

# LUTHERAN LIFE

*The Newsmagazine of the  
Florida-Georgia District of the  
Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod  
January/February 2019*

*Let Jesus Be Seen  
In Twenty-Nineteen*





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@flgadistrict.org](mailto:lutheranlife@flgadistrict.org)

# LUTHERAN LIFE

Lutheran Life Publishing:  
971 SW Pepperidge Terrace  
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E-Mail photos, news, address updates to:  
[lutheranlife@flgadistrict.org](mailto:lutheranlife@flgadistrict.org)

John List, Editor

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

[www.flgadistrict.org](http://www.flgadistrict.org)

District President, Greg Walton  
School & Youth Ministries, Mark Brink  
Finance/Administration, Laura Zirbel  
LCEF District VP, Jay Wendland  
Legal Counsel, Rusty Huseman

"Let Jesus Be Seen  
in Twenty-Nineteen"

Cover design and photo: Emily Karolus  
Cover model: Vicar John Karolus  
St. Paul Lutheran Church & School  
Boca Raton, Florida



# floridageorgia DISTRICT CAPSULES



by Greg Walton District President

## Calling Congregations

Peace/Decatur, GA .....Sole Pastor  
King of Kings/Jasper, GA .....Sole Pastor  
Faith/Fort Lauderdale, FL .....Sole Pastor  
Faith/Hialeah, FL ..... Senior Pastor  
Bethlehem/Jax Beach, FL ..... Assoc. Pastor  
Epiphany/Lake Worth, FL ..... Senior Pastor  
Oak Road/Lilburn, GA .....Sole Pastor  
Epiphany/Tallahassee, FL ..... Senior Pastor

## Calls Issued

First/Clearwater, FL called  
Candidate Andrew Apple as SMP Pastor  
Redeemer/Stuart, FL called  
Candidate Stanley Allen as SMP Pastor  
Our Savior/St. Petersburg, FL called  
Candidate Christopher Futch as SMP Pastor

## Calls Accepted

Candidate Andrew Apple  
accepted call to First/Clearwater, FL  
Candidate Stanley Allen  
accepted call to Redeemer/Stuart, FL  
Candidate Christopher Futch  
accepted call to Our Savior/St. Petersburg, FL

## Calls Declined

Rev. Stephen Reynolds declined call to  
Epiphany/Lake Worth

## Transferred Out to Other Districts

Mrs. Kaitlin Bauer to Texas  
Mr. Jeremiah Bauer to Texas  
Rev. Frances Cantwell to Texas  
Dcs. Lois Diebel to SELC  
Rev. James Martin to Southeastern  
Dcs. Delia DeLeon to Ohio

## Transferred In from Other Districts

Rev. David Dahlke from Iowa West  
Rev. James Drummond from Indiana  
Rev. Joseph Signore from Pacific/SW  
Ms. Linda Nobill from Michigan  
Mr. Richard Schneider from S Wisconsin  
Rev. Daniel Chun from Pacific SW  
Rev. Andrew Howe from Northern Illinois  
Mr. Johusa Cromley from Missouri  
Rev. Issac Choi from English

## Ordained/Commissioned Minister

### Initial Placements

Ms. Jana Wenzelburger Concordia/Mequon, WI  
to Grace /Winter Haven, FL  
Rev. Christopher Futch Concordia/St Louis, MO  
to Our Savior/St Petersburg, FL  
Rev. Stanley Allen Concordia/St Louis, MO  
to Redeemer/Stuart, FL  
Rev. Andrew Apple Concordia/St Louis, MO  
to First/Clearwater, FL

### Ordained/Commissioned Minister Installations

Rev. David Dahlke  
at Lakeside/Venice, FL  
Rev. Robert Davis  
at Timothy/Woodstock GA  
Rev. Joseph Signore  
at Our Redeemer/Ocala, FL  
Dcs. Carol Schroeder  
at Trinity/Athens, GA  
Mr. Joshua Cromley  
at Faith/Merritt Island, FL  
Rev. Andrew Howe  
at Mount Calvary/Warner Robins, GA  
Rev. Issac Choi  
at St Mark/Tucker, GA

### Status Change in the District

Ms. Tracey Rice  
from Active to Candidate  
Ms. Gloria Klockziem  
from Active to Emeritus  
Ms. Reta Sollenberger  
from Candidate to Emeritus  
Rev. Kenneth Ferrier  
from Candidate to Emeritus

### Called to Glory

Rev. Darrell Stuehrenberg (O)  
10/22/2018  
Rev. Jose Puerto (O)  
11/6/2018

I AM **JOY:FULLY**  
**LUTHERAN**  
1 THESS 5:16-24

The LCMS Synod Convention will be held in Tampa, FL July 20-25, 2019 under the theme "Joy: Fully Lutheran" from 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. As the host district, volunteer opportunities will be available throughout the week. For more information: <https://www.lcms.org/convention>



## Hearts for Jesus To Support Lutheran Special Education, Redeeming Life Maternity Home

The District's "Hearts for Jesus" program is an annual project that engages the majority of schools in the District in a common effort.

"Chapel offerings are designated for the project, typically in the month of February," explains Mark Brink, executive director for education for the Florida-Georgia District. "This year's project will support Lutheran Special Education Ministries. Since 1873, Lutheran Special Education Ministries (LSEM), formerly known as Lutheran School for the Deaf, has been serving children with learning challenges. This organization has a history of dedication and commitment to serving all of God's children."

Founded in 1874 in Detroit as Lutheran School for the Deaf, they changed their name in 1990 to become Lutheran Special Education Ministries, to better communicate the expanded services being offered to children well beyond the initial focus on those who were hearing impaired.

"Secondarily, we are encouraging schools to support Redeeming Life Outreach Ministries in Sanford, Florida, an RSO of the LCMS and an important partner in our District's ministry outreach," Brink continued. "Redeeming Life serves single pregnant and post-partum women who, because of the circumstances in their lives, lack the support and opportunities offered by a loving, caring, Christ-centered home and family."

It was more than 25 years ago that Pastor Edward DeWitt (then seminarian) and his wife, Sheryl, attended a Lutherans for Life event in St. Louis. The information shared at the meeting about the number of abortions taking place annually was heart-wrenching to the DeWitts. What impacted the DeWitts the most was the sense of desperation a woman must feel — the hopelessness and helplessness — in order to see no other option than to choose abortion. It was then that the dream of what would become Redeeming Life Maternity Home was conceived.

Lutheran schools can also take advantage of a user-friendly website: [www.luthed.org](http://www.luthed.org) which allows for greater communication, collaboration and resource-sharing among all who are interested in Lutheran education. A helpful video is located on the homepage to assist in the navigation of the site, in addition to some FAQs. Resources are free to download or purchase through [amazon.com](http://amazon.com). No username or password is required.

A few of the resources that are available:

- ◆ School Mailing: Twelve ministry articles published September through May, formatted and ready to use in a variety of ministries.
- ◆ Chapel Talks for Lutheran Schools: A series of "It's Still All About Jesus" chapel talks based on the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation.
- ◆ In His Hands: A manual for churches and schools who are operating early childhood programs.
- ◆ Governing Board Manual (2017 Edition): An excellent guide for school administrators and governing authorities and/or boards.
- ◆ Social Media: Connect with LCMS School Ministry on a variety of platforms. ■



*Karla Mendoza and Bryan Beyer from the Seminole County Sheriff's Office "strolled" by Redeeming Life Maternity Home in Sanford during the holidays! Through their continuing partnership with RLMH, four of these new baby carriages were dropped off to help the single moms.*

## DISTRICT CALENDAR

**Hearts for Jesus Project**  
In 2019 we will be supporting the  
Lutheran Special  
Education Ministries

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

**2019 District School Music Festival**  
Friday, February 22, 2019  
St. Paul Lutheran Church & School  
Lakeland, FL

**District Administrators Conference**  
February 27-March 1, 2019  
El Caribe Hotel Daytona Beach, FL

**2019 New District Workers Retreat**  
March 1-2, 2019  
District Office Orlando, FL

**2019 Veterans of the Cross Retreat**  
March 4-6, 2019  
Life Enrichment Retreat Center  
Fruitland Park, FL

**Regional Pastor Conferences**  
Region 1 April 28-29  
Region 2 May 7-8  
Region 3 May 4  
Region 4 May 7  
Region 5 May 6-7  
Locations In Each of the Five Regions

**2019 National Lutheran Youth Gathering**  
July 11-15, 2019  
Minneapolis Convention Center  
Minneapolis, MN

**2019 LCMS National Convention**  
July 20-25, 2019  
Tampa Convention Center  
Tampa, FL

**District Pastors Conference**  
September 23-25, 2019  
Hilton Daytona Beach, FL

**District Educators Conference**  
September 25-27, 2019  
Hilton Daytona Beach, FL

**National Association of  
Lutheran Interim Pastors**  
September 30-October 4, 2019  
District Office Orlando, FL





recently heard a story about a turn-around church that amazed me. It was an historic church, well over 100 years old, that had seen a steady decline since the late 1960s. It was a gorgeous old facility, gothic-looking with stained glass windows showing

various scenes of the ministry of Jesus. Behind the ornate wooden altar was a stained glass rendition of the Ascension of Jesus, with His arms held out over the congregation offering a benediction.

