	
Board Designated	1,456,435	1,409,409	
Temporarily Restricted	1,053,746	1,249,316	
Permanently Restricted	1,823,771	1,740,708	
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 7,251,792</b>	<b>\$ 6,345,447</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 7,842,525</b>	<b>\$ 7,054,549</b>	

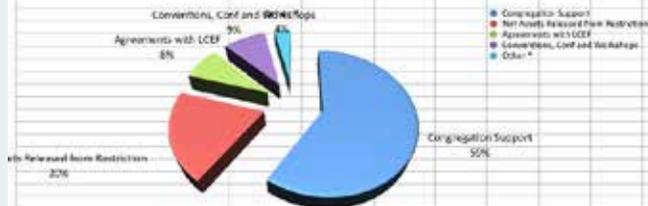
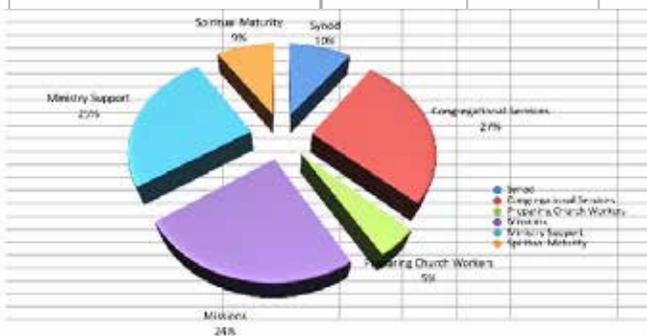
Florida-Georgia District The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Statements of Activities Audited Results			
	For The Years Ended January 31, 2018	2017	
<b>UNRESTRICTED REVENUES</b>			
Congregation Support *	\$ 2,074,614	\$ 1,966,918	
Net Assets Released from Restriction	695,780	506,317	
Agreements with LCEF	271,872	268,185	
Convention, Conferences and Workshops	319,622	410,680	
Gifts, Property	1,200,000	-	
Other	125,125	148,162	
<b>Total revenues</b>	<b>4,687,013</b>	<b>3,298,242</b>	
<b>EXPENSES</b>			
Synod	368,524	361,648	
Congregational Services **	983,559	746,353	
Preparing Church Workers	168,253	171,673	
Mission	884,654	880,152	
Ministry Support	919,437	847,793	
Ecclesiastical Administration	343,734	404,021	
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>3,668,161</b>	<b>3,411,640</b>	
<b>CHANGE IN NET ASSETS</b>			
Unrestricted	1,018,852	(113,398)	
Temporarily restricted	(105,570)	40,975	
Permanently restricted	83,063	107,279	
<b>Total change in net assets</b>	<b>906,345</b>	<b>34,856</b>	
<b>NET ASSETS - BEGINNING OF YEAR</b>	<b>6,345,447</b>	<b>6,310,591</b>	
<b>NET ASSETS - END OF YEAR</b>	<b>\$ 7,251,792</b>	<b>\$ 6,345,447</b>	

\* Includes Congregation Support Over and Above Pledge  
\*\* Includes School Ministries, Conferences, Convocation, Conventions, Human Care, Church Worker Family Care

Unrestricted Revenues for FYE January 31, 2018	
Congregation Support	\$ 2,074,614
Net Assets Released from Restriction	\$ 695,780
Agreements with LCEF	\$ 271,872
Conventions, Conf and Workshops	\$ 319,622
Other *	\$ 125,125
	<b>\$ 3,487,013</b>

\* Excludes \$1.2M In-Kind property donation

Expenses by Critical Target for FYE Jan 31, 2018		
Synod	\$ 368,524	10%
Congregational Services	983,559	27%
Preparing Church Workers	168,253	5%
Missions	884,654	24%
Ministry Support	919,437	25%
Spiritual Maturity	343,734	9%
	<b>\$ 3,668,161</b>	



## DISTRICT SUPPORT BY CONGREGATION FOR FYE JANUARY 31, 2018

City/State	Congregation	Financial Support	Confirmed Members	Support/Member	City/State	Congregation	Financial Support	Confirmed Members	Support/Member
<b>01 - Northeast Georgia</b>					<b>07 - North Central Florida</b>				
Athens, GA.....	Christus Victor	8,150	75	108.67	Jacksonville, FL.....	St. Paul	6,417	204	31.46
Athens, GA.....	Trinity	12,000	160	75.00	Jax'ville Beach, FL.....	Bethlehem	20,000	515	38.83
Blairsville, GA.....	All Saints	20,781	156	133.21	Kingsland, FL.....	Messiah Mission	0	0	-
Clarksville, GA.....	Grace Mission	600	1	-	Kingsland, GA.....	Holy Trinity	4,803	137	35.06
Gainesville, GA.....	Good Shepherd	14,538	252	57.69	Middleburg, FL.....	St. Peter's	13,058	221	59.09
Lilburn, GA.....	Oak Road	31,343	332	94.41	St. Augustine, FL.....	Christ Our Savior	0	59	19.35
Toccoa, GA.....	Trinity	1,20	97	12.37	Starke, FL.....	Good Shepherd	0	65	-
<b>Circuit Totals/Average</b>		<b>90,473</b>	<b>1,045</b>	<b>80.58</b>	<b>Circuit Totals/Average</b>		<b>47,278</b>	<b>2,011</b>	<b>23.51</b>
<b>02 - Atlanta North</b>					<b>08 - Space Coast</b>				
Atlanta, GA.....	Grace	6,000	81	74.07	ChiefLand, FL.....	Good Shepherd	500	68	7.35
Atlanta, GA.....	Rivercliff	39,461	359	109.92	Dunnellon, FL.....	Peace	2,400	57	42.11
Atlanta, GA.....	Living Faith Korean	2,000	32	62.50	Gainesville, FL.....	Abiding Savior	24,084	203	118.64
Atlanta, GA.....	St. Mark Eritrean	0	0	-	Gainesville, FL.....	First	36,600	428	85.51
Atlanta, GA.....	Stepping Stone	750	0	-	Inverness, FL.....	First	5,004	311	16.09
Cartersville, GA.....	Savior of All	12,000	205	58.54	Ocala, FL.....	Faith	11,162	195	57.24
Cumming, GA.....	Living Faith	29,730	199	149.40	Ocala, FL.....	Our Redeemer	7,498	416	18.02
Dahlonega, GA.....	St. Peter	7,337	24	-	Ocala, FL.....	St. John	13,142	404	32.53
Jasper, GA.....	King of Kings	7,275	58	32	Oxford, FL.....	Amazing Grace	35,866	168	213.49
Kennesaw, GA.....	Living Hope	100	308	12.64	Silver Springs, FL.....	Forest Ev. LC	3,451	37	93.27
Marietta, GA.....	Faith	13,200	268	49.25	Summerfield, FL.....	Trinity	39,150	870	45.00
Rome, GA.....	Holy Trinity	2,700	130	20.77	<b>Circuit Totals/Average</b>		<b>178,859</b>	<b>3,170</b>	<b>56.42</b>
Tucker, GA.....	St. Mark	7,477	113	66.17	<b>09 - Orlando East</b>				
Woodstock, GA.....	Timothy	15,000	425	35.29	Cape Canaveral, FL.....	Christ	7,000	80	87.50
<b>Circuit Totals/Average</b>		<b>141,630</b>	<b>2,195</b>	<b>64.52</b>	Holly Hill, FL.....	Trinity	3,000	197	15.23
<b>03 - Atlanta South</b>					Melbourne, FL.....	LC of the Redeemer	16,597	100	165.97
Columbus, GA.....	Bethlehem	6,000	69	86.96	Merritt Island, FL.....	Faith	12,000	579	20.73
Columbus, GA.....	LC of the Redeemer	4,536	199	22.79	Merritt Island, FL.....	Grace	0	60	-
Decatur, GA.....	Peace	1,503	87	17.28	Palm Bay, FL.....	Risen Savior	1,000	66	15.15
Douglasville, GA.....	Prince of Peace	0	74	-	Rockledge, FL.....	Trinity	0	125	-
East Point, GA.....	Christ	0	64	-	South Daytona, FL.....	Holy Cross	0	236	-
Hampton, GA.....	Christ Our Savior	9,086	62	146.55	Titusville, FL.....	Good Shepherd	0	266	21.12
Peachtree City, GA.....	St. Paul	14,817	330	44.90	<b>Circuit Totals/Average</b>		<b>35,597</b>	<b>1,709</b>	<b>23.17</b>
Stockbridge, GA.....	Holy Cross	0	77	-	<b>10 - Orlando West</b>				
Stockbridge, GA.....	Lord of Life	4,839	67	72.22	Casselberry, FL.....	Ascension	25,633	455	56.34
Tucker, GA.....	Incarnate Word	0	32	-	Deltona, FL.....	LC of Providence	0	91	-
<b>Circuit Totals/Average</b>		<b>40,781</b>	<b>1,061</b>	<b>38.44</b>	Orlando, FL.....	Esperanza Viva	120	12	10.00
<b>04 - East Central Georgia</b>					Orlando, FL.....	Hope	7,919	204	38.82
Augusta, GA.....	Our Redeemer	49,225	439	112.13	Orlando, FL.....	Journey of Life	3,443	53	64.96
Eatonton, GA.....	Lake Oconee	23,299	156	149.35	Orlando, FL.....	LiveUCF	50	1	50.00
Macon, GA.....	LC of the Holy Trinity	600	23	26.09	Orlando, FL.....	Prince of Peace	3,600	737	4.88
Milledgeville, GA.....	Hope	825	22	37.50	Orlando, FL.....	Trinity	36,760	1,075	34.20
Perry, GA.....	Christ	3,300	154	21.43	Sanford, FL.....	LC of the Redeemer	5,000	90	55.56
Savannah, GA.....	Trinity	38,250	360	106.25	St. Cloud, FL.....	Grace	300	141	2.13
Statesboro, GA.....	St. Paul's	169	50	3.38	<b>Circuit Totals/Average</b>		<b>82,825</b>	<b>2,859</b>	<b>28.97</b>
Warner Robins, GA.....	Mount Calvary	70,000	614	114.01	<b>11 - Winter Haven</b>				
<b>Circuit Totals/Average</b>		<b>185,688</b>	<b>1,818</b>	<b>102.13</b>	Bartow, FL.....	Redeemer	300	60	5.00
<b>05 - Tallahassee</b>					Lake Wales, FL.....	Lake Wales	3,022	91	33.21
Albany, GA.....	Trinity	2,305	72	32.01	Lakeland, FL.....	Christ	24,100	285	84.56
Crawfordville, FL.....	Trinity	1,100	58	18.97	Lakeland, FL.....	St. Paul	0	1137	-
Lake City, FL.....	Our Redeemer	1,200	120	10.00	Plant City, FL.....	Hope	36,238	341	106.53
Tallahassee, FL.....	Epiphany	24,156	358	67.47	Winter Haven, FL.....	Grace	45,470	1,059	42.94
Tallahassee, FL.....	University	7,500	67	111.94	Zephyrhills, FL.....	Our Savior	8,179	142	57.60
Tifton, GA.....	Peace	3,769	17	221.71	<b>Circuit Totals/Average</b>		<b>117,399</b>	<b>3,115</b>	<b>37.69</b>
Valdosta, GA.....	Messiah	6,500	133	48.87	<b>06 - First Coast</b>				
<b>Circuit Totals/Average</b>		<b>46,530</b>	<b>825</b>	<b>56.40</b>	Jacksonville, FL.....	Grace	0	514	-
<b>06 - First Coast</b>					Jacksonville, FL.....	Holy Cross	0	80	-
Jacksonville, FL.....	Grace	0	514	-	Jacksonville, FL.....	Hope Mission	3,000	52	57.69
Jacksonville, FL.....	Holy Cross	0	80	-	Jacksonville, FL.....	Our Redeemer	0	164	-
Jacksonville, FL.....	Hope Mission	3,000	52	57.69					
Jacksonville, FL.....	Our Redeemer	0	164	-					

