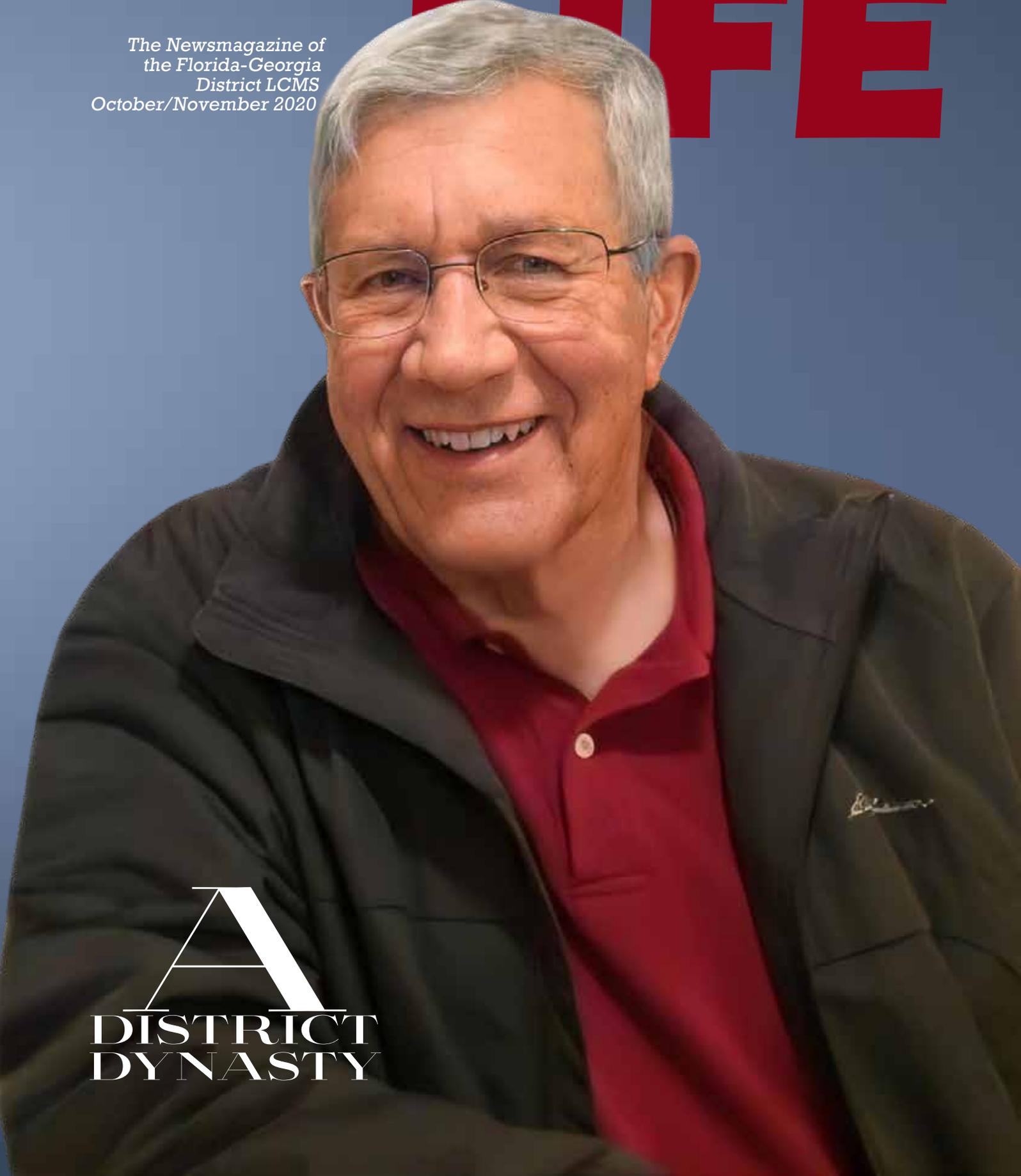


LUTHERAN

The Newsmagazine of
the Florida-Georgia
District LCMS
October/November 2020




DISTRICT
DYNASTY

Lutheran Life is the official newsmagazine of the Florida-Georgia District of the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod. 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 designed to inform LCMS church and school members of the activities, personalities and resources offered by the Synod and the District. Lutheran LIFE may also provide a forum for Lutherans to express their views and ideas on a wide range of topics. Lutheran LIFE is published bimonthly. News items and photos are encouraged. Please send scanned photos as a JPG attachment rather than embedded in your emails. Or mail your photo print in a good quality resolution to our address below. Advertising is welcome and encouraged; rates and information are available from Lutheran LIFE's office.



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Arrington Returns to District Office Administration Team

Debra "Debbie" Arrington has returned to the FLGA District Office in the capacity of assisting both Peter Meier, Executive Director, Missions and Outreach, and Laura Zirbel, Executive Director, Finance and Administration.

Most recently she had been working with the East Region Office of LCEF for two years. Prior to working for the East Region, Debbie served as Administrative Assist to the FLGA District Executive Director of Finance and Administration and FLGA District LCEF Vice President for 6 years. She was instrumental in coordinating events, booths, communications and more.



Debbie is married to Jim (above) and they enjoy travel — particularly ocean cruising and driving their large RV, fine dining, good wine and friends.

"We are thrilled to have Debbie back on staff," proclaimed FLGA District President, the Rev. Dr. Greg Walton. "She is a hard worker, and blends beautifully with the entire District team and board of directors. She has an effervescent personality and a constant smile of her face." ■

District Calls Accepted
Rev. Dennis Tegtmeier to
Intentional Interim Pastor
Trinity/Athens, GA

Rev. Nathan LeGreco to
Grace/Key West, FL

Rev. Daniel Prugh to
Holy Trinity/Tampa, FL

Transferred Out of FLGA to Other Districts

8/01/20 — Rev. Brian Gauthier to Nebraska District
8/10/20 — Mr. Thomas Menke to Texas District
8/20/20 — Ms. Stacy Dzelzkains to South Wisconsin District
8/27/20 — Rev. John Weiler to Missouri District
9/21/20 — Ms. Ellen Lewis to Pacific Southwest

Transferred Into FLGA from Other Districts

8/21/20 — Ms. Kathy Meier from Minnesota South
9/08/20 — Rev. Joseph Lecke, Jr. from Southern Illinois

Initial Placements of Ordained/Commissioned Ministers

8/16/20 — Mr. Jonathan Kisker from Concordia Nebraska to St. John/Ocala, FL
8/16/20 — Ms. Grace Gunther from Concordia Austin to St. John/Ocala, FL

Installations of Ordained/Commissioned Ministers

8/09/20 — Rev. James Weist, Pastor, Hope/Bradenton, FL
9/02/20 — Mr. James Essig, Principal, First/Clearwater, FL

Status Changes in the District

7/28/20 — Mr. Jon Wareham from Active to Emeritus
10/04/20 — Rev. John Hirst from Active to Emeritus

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LUTHERAN LIFE

Concordia Mequon & Ann Arbor President Announces Retirement

The Rev. Dr. Patrick T. Ferry has announced that he will conclude three decades of distinguished service to Concordia University Wisconsin and Ann Arbor, Michigan in June of 2021. The Board of Regents will plan a national search for his successor.

In his 30th year at Concordia University — 24 of them as president — Ferry told the University's Board of Regents in September that he will retire from his position at the conclusion of the current academic year.

During his tenure, Concordia University Wisconsin has been widely recognized for its excellence in Christian faith and learning, student outcomes, robust program growth in the areas of health science, business, and education, and the successful merger with a sister campus, Concordia University Ann Arbor, MI in 2013.

While the days ahead are ones filled

with great challenges, the university is in an excellent position to move forward.

"After prayerful reflection, I believe that the time is right for change — for me, and for the university," Ferry wrote in his email. "Privileged beyond all deserving, I give thanks to our Lord for the opportunity to be a part of such an extraordinary mission ... For Concordia the focus is appropriately fixed on the future ... The same Lord who has blessed Concordia and has been our help in ages past is our hope for years to come."

Ferry came to Concordia University in 1991 from St. Andrew's Lutheran Church in Laramie, Wyoming, where he served as campus pastor for students at the University of Wyoming. He began his Concordia career as a professor of history. Ferry was inaugurated as the university's 8th president in August of 1997. He is one of

the longest-serving presidents in the institution's 172-year history, overseeing decades of tremendous student, program, and campus growth and Concordia's designation as a top-tier, nationally ranked university.

Florida-Georgia District President, the Rev. Dr. Greg Walton, said this about Ferry, "The announcement of President Pat Ferry's retirement marks the end of an era for Concordia University/Wisconsin. He was instrumental in moving the campus to its current location in Mequon. He was also instrumental in the merger between Concordia University/Wisconsin and Concordia/Ann Arbor, Michigan. He has been an inspirational leader with vision and insight, who gathered a great team around him to serve the needs of students while serving the Church at large.



Working with Pat over the years has been a joy and I have been amazed at all he has accomplished at CUW and CUAA. His well-deserved retirement will leave some large running shoes to fill, but it will

also leave a legacy which will extend well into the future through the many students, faculty and staff he has impacted over his 24 years of service." ■



FLGA Executive Director of Missions and Outreach, Dr. Peter Meier, invites you to join him for Mission Mondays, a one-hour Zoom discussion on a wide-range of mission and outreach topics. Mission Mondays discussions are scheduled for the 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month at 11am

District Middle School Gathering Goes Virtual

Free Event



FLGA District Middle School Gathering slated for November 7th is going virtual! This is a **FREE EVENT** and will offer keynote speakers, the Bread of Stone band (including a live 30-minute casual meet and greet with them). The event will be emceed by Wes Wright and will run from 6 to 9 pm. Additional information is available on the FLGA District Website.



ONE BODY MANY PARTS

As I write this we are just days following the **President's Equip Conference 2020**.