The stone walls reverberated with sound when empty, and hummed when people sang. However, fewer and fewer people were singing these days in that sanctuary. At one time it was one of the largest congregations in this particular denomination, with a school attached, and all kinds of ministries happening every day of the week. As children grew and culture changed all around them they noticed that the confirmation classes, once as many as 50 children, were reduced to two or three at most.

Certainly the changes in the neighborhood contributed, but the leadership couldn't understand why they kept losing members. The article remarked on the number of deaths the congregations saw each month, and lamented the fact that no one seemed interested in reaching out or inviting others in. It seems that those who considered themselves to be the core members were satisfied to keep things the way they always were, comfortable and familiar.

Long ago it was decided among some of the leaders that training new workers was more trouble than it was worth. As a result, some had served in the same leadership position, contrary to their congregational bylaws, for more than 30 years!

Many of the younger members felt their input and offer to help was unappreciated so they found other places to do "ministry," which didn't include Sunday worship anymore.

More recently the congregation experienced rapid loss of members when a dispute arose between the pastor and some leaders. It ultimately resulted in the pastor leaving, but many who saw him as the only bright hope for the future of the church left after he had gone.

Further controversy erupted and many of the old time leaders left. As a result the congregation had dwindled to only a handful of people. They were hopeless and despondent. They were vacant and had no vision for the future. The congregational president, elected by

default, was talking with a coworker at his office, and he happened to be a Christian of a differing tradition. He told him about something his congregation was doing that was really having an impact. He shared how his congregation has taken seriously the call of Jesus to reach people outside of their congregation. Everyone and anyone who wanted an opportunity to serve could find a place to serve in some way.

With nothing to lose, the man prayed about this and brought it back to the handful of people who still gathered to worship and the retired pastor who had agreed to serve them. It sounded crazy. What impact could a few people have that would make a difference? His friend had pointed him to these words in James 2: "What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, 'You have faith and I have works.' Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!" (Jas 2:14–19).

Together this small group began to unpack this and look throughout Scripture, and what they discovered, over and over again, was that God's expectation was that they not simply have a faith, but that they live that faith out in their daily actions. They heard the words of Jesus saying, "Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them." (Jn 13:16–17).

Fed by God's Word and convicted by His Spirit they began to formulate a plan of action. How could they be in their community as representatives, first of God's Kingdom, but secondly, as members of this little congregation? They began to think of their contacts and people they knew in the community who could help guide them. Some began volunteering in the local clothing closet, others in the soup kitchen. Some of the men began working with Habitat for Humanity, others found other ways to impact people right where they were. Slowly, over time, they began seeing the very people they touched in these other places visiting their church.

A new, positive spirit, had taken over, and an openness to the people coming to visit. Some joined, and when they did, they were encouraged to go out and get involved. Soon, there was a new energy in

the church and it began to grow.

Six months later God had blessed their work and they were far more stable than they had been in the previous decade. They formed a call committee and began their work to call a pastor. The congregation was clear that the kind of pastor they wanted was one who would join them on their journey to reach people for Jesus. Eventually God brought them a pastor who continued to lead them forward seeing that their ministry wasn't confined to their campus, but was all around them. When they stopped being inwardly focused and began looking at their community with new, outwardly focused eyes, they stopped seeing what they couldn't do, and began to see all the possibilities.

Truly these people had learned to let Jesus be seen in their lives, and like moths to a flame, people took notice and began to be inspired and involved. It revitalized their ministry.

The truth is, this can happen to any ministry that has people with a heart to serve Jesus. It is too easy to succumb to the lies of the devil and fail to see the possibilities and opportunities that God is providing right where you are. What new ministry could you raise up in your community, or maybe in a surrounding community, all for the sake of touching hearts and lives with the love of Jesus?

Let Jesus be seen in 2019!

Let Him be seen in your life!

Let Him be seen within your congregation!

Let Him be seen in your community!

I'm reminded of the old story of the elderly couple driving down a country road one day when they are passed by a young couple in a convertible snuggled close together. The wife looked at her husband, driving the truck, and said, "I remember a day when we used to drive like that, sitting close together. What happened?"

Her husband looked at her, and with the wisdom of Solomon said, "Well, I haven't moved!" My friends, our gracious heavenly Father sent us Jesus, and has claimed us with purpose. His plan for His



children has always been that we reach out to those who have not yet heard. They are all around us. He hasn't moved! So draw close to God and let His Epiphany light shine in your heart to connect people to Jesus. ■

*Let Jesus Be Seen  
In Twenty-Nineteen!*

GREG

## Miessler Named Executive Director

# Rick Armstrong Announces July Retirement From Lutheran Counseling Services

The Rev. Dr. R. Richard Armstrong (Rick) has announced his retirement from Lutheran Counseling Services. Rick was the Founding Board Chair for LCS, became the Associate Director at LCS in 2004 and the Administrative Coordinator in 2011. In 2012, he was named Executive Director and has assisted LCS in expanding its clientele to serving more than 350 clients monthly.

Rick is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, a Fellow with the American Association of Pastoral Counselors and a Florida Approved Supervisor for Marriage and Family and Mental Health Counseling. He focuses on relationship issues, depression, anxiety, grief/loss, crisis management and spiritual growth. He also does leadership coaching and organization/team consultation. Rick served as a Parish Pastor for 25 years. He is married with two adult daughters and six grandchildren.

Since its inception in 1987, LCS has provided a wide range of confidential professional counseling and consulting services to thousands of Florida residents regardless of race, creed, gender, religion, or national origin. Originally founded by the Lutheran Church and local community leaders, Lutheran Counseling Services has grown into an independent nonprofit providing mental health counseling, training and consulting services to an expansive community.

In 2016 Lutheran Counseling Services served more than 700 clients (245 of these were children) and provided 3,500+ clinical sessions. The professional staff offers a variety of mental health services to those who reach out for assistance. They regularly serve the professional church workers of the Florida-Georgia District and have a presence at nearly all District conferences, conventions and events.

"I am very grateful for the opportunity I have had to serve in the ministry of Lutheran Counseling Services," Armstrong offers, "as Chair of the original steering committee and first Board of Directors for eight years, Associate Director, Operations Coordinator for eight years and for the past six years Executive Director. I am grateful for the staff and Board of Directors with whom I have served. I am humbled that God has used me to serve clients in need, as well as organizations and communities who have sought our services under our mission of 'Sharing God's healing and abundant grace.'"

"At this point in my life I have decided to retire from the position of Executive Director at LCS effective July 1, 2019."

The LCS Board of Directors has chosen Megan Miessler, LCSW, DCE to serve as the next Executive Director of the faith-based organization. Miessler has been at LCS for 11 years. Prior to that she served in parish ministry for eight



Rick Armstrong



Megan Miessler



years. Presently she serves as Associate Director/Operations Coordinator at LCS. Miessler is Rick Armstrong's daughter.

Miessler received her Director of Christian Education degree from Concordia/St. Paul and her masters degree in social work from University of Central Florida. Megan works with children and families and focuses on play therapy, depression, anxiety, crisis intervention, school counseling and marriage therapy. ■

At left — Armstrong, Miessler and Scott Gress, a coach with LCS.

## “What Do You Want To Do?”

In the last issue we addressed this question with the emphasis on clarifying the destination prior to identifying the activity that would get you there. Yet there is another element that is helpful to also consider. The coaching leader calls it:



*watch out for your assumptions!*

Do you recall the husband and wife illustration used last month? We shared the story of the husband who asked the wife if she wanted to go by plane or car to which the wife asks, “where are we going?” Well, let’s put another twist on the story: Suppose the husband made the decision on where to go, when they would go and how they would get there. Then further imagine that it was at the last minute that he finally told his wife to get her traveling shoes on, pack her bags and get in the car for a two week vacation!

That’s kind of nuts. What good husband would make any of those plans without consulting his wife? Not only does she have her own opinions and preferences, which should be honored and respected, but she has her own schedule and responsibilities to work around. It would not be surprising if the wife in the story was in no small way offended and refused to get in the car! He may have been well meaning but he sure made some assumptions which turned into some very poor results.

This probably has a lot in common with churches that experience low participation with new styles of worship, new activities and new programs or even when repeating old ones. They may be for members or for the surrounding community but the error is the same: we make assumptions for people just like the husband made assumptions for his

wife! It may be well meaning, but it can almost guarantee that things will not turn out as well as they could.

What this means is that when we ask the question, “what do you (or we) want to do” we will intentionally ask those who will be impacted by what we do. We will ask the members about their questions, concerns or hurts before planning a class. We will ask non-members about their interests, wants or needs before assuming we already know. We will furthermore invite people to be part of the conversation to identify what programs or actions we should take. That inquiry may look like surveys, it may look like interviews, it may look like focus groups or just coffee together, but it will definitely not look like us deciding for them!