## DISTRICT SUPPORT BY CONGREGATION FOR FYE JANUARY 31, 2018

City/State	Congregation	Financial Support	Confirmed Members	Support/Member
<b>12 - Heartland</b>				
Arcadia, FL	Grace	0	25	-
Avon Park, FL	Christ	6,590	36	183.06
Belle Glade, FL	St. Peter's	550	25	22.00
Clewiston, FL	Faith	4,105	30	136.83
Lake Placid, FL	Trinity	2,500	157	15.92
Okeechobee, FL	Peace	1,200	260	4.62
Sebring, FL	Faith	17,417	95	183.34
Wauchula, FL	Peace Valley	4,000	29	137.93
<b>Circuit Totals/Average</b>		<b>53,016</b>	<b>675</b>	<b>78.92</b>

<b>13 - Suncoast</b>				
Brooksville, FL	Christ	2,500	308	8.12
Hudson, FL	Hope	2,312	178	12.99
Lutz, FL	Holy Trinity	10,584	179	59.13
Masaryktown, FL	Holy Trinity	19,377	181	107.06
New Port Richey, FL	Faith	7,500	218	34.40
Spring Hill, FL	Forest Oaks	5,000	218	22.94
Trinity, FL	Trinity	5,743	158	36.35
<b>Circuit Totals/Average</b>		<b>53,016</b>	<b>1,440</b>	<b>36.82</b>

<b>14 - St. Petersburg</b>				
Clearwater, FL	Bethel	1,300	807	1.61
Clearwater, FL	First Ev.	7,600	262	29.01
Dunedin, FL	Faith	8,083	129	62.66
Largo, FL	Christ the King	29,782	436	68.31
St. Petersburg, FL	Grace	27,378	340	80.52
St. Petersburg, FL	Our Savior	60,497	841	71.93
<b>Circuit Totals/Average</b>		<b>134,640</b>	<b>2,815</b>	<b>47.83</b>

<b>15 - Tampa</b>				
Brandon, FL	Immanuel	0	449	-
Lithia, FL	Lamb of God	0	65	-
Riverview, FL	Christ the King	5,326	79	67.42
Tampa, FL	Holy Trinity	6,000	166	36.14
Tampa, FL	Messiah	71,378	662	114.76
Tampa, FL	Messiah Hispanic	2,342	109	21.49
Tampa, FL	Zion	1,600	26	61.54
<b>Circuit Totals/Average</b>		<b>86,646</b>	<b>1,516</b>	<b>57.15</b>

<b>16 - Sarasota</b>				
Bradenton, FL	Hope	17,474	273	64.01
Englewood, FL	Redeemer	0	144	-
Parrish, FL	Faith	17,174	252	68.15
Port Charlotte, FL	LC of the Cross	11,000	252	43.65
Port Charlotte, FL	Trinity	2,500	91	27.47
Punta Gorda, FL	Faith	1,000	219	4.57
Sarasota, FL	Beautiful Savior	53,957	394	136.95
Sarasota, FL	Concordia	25,000	204	122.55
Sarasota, FL	Good Shepherd	2,200	177	12.43
Venice, FL	Lakeside	28,504	711	40.09
<b>Circuit Totals/Average</b>		<b>158,808</b>	<b>2,717</b>	<b>58.45</b>

<b>17 - Southwest</b>				
Bonita Springs, FL	Amigos en Cristo	610	9	67.78
Bonita Springs, FL	Hope	8,000	400	20.00
Cape Coral, FL	Trinity	11,275	211	53.44
Estero, FL	Thrive	5,000	53	94.33
Fort Myers, FL	Bethlehem	900	163	5.52
Fort Myers, FL	St. Michael	43,000	728	58.27
Fort Myers, FL	Zion	33,000	725	45.52
Immokalee, FL	Immokalee	960	7	137.14
LaBelle, FL	Christ the King	0	74	-
Lehigh Acres, FL	Beautiful Savior	250	61	4.10
Marco Island, FL	Marco	59,969	450	133.26
Naples, FL	Grace	42,000	314	133.76
Naples, FL	Peace	0	134	-
North Fort Myers, FL	Good Shepherd	3,563	120	29.69
<b>Circuit Totals/Average</b>		<b>208,527</b>	<b>3,459</b>	<b>60.29</b>