It wasn't the conference I initially envisioned, but it was certainly the conference God can and will use to help shape His Church into the future. In fact, there's still time to check it all out until December 31, 2020 — and it is my hope that many will take the time to experience this first-ever online virtual conference in the Florida-Georgia District.

In 2018, as we began to think about this triennial conference, I began a conversation with Trish Aamoth, former President of the FLGA District LWML. It had been my hope for some time that we could hold a conference all together in one location, hence the theme that emerged, "One Body, Many Parts."

The verses that inspired me came from 1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-27. Here's a portion of that text:

"For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — Jews or Greeks, slaves or free — and all were made to drink of one Spirit. For the body does not consist of one member but of many... But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it."
(1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-14, 24B-27)

We determined that working together was not only God pleasing, but would also reduce costs and give everyone

a greater opportunity for fellowship and learning. It wasn't long before Trish, with the support of her board, signed on, and we began imagining what such a conference would look like. We selected a location that would accommodate the needs of all involved. We walked through the facility and saw the possibilities, and we were all very excited about what this conference could be.

That was all before 2020 reared its ugly head!

We gathered a capable and diverse planning team, headed by Kurt Bickel, and we began planning a wonderful experience for participants. This conference would not only be for the professional church workers — the ordained and commissioned ministers, or for the LWML, but also for the lay leaders in the congregations across the District. For years I've been saying that the future of the church rests in the laity, and I was convinced this conference could offer training to equip each of us to be better suited to share the good news of Jesus in word and deed.

One of my old teammates, the sainted Bill Patrick, had a sign in his office when I was serving in the parish. It said, "If you want to see God laugh, tell Him your plans!" The best laid plans could not have prepared us for a pandemic. Yet, it was becoming clearer and clearer that God had a better plan for us. Quite honestly, there were a number of weeks we struggled in limbo, trying to determine if a live conference could actually happen.

Finally, with the safety and well-being of participants in mind, I made the difficult, and for some, the unpopular call, we would move to a virtual conference. The only problems were I had no idea how a virtual conference

worked, and we had less than 13 weeks to pivot (what has become a very popular concept) and change our format to pull together a virtual conference.

I'm not going to lie. It was a challenge with many moving parts and a huge learning curve for all involved. Yet, if you talk to

the PEC Planning Team, we can each testify to the power of God, and His miraculous grace which guided us through the process.

As I watched the conference, there are a few things I might have done differently, but we really had nothing to compare it to ahead of time. All in all, the results were astounding! All of our main presenters, who had been contracted for a live conference, were more than happy to accommodate this new format, even though it required significant changes in their presentations. We reached out to ministry friends to simply ask for some help with workshops, and the response was overwhelming.

There are more than 100 workshops on a variety of topics for all kinds of workers in the church. I feel pretty certain that anyone could find something of interest to help them strengthen their ministry centered in the Gospel.

It was not the conference I envisioned. It was so much more!

I have seen God work in such a marvelous way through it all. Did you know that the PEC Conference had participants from Puerto Rico, Canada, Nebraska, Ohio, Illinois, Maryland, Tennessee, Louisiana, California, New York, Missouri and Virginia, not to mention Florida and Georgia!



Almost 900 registered for the conference, and will have full access to the material until the end of this calendar year. In other words, this conference went well

beyond anything I could have imagined. It's just a reminder that God has bigger plans and we dare not limit Him!

Already we have had other districts who are building similar conferences, but watched ours closely to learn. Last December I shared with staff a motto for 2020. Perhaps you have seen it.

"Reaching Many in 2020 for Jesus!"

When COVID hit I began to feel that such a thing was impossible. Then I began to see our pastors and churches online, and I saw the reach that many were having, not only in their community, but in some cases across the world! I know that 2020 has been a challenging year for many, and yet, in spite of this, God has been doing amazing things as He reshapes His Church for the future.

The PEC showed me, once again, that we are one body, made up of many parts in God's Church. I saw this in the wonderful team that came together to produce what is a work of love for Jesus and for His Church. I saw it in the District Staff, who pulled together to "eat the elephant a bite at a time" to make this a memorable conference. I saw it in the main presentations,

With Sincere Reflection.
GREG

that seemed to work so well together, from the excellent Bible studies led by Donna Snow, to the relevant and timely information shared by David Kinnaman, to the hysterical but poignant comedy of The Skit Guys. I saw it in the eager workshop leaders, all desiring to strengthen God's Church by pointing us back to Jesus.

My last conference! In some ways so sad, but in another way, so innovative and exciting! It has certainly been a time of growth for me personally, and I believe I have learned lessons that will be with me the rest of my life. God is good all the time, and all the time God is good! I can't imagine a better way to begin the end of my service to the District by providing a conference unlike any other we've had. More than this, it was a conference reminding us that we are **one body, many parts**, drawn together in the love and forgiveness of Jesus. I pray God will use this conference to truly equip His body, the Church, especially in the Florida-Georgia District, to connect people to Jesus. May it provide you with lessons that will stick with you and lead you well into the future in Jesus, and may He always remain our focus, for our future always has been and always will be fixed on Jesus! Amen? Amen!





COVER STORY

A Family Legacy A DISTRICT DYNASTY

How A Family and District Congregation Has Inspired and Energized Ministry

The name Gerhard (“Mike”) Michael, Jr. is a familiar one to the members of the Florida-Georgia District — as well as throughout the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. He served in the District as pastor at Mt. Calvary/Warner Robins, GA for 12 years, then 12 years as the FLGA District President. In his retirement, he is the pastor of a mission congregation, St. Peter/Dahlongega, GA (see page 27).

Mike and his wife and partner in ministry, Joan Michael, are directly or indirectly responsible for a number of church workers — present and future — in the Florida-Georgia District.

The Michael family legacy includes son, The Rev. Greg Michael (wife Kelly), who shepherds students at University of Georgia, Athens, GA through the campus ministry of Christus Victor/Athens, GA; son-in-law, Tim Droegemueller, who is married to Mike & Joan’s daughter, Susan. Tim is pastor at Living Faith/Cumming, GA; son-in-law, Pete LeBoriosis,



Gerhard and Joan Michael flank grandson Joshua LeBoriosis and his bride, Christina at their June, 2019 wedding.

married to Michael daughter Sonja Michael LeBoriosis, will complete his SMP course work in 2021 and serves as Associate Pastor at Mt. Calvary/Warner Robins, GA; grandson, Josh LeBoriosis, who is in his final year at Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, MO,

and will graduate next spring and join the family rank of pastors; and grandson, Nathan LeBoriosis, who is in his freshman year at Concordia University/ Chicago, IL with plans to be a Lutheran elementary school teacher.

That’s a mouthful!

And if you’ve lost count, that’s six men over three generations who are serving, or who will soon be serving the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod as professional church workers.

What a wonderful family legacy!

Oh . . . and then there is Mike & Joan’s son-in-law, Jay Wendland, who serves as FLGA District Vice President of LCEF



Greg & Kelly Michael & Family



Tim & Susan (nee Michael) Droegemueller



David Brighton



Lee Hopf



Luke Shirley



James Bozarth



Laird Van Gorder

in the District Office. Jay is married to Deborah Michael Wendland.

But the story doesn't end there! Mount Calvary/Warner Robins, GA has been a congregation that, over the years, has held up full-time church work as a worthwhile and God-pleasing vocation!

"We are currently enjoying our 20th vicar," explains Mount Calvary's senior pastor, The Rev. David Brighton, "and the presence of these fine young men in the congregation during the past two decades has helped to inspire others to go into full-time church work."

According to Brighton, Pastor Lee Hopf, a son of the congregation, is beginning his fifth year serving at Trinity Klein Lutheran Church in Spring, TX.

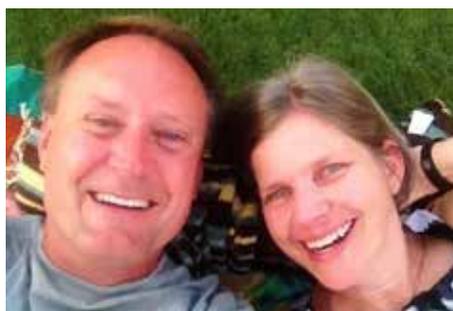
"Luke Shirley is another son of the congregation — and grandson of Jerry Bisping, our Director of Christian Outreach, Emeritus," he continues. "Luke is in his second year at Ft. Wayne Theological Seminary/Ft. Wayne, IN.

"Another son of the congregation, Trevor Hudlin, is currently in college and after completing the required courses for his bachelor's degree, plans to enroll at one of our Concordia Universities to get his DCE degree.

"James Bozarth, a former member of Mount Calvary, through his experiences here, was led to pursue a second career in the ministry and has begun his second year at Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, MO this Fall.

"Another member was also led to pursue a second career in the ministry during his retirement — Pastor Laird Van Gorder will finish his SMP program this year. He is currently serving as Pastor of Holy Trinity/Macon, GA."

Pastor David Brighton puts it this way, "Both of my grandfathers,



Jay & Deborah (nee Michael) Wendland

an uncle, and three cousins have served as pastors in the LCMS and I've always tried to encourage the next generation of young men who have the talents and the nudging of the Holy Spirit to consider full-time church work as a wonderful vocation to pursue. It's been my true pleasure to mentor 20 vicars and 3 SMP vicars during the past 21 years."

Concordia Seminary's Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) Program is a four-year state of the art distance

education program that prepares men for specific pastoral ministries in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Students receive academic training in the setting where they will continue to serve following ordination. While taking classes through Concordia Seminary, they work with local pastor-mentors who support them in the program with day-to-day guidance, encouragement and prayer.

David Brighton has been a champion of this unique program leading to ordination.