So while you will want to clarify the destination (from part one last issue) it is wise to clarify your assumptions about both the goals (destination) and the actions (programs plans or activities) to see if they would be interested or even participate. Better yet, involve them in the planning and designing of the activity. Then there will be built in ownership which may grow to involve their friends who also may be far away from Jesus.



### COACHING COMMANDER

by Rev. Scott Gress  
Lutheran Counseling Services  
Leadership Coach

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



## St Paul/Weston and Thrive/Estero Make Combined Mission Trip to Haiti



Members of **St. Paul/Weston** and **Thrive/Estero** worked with Helen Roenfeldt (5th from left) in Haiti in January. The team included several first-time travelers to Haiti. Serving in Haiti can include several different kinds of opportunities and they were able to help in many ways including manual labor service by painting El Shaddai church and installing a new

floor for a school in Colminy. The team also provided much-needed food, health, and hygiene supplies to people including food bags for 50 families in the village of Deluge. Time was spent in education as members of the team taught about theology, music, hygiene, the solar system, and the most important message of all, that God Loves the Whole World!

While these tasks took place, some of the best moments in serving happened when the love of Jesus was shared in the relationships built with the people themselves. Pastor Tim Hartner (St Paul) and Pastor John Roth (Thrive) led their parish teams under the supervision of Helen Roenfeldt, executive director of Mission:Haiti. ■

# First Quarter District Board Met Mid-January Tackles Mission Opportunities, Synod Convention Business

The LCMS National Convention is slated to be in Tampa, FL next July 20-25, 2019 under the theme "Joy: Fully Lutheran" from 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. Greg Walton reported to the board about what it means to be the "host" District. Our District volunteer coordinator will be Mrs. Liz Pfeffer, wife of Pastor Dean Pfeffer, Hope/Plant City. She actually works directly across from the convention center in Tampa, and will be coordinating with the Synod and with Kathy Keene as we support the 2019 Synod Convention. Liz Pfeffer anticipates having the volunteer form available early in February.

The board continued to review the celebration of the District's 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, and while the fan-fare has subsided, the goal of raising dollars for the Mission Loan Fund continues. The challenge is to raise \$70.00 per member of the FL-GA District for the Mission Loan Fund. The goal is to connect people to Jesus through the celebration of this significant milestone. The potential, if all participated, could be well over \$3.5 million. Laura Zirbel, Executive Director of Finance and Administration gave an update of details.

"Let's let Jesus be seen in 2019" is the theme that has been adopted for the anniversary year.

Oscar Benavides gave a report to the board about the FiveTwo Network activities. Details are on the following page.

During one break-out session the presidium met with the executive committee to review staff salaries and make recommendations to the board. Between December 3-14 annual Staff Evaluations were performed on all staff members. Both Laura Zirbel and Jay Wendland continue to show what great hires the District made late in 2018.

Rev. Dr. Victor Belton, Rev. Scott Gress and Rev. Michael Mast are serving as mission facilitators in various regions of the District. They meet monthly, via ZOOM, with Oscar Benavides. This team met with the Mission Advisory Council and the Circuit Visitors just prior to the District board of directors meeting in Orlando.

Jay Wendland reported on the LCEF Fall Leadership Conference that was held in San Diego in November. District Delegates included Greg and Edith Walton, Mark and Marybeth Brink, Karen

(Dennis) Cerny, and Stan (Jody) Engel as well as our new DVP, Jay Wendland. Speakers included Edwin Meese III and Mike Meese, as well as Patrick Lencioni.

Five of the seven District Presidents on the East Coast have come together to form a program called GPS, to serve pastors in their first few years of ministry as they develop and continue to learn. The goal is to help them adjust to life in the parish as they transition from the seminary.

These five districts along the east coast have opted out of participating in PALS (Post Applied Learning for Seminary) sponsored by the Synod so that a greater personal involvement in the new pastor process can occur with involvement from the District Presidents.

These DPs meet monthly via video calls and then annually face to face. Each month the participants are given a lesson with some assignments and follow up. The participating District Presidents are present to answer questions and to get to know the pastors, and we will each be teaching sessions online. The goal is to cement a strong bond between the pastors and the DPs so that there is a greater confidence and stronger relationship. The first face-to-face even took place immediately following our District Board of Directors meeting with excellent participation.

The 2019 Veterans of the Cross Retreat will gather March 4-6, 2019 under the theme "Bearing Fruit on the Edge" at the Life Enrichment Retreat Center in Fruitland Park, Florida. This event is inclusive of laypersons and now is the time to remind the retired workers in your congregation. More details are available on the back cover of this issue.

Mark Brink and Rusty Huseman, District Legal Counsel, are working with President Walton to explore the possibility of entering into a partnership with Ministry Safe. Huseman explained the concept of "grooming" and the danger our youth have as it becomes more and more widespread.

Through Ministry Safe the District would make a training program available to all of our ministries — churches and schools — to create a greater awareness and understanding of the dynamics that are typical in instances where sexual abuse of children by

adults is taking place. Additional information about the organization is available at [ministrysafec.com/](http://ministrysafec.com/) They are located in Fort Worth, Texas and are one of the nation's leaders in training to protect children and provide background checks. The mission of Ministry Safe is, "to protect children and those who serve them." As Brink, Huseman and Walton develop this strategic partnership more will be reported.



## BOARD ROOM

by John List  
Communications Director

The District School Administrators Conference will be held February 27 through March 1 in Daytona Beach at the El Caribe Resort. The theme for the conference is, "The Leader Within You." President Walton will serve as Chaplain for the event and Pastor Scott Gress is the featured presenter. District Legal Counsel, Rusty Huseman, will present on Legal Issue Impacting Lutheran Schools, Mr. Bob Boyd, Principal at St. Paul, Lakeland and our District Representative to the Florida Association of Academic Non-Public Schools, will update the administrators on proposed and pending legislation that impacts our schools. A.J. Cluck, Principal at Trinity, Delray Beach will present on Retention of Students and Mark Brink will lead a discussion that will focus on how the District might best serve our schools.

The District School Music Festival will be held on Friday, February 22nd, at St. Paul/Lakeland. Daniel Bates, the Music and Band Director at St. Paul is leading the planning process for this event. Students from throughout the District will perform in choir, band, orchestra, praise band and bell competitions. It is a full day of celebration of music arts.

Plans for the 2020 Haitian Lutheran School Teachers Conference continue to move ahead. The Conference Planning Team will travel to Haiti in mid-March to spend several days visiting schools in the city, villages and rural communities to better understand the environment and the challenges and opportunities that teachers and students face in this culture that is very different than ours. The conference will take place April 5-8, 2020 at a location to be determined. ■

# 10 FiveTwo Network Helps Launch Peace Center for Life/Orlando

It started a little more than a year ago when **Prince of Peace/Orlando** stepped out in faith and became the *first team* to join the FiveTwo Start New Initiative in partnership with the Florida-Georgia District. There are now *five teams* in the FiveTwo “Incubator” and *seven new starts* in the District to



**FiveTwo  
NETWORK**  
by Oscar Benavides  
Vice-President  
of Strategic Initiatives

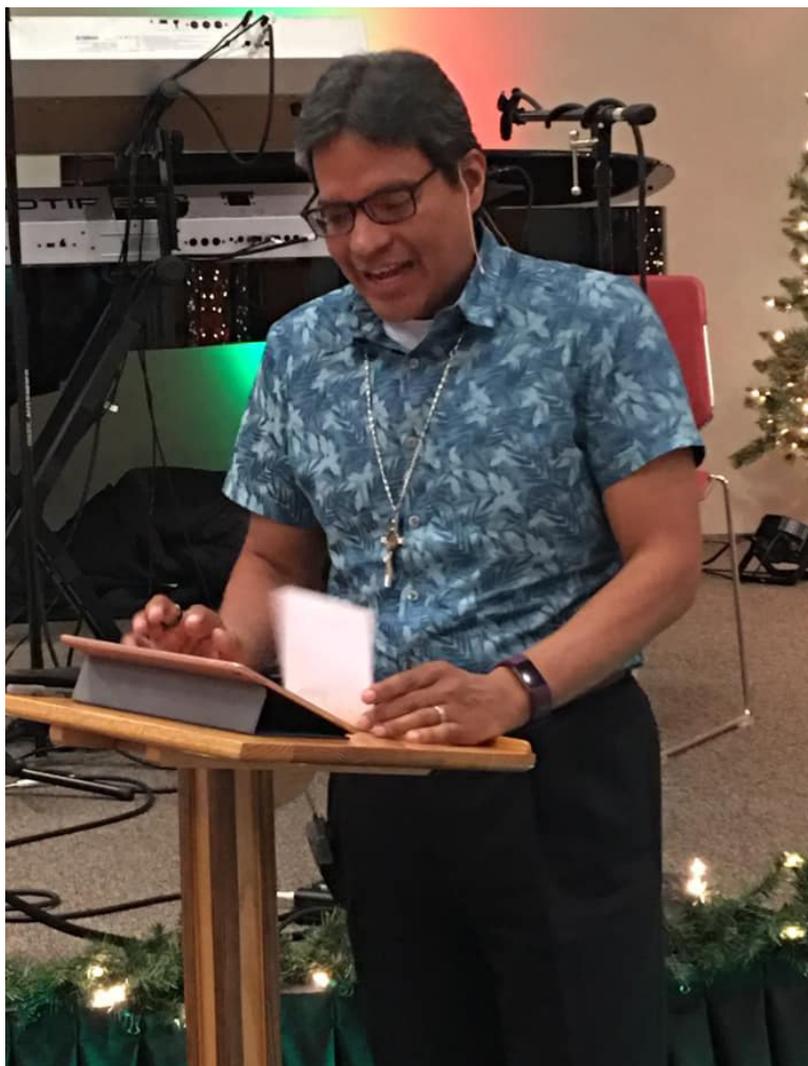
reach President Greg Walton’s goal of 10 new starts each year.