City/State	Congregation	Financial Support	Confirmed Members	Support/Member
<b>18 - Treasure Coast</b>				
Fort Pierce, FL	Trinity	2,400	176	13.64
Hobe Sound, FL	Bethel	0	46	-
Lake Worth, FL	New Alliance	0	10	-
N Palm Beach, FL	Faith	18,278	175	107.02
Port St. Lucie, FL	Grace	12,000	177	67.80
Stuart, FL	Redeemer	78,919	475	166.15
Vero Beach, FL	LC of Redeemer	2,750	111	24.77
W Palm Beach, FL	Redeemer	0	44	-
<b>Circuit Totals/Average</b>		<b>114,797</b>	<b>1,214</b>	<b>94.56</b>

<b>19 - South Palm Beach</b>				
Boca Raton, FL	St. Paul	28,333	1,581	17.92
Boynton Beach, FL	Son Life	14,817	370	40.05
Delray Beach, FL	Emmanuel Haitian	600	40	15.00
Delray Beach, FL	Trinity	26,989	450	59.98
Lake Worth, FL	Epiphany	3,400	126	26.98
Lake Worth, FL	Our Savior	15,089	288	52.39
Lake Worth, FL	Salem Haitian	0	125	-
<b>Circuit Totals/Average</b>		<b>89,228</b>	<b>2,980</b>	<b>29.94</b>

<b>20 - Gold Coast</b>				
Davie, FL	Gloria Dei	912	335	2.72
Fort Lauderdale, FL	Faith	800	40	20.00
Fort Lauderdale, FL	Shepherd of the Coast	8,754	247	35.44
Fort Lauderdale, FL	Trinity Haitian	600	1	600.00
Fort Lauderdale, FL	Trinity	2,100	201	10.45
Hollywood, FL	Prince of Peace	3,200	46	69.57
Lauderdale Lakes, FL	Tabernacle	400	265	1.50
Miramar, FL	Miramar	0	33	-
Fort Lauderdale, FL	Tabernacle De Grace	0	205	-
Plantation, FL	Our Savior	5,500	385	14.29
Weston, FL	St. Paul	52,840	922	57.31
<b>Circuit Totals/Average</b>		<b>75,105</b>	<b>2,515</b>	<b>29.86</b>

<b>21 - Monroe-Miami-Dade</b>				
Hialeah, FL	Faith	4,620	159	29.06
Hialeah, FL	St. Andrews	1,800	34	52.94
Kendall, FL	Concordia	5,400	135	40.00
Key West, FL	Grace	2,500	159	15.72
Leisure City, FL	Hospital del Alma	0	256	-
Marathon, FL	Martin Luther	2,400	84	28.57
Miami, FL	Bay Shore	2,500	75	33.33
Miami, FL	Our Saviour	0	54	-
Miami, FL	San Pablo	500	27	18.52
Miami, FL	St. Matthews	4,277	75	57.03
Miami, FL	St. Paul	2,526	75	33.68
Culter Bay, FL	Trinity	0	16	-
Nassau, Bahamas	LC of Nassau	0	124	-
North Miami, FL	Holy Cross	16,387	233	70.33
Tavernier, FL	Immanuel	0	45	0
<b>Circuit Totals/Average</b>		<b>42,910</b>	<b>1,541</b>	<b>27.85</b>

<b>Grand Totals/Average in 2018</b>		<b>2,074,614</b>	<b>46,545</b>	<b>44.57W</b>
<b>Grand Totals/Average in 2017</b>		<b>1,966,918</b>	<b>44,801</b>	<b>43.90</b>

\* Congregation Support included certain Unrestricted Gifts and gifts for missions

\*\* Confirmed Members numbers have been obtained from LCMS Rosters and Statistics, which are the latest numbers available.

# Registration Open for Middle School Youth Gathering

The District's Middle School youth will gather November 2-4 this fall at the Lake Yale Baptist Conference Center in Leesburg, Florida — the facility that has served so well in the past. Registration is open and can be completed at the District website: [flgadistrict.org/msyg/](http://flgadistrict.org/msyg/)

The Rev. Matt Popovits, an LCMS pastor from Our Savior in New York, will speak to the participants about what it means to REALLY follow Jesus in this world. He will talk about the very REAL life we are living and that Jesus is REALLY present with us.

Bread of Stone, an American contemporary Christian music and pop rock band formed in 2004 in Sioux City, Iowa, returns as the gathering's music leadership — with a history of enormous energy and love for the youth.

"All registration information, forms and details can be found on the District's website," offers Cindy Hammerstrom, administrative assistant in youth ministry for the Florida-Georgia District. "Breakout and servant event information, along with a pre-gathering Bible Study will be coming soon."

Registration cost is \$165 per-person for early registration which end October 4th. An additional \$10 per-person (\$175) will be the cost for registrants after 10/4 and the final date to register is October 11th. There are some scholarship dollars available — up to \$50 per student — available through the Sally Sirrine Youth Scholarship Fund. Details are on the District's website.

According to Hammerstrom the Lake Yale Baptist Conference Center has implemented two policy changes — an additional \$25 per-person, per-day for registrations received after October 28. So please plan ahead to save that extra \$75. Make sure to have any late registrants in to the District Office by October 28th. Additionally any groups that are 25 or larger will automatically be assigned to campground rooms.

"We appreciate the larger groups cooperating with this as the hotel rooms were filled to almost capacity last year!" Hammerstrom concludes.

Middle school youth groups should register as soon as possible to ensure participation. Cindy Hammerstrom can be reached via email at [chammerstrom@flgadistrict.org](mailto:chammerstrom@flgadistrict.org) or at the District Office: 407-857-5556.

by John List, Editor ■



**Matt Popovits**



**Bread of Stone**



# National Youth Gathering Slated for July 11-15, 2019 in Minneapolis Convention Center, US Bank Stadium

The LCMS National Youth Gathering is scheduled for July 11-15, 2019, in Minneapolis, MN and events will be held at the Minneapolis Convention Center and U.S. Bank Stadium.

Held every three years since 1980, the LCMS Youth Gathering provides thousands of youth and adults the opportunity to come together as a community of God's people to learn more about Jesus Christ, the Christian faith and their Lutheran identity. During the five days of the Gathering, youth will spend time together in God's word, worship, service, and fellowship with others from across the Synod.

Registration mailers have been sent to all congregations and September 5th marks the day that congregations can start entering online data entry for registration. Actual registration begins online on October 17, 2018 on a first-come, first-served basis. Congregation youth group leaders will want to mark those dates on their calendars so they don't miss them.

Gathering planners continue to provide resources in preparation for the event that is now less than a year away. Visit [lmsgathering.com](http://lmsgathering.com) for the latest information.

Questions about the registration process or any portions of the gathering can be directed to [nygregistration@lcms.org](mailto:nygregistration@lcms.org).

Here are some of the resources that can be downloaded at the website:

- 2019 Gathering Registration Book
- Gathering Registration 101 Video
- Congregational Worksheet
- Primary Adult Leader Worksheet
- Youth Participant Worksheet
- Special Needs Form
- LCEF Authorization Form
- Young Adult Volunteers

Nearly 300 young adults have already applied to serve as Young Adult Volunteers (YAVs) at the Gathering. As college students prepare to return to campuses across the country keep them connected to the Young Adult Volunteer application process here: [www.lmsgathering.com/yav](http://www.lmsgathering.com/yav). The application is open until December 31, 2018.

by John List, Editor ■



## Zirbel Named District Executive Director for Finance & Administration



Laura Zirbel has been promoted to the position of Florida-Georgia District Executive Director, Finance and Administration.

Ms. Zirbel joined the Florida-Georgia District staff in 2013 and worked as the bookkeeper in the accounting department before assuming the added responsibility as a lloan consultant for the Florida-Georgia District Lutheran Church Extension Fund in 2015.

She brings more than 15 years experience in the accounting profession and previously worked with Faison/Trammel Crow as a staff accountant and financial analyst. She also worked with Software

Techniques, Inc. in Winter Park as accounting manager as well as at Minnesota Properties LLC as a property manager.

Ms. Zirbel graduated from Bethel College in St. Paul, MN with a Bachelor of Arts in Mathematics. She has been married to Lawrence Zirbel for 22 years and they have three children. They live in Winter Park, FL. ■

## Three-Year Mentoring and Sponsorship Opportunities

# Mission: Haiti Launches GROWW Program,

by John List, Editor ■

Last month I had the privilege of having lunch with Mission: Haiti's executive mission director, Helen Roenfeldt. During the lunch interview she shared a mid-year update with Lutheran Life.

