

LUTHERAN LIFE

February/March 2020

2020
VISION
Keep Jesus in Focus



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

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Calling Congregations

Christ the King/Commerce, GA..... Sole Pastor
Peace/Decatur, GA Sole Pastor
King of Kings/Jasper, GA Sole Pastor
Christ/Lakeland, FL Sole Pastor
Oak Road/Lilburn, GA Sole Pastor
Marco/Marco Island, FL Senior Pastor
Faith/Merritt Island, FL Sole Pastor
Woodlands/Montverde, FL Senior Pastor
Peace/Naples, FL Sole Pastor
Holy Trinity/Rome, GA Sole Pastor
Epiphany/Tallahassee, FL Senior Pastor
Holy Trinity/Tampa, FL Senior Pastor

Calls Issued

Christ the King/Commerce, GA called
Aaron Reinking as Sole Pastor
Christ/Lakeland, FL called
George Lowrey as Sole Pastor
Oak Road/Lilburn, GA called
Paul Alms as Sole Pastor
Lord of Life/Strockbridge, GA called
Carl Morten as Pastor SMP
King of Kings/Talking Rock , GA called
Jeff Wilhelm as Sole Pastor
Epiphany/Tallahassee, FL called
Matt Kohl as Sole Pastor
Mount Calvary/Warner Robins, GA called
Peter LeBorious as Associate Pastor SMP

Calls Accepted

Robert Davis accepted Senior Pastor at
Good Shepherd/N Fort Myers, FL
Carl Morten accepted Pastor SMP at
Lord of Life/Stockbridge, GA
Peter LeBorious accepted Associate Pastor SMP at
Mount Calvary/Warner Robins, GA
Daniel Brammeier accepted Sole Pastor at
Timothy/Woodstock, GA

Calls Declined

Paul Alms declined Oak Road/Lilburn, GA
Jon Thomas declined Woodlands/Montverde, FL
Jeff Wilhelm declined King of Kings/Talking Rock, GA
Matt Kohl declined Epiphany/Tallahassee, FL

Transferred Out to Other Districts

Ms. Julie Bedard (C) Southern
Rev. Stephen Reynolds (O) South Wisconsin

Transferred In from Other Districts

Ms. Aimee Dierks (C) Northern Illinois
Rev. Victor Belton (O) Atlantic

Ordained/Commissioned Minister Initial Placements

Ms. Andra Gates/Concordia Seminary Deaconess
Rev. Carl Morten/Concordia Seminary SMP
Rev. Peter LeBorious/Concordia Seminary SMP

Ordained/Commissioned Minister Installations

10/27/19 | Aimee Dierks was installed as Early Childhood Director
Amazing Grace/Oxford, FL
11/03/19 | Robert Davis was installed as Senior Pastor
Good Shepherd/N Fort Myers, FL
12/22/19 | Daniel Brammeier was installed as Sole Pastor
Timothy/Woodstock, GA
11/10/19 | Andra Gates was installed as Deaconess at
Concordia/Miami, FL
01/11/20 | Carl Morten was installed as SMP Pastor at
Lord of Life/Stockbridge, GA
01/20/20 | Peter LeBorious was installed as SMP Associate Pastor
at Mount Calvary/Warner Robins, GA

Status Change in the District

Ms. Julie Bedard from Active to Candidate
Rev. David Hilgert from Candidate to Emeritus

Called to Glory

Rev. Richard Eissfeldt (O)
Mr. Herman Koenig (C)

Reinstated to the Roster

Deaconess Sara Perez-Archie (C)

LUTHERAN LIFE

Do you have new members who should be receiving Lutheran Life?

Send us their names and addresses for their free subscription. You can also send a new updated mailing list for your congregation and our software will "knock out" duplications to ensure households are not receiving multiple copies. To remove any name/address, please send an email to LutheranLife@aol.com and it will promptly be deleted.

UCF Campus Ministry Flourishing

With more than 68,000 students, the University of Central Florida is the largest university by enrollment in Florida, and it is one of the largest universities in the nation. The opportunities at UCF are limitless. **LiveUCF**, a church on the campus of the University of Central Florida, is not only trying to leave an impact on campus but also on the Lutheran church as a whole.

Since its inception in 2014, LiveUCF has set out to live life alongside students and raise them up to be the future leaders of our church. Live also is proud to be a “student led church” — our students attend board meetings, they plan out activities, and they are an integral part of the church’s decision-making process.

For their annual gala held in October of 2019, our students and alumni were challenged to complete this phrase: “Live is more than a church, Live is _____.”

“I think the words our students and alumni wrote speak volumes about not only LiveUCF, but of college ministry as a whole,” said Laura Blank, LiveUCF’s Outreach Minister. “LIVE is more than a church, LIVE builds lasting relationships. Through the ministry of LiveUCF, God has blessed me so much, especially those around me, offered Kevin Blank, Class of 2020. “I thank God and LiveUCF for blessing me with lasting relationships I could have only dreamed about.”

“Having LiveUCF was one of the biggest draws for me to come to UCF. Live has provided me with lasting friendships all while helping me grow in my faith in ways I couldn’t have imagined,” voiced Carolyn Marsee, also class of 2020.

“Live is more than a church, Live is where I found my place at UCF.” (Angela Behjre 2020).

Other students, now alumni, offered these statements:

“LiveUCF is more than a church . . . Live is a lifelong family. Live is a confidence builder. Live is a faith strengthener. The friendships I’ve formed over the last four years while attending are unlike any other. Live definitely helped me solidify my certainty in my faith by giving me a setting to build relationships with other faithful students, even at one of the largest universities” (Rachael Arnholz 2019).

“Live is more than a church, Live was our home church away from home. Live kept us engaged in church when many young adults tend to venture away from their faith. It allowed us the opportunity to take ownership in our church and build a Christian community at the heart of UCF.” (Tyler 2016 and Kristen 2017 Killinger).