Prince of Peace has been reaching out to Latinos in the Orlando area for years using an English for Speakers of Other Languages [ESOL] program that is led by Pastor Adolfo Borges. Price of Peace had a dream to expand it to reach more people and to add other wholistic programs. Through the FiveTwo Incubator, they envisioned a resource center at the church that would build relationship with their immigrant neighbors and share Christ with them.

On February 20, 2019 they will launch the **Peace Center for Life** that will include expanding the ESOL program, offer immigration legalization resources and other important needs programs.

“The world around us is changing, and too many people still don’t know Jesus,” Borges emphasizes.

FiveTwo engages men and women to reach new people in ways they never dreamed of. If you would like to have a conversation on how you or your church can start a new start journey, please contact Oscar Benavides at [obenavides@fivetwo.com](mailto:obenavides@fivetwo.com). ■



Adolfo Borges, Prince of Peace/Orlando

## Lutheran World Relief, IMA World Health Join Forces

BALTIMORE, MD — International humanitarian organizations Lutheran World Relief and IMA World Health today announced they are combining operations to dramatically increase their impact on breaking the cycle of poverty and promoting healthier families and communities throughout the world.

Lutheran World Relief, based in Baltimore, and IMA World Health, a faith-based public health agency headquartered in Washington, D.C., integrated January 1 with a single CEO, leadership team and staff, and identical boards of directors.

The combined organization mobilizes a joint staff of 550 people in 21 countries around the world.

Ambassador Daniel V. Speckhard, president and CEO of Lutheran World Relief, will lead the unified organization.

Rick Santos, who served as CEO at IMA World Health for the past nine years, will serve as a senior advisor for the transition.

“The move is a natural evolution for Lutheran World Relief and IMA World Health, which have worked together for more than half a century,” Speckhard explained. “IMA World Health was founded in 1960 by a coalition of faith-based organizations, including Lutheran World Relief, to provide medical supplies to the world’s poorest populations. Over the years, IMA World Health has provided \$75 million in medical-related materials to Lutheran programs and has evolved to become a comprehensive public health agency.

“In addition to our ongoing work serving more than 35 million people around the world, the combined agency

is expanding programs to improve water and sanitation and thwart cholera in Haiti, prevent the spread of Ebola along the Ugandan-Congolese border, and provide treatment for pediatric and cervical cancer in Tanzania.”

The two organizations’ financial strength and complementary work in public health, rural livelihoods and emergency relief greatly extends the unified agency’s reach throughout the world, Speckhard said.

“We’re making this historic move to better serve the world’s most vulnerable communities,” he said. “We will have a much greater impact together than we ever could have apart in the goal of ending extreme poverty and hunger and building healthy communities.” ■

*Has Served as Chaplain for Past Three Years*

## Jim Weist Recognized for Chaplaincy Service to Palm Beach County's Sheriff's Office



A little more than four years ago, the Rev. James Weist made the decision to work with the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office serving the community through the unique and important calling of a chaplain. A chaplain is traditionally a cleric, or a lay representative of a religious tradition, attached to a secular institution such as a hospital, prison, military unit, school, labor union, business, police department, fire department, university, or chapel.

"After some of my own hurt and tragedy, the opportunity for me to give back to our first responders and especially those who are most hurt and broken in our society was something I felt called into," Weist explains. "After serving for a little more than a year I received training in CISM — Critical Incident Stress Management — for groups and individuals. I am one of a number of first responders for Palm Beach County for a major crisis in the community. I primarily work alongside fire rescue, and to some degree police officers, helping them process through major incidences that primarily involve childhood death and acts of terrorism."

Pastor Weist was recognized for his work through the Palm Beach County Fire-Rescue. Palm Beach County Fire-Rescue is one of the largest Fire Departments in the state of Florida and they respond to emergencies such as fire, medical, car accidents, hazardous materials or conditions, plane crashes, aircraft emergencies, chemical spills, fuel spills, water rescues, animal rescues, hurricane/disaster planning, preparation and response and even presidential motorcade details.

Palm Beach County Fire-Rescue receives approximately 140,000 emergency 911 calls for help each year. There are 49 fire stations, including Palm Beach International Airport covering 1,761 square miles and there are more than 1,500 employees.

"My work with fire rescue has primarily been helping them process through several critical incidences that have transpired during 2018," Weist continues. "All of the service is volunteer, although you do need training to be a part of the critical incident stress management team. As a pastor — and most importantly as a Christian — I believe it's important to be involved in this ministry because we can be called to deal with the most tragic and horrific challenges in the world. The only thing that brings hope is to ultimately point people to God and the answers that only He can provide. Without God, we are totally hopeless. But to be able to listen and love and walk alongside those who are in vulnerable circumstances and to provide love and care to them is both an honor and a privilege. I want to give back the love I have received from Jesus and other Christians so that those who go through challenges know that they have hope as well." ■



## 2019 Marks the 20th Anniversary of PLI

It has been 20 years since the first pastors and spouses stepped into something they weren't quite sure about but knew they needed.

It has been 20 years since mentoring congregations lined up across the United States to intentionally invest in a next generation of leaders for the church.

It has been 20 years since an enormous number of women began to discover they had unique gifts and passions that didn't need to be shoe-horned into roles that fit someone else. The landscape has certainly changed in



**PLI**  
by Jock & Gail Ficken  
Pasoral Leadership  
Institute

20 years! The mission field harvest is still ready and alive.

God is still a missionary God who promised His Son in Genesis 3 and delivered via Virgin birth in Luke 2. The Spirit still transforms stubborn, sin-stained hearts to fill them with faith.

But now, 20 years later . . . the Christian church has been pushed to the margins in most American communities. The front doors of churches are unlocked and opened on Sunday mornings (oftentimes with security personnel to protect against armed intruders) but unbelieving people no longer come in. Most denominations that were plateaued or in slow decline are caught in cycles of rapid decline.

The rest (of the world) sends its missionaries to the West (us!). Seasons of incredible movements have bolstered and punctuated the church's history:

- Empowering networks
- Baptized people of God as the missionaries of God
- Enormous trust in God to provide for needs and protect from the Evil One
- Willingness to risk and sacrifice for the spread of the Gospel

Look at the examples:

The Early Church! Martin Luther and the Reformation! It unleashed a powerful movement when the church was being crushed by corrupt institutionalism. (We can't even imagine the radical revelation of the "priesthood of believers"!)

The early decades of my own church body! The LCMS. (A new church

was planted every other day for 40 years.) Movements organize. Eventually they institutionalize. Institutions squeeze out the missionary movement that launched them.

Your church doesn't need to submit to an irrelevant demise!

Most churches are missing missionaries today. Missionary leaders. Congregations in 3rd largest mission fields need missionaries to people in their communities that:

- Can't imagine our churches represent Good News to them.
  - Can't imagine the Bible is an authoritative Word or Jesus as more than one religion's alternative.
  - Can't imagine why they'd walk through our unlocked Sunday morning front doors.
- PLI's mission continues to be to train and invest in multiplying missional leaders.

Leaders can't give away what they don't possess.

Most churches serve the faithful and make not much more than feeble missionary attempts. (Ironically, wonderful people of God who long for a brighter future for their churches resist the missionary shifts that could result in a brighter future.)

I would like to invite you to come closer in this 20th anniversary year of PLI. We'll occasionally look back and celebrate what God has done through PLI. But mostly will lean forward, arm in arm, with faith and a deeply wedded conviction that God is eager to lead His church forward.

So I ask this of you in 2019: would you:

- Take 20 minutes and discuss PLI with your congregation and several of your leaders.
1. Describe your "today."
  2. Describe what used to be 20 years ago.
  3. Describe "what could be" tomorrow.
- Look at the new PLI learning communities. If it's time (and it probably is), contact Raechel today, and do whatever it takes to join a learning community that invests in a stronger future for your congregation.
  - Offer to invest 1000 Young Leaders in some gifted, godly young adults to become missionary disciples where they live, work and play. Tell them to contact our 1000Young Leader team. The next online cohort starts April 1. They might be the catalyst for a new missionary movement from your church.
- Finally, this year launches a learning community immersion for

Ethiopian and Liberian immigrant leaders in the D.C. area. Pray for them today. They are the Rest being sent to the West! This could be a season to trust that you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you!