During the past year the plight of Haiti's families and children have become even more of a burden for the District's partnership.

"About 75 to 80 percent of the children in orphanages actually have a parent or relative," Roenfeldt explained. "The children are either given up or at times even sold for a small amount of money with the promise that the child will be fed and sent to school in exchange for performing some household chores. They're given away because the parents or relatives have no means to feed, clothe or educate their children."

According to Roenfeldt this frequently leads to the child becoming a slave — what Haitians call a "restavik" and they are abused, trafficked and can even be abandoned should the child fall into poor health. By Haitian law, children in orphanages are to receive three hot meals per day and sent to school but it doesn't always happen when the orphanages become overcrowded, underfunded or poorly supervised. "Even in the best orphanages, many of the children lose a healthy connection with their parents or families and they don't learn healthy family dynamics which leads to the cycle being repeated over and over again — tearing at the

very fabric of Haitian society."

As a result of this course of action, Mission:Haiti has launched a ministry called **GROWW: Grace Regional Orphanage Without Walls**. **Grace** because everything done is by God's grace. **Regional** because the work with with the local churches in the different regions of Haiti. **Orphanage Without**



*Dieudonne Pierre lives with four of her six children in the village of Colminy. Two years ago she gave her two oldest children away to a wealthy family in St. Marc to work as household help in exchange for a small amount of money, in hopes that the St. Marc family will feed and educate them. Her husband was killed four years ago while he was working as a security guard at a friend's garden. The remaining 4 children, Remise, age 12, Jacqueson, age 10, Merline, age 8, and Dieulande, age 6, all have a sponsor for school but a sponsor for a family business and supplemental food is needed. The gentleman in the picture is Presendieu Orelus, the Principal of the Colminy Lutheran school who is the mentor for the family.*

**Walls** because it will be a virtual orphanage — monitoring the children's health, supplementing the family food and sending them to school just as what would happen within an orphanage situation.

Roenfeldt explains that this works better than the traditional orphanage model.

"We identify at-risk children and families through our community health outreach and we qualify families with the participation of our local supervisors — usually a pastor or school principal," she continued. "A three-year program of mentoring and sponsorship is designed to provide funding for a small family business or livestock which helps a family move toward self-support.

"Tuition, books, uniforms — all this is supplied for each child of school age. The supplemental food for the family is slowly decreased as they are able to become more self-sufficient."

Mentoring is providing on a regular basis with local supervisors. The program often includes adult literacy or skill training.

How can you be part of this new ministry?

"Pray for this new ministry to the families of Haiti," Roenfeldt concluded.

"Fund a family business or support GROWW with a financial gift. A small business grant or a livestock grant is \$200 and to sponsor tuition, schools supplies and uniform for one child is \$25 per month."

Roenfeldt stated that Mission:Haiti is starting with ten families and will had as few as three to five families each quarter of the year. There will be quarterly updates to see how the families are doing.

The goal is to have families remain in the program for only three years but the children may remain in school sponsorship for as long as possible.

Additional information — or to participate in the GROWW program — can be obtained from Helen Roenfeldt at [missionhaiti99@aol.com](mailto:missionhaiti99@aol.com) ■

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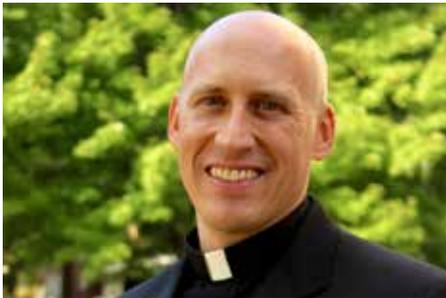


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# Michael Zeigler Named Lutheran Hour Speaker

Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM) has announced that the Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler of St. Louis will begin serving as speaker of "The Lutheran Hour" radio program on Oct.1. Zeigler succeeds the Rev. Dr. Gregory Seltz, who left the position in 2017 to become executive director of the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty.



The Rev. Zeigler has served as pastor of Epiphany Lutheran Church, St. Louis, since August 2014. Previously, he was assistant pastor at Timothy Lutheran Church, St. Louis.

Pastor Zeigler's first sermon will be broadcast on Reformation Sunday, October 28th. ■



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**Lutheran Church Extension Fund**  
> florida-georgia district

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877-457-5556 ext. 4

# Chosen With Purpose, District Meets in

The 33rd Convention of the Florida-Georgia District was held June 22–24 in Orlando under the theme “Chosen with Purpose — Abiding in Jesus,” from John 15:12–17. District delegates continued their model of what can happen when District leadership, pastors, and congregations unite work toward a common goal of



Rev. James Guelzow and Lynn Doulos tou Christou award

healthy, vibrant, missional work. The votes by delegates were harmonious and virtually unanimous in all categories.

Chaired by President Gregory S. Walton, the upbeat gathering of pastors, commissioned ministers and laity tackled a range of business including resolutions designed to expand the district’s campus ministry efforts.

Working with the newly contracted FiveTwo Network, an organization designed to equip Christian entrepreneurs to launch a variety of sustainable start-ups that reach people for Jesus, and Rev. Bill Woolsey, President and Executive Director and Rev. Oscar Benavides, Vice-President of Strategic Initiatives, the District has set a goal of starting two ministries in each of the district’s five regions over the next five years, resulting in 50 new ministry starts. The District began this well-coordinated process, and the next start-up incubator will be held at Prince of Peace in Orlando November 8-10th. Details will be available from the District office. The purpose of the incubator is to help teams start new ministries and relaunch or reenergize existing ones.

“We provide clarity, camaraderie and know-how and work with church plants and re-plants, non-profits, and ‘business as mission’ for-profits,” Benavides explains. “Through our assessment, training, and coaching, entrepreneurial men and women of faith realize their dreams of creating faith-based start-ups that lead to more

baptized followers of Jesus.”

Convention delegates also voted to reaffirm the district’s partnership with Mission: Haiti, which includes financial support, mission trips and prayer. Mission:



Kurt & Carol Bickel and the Doulos tou Christou award with daughters, Leigh Nicoll (left) Sarah Del Rio (right)

Haiti is led by Mrs. Helen Roenfeldt, Executive Director.

During the convention delegates voted to:

- encourage congregations to care for their neighbors in need by providing food, clothing, shelter, counseling and compassion;
- provide leadership training for laypeople — realizing that an enormous untapped source for mission is among the congregation’s non-professional church-workers — men and women eager and enthusiastic to be coached for work in their communities and abroad;
- establish a district task force to identify best practices for increasing the number of professional church

workers. Recruitment must be a primary goal if we are to continue to exist in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Pastors and teachers are retiring faster than we are replacing them.

Delegates also adopted resolutions to ask the Synod in convention to increase transparency and reporting on the LCMS budget and special appeals. These resolutions are memorialized to the LCMS in Convention to direct the Chief Financial Officer to report quarterly the financial position of the Synod, and that this report be easily understood, in generally accepted accounting principles.

This isn’t the first time Synod congregations have sought simple, transparent financial reports. Despite prior Synod Convention resolutions that require clear financial reporting the LCMS International Center shares little about Synod finances with congregations. Delegates are sending a clear message that this must change.

Voting delegates called for a reestablishment of the District President as the supervisor of individual Synod members, nullifying and sending for review both a related Commission on Constitutional Matters Opinion and an LCMS Board of Directors decision.



Sheryl DeWitt



Darrell Stuehrenberg



Dan Reichard



Ken Green



Renee Varga



Helen Roenfeldt



Dave Brighton

# Orlando for 33rd Regular Convention

Delegates want the opinion nullified and sent for review with clear reference to the historical precedent of Synod's practices and that the District memorialize Synod with proposed constitutional and bylaw changes that would seek to clarify and return to Synod's historic position; and finally that the District pray for peace and harmony within the District and Synod, providing a witness to God's powerful work of reconciliation in our lives.

Other business included a resolution passed to change the requirements for electoral circuits, giving a voice to smaller congregations and circuits.

President Greg Walton was elected on the first ballot with 86 percent of the vote to his fourth term as District President.