"I sincerely believe our staff and the young men who have served as vicars over the years here at Mount Calvary have helped to inspire a 'DNA' in the congregation that encourages all of our church family to live out their faith in their daily lives," he concludes. "I'm so happy that our congregation continues to funnel those with the gifts and passion fueled by the Holy Spirit toward pursuing their dreams to be full-time workers in the Lord's vineyard!" ■



Christus Victor is the campus ministry at UGA being served by The Rev. Greg Michael

Every Christian is called by God to DO SOMETHING! To Make Disciples Who Make More Disciples . . .

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”
— Jesus, MATTHEW 28:18-20

“As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” —Jesus, JOHN 20:21

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” — Jesus, ACTS 1:8



by Peter Meier
Executive Director of
Missions and Outreach
Florida-Georgia District
pmeier@flgadistrict.org

How do you see yourself fitting in to Jesus’ call, to the Great Commission? Make new disciples by starting new faith communities and/or ministries?

What is starting new faith communities or “new starts?” A new start is any new outreach designed to make disciples from starting new ministries to starting new sites and stand-alone congregations. Just as you follow a map when hiking an unknown trail, we have prepared a “Start New Pathway” which offers a “map” to guide you in starting new.

The “Pathway” is quite flexible; you can use it as a guide for starting new ministries, micro-churches, new ministry sites and free-standing (chartered) congregations. We can help you scale this to whatever God is inviting you to “start new.”

Don’t let this pathway overwhelm you. Trails are best conquered one step at a time, and with a guide! (The Start New Pathway in detail is found on the District website).

Make new disciples by gathering with one or more others in a micro-group or discipleship group?

What is a micro-group or a discipleship group? A micro-group and a discipleship group are essentially the same. A micro-group consists of three people. A facilitator (the first person – you!) invites one person. That one person invites one additional person. Micro groups have two rhythms: First, each person individually reads Scripture daily, secondly, the entire group meets together (personally or on line) once a week for 30-90 minutes to apply and share insights from the Word. See the “Disciple-Making Pattern” below for a very simple and reproducible discipling guide. Also, visit the District Website for additional resources and ideas.

A New Start Pathway New Disciples – New Faith Communities Connecting People to JESUS

This will outline a basic pathway for starting a new outreach, ministry, or a new church. These are subject to realities of context and culture, and are offered only as a “map” to reach your goal. You will want to define the goal God is calling you to achieve. We are here to help you custom design a map that fits your situation and goal.

1. Pray

- a. What is God calling you to start?
- b. Take a Personal Prayer Retreat
- c. Gather a Prayer Team

As God confirms your burden/vision...

2. Inquire

- a. Meet with me, the District Mission Executive, to share the dream/vision and to brainstorm
- We are here to help & guide you on the pathway!
- b. Gather mission field demographics
- c. Invite Mission Exec to share New Start concepts
 - Church leadership group
 - Interested lay leaders

3. Equip

- a. Equip Congregation Leaders & Members
Theology and helps for congregations starting new

4. Empower

- a. Secure Congregation Commitment
- b. Develop a Basic Plan and Timeline with your Coach or Mission Exec
- c. New Start Leader Identification, Assessment and Training
- d. Team Recruitment & Discipleship
- e. Develop Community Connections
- f. Ministry Development
 - Ministry Teams
 - Discipleship for Leaders

5. Engage

- a. Vision and Planning for Launch
- b. Administrative Detail
- c. Secure Facility
- d. Soft Launch & Follow-up (if appropriate)
- e. Launch Publicity
- f. Post-Launch Planning

6. Launch

- a. Celebration
- b. Systems development (if appropriate)
Outreach, Connections, Worship, Discipleship, Pastoral Care, Ministry Placement, Generosity, Multiplication, Evaluation

7. Post-Launch

- a. Place/space planning
- b. Multiplying Leadership
- c. Staffing Plan (non-paid/paid)
- d. Becoming an LCMS Congregation (if appropriate)
- e. “Start New” planning (multiplication)

Where is your next “there?”





DISCIPLE-MAKING TOOLS

BE MOTIVATED. GET EQUIPPED. BE AVAILABLE.

How do you see yourself fitting in to Jesus' call, to the Great Commission?

Let us know how we can help!

I am fairly new to the Florida-Georgia District, having been called as the Executive Director of Missions and Outreach. I, along with our District Mission Facilitators, Rev. Victor Belton, Rev. Mike Mast, and Rev. Scott Gress, are ready to walk along-side as you follow Jesus' call to make disciples! You can reach me on my mobile: (952) 221-0362 or via email at pmeier@flgadistrict.org. ■

A Disciple-Making Pattern

Disciples making New Disciples
who make New Disciples
Connecting People to JESUS

Disciple-making is a simple process that can be used by any Christian person at any time in any place. The goal is to follow Jesus' pattern of inviting others into a discipling relationship in which the Holy Spirit teaches us through His Word and in which we live out the Disciple-Life to which He calls us. Here is one simple pattern you can use:

- ❶ Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your meeting.
- ❷ REVIEW from previous week (back arrow): How did you follow Jesus last week? With whom did you share what you learned?
- ❸ DISCOVER the truth from the Scriptures (up arrow). What do we learn about God? What do we learn about ourselves/ other people? Practice telling the story in your group.
- ❹ LIVING THE DISCIPLE-LIFE (forward arrow). Informed by the Scriptures you read, how will you follow Jesus this week? With whom will you share? How can we pray for one another and others?



Make Disciples...
And you just might plant a church!

Note: recommended Disciple-making Resources are available on our District website. These resources and ideas will help you make disciples who make more disciples, who ultimately gather in groups (faith communities) of disciples.

Meet Your FLGA District Mission Facilitators



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Rev. Mike Mast
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Sanford, FL's Redeeming Life Expanding Outreach to Illinois

In order to help more at-risk women and babies, Redeeming Life Outreach Ministries, an official Recognized Service Organization of the LCMS based in Sanford, FL, has expanded its vision to have a maternity home in every district of the LCMS. Partners Sheryl and Edward DeWitt spearhead a diverse team of nurturers, educators and leaders who are passionate about the miracle of life, motherhood and living a Christ-centered life.

"We are committed to providing love, hope and a future to our residents and their unborn children, Sheryl DeWitt emphasized.

In early 2020, the Life Task Force and Maternity Home Steering Committee of the Northern Illinois District (NID) along with LCEF agreed to partner with Redeeming Life about opening a maternity home in the Greater Chicago, IL area.

"The enthusiasm and vision of our brothers and sisters in the NID make this an ideal location for our first expansion home," Sheryl DeWitt offered.

"In 2017, an analysis showed that Illinois had 90 abortion-providing facilities. Additionally, Illinois has some of the most aggressive abortion laws in the country! The need for a Lutheran maternity home program has never been greater," she continued. "Our goal is to redeem the lives of single mothers and their unborn children by providing hope, love and a future as we share the Gospel of Christ."

Early in the initial plans, the NID team received word that a home was being donated to use for this project.

"With the solid infrastructure of Redeeming Life's maternity home program and time-tested policies and procedures, we knew we could be open quickly," Ed DeWitt said. "Unfortunately, the donated property did not materialize, but our partnership with the NID did not waiver. Together we are actively working on expansion plans to open a second maternity home in the Chicagoland area, creating partnership opportunities for our LCMS congregations in the NID to preserve life through a much-needed maternity home program.



"We are actively seeking a congregation that will invite these vulnerable women to be part of their church family, welcoming them in love

and friendship, and sharing God's Love with them through weekly worship, Bible study and Christian fellowship," he explained.

"Once this church family is identified, we will locate a home to purchase very nearby, hopefully within a block or two of the church. The church family is not responsible for the financial obligations or operation of the maternity home; the home is a mission of the entire district and will need support from all congregations and its members. We encourage

and invite every congregation to invest in this positive, pro-life ministry," Ed DeWitt concluded. ■

Kingdom Seed Investments offer one-time dollars to kick-start new starts, while Zero Interest Mission Loans offer more substantial funding.

New Support Provided for New Outreach and Ministry Starts!

Has your church or ministry been considering a new outreach or ministry to reach new people, but felt that you were lacking the resources to get it off the ground? The District Missions team has launched Kingdom Seed Investments and Zero-Interest Mission Loans — offering one-time mission start up investments intended to help established congregations, existing ministries, and new starts to begin new ministries which reach new people in new locations.

"Like a farmer who desires a crop begins with a plan and some seeds, the new Kingdom Seed Investments are intended to help kick-start your outreach plans," The Rev. Dr. Peter Meier, Executive Director of Missions and Outreach, explains.

"These Kingdom Seed Investments are offered for outreach projects which are intended to be long-term and self-sustaining beyond the initial Kingdom Seed Investment."

Like the farmer sowing seed, Kingdom Seed Investments are intended to assist Great Commission engagement by:

- Promoting development of new outreach goals and new ministry starts;
- Assisting congregations with needed start-up resources;
- Encouraging new outreach initiatives which bring Jesus and the Gospel to the community;
- Partnering with staff and lay leaders who have a heart for the desired outcome;
- Providing opportunities for congregation and District leaders to collaborate in outreach;
- Encouraging accountability for outreach planning and implementation.

Zero-Interest Mission Loans are also available in amounts up to \$150,000 for congregations wishing to start new ministries and plant new churches. These zero-interest loans are repayable so that funds can be re-invested in other new mission work.

For more information on the scope and application process for Kingdom Seed Investments or the Zero-Interest Mission Loans, contact Meier in the District Office at pmeier@flgadistrict.org or on his mobile: (952) 221-0362. ■

Despite Pandemic . . . The Message of the Reformation Continues to be “All About Jesus!”



There is no doubt that the pandemic has changed so much of how we live, work, move and have our being. Wearing a mask was never a part of our wardrobe unless we worked in health care. But now masks are not only a part of our daily attire, they have become fashion statements for many people.

A number of people I know here in Plant City, FL have masks adorned with strawberries for hometown pride! You see people who wear a mask to match their outfits, make political statements and thankfully many wear them with a cross, Luther's seal or faith based messages of hope. And for us pastors, I have seen “liturgically correct” colored masks that we can order. Yes, this is a whole new world for sure.



Take heart! Fear not! Here is some great news of greater joy! It is because Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8) that the message of the Reformation has not changed because of this pandemic.

Despite how hard Satan works to keep us distant from each other, this Reformation we can and will again celebrate with joy and gusto both in person and virtually. The message of the Reformation continues to be all about Jesus, just as it was over 500 years ago for Luther. So you see, some things, despite Satan's best efforts, have not changed as we celebrate the truth of the Reformation.

What a day this will be! But you see, we must be careful because the day is NOT about us . . . IT'S ABOUT JESUS!

Just like October 31, 1517 when Martin Luther first nailed those 95 theses to the doors in Wittenberg... it was about Jesus then and is STILL all about Jesus. Just think, it all started with a lowly monk who, as he studied God's inerrant Word, saw that Word being changed and transformed and no longer taught or proclaimed in its truth and purity.

Martin Luther saw Jesus' work

on the cross being minimized if not totally disregarded more and more with the emphasis for salvation being placed more and more on what you/we/I can do to earn salvation. Salvation at the time of Luther was becoming more and more based on works and less and less on Jesus.

Luther stood up and tried to remind the church of his day that salvation then was all about Jesus and that our salvation is from outside of us. The same holds true 503 years later that salvation is ALL ABOUT JESUS!

Salvation is all about what Jesus did for us on the cross and through the empty tomb of Easter. It is about what Jesus does for us through His Holy Spirit who daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. Luther wanted the church to see that we are not saved by our works or anything within us rather, our salvation is found in Christ ALONE!

So here we are 503 years later and guess what . . . our 21st century society is as much in need of a Reformation as was the 16th century. People today (yes, even churches today) continue to believe, teach and confess that salvation is found in being a good person, in doing good deeds, in being a good and productive member of society and in the giving of our resources to help others.

Totally absent in their equation is JESUS. Yup, just like 500 years ago, the Reformation is STILL ABOUT JESUS! It was about Jesus then. It is about Jesus today. I guess the more things change, the more they remain the same! Try as Satan did in Luther's day to take the focus off Jesus, he is doing the same today through the pandemic, civil unrest and political attacks. Satan didn't win then as Luther stood up and spoke up. Satan will not win today as God empowers us to stand up and speak up.

So here we sit with the AWESOME Gospel proclamation that sadly we tend to keep to ourselves instead of living boldly and sharing with others. I am fully convinced that if we did live boldly to share this message with others, we would be increasing the numbers of God's kingdom by leaps

and bounds. We have that

Gospel message that “it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast” (EPH. 2:8-9). You see, there is no way we can earn or buy our salvation. It is God's free gift to us! That's what Luther said then and we say today — 503 years later the message remains unchanged . . . It's ALL about Jesus!

Let's be clear about what Scripture teaches. Salvation is a GIFT of God. It is grace... all grace... sweet, amazing, undeserved, unmerited grace. None of us deserves it. None of us can prove ourselves worthy of it. But thanks



by Dean Pfeffer
Senior Pastor
Hope Lutheran Church
Plant City, FL
Winter Haven
Circuit Visitor

be to God in His love for us, He not only gives it to us, He lavishes it on us! “By grace we are saved, grace free and boundless” (LSB 566).

Dear partners in ministry in our Florida-Georgia District, this torch of the Reformation has been passed through the ages and now is in our hands. It is up to us to pass that torch to future generations and not let it stop here and now. You know as well as I, that if we fail to pass the torch of the Reformation to future generations, someone else will and that message may not be that of Grace Alone, Faith Alone, Scripture Alone, Christ Alone.

God has grace for your life... grace to forgive... grace to remove guilt... grace for a clear conscience... grace to get off the performance treadmill... grace to relieve your hurt. Grace... it's an amazing thing! Maybe your life has been spent trying to prove yourself to God. Maybe you've avoided God because all you thought He did was wag His finger in your face. Take another look. See God as He really is. He is GRACIOUS. ■

First-Ever District Virtual Conference Successfully Merged Church & School Workers With Lay Leaders



The first-ever totally virtual President's Equip Conference took place September 24-26 this year. The Equip Mall — along with all the general sessions and workshops — are open to everyone and can be visited through the end of the year. They have exciting products, along with discounts for registered attendees!

Three General Sessions, each lasting between 1.5 to 2.5 hours, brought words from Greg Walton, keynote speakers and some comic relief from The Skit Guys. Those sessions also celebrated ministry anniversaries.

More than 100 informative videos and words of encouragement were delivered in breakout workshops — many from across the country. A comprehensive list is available on the conference home page. With so many to choose from, you could watch one each day until the end of the year!

Many congregation and school administrators and staff participated in “watch parties” for the general sessions and then broke into smaller groups to watch the workshop videos.

The FLGA Equip Mall was a unique

way to visit contributors from around the country, with giveaways, pertinent information and more. The mall remains on the conference home page through the end of this calendar year. There is also an information resource library. ■



Keynote speaker, David Kinnaman, president of Barna Group, is a leading research and communications guru who energized the PEC with today's statistics about worship participations, congregation membership and more.

FLGA District President Greg Walton welcomed participants to the first virtual PEC and delivered regular prayers and words of encouragement throughout the three-day event. Walton also introduced the District Office staff to participants with a humorous video.



Donna Snow, one of the keynote leaders each day, led the PEC through God's Word. Her clear, down-to-earth style and riveting stories encouraged participants to tune in on the theme One Body, Many Parts.



President Walton gave a video tour of the District Office to introduce the staff. The newest member of the team, The Rev. Peter Meier, executive director for missions and outreach (see page 8 of this issue), made sure viewers knew he was from Minnesota.



Tommy Woodard and Eddie James are “The Skit Guys.” They brought comic relief each morning — since their high-school days, they've been writing and performing hilarious and poignant skits live and on camera. Their material for the conference — delivered on video each day — were themed around “One Body, Many Parts.”

More than 100 workshops were offered — and may still be viewed through December 31st of this year — providing the opportunity for participants to gain valuable insight into a wide range of ideas affecting both church and school ministry.



Shea Pennington, Associate Pastor at Hope/Plant City, FL hosted a workshop on the rapid changes taking place in the way the Christian community is formed and fashioned — particularly as it relates to urban and multi-cultural ministry.



John Peterson, Assistant Principal at Grace/Winter Haven, FL hosted a workshop on accreditation news — particularly as the initiatives that are being planned to help schools maintain accreditation while dealing with the constant changes caused by the COVID pandemic.



Anne Dobbins hit just the tip of the iceberg — about what Mission:Haiti and the FLGA District is doing with teachers in Haiti. She shared details, photos and stories and encouraged video participants to consider being a part of this education mission.



Leaders of schools and churches have been faced with numerous decisions since mid-March and likely haven't even had a chance to catch their breath. Coli Escher hosted this session offering tips and reflect on your recent decision-making and communication and ways to help prepare your organization to move from barely surviving to thriving.



Megan Miessler, CEO of Lutheran Counseling Services, tackles the subject of navigating difficult interactions with parents, especially during these COVID-19 anxious times. She presents tools and strategies to bring the anxiety level in the room down.



Pump the brakes! Phil Klopke, co-director of 1,000 Young Leaders with the Pastoral Leadership Institute, explains how the Millennial Generation has just surpassed the Boomer Generation in population — but none are in our pews. He share ways you can start encouraging them.



Jeff Skopak, pastor at Grace/Jacksonville, FL, takes a fresh look at how a congregational ministry can serve those who are not active in a church community but have chosen a Christian School for their child.



Josh Brink challenged his video participants to examine, reflect on, and plan for the inherent challenges of teaching music remotely, both synchronously and asynchronously — as we move through these pandemic times.



Dr. Kim Marxhausen explains how months of sheltering, and the prospect of returning to school has created a nasty side-effect to COVID 19 — anxiety. Chronic worry does impact learning, but there are things we can do to tame this monster.



Deaconess Elizabeth Borth of **Redeeming Life Outreach Ministries/Sanford, FL** was the winner for the FLGA Scavenger Hunt during the recent PEC.

Participants were challenged to find and submit all kinds of items — from congregation bulletins, pictures of their group participating with the convocation theme, a photo of Jesus, a photo of Martin Luther, Luther’s small catechism and more. All the items had to be assembled in a single photo and submitted.

A gift card was the prize. ■



Anita Glanzer of **St Lukes/Ovideo, FL** was the winner of the PEC Anniversary Contest.

A gift card was the prize.

Several discounts are being offered at the FLGA Booth in the Equip Mall. Some of the merchandise is discounted through the end of October and other things are through the end of the calendar year. ■



Pastor Jay Winters of **University Lutheran/Tallahassee, FL** tells us that Florida State University has a top priority ensuring the health and safety of the entire campus community. “Stay Healthy FSU” is a public health portal for individuals living, working, or studying on the FSU campus. More information is available on the FSU website at fsu.edu.

University is worshipping both online and in person on Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings. Details at universitylutheranchurch.org/ ■

CONNECTING LUTHERAN CONGREGATIONS WITH NEIGHBORS AROUND THE WORLD

God's Love IN ACTION

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Floodwaters and COVID-19 cases are rising in India and Nepal. Learn how your congregation can help vulnerable families.

Visit our new suite of resources to help your congregation love our global neighbors.

lwr.org/congregations



Jake Lyell for LWR



Campus Life Slowly Returns to a New Normal at UGA Athens, GA

The new academic year has begun on college campuses across the nation. For many that means online classes; for many others it means campus life that looks much different.

“This is a challenging time to be a student just about anywhere on the planet,” explains The Rev. Greg Michael, pastor at Christus Victor Lutheran Church and Student Center at University of Georgia, Athens, GA.

“For incoming students especially, isolation is real and the precautions of masks and social distancing only further complicate the challenges of being away from the community to which you have grown accustomed.”

Such dynamics mean both challenges and opportunities for campus ministries. It is a challenge

because the usual means of engagement and invitation, such as personal invitation, has grown much more difficult to employ.

“Meals are eaten six feet apart or are taken out of the student centers and restaurants. Visiting other students’ dorm rooms is not permitted at this time. Social distancing makes it easier to avoid people you do not know. And for those who still brave breaking the barrier down, the inability to read facial expressions due to masks makes it difficult to gauge responses and assess how to continue and further the conversation.”

But according to Michael, it is also a great opportunity. Online connections provide opportunities to engage a community from a distance and explore the possibilities without the same fears that exist going into a new situation completely alone. The heightened awareness of the utter lack of connections reveals the created need for relationships.

“Even the most introverted people realize that they need human interaction — we all need meaningful community,” Michael continues. “As

such, those of us in campus ministry get to reach out and foster such relationships. We can provide human interaction that is missing in so many lives and bring people together, even distanced or online, to have meaningful interaction. We get to gather around the Word incarnate; we get to spend time in common activity; we get to talk and share these different times in the joy of the One who goes with us.

“Yes, we can help people gather around relationships that have meaning — meaning centered in the One who made us for relationships and restores us to the same. Indeed, the challenges are great and these times are difficult . . . but make no mistake, our God is using these times to engage people with his love and with hope,” he concludes. “Please pray for our campus ministries and pray for the students; pray that they would know the togetherness we have in Christ in the midst of these separating times.” ■



Students at UGA/Athens Christus Victor participated in a “socially distant” scavenger hunt on campus one recent evening. Students participating were Tose Akinmola, Everett Wayman, Matthew Shipman, Emma Sivills, Becca Rau, Liam Monast, Emily Leib, Austin Burnette, and Zane Placie. Above — they create the cover of the Beatles Abbey Road album. At left, looking for clues in the campus bell tower. Upper left, clues were hidden in a freezer and at lower right they pose in front of one of the fountains on campus.





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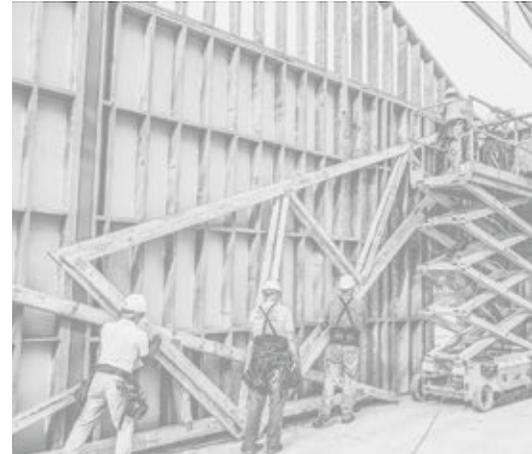
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THREE WAYS TO SUPPORT THE CHURCH

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St John's by the gas station is a church that has a lot in common with many other churches in the United States. They have had a rich history of worship and Bible studies. There was a long stretch of time where they had the best day care in town. Everyone seemed to want to send their kids there. For a while they also had this



awesome Wednesday night supper that would regularly run out of food.

Christmas and Easter they would run out of worship space.

But that was a long time ago — even before the pandemic the attendance was beginning to grow sparse. It's not so much the pastor's fault, although he catches a lot of the blame. It just seems that the energy of that time has come and gone. Now as this pandemic stretches on, the in-person worship is really thin and the online numbers are pretty light and while people are giving, the base of support is getting smaller and smaller.

Some are whispering that our options for responding appropriately and thoughtfully are also really limited. We can't make people come to church and we can't make them give. It doesn't seem to be working.

Yet the coaching leader asks, "How do you know it's working" and "Where are you looking?"

If a mechanic opened up your trunk to look and see why the motor was running roughly you might wonder about the wisdom of the mechanic. But if he pulled out the scanner looking for error codes to diagnose the problem and then opened the hood of the car and within two minutes identified your problem

and the solution you might think he was either crazy or a genius.

Knowing where to look makes all the difference in the world.

The problem with "church" is that we keep looking at the wrong thing. We know the attendance and giving figures

are weak. Next, we identify our attempts to address it don't always work. So we are tempted to just ignore the problem or throw up our hands in defeat.

But the coaching leader asks deeper questions to know what's going on. Attendance and giving are lagging indicators of what is called engagement. Small steps in engagement over time raise those numbers. But that means you need to intentionally look, learn and adjust your approach in order to increase



engagement. Call it a new dashboard to indicate where people are in their journey with you and growing closer to Jesus.

But how? How do you measure engagement during a pandemic? There are as many ways as your curiosity and creativity can design!

It's not just online views and length of views through YouTube or Facebook. How have you invited engagement through a free downloadable resource? How have you offered an email request

How Do You Measure Engagement During A Pandemic? How Do You Know It's Working?



by Scott Gress
Lutheran Counseling
Services
Leadership Coach
Florida-Georgia District

for more information? Then how many downloads and emails have taken place? How many forum posts for prayer requests have been made on your online forum? How many new names or unique visits? How many calls have come in? From whom? How many have registered for that service or activity you promoted in both your online and in person service? How many unique log-ins and comments were made during your live stream? Then even more importantly, how did you respond in the moment? How did you

engage with them?

The new dashboard is far less about "group" and gathering and far more about "individuals" and engagement. Look under the hood. Notice, design and build in on-ramps for engagement. Then consistently and persistently invite people to journey with you through the next step. Work hard at meeting and loving those individuals, even if it is only digitally. This is the new dashboard

to look at to make friends who may not yet be close friends with Jesus.

One life at a time.

One contact at a time.

One day at a time.

It is only limited by your creativity and intentionality. God bless your engagement! ■

Contact Scott Gress through email scottgress@me.com or his blog page scottgress.com or his mobile 561-542-4472.

Lutheran World Relief Providing Aid in Beirut, Lebanon Following Massive August Port Explosion



In the early evening on August 4, 2020, a fire believed to be in a fireworks factory, led to a small explosion and then a massive explosion of a warehouse holding

holding this cache of ammonium nitrate since 2014 when it was seized from a Russian cargo ship.

According to John Rivera of **Lutheran World Relief**, three 40-foot

containers containing the quilts and kits were stored behind a concrete block building, a spot that protected them from the blast.”

“The quilts and kits have since

INTERNATIONAL LUTHERAN NEWS

3,030 U.S. tons of ammonium nitrate in the port area of Beirut, Lebanon. For comparison, Timothy McVeigh used two tons of ammonium nitrate in the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, which killed 168 people.

shipping containers have been found intact. They had been filled with thousands of mission quilts and both school and personal or baby care kits. They were thought to have been destroyed in the blast.

“It took several weeks for Lutheran World Relief’s partner to gain access to the port area where the containers were stored, Rivera said. “While some of our partners shipping containers were heavily damaged, it appears that the three

been transferred to a warehouse, from where they will be distributed to refugees living in Lebanon, principally from Syria and the Palestinian territories.

Lutheran World Relief is also working to address immense shelter needs in the wake of the explosion, helping poorer families to repair and return to their homes. For more information or to donate: <https://lwr.org/beirut>. ■



Ammonium nitrate is a common fertilizing agent and the main ingredient in explosives used in mining. The warehouse had been



Baby Care Kit Collection

- Socks
- Receiving blankets
- Cotton t-shirts (no onesies)
- Diaper pins or large safety pins
- Gowns or sleepers (without feet)
- Hooded jackets, sweaters or sweatshirts

SCHOOL KIT	
	FOUR 70-sheet notebooks of wide- or college-ruled paper, approximately 8" x 10 1/2"
	ONE 30-centimeter ruler
	ONE pencil sharpener
	ONE pair of blunt scissors
	FIVE unsharpened #2 pencils with erasers
	FIVE black or blue ballpoint pens (no gel ink)
	ONE box of 16 or 24 crayons
ONE 2 1/2" eraser	

FLORIDA GEORGIA

Out and About in the District

Send Your News & Photos to lutheranlife@aol.com

YouTube Message Shows How to Shine The Light of Christ



Ashlyn Swenson, director of youth and family ministries at **Ascension/Casselberry, FL**, reminded the children — and those who appreciate a good children’s message — that in order to properly shine the light of Christ, we need each other. “Together, we are called to be the light and to shine it for everyone to see,” she demonstrated. She used a lantern and batteries to illustrate her message. The congregation is currently only meeting via virtual online worship. To watch her full message, visit this YouTube link: youtube.com/watch?v=ztyqbCQdtno ■

Hope Returns to In-Person Worship, Offers Saturday Eve Communion



Associate Pastor Will Murphy, **Hope/Bonita Springs, FL**, offered an encouraging video on the congregation’s Facebook page with details about returning to in-person worship as well as how to make a reservation for Saturday evening communion. Hope hasn’t had in-person worship since March. ■



Students at **Faith/Marietta, GA** decided to honor the Americans who perished in the September 11th attacks 19 years ago. 246 people went to sleep in preparation for their morning flights. 2,606 people went to sleep in preparation for work in the morning. 343 firefighters went to sleep in preparation for their morning shift. 60 police officers went to sleep in preparation for morning patrol. 8 paramedics went to sleep in preparation for the morning shift. None of them saw past 10:00am Sept 11, 2001. In one single moment life may never be the same.

The students made individual flags and then posted them in the window to ensure those walking by would #Never Forget. ■

Grace/Jacksonville Renovates During Pandemic

March 15, 2020 will be date many will not forget — the day most of the world shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, at **Grace/Jacksonville, FL** it will also be remembered as the day renovation and repairs began on the sanctuary and other facilities around the campus.

Grace was prepared for worship services to be moved into the gym for three or four Sundays. During that time there was no plan to livestream services. However, in a period of 24 hours the Grace Leadership Team (Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Skopak, Rev. Michael Popp, and Principal Jennifer Tanner) lead the staff to transitioning the Christian Day School (Grades Pre-K to 8th) to online as well as all Chapel services and Sunday morning worship.

A sound stage was created in the gym for video live-streaming purposes all the while the sanctuary was torn apart (due to water intrusion) and put back together along with upgrades to internet, audio and video equipment. Due to the pandemic the work was slowed down and the original projection of 3 to 4 weeks stretched to 10 weeks. Unfortunately, the congregation has had to delay any plans of “re-dedication” until they can safely gather together in person for a grand celebration. Meanwhile, the newly renovated facilities are being used for in-person worship over three services on Sunday mornings, three chapels a week to accommodate distancing needs for the school which is ‘in-person,’ and now serves as the classroom for Mrs. Alicia Crespo, the school music teacher in order to provide safer distancing.

The timely upgrades to the technology in the sanctuary along with the other necessary renovations has enabled Grace to provide a better online production for its community as well as a freshly renovated sanctuary for those who choose to worship in person. Even in pandemic the Gospel ministry goes forward! ■



Before – and After!
above and at left, Grace’s sanctuary while under renovation. Below is school chapel meeting in the newly renovated facility. The congregation is holding off on a re-dedication celebration service until they can safely gather again.



Temp Checks and Plexiglass Partitions = New Norm

Our Savior/Plantation, FL is back to full-time school with a wide-range of precautions in place to ensure safety for both students and staff. Below, a student receives a temperature check as she arrives on campus. Middle photo — plexiglass stations have been created at desks and masks

are required for everyone other than when eating or drinking.

Far right — students participate in a “hands on” art class during masked instruction. They are all encouraged to develop their own style and unique artistic abilities. ■



St John/Ocala Gets Creative During Quarantine



As Florida has moved into a combination of In-Person and Online Church and School worship, Jeff & Anette Shanks at **St. John/Ocala, FL**, have created a couple of unique opportunities during quarantine to bridge these two.

10@10 Prayer Time

Pastor Jeff Shanks gathers people daily (Monday-Thursday) on Facebook Live for a short Scripture reflection, song and time of prayer (including prayer requests taken in real time).

Not only have members and friends from the Ocala community joined in, but the 10@10 community regularly includes people from multiple states who join in as well.

One of the most encouraging parts of this virtual gathering is that people have become connected across states and pray for each other on an ongoing basis and give each other encouragement.

Lessons on 48th Lane Devotions for the Whole Family

Every Thursday evening at 6:30pm, Pastor Jeff and Anette Shanks (Director of Family Life) put together a weekly family devotion on Facebook Live from their home (hence



Lessons of 48th Lane have involved, the story of Jacob (a rather slimy guy). Anette and Jeff Shanks used capes and corn starch to illustrate pro-wrestler, "The Jacobnator," who comes to lay claim to a world record.

the name Lessons from 48th Lane). The format might include the theme song, skit, object lesson or cooking lesson or puppet show, the evening's Bible Story, application and prayer.

The Shanks began doing these during quarantine and then continued them once things began to reopen. After the live session, they upload the video to the St. John – Ocala, FL YouTube channel for playback. Even with school returning in person for many, 20% of our students have remained online, so the St. John elementary teachers have been using each week's lesson in their classrooms and having the online students watch them as well.

Like the 10@10 devotions, the audience has expanded beyond

Florida. Visit YouTube's "Lessons on 48th Lane" and St. John Lutheran Church, Ocala, Florida on Facebook. ■



A puppet show was presented in one of the back to school YouTube "Lessons on 48th Lane."

Plantation Offers Virtual Noah's Ark

Sunday school teachers Jennifer Strickman and her son, Preston, communicated with their **Our Savior/Plantation, FL** students through a mailing in September. Each student received their own personalized package with a bible story devotion, activity book, face mask, Thrivent t-shirt and personalized cards.

It was a Noah's Ark-Rainbow theme and the face masks were tie dyed for the theme. "We received heart warming stories about how excited these young students were to receive their own package in the mail," said Preston Strickman (at right). ■



Redeemer/Stuart Students Drinking, Dyeing, Combating Fires and Solving Campus Crimes



Karen McChrystal's third-grade class at Redeemer/Stuart, FL studied Scientific Properties by making Root Beer Floats. As quoted by one of the 3rd graders it was "Scientifically Delicious!"



Redeemer/Stuart, FL's Kindergarten class enjoyed a visit from Martin County Fire Rescue Lieutenant Paul Jones. He visited as the concluding part of their Community Helpers unit and gave instruction to the class about fire safety.

The Fifth Grade class has been working on making inferences. In September they came into class to find that there had been a crime committed — someone had pilfered their cookies, and left a giant mess behind. They had to use their inferencing skills to solve the crime.



Above and below — A youth event at Redeemer/Stuart, FL involved a tie-dye project to put a "cross" on tee-shirts. According to Joy Beach, "it was a lot harder than it looks!"



Amazing Grace/Oxford Celebrates Second Anniversary

When Pastor James Rockey tasked his team with the question “What CAN we do to experience Christ and share Christ in these COVID-19 times?,” **Amazing Grace Early Learning Center/Oxford, FL** staff and stakeholders responded in a big way! On Friday, October 2nd, more than 100 parents, children, staff and church members came together to celebrate their second anniversary, the commissioning of staff members, the gifting of Family Faith Kits to students and the work that God is doing during an outdoor Family Chapel. The evening culminated with an ice cream social.

Understanding that safety during the pandemic is of utmost importance, care was taken to let those attending know in advance and during the event to stay socially distanced and to wear masks during the event — other than when eating. Families were overjoyed to have a time outside of drop-off and pick-up to be together in a safe way. At times when staying apart is the norm, coming together safely to celebrate what the Lord is doing at Amazing Grace was the answer to many prayers.

During the Family Chapel Service, the older children sang while parents stood on tiptoes to record their voices. The younger students sat with parents and joined in as they are familiar with the songs. Family Faith Kits, which include a children’s Bible, a candle, Wee Sing Bible CD’s and instructions on how to have a “Jesus Time” were given and received enthusiastically.

Amazing Grace Lutheran Church and Early Learning Center are encouraged by the success of this event and already planning a variety of events as we answer the question, “What CAN we do to experience Christ and share Christ during these COVID times?” ■



Every fall **St. Paul/ Weston, FL** has a very special event for pet owners. It is the annual “Blessing of the Animals.” Pastor Scott Henze (left) conducts the event in remembrance of Francis of Assisi’s love for all creatures. This year’s service was conducted the first Sunday of October. ■

New Teachers & Anniversaries Celebrated in Winter Haven



Five new teachers were installed and one was commissioned at **Grace/Winter Haven, FL** in late summer. Left to right: Melissa Davis (Kindergarten), Tracy Navaro (MS Literature), Sarah Duffy (Commissioned / Music), Christie Thompson (3rd Grade), Adrienne Richardson (Art). Seven individuals celebrated years of distinguished service. From left — Julie Sear (2nd Grade – 30 years), Gillian McIntee (School Administrative Assistant – 10 years), Jon Peterson (Assistant Principal/Technology – 35 years), Teri Ogle (Assistant Treasurer/HR – 30 years), Michael Rottmann (Principal – 25 years), Leah Welter (Director of Youth and Family Life – 15 years), (not pictured – Jessica Zealley, PK4 – 15 years).



Michael Duffy (at right), Concordia Seminary/Saint Louis, MO, is serving his vicarage year at Grace, and his wife Sarah is serving as the school music teacher. ■



Our Savior/Ocala Executes Virtual Summer VBS Program



Danny, Titus, and Pastor Joe Signore doing their egg drop project.

Instead of having a traditional on-campus Vacation Bible School this summer, **Our Savior/Ocala FL** used a 'virtual VBS' program, *Faith Lab at Home*, reports Anna Signore, VBS Director. The congregation donated supplies and assembled kits that included everything needed for five days worth of projects and snacks. Families picked up their VBS kits at a drive-through event. During the week of VBS, our families shared videos and photos of our activities, songs, and Bible verses. We awarded prizes every day for participation. It was a big hit with the families in our congregation as well as the greater community! ■



Anna Signore with paper bags full of VBS supplies during the drive through supply pick up event.



Hannah Hart assembling VBS supply kits

Kyrie Hart with her spaghetti tower project.

St. Paul/Boca Raton Renovates During Pandemic

St Paul/Boca Raton, FL didn't waste anytime after COVID-19 shut down corporate worship. They had planned a sanctuary renovation for later in the year but jumped right in when their contractor was available to begin immediately. The sanctuary holds between 350 and 400 people comfortably and they expect to gain about another 100 seats in the remodel.

During the renovation the congregation has been worshipping online virtually — at least until August when they began social distancing in the Family Life Center.

“Our 85-by-130-foot gymnasium does a pretty good job as a worship center with high-tech acoustics and lighting and video capabilities,” explains Senior Pastor Steve Carretto. “It enables us to comfortably seat people in both our morning services while maintaining an adequate social distance between families.”

St. Paul's Pre-K through 8th Grade school opened with regular classes as well as virtual education for families and students to make a choice appropriate for their requirements. The Family Life Center continues to be used as a gym for the church's school athletic activities as well as weekday Bible classes.

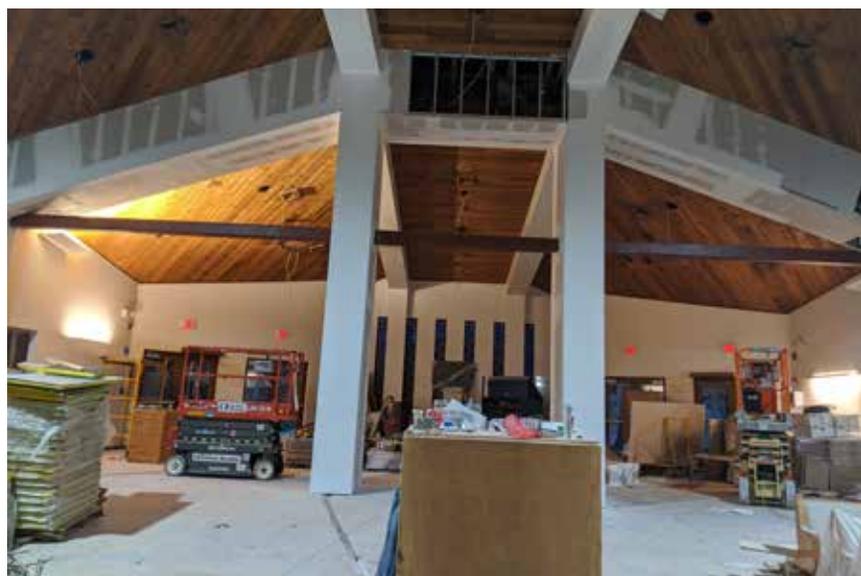
“Both our contemporary 9 am worship and our traditional 10:45 worship are seating approximately 100 people each week. We rented an electronic organ that was carefully tuned for the room and it's worked very well,” Carretto says.

The renovation project includes a wall of glass separating the sanctuary from the narthex, new staging and communion rail access, new carpet, paint, and new air-conditioning system. Congregants will no longer have to climb steps to reach the communion rail.

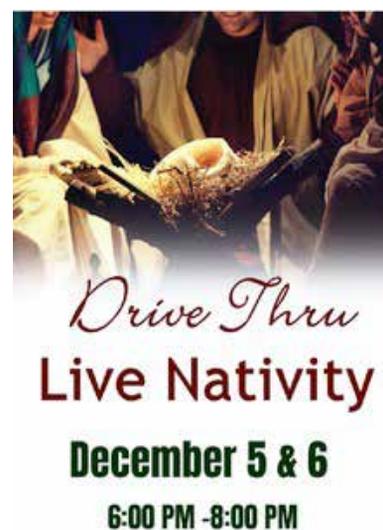
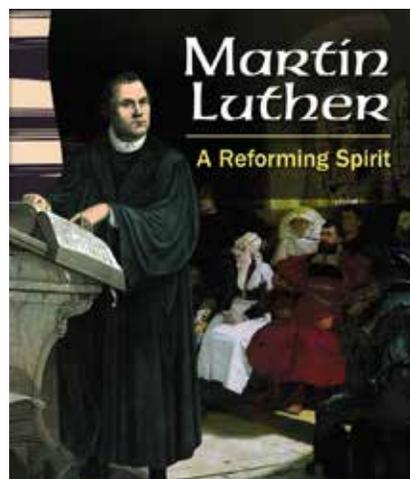
In addition to the main room renovation of the rest rooms are being expanded and reconfigured to meet today's codes for ADA requirements.

“Completion is anticipated for Thanksgiving worship. During the abbreviated distancing the choirs are not singing but we are utilizing duets, trios and quartets as well as our praise team members to lead the singing.”

St. Paul has also formed a monthly gathering on the campus athletic fields with large screens for prayers and singing while the members bring lawn chairs and distance themselves. ■



St. Paul/Weston, FL has launched an adult Bible study series kicking off in late September, celebrating Reformation entitled: *A Man Named Martin*. They also plan to repeat their live nativity in December as a “drive-through” event..



The Rev. James D. Weist was installed as Senior Pastor at **Hope/Bradenton, FL** where he had been serving since May, 2020. He follows the Rev. Craig Mathews, who retired after serving that congregation ten years. Weist was installed on August 9, 2020. Pictured (from left) Pastors Justin Pahl, Tampa, Tony Durante, Our Savior/Plantation, FL; Mr. Roy Heflin, DCE, Sun City Center, FL; Jack Gebhardt, Grace/The Gathering Place, Port St. Lucie, FL; Jim Weist, Jeff Johnson, The Church in Miramar/Miramar, FL; Craig Mathews, Emeritus, Hope/Bradenton, FL; Rob Hinz, Hope/Bradenton, FL; Mike Mast, Christ the King/Largo, FL and Regional Mission Facilitator. Pastor Mast officiated. ■



St. Peter/Dahlonega, GA is pleased to announce the addition of the Rev. Dr. David Kruger (right) to its pastoral staff. Kruger join the Rev. Dr. Gerhard Michael (left) and will share in preaching and teaching, provide guidance and support to the congregation's counseling ministry and strengthen outreach to individuals, families, youth and University of North Georgia students.

A graduate of Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, MO in 1972, Kruger also earned a Doctor of Ministry degree from Christ Seminary/Ormond Beach, FL in 1983, with a special emphasis in pastoral care and counseling.

On Sunday, September 13, 2020 Pastor Kruger conducted services at St. Peter and a reception in his honor immediately followed. ■



Four ladies from **Bethel/Clearwater, FL** attended the President's Equip Conference "watch party" at their church. Shown here, from left, at Gail Leppert, Karen Brasted, Jane Otte, Kathy Miller. ■



St Paul/Boca Raton Integrates Staff Trivia, Team-Building Exercises Into PEC Conference

A delicious continental breakfast with pastries, bagels, coffee, tea and bottles of water kicked off the District President's Equip Conference at **St. Paul/Boca Raton, FL**, held in their Family Life Center. They were able to keep a safe distance at large round tables scattered around the room each with great views of the big screen over the stage.

Prior to the general sessions, Senior Pastor Steve Carretto gathered information about each participant and then challenged the room by offering trivia details about their past — such as sports, academics, how they met their spouse, instruments they played, drama performances, hobbies and other interesting facts. He had the room in stitches as they learned more

about each other and became a closer family during the 3-day event.

After breaking into teams the group had to assemble skeleton bodies using only an assigned part of their own body — laying groundwork for the “One Body, Many Parts” theme. The board of elders served the staff a delicious lunch on Friday. ■



Classrooms across campus were utilized for the breakout sessions.



Mark Lohmeyer gets some blue tape on the “head” of the body prior to having to put it on the wall.



Susan Franskousky attempts to fix a section of the “body” on the wall only using her right foot.



Left — Jeff Potter, Assistant Principal, shared the master of ceremonies duties with Pastor Carretto and St. Paul School Principal Jim Richards. The faculty and administration roared with laughter when they learned during trivia games that Potter had been a synchronized swim star in college. He quickly dropped to the gym floor and demonstrated his skills for the entire room.



Participants gathered for a group photo on Day #2 of the event.



Recognized for ministry anniversaries were Susan Franskousky (15), Steve Carretto (10), and Donna Evensen (15).

Woodlands/Montverde Confirms 7 Youth

On Saturday September 19, **Woodlands/Montverde, FL**, held their confirmation service that was supposed to happen in May but because of COVID-19 was pushed back to September. There were seven young people confirmed during the service.

Pastor Joshua Pettit led a completely separate service for confirmation. The theme focused on family.

“The words you are going to hear are going to seem kind of ancient or old-fashion. However, these are the words your parents confessed, your grandparents, and great-grandparents confessed on their confirmation days,” Pettit explained. “These are the things they believed and confessed and taught each generation all the way to our confirmands here today!” He told them that they are connected not only to that family from generation to generation but also the Church family that was present. They too confessed this same faith as their own.”

When they confessed their faith they were before the congregation but with a different twist. Because the theme was family, the confirmands confessed their faith with their parents and Godparents standing behind them supporting them. The family of God supported

them through this milestone in their life. The service reminded the confirmands they were not alone and that just because they confessed their faith, their life long learning of being a disciple of Jesus had not ended and that they were not alone on this walk. ■



Messiah/Tampa Hosts Successful Food Drive

Messiah/Tampa, FL successfully accomplished a food drive on a Sunday morning late in September. The goal was to unite the congregation to be the hands and feet of Jesus to those in need. Like most congregations they have a significant number of members who are high risk and are continuing to worship online through their livestream broadcasts.

People drove through and dropped off food. Some did this as they came to church in person while those not comfortable returning to corporate worship dropped food and watched the livestream of the service at home. Messiah gathered 4,600 pounds of food to support three local food pantries and a Backpack Food Program at one of their local elementary schools. ■



The following District individuals in ministry in our congregations and schools were recognized.

Congratulations!

Name	Anniversary Year	Name	Anniversary Year	Name	Anniversary Year
Isabel Beaumont	10	Kayla Swetz	15	Diane Frusco	35
Laura Brickey	10	Rev. Charles Trower	15	Rev. Stephen Gaulke	35
Rev. Stephen Carretto	10	Jamie Wagner	15	Rhonda Georgas	35
Rev. Luis Diaz	10	Leah Welter	15	Natalee Hallstead	35
Skylar Ead	10	Rev. David Wesche	15	Rev. Richard Lineberger	35
Stephanie Finley	10	Jessica Zeally	15	Rev. Scott McLean	35
Rev. Brian Gauthier	10	Rose Baez	20	Rev. Dr. Warren Miller	35
Rev. Hiruy Gebremichael	10	Lenore Berlinski	20	Jon Peterson	35
Rev. Zachary Hoffman	10	Rev. Samuel Boodle Sr.	20	Rev. William Sielk	35
Andrew Kaley	10	Esther Callava	20	Rev. Dr. Henry Baum	40
Kate Matson	10	Amy Dotson	20	Rev. Craig Bode	40
Rev. Terry McKee	10	Cathy Douglas	20	Rev. Dr. Richard Carlton	40
Shelby Means	10	Laurie Eriksen	20	Rev. Jonathan Frusti	40
Kaitlin O'callhan	10	Linda Fitzgerald	20	Rev. Steven Hess	40
Rev. Enrique Orozco	10	Angela Fletcher	20	Rev. John Karch Jr.	40
Emma Pinter	10	Rev. Gary Held	20	Rev. Dr. Jeffery Moore	40
Rev. Miguel Sanabria Sr.	10	Teresa Justice	20	Elaine Popp	40
Holly Schlakman	10	Rev. Marc Kappel	20	Rev. Paul Rauscher	40
Jessica Shea	10	Peter Kiehn	20	Rev. Edward Scott	40
Rev. Tod Shouse	10	RaQuel Marten	20	Brenda Sorren	40
Lisandria Slavin	10	Katy Miller	20	Chaplain Gary Bomberger	45
Laura Swanson	10	Karyn Scarpa	20	Mark Brink	45
Kristin Volz	10	Karli Schultz	20	Rev. Dr. Thomas Fuqua	45
Arline Reilly	15	Rev. Roger Schwartz	20	Rev. Stephen Schafer	45
Lesley Agosta	15	Rev. Joseph Song	20	Rev. Earl Steffens	45
Carol Branam	15	Karen Atkinson	25	Rev. Lawrence Zimmermann	45
Heidi Branan	15	Rev. Edward DeWitt	25	Rev. Larry Dexheimer	50
Janiclaire Comstock	15	Rev. Jeffrey Jensen	25	Rev. Richard Drankwalter	50
Jennifer Cruz	15	Rev. Frank Kinast	25	Rev. Dr. Gary Genzen	50
Rev. Dr. Joel Dietrich	15	Rev. Peter LeBorious	25	Rev. Marvin Huggins	50
Tina Eaton	15	Patrice Moore	25	Rev. Thomas Moore	50
Donna Evensen	15	Rev. Benito Perez-Lopez	25	Rev. Timothy Nickel	50
Susan Franskousky	15	Rev. Manfred Poeppel	25	Rev. Pat O'Brien	50
Jeremy Fritz	15	Rev. John Rallison	25	Rev. Elmer Riffel	50
Cheryl Hodge	15	Rev. Clarence Reinke Jr.	25	Rev. Harlan Schoenrock	50
Christine Kamikazi	15	Michael Rottman	25	Rev Stephen Schroeder	50
Nicole Kneser	15	Shirley Schultz	25	Rev. Robert Steinke	50
Jill Koch	15	Lynn Tomich	25	Rev. Richard Arndt	55
Elizabeth Kozieracki	15	Christy Wenzlaff	25	Rev. Dennis Glander	55
Rev. Gregory Le Sieur	15	Joni Zehnder	25	Rev. David Mennicke	55
Rev. Dana Loney	15	Rev. Adolfo Borges	30	Rev. Dr. Gerhard Michael Jr.	55
Heather Lowing	15	Rev. Dr. R. John Buuck	30	Rev. Ronald Mueller	55
Nick Moss	15	Beth Cameron	30	Rev. Robert Stuenkel	55
Rev. Michael Mueller	15	John Glanzer	30	Rev. Dr. Rodger Meyer	60
Rev. Christopher Patterson Jr.	15	Debra McFadden	30	Rev. William Splitgerber	60
Rhiannon Raschke	15	Rev. Richard Rossow	30	Rev. Paul Wittenberg	60
Angie Rush	15	Julie Sear	30	Rev. Roland Roehrs	65
Brenda Spieler	15	Ruth Wessling	30	Rev. Dr. Hubert Temme	65
Rev. Dr. Brian Stolarczyk	15	Rev. Dr. David Brockhoff	35	Rev. Dr. Paul Foelber	70

Mount Calvary Hosts Watch Party for PEC Conference



Mount Calvary/Warner Robins, GA had great participation at their watch party during the District President's Equip Conference in September. Above, (back row left to right) are Pastor Andrew Howe, Pastor David Brighton, Marcia Brighton, Vicar Tim Barber, Pastor Pete LeBoriosis and Richard Kesler. Bottom Row — DPM Ellen Prohl, Pat Hickman, Jerry Bisping (Emeritus), Jan Clark and Vivian Stilley



Back Row (from left) – Pastor Pete LeBoriosis, Pastor David Brighton, DPM Ellen Prohl, Jerry Bisping, Vicar Tim Barber, Pastor Andrew Howe, Keith Dierking. Seated (from left) Marcia Brighton, Regina Reagan, Vivian Stilley, Pat Hickman, Rhoda Reilly, Jan Clark and Ruthie Radcliff. ■

Two Icons Recognized at New Port Richey Watch Party



Rev. Tom Wenndt reports from **Faith/New Port Richey, FL** that three retired pastors were honored for their years of service during the “Celebrations” event of the recent President’s Equip Conference. At left is the Rev. Richard Arndt and his wife, Pam, who celebrated 55 years of ministry. At right is Rev. Hubert Temme and his wife, June, honored for 65 years of ministry. Rev. Hubert H. (Hu) Temme’s first call was as a missionary to the Australian Aborigines, then as a mission planter, and pastor of other congregations. Rev. Temme was an Australian Army Reserve Chaplain, chairperson of the Board of Aboriginal Missions, and guest speaker on the Australian Lutheran Hour. Here in the U.S., Rev. Temme served congregations in Centralia, IL., Baltimore, MD., and as vice president of development for Wheat Ridge Ministries in Chicago, IL. Rev. Temme and his wife, June, have most recently served as representatives of Concordia Seminary in the advancement division. They have visited with pastors, church workers, and donors in Florida and elsewhere to keep the visibility of the Seminary strong and to encourage financial and other support.

“Friends, these men are special — boasting a combined 120 years of service to the church.” Pastor Wenndt explains. “Faith’s congregation has only received them in retirement,” he continues, “but their years of experience and wisdom are priceless. But all of it is from the Lord, who gives to them — and us — our faithfulness. May the Lord bless them in the years to come as He has in the years past.” ■



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The
LAST WORD



Ladies & Gentlemen . . . Start Your Engines!

Pastors and their families live under an unimaginable amount of pressure — particularly this year as our country has faced the extra stress brought on by racial injustice, COVID-19 and the absurdity and craziness of this year’s political shenanigans and misbehavior.

Our pastors lives are often played out with intense scrutiny — sometimes in a fishbowl with the board of elders and the entire congregation and community watching nearly every move they make.

Our clergy are often expected to have ideal families, to be perfect people, to *always* be available, to *never* be down and to have *all the answers* we need to keep our own lives stable and moving forward. Those are unrealistic expectations to place on anyone, yet most of us are disappointed when a pastor becomes overwhelmed, seems depressed, lets us down or completely burns out.

Pastor Appreciation Month was established in 1992 with a mission of uplifting and encouraging pastors, missionaries and religious workers. It’s a special time that individuals and congregations set aside each year to honor their pastors and pastoral families for the hard work, sacrificial dedication and multiple blessings provided by these special people. When you think about it . . . God has entrusted to them one of the most precious of assignments — the spiritual well-being of His flock.

I don’t know about you, but I’m blessed to have not just *one* but *two* awesome guys constantly serving my spiritual needs. Some people don’t even have one full-time pastor while their congregation is in the calling process or is sitting with a vacancy.

My guys wear a lot of hats!

They’re preachers, of course, and both are gifted with content and delivery. And this year they’ve become television evangelists! I’ve admired watching them preach to an empty room as if it were shoulder-to-shoulder with their flock. They’re counselors, to our church and school students, parents, faculty and administration. During this pandemic they’ve become career coaches to people who have been furloughed or permanently laid off.

For me, they’re business advisors, too. Sure, I have a few years on them (okay, maybe more than a few), but while I am a self-employed person for more than half a century my pastors are always available to discuss career thoughts or guidance. They’re

also custodians — after an event, emptying trash, stacking chairs and tables, sweeping floors to be ready for either school or worship services being able to take place the following morning. When they could be *at the gym*, both these guys are *cleaning up our gym!*

Of course they’re arbitrators.

They both put themselves out there to keenly analyze situations . . . sometimes between couples, parents and children, business associates or members of our church or school family. Wow. Talk about walking on eggshells! Neither of them are afraid to offer opinions or prayerful advice. Which sort of makes them social workers too! They both constantly seek to improve the quality of life for our congregation families or individuals. They have to be volunteer coordinators, too! We have an enormous church and school family standing on the sidelines just waiting to be asked to spearhead a project or oversee an event or serve on a board.

My pastors seem to identify the right person for the job.

And then they’re events managers — not only dreaming up the events and tackling anything from scheduling meetings, preparing the budget (or finding the funds), directing the communication, lining up the sponsors and even securing the food and drinks. They may manage people to perform some or all of those functions, but their personal wellbeing or reputation is on the line at the end of the day.

When all is said and done, they’re pretty much CEOs — at a somewhat lesser pay scale than most Fortune 500 chief executive officers. Oh, I know, Jesus is really the CEO of His church, but every major decision made in my church seeks the input of our pastors.

That said, *do something special* for your pastor(s) between now and Thanksgiving. During these pandemic times, it might be even more appropriate to give a gift card than inviting them to dinner.

Or buy him the new Corvette!

And don’t forget their wives! They are invaluable, support structures for these men. They’re critical in keeping a balance in their home and church lives. They’re oftentimes away from public view supporting them behind the scenes. Make *sure* their name is on the Hallmark card that will contain that special gift card. So lower your mask for a moment, give a wide smile, maybe gift her a nice bottle of wine when you hand him the keys to that brand new Corvette. 🚗🚗



by John List
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