PLI invests in pastors, spouses and church leaders by building empowering relationships where confidence and courage is born. PLI's learning happens in these relationships.

Training happens at the intersection of leadership, discipleship and mission.

The organization transforms and equips leaders to lead change and to grow and multiply more missional leaders.

PLI's purpose is to help leaders revive their understanding and application of the Great Commission in a local context. The result is discipleship lived out in vibrant communities. By God's guiding, families and congregations are empowered to make deeper connections with non-believers, loving and leading as Jesus did. The result is wider influence for the sake of the Gospel.

Hundreds of pastors and spouses in the United States and 12 countries worldwide have been led to lead through the PLI Experience. The unique blend of couples learning together in PLI's encouraging and accountable coaching environment results in distinctive leadership development. The PLI Experience changes lives and builds up the character of leaders to boldly reach the lost for Christ.

Additional information is available on the PLI website: [www.plileadership.org/](http://www.plileadership.org/) or via email: [info@plileadership.org](mailto:info@plileadership.org). ■

### Upcoming PLI Learning Communities

Leadership Essentials 2019 Houston // Immersion 1  
Date: March 21 - March 23 2019  
Resurrection Lutheran Church  
Spring, TX

1,000 Young Leaders Spring 2019 Cohort  
Date: April 1 - April 1 2019

1,000 Young Leader Annual Gathering  
Date: May 3 - May 5 2019  
Venue: PLI Headquarters  
Nashville, TN 37214

D2MC 2019 St. Louis // Immersion 1  
Date: September 26 - September 28 2019  
Venue: Messiah Lutheran Church  
Weldon Spring, MO 63304

D2MC 2019 East Coast // Immersion 1  
Date: October 3 - October 5 2019

# National LWML Convenes in Mobile in June

There is something so special about an LWML Convention! It doesn't matter if you only attend one or have been blessed to attend several! It can change your life!



**38th Biennial LWML Convention Slated for June 20-23 Waterfront in Mobile, Alabama**

Only by attending national conventions, have I come to truly appreciate the full scope of what LWML is and what LWML does. Worshipping and communing with well over three thousand Missouri Synod Lutherans is an awe-inspiring experience. It takes more than thirty communion stations to serve that many of us — with close to one hundred pastors.

The opening banner procession is a stunning display of the talent, skills and artistry in our synod. A walk through the exhibit hall can leave you speechless from the diversity and breadth of the missions where our synod is working and the numerous opportunities we each have to contribute and be involved.

Mites in Action speakers share exactly how the coins placed in mites boxes serve the Lord around the world and here at home. Luncheon speakers will inspire and encourage. Servant Connections give everyone an opportunity for hands on service. A pre-convention golf tournament and a Saturday morning mission walk will bring in thousands of dollars for mission grants.

New leaders will be elected, which is always a chance to see how God continues to richly bless the LWML with dedicated and faithful servants. Mission Grant recipients for the 2019-2021 Biennium will be selected from thirty-one proposals. Dozens of young women from around the Synod will experience special activities which will enrich their LWML involvement at convention as well as when they return home.

The 38th Biennial LWML Convention is less than five months away, June 20-23, at the Mobile Convention Center on the waterfront in Mobile, Alabama. The Florida-Georgia District is hosting, along with the Gulf States and Louisiana-Mississippi Districts. Two years ago the 2019 LWML Convention Host Committee Chair Bunnie Koelsch and the three district presidents began meeting with LWML leadership. Since that time a full slate of

coordinators, directors and chairs have been appointed to the host committee. Recruitment of approximately 500 workers has been on-going since last May, but more than two hundred and fifty more volunteers – women, men and a few teens – are still needed! Information and the “Call for Workers” application are available at [www.flgalwml.com](http://www.flgalwml.com).

For 2019 LWML Convention information, go to [www.lwml.org](http://www.lwml.org). ■



## FUTURE & HOPE

by Trish Aamoth  
President  
LWML FL-GA District



## Stepping Stone Brothers Give Thanks for Peace/Atlanta and Florida-Georgia District's Atlanta North Circuit

The men affiliated with Stepping Stone homeless ministry remain grateful to **Peace/Atlanta** for providing a haven to study in God's Word on a monthly basis throughout the year. They especially appreciated a delicious Thanksgiving feast



prepared for them by the congregation members — and the opportunity to gather together in thanks and appreciation of God's unfailing and unceasing goodness to all His children.

The weekly Saturday Worship Services began a year ago. Stepping Stone gathers together in the Body of Christ on these days. For many of their brothers, this is their only church — and therefore, their only opportunity to hear they are forgiven for their sins, to be reminded that Jesus is our eternal Savior, and to hear His Word regularly preached to them.



"Each week 20 to 30 brothers join in worship. We thank God for New Church of Atlanta, Saebit Korean Presbyterian Church, Siloam Korean Presbyterian Church as well as Mr. Youngkyung Lee and his family and our own Stepping Stone Mission volunteer staff for ensuring that our brothers receive good meals before or after each weekly service," explains president and founder Reverend Joseph Song. "And we thank Ponce Presbyterian Church for graciously serving as our host for these services."



The brothers of Stepping Stone participated in their 20th Retreat (above) at Daniel's Prayer Garden. They were led into a deeper contemplation of God's Word. Elder B.J. Nam of Grace Community Presbyterian Church, and members of Oak Road Lutheran Church provided both spiritual and physical nourishment. They had 20 brothers join — including 13 new to the ministry and a few others who had not been with them during retreat times before. Said one brother, "I've truly begun to realize how much God can move in your life. To get away from the chaos of everyday life and really connect with God and bond with the Word, I've learned the significance of grace, glory and truth in the Lord."



This past fall a Winter Coat Drive (above) was successful in providing more than 250 jackets and nearly \$2,000 in funds to purchase jackets to share with the brothers and sisters experiencing homelessness in Atlanta this winter.

**Christ the Shepherd Lutheran Church, Faith Lutheran Church, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, King of Kings Lutheran Church, Living Faith Lutheran Church, Oak Road Lutheran Church, Timothy Lutheran Church, and the Atlanta North Circuit of the LCMS Florida-Georgia District** all contributed jackets through this drive. They are routinely shared with those who come to join us during our Wednesday and Friday Bible studies and Saturday worship

services. Broader efforts to share these jackets began earlier this month with special stops at Atlanta Mission and Hurt Park and will continue on throughout winter season.

The Stepping Stone Choir proclaimed the Gospel through their gift of song. In December they joined with Ponce Presbyterian Church in Atlanta in song as they together celebrated the birth of Christ. The choir enjoys singing



throughout the year but especially loves to do so at Christmastime. The choir is available to visit congregations. For more information contact Joseph or Sharon Song at (404) 429-9072. ■

### 2019 Partial List of Events:

- March 1 to 3: 21st Rehabilitation & Spiritual Leadership Retreat at Daniel's Prayer Garden
- April 20: Sharing and Caring Festival
- April 21: Easter Sunday
- May 12: Picnic for Leaders Experiencing Homelessness
- June 20 to 23: Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML) Convention
- July 20 to 25: Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS) Convention
- August 18: Annual Benefit Concert (10th Year Anniversary of Mission)
- October 18 to 20: 22nd Rehabilitation & Spiritual Leadership Retreat at Daniel's Prayer Garden
- October 26: Appreciation Night
- November 23: Thanksgiving Service Day (Winter Jacket Giveaway Time Begins)
- December 8: Stepping Stone Mission
- December 21: Christmas Service Day
- December 24: Stepping Stone Choir Team at Church (to be determined)
- December 25: Christmas Day



## National Lutheran Schools Week Celebrated January 27 - February 2 Throughout District

National Lutheran Schools Week provides nearly 2,000 preschools, elementary schools and high schools with the public opportunity to proclaim and celebrate God's work among us in schools of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

"We thank God for the opportunity to provide excellent academic preparation for the children we serve. We are most grateful for the opportunity to share Jesus' amazing love with children and their families," stated Mark Brink, District Education Executive.

"National Lutheran Schools Week gives us an opportunity to proclaim these great blessings within the communities we serve. Our schools are amazing incubators for faithful witness of God's love for us through Christ by teachers and students alike."

Lutheran Life is asking teachers, students, administrators, congregations and parents to submit photos and details of how you celebrated Lutheran Schools Week this year. Please send your photos and storylines to [lutheranlife@flgadistrict.org](mailto:lutheranlife@flgadistrict.org)



A twenty foot fishing boat with both biblical and modern era disciples of Jesus Christ sails across an ocean of flowers. A fisherman works the net filled with a bountiful catch as the boat sails beneath a lighthouse crowned with the cross of Christ with person representing Jesus Christ overlooking the boat and his floral seas.

These were all seen on the Lutheran Hour Ministries float in January's annual Rose Bowl parade in Pasadena, CA.

The overall theme for the parade was "The Melody of Life" and numerous floats made us of live music — including the Lutheran Hour Ministries float which was flanked by oversized bells and horns and with a Nativity scene backdrop, a Lutheran choir sang the float's theme "Joy to the World the Lord is Come!"

The LHM float — the only Christian entry — was the 61st float among the parade's 91 units.

## Buying or selling a home in South Florida?



## Sometimes the right choice isn't always obvious.

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



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

Jay Wendland  
[jwendland@flgadistrict.org](mailto:jwendland@flgadistrict.org)  
877-457-5556 x 5041

## District's Youth Ministry Council Gathers for Planning Session



**The Florida-Georgia District Youth Ministry Council** invited youth and youth leaders from around the district to participate in the District High School Ministry Summit on January 12, 2019. The

goal of this summit was to provide greater insight into how the District can serve High School Youth more effectively. It was very important to the DYMC that high school youth would be a part of this process and

that affirmation of past events as well as ideas for future efforts were shared. The ideas and feedback will be reviewed by the DYMC as it works to support and lift up high school youth in the district. ■

## National Youth Gathering Offering Webinars First Thursday Of Every Month

The National Youth Gathering (NYG) is coming quickly. Taking place in Minneapolis on July 11-15, 2019 this is the *first* Gathering in the northern part of the United States.

The FLGA District is celebrating the gathering with a District Event on Saturday July 13th starting at 5:00 pm in the Hyundai Club at US Bank Stadium. For only \$42 a person, each attendee will get dinner and a tshirt. But especially great is that everyone who attends the event gets to avoid the crowds at the gate for the mass event

that night! The Florida-Georgia youth will walk directly to their reserved seats from the Club Room! To register for the event go to the FLGA District website at <https://flgadistrict.org/hsyg/>.

The LCMS Youth Ministry Office has made it easier than ever to get information about planning for the gathering. Some of the things you can find on the Gathering website include fundraising ideas and event travel tips.

The Youth Ministry Office also hosts

webinars on the first Thursday of month — some of the past topics include “A Day in the Life of the Gathering” and “Help! I am a Youth Volunteer Leading our Group to the Gathering.” The next webinar will be on February 7th. If you have missed any webinars you can go to <https://www.youtube.com/user/lcmsgathering> and catch up. Questions about attending the NYG can be directed to the District Coordinators: Joe Guagliardo at (321) 432-6032 or Cindy Hammerstrom at (407-857-5556 x 6). ■

**REAL.PRESENT.GOD.**

**LCMS YOUTH GATHERING | Minneapolis · July 11-15, 2019**

## ACCEPTED!

Most universities are sending out their first rounds of acceptance letters to students. This can be an exciting, and sometimes heartbreaking time. Some students will receive an acceptance letter from every school that they applied to, other students will be praying that just one school will send one.

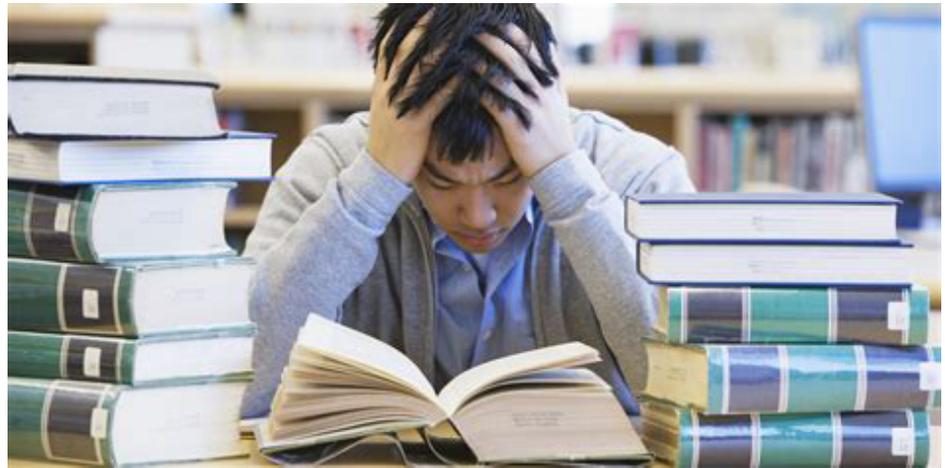
This is a great time to have parents, church workers, and others get into conversations with people that are applying to universities and colleges. Good questions will help students process their feelings and decisions around their acceptance letters — how do they feel about where they were accepted?

And now that they have an acceptance letter in hand, what do they imagine going to college is going to be like? How do they plan to continue their relationship with Jesus while in college?

For many students, this is a time of decisions. They are trying to make decisions on which school to go to and where their next four (or more) years will be spent. Make sure that they are asking questions about their faith life as a part of that decision making process, including if there is a church and/or campus ministry near the campus that they are planning on attending. There is a campus ministry locator that you can find at [lcmsU.org](http://lcmsU.org)

If you have any questions and want to hear from one of our Florida-Georgia District campus ministers, please reach out to them at [flgadistrict.org/campus-ministries/](http://flgadistrict.org/campus-ministries/) ■

# CAMPUSCORNER



## Concordia Theological Seminary Announces Kantorei Spring 2019 Choir Tour

FORT WAYNE, Indiana — Concordia Theological Seminary has announced Kantorei's spring concert tour in Florida. The Seminary Kantorei is comprised of approximately 16 voices — a choir of students studying for the Office of the Holy Ministry at Concordia Theological Seminary. Kantorei will tour Florida from February 23–March 1. The tour consists of worship services featuring choral music as well as congregational hymns and canticles.

Kantor Kevin Hildebrand directs the choir, accompanied on organ by Associate Kantor Matthew Macherer. Rev. Jim Fundum, an admission counselor at CTSFW, will serve as liturgist and preacher. He will be available to speak to prospective students following the services. Men interested in the pastoral program at

CTSFW may also contact the Admissions Department at [Admission@ctsfw.edu](mailto:Admission@ctsfw.edu) or (800) 481-2155 to set up a time and place to speak with Fundum while he is in Florida.

The itinerary for this year's tour is as follows:

Saturday, February 23 • 5:00 p.m.  
Faith/Naples [www.flcnaples.com](http://www.flcnaples.com)

Sunday, February 24 • 8:00 and 10:30 a.m.  
Grace/Naples [www.graceofnaples.com](http://www.graceofnaples.com)

Sunday, February 24 • 6:00 p.m.  
Redeeme/Englewood [www.redeemerfl.com](http://www.redeemerfl.com)

Monday, February 25 • 7:00 p.m.  
Grace/Saint Petersburg  
[www.grace-lutheran.com](http://www.grace-lutheran.com)

Tuesday, February 26 • 7:00 p.m.  
Our Savior/Zephyrhills  
[www.oursaviorlutheranzephyrhills.org](http://www.oursaviorlutheranzephyrhills.org)

Wednesday, February 27 • 6:00 p.m.  
Shepherd of the Coast/Palm Coast  
[www.sotpc.com](http://www.sotpc.com)

Thursday, February 28 • 7:30 p.m.  
Abiding Savior/Gainesville  
[www.abidingsavior.info](http://www.abidingsavior.info)

Friday, March 1 • 7:00 p.m.  
Immanuel/Pensacola  
[www.immlu.com](http://www.immlu.com)



# FLORIDAGEORGIA

## REGIONAL NEWS

*Out and About in the Florida-Georgia District*



Ladies at **Good Shepherd /Gainesville, GA** gathered in service to make “no-sew” fleece blankets for disadvantaged families served by Family Promise of Hall County. The goal was 25 blankets but after three hours — of arranging, cutting, tying and of course, enjoying delicious food and wonderful fellowship to Christmas music — they completed 14. That just means we will gather together again after the first of the year to complete the remaining blankets. This was a Thrivent Action Team event followed by a second Thrivent Action Team event of stuffing the blankets into canvas re-useable bags screen-printed with John 3:16 written in the shape of a Christmas tree. Our youth helped with this event on Sunday morning. Included with the blankets were hygiene products for the adults and stuffed animals for the children. ■



Christmas eve worship at **Living Faith/Cumming, GA** involved all the children and youth sharing the story of the Babe in Bethlehem. There was singing, readings, costumes and drama as they led the congregation in worship. Living Faith is shepherded by Rev. Tim Droegemueller, Senior Pastor. ■

### REGION



**Vice President:**  
David Brighton  
Mount Calvary/Warner Robins

**Laity Board Members:**

Gary Engel | King of Kings/Jasper  
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



Lizzie Comfort Dog, from **Trinity Savannah**, and her team were invited to Snowball Express, sponsored by American Airlines.

This event provided an opportunity for families of fallen service personnel to enjoy a trip to Disney World.

Lizzie was at their send-off celebration at Savannah Airport. This is Lizzie and her team's third year attending this event ■

## St. Mark/Tucker Celebrates 26th Year of Drive-Through Nativity



Clockwise, from upper left, **St. Mark's** youngest angel, Leilani Major, is the daughter of the congregation's Outreach Director.

Pastor Zelalem and his wife Shita acting as Joseph and Mary with baby Jesus. "Pastor Z" as St. Mark's congregation family refers to him, is an Ethiopian pastor working with St. Mark/Tucker's Pastor Hiruy Gabremichael in hopes of getting ordained in the United States and eventually launching his own congregation. Angels and Shepherds (at left) singing with great magnitude. They were part of the Live Drive-Through Nativity that St. Marks puts on each year. The event is now in the 26th year. Traffic has been consistently growing.

At right — A recent Youth Night at **St. Mark/Tucker, GA** involved the youth preparing "blessings bags" for the homeless in their community. The bags were filled with a thermos, socks, gloves, baby wipes, band aids, toiletries and a separate bag filled with non-perishable foods. ■



Our Redeemer/Augusta held a chili cookoff and dessert challenge to benefit the senior youth efforts to attend the 2019 LCMS National Youth Gathering in Minneapolis, MN. All proceeds benefited the youth's fund-raising. ■



The installation of **Mt. Calvary/Warner Robins, GA** new Associate Pastor Andrew Howe took place in Region 1 on Sunday, December 2, 2018 with District President, The Rev. Dr. Greg Walton doing the installing and preaching. A dinner followed the installation service. Pictured above (front row left to right) are pastors Dave Bernthal, Dave Brighton (senior pastor at Mt. Calvary and Region 1 Vice President of the District), Andrew Howe, President Greg Walton, Mt. Calvary's Vicar Craig Wehmeyer, (back row left to right) John Lehenbauer, Roger Schwartz, Jeff Webb, Mark Bowditch, SMP Vicar Laird Van Gorder. ■

# St. John/Ocala Hosts Christmas Craft and Bake Sale

**St John/Ocala** had a successful Christmas Craft Sale that included delicious baked goods as well as a “lunch stop” for the holiday shoppers. Connie Dail assembled a group who put together a fantastic spread of tasty treats that was a “must stop” during the event.



According to Carole Mikler, the annual event supports the LWML Mission Grants that includes St. John Lutheran School and several projects including the 2019 LWML national convention attendees, interfaith services, Concordia seminary students, Lutheran World Relief and more.



St John’s Lutheran Women in Mission and Men on the Move group work together on these hand created crafts and woodwork items. At left — Cathy Burnside, coordinator of event, offers a prayer before launching the day-long event and St. John’s resident “treasure hunter” Lorraine Carroll brings great items to use for many of the crafts. At right are some of the cabinet doors that were discarded



after Hurricane Michael’s devastation. They’ve been painted and re-imagined into wonderful Christmas crafts and they sold quickly. ■

## 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



Pastor Joseph Signore was installed at **Our Redeemer/Ocala** on November 11, 2018. Clergy participating were (left to right front row): Ron Scheer, Roy Zerbe, Joseph Signore, James Rockey (Region 2 VP), Ken Schamens; and back row: Steve Lane, Ron Mueller, Alan Struckmeyer (Circuit Visitor), and Ron Biel. ■



**Christ/Lakeland** hosted an antique car show on their campus on Saturday, January 19th for the community. The free event attracts a large group for fun and fellowship and the congregation has tables set up with food, beverages and door prizes to benefit their Senior Orphans. ■



The Busy Hands Joyous Hearts Ministry at Christ/Cape Canaveral, FL surpassed their 2018 donation of red baby hats to the American Heart Association for their “Little Hats, Big Hearts” campaign. They surpassed their goal by more than 55 hats — a total of 86! The Sip 'n' Stitch group meets weekly to learn/teach needlearts, encourage each other, and uplift with devotion. ■

As a part of the morning worship at **Hope/Plant City** on Sunday, January 6th, a special gift of hope was presented to Mary Heysek, Executive Director of the United Food Bank of Plant City, by Hope’s Sr. Pastor of Food Bank Board Member, Rev. Dean Pfeffer.

For a number of years, the congregation of Hope has presented the Food Bank with a check, following their children’s Christmas program. This year the special offering was received on Sunday, December 23rd following their presentation of *Carole and the Belles*.

These funds are directed towards the Food Bank’s Children’s Nutrition Program which this year provided approximately 1200 bags of groceries for families with school-aged children while schools were closed for the Christmas recess.



The check from Hope totalled \$500.00 and is a part of the congregation’s annual support of the food bank. Hope’s Sr. Pastor, Rev. Dean Pfeffer serves as Secretary for the Board. According to Pfeffer, “we look forward to the day in our community when hunger and food insecurities are no longer an issue for anyone. But until that day comes, the United Food Bank of Plant City stands ready to assist with a hand up to those in need.” ■

**REGION**



**3**



**Vice President:**

Charles Reich | Grace/Winter Haven

**Board Treasurer:**

Renee Varga | Woodlands/Montverde

**Laiety 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



Pastor Paul Sizemore was installed at **Trinity/Holly Hill** on Sunday, October 21. Paul was baptized there by Pastor Schultz, the grandfather of the current congregational president. Paul grew up in this congregation and now will be serving as their pastor. ■

## Ascension/Casselberry's Tom Eggebrecht Installed Into Police Chaplaincy Program

**Pastor Tom Eggebrecht, Ascension/Casselberry, FL**, is a published author. *“Fully and Creatively Alive: How to Live a More Joyfully Fulfilling Life,”* is available on Amazon in both paperback and Kindle versions. In his book, Eggebrecht takes the reader through the stories of real-life people who pursued their passions and followed their dreams in many and various ways, and have done so successfully.

You’ll read about Tanner who uses spoken word poetry to get a message across. Megan is designing hip (and modest) clothing for women. Morgan creates one-of-a-kind pottery. Mikaela discovered a gift for photography. Claire is a comedian who rides the waves of social media. Riley is a sound engineer who has traveled all over the world. Lauren calls herself a visual storyteller. Judson is a graphic designer who dreams of branding upscale food products. Emily makes jewelry and teaches women in Honduras how to start their own self-sustaining jewelry businesses. Patrick tells stories with his photos. Larry has created a business built around his love of live music. Cadence is a brilliant writer who also presents storybook dinners for strangers who come together to get to know one another. Daniel uses his business skills to serve artists who don’t have such skills, while exploring his city from the seat of his bicycle.

Step by step and story by story, *“Fully and Creatively Alive,”* takes you on a journey towards a more creative, freer and fully alive version of yourself.

The book dissects inspirational stories of those who have taken creative risks and pulls from the principles that can help us all move from where we are now to who we dream of becoming. This book can help you nudge your way out of the mundane towards the magnificent you God created you to be. It’s a great



encouragement for those who are considering a new pursuit or a creative venture and need some encouragement to get started.

The powerful insights and practical suggestions from these stories propel us on our journey to know our own unique gifts and express them well — both personally and professionally.

One way Tom Eggebrecht lives a more joyful and fulfilling life is through his service to the city of Casselberry as a police chaplain. He is pictured at right and in the photo below on the far right, along with other chaplains currently serving the Casselberry Police Department.

“A police chaplain is a pastor who serves in a precinct and works primarily with police officers to provide support and counseling,”

Eggebrecht explains.

“A police chaplain might work in secular areas with the law enforcement personnel . . . in hospitals, military bases, even prisons. Police chaplains have to have more than just a deep faith and a calling to the ministry. Working with officers requires a greater understanding of loss and what it means for someone to be going through a period of intense grief. Officers may confront death on a regular basis, and very few go through their entire careers without being put in a threatening position. As their chaplain, you have to know how to approach these situations and help the officers through them.”

Eggebrecht may be called upon to offer up prayers or talks at specific public events something he is well-qualified to do as both an LCMS ordained minister and published author. In some cases, chaplains may even need to officiate at an officer’s funeral. ■





With a needle and some embroidery thread, Barbara Krupick was able to create true works of art. One idea she had was to make six 17-inch quilt blocks that would be sewn into a large quilt for her son, Matthew Krupick, and his family for Christmas. Little did she know that the Lord would take her home before the project was completed. Matthew is the building and grounds supervisor at **Zion /Fort Myers**. Wanting to have the project finished, he approached the church's quilting group, Lydia Quilters, and they agreed to put all the pieces together into a beautiful finished product. The quilt was presented to him just in time for Christmas. ■



A dozen students and members from **Thrive/Estero** attended the Passion Conference in Atlanta, GA with tens of thousands of other young adults gathered for worship, learning and serving. The event took place in the Mercedes Benz Stadium. ■



On January 27th Thrive hosted their First Annual Chili Cook Off. This event was a fundraiser to send members of Thrive's congregation on a mission trip to Haiti in March. The \$5 per person advance purchase ticket (\$10 at the door) enabled participants to taste a wide range of amazing home-made chilis. The cost included a sampling of chili, and ballots to cast votes toward the top three entries. Aside from chili tasting, there were plenty of amazing prizes as a part of a silent auction. All of the proceeds from this event were put toward financial support for the Thrive team going to Haiti. ■

**REGION**



**4**



- Vice President:**  
Jon Zehnder | St. Michael/Fort Myers
- Laity 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:**  
Paul Burtzlaff, Our Savior/St. Petersburg
- 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



**Hope/Hudson** hosted their annual Christmas Cantata the weekend of December 15th and 16th. "Peace Has Come" by Mary McDonald was the Cantata/Musical Play which included their chancel choir and many members of all ages. Arlene Fuqua directed the choirs and Carla Fox-Norris was the play's director. The Christmas event was a powerful outreach for Hope and was well received with record numbers in attendance on both days! ■

## First/Clearwater Had Live Nativity, Students Performed Christmas Musical

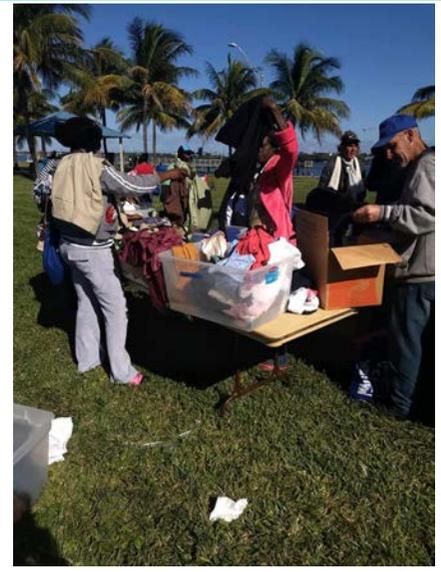


First/Clearwater's Praise Team presented their 9th annual Christmas concert which included the Sunday School students in a live nativity.

**First/Clearwater** students presented "Carol and the Belles," a musical about a diner in the 50's that celebrates Christmas year-round. The musical opens in the year 1954 at Big Bill's Drive-In restaurant, where the waitstaff sings your order and the Christmas decorations stay up all year long, excitement has never been higher. They've just won the network's Christmas at the Drive-In

contest and will host the live telecast of the Rock & Roll Christmas TV Special! While the staff gets the drive-in spruced up for the show, the customers don their best leather jackets and poodle skirts, and the TV audience is asked to adjust the rabbit ears and pop the Jiffy Pop, everyone is about to get a big surprise. The musical is a pageant proclaiming the birth of Jesus the Savior. ■





**Faith/North Palm Beach's** Ministry Team handed out nearly 100 backpacks to those in need on Saturday, December 22 at Currie Park in West Palm Beach. The men of Faith also hosted a "cook out" at the park and distributed clothing and personal care items. According to David Hernandez, the Matthew 25:40 backpacks are filled with essential items needed for those who do not have a place to call home. There are bags for both males and females. ■



**St. Paul/Weston** hosted Spoke Folk for their 2018-2019 Winter Tour. Spoke Folk is a ministry passionate about living and sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Every year Spoke Folk holds several 12-day tours of up to 30 participants (15-20 years old) and 10 adult counselors from across the country. After a few days of training, the tour bikes approximately 40 miles to a new church each day and performs a program of Christian music and testimonies. Through biking, music, and community, Spoke Folk trains youth how to be missionaries in their daily lives, while sharing the love of Jesus with those we meet on the road and in the congregations we visit on tour.

# THE GATHERING PLACE

**The Gathering Place** is the new church plant in Southwest Port St Lucie continues .The congregation has launched a website: [www.thegatheringpsl.com](http://www.thegatheringpsl.com) as well as a Facebook page. They continue to meet the last Sunday of every month in Jim's home at 4138 SW Darwin Blvd., Port Saint Lucie, FL 34953.



Children from Joyful Noise, **Trinity/Fort Pierce's** free "Mommy and Me program," pretend to take a bath. The moms and children sing about how bathtime reminds us about God washing our sins away. ■

## 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

The group played at several South Florida Churches riding their bikes from church to church which included rides ranging from 15 miles to 100 miles each day. They wrapped up their tour with a concert at St. Paul on Sunday, January 6th, 2019. ■



**St. Paul/Weston** Kid’s Choir led worship on Sunday, December 16th, 2018 by performing the musical “Christmas Hangups.” The musical was directed by Irene Villanueva and Cydney Hartner. ■



The family Christmas Eve Worship at **St. Paul/Weston** was visited by several Superheros who were in search of the greatest superhero of all, Jesus, who was found in Bethlehem. From left — Kyle Valencia (Captain America), Jeremy Becker, DCE, (who tried to fit in with the other superheroes as IncrediUncle (an unlikely new member of the Incredibles family), and Kim Lucas (Wonder Woman) appeared at St Paul/Weston on Christmas Eve. ■

“Emmanuel God With Us” was the theme of **St. Paul/Boca Raton’s** school Christmas program coordinated by Rebecca Shaffer, Music Director. All grades were represented with acting, singing, chimes, ukuleles and drums as they put on

the advent musical. Eighth-grade student artist Lauren Beaulieu designed the cover art for the program (below). Pastor Steve Carretto delivered an advent devotional to the packed family life center. School families were invited to participate in four Christmas Eve and one Christmas Day service and many school families took advantage of this. ■



Rebecca Shaffer is recognized by Assistant Principal Jeff Potter at the conclusion of the program. Logan Kubowicz (at right) was spotted in the audience, he is the son of Pastor Andrew and Nikki Kubowicz, St. Paul’s associate pastor.



# LCEF Hosts Congregation Recognizes District-Wide Congregation

In January, LCEF hosted a weekend in Orlando to celebrate the work of congregational advocates. Some were celebrated for adding 12 or more additional investors per year while others were recognized for maintaining an ongoing relationship. Phyllis Hand from **Grace/St. Petersburg, FL** added the most investors — 35 in the past 12 months. She won the Star Performer award. The advocates are identified by congregation with LCEF District VP, Jay Wendland. ■



Lynda Voss and Greg Walton opened the event with song and devotion



Victor Belton brought a keynote message and greetings from Concordia/New York



Don Bergwall • Savior of All/Cartersville, GA



Bruce Hahn • Trinity/Orlando, FL



Rick Charlton • Hope/Jacksonville, FL



Lyle Mueller • Amazing Grace/Oxford, FL



Stan Engel • Living Faith/Cumming, GA



Marvin Timm • Redeemer/Augusta, GA



Jim Raether • Christ Our Savior/Griffin, GA



Eric Jenkins • Mt. Calvary/Warner Robins, GA



Jon Boeche • Christ the King/Largo, FL



Scott Tighe • Timothy/Woodstock, GA



Robert Pinckney • Christ/Perry, GA



Jack Martin • First/Gainesville and Abiding Savior/Gainesville, GA

# Advocate Weekend in Orlando, Work, Accomplishments, Achievements



Jon Brazee • Christ/Cape Canaveral, FL



Cliff Skarr • Christ Our Savior/St. Augustine, FL



Chrystal Presley • St. Paul Jacksonville, FL



Ben Place • Zion/Ft. Myers, FL



David Kulhman • St. Paul/Weston, FL



Debbie Arrington, LCEF East Region Administrative Coordinator with LCEF East Region Vice President, Dan Reichard



Steve Strauch, LCEF Regional Vice President West Region, and his team observed the advocate weekend activities



Ed Kwak, LCEF Marketing Manager West Region and MJ Niebla, Administrative Coordinator LCEF West Region



District Legal Counsel, Rusty Huseman spoke to the advocates about the nationwide Lutheran Legal League



LCEF top-producer, Phyllis Hand, received applause and a standing ovation from the crowd. She's shown above with District LCEF VP, Jay Wendland, and at right with East Region VP, Dan Reichard, and Dan's wife, Andrea Reichard. Phyllis has won the award multiple times. Phyllis is a member of Grace/St. Petersburg, FL





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## Registration Continues for Annual Veterans of the Cross Retreat

Retired church workers and their spouses will gather at the Methodist Life Enrichment Center, Leesburg, FL, from Monday, March 4 to Wednesday, March 6, 2019 for the annual Veterans of the Cross Retreat.

The retreat, established in 1979 by the late Florida-Georgia District President Dr. L. Lloyd Behnken, is designed to stimulate retired professional church workers. The theme for the 2019 retreat is “Bearing Fruit on the Edge” (John 15:12-17).

Rev. Ken Hennings, President Emeritus of the Texas District, LCMS is the keynote speaker. An additional keynote speaker is Rev. Dr. Greg Seltz, director of the LCMS’ new Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty in Washington, D.C.

Rev. Dr. Jonathan Rockey of Palmer, Alaska will be the proclaimer for the communion service. Daily devotions will be led by Rev. Earl Steffens, Valdosta, GA.

Another highlight of this year’s retreat will be “Servant Events” coordinated by Rev. Bob Steinke with an introductory presentation by Mike Muller from Hope Seeds.

The presentation of Behnken Medallions will also be a significant part of the retreat. These will be given to “veteran servants” in four categories: pastor, teacher, church at large and lay person.

Retreat registration forms are on the District website [flgadistrict.org](http://flgadistrict.org) Newly retired workers are encouraged to contact the FLGA District office at 407-857-5556 x8 with any questions. ■



Ken Hennings



Jonathan Rockey



Greg Seltz



Earl Steffens