Also elected were:

- Rev. David C. Brighton, Senior Pastor of Mount Calvary Lutheran Church in Warner Robins, Georgia, First Vice-President, Region 1;
- Rev. Jon Zehnder, Senior Pastor of St. Michael Lutheran Church, Fort Myers, Florida, Second Vice-President, Region 4;
- Rev. James Rockey, Pastor of Amazing Grace Lutheran Church, Oxford/The Villages, Florida, Third Vice-President, Region 2;
- Rev. Stephen Carretto, senior pastor of St. Paul

Lutheran Church, Boca Raton, Florida, Fourth Vice-President, Region 5; and

- Rev. Charles T. Reich, Senior Pastor of Grace Lutheran Church, Winter Haven, Fla., Fifth Vice-



*President Greg Walton with Doulos tou Christou award recipient Karen & Dennis Cerny*

President, Region 3.

The officers were installed at the culmination of the convention.

Rev. Dr. David Maier, President of the Michigan District, LCMS, and Chairman of the Council of Presidents led a Bible study on "Life UNDER Christ."

Rev. Kenneth Green, II of Prince of Peace/Orlando, was the election supervisor for the convention. Rev. James Guelzow chaired the nominations committee and Rev. Douglas Kallesen served as the chaplain for the three-day event.

Doulos tou Christou awards recognizing four individuals for their service to the church. They were Mr.

David Weidner, Mr. Kurt Bickel, Rev. James Guelzow and Mr. Dennis Cerny. Each received the bronze figure of Christ washing a disciples feet.

Convention guests included Rev. Oscar Benavides, FiveTwo Network; Rev. Adolfo Borges, LCMS Hispanic Convention; Mr. Phil Hubble, Lutheran Services Florida; Ms. Melanie Johnson, Lutheran Services Georgia; Mrs. Trish Aamoth, District LWML President;

Mr. Bruce Sutherland, Lutheran Hour Ministries; Mr. Sam Osterloh, the Jesus Film; Mr. Randy Fauser, Grace Place Ministries and Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison, LCMS President.

In President Walton's concluding remarks he focused on The Florida-Georgia District being comprised of some 200 plus ministries, close to 6000 people, covering a third of the Eastern Seaboard, walking together as Synod in this very special and wonderful place we call home.

"We are people abiding in Jesus and committed to proclaiming Him through Word and Sacrament, sharing

His love with all in need. I am confident that God will continue to bless our work in His harvest field, and He will continue to open opportunities before us, as we keep our eyes on Jesus. It's all about Jesus," Walton emphasized. "For me it's always been about Jesus and the difference He makes in the lives of sinful people. I want to challenge us, as we



**Doulos tou Christou Award:**  
*Standing from left — Kyle Weidner, Sophia Durning, Don Harkins, Emily Harkins with Cathy and David Weidner*

look forward to our 75th Anniversary, to commit to planting two new ministry starts per region each year so in 2023 we can rejoice in 50 additional ministry starts that point people to Jesus, helping them to understand that they, too, have been chosen with purpose — to abide in Jesus!"

*by John List, Editor* ■



*Joan Michaels & Lois Schaefer*



*Jon Zehnder & Lois Ford*



*Jim Guelzow*



*Pat O'Brien*



*Gretchen Jameson*

# FLORIDAGEORGIA

## REGIONAL NEWS

*Out and About in the Florida-Georgia District*



On Sunday, July 8, 2018 King of Kings/ Jasper, GA celebrated the 40th Ordination Anniversary of Pastor Ernie J. Knoche. Pastor Knoche is pictured with wife and family. Council President Judy Mapp (below) makes a presentation to Pastor Knoche



Trinity/Athens hosted an open house in late August with an ice cream social, farmers market and an opportunity for families to walk through classrooms and meet the teachers at Trinity Lutheran Academy.



Faith/Marietta's second grade STEM lessons had their students designing a hat from only a few materials that would block their faces from the sun and absorb sweat. In the process they learned that different materials have different properties suitable for different purposes.

### REGION



1



**Vice President:**

David Brighton  
Mount Calvary/Warner Robins

**Laity Board Members:**

Jay Wendland | Living Faith/Cumming  
Karen Cerny | Faith/Marietta

**Commissioned Minister Board Member:**

Tamie Worthington | St Paul/Peachtree City

**Circuit 1 NE Georgia Circuit Visitor:**

Zachary Hoffman | Good Shepherd/Gainesville

**Circuit 2 Atlanta N Circuit Visitor:**

Jeffrey Jordan | Rivercliff/Atlanta

**Circuit 3 Atlanta S Circuit Visitor:**

George Murdaugh | Prince of Peace/  
Douglasville

**Circuit 4 E Central Georgia Circuit Visitor:**

John Lehenbauer | Christ/Perry



*Category 4 Quartet — with Clay Hine, Kirk Young, Tim Brooks and Tim Reynolds — performed at Oak Road Lutheran Church in Lillburn, GA. They're seen here enjoying a salute to the congregation's fathers last June for Father's Day.*



*Timothy/Woodstock, GA members, Steve and Jenni Armbrust, conducted the daily opening and closing sessions of Shipwrecked VBS on June 4 – 8. 116 children, ages 3 – grade 5, learned that even though we maybe lonely, worried, struggling and powerless, Jesus rescues us. A daily offering was collected to purchase seeds for struggling families in Haiti. Unchurched families were contacted via email shortly afterwards inviting them to worship at Timothy.*



*Timothy/Woodstock, GA participated in the annual July 4th parade. "God Blesses America the Beautiful" was the float theme which traveled 1½ miles down Main Street. 14 TLC members handed out 600 inspirational bracelets to the children watching the parade. The Board of Evangelism sponsored the float which received honorable mention.*

## St. Mark/Tucker Supports Schools for the Deaf in Eritrea



St. Mark/Tucker, GA has donated \$1,585 in Sunday School offerings from April through September 2017 to the only two Schools for the Deaf in Eritrea near Ethiopia in eastern Africa. This was a very special mission for St. Mark as their Pastor Hiruy Gebremichael taught at these schools for seven years before coming to the United States. These two schools located in Asmara and Keren in Eritrea are the only places where the hearing impaired can hear the Word of God in their country.

Every morning these students have devotions by their teachers, and every Sunday they have worship. These are the first such schools in east Africa and have been a blessing for many since 1956. Many of St. Mark's Sunday School children's parents have come from Eritrea. St. Mark was blessed to have two of those parents travelling to Eritrea within the past six months and able to personally deliver the donations. In a letter from the Asmara School for the Deaf after the first donation, the school stated they would use the money to provide clothes and shoes to their needy children.

Members of St. Mark have designated their Sunday School quarterly offerings be given to mission projects around the world with total contributions over the past five years of more than \$12,000. Some of the specific designated missions have included Heifer International, North Atlanta Circuit Outreach, LCMS Disaster/Hurricane Relief, and Lutheran Church Charities' Comfort Dogs. These projects have provided unique opportunities for children and adults to learn what Jesus meant when He said, "Inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of these, you have done it unto Me".



University Lutheran/Tallahassee created a sandwich board to attract returning students, faculty and administration to a Bible study entitled "Go Deep."



A true mountaintop experience was evident for these 115 high school students from Bethlehem/Jacksonville Beach as they participated in singing, worshipping and praising their Lord at Flat Rock Trail off the Blue Ridge Parkway. They were participants in a summer camping experience at Camp Linn Haven.



Members of St. Peters/Middleburg, FL confirmation class posed for a photo during their retreat. At left shows one of their hiking sites.

## REGION

# 2



**Vice President:**  
James Rockey

Amazing Grace/Oxford

**Board Secretary:**

Jay Winters, University Church  
Student Center/Tallahassee

**Laity Board Members:**

Donald Kaufman | St. John/Ocala

Lois Schaefer | Amazing Grace/Oxford

**Circuit 5 Tallahassee Circuit Visitor:**

Frank Kinast | Messiah/Valdosta

**Circuit 6 First Coast Circuit Visitor:**

Dana Brones | Bethlehem/Jacksonville

**Circuit 7 N Central Florida Circuit Visitor:**

Alan Struckmeyer | Abiding Savior/Gainesville



On Sunday, August 19, Epiphany/Tallahassee celebrated the installation of their Preschool faculty and staff. They are blessed with a dedicated group of people who provide a positive, caring and Christ-centered learning experience for each of their children.

## Hope/Plant City Recognized By Community Organization, Commissions Skylar Smith as New Congregation DCE



Sharon Moody presenting Pastor Pfeffer a thank you plaque during the closing ceremony.