According Laura Blank, college is most certainly a time filled with stress, questioning, peer pressure, and worrying. Students need the support and love that keeps them moving forward while keeping them focused on their faith. LiveUCF — and all our campus churches spread throughout the FLGA District — want to do just that.



More information about LiveUCF is on their website: liveucf.com. If you know of any students headed to University of Central Florida, LiveUCF would like to connect with them. Send information via email to connect@LiveUCF.com.

February 9-15, 2020

Synod Council of Presidents
Marriage Retreat
Santa Fe, New Mexico

February 17-22, 2020

Best Practices for Ministry Conference
Phoenix, Arizona

February 28-29, 2020

Region 3 Lay Leadership Summit
Prince of Peace | Orlando, FL
Details on District Website

February 28, 2020

Lutheran Schools Music Festival
St. Luke’s | Oviedo, FL
School choirs, bells, orchestras, bands

March 2-4, 2020

Veterans of the Cross Retreat
Life Enrichment Center |
Fruitland Park, FL
Details on District Website

March 6-7, 2020

District New Workers Conference
District Office
Orlando, Florida

March 9-13, 2020

Grace Place Wellness Retreat
Lake Lanier Islands Resort
Atlanta, Georgia

March 15-18, 2020

East Coast District President’s
Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

April 17, 2020

District Board of Directors
Teleconference Meeting
11 a.m. Saturday Morning

September 24-26, 2020

District Presidents Equip Conference
Buena Vista Palace | Orlando, FL
Details on District Website

W

We are already into the New Year.

How are you doing with your resolutions? Most people do not last long before giving up on their resolutions. An article in the *New York Post* says that most people give up on their resolutions before the end of the first month of the year. In fact, after analyzing more than 31.5 million online global activities last January, the writer of the article was able to pinpoint the date when most people report failing their resolution — January 12th! I hope you are able to beat the odds and keep your resolutions, whatever they may be.

I do want to suggest one to you, and that is to reach many in 2020 for Jesus!

Last year I made a resolution to let Jesus “be seen” in my life! As we reflect on the Incarnation of Jesus, I hoped His love would be more visible in my actions and treatment of others. There were a few times when I had some success, but many times, I failed miserably. With the Apostle Paul I say, “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?”

Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” I am confident that even in the midst of my failures He offers me His grace. I am continually learning to cling to Jesus in every trial and difficulty, even when I am feeling discouraged and let down. Why? Because His promises are eternal, and He has said, He will be with

us to the end of the ages and that He will never leave me nor forsake me. Later Paul continues in *ROMANS 8*, saying, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.” This is why, even in our greatest weakness, Jesus can be seen in us as we humble ourselves, turn to Him, and receive His love and forgiveness. We are free to let Him “be seen” in us, and as He is seen in us, we find that we can reach many in a hurting world with His love and grace.

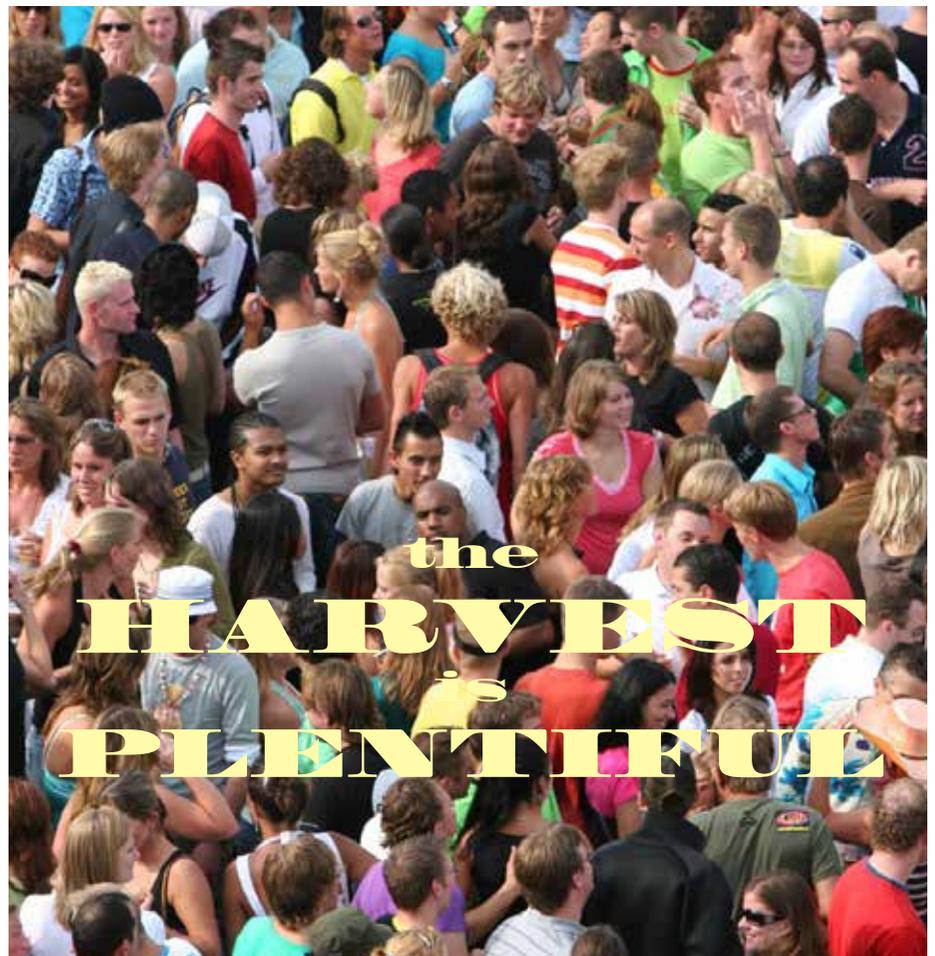
Reaching many in 2020 for Jesus may require an adjustment in our attitude and opening our eyes to opportunities. Jesus can be visibly seen in our life as we build ourselves up in His Word of promise and regularly receive the Sacraments. In terms of adjusting

our attitude, when we adopt an attitude with the desire to allow Jesus to be seen in us, it impacts all other aspects of our life.

Desire is a key. Do we want to show Jesus to others? The Psalmist wrote, “Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.” If our delight is to share Jesus with others, Jesus will be seen in us.

In terms of opportunities, they are all around us. The harvest is plentiful but Jesus says the workers are few. I have a friend who has a vineyard. When the crop is good, it takes more time, effort and willing workers to harvest it. There is a timing element to harvesting a crop. It demands immediate attention or the fruit may be lost. Imagine seeing an ample harvest waste away because there wasn’t enough time and workers to gather it in. It is heartbreaking to see such a missed opportunity.

As we see the challenges that face many of our churches, we can





*When Jesus is Seen,
We reach many in 2020!*

Reaching many in 2020 for Jesus

turn them around and see them as opportunities. We have the opportunity to make a difference for Jesus in the world all around us. God loved this very world so much that He sent His only Son, Jesus, that whoever would believe in Him would not perish but have eternal life.

Each of us, saved by grace through faith, are now the workers sent into the abundant harvest field to share the hope that we have within. Jesus calls us to reach

many for Him, for God's Kingdom, for all eternity.

Have you ever known someone who was outside of the Kingdom of God, who came to know the love, forgiveness and grace of Jesus? Not only is it inspiring, it really motivates you to reach out with His love to others. It is time to harvest the crop God has supplied in the world. The harvest is plentiful. We are the ones God is calling, whom He is giving opportunity to participate in His work of reaching

many in 2020 for the sake of the Gospel. Will you join me as we extend His Kingdom and share His love so that Jesus is seen in us? May His ministry through us transforms lives.

There are many resolutions that I have already forgotten, neglected or abandoned. Reaching many for Jesus is a top priority, not only *professionally*, but also *personally*, as we equip, empower and engage to connect people to Jesus! Together may we reach many in 2020 for Jesus!

*Your fellow worker in
His harvest.,
GREG*



The writing assignment was intriguing, but I never anticipated it would result in a decade-long friendship with one of America's best-loved TV personalities. As a columnist for *Christian Parenting Today* magazine, I had been asked by editor David Kopp to write a cover story on Mister Rogers. Even in 1994, celebrities were protected by a ring of handlers. The task could have been impossible. Fortunately, I connected almost immediately with a key person: David Newell, whose real-life sunny disposition matched his onscreen persona as Mr. McFeeley on *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*.

I caught a flight to Pittsburgh. The PBS station WQED was located downtown. Fred Rogers and I met in his office, just down the hall from the studio where the popular children's program was taped. Furnished almost like a small den, the office felt comfortable and homelike. This was definitely not a corporate cubicle!

"There's a small clock from the mother of a special needs child, personally meaningful artwork on the walls, and two pairs of sneakers tucked under the chairs," I recalled later. The magazine article was to offer parents a godly approach to building self-esteem in young children. According to the cassette tape recording I made that day, Fred said, "Self-esteem doesn't come from people giving a lot of compliments for things kids don't and shouldn't be complimented for. Self-esteem comes from realizing you have worth."

"I like you just the way you are" was more than the last line on a broadcast script. That implicit message of

acceptance and respect for each individual was at the heart of Fred's message.

And yet, he offered even more.

Fred modeled how to be immersed in the moment. Perhaps that why he made me feel so special. I believe his willingness to give the gift of time was one of the qualities that appealed to his youngest television viewers. Even before the beginning of the digital age, parents were telling children to "hurry up" and "get going." Fred didn't do that — on TV or in real life.

I appreciated his pace, especially during that initial visit as I scribbled notes across a large yellow legal pad. During that interview and our subsequent meetings, he never attempted to fill pauses. He didn't rush through answers. He never looked for ways to cut short a conversation. This busy celebrity gave the gift of time.

Fred was also visionary. He identified what matters in life. Today, we are belatedly beginning to shift from valuing the material to recognizing more fulfilling core values. Even the title *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* reflected the desire for community and all that such connectedness includes.

Fred was inclusive before the importance and value of diversity became universally accepted, and he exuded a level of caring that could only be defined as radical kindness. In a recent interview about the movie "It's a Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood," actor Tom Hanks repeated one of Fred's best-known quotes: "Be kind. Be kind. Be kind." That was Fred Rogers.

Editor's note — visit marymanzsimon.com

Dr. Mary Manz Simon is considered one of the top "parenting pros" in the country. She combines her training as an early childhood educator, insights as a corporate consultant and children's market analyst, and experiences as a mother and grandmother, to provide a wide range of services and presentations to audiences and companies. Her platform of practical advice, within a developmental framework, appeals to educators and parents who want real-time solutions. Simon's extensive work with companies and retailers in publishing, education and children's entertainment, give her a comprehensive time line and perspective on emerging issues. With sales of more than three million books in English, hundreds of magazine articles and media interviews, Simon is, in the words of her son, Matthew, "a world changer." She and her husband, retired LCMS Pastor Hank Simon, attend Zion/Fort Myers, Florida.

My friend Mister Rogers

by Dr. Mary Manz Simon

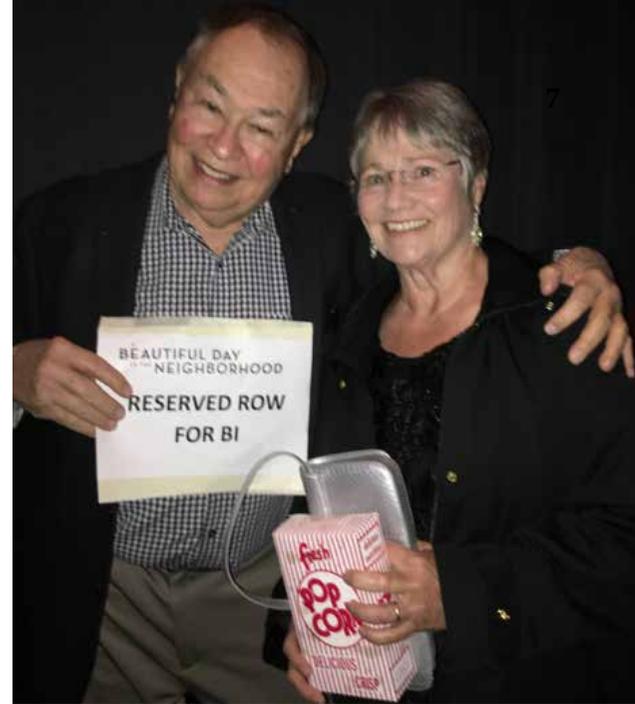


Shown above is an autographed trolley Fred gave Mary during one of her trips to the WQED studio in Pittsburgh, PA. Below, and at right, is correspondence from Mister Rogers, always hand-written in his distinctive calligraphic style.





Mary is pictured at left at the Heinz History Museum in Pittsburgh with the "original set" from Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood. The show ran from 1968 through 2001 — 31 seasons with 912 episodes. At right, Mary is shown with David Newell, who played Mister McFeeley on the show. They were recently at Sony's red carpet gala in Pittsburgh on Wednesday, November 20, 2019.



Fred McFeeley Rogers (below right) was an American television personality, musician, puppeteer, writer, producer, Presbyterian minister and icon. He was the creator, show runner and host of the preschool television series *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* — which ran from 1968 to 2001. In December 2002, doctors diagnosed Rogers with stomach cancer. He underwent surgery the following month, but it did little to slow the disease down. On February 27, 2003, with his wife Joanne at his side, Rogers died at his home in Pittsburgh.

Tom Hanks (below left) portrays Mister Rogers in *A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood*, a timely story of kindness triumphing over cynicism, based on the true story of a real-life friendship between Fred Rogers and journalist Tom Junod. After a jaded magazine writer is assigned a profile of Fred Rogers, he overcomes his skepticism, learning about empathy, kindness, and decency from America's most beloved neighbor. Hanks received the Cecil B. DeMille award at the 2020 Golden Globes this year.



J

oanne was a new member on the Christian Activities committee. She was excited and a little nervous about joining this nice group of people at the church. They seemed to know each other so well and have done this work for so long.

At the first meeting she knew they would probably be talking about the next year's schedule and likely ask her to take on some kind of responsibility. She was anxious but enthusiastic. She was ready to jump in and help in any way.

But then at the meeting she was a bit taken aback at what she heard: "Well, we'll just do what we did last year. Besides, it's not as if we have a lot of help." Then as the meeting neared its end she hadn't been asked her opinion or been asked to do anything. So she said, "What should I do?" "Oh thanks Joanne." They replied, "We're just going to do what we did last year. Maybe you can help out here and there."

Joanne's enthusiasm seemed to evaporate. She was a bit surprised and confused. In fact she was discouraged. They seemed like they were on automatic pilot.

Does this kind of "automatic pilot leadership" ever happen at churches?

Unfortunately it is not uncommon. Good people, nice people, faithful Christian people and probably also tired people, may not know what to do differently in the future. What's more, unintentionally and unfortunately new volunteers, unless they are extroverted, have difficulty finding their niche, fitting in and sticking.

So what can be done? More "automatic pilot?"

No, there is another option for the coaching leader. Every new year is an opportunity for reflecting on the past and dreaming about the future. Every time a newcomer joins a group, team or committee, it is an opportunity for new ideas and new energy. It begins with stating out loud your church's purpose. We can all assume many good things about why a church is "here" but saying it aloud brings clarity, unity and focus to what you and your group or team are doing. How would you answer that question?

Then take the time to reflect based upon that purpose. Ask: "How did we do last year in working on and accomplishing that purpose?" "What were the lessons learned?" "What can we celebrate?"

Next, instead of automatically assuming you will try to repeat what you did last year, ask: "What by God's grace can we dream of doing next year?" "How can we fulfill our purpose even more intentionally in what we do?" Continue by narrowing it down to what is really doable based upon the gifts of people, energy and resources. Include questions like, "who can we ask to help?" "Who by asking may be drawn closer to Jesus though their taking on a part of this?" "What resources do we have?" "How motivated are we (and our church) to accomplish this?"

For the newcomer just going through this process and encouraging their input and participation will help to "onboard" them. They are probably less emotionally "attached" to what has been done before and are likely to be a source of fresh thinking, thought starters or ideas for what can be done in the future. Give them permission and encouragement. Thank them even when their ideas seem outlandish because it will stretch



your thinking! Be sure to pray for one another, care for each other and love one another, carving out time in the meetings and in the activities to “check-in” on how each are doing. Make it a “safe place” for trying new things and making new mistakes. Exercise that forgiveness muscle and loving one another. People are a first priority before projects.

There are few opportunities to intentionally be different and do things differently. Yet the perfect

opportunity to try is when new people arrive and a new year begins. Turn off the “automatic pilot” and lead with a few of these questions. Then see God work in new and exciting ways.



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. You can contact Scott through email scottgress@me.com or his blog page scottgress.com or at 561-542-4472.

AUTOMATIC PILOT LEADERSHIP?

BY SCOTT GRESS

*Every new year is
an opportunity for
reflecting on the past
and dreaming about the future.*



WE'VE BEEN LISTENING!

Exciting changes have been made to Lutheran Church Extension Fund's (LCEF) ConnectPLUS and PartnerPLUS investments.

LCEF wouldn't be able to support Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) ministries without the faithful support of our investors. This strong and stable base means the important role LCEF plays in supporting the LCMS will continue long into the future.

CONNECTPLUS

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On balances up to \$50,000.

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- Balances up to \$50,000 earn 3.0%.
- Balances over \$50,000 earn 2.25%. Rates subject to change.
- Minimum of \$500 to start.
- Two-year fixed term note.
- Additional funds can be added during the term (\$25 minimum).

PARTNERPLUS

2.50%
2-year

3.00%
4-year

On balances up to \$50,000.

- PartnerPLUS** is a special, fixed-rate investing opportunity with a premium rate for LCMS individuals, organizations and congregations.
- Balances up to \$50,000 earn 2.50% for a two-year term or 3.00% for a four-year term.
- Balances over \$50,000 earn 2.25%. Rates subject to change.
- Minimum of \$500 to start (no transfers from other LCEF investments).
- Additional funds can be added during the term (\$25 minimum).
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LCEF is a nonprofit religious organization; therefore, LCEF investments are not FDIC-insured bank deposit accounts. This is not an offer to sell investments, nor a solicitation to buy. LCEF will offer and sell its securities only in states where authorized. The offer is made solely by LCEF's Offering Circular. Investors should carefully read the Offering Circular, which more fully describes associated risks. The State of Washington has adopted a regulatory position that currently prohibits residents of Washington State from opening a new investment unless they are already an LCEF investor and 18 years or older. Rates as of Dec. 2019. Balance restrictions apply. Rates subject to change. Visit lcef.org for details. *ConnectPLUS is available on a one account per investor basis only to new investors 18 and older who have not had an LCEF investment in the past 24 months. ConnectPLUS is not available to investors in Ohio and Pennsylvania. **PartnerPLUS is available to investors 18 and older. New money only.

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District Board Meets First Time in New Decade

The Florida-Georgia District Board of Directors met in Orlando January 24-25 to conduct the business entrusted to them by the member congregations. They participated — along with the regional vice presidents and circuit visitors — in the installation service of the new Missions & Outreach Executive, the Rev. Dr. Peter Meier.

“We have a lot of work ahead of us,” the Rev. Dr. Greg Walton, President of the District emphasized in his installation homily,” and Peter is here to equip, empower and engage us . . . not to do the work for us!” The Board and Circuit Visitors pledged to support and pray for Meier and his work.

That afternoon Ms. Rebecca Hartmann was welcomed to the board, replacing Katie Abercrombie, who retired and moved out of the District. She is a member of Hope/Plant City, FL and comes from a long line of Lutheran educators.

The board spent time in Bible Study and discussion pertaining to leadership and outreach.

Laura Zirbel gave a presentation on the current state of finance and administration and the next issue of Lutheran Life will have the annual report following the audit by the independent firm that has handled that function for the past several years. There has been a movement toward quarterly — instead of monthly — giving by a large section of congregations in the District.

District Vice President for LCEF, Jay Wendland, gave a report on the status of LCEF as well as LERT (the Lutheran Early Response Team). LERT training helps prepare congregations and individual members to be better prepared when a disaster strikes, and helps them know how to respond in word and deed within their community. Wendland updated the board of the recent trip to the Bahamas. LERT is working closely with the Rev. Sam Boodle, pastor at Lutheran Church of Nassau, to help assess damage and with needs. Jay

Wendland gave a full report (see sidebar). Lutheran Church of Nassau sustained no damage.

Mark Brink, District Executive Director for Schools & Youth Ministry gave an update on the “Not Even One” initiative to equip church and staff as well as lay leaders to better recognize signs of child sexual abuse. The District is about to kick off phase two of that program.

President Walton brought the Board up to date with activities including the upcoming Council of Presidents meeting (Santa Fe,

NM), Best Practices event (Phoenix, AZ), Region 3 Lay Leadership Summit, Veterans of the Cross Retreat, New Workers Gathering (all in Greater Orlando, FL area) and the Grace Place Wellness Retreat (Atlanta, GA).

The President’s Equip Conference in September of this year at Buena Vista Palace, Orlando, will be themed “One Body Many Parts.” It is in conjunction with the LWML. The committee has been meeting to formulate plans. This will be President Walton’s last conference as District President.

A comprehensive report was also given on the past nine months of mission activities with FiveTwo. Ten new ministries have begun in ten different cities.

There was also some discussion about possible mission starts in Babcock Ranch (just outside of Ft. Myers, FL with help from regional and circuit leadership) and North Macon, GA working with Mount Calvary/Warner Robins, GA.

—JL

Bahamas Hurricane Relief



In photo, from left, District President the Rev. Dr. Greg Walton, Rev. Sam Boodle, Rev. Michael Meyer, Manager, LCMS Disaster Response, Rev. Dr. Ross Johnson, Director, LCMS Disaster Response, and Jay Wendland, FLGA District Disaster Relief Coordinator. In December they flew to the Bahamas with a goal of assessing the financial needs of the both Nassau Lutheran Church and the community. Pastor Boodle, of Nassau Lutheran, will help distribute the gifts that have been received by the Florida-Georgia District since Hurricane Dorian’s trek across the Bahamas in September. Hurricane Dorian was the most intense tropical cyclone on record to strike the Bahamas.

Peter Meier Installed as New District Missions Executive

The official start date for Dr. Peter Meier was February 1st but he was installed at the District Board of Directors and Circuit Visitors joint meeting on Friday, January 24th this year.

Meier comes to the District from the Center for US Missions where he served as Executive Director. Before joining the Center in 2013, Peter served in the Minnesota South District as Executive Assistant to the President (2005-2006) and Assistant to the President for Missions (2005-2013). He also served as Senior Pastor of Zion Lutheran Church and School in Mayer, MN from 1982-2005.

Born in Milwaukee, WI, Peter received his undergraduate education degree in education from Concordia Teachers College in River Forest, IL in 1978, and his Master of Divinity from Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, IN in 1982. His Doctor of Ministry degree was granted in 2011 by Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne. Peter's research and doctoral thesis was on the topic of missional leadership in Lutheran Schools.

Peter met his wife Kathy at Concordia River Forest; they were married in 1979. Kathy earned her Masters in Special Education from Concordia St. Paul in 2009 and served as Coordinator at the Center for US Missions beginning in 2013. The couple is blessed with three married children and six very active grandchildren.

"I'm extremely enthusiastic about having someone 'back in the field with boots on the ground,'" President Greg Walton emphasized.

"When I heard Peter Meier had accepted the call to be our mission executive I could barely contain my excitement," offered the Rev. Victor Belton, one of the mission coordinators for the District and pastor at Peace/Decatur, GA. "I have worked with Peter on a number projects through the Center for United States Mission. The work we have done that is the foundation for everything else is on prayer initiatives for the Center and for mission efforts in the wider LCMS. I believe Peter is the man for the season and that our work together will help advance the Kingdom agenda of our Father as well as facilitate growth in the congregations and outreach efforts of our District.

"Peter Meier is a seasoned veteran with a heart for the mission of Christ," added the Rev. Gerald Kieschnick, Chief Executive Officer for Legacy Deo and former President of the LCMS.

Following the late morning installation service, those in attendance enjoyed a luncheon prior to the beginning of the District Board meeting. Kathy and Peter attended the Board of Directors' dinner later that evening at President Walton's home.

—JL



Kathy & Peter Meier



Peter Meier is installed by President Walton



The string section of the installation orchestra was comprised of Lynda Voss and Greg Walton

Redeeming Life Outreach Ministries Ensuring Healthy, Hope-filled Lives Rooted in Christ

Redeeming Life Outreach Ministries is a Christ-centered maternity home offering love, hope, and a future to single pregnant women in crisis. Based in Sanford, Florida, they are a Recognized Service Organization (RSO) of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and also a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Sheryl DeWitt is executive director for Redeeming Life, leading a team of a diverse group of nurturers, educators and leaders who are passionate about the miracle of life, motherhood and living a Christ-centered life. "We are committed to providing love, hope and a future to our residents and their unborn children," she offers.

"Some people, like those living on the streets, would say they want (and need) the basics of life — a roof over their head, nutritious meals, a job, and a good, reliable car," DeWitt continues, "these aren't things that fit under a Christmas tree."

This past Christmas — and throughout 2020 — Redeeming Life seeks donations to help residents with their basic needs.

One resident, Sarah, came to Redeeming Life in July of 2019. She had been living on the porch of a church under a tent on the porch of a church. She had no time to get on her feet because she was too busy just trying to survive. Her baby is due in February and



Redeeming Life Resident Sarah

her goals are to have saved \$900 by the time the baby arrives. Her career goal is to become a certified medical assistant, enabling her to buy a reliable car and hold a steady job.

"Living at Redeeming Life affords Sarah — and all our residents — the time they need to finish school, find a job, learn how to manage themselves, and to care for their babies, DeWitt explains. "No longer living on the streets, Sarah has found a good job with benefits. She works during the day and goes to school at night. And in the end, through the gift of time, she has discovered what she now holds most precious — the gift of a Savior."

There are six bedrooms in the maternity home and the residents live together, along with a Residential Manager. Each woman is on her own journey toward self-sufficiency, and everyone is taught important life skills that are required for them to eventually move-out and live on their own with their children.

They live as a family, cook and eat together, have daily devotions, pray, and study God's Word together. When "life happens," they support one another. They learn to get along with people with different backgrounds and ideas. When conflict arises, they learn how to manage it, and they learn how to forgive one another and to accept forgiveness.

Women who desire the opportunity to learn and grow and have a strong desire to become self-sufficient and take care of themselves and their babies are the best fit for this program. "They should also have a desire to strengthen their spiritual walk with God and engage in regular devotions and Worship," DeWitt continues. "The biggest barrier to success in the program is an unwillingness to give up past relationships that are detrimental and prevent a woman from steadily working toward progress."

Residents are afforded private time in the home but they are not allowed to isolate themselves in their rooms. Residents share in dinner, devotions and chores and have private time every night before 10 PM as well as on weekends.



Ed & Sheryl DeWitt

Chores consist of dusting, vacuuming, sweeping and mopping, cleaning the kitchen and bathrooms, and more. The goal is to learn to clean and properly maintain a home for themselves in the future.

"We believe that all people need Jesus, God's Son and our Savior," DeWitt concludes. "No matter who we have in our lives, we always first need a relationship with Jesus. Part of our resident's journey with us is to grow in faith with God, and bring their baby up knowing who Jesus is and having a relationship with Him. We also know that families who worship together have healthier and positive relationships with each other." As a result, all residents attend Bible Study and worship services every Sunday across the street at **Lutheran Church of the Redeemer/ Sanford, FL** where Sheryl's husband, the Rev. Edward DeWitt, serves as pastor. He is a founding member and chairman of the board of directors for Redeeming Life Outreach Ministries. They have achieved the Silver GuideStar Seal of Transparency — indicating that a nonprofit has provided key information in its Nonprofit Profile. By providing up-to-date information, nonprofits allow potential donors and funders to make educated decisions about the work they do to make the world a better place.

To make a monetary gift to Redeeming Life Outreach Ministries, checks may be sent c/o Sheryl DeWitt at P.O. Box 1496, Sanford, FL 32772-1496.

—*JL*

District Congregation Honors the Past, Celebrates the Present and Envisions the Future at a Vicarage Reunion Night

As the decade was ending and the calendar approached 2020, **St. Paul/Boca Raton, FL** senior pastor Steve Carretto wanted to challenge his congregation to look forward at several ministry opportunities in the next 20 years. He worked with a team to create the theme “Honoring the Past, Celebrating the Present and Envisioning the Future.”

He had the idea to go back 20 years and bring as many pastors as possible who had had their vicarage year at St. Paul back for a vicarage reunion. They invited all of them — along with their wives — and St. Paul was able to have half of them return. Many had commitments — travel, educational, congregational and family — and were not able to attend.

At St. Paul vicars arrive in August and are with the congregation for a

calendar year. “They step onto campus and the first few days receive a binder in their initial indoctrination meeting and the calendar in the binder shows them what to expect in their first four months with us,” Carretto continues. “In the first few months they get into relationships with the staff (during the week) and the congregation (on weekends) and then eventually with our school students, teachers, parents. Once those relationships are established, they can truly begin pastoring people.”

That explains the enthusiasm the church and school family of St. Paul delivered in January when more than 250 members attended a mid-week banquet to hear each of them give a brief synopsis of their vicarage experience and share where they are today and the ministry they are doing.

St. Paul’s vicars do nearly everything an ordained pastor is able to do — but with supervision. “Very quickly these men begin pastoral visits with us. When they walk through the doors of St. Paul they are a student, but my prayer is that when they exit our campus after a year, they would be able to handle everything a pastor does. They may still be developing their leadership skills but they’ll feel the confidence of being able to lead a congregation.”

According to Pastor Carretto, the vicars at St. Paul are frequently at Church Council meetings, Board of Elders meetings, they sit with every staff member at some point to better help them experience what team ministry is all about.

“The St. Paul vicars aren’t asked to develop a budget or design

Ten former St. Paul vicars (including St. Paul’s Senior Pastor, Steve Carretto, a former vicar himself — attended the event. They gathered on stage for a formal photo. Pictured left to right are Dennis & Sally Glick, Pastor Emeritus, Kevin Hintze (holding his iPhone so his wife, Sarah, and their 3-week-old son Isaac could join in the evening), Jeremy & Alicia Lucke, Matthew & Joanna Lane, CJ & Katie Luttinen, Peter & Emily Ahlersmeyer, Dustin & Chelsea Beck, Steve & Jessica Carretto, Jacob & Rebecca Schultz, Noah & Monica Kegley and Andrew & Whitney Howe.



every worship service . . . but they'll have the opportunity to work beside our council, finance and business administration team in the preparation of the church and school budget or work beside our minister of music or worship arts leader in the organization of a worship service. I want them to know how to put a bulletin together, how to utilize so many of the tools that are available to us through the LCMS, he says.

"The vicars at St. Paul participate in pre-marital counseling with our pastors as long as the couple is

comfortable with that. They get to see how we go about that just like they do when sitting with a family in the preparation of a funeral or memorial service. It's a tremendous and very real learning opportunity with real people — not something you can experience in the classroom back at seminary."

Pastor Carretto believes the vicars should *experience* the entire pastoral office and *learn from it*. They don't get a lot of counseling experience back at seminary and our vicars often venture into student counseling with

our middle and high school youth and students in our school. "Some pursue that more in depth and enjoy it more than others and that's okay."

What does it cost a congregation to have a vicar?

The salary is usually in line with a first-year teacher. That range will vary in different parts of the country according to housing and cost of living. At St. Paul the vicars get assistance with their housing with a pre-arranged condominium property, but they pay their own rent so that they can learn to budget that



2005-2006
Jeremy & Alicia Lucke
Peace Lutheran Church
Corvallis, OR



2006-2007
Benjamin & Celina Haupt
Concordia Seminary
Saint Louis, MO



2007-2008
Kevin & Sarah Hintze
Zion Lutheran Church
Georgetown, TX



2008-2009
Stephen & Jessica Carretto
St. Paul Lutheran Church & School
Boca Raton, FL



2009-2010
Dustin & C
Holy Cross L
War



2011-2012
Matthew & Joanna Lane
Peace Lutheran Church
Faribault, MN



2012-2013
Peter & Emily Ahlersmeyer
Concordia Lutheran Church
Fort Wayne, IN



2013-2014
CJ & Katie Luttimen
Holy Cross Lutheran Church-
Mobile, AL



2014-2015
Andrew & Whitney Howe
Mount Calvary Lutheran Church
Warner Robins, GA



2015-2016
Jacob & F
Concordia Luth
Saint



Pastor Andrew Howe is flanked by St. Paul elders John List and Carl Schiefer. All three have family history dating back to St. Lorenz Lutheran Church and School in Frannkenmuth, MI. Howe, a Frankenmuth native, served as vicar at St. Paul in 2014-2015 with his wife Whitney.



2018-2019 John & Emily Karolus
Concordia Seminary Saint Louis, MO
Karoluses sent a video greeting at the reunion event from Morocco where they were on a pre-arranged vacation.

along with their living expenses. The apartment is located near campus but the vicars pay the rent, utilities, water — just like they would after graduation from seminary.

“Our vicars receive an automobile allowance with mileage covered when they are using their cars for their churchwork,” Carretto continues. “They also get comprehensive health coverage with our congregational plan as a full-time employee of St. Paul. We seem to be assigned vicars who are newly married. Some have gone to

seminary together and others are married just before entering their vicarage year.

“It’s a great opportunity to “figure out church life” together . . . understanding how to live life in the community and obtaining skills to have a healthy balance in that life. The last thing we want to do is see a young vicar become a slave to church life and not be able to understand how to balance his life to include his responsibilities as a husband or a parent, time for exercise and retreat or reflection. We want them to have friendships and a healthy life so they can enjoy coming to work and feel affirmed in their calling.”

Pastor Carretto says that St. Paul Lutheran Church and School responds very well to vicars — they *mentor* them, they *invite* them into their homes, onto their boats, into their clubs. “Our parishioners enthusiastically and affectionately embrace these couples and these

men and their wives make lifelong friendships here,” he emphasizes. “A huge percentage of our vicars are raised in Christian homes — many, of course, Lutheran. Their experience here is incredibly different. They meet people from all walks of life, different religions some are unchurched but have their children in our school. It’s a fantastic experience for them. It’s actually a very real ‘mission’ opportunity.”

How does a congregation get involved in the vicarage program?

The first step is to get in contact with the seminary. The congregation will go through an interview process. Either Dr. Glenn Nielsen (Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, MO) or Dr. Gary Zieroth (Concordia Theological Seminary/Fort Wayne, IN) might make a personal visit. A congregation needs to have the financial resources to participate. There are prerequisites and the placement team looks at several things. Some congregations



2009-2010
Tim & Chelsea Beck
Cross Lutheran Church
Warda, TX



2010-2011
Timothy & Amanda Eden
Bethel Lutheran Church
Bryan, TX



2015-2016
Bob & Rebecca Schultz
Lutheran Church-Kirkwood
Saint Louis, MO



2016-2017
Noah & Monica Kegley
St. Paul's Lutheran Church & School
West Allis, WI

Below — St. Paul's current vicar, Joshua LeBorious, comes from a long line of Lutheran Pastors. He and Chris were married last summer right before they began vicarage at St. Paul. He's shown with his younger brothers and his parents, Sonja & Peter LeBorious. Josh's father, Pete, was just installed as Associate Pastor/SMP at Mount Calvary/Warner Robins, GA. Josh's grandfather is former District President Gerhard Michael, now serving St. Peter/Dehlonaga, GA and his uncles are Pastors Greg Michael, Christus Victor/Athens, GA and Tim Droegemueller, Living Faith/Cumming, GA. Josh's uncle Jay Wendland serves as LCEF District Vice President.



St. Paul's Senior Pastor, Stephen Carretto and School Principal, James Richards presented the congregation with a vision of what St. Paul's campus might look like in the not-too-distant future. Architectural renderings showed an expansion including additional classrooms, separate zones for pre-school, elementary and middle school students, updated athletic fields, outdoor courtyards that can serve as meeting space or lunch areas, a new fellowship hall, conference rooms and church and school offices. The expansion is taking into consideration heightened security and traffic flow on campus.



2019-2020 Joshua & Christine LeBorious

seeking vicars are not able to get them because of the shortage of seminary students. The placement experience is similar to a “call” for a pastor and the vicarage assignment process attempts to have a good fit between the student and the congregation.

“My vicarage experience was pretty unique,” Carretto elaborates. “Dr. Nielsen understood that Jessica and I wanted a congregation with a school and one a bit different from our experiences in the Midwest.

“We wanted to stretch our wings somewhat. Jessica was teaching and I was in my field experience as a seminarian. We were interested where the community wasn’t typically Lutheran — or even Christian. We wanted to experience what ‘teaching and preaching’ might

look like for us as a team. We were also extremely blessed because Jessica received the opportunity to teach at St. Paul during my vicarage year.

“My supervising pastor was Pastor Keith Brutlag, the intentional-interim pastor for St. Paul as they went through the call process. It was a phenomenal opportunity for me given the congregation went from *three* full-time pastors to *none*. Brutlag was an exceptional coach and my experience was incomparable. He’s a trusted advisor to this day.

“The vicarage process — and especially the residential seminary process — is beautiful. It really demands us to trust the Lord. It can be challenging — especially for our wives who are along for the ride. They work when we are at seminary,

then we move for our vicarage year and they come along. Then we return to campus our fourth year and they make another move,” Carretto concludes. “And finally, we make another move when we enter our first placement! Our wives often put their careers or families on hold while we complete our seminary education.

“Personally I found it valuable that we weren’t walking through the seminary process alone. Jessica and I had the support of our families, our fellow seminary students, the seminary faculty and, of course, our home congregations. Seminary is pretty intense, there is no question about it, but also party of what God has planned for His church!”

—JL



St. Paul's Senior Pastor (and Florida-Georgia Region 5 District Vice President) Steve & Jessica Carretto — vicar from 2008-2009 — hosted an al fresco dinner the night before the congregation's celebration. The evening provided the opportunity for all the former vicars to share vicarage stories and get to know each other. Perched on the wall of the swimming pool are (from left) Monica & Noah Kegley, Nikki & Andrew Kubowicz with son Logan — Andrew is in his first-year call as St. Paul's Associate Pastor, Alicia & Jeremy Lucke, Sally & Dennis Glick — Dennis is St. Paul's Pastor Emeritus and long-time vicarage supervisor and former Vice President of the District, Emily & Peter Ahlersmeyer, Katie & CJ Luttinen, Joanna & Matt Lane, Jessica & Steve Carretto, Chelsea & Dustin Beck, Rebecca & Jacob Schultz, Whitney & Andrew Howe with son Davis and John List, one of St. Paul's Elders. List is just one member of the congregation who ensures the vicars have housing and get plugged into St. Paul family homes for holidays and dinners. Not pictured, Kevin Hintze — his flight had a weather delay and he arrived the following morning.



Reverend Daniel Brammeier was installed as Pastor of **Timothy/Woodstock, GA** just in time for Christmas. The service was conducted December 22, 2019 and officiated by District President, the Rev. Dr. Greg Walton. Pastor Brammeier graduated Concordia Theological Seminary/ Fort Wayne IN in 1994 and has served the past 15 years at Immanuel/Brandon, FL. Pictured at the installation, from left, Pastors Ray Borchelt, Daniel Brammeier, District President Greg Walton and Ernie Knoche

Burning Bus



Jim Speer

In January the **Christ/Perry, GA** bus caught on fire while on the way to pickup children for the church's Wednesday night program. Jim Speer was the driver and got out of the bus safely. Fortunately he hadn't picked up any children yet. Jim is the owner of Jim's Quick Lube in Warner Robins, GA and a regular driver of the bus. ➤➤



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



REGION 1
GEORGIA

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



On January 12, 2020 The Rev. Peter LeBorious was installed as Associate Pastor SMP at **Mount Calvary/Warner Robins, GA**. Pictured from left (front row) are Pastors Andrew Howe, Peter Leborious, David Brighton, Gehard C. Michael and from left in back row President Greg Walton, Roger Schwartz and John Lehenbauer

Pastor Carl Morten was ordained as SMP pastor and installed at **Lord of Life/Stockbridge, GA** on, Saturday, January 11, 2020. Pictured below are (front row, left to right) Pastors Ray Borchelt, Paul Drutz, Carl Morten, District President Greg Walton, Wilton Heyliger, and Seminarian Jonathan Munnicha. In the middle row are Pