

# LUTHERAN

# LIFE

**2020**  
**VISION**

Reaching Many in 2020  
for Jesus!

April/May 2020



# LUTHERAN LIFE

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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**Call Days Slated for April 28, 29, 2020**

## Seminaries Scramble to Adjust Traditional 'Call Day' Worship

Due to concerns about the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, both **Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, MO** and **Concordia Theological Seminary/Fort Wayne, IN** call days will be held as a "virtual-only event" for the first time. Students, deaconesses, interns, graduates — and even the LCMS Council of Presidents — will not attend.

Calls will be announced during one 7 p.m. (CDT) virtual service at [csl.edu/callday](http://csl.edu/callday) for the St. Louis Seminary on April 28, Tuesday.

On Wednesday, April 29, Concordia Theological Seminary will hold their virtual service — also being live streamed at 7 p.m. (CDT).

In St. Louis, Seminary President Dr. Dale A. Meyer will preach. It is his final call day service before his retirement. Dr. Glenn Nielsen, Director of Placement and Director of Vicarage and Deaconess Internships, will announce the assignments and calls.

Students, families, congregations and the public are encouraged to share photos and videos of their in-home celebrations and watch parties on social media by using the hashtags, #CallDay2020 and #CallDayWatchParty.

In a March 30 video message to students, Meyer addressed the disappointment many in the Seminary community feel regarding the out-of-ordinary format for these events: "We don't only grieve when someone dies.

We also grieve when we lose something precious to us . . . you are experiencing grief. After all these years of sacrifice and study for a most noble purpose, you and your family can't celebrate in the way you had planned and hoped for.

"Let's all make a conscious decision to meet this grief with hope," Meyer told students. "There should be no lessening of our joy as our Lord places you into His service in the church, no lessening of our joy as we look to the closing weeks of the semester, even if our rejoicing is done a little differently this year with social distancing or isolation in our homes, living rooms, basements and yards instead of together in the chapel."

After the concluding services, both seminaries plan to post a list of where the students and graduates will be going.

"Call Day loses the handshakes and hugs, singing together with full voices, and looking at beaming faces when the assignments and calls are handed out," Nielsen said. "But the excitement is not lost. The anticipation of 'Where will I go?' continues to build. Congregational members will rejoice because a vicar or intern or candidate is on the way to serve them.

"This year, the way Call Day is carried out is different, but what remains the same is that our gracious Savior gives us so many reasons to celebrate. Thanks be to Him!" Nielsen concluded.

*The Skit Guys, who will be performing at the planned September President's Equip Conference, have launched a nightly online series for all ages called "Bedtime Bible Stories with The Skit Guys." Tommy Woodard and Eddie James are The Skit Guys and they are filling a need for people and families, especially since church and Sunday school aren't happening as they normally would.*

*Each episode of Bedtime Bible Stories features a story from Scripture, a thematic keyword, a prayer, and a Bible verse that viewers are encouraged to memorize over the course of a week — and they're funny too!*



### COVID-19 RESPONSE & STREAMING SKIT GUYS VIDEOS

*The show airs at 7:30 PM (Central Time) every night on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube, and viewers engage with the video and each other in a chat while it airs. But if that's too late for your little ones, the recorded sessions are also available on their website: [skitguys.com](http://skitguys.com).*



## Seminary President Emeritus

### Rev. Doctor Karl Barth Enters Rest

The Rev. Dr. Karl Barth, who served as president of the LCMS South Wisconsin District (SWD) from 1970 to 1982 and as president of Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, MO, (CSL) from 1982 to 1990, died Feb. 16. He was 95.



Barth graduated from Concordia College/Fort Wayne, IN, in 1943. He received his Master of Divinity from CSL in 1947. He served as assistant pastor at First English Lutheran Church in New Orleans from 1947 to 1950; pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church in Centralia, Ill., from 1950 to 1952; and pastor at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in West Allis, Wis., from 1956 to 1970.

Barth was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Divinity by Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, in 1975. He served 16 years on the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) and as CTCR chairman from 1974 to 1982.

Barth served on various other LCMS boards, including the LCMS Board of Directors, and directed the Synod's 150th anniversary celebration. His Synod duties took him to partner churches and seminaries in Europe, Africa and Asia, and he remained active in retirement as a preacher, writer, advisor, mentor and fundraiser.

Barth was preceded in death by his wife, Jean (Kelly) Barth. The Barths were married for 68 years and were blessed with five children: Linda (Tom) Grams, Karl, Laurel (Chester) Buchanan, Kurt, and Lisa (David) Graf.

CSL President Dr. Dale A. Meyer said, "Karl Barth served Concordia Seminary at a very critical time. ... [His] tenure brought the stability and positive prospect for the future that an institution must have. Concordia Seminary thanks our Lord for providing President Barth, and we extend our condolences to his family."

LCMS President Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison said, "Thanks be to God for Dr. Karl Barth! He was a rock steady leader during some of the darkest times in the history of the Missouri Synod. His father had been president of our seminary in Springfield, and Karl followed faithfully in the footsteps of his dear father, both in confessing the truth of God's inerrant Word, and in leading a seminary with great fidelity."

"We shall miss our friend and father in Christ, but only until the resurrection! Amen, come Lord Jesus."

# CAPSULES

### District Calls Accepted

Aaron Reinking accepted the SMP pastoral call to Christ the King/Commerce, GA

Karl Glander accepted the SMP pastoral call to Bethlehem/Fort Myers, FL

### Transferred Out to Other Districts

Richard Schneider (C)..... South Wisconsin  
Randall Mueller (O)..... South Wisconsin

### Transferred In from Other Districts

Sheryl Reinisch (C) .....Northwest  
Jon Wiegand (C).....New Jersey

### Ordained/Commissioned Minister Installations

1/24/20 | Peter Meier was installed as  
FLGA Executive Director Missions and Outreach

3/01/20 | Aaron Reinking was installed as  
Pastor of Christ the King/Commerce, GA

### Status Change in the District

Jan Campbell from Active to Candidate  
Kelsey Reynolds from Active to Candidate

### Called to Glory

12/27/19 Mr. William Patrick (C)  
1/30/20 Rev. Robert Cooper (O)  
1/19/20 Rev. J. Elmer Medley (O)  
2/18/20 Rev. Russel Johnson (O)

### Emeritus

Sonja Seppa-Gorwood  
Candace Church  
George Earhart  
Russell Frahm  
Marc Spaeth  
Carol Seelman  
Thoas Block  
Kevin Koenig

### Removed from the Roster

1/30/20 Rev. Kevin Ray (O) Resigned

# CALENDAR

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the District Calendar is constantly changing and evolving.

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

The Florida-Georgia District website is updated regularly to provide you with information and resources for live streaming, online giving, families and children, churches, schools and more. Watch the District Website for adjustments to all upcoming events. Several things have been cancelled or postponed. Although we can't GO to church, we still need to BE the church as we move through this pandemic.

# NO FEAR,

# Just Hope!

He is Risen!

He is Risen indeed!

Alleluia!

What a beautiful greeting this is, and even if you were not able to verbalize that on Easter Sunday, it is still true. Many of us have heard the old Bill Gaither song, "Because He Lives." While we may not totally agree with the theology of the song, look again at the truth of the chorus:  
*Because He lives,  
I can face tomorrow;  
Because He lives,  
all fear is gone;  
Because I know He holds the future;  
And life is worth a living  
just because He lives.*

Life is worth living, especially as we discover our purpose and celebrate our faith. We

are confident (meaning "with faith") that the Resurrection of Jesus is our hope in the midst of an often-hopeless world.

The world all around us is living in fear and needs hope right now! God has given us the very message of hope to share as we proclaim the living and risen Jesus. From the very beginning, God's desire was for this good news to be shared with the world.

As soon as Jesus appeared to His disciples, He was empowering them to go into the world. We read in JOHN 20, *Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you.' And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven*

*them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.'*

Without question, the disciples were living this moment in fear. They had watched Jesus die. Each was a known associate of Jesus. They were concerned there was a price on their heads. After all, who knew what Judas had told the officials? They worried about what this would mean for their families. It would not take long for news to get back to Galilee. In fact, the bad news was spreading like a virus . . . perhaps this was the reason Jesus' first words to them was "PEACE."

While it was a common greeting in that day, I cannot help but think it had an especially poignant meaning to the disciples that night. In spite of their fears, Jesus still sent them into the





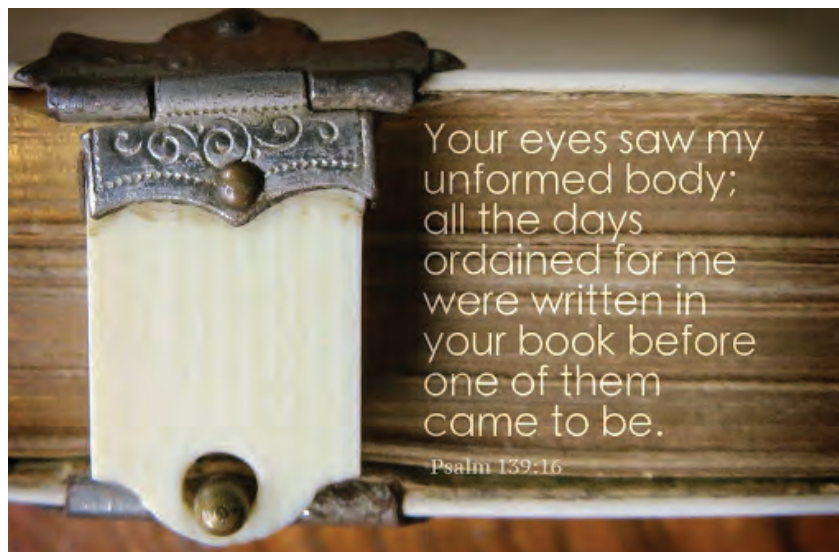
world. Maybe He reminded them of His earlier words, *Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

Jesus makes this promise to us too in the midst of our fears! We have the joy of knowing that our Savior is alive forevermore, and He has promised us new life eternally. This means we do not have to fear the sting of death any longer. No one will escape it, but those who believe in Jesus know it is not the end! We already have the victory! We can boldly proclaim with Paul, *The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Disease may affect our physical bodies, but it cannot take away what Jesus has freely and graciously given to us through His death and resurrection! It is with great confidence and boldness we say with Paul, *For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.* We don't have to live in fear because Jesus has given us hope, real and abiding hope.

This hope filled the disciples with a profound boldness that would continue to grow each of them in the coming days. Following the Ascension, they go as sent missionaries to a world that didn't know Jesus, willingly risking their very lives, filled with the hope and love of theirs, and our, Messiah.

Jesus has now placed the mantle of responsibility on each of us who proclaim His death and resurrection. The word *responsibility* often frightens people. It is simply the ability to respond. Even as the Father sent Jesus, God now sends us into a world filled with fear and hopelessness. We are lights in the darkness. We are not becoming lights, by virtue of Jesus' rising from the dead and our faith in Him; we are His lights, made so by His grace. In the midst of hopelessness, we carry true hope into the world, a hope that we find in Jesus! As Paul reminds



us, *For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.*

It is our privilege to go to the highways and byways with the message of forgiveness and life in Jesus as we shine His light and share His hope. The season of Easter is all about life over death. It is a season of victory, celebrating that we no longer have to live in fear. We do not have to fear death; we do not have to fear sin, disease, hardship, or persecution. We have hope that grounds us in the truth of Jesus Christ. This is the hope we get to share with the world!

As I've pondered the COVID-19 virus, while it is certainly wise that we all take necessary and proper precautions, we can do so with hope. The Psalmist tells us, *Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.*

My times are in His hands — so are yours. This reminds me that God has it all under control. I don't have to understand it. I don't have to agree with it. I don't even have to like it. You can't add or take away from the days ordained for you. What is more important is how you use the days God ordained for you.

He is Sovereign, and we can put our trust in Him. If you need proof just look to Easter, when our Lord Jesus came back from death to life. We don't need to live in fear! The Risen Jesus is our hope, and the hope for the whole world! Because He lives, we can celebrate — today, tomorrow, and eternally!

In the midst of all that is happening around us today, let's not forget to look forward, with 2020 Vision, and plan for tomorrow and all that can be accomplished as we shine His light. Read through the following pages for some wonderful examples of what can happen when God's people come together to share the hope and love of Jesus.

*He is Risen Indeed!*  
GREG



**2020**  
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John and Mary went to church one or maybe two times a month. They liked the people who sat around them and to whom they said hello during the time of greeting. But they didn't really know them. Sometimes they helped out serving a meal at church and cleaning up afterward. All the work of the church seemed to be taken care of so the needs were kind of invisible to them. They wrote a check on occasion and even at the end of the year when their finances were good.

Then this Coronavirus hit.



by Scott Gress

Lutheran Counseling Services  
Leadership Coach

## Lessons from a Quarantine

Sitting at home they missed the sermon and the occasional solo singing of "Sally the songbird" (a nickname they had given her privately). She had a nice voice. But now they seem to be on their own. It was an anxious time.

So they would catch a bit of religious television. They tried a couple of times to click on a link from the church's email to watch the service. But it wasn't the same so that didn't happen too much. The pastor even called once. That was really nice. They thought, maybe we'll come back after this virus thing passes.

Maybe? That's the fear of every caring pastor. That this "virus thing" will disrupt the patterns and habits of people and afterward they may not even come back!

What can we do?

What should we do?

It appears as if God has temporarily taken away a key ingredient to our ministries: the gathering of people in corporate worship. That can be detrimental to our relationships including our relationship with Jesus. But it likely is also an opportunity to address something that we may have been missing: intentional ministry of one on one care and encouragement.

In the past we used that corporate worship as a convenient starting place to connect with people one on one. We chat on the way out, we got to know, we encouraged, went together to Bible class or we just had a cup of coffee. Yet maybe we became less than intentional in our relationships assuming that the worship services alone were enough to minister to people.

But now that we don't have that convenience and blessing of corporate worship, we are of necessity becoming more aware of the critical nature of one on one ministry.

So how can we connect with people now? How can we strengthen relationships and faith and help one another to serve others who are likewise anxious and lonely? Those are great questions for a coaching Christian leader.

It's really pretty straight forward and doesn't require a lot of training. How about the telephone? We can simply check in.

■ **Step one: ASK**, "how are you doing?"

■ **Step two: LISTEN** (this is the most important part).

■ **Step three: ASK**, "how can I pray for you?" If they say yes, you immediately have permission to call again to follow up on how God is answering prayers. You can even pray right there on the

phone. (Notice this first call said nothing about "telling"?) You get the picture. In this way, one call will lead to multiple calls. Multiple calls lead to sharing what you read in your devotions that morning (if you did) and additional questions. Such as: "how are your friends, family and neighbors?" "How is God using you to bless them?" "How can I support/pray for you in your blessing of them?" "Who do you know at church that you can call?" Affirmation and thanksgiving can follow. One believer encourages another.

This is not a pastor thing. It is a body of Christ thing. It will probably require lay leaders to model the way so that it can be replicated by John and Mary and others. God has blessed us with relationships. So God is inviting us to step into what might be new behaviors and conversations to love on the people He loves. One on one ministry like this, whether member to member or member to unchurched neighbor is the necessary counterpart of corporate worship. Two sides of the same coin. Along the way we can share stories of what God is doing in those conversations with our fellow members and our pastor.

Together you can praise God that He is working through the body of Christ in tangible and substantive ways. John and Mary can't wait to come back and share what God has been doing through their phone calls. In fact they are bringing two couples to church when corporate worship resumes next month!

We may even come to give praise to God for a virus. It is an opportunity and even an excuse to love our neighbors like never before. Come to think of it, we can continue this even after the virus passes! What a blessing!

*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 and his YouTube page. You can contact Scott through email [scottgress@me.com](mailto:scottgress@me.com) or his blog page [scottgress.com](http://scottgress.com) or at 561-542-4472.*



# Payroll Protection Program Applications Now Available

The US Department of Treasury Payroll Protection Program (PPP) borrower information and loan application is now available online. This is a Small Business Administration (SBA) loan program with a feature which allows for partial loan forgiveness, available to small businesses and non-profit organizations. This is a time-sensitive program with lending offered through an approved SBA lender.

The loan application acceptance process begins on April 3rd and ends

on June 30, 2020. Should you decide to pursue this funding, please start the process *now* as funds are limited.

In addition, the LCMS headquarters and Lutheran Church Extension Fund have issued letters that provide additional clarity.

A letter from Congress regarding the intent to include houses of worship is available online.

We continue to update our website with the information we receive from the Synod office, Concordia Plan Services,

and other resources that might be of assistance to you.

The FLGA District office continues to seek further clarification and details from the Small Business Administration (SBA) and other Treasury publications on this statute.

Please address any questions, via email to Mrs. Laura Zirbel at [lzirbel@flgadistrict.org](mailto:lzirbel@flgadistrict.org). She will respond with the most current information possible.

## a place we have never been before

We are in a place we have never been before as we cope with the impact of COVID-19. Some compare it to the days before a hurricane, but without a storm track that tells us when this storm will pass.

For those of us who like or need to be in control, we are realizing how little is actually within our control — other than washing our hands, covering our mouths when we sneeze and practicing social distancing.

So, what do we do?

How do we press the pause button on the non-stop coronavirus dialogue playing in our heads — and on our TV's and digital devices? Anxiety and fear fester when we allow our brains to land on the same anxious thoughts every day, but how do we redirect our thoughts?

With most of us facing stay-at-home orders and struggling to manage runaway thoughts, give the following activities a try:

- Turn off the TV and play some relaxing music.
- Take a hot bath or shower.
- Go for a walk or bike ride.
- Call a friend and talk about something other than the Coronavirus.
- Exercise.
- Bake.
- Pray.

If none of these work for you, give our office a call. Lutheran Counseling Services (LCS) is open and serving clients. We are offering online and phone sessions as well as free virtual support groups and online resources. Please visit [lcsfl.com](http://lcsfl.com) to



by Megan Miessler

Lutheran Counseling Services

Executive Director

sign-up for our free virtual support groups and access resources we have shared. We will continue to be here for you during this very difficult time.

LCS accepts a wide range of insurances, offers a sliding fee scale for the uninsured and a Ministerial Assistance Program (MAP) for clergy and church workers. If you need support or have questions about our services, please call our office at 407-644-4692 or visit our website, [lcsfl.com](http://lcsfl.com)

*Megan Miessler is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. Megan began working with children and youth as a DCE in the Lutheran Church. She received her MSW from University of Central Florida and her DCE from Concordia/St. Paul, MN. Megan works with children and families and focuses on play therapy, depression, anxiety, crisis intervention, school counseling and marriage therapy.*



COUNSELING CORNER

# Virtual Preaching & Live Streaming Challenges Offer Unique Opportunities

Sure, I had THOUGHT about streaming our worship service before March 15th of this year. I had even priced out some of the technology. But that was about it.



by Jay Winters

University Lutheran Church

Tallahassee, FL

Secretary, FLGA District

and such are pretty terrible. University Lutheran and I have a lot of growing to do in this area. But that's ok. God promises that His Word will not return void — even when sloppily sent through a dated webcam and a phone not designed for public speaking or music recording. God's Kingdom did not fail to come when He stuck me in the pulpit as a green recent

seminary graduate making plenty of mistakes, and His Kingdom will not fail to come as we all figure out this technology through trial and error.

Knowing that His grace (and the gracious forgiving hearts of our hearers) will sustain us, let us press ahead. Let's learn more. Let's get

better at this. There's so much opportunity as we continue on — getting through Easter and moving ahead in the liturgical season "Live Stream".

Let's fill the internet with our mistakes, because God will even work through our mistakes to communicate His grace!



Rev. Jay Winters is pastor of University Lutheran Church/Tallahassee, FL and secretary of the FLGA District. He can be reached at [pastor@universitylutheranchurch.org](mailto:pastor@universitylutheranchurch.org)

When the time to prepare for March 15th worship arrived however, I saw that streaming worship was going to be necessary. I started reading everything that I could in the Lutheran Communicators group on Facebook, I watched every YouTube video I could, and I played around with test "live streams" trying to check camera angles and lighting.

I also started to think through what it meant to be communicating through a camera instead of with an in-person congregation. I reached out to Rev. Cris Escher, a phenomenal pastor in our District with some real gifts in technology and communication and he helped me think through quite a bit of this.



Cris Escher, Pastor Grace/St Lucie, FL

As I started to think through goals. I decided that I wanted whatever we were doing to feel authentic. I wanted the person on the other end of the livestream to feel like how they remember the scene from their usual seat at church. Most of what I wanted was to contextualize the Word of God into the strange new reality that we found ourselves in. Amazingly, every Scriptural text that I looked at seemed like the Holy Spirit had placed it right there for the purpose of addressing people in the midst of the coronavirus. I said a big thank you to Him and reworked some of my sermon.

Looking back at the past couple of weeks, our streams and recordings





# District Youth Leaders Get Creative With Social Distancing

How we can still connect during social distancing and sheltering at home? Connecting with youth can be a difficult task. There are sports schedules, debate teams, and family obligations, not to mention that sometimes youth just don't want to be "connected with" at all.

Introduce a new social distancing requirement and shelter at home commands and now a whole new way of connecting with people has to be discovered. If there is one thing I know about youth workers, it is that they are great at networking with other people for creative ideas. Amazing new ministry ideas have sprung up during this time of physical isolation right here in our district.



by Jeremy Becker  
Youth & Family Ministry Director  
St. Paul/Weston, FL  
Chairman, FLGA District  
Youth Ministry Council

At **Messiah/Tampa, FL** DCE Abby Moss was already doing short daily Lenten devotions via text messages before social distancing was a thing. The teens she has connected with have been posing questions and responses and creating hashtags on what they are discovering. Abby also suggested the online resource of Visual Faith Ministries ([www.visualfaithmin.org/](http://www.visualfaithmin.org/)) which provides great free resources for journaling.

Josh Cromley, the DCE at **Faith/Merriott Island, FL** has been producing Lent and Sunday videos for Facebook and YouTube. He has also found good connection with families through the Remind App as he also encourages them in family devotions.

The youth at **Our Savior/Saint Petersburg, FL** have been put into digital youth groups online and their DCE, Cassie Moore, interacts with them several times a day. She has also done a few Zoom meetings and they started filming school-wide devotional videos that are being sent out to families.

At **St. Luke's/Oviedo, FL** DCE Megan Skelton has been hosting children's message lessons online in between their Sunday morning streamed services. She has been sharing ideas for games, snacks, and activities that families can do together to enhance the lesson based on things they have around the house. DCE Annalisa Fitzsimons has been encouraging parents of middle schoolers as they strive to parent well while everyone is at home, including faith conversations and fun. She has been sharing these ideas through Instagram stories, messages, and the US Postal Service.

Eric Gerken, the DCE at **Prince of Peace/Orlando, FL** has been reaching out to the youth through phone calls and texts. He has also found Zoom and Kahoot! to be helpful online tools to connect with youth.

Leah Welter, the Director of Youth and Family Life at **Grace/Winter Haven, FL** has actually found better attendance for their Facebook live Sunday School then they were getting in person.

At **Our Redeemer/Augusta, GA**, DCE Josh Eckstein released a web page filled with Sunday School resources for families. He is using YouTube as well to connect with the youth. Josh and his pastor, Roger Schwartz, are teaming up on a church-wide Bible Study opportunity for their congregation.

**Faith/Viera, FL** sent out \$25.00 to each family in the church with a note that said, "If you need this, please use it. If you don't need it, please pass it along to someone who does." David Timmerman, the DCE at Faith, also has been sharing short children's messages via YouTube, Bible studies on Zoom, preschool chapels on Zoom and YouTube, and Facebook Live videos for some of the larger Bible studies.

Kami Jo Mogelang, the DCE at **Grace/Naples, FL** has been sharing children's messages in their Facebook Live worship and providing Zoom lessons with kids for Confirmation and youth Sunday School.

At **Zion/Fort Myers, FL** DCE Tim Richter has also been doing children's messages in the live stream services and sending links online for Sunday School experiences for families.

At **St. Paul/Weston, FL**, we sent out short video thoughts for youth on YouTube to do while they are at home. We have recorded songs we sing in chapel and Sunday School and shared them with families on a YouTube playlist. We have also connected on Zoom for youth Bible class, and Zoom and YouTube videos for confirmation classes.

While all this technology is great for connecting with



people, sharing ideas, Bible studies, worship, Sunday school, confirmation, and more, we can't forget about the simple one on one connection with people. Cassie Moore said, "Honestly, the most impactful moments have come from me texting students and parents and just checking in and offering to lift them up in prayer."

Personally, I am thankful that even though our context for doing ministry right now has drastically changed, the message of the Gospel has not changed. We are children of God and while the times may seem uncertain, sharing the Gospel message is still our calling.

# Easter Celebration, Delayed, But Will Be Triumphant

**Mount Calvary/Warner Robins, GA** continues being the church while they can't gather in the building. We are recording services with our staff taking parts as liturgist, preacher, camera work using our phones on a tripod, presenting music with Ellen Prohl on a keyboard and our vicar is working the sound room! It's actually working out pretty well and we post each service on our web page for our folks to follow."



by David Brighton

Pastor, Mount Calvary Lutheran  
Church, Warner Robins, GA  
First Vice President, FLGA District

We have also set up "Zoom" sessions and Pastor Pete LeBorioso has moved his college age group meetings from McDonald's on Sunday nights to meeting virtually online. In doing so the group has grown from three or four to more than ten. Perhaps that age group is finding it more convenient.

Our entire worship team has begun planning to start a Daily Devotion and Word of the Day that will be Monday thru Friday on our congregation's website. I've been thinking of doing this for quite a while and this crazy pandemic helped make it a "now" decision.

I don't think any of us who are living through this pandemic will ever forget it. This has totally changed our lives. I have never experienced a time in my lifetime — now more than six decades — where we were given a "shelter in place" order. The panic buying at the grocery stores reminds me of the gas "shortage" crisis in 1979 when I was a freshman in college.

After the Iranian Revolution, gas shortages occurred, and while it was about a four percent decrease in the world supply, it created a "panic buying" of gasoline that led to long lines at the gas stations.

I can remember people were topping off their tanks every day instead of driving around with

a quarter or half tank. The gas 'shortage' was really all in our cars instead of at the pumps!

Once the panic subsided, the gas trucks were able to fill the tanks at gas stations once again and everything returned to normal.

So the question for God's people at a time like this is, how do we now live? The answer to that question is completely dependent on answering

a more important question: Who are we? You and I know that we are God's children, sinners all, but forgiven and redeemed by Jesus' blood shed for us at Calvary. And being

a redeemed sinner is so important! Since we are redeemed, bought back from sin, death and hell, we are empowered by the Holy Spirit, who works through God's Word, our Baptism and the Lord's Supper to live the life we are called to live *IN* this world, but not *OF* this world.

When others panic from fear of this virus (or anything else that may come upon us in the future), we don't fear because we trust the Lord to be with us and guide us through this tough time, we pray and trust that the Lord will guide the scientists working to find a vaccine to stop the pandemic and therapeutics to cure it for those who are victims of the virus, we do our best to be good citizens and follow the dictates of the government (put in place by God — see ROMANS 13), and we ask God to protect us, our loved ones, the people of our country and the world until the pandemic is stopped.

During this State of Emergency, many of us are finding that we have more time at home! Imagine that! How many of us say over and over again that life is so hectic — if we could just slow down a little bit!

And now we can!

Families have more time

together — how wonderful!

District President Greg Walton encourages us all to use some of this time to be in God's Word, to seek His direction and guidance and peace — rather than just binge watching television. That's a great idea . . . why not re-read the Small Catechism — you'll be amazed how relevant it really is!

President Walton also encourages us to remain active. We don't have to spend all the extra time at home *IN* our homes. Get out and take a walk, get some work done in your garden or around your home. Along with that eat well and *get enough sleep*. All of these things can be done while maintaining proper "social distancing" as President Donald Trump has requested us to do.

So, we are doing worship for Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday virtually. BUT when we get clearance to return to our sanctuary WE WILL CELEBRATE EASTER — AND IT'S GOING TO BE QUITE THE CELEBRATION!



I hope you give me a big "AMEN!" to that! In Warner Robins, we shouted "He is risen! He is risen indeed!" from our homes this year!

May God bless us, protect us, and fill our hearts with joy because though "in the world you will have tribulation; take heart, for I have overcome the world." (JOHN 16:33) These words of Jesus are the comfort we need to go forward and live life to the full in His name! Rejoicing always with you!



# Two New Faces of Our Frankfurt Families Baptized



When you walk down the street of Frankfurt, Germany you might be surprised at the faces you see in crowd. Frankfurt is home to the central bank of the European Union. This banking city has attracted people from all over the world. More than half of the city's population have foreign passports.

At **Trinity Lutheran /Frankfurt, Germany**, the English-speaking, worshipping community comes from 16 different nations. Missionary Pastor Gary Schuschke (below) and the members of Trinity work together on two main mission goals. The first is to bring the Gospel out to the four million people who live in the Rhein-Main area of Germany. The second is to prepare members to take the Gospel back home with them to all the countries from which they come.

Two of our newest members — Sarah (above), whose mother is from Zimbabwe and her father lived behind the Iron Curtain in East Germany as a child — and Deborah (below), whose parents come from India and work in international banking. Both of these girls will grow up speaking three languages at home and will likely learn more in school. Imagine the plans that God has for these children as they grow!

You prayers and support make it possible for Pastor Gary Schuschke and the members of Trinity Lutheran Church to minister to the people of greater Frankfurt and to families like Sarah's and Deborah's.

## Sharing Hope in the COVID-19 Crisis

Life has quickly changed. From social distancing, to worshipping online, to jobs lost and schools closed. Yet we know that we have a God who is unchanging, whose "mercies are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness" (LAM. 3). It is therefore our privilege to share with those who are struggling and who often don't know the hope that we have in Christ.

**Amazing Grace/Oxford/The Villages, FL** is in the midst of bringing that hope to many who have been laid off due to the Coronavirus. In partnership with a local foundation, the congregation is partnering with the Santoro Foundation and local businesses to give \$100 Publix Gift Cards to laid off workers. Those receiving the gift cards are referred by their employer —who partner with the charitable group to cover up to 50 percent of the card value.

"The response of those receiving the cards has been humbling," Pastor James Rockey offers. "We had people crying saying they weren't sure how they would feed their family this week! One woman responded saying, 'I was just praying that the Lord would show me what to do . . . and the phone rang telling me about the grocery card!'"

Amazing Grace also partnered with the Foundation to provide the Gift Cards to their Early Learning Center staff and many of the families from the center. To date more than \$7,500 has been distributed and up to \$50,000 has been made available. "It is our prayer that these cards will bring hope to those struggling and assure them that they are valued and loved," Rockey concluded. "When people ask why we are doing this, our answer is, every day we experience Christ's love. So, as John writes, 'We love because He first loved us!'" (1 JOHN 4: 19).



*Pastor Rockey practices social distancing while distributing one of the Publix gift cards to a member of the community.*



These days, we are all wondering, “What good can God bring from this pandemic?” “How is God working through all the pain and struggle to bring the good He’s promised?” (ROMANS 8:38).

I wonder if the Easter story and post-Easter appearances of Jesus might give us a clue. Read through the post-Easter appearances in the Gospels with highlighter in hand. Mark all the instances where you see the word “GO!” or one of its forms. Here are some to get you started: MATTHEW 28:1, 2, 7, 8, 10, 16, 19; MARK 16:2, 7, 8, 10, 13, 15. You can find more in LUKE, JOHN, and ACTS.



by Peter Meier

District Executive Director  
Missions and Outreach

There was a lot of *GOING* going on, from those who were going to the tomb, to Jesus final words to His disciples at His ascension, to the scattering of the persecuted Christians in the early days of the Christian Church. Why all the going? I think its part of God’s genius plan.

When Jesus ascended into heaven, he gave his Church a vision

and a mission. We call it the “Great Commission” (MATTHEW 28:18-20).

The vision is that His Kingdom will reach every person and permeate every nook and cranny to the ends

## God’s Genius Plan For Reaching Many in 2020

of the earth. The mission is for His followers to make disciples as they are going about their every-day lives. The means to accomplish this was also given — Baptism and the Word of God.

St. Peter in his first Epistle, pictures how God’s genius plan will be carried out: “Peter, an apostle (sent one) of Jesus Christ: to the elect exiles (chosen and sent ones) dispersed (scattered, sent out) in Pontus, Galatia, Capadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, and set apart by the Spirit for obedience and for sprinkling with the blood of Jesus Christ. May grace and peace be multiplied to you” (1 PETER 1:1-3).

It’s genius. And it fits our current circumstances.

The sent ones (believers — us!) are scattered throughout the world, in various communities and

neighborhoods, according to God’s plan. We have been called and set apart by the Spirit through our baptism into Christ. God’s grace and peace is ours. It’s multiplied again

and again to us. And we are the ones sent out to multiply it, that is, to share God’s grace and peace with others as we are going about our daily lives. That’s the basic element of making disciples. As new disciples are made, they gather together in groups of disciples (church) to grow in faith as they study and share the Word of God and receive His gifts in the Sacraments.

God’s plan is genius. It’s simple, reproducible. And it works.

God’s genius plan involves addition and multiplication of disciples. And God’s genius plan involves us — individually, and in groups (which we call congregations or churches). We are the ones to whom God has entrusted His plan!

Let’s dig deeper. Disciple-making is the addition of one new disciple or a new family at a time. This is the mission of the local church, the people of God in their daily lives and spheres of influence. These days, we are literally reduced to the simplest forms — our immediate family, neighbors, a few co-workers. By our witness of word and deed, we invite them to meet Jesus, to learn what He is like, and what he’s done for them. That’s disciple-making, even in a pandemic.

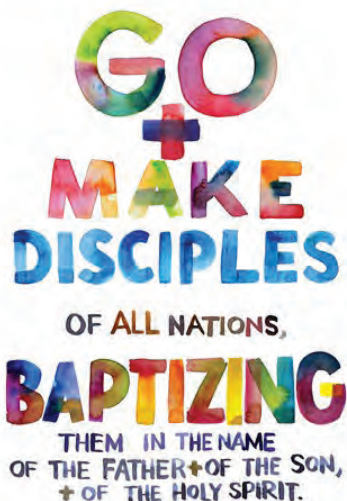
At the same time, local church leaders must think multiplication which involves releasing and sending people to start new faith communities in new places to reach new people. Today, we are not sending large groups to start new churches in new communities. Rather, we must think neighborhood, house churches, simple faith communities.

Addition takes place locally as new disciples are made. This is an essential





part of God's genius plan. Intentional multiplication is also an essential part of God's plan to reach new groups of people with the Gospel. Multiplication involves equipping, empowering and sending Christian people into their communities to start new faith communities which will add new disciples and will intentionally multiply by releasing and sending people to start new in still more locations.



#### Genius!

In these days of the Coronavirus Pandemic, we are presented with a real-life illustration of multiplication — the multiplication of the virus by social contact. Let's apply this idea to the church. Jesus' goal is not to build *bigger* churches and to gather *bigger* crowds. His goal is to *make disciples* who are released and sent in order to multiply according to God's intent. His goal is that his church will fill every nook and cranny of the world! That requires releasing and sending on our part. These days of "shelter in place" have pressed us to do this in new ways — using social contact and technology to equip, to empower and to send.

Adding and accumulating will no longer get the job done.

Today, the vast majority of churches in the U.S. (80-90%) exist in a survival culture. The average church has below 100 members and struggles to survive. They focus on gathering and keeping the next few members, rather than on raising up and sending the next 10 leaders. They often operate

with a "scarcity" mentality, protecting their resources. They are stuck. But they could actually multiply!

Another group of churches have an addition-growth culture. About 10-20% of U.S. churches are in this group. The Pandemic has challenged these churches severely. They can no longer simply rely on growing in attendance and making an impact by serving their communities. Adding new multi-site locations isn't possible right now. Plans for adding new staff, starting a building project, even increasing support for missions and mercy work have been put on hold.

What if we were to ask and answer questions like these: How might we use this opportunity to start a network of new faith communities in our region? What if we planted a series of new micro-churches in places where we already have a handful of members? What would it look like to plant five new micro-churches before we add staff? What if our next staff is a network leader for these micro-churches? What if we designate a generous portion of our tithe for starting new faith communities?

Less than .01% of US churches are actually multiplying churches, according to Leadership Network and LifeWay Research. These are churches that have multiplication at the core of their values and practices. They may be churches with as few as 100 members. They define success by their "sending capacity" rather than their "seating capacity."

These churches have a culture of multiplication

# 2020 VISION Reaching Many in 2020 for Jesus!

## Some Questions for Discussion & Action:

1. In this time of Pandemic, how might God have strategically placed you to be a part of his genius plan? What is your role as one who is called and sent by the Holy Spirit? Pray about this. Talk about this with a few others.
2. What difference would it make if your church embraced the values and behaviors (culture) of multiplication? What would be different about the way you operate?
3. What are the first simple steps you will take to learn more about the culture of multiplication and how to shift to that culture in your church?

which tells the stories and celebrates the behaviors of multiplication. These churches will start a new church before they build or buy their own first building. They will send a church planter or before adding their second and third staff members. They will commit a generous percentage of their tithes to church planting and prioritize that commitment. They will plan to start or join a network of churches who collaborate to plant new churches, and thereby accomplish more than any one of these churches could do on their own.

God has a genius plan. It works. It has worked since Jesus' ascension. It works in our day of Pandemic and post-pandemic time. It begins with leaders who value multiplication as well as addition, and who want to be part of God's genius plan to call and send his people to every community and neighborhood until every nook and cranny of the world has seen the Kingdom of God in its midst. It looks like reaching many for Jesus in 2020!

And it begins with you.

The Rev. Dr. Peter Meier can be reached at the Florida-Georgia District Office: (877) 457-5556 or via email: [pmeier@flgadistrict.org](mailto:pmeier@flgadistrict.org)

# Nothing is Normal, Usual, Casual or Stable

Empires rise and fall throughout history. Dynasties come and go. There comes a time in which according to W. B. Yeats, "Turning and turning in the widening gyre The falcon cannot hear the falconer; Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world."



by Victor Belton

Pastor, Peace/Decatur, GA

FLGA District

Mission & Ministry Facilitator

This world turns and turns. Regularly expected things are not as normal. Things seem to blow up and there seems to be a lack of order and normalcy.

This is perhaps how the COVID-19 Coronavirus challenge has many of us feeling. Nothing is normal, usual, casual or stable. Everything is in a state of flux.

Understand these times of stress and crisis are not unique to the United States but even now, as with this global pandemic, every nation is challenged, has decisions to make and every nation is being uprooted and disturbed. Our Father has no regard for some people over others, consequently every nation, or people have challenging times that call them back and remind them of the Sovereignty of God. Even the people of God, Israel, have passed through these kinds of challenges before and their God, our Father, in loving grace and mercy, has always been right on time dispensing everything necessary for His people and nations to survive and thrive.

Remember these examples:

The plague – NUMBERS 16:46-48

The Fiery Serpents – NUMBERS 21:6-9

Warning to Nineveh – JONAH 4:9-11

Also remember that our Father had a way of providing for the children of Israel in Goshen even when all of Egypt was suffering. All the water in Egypt was blood, but there was clear, clean water in Goshen where the Israelites lived. All of Egypt was dark but there was light

in Goshen. The firstborn of Egypt was destroyed, but because of the obedience to apply the blood the angel of death passed over Goshen.

Our God was able then and our God is able even now. EXODUS 7:14. The answer for the nation has been given in scripture. You know this narrative from 2 CHRONICLES 7:12-14:

Then the LORD appeared to Solomon in the night and said to him: "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice. When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust

to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

Times such as these are opportunities to return to the Lord our God who is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. Our Father is neither trying to destroy us nor is He sending the Coronavirus to punish us. This, however, may well be a correction and an opportunity to repent and return. The wages of sin is separation from our Father and His healing grace and mercy. Jesus has taken the punishment for our sin upon Himself and on the cross exchanged our sin for His righteousness.

This is not magic. We have the capacity to be wise in how we behave. We should not be careless, thinking God is going to protect us despite anything and everything so we can go forward with life as usual, but we should also not despair. We live in the Light of Christ and we are confident with the Apostle Paul in ROMANS 8:37-39 that: "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

President Trump called for a day of prayer back on Sunday, March 15th which, despite how you may feel about him, is a right thing to do. So as we approach the throne of grace let's follow the directive of 2 CHRONICLES:

Heavenly Father, we acknowledge that sin has broken our world, so these virus bugs that were meant to exist without harming your creation now are able to kill many of your children, steal our security and destroy our confidence in our world and in you. Lord we believe your Word so we come to you in humility, confessing our sin and repenting of thoughts, words and deeds, things displeasing to you that we have done and those things that would please you we have left undone.

Lord, remember us. We are your people. You have called us through Baptismal water. You have fed us with the body and blood of Your son and called us by name. Father we seek your face with determination to turn from our wickedness. Though we do not deserve it, Father, we ask that you grant us wisdom and courage for the facing of this hour.

Make us the Light of your son, Jesus, for those who do not know. Use this crisis to build your Kingdom and save many alive for your purposes. We love you Lord. We trust you Lord. We believe by faith that will hear from heaven and will forgive us our sin and heal our land. Grant us dominion over this scourge O Lord and we promise Father, that as our deliverance comes, we will with full confidence proclaim you our Healer, Savior, Deliverer and King. We ask this all in the matchless name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

MISSION & MINISTRY





## “I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.” — LUKE 10:3

**GO!**

This is not a suggestion. It is a command! God is commanding us to go and share His love. If you read the beginning of this chapter in Luke, the Lord is not talking about those who are formally trained for ministry. He is referring to 72 OTHERS to prepare the way for his coming.

He is talking to you and me.

And then, to make it a bit more challenging, in the remaining verses he wants you to be totally dependent on his promises. “Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals...”

Hummm??? Or maybe, no comfy church pews, no beautiful organ and choirs, no *church as usual!* It sounds a bit familiar, a bit uncomfortable and VERY scary! It sounds like NOW. Maybe, just maybe, we have had our priorities mixed up. We use all our comfortable things as our excuse.

Not me Lord. I’m much better at sitting in my pew. I’m busy! I don’t have the time. But God is calling *each and every one of us* to share His love to those around us.

The current world situation with this pandemic has forced us to do ‘church’ differently.

Or has it forced us to do it correctly. There are wolves — lots of them — everywhere!

But the good news is we are not alone. I love Greg Finke’s book, “*Joining Jesus on HIS Mission.*” This is not our mission. It is the Lord’s. In his book, Finke asks, “How’s Jesus been trying to get your attention lately?” When I re-read that question it made me giggle as I thought, “Can I make a list?” It is a whole new world.

I saw a Facebook post recently that stated, “We are the church deployed.” Go and BE the body of Christ! We are now focused more on what people actually need to be able to see and hear and experience Christ at work.

Go and BE a means of Grace. We are getting people ready for Jesus! We need to live and speak the message of the Gospel. The time is now! Holy week has been a perfect time to show others the LOVE Christ showed us on the cross. And with Easter behind us and not-quite-normal Spring ahead of us, we have His command of challenge to be courageous and spread His message.



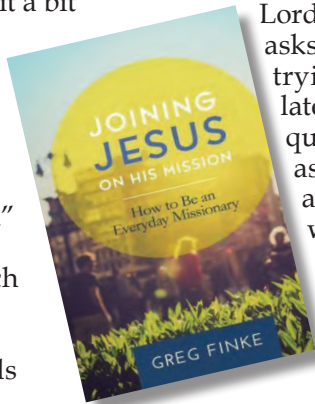
by Lois Ford

Teacher, Faith/Eustis, FL

District Board of Directors

Commissioned Minister Representative

**“Like a mighty army  
moves the Church of God;  
Brothers, we are treading  
where the saints have trod;  
We are not divided,  
all one Body we,  
One in hope and calling,  
one in charity.  
Onward, Christian soldiers,  
marching as to war,  
With the cross of Jesus,  
going on before.”**







# Lutheran Church Extension Fund

> where investments build ministry

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Laborers For Christ working on Christ Lutheran Church in Perry, Ga.

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# \$1.9 BILLION IN TOTAL ASSETS

Numbers as of 12/31/19

*To learn more about LCEF and the ways you can help make a difference in the Florida-Georgia District and beyond, contact your district vice president, Jay Wendland, at 407-258-5041 or [Jay.Wendland@lcef.org](mailto:Jay.Wendland@lcef.org).*



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Grace Lutheran Church & School, St. Petersburg, Fla.



**Jay Wendland**

**District Vice President, Florida-Georgia District**

**407-258-5041, [Jay.Wendland@lcef.org](mailto:Jay.Wendland@lcef.org)**

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# FLORIDAGEORGIA

## REGIONAL NEWS

*Out and About in the Florida-Georgia District*

send your news & photos to [lutheranlife@aol.com](mailto:lutheranlife@aol.com)



**St. Paul/Peachtree City, GA** dedicated their long-awaited first sanctuary on Sunday, February 2, 2020. The congregation launched in 1996, but they have worshipped in a community building, their school cafeteria and the gymnasium. The sanctuary was part of a renovation and addition project that also included a new lobby, offices, and conference room as well as a new school cafeteria, music room and kitchen. They partnered with LCEF on their capital campaign as well as the financing for the project.



In above photo, St. Paul's adult choir, under the direction of Mary Dahn, performs during the dedication. At left, St. Paul Lutheran School students, under the direction of Mark Abresch, sing during the worship service dedication.



*The Rev. Dr. Joel Dietrich, St. Paul Associate Pastor; Florida-Georgia District President, the Rev. Dr. Greg Walton; Rev. Mark Dahn, Senior Pastor pose for a photo after the celebratory worship service.*





The **Faith/Marietta, GA** elementary school bookclub continues to meet “virtually” discuss the book *Song for a Whale*. This was our third book. Our next book is called *The Last Last Day of Summer*. They are working through Zoom.



The **Christ/Perry, GA** youth group enjoyed their 11th annual Ski Trip to Cataloochee Ski Area in Maggie Valley, North Carolina on President’s Day weekend on this year. They were able to make this trip before the pandemic evolved. **Our Savior/Clyde, NC** is nearby and served as a congregation host for the trip. They provided a place to sleep and eat! At left the group pauses for prayer before a meal. In photo below, Sam Harbin (on the left) and Bryce Dunn take to the slopes.



Region 1 Vice President:  
David Brighton  
Mount Calvary/Warner Robins, GA

Laity Board Members:

Gary Engel | King of Kings/Jasper, GA  
Karen Cerny | Faith/Marietta, GA

Commissioned Minister Board Member:

Tamie Worthington | St Paul/Peachtree City, GA

Circuit 1 NE Georgia Circuit Visitor:

Zachary Hoffman | Good Shepherd/Gainesville, GA

Circuit 2 Atlanta N Circuit Visitor:

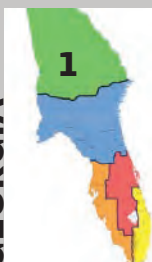
Jeffrey Jordan | Rivercliff/Atlanta, GA

Circuit 3 Atlanta S Circuit Visitor:

George Murdaugh | Prince of Peace/Douglasville, GA

Circuit 4 Central Georgia Circuit Visitor:

John Lehenbauer | Christ/Perry, GA







Several women from **Hope/Jacksonville, FL** crocheted, knitted and sewed 57 hats, 28 scarves and 24 blankets. These handmade items were given 'in love' to the Hubbard House — to be distributed to women and children in need.

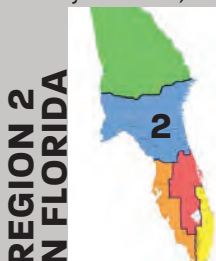
Hubbard House, a full-service certified domestic violence center, has answered more than 98,920 hotline calls and sheltered more than 38,200 victims and their children in its life-saving and life-changing 43-year history.

The victims and children who come to shelter are provided with warm beds, hot meals and personal amenities. Counseling and group support are made available to every sheltered family member, both adults and their children. Victims also receive services from a victim advocate who helps them to avail themselves of public resources and housing assistance. Services from a court advocate and job coach are also available. Shelter and services are always free to victims, and the goals are always the same: victim safety and empowerment.



**Region 2 Vice President:**  
James Rockey | Amazing Grace/Oxford, FL  
**District Secretary:**

Jay Winters, University Church & Student Ctr/Tallahassee



**Laity Board Members:**  
Lois Schaefer | Amazing Grace/Oxford, FL  
**Commissioned Minister Board Member:**  
Donald Kaufman | St. John/Ocala, FL  
**Circuit 5 Tallahassee Circuit Visitor:**  
Frank Kinast | Messiah/Valdosta, GA  
**Circuit 6 First Coast Circuit Visitor:**  
Dana Brones | Bethlehem/Jacksonville, FL  
**Circuit 7 N Central Florida Circuit Visitor:**  
Alan Struckmeyer | Abiding Savior/Gainesville, FL

**Forest/Silver Springs, FL** members have adopted a stretch of the State Road 40 Highway. Since its inception in 1990, Florida's Adopt-a-Highway Program has been very successful in reducing the cost of litter removal and improving the appearance of highway right-of-ways throughout Florida. Volunteers enter into a two-year agreement with the Florida Department of Transportation, during which they agree to conduct litter removal at regularly scheduled intervals. One recent day the Forest Lutheran members filled 16 contractor-sized garbage bags with more than 480 pounds of trash.







Administrative pastor Richard Boyd shares a “behind-the-scenes” view of his preaching to an empty room with a tripod on Palm Sunday. The entire staff has been working diligently at **Epiphany/Tallahassee, FL** to continue to provide meaningful worship during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Members of **Bethlehem/Jacksonville Beach/FL** teamed with Thrivent on a project that entailed making dozens of heart-shaped “Love Pillows” for their preschool VPK class.



# Russell Frahm Retires After Serving 32 Years at Faith/Merritt Island, Florida

The Reverend Doctor Russell G. Frahm retired as pastor of **Faith/Merritt Island, FL** on February 29, 2020 after serving 32 years at the congregation. He was installed as Assistant Pastor on August 14, 1988, as Associate Pastor in 1989, and as Senior Pastor in 1992. Pastor Frahm came to Faith/Merritt Island from Baton Rouge, LA with his wife, Karen and their four children.

A retirement celebration was held for Pastor and Karen Frahm the week prior at the Radisson Resort Hotel Convention Center. It was attended by approximately 300 people, including current church members, past church members, family and friends.

In addition to dinner, guests enjoyed a comprehensive slide show of Pastor and Karen's life spanning from approximately 1957 to the present. All four of the Frahm children gave presentations to their parents and shared their love and stories about growing up in the Frahm household. Judy Frahm-Roth and Phillip Frahm also entertained guests with their song "Blessings."

Faith's president presented Pastor Frahm with an engraved acrylic cross as a parting gift from the congregation. Several members also made presentations to Pastor & Mrs. Frahm.

Karen Frahm spoke about their time at Faith and presented the church a banner that she made which is now hanging in the church narthex. Pastor Bruce Alberts, Circuit Counselor of the Space Coast zone and Reverend Doctor Thomas Zehnder, former President of the FLGA District were also present.

The celebration ended with Pastor Frahm speaking about the past 32 years and his plans for the future. His short-term plans include fishing, traveling, camping, and spending time with his family (pictured below right).



## Region 3 Vice President: Charles Reich | Grace/Winter Haven, FL

District Board Treasurer:  
Renee Varga | Woodlands/Montverde, FL

Laity Board Members:  
Rebecca Hartmann | Hope/Plant City, FL  
Sheryl DeWitt | Redeemer/Sanford, FL  
Commissioned Minister Board Member:  
Lois Ford | Faith/Eustis, FL

Circuit 8 Space Coast Circuit Visitor:  
Bruce Alberts | Good Shepherd/Titusville, FL

Circuit 9 Orlando East Circuit Visitor:  
Ken Green | Prince of Peace/Orlando, FL

Circuit 10 Orlando West Circuit Visitor:  
Mark Kappel | Faith/Eustis, FL

Circuit 11 Winter Haven Circuit Visitor:  
Dean Pfeffer | Hope/Plant City, FL







**Good Shepherd/Titusville, FL** will continue to operate their Food Pantry throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. They are following guidelines of the Center for Disease Control to ensure they aren't putting anyone in danger. They have taken significant precautionary steps. People in need can continue to reach out to the Food Pantry through the church office.



Pastor Gary Held led Palm Sunday worship — props and all — for **Risen Savior/Palm Bay, FL**. Held has been pastor there since 2004 and has launched an online virtual weekly service under the current pandemic conditions. The inaugural service was March 22nd — the fourth Sunday in Lent. Palm Sunday's worship was with full organ and a virtual singing of *Hosanna, Loud Hosanna* to kick off Holy Week.

On Sunday, February 16th, the members of **Hope/Plant City, FL** hosted their annual Teddy Bear Sunday. The purpose of this day is to share the warmth and love of God with children in their community. This year, approximately 140 teddy bears were donated to the Plant City Police Department to share with children and youth in times of crisis. According to Human Care Ministry Team leader Sandy Howell, "this year we set the challenge to our members and friends along with the assistance of our Plant City Police Department to stuff the police car! We are so thankful to our PCPD for their assistance, presence

and participation that morning. I think that challenge really motivated our members." Senior Pastor, Dean Pfeffer, explains "this has become such a tradition for us. Each bear is tagged with a note from Hope with the words of John 3:16 to remind the recipient of God's never ending love for us. It is fun to watch the adults come to church carrying teddy bears and to see the joy on their faces as they give that bear to a child in need." Connie Harsh is shown adding her contribution to Bear Mountain while husband Larry watches. In the adjoining photo you can see the police car stuffed with Teddy Bears.





**Lutheran Church of Providence/Deltona, FL** just completed their first year of quilting for Lutheran World Relief. Imagine the comfort and care you feel when you snuggle under a comforter or wear a piece of clothing made or worn by a loved one. That's the feeling LWR wants to share through this mission quilts. They are useful for shielding against the cold and rain, and for warm bedding, quilts can also be purposed as simple tents, floor coverings, or a wrap to hold a baby on a mother's back. The quilts will be sent all over the world to any areas of need. The congregation started the project at the beginning of 2019 with just three ladies and the group has grown to eight. Some of the quilters had never sewn before but they learned new skills and put them to good use. Working diligently throughout 2019 they completed 75 quilts — and expect to top that number in 2020. On February 2, 2020 they had a dedication service for the quilts and displayed them on the backs of the pews before packing them up and shipping them to Lutheran World Relief.



On Saturday, March 21st, some of the members of **Hope/Plant City, FL's** Missions and Outreach Ministry Team gathered to prepare meals for their shut-ins and other senior members of the congregation. The idea arose after Hope was forced to cancel their Mid-Week Lenten Service and the Missions Team had already purchased the food for that supper. Team member, Cathie Warner spoke to Hope's Sr. Pastor, Rev. Dean Pfeffer, suggesting the team go forward with preparing the meal as planned and then delivering meals to those in the congregation who are sick, shut in or just separated from family and friends during the COVID-19 quarantine. Team members were on board with the idea and prepared dinners of ham, scalloped potatoes, green beans, roll and dessert. Along with each meal the team included a special "thinking of you" card signed by *Missions and Outreach Ministry Team* members.



*Pictured at right prior to meal distribution are: (from left) George Hayes, Willa McMinn, Diane Bertsch and Cathie Warner*





William Murphy (front center), SMP graduate at **Hope Lutheran/Bonita Springs, FL** was installed this first quarter of 2020. He will be working with Circuit Visitor and Hope's Senior Pastor, Richard Browning. Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) is an LCMS program for preparing pastors to fill an identified need in a congregation, cultural setting, or other ministry. SMP uses distance education, local pastors as mentors, and an annual week of study on a seminary campus. Participating in the installation were (front row) Mike Duchene, Karl Glander, Juan Gonzalez, Curtis Deterding, William Murphy, Richard Browning, Seth DeBartolo, Mark Gaertner, Hank Simon. Back Row, Tom Ramsey, Fred Koehler, Robert Davis, Keith Lingsch, John Roth, Jon Zehnder and Mark Eisold.

Ash Wednesday — just prior to evening worship — **Holy Trinity/ Masaryktown, FL** hosted a fish fry dinner and raised \$500 for their food pantry as a Thrivent Action Team. Just prior to the congregation cancelling all corporate worship (due to the COVID-19 virus) the congregation removed all their pews in anticipation of a sanctuary remodeling project.



**Region 4 Vice President:**  
Jon Zehnder | St. Michael/Fort Myers, FL

**Laity Board Members:**

Evita Gonzalez | Beautiful Savior/Lehigh Acres, FL

Daniel Najjar | Beautiful Savior/Sarasota, FL

**Commissioned Minister Board Member:**

Jesse Crosmer | Our Savior/St. Petersburg, FL

**Circuit 12 Heartland Circuit Visitor:**

Richard Norris | Trinity/Lake Placid, FL

**Circuit 13 Suncoast Circuit Visitor:**

David Brockhoff | Holy Trinity, Masaryktown, FL

**Circuit 14 St. Petersburg Circuit Visitor:**

Paul Burtzloff | Our Savior/St. Petersburg, FL

**Circuit 15 Tampa Circuit Visitor:**

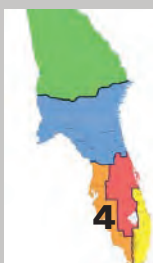
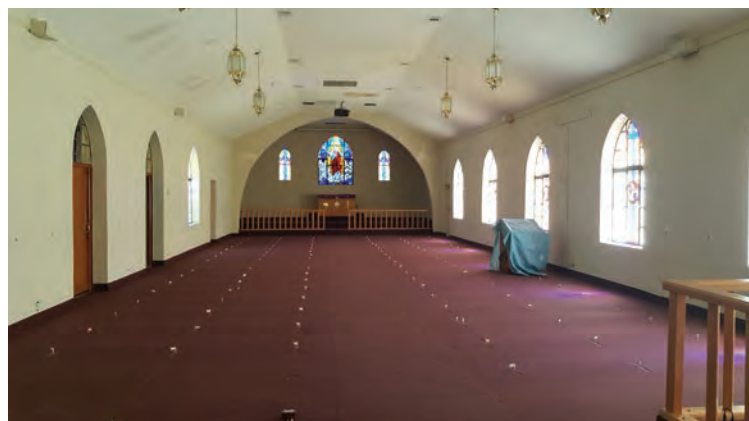
Gilbert Kuehn | Messiah/Tampa, FL

**Circuit 16 Sarasota Circuit Visitor:**

Rossetter Leavitt | Beautiful Savior/Sarasota, FL

**Circuit 17 SW Circuit Visitor:**

Richard Browning | Hope/Bonita Springs, FL







Kapelle is Concordia University/Chicago, IL's premier choral performance ensemble. This select voice choir tours annually throughout the U.S. as well as internationally every four years, and records regularly. This spring's concert tour brought them to the FLGA District.

On of their stops was at **St. Paul/Boca Raton, FL**. Their formal concert was on a Sunday afternoon — in black tie and gown — and members of the congregation hosted the students overnight for dinner and rest. Monday morning brought Kapelle back to St. Paul for morning chapel service and a special abbreviated “teaching concert” with St. Paul’s student body.

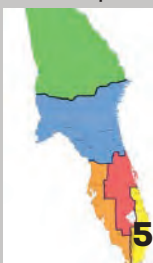
Dr. Charles Brown is the conductor of Kapelle. Professor Brown has toured extensively throughout the United States, with additional concerts to Argentina, Chile, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania and Russia. He is shown (at left) working with St. Paul’s students in a choral workshop. St. Paul’s choirs are under the direction of Ms. Rebecca Schaffer.

Below photos show Kapelle at Sunday’s formal concert and Dr. Brown on Monday, during the casual “teaching concert” at morning chapel. In between choral selections, Dr. Brown explained voice techniques, voice ranges, music styles and some choral history to St. Paul’s student body.



**Region 5 Vice President:**  
Stephen Carretto | St. Paul/Boca Raton, FL

**REGION 5  
SE FLORIDA**



**Laity Board Members:**  
Samuel Ludington | Holy Cross/N. Miami, FL  
Stephen Bradshaw | Trinity/Lake Placid, FL  
**Circuit 18 Treasure Coast Circuit Visitor:**  
Mark Stillman | Faith/N. Palm Beach, FL  
**Circuit 19 S. Palm Beach Circuit Visitor:**  
Dennis Glick | St. Paul/Boca Raton, FL  
**Circuit 20 Gold Coast Circuit Visitor:**  
Timothy Hartner | St. Paul/Weston, FL  
**Circuit 21 Monroe-Miami-Dade Circuit Visitor:**  
Tony Mandile | Martin Luther/Marathon, FL



*Monday morning chapel at St. Paul was a ‘teaching concert’ where Kapelle sang for the student body.*





**Our Savior/Plantation, Florida** hosted their third annual "Knight for a Day" event in February for boys ages three to third grade. This community event was sponsored by Thrivent Financial and had an "Armor of God" theme. The knights-in-training spent the morning completing a series of tasks before the king and queen

arrived. The tasks included: catapulting water balloons at a dragon, using shields to dodge flying marshmallows, jousting, using bows and arrows, jumping over a moat, throwing "spears" at targets on the castle wall, and decorating their swords, shields, and masks. The king and the queen were greeted with a royal fanfare. Afterwards, the knights-in-training presented themselves to the king and queen and were knighted in the annual ceremony.



Late in February the school students at **Our Savior/Plantation, FL** surprised Pastor Tony Durante with a birthday cake and sang blessings to him.

**Trinity/Delray Beach, Florida** members served approximately 275 meals the first week of April to the community. The barbeque lunches were offered to anyone who stopped by the congregation's kitchen between 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. It was promoted throughout the community.





# 134 Veterans of the Cross

gathered at the Warren E. Willis Life Enrichment Conference Center in Fruitland Park, FL, March 2-4 under the theme "Climbing New Hills." This annual event sponsored by the Florida-Georgia District LCMS engages the attendees with opportunities for the mind, body and spirit through keynotes speakers, worship and singing, fellowship, and free time to relax and renew.

These spiritually gifted, young-at-heart men and women value this time together to connect with friends from across the Synod who also have achieved retirement.

This year's keynote speakers were the Rev. Dr. Rick Armstrong of Lutheran Counseling Services and the Rev. Dr. Jon Diefenthaler, president

emeritus of the Southeast District LCMS. Diefenthaler was also one of the Lloyd Behnken Medallion recipients in the "Church-at-Large" category.

The Bible Study Leader was the Rev. Dr. Victor Belton, Peace/Decatur, GA and a special musical guest was Mr. Don Wharton, Christian singer, songwriter, author, comedian and plane crash survivor.

With Don's engaging and humorous style, VOC participants emphasized their God-given talents and were encouraged to use them to the fullest. Don Wharton is one of seven people to survive a plane crash into the Bering Sea near Nome, Alaska.

## 2020 Behnken Medallion Recipients:

- The Rev. Dr. Jon Diefenthaler, Church-at-Large, President Emeritus of the Southeast District LCMS, presented by FL-GA District President, The Rev. Dr. Greg Walton;
- The Rev. Jim Guelzow, Ordained Minister, former Chairman of the Board of the Florida-Georgia District and long-time pastor at Messiah/Tampa, FL, presented by Rev. Pat O'Brien;
- Mr. Joe Gugliardo (alias, Joe G.), Commissioned Minister, Certified Lay Minister and longtime leader in Youth Ministry in FL-GA District, presented by Mr. Mark Brink, FL-GA District Executive Director for School & Youth Ministry
- Richard & Nancy Challis, Lutheran Hour Ministries, LWML and the Lutheran Braille Workers. They were unable to attend but will be recognized at a future time.

Worship was led by the Rev. Doug Kallesen, Trinity/Orlando, FL and Dr. Belton served as the Preacher, with excellent musical accompaniment through the talents of the attendees including Mr. Wharton and Marge Freeman.

One of the primary aspects of this annual retreat is the Behnken Medallion Honorees. This annual retreat is for both rostered and lay workers throughout the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod who are retired. The committee has begun working on the 2021 retreat slated for March 1-3, 2021.



Christian singer Don Wharton leads singing.



Kathy Keene handles some VOC business.



The Rev. Dr. Victor Belton served as the Bible Study Leader and Preacher.



Marge Freeman accompanies the choir that sang for worship



The Rev. Dr. Peter Meier is introduced as the District's new Executive Director for Missions and Outreach.





*James Rockey, Elaine and Bob Besalski share a moment under the canopy of trees.*



*The Rev. Dr. Rick Armstrong of Lutheran Counseling Services was one of the keynoters.*



*Marilyn Illsley, on of the retired teachers from the FLGA District applauds a speaker.*



*The Rev. John Frerking gets some advice from his wife, Eileen during a coffee break.*



*The Rev. Dr. Bob Scudieri, former LCMS Missions Executive, poses with Richard Steinbrueck, a Thrivent representative. Richard and his wife, Judy, coordinated all the a/v equipment for the conference.*



*President Greg Walton checks conference scheule with Pastor Richard Pieplow, one of the VOC planning committee.*



*Pastor Ron Biel displays some of the Educational Opportunities travel information. The company is dedicated to providing quality Christian travel programs at an affordable price. Nearly half a million Christians have enjoyed learning as they traveled to every corner of the globe.*



## **James Guelzow Honored With 2020 Ordained Minister Behnken Medallion**

The son of Miriam Brauer Guelzow and the Reverend Roy Guelzow, James Roy Guelzow was born on April 15th in Columbus, Indiana. He entered God's family of grace through baptism on May 9, 1948.

Pastor Guelzow came to the FLGA District in 1955 when his father accepted the call to establish Grace/Fort Lauderdale, FL. Jim attended Concordia College, Milwaukee, Concordia Senior College, Ft. Wayne, and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. He married Lynn Weinke of Wausau, Wisconsin in 1972 and they spent their vicarage at St. Paul's/Falls Church, VA, 1972-1973.

Jim was ordained in 1974 becoming the 3rd generation of Guelzow pastors in the LCMS. Jim began his ministry establishing a mission congregation, Peace/Okeechobee, FL. While there, he helped launch a new mission, Trinity/Lake Placid, FL, serving that congregation more than two years before a permanent pastor accepted the call.

In June of 1983 Jim and Lynn accepted the call from the District as Mission Developer to Northwest Tampa at Messiah/Carrollwood, FL. He served that congregation through three building programs, the establishment of a pre-school, a migrant ministry, a Stephen Ministry and six vicars. After 31 years of ministry at Messiah, Pastor Guelzow retired in May of 2014. He continues to serve Messiah as emeritus pastor to the homebound.

In the FLGA District he served as District LWML Pastoral Counselor for six years, a member of the Missions Advisory Council for 12 years, a Circuit Counselor and a member of the LCMS Convention Committee on Missions. Jim was elected as 1st Vice-President of the District in 1997, serving nine years, and when the District restructured in 2006, he

was elected as Region 4 Vice-President until retirement from the Board of Directors in 2015. During his time on the Board, Jim served as Board Chairman for 16 years. In his capacity as chairman, Jim also served on the District Lutheran Church Extension Fund committee. Three years ago, he served as District Convention Manager and at this Convention as Nomination Committee chairman. Jim continues to serve as the President's representative to the Lutheran Services Florida Board of Directors.

Lynn and Jim have two married children, Nathan and Heidi, and four grandchildren. Nathan, now a 4th generation Guelzow pastor, serves at Immanuel/Downers Grove, IL, where he and his wife, Erin, enjoy their two sons. Daughter Heidi is the principal at St. Mark/Houston, TX, where she and her husband, Scott Jerry, are blessed with two children.

Pastor Guelzow is an avid Cubs fan, enjoys travelling to see family and God's created world overseas.



*Pastor Bob Besalski, Jim & Lynn Guelzow and Pastor Pat O'Brien. O'Brien presented Guelzow with the Behnken Medallion.*



## Joseph Guagliardo Honored With 2020 Commissioned Minister Behnken Medallion

Joseph A. Guagliardo — better known in Youth Ministry circles across the country as, Joe G. or “Superman Joe G”, was born and baptized in Chicago, Illinois, in June, 1951. He graduated from Wheeling High School in 1969. While in college, Joe met Kathy, now, his wife of nearly forty-six years.

Throughout the District and Synod, Joe is known as a doer. He likes to get things done.

For twenty-eight years, Joe worked in the supermarket industry. But something more was going on inside him as the Holy Spirit used his pastor and others to move him toward a lifetime of service in the Church. He credits Pastor Mark Behring — then serving at Our Savior/Lake Worth, FL as being his primary influencer in life and ministry. It was there that Joe recognized his passion for serving — especially the youth of the church and their families.

After years of service as a youth ministry leader, in 1999, Joe earned his Colloquy from Concordia/Mequon, WI. The following year, Joe accepted a Call to serve at Zion/Ft. Myers, FL where he was Commissioned and Installed as a Certified Lay Minister.

In October of 2006, Joe accepted a Call to serve at Faith/Merritt Island, FL, where he served with distinction until his retirement on December 31, 2016.

Aside from creative ministry in the parish, Joe provided

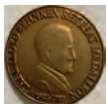
many years of leadership and service on the District Advisory Council for Youth Ministry — including chairman of that organization. He also chaired multiple District Middle and High School Gatherings and was the District Coordinator for the 2004 National Youth Gathering.

Last year, Joe’s first book, “Adventures in Youth Ministry: Perspectives of a Second Career Youth Minister,” was published. Joe has been tireless in his efforts to serve the Lord with the gifts he has been given. Joe’s wife Kathy has been at his side encouraging him every step of the way.



*Pastor James Rockey, Joe & Kathy Guagliardo and District Executive Director for Schools & Youth Ministry, Mark Brink. Brink presented Guagliardo with the Behnken Medallion.*

# Veterans of the Cross



## Jon Diefenthaler Honored With 2020 “Church-At-Large” Behnken Medallion

The Rev. Dr. Jon T. Diefenthaler is President Emeritus of the Southeastern District of the LCMS, having served in that office 2003-2012. He is currently a Church-Relations Advisor for Lutheran World Relief and an Adjunct Professor at Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, MO.

Born and raised in Milwaukee, WI, Jon is a graduate of Concordia/Milwaukee, WI, Concordia Senior College Ft. Wayne, IN and Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, MO. He also received an M.A. degree in American History from Washington University/St. Louis, and a Ph.D. in American Religious History from the University of Iowa.

The subject of his doctoral dissertation was H. Richard Niebuhr, and he has since published two books on the work of this 20th century American theologian.

During the course of his career, he was on the faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, IL (1972-1975), and he served as pastor of Bethany/Waynesboro, VA (1975-1997), as well as senior pastor of Our Savior/ Laurel, MD (1997-2003).

As a District President, serving his full nine-year term, he was a member of the Board of University Education (2005-2009), the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (2009-2012), and Vice Chair of the Council of Presidents (2009-2012). In addition, he was a member of the Board of Regents, Concordia/New York (2013-2016). He has been widowed two times: Linda Reineck (1994) and Vivi Provine (2018), and he has four children and twelve grandchildren.

For the past two decades, he has resided in Columbia, MD. Jon was the chief coordinator of ECCE — the East

Coast Common Endeavor, a gathering of the United States East Coast District Presidents. He also participated in the Southeast Regional Gathering — a group of LCMS District Presidents and ELCA Bishops, all from the Southeastern United States. He also has been involved in Lutheran World Relief. Jon has a reputation for being an excellent preacher, teacher, and communicator as well as a great leader.

While serving as the District President of the Southeastern District he effectively led the District in raising \$6 million for church planting and congregational renewal. He has a passion for mission, a servant’s heart, and continues to find ways, with his wisdom, passion, and energy, to serve the Church at large and our Lord Jesus.



*FL-GA District President, the Rev. Dr. Greg Walton with Rev. Dr. Jon Diefenthaler. Walton presented Diefenthaler with the Behnken Medallion.*



# Synod Reports No LCMS Missionaries Have Been Affected

Worldwide concern about the COVID-19 virus continued to grow as this issue of Lutheran Life went to press. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) is closely monitoring the situation to provide the best possible information and counsel to LCMS staff and missionaries who may be in areas of increased risk.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), coronaviruses “may cause illness in animals or humans. In humans, several coronaviruses are known to cause respiratory infections ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). This new virus — #19 —and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019.”

According to the WHO, as of March 1, there were 87,137 confirmed cases of COVID-19

and 2,873 deaths worldwide. The majority of confirmed cases and deaths have been in China. The March 2 update from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports 43 confirmed cases and two deaths in the United States, but at this writing, there have been more than 12,900 deaths related to COVID-19 in the United States. The death rate from COVID-19 in the state of New York is around 28 per 100,000 people. New York is the state with the highest number of COVID-19 cases.



*Kendall Cortright  
Director of LCMS Missionary  
Services for the Office of  
International Mission*

Kendall Cortright, director of LCMS Missionary Services for the Office of International Mission (OIM), says that the OIM is actively gathering information about COVID-19 from multiple resources, including the CDC, WHO, safety and security organizations, government websites and news articles. The OIM has also been regularly communicating with LCMS staff and missionaries in the field to develop contingency plans for addressing the possible spread

of the virus.

Cortright emphasizes that, at this time, no LCMS missionaries have been affected by COVID-19. All, he says, remain “safe and healthy.”

There are, however, several recent CDC travel advisories regarding COVID-19, several in areas where LCMS missionaries are located, including South Korea and Italy (CDC advisory level 3 — reconsider travel), Japan (level 2 — exercise increased caution) and Hong Kong (level 1 — exercise normal precautions). OIM will continue to monitor travel alerts, particularly in countries where the LCMS has missionaries and that have a level 2 advisory or higher. The OIM is recommending all deployed staff prepare in advance for logistical challenges related to travel bans on affected countries and keep their travel to affected countries with level 2 or higher to a minimum.

“The virus is quite frightening for many people,” Cortright notes, “but we recognize that its impact is relatively small in comparison to influenza, which so far this season has infected 26 million people, resulting in 250,000 hospitalizations and 14,000 deaths in the U.S. alone.”

## Please Help Us With the District Census Data!

Many of our 200 churches in the Florida-Georgia District have already completed their Congregational Statistics Report. If you haven't reported yet, you still have time. You should have received a paper mailing that included your user name and password so that you can submit your statistics online. The format is the same as it has been for the past several years.

If you have misplaced your username and password, you can contact Rosters and Statistics for the information via email by sending your request to: [rosters.stats@lcms.org](mailto:rosters.stats@lcms.org)

Start with your report from last year and update the fields that have changed. If you don't have last year's report, please contact Lynda Voss in the District Office at [lvoss@flgadistrict.org](mailto:lvoss@flgadistrict.org).



## LCEF Reacts Quickly, Remains Steadfast and Uncompromising During Pandemic

Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) is blessed to partner with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) to provide financial assistance through the Synod's Soldiers of the Cross program to church workers in crisis situations. LCEF funds, administered by each LCMS district office, will help ordained or commissioned ministers and laity serving congregations, schools and Recognized Service Organizations who find themselves with immediate unmet financial needs stemming directly or indirectly from the spread of the pandemic.

According to Jay Wendland, FLGA LCEF District Vice President, "Together, LCEF and the LCMS seek to raise \$5 million for Soldiers of the Cross, purely

to address the needs of church workers facing a crisis situation. The need is urgent. We are encouraging District-wide support of the Soldiers of the Cross COVID-19 Response Initiative through a gift of any amount."

LCEF is immediately distributing \$1 million dollars to the 35 districts of the LCMS for immediate relief grants.

"We extend a heartfelt challenge to our faithful LCEF investors and friends to help equal or exceed the initial \$1 million-dollar distribution.

"The LCMS has itself committed \$1.5 million dollars toward this effort from humanitarian gifts already received. Working with their donors and reaching further into the Church, the LCMS will continue to appeal to the entire Church to give an equal or greater amount over the coming months."

Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) is also offering an electronic giving platform called Joyful Response for accepting online gifts through a congregation's website, a mobile phone app, ACH or text-giving.

"This platform is available for LCMS congregations, schools and registered service organizations (RSOs)," Wendland explains. If you are not currently set up to take electronic payments, please get in touch with me and I'll help you through this process.



by Jay Wendland

FLGA District Vice President

Lutheran Church Extension Fund

"As your ministry partner, Lutheran Church Extension Fund understands the concerns that our District congregations are experiencing as we navigate through these unprecedented times. LCEF has employed numerous financial tools to help our borrowers, including several specifically put in place by our COVID-19 Response Team.

"Whether you are a current or new LCEF investor, you can designate the interest from your LCEF investment to the fund for our church and lay workers, Wendland states.

"Again, assistance is available to eligible Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod congregations, organizations and rostered church workers."

For additional information, please visit LCEF's website at <https://lcef.org/> or contact Jay Wendland, District Vice President LCEF, at [Jay.Wendland@lcef.org](mailto:Jay.Wendland@lcef.org) or 407-258-5041.