The evening of August 2nd, brought to a close the end of the 2018 “Lots of Hugs Summer Reading Camp” at Hope, Plant City, FL. “Lots of Hugs,” operated under the direction of the Plant City Black Heritage Celebration, hosts this annual camp for elementary and middle school youth who struggle with reading readiness in school. This was the first year that Hope hosted the camp at their facility.

According to Rev. Dean Pfeffer, Hope “was blessed to welcome more than 100 disadvantaged children to our campus and open not just our doors but our hearts and time to reach out with the love of Jesus.” Hosting this camp was a blessing and opportunity for both the participants and the congregation hosts.

“We praise God that many of the children in the reading camp also joined us for our Vacation Bible School and got to spend additional time hearing and learning of the love Jesus has for them,” Pfeffer continued. Each day, camp director Sharon Moody, President of Plant City Black Heritage and her team prepared both breakfast and lunch for campers and counselors. “Lots of Hugs” and Hope’s leaders are looking forward to hosting the program again next summer. As a part of the closing, each participant was presented with a stuffed backpack from the Plant City Kiwanis — which included a backpack

blessing from Hope and an invitation to worship.

As a part of their morning worship on Sunday, June 17th, the Hope’s members joined together to celebrate the commissioning of a new church worker. Skylar Smith, a 2017 graduate of Concordia University, Austin, Texas was formally Commissioned as a Director of Christian Education (DCE) within the church body.



Hope's Associate Pastor, Rev. Shea Pennington, Skylar Smith and Hope's Sr. Pastor, Rev. Dean Pfeffer.

After graduating Skylar served her one year internship at Trinity/Navasota, Texas. Her commissioning took place at her home congregation in Plant City by her Pastor, Rev. Dean R. Pfeffer. According to Pfeffer, “Skylar, without any question is going to be a blessing to all whom she will serve. She has a servants heart and a deep passion to serve others and work with youth. Having known her for most of her life, she is going to touch many people with her love for the Gospel.” ■

### REGION



# 3



#### Vice President:

Charles Reich | Grace/Winter Haven

#### Board Treasurer:

Renee Varga | Woodlands/Montverde

#### Lay Board Members:

Katie Abercrombie | Prince of Peace/Orlando

Sheryl DeWitt | Redeemer/Sanford

#### Commissioned Minister Board Member:

Lois Ford | Faith/Eustis

#### Circuit 8 Space Coast Circuit Visitor:

Bruce Alberts | Good Shepherd/Titusville

#### Circuit 9 Orlando East Circuit Visitor:

Ken Green | Prince of Peace/Orlando

#### Circuit 10 Orlando West Circuit Visitor:

Marc Kappel | Faith/Eustis

#### Circuit 11 Winter Haven Circuit Visitor:

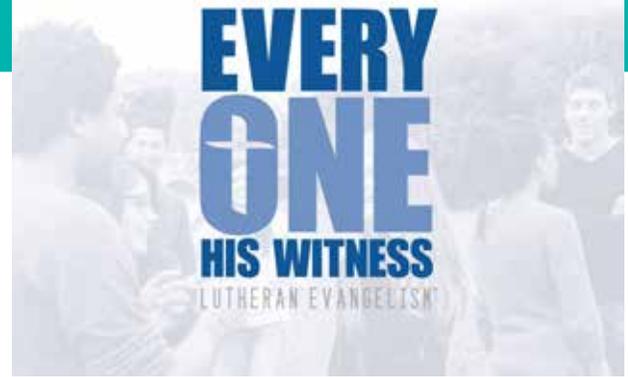
Dean Pfeffer | Hope/Plant City



Hope/Plant City's Church's Quilters have made more than 60 quilts — sending them to the Lutheran Church in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico — still covering from earthquake damage in August. The ladies originally took to the task of making quilts for Hope's sick and shut in members. As a part of Sr. Pastor, Rev. Dean Pfeffer's dedication and blessing of the quilts he shared the hard work, time and energy the ladies of Hope have given towards this project and they joy they share in making them. Pictured at left are some of Hope's quilters (from left) Dodie Walker, Bren Ellison and Brenda Bergner.



Woodlands/Montverde's Youth Group hosted a water-themed event that ran several days during the dog days of summer.



Ascension/Casselberry, FL launches "The Every One His Witness" evangelism study this fall as they consider the real world context in which Lutherans find themselves as witnesses of Jesus Christ. It puts sound doctrine into practical action for sharing the faith with the people whom God has placed alongside His witnesses in their everyday lives.



## VIRTUAL FLIGHT TO HONOR

Saturday, October 6<sup>th</sup> at 10:30am  
St. Paul Lutheran Church  
4450 Harden Blvd., Lakeland

Polk County veterans who are physically unable to travel are invited to participate in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual "Virtual Flight to Honor" to be held on **Saturday, October 6<sup>th</sup> at 10:30am**. The Polk County Veterans Council and Cornerstone Hospice and Palliative Care will host the event at St. Paul Lutheran Church.

Honorees will include World War II and Korean War veterans as well as any veteran with a condition that makes him or her unable to participate in the *Yellow Ribbon Flight to Honor*, a daylong tour of military monuments in Washington, D.C.

During the event, the veterans will watch a video of a previous Flight to Honor, professionally shot from the veterans' perspective, which tours the various military monuments in our nation's capital. Additionally, the veterans will be honored with a Cornerstone SALUTES! and treated to a delicious lunch.

Veterans can apply to attend the Virtual Flight to Honor by contacting Cornerstone Hospice Volunteer Specialist Pat Gruber at (863) 291-5567 / [pgruber@cshospice.org](mailto:pgruber@cshospice.org).



A few members of Faith/Eustis have some fun while being "shipwrecked" during Vacation Bible School.

Orlando's Prince of Peace congregation will celebrate America's Heritage on Sunday, November 11th from 6 to 8 with the Orlando Concert Band. Prince of Peace is located at 1515 S Semoran Blvd, Orlando, FL 32807. More information: (407) 277-3945



## deBartelo Ordained, Installed at Amigos en Cristo

Seth de Bartelo was Ordained and Installed on Sunday, May 27, into the Pastoral Ministry of Amigos en Cristo, serving Southwest Florida. Amigos en Cristo is an LCMS Lutheran Outreach Ministry, located in SW Florida. de Bartelo was called to help start two new ethnic ministries during the next three years in southwest Florida. The service took place at Grace/Naples.

Rev. de Bartelo had been serving Amigos en Cristo in several capacities and had preached and led worship in a number of Southwest Circuit Churches.

Seth's father, Rev. Peter de Bartelo, the pastor of Evangelical Lutheran Church in Gallupville, NY, took part in the "Laying on of Hands." Rev. Jon Zehnder, Region 4 Vice-President in the FL-GA District, officiated the Ordination portion of the service. Rev. Richard Browning, officiated the Installation portion of the service. Grace's pastor, Keith Lynch, was the Preacher for this service. Grace/Naples hosted a light meal following the service. ■



Front row — Jon Zehnder, St. Michaels/Ft. Myers; Andre Mezilus, Bethlehem Haitian/Immokalee; Seth de Bartelo; Peter de Bartelo, Evangelical Lutheran/Gallupville, NY; Juan Gonzalez, Beautiful Savior/Lehigh Acres; Carl Glander, Immokalee/Immokalee. Row two — Mark Eisold, Pelican/Golden Gate; Fred Kohler, retired; Robert Selle, Amigos en Cristos, Darrell Stuehrenberg, Bethlehem/ Ft. Myers; Charles Kanefke, Trinity/Cape Coral; Jerry Lawson, LCMS Missionary to Russia (former pastor at Good Shepherd/N. Ft. Myers); Richard Browning, Hope/ Bonita Springs. Back row — Keith Lynch, Grace/Naples.

## Florida Gulf Coast University Students Returning to Thrive

As the Florida summer comes to an end and the fall is starting up again, Florida Gulf Coast University students start classes and the Thrive ministry goes into full swing. Incoming freshmen were warmly welcomed on Wednesday, August 22nd with give-away's, games plenty of food.

Sunday evenings from 5 until 8 students are invited to hang out at Pastor John Roth's home in the Preserve. It's a fellowship opportunity for FGCU students to get to know Roth and the ministry team from Thrive's congregation. ■

*At right — each Thursday night at 6:30 pm Thrive holds band practice for student musicians who want to be involved in their Sunday contemporary worship*



## REGION 4



### Vice President:

Jon Zehnder | St. Michael/Fort Myers

### Liaison Board Members:

Evita Gonzalez | Beautiful Savior /Lehigh Acres

Daniel Najjar | Beautiful Savior/Sarasota

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

Circuit 12 Heartland Circuit Visitor:

Richard Norris | Trinity/Lake Placid

Circuit 13 Suncoast Circuit Visitor:

David Brockhoff | Holy Trinity/Masaryktown

Circuit 14 St. Petersburg Circuit Visitor:

Philip Rigdon | First/Clearwater

Circuit 15 Tampa Circuit Visitor:

Gilbert Kuehn | Messiah/Tampa

Circuit 16 Sarasota Circuit Visitor:

Rossetter Leavitt | Beautiful Savior/Sarasota

Circuit 17 SW Circuit Visitor:

Richard Browning | Hope/Bonita Springs

On Sunday, April 22, Rev. James Weist was installed during the 11 a.m. worship at Redeemer/Stuart, FL as part of their ministry staff with the express purpose of planting a new Lutheran congregation in nearby Port St. Lucie, FL. Most recently Weist served as pastor of Epiphany/Lake Worth.

Jim Weist is pictured at right with family, friends and clergy from the Stuart area. ■



Andrew Kubowicz was installed as St. Paul/Boca Raton's associate pastor on Sunday, July 29th at a 4 pm worship. Andrew and wife Nikki (center) are shown with their newborn son, Logan, surrounded by members of their family who came to town for the installation. Pastor Kubowicz joins senior pastor Stephen Carretto, vicar John Karolous, minister of music Mark Lohmeyer, worship arts leader and principal James Richards.



Pastor Tony Durante, former Assoc. Pastor at Trinity/Delray Beach, FL, was Installed at Pastor of Our Savior/Plantation, FL, on Sunday, April 15. Our Savior Church was packed for this special occasion.

Many Trinity,/Delray Beach parishioners were in attendance, as Pastor Durante was a son of the congregation before becoming first their Director of Discipleship and then Associate Pastor. ■

*Front Center — Tony Durante; Row 2 — Dennis Glick, Gold Coast Circuit Visitor; Steve Carretto, St. Paul/Boca Raton; Walter Volz, retired Our Savior/Plantation; James Leggett, Our Saviour/Miami and Food for the Poor Speaker; Dennis Bartels, Holy Cross/North Miami; Row 3 — Mark Abram, retired; Vince Putnam, Trinity/Delray Beach; Steve Reynolds, Shepherd of the Coast/Fort Lauderdale; George Poulos, Gloria Dei/Davie; Row 4 — Timothy Hartner, retired; Elmer Medley, retired; Scott Gress, Lutheran Counseling Services/Orlando; Ken Larson, retired; Daniel Bartley, Emmanuel Haitian/Delray Beach; Darrell Stuehnenberg, Bethlehem/Ft. Myers.*

**REGION**



**5**



**Vice President:**

Stephen Carretto | St. Paul/Boca Raton

**Laity Board Members:**

Samuel Ludington | Holy Cross/North Miami

Stephen Bradshaw | Trinity/Lake Placid

**Circuit 18 Treasure Coast Circuit Visitor:**

Mark Stillman | Faith/North Palm Beach

**Circuit 19 S Palm Beach Circuit Visitor:**

Dennis Glick | St Paul/Boca Raton

**Circuit 20 Gold Coast Circuit Visitor:**

Timothy Hartner | St. Paul/Weston

**Circuit 21 Monroe-Miami-Dade Circuit Visitor:**

Tony Mandile | Martin Luther/Marathon

## District Pastors Will Convene in Daytona Beach

Florida-Georgia District clergy will convene September 24-26 at the Hilton Daytona Beach under the theme “The Gospel in a Secular Age.”

According to Rev. Andy Schermbeck, Conference Planning Team Chair, “Communicating and applying the Gospel in our lives is no small task in any generation. The complexity of our contemporary cultural landscape does not make it any easier. Culturally, we are at a time when ‘naïve’ belief is being displaced by ‘reflective’ belief. This means that the once commonplace assumption that there is only one reasonable way of understanding the world — God exists

— is being replaced by the belief that there are many reasonable ways to make sense of the world.”

Speakers include President Greg Walton and members of this panel:

- Rev. Dr. John Nunes, president of Concordia/New York;
- Matt Keene, a filmmaker and journalist,
- Rev. Ben Hoyer, pastor of Holy Cross/Lake Mary,
- Rev. Mark Kiessling, director of LCMS Youth Ministry,
- Rev. Dr. Vic Belton, regional representative for Advancement for Concordia/New York,

- Rev. David Haara, pastor of Family of Christ/Tampa,
- Dr. Daniel Siedell, author and lecturer for Art & Theology at University of Iowa,
- Rev. Oscar Benavides, VP of Strategic Initiatives for Five Two Network, and
- Rev. Jay Winters, Secretary of the District and pastor of University Lutheran/Tallahassee.

Rev. Dr. Rick Armstrong of Lutheran Counseling Services will be the Devotion Leader and available for conversation and consultation throughout the conference.

Appointments may be scheduled in advance from LCS at (800) 444-2842. ■



Walton



Nunes



Keene



Hoyer



Kiessling



Belton



Haara



Siedell



Benavides



Winters

## Youth Ministry Council Gathers to Study, Reflect, Refresh and Plan

The District's Youth Ministry Council hosted an annual retreat for the Professionals who work in Youth and Family Ministry in the Florida-Georgia District. The retreat was held at El Caribe Resort in Daytona Beach from Monday, May 7 to Wednesday, May 9.

The purpose of the retreat is to bring Youth and Family Ministry Professionals together to network, learn, and be refreshed, in order to be sent back into the ministries to which they have been called. This year the DYMC brought in NADCE (National Association for Directors of Christian Education) Chair, Brent Howard, from Kansas City to lead the group through study and reflection on God's word. Seventeen Professionals were able to be a part of this event. If you have someone working in your congregation in Youth and Family Ministry, this would be a great event to encourage them to participate in next Spring 2019.

Information is available from Jeremy Becker, DCE, Director of Youth and Family Ministry at St. Paul/Weston, Florida at [jeremybecker14@gmail.com](mailto:jeremybecker14@gmail.com)



# First-Ever Florida-Georgia Lay Leadership

It was all hands on deck when the Florida-Georgia District office launched the inaugural Lay Leadership Summit August 23-25 in Orlando/Kissimmee's Lake Buena Vista Embassy Suites.

While there were about a dozen pastors present — presenters at workshops — the event's emphasis was directed to the more than 165 lay leaders from throughout the District.

The summit opened for registration on Thursday at 5 pm with an opening worship at 7 in the main ballroom. This gave participants the day to arrive from pretty much all travel points. District President Greg Walton welcomed the group and challenged them as to "why are we here? Why now?" And encouraged them to use the three-day event to learn, grow, obtain ideas and eventually return and light fires in their home congregations to heighten efforts to tell others in their communities about the love of Jesus and how "His light shines in a darkened world."

Dr. Walton gave a brief overview about the State of the Church and told how approximately 4,000 congregations fail annually while only launching about 1,000. More than 2.7 million church members tend to fall into inactivity and stop worshipping on a regular basis. While the US population has increased by 17 percent — or about 24 million — between 1990 and 2000 the combined membership of all protestant denominations has actually declined by 50 million — or about 9.5 percent.

According to Walton there have been surveys that state three out of four people in churches are found annoying. Congregations members can't agree on politics, church issues, worship and music styles. As a result participants pull away rather than get caught up in church politics.

"The United States ranks third in the world as a mission field," Dr. Walton emphasized. "We are actually a bigger mission field

than the majority of the countries to which we send missionaries. Only India and China remain larger mission fields."

More than half the churches in the United States added no additional members in the last calendar year. "The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has opened 450 churches in the last 40 years and closed 50!" Walton continued. "Only South Dakota has seen any growth when it comes to the LCMS. And in our District there has been approximately three million people moving into Florida and one million in Georgia for a total of four million people — yet we've lost approximately 24 percent of our members — about one-fourth of our District's membership!"

The Barna Group has conducted more than one million interviews over the course of hundreds of studies, and has become a go-to source for insights about faith and culture, leadership and vocation, and generations. Walton explained how the Barna Group has carefully and strategically tracked the role of faith in America, developing one of the nation's most comprehensive databases of spiritual indicators. They have said the average age of a member in the LCMS is 65. According to their research this has nothing to do with worship style but everything to do with excellence! Younger prospective members are looking to find Jesus and it's not about our liturgy or music style. They're looking for excellence in everything we do.

Dr. Walton referenced the recent Florida-Georgia District Convention this past June 22-24 (see page 18) when LCMS President Matthew Harrison stated that in the next decade the LCMS will lose more than 500,000 members. Some will land in other churches, some will die and others will just fall away.

"Between both seminaries — St. Louis and Fort Wayne — we only graduated 100 candidates and yet we

were seeking about 170. In past years the retired clergy were abundant . . . they were available to help with transitions and visitation," Walton said. "But that's not the case today. They aren't here — even in a retirement haven like Florida. We must put a major emphasis on recruitment for our pastors and teachers or we're going to have a real problem in a very short time frame."

Pastor Walton referenced the church operating in the times of the Apostles or even Martin Luther. "They didn't have organs, they didn't have different worship styles, they didn't have the social media and communications opportunities we have today.

"We have to do a better job of reinventing ourselves to a certain extent. We are often seen as homophobic, irrelevant, unkind, racist, hypocritical and only focused on money and budgets," Walton emphasized. "Our competition is not the Methodists, the Catholics, the Presbyterians or even the non-denomination mega churches! Our competition is Satan — the devil!"

Walton charged the leadership participants with keenly finding a purpose and ways to better partner with our pastors to connect people to Jesus.

Workshops included:

- Healthy systems in congregations
- Living life with a purpose
- Parish nursing and the benefits
- Empowering volunteers
- Youth ministry and fund-raising
- Crisis disaster plans and response
- Developing contemporary worship
- How to facilitate great meetings
- Vision casing for fishers of men
- Leading our of love
- Starting a school ministry
- What does an elder do?
- Putting Jesus' words into practice
- Tax reform and affects on the church
- Stewardship — more than just money
- Anxiety in leadership
- Caring for our church workers ■



Lynda Hagman



Oscar Benavides



Mike Nowicki



Marcus Howard



Blair Clark



Michael Popp



Megan Miessler



Austin Wessel

# Summit Has August Launch in Orlando



Summit committee member Maggie Bowles from Trinity/Orlando pauses at the registration booth with keynote speaker The Rev. Dr. David Benke, St. Peter/Brooklyn, New York



Pastor Benke lead two “brainstorming sessions” that discussed a wide range of topics but was oriented around multi-cultural outreach within our changing communities. Hispanic prospective church members aren’t targeted in the same way as Asians and when you reach one group it doesn’t mean you’re not reaching others. In Pastor Benke’s congregation, his members don’t live in a cultural vacuum, and what works with one group may relate to others as well.



Dr. Walton welcomed keynote speakers Rocky DeStefano and Lary King from Chick-fil-A of Clermont, Florida. They discussed the characteristics of an engaged team and how church leaders can help prevent congregation losses much the same way a business can. In their presentation, “A Server’s Journey,” they paralleled Biblical servant leadership with today’s successful businesses. They used Jesus as an example during Passover with the washing of his disciples’ feet.



The servant event was comprised of packing bags for the homeless that included personal care items designed for both men and women. The lay leaders were able to return to their home communities with these “goodies bags” filled with toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, shampoo, conditioner, , razors and other personal care items to pass out to needy recipients.



Trish Aamoth



Bruce Sutherland



Scott Gress



Nikki Rach



Rick Armstrong



Brian Jaeger



Pat Leupold



Judy Lagerbloom



*Holy Cross/North Miami had a special chapel guest to launch the new school year — Mrs. Spitfire (a.k.a. Mrs. Oxar) and she brought squids and held them out for the children to enjoy.*



*John Elliott and Lawton Thompson celebrate dual ordinations on Saturday, June 16th at St. Luke's/Oviedo. Participants (left to right) front row, — Rev. William Reinhardt, Oviedo (Haven Resident); Rev. Ken Green, Prince of Peace/Orlando; Rev. Lyle Muller, Oviedo (Haven Resident); Rev. John Elliott; Rev. Lawton Thompson; Rev. Paul Hoyer, Holy Cross/Lake Mary, FL; Rev. Dr. Greg Walton, FL-GA District President; Rev. Dr. Wally Arp, Sr. Pastor, St. Luke's/Oviedo, FL and 1st VP of the SELC District (Ordaining Pastor); middle row — Rev. Allen Freudenberg, Oviedo (Haven Resident); Rev. Michael Popp, Grace/Jacksonville, FL; Rev. Les Kimball, Oviedo/FL (Haven Resident); Rev. Larry Schaefer, Interim, Our Savior/ Orlando, FL (Haven Resident); Rev. Jacob Berlinski, Rivercliff/Atlanta, GA; Rev. Gary Schuschke, St. Luke's/Oviedo, FL; Rev. Dr. Richard Armstrong, LCS, Orlando, F; back row — Rev. Kevin Duff, Faith/Viera, FL; Rev. Tom Eggebrecht, Ascension/Casselberry, FL; Rev. Adam Barcott, New City Church/Orlando, FL; Rev. Chris Johnson, Holy Cross/Lake Mary, FL; Rev. Dr. Roy Maack, Oviedo (Haven Resident and Former President – Southeastern District); Rev. Brian Roberts, St. Luke's/Oviedo (Southern Circuit, SELC Circuit Visitor)*

## Tim Hartner Retires After Almost Three Decades in Full-Time Pastoral Ministry

Twenty-eight years of ministry in South Florida were celebrated on Trinity Sunday, May 27th, as the Rev. Timothy Hartner retired from full-time ministry at St. Paul/Weston. Director of Youth and Family Ministry, Jeremy Becker, welcomed worshippers before the choir, under the direction of Paula Krueger — also retiring from St. Paul — sang Alleluia in a round format.

Close family friends, Rabbi Norm Lipson and Monsignor Pablo Navarro brought friendly recollections of their history with Pastor Hartner before he delivered his farewell sermon.

Underscoring his partnership with wife, Laurie, Hartner's message recalled Baptisms, weddings, births, funerals, the St. Paul church family and several mission trips. He spoke of new opportunities ahead, new ways of serving the Lord with gladness.

A highlight following the celebration of Holy Communion was Deborah and Cydney Hartner's colorful and heartfelt recollection of what it was like growing up in the Hartner household. They both spoke of the inner strength that was instilled in both of them by their parents as they also

underscored the unconditional love that overshadows fear, transitions, health/cancer scares and other challenges. They included some humorous jabs about being "preacher's kids" in both high school and college.

St. Paul's Bell Choir also participated in the worship and members of the congregation were invited up to close with Peter Lutkin's Benediction "The Lord Bless You."

Pastor Hartner remains in Weston and is Circuit Visitor for the Florida-Georgia District's Gold Coast Circuit.

*by John List, Editor* ■



*Clockwise, from left, Pastor Tim and Laurie Hartner — Laurie has been St. Paul's pre-school director; Jeremy Becker welcomes worshippers; President Greg Walton pokes some fun at the Hartners as he reminds them he knows where he can find them for future ministry opportunities within the District; Deborah and Cydney Hartner offering heartfelt remarks about growing up as preacher's kids in the Hartner family household.*





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## The BACKPAGE

# District High-Schoolers Converge on Lakeland for Second Annual "Summer Fun Under the Son!"



High School Youth from various congregations in the Florida-Georgia District converged at St. Paul's Lutheran in Lakeland, FL on Saturday for the second annual "Summer Fun Under

the Son". While lots of fun was had by all, the youth also took part in a service project connected with the District's "Hearts for Jesus" program that combines Chapel offerings from the District's Lutheran Schools and donates it to a worthy cause or service organization. This year's Hearts for Jesus offerings are being used to fund the development of the Florida-Georgia District's Flood Bucket program. The High School students at this event helped to put together 330 Flood Buckets that will be put into storage at Hope Lutheran in Plant City, FL until they are needed

somewhere in the Southeastern United States. Many thanks to Pastor Shea Pennington and Jon Klockziem for their hard work and efforts at coordination for this service event. ■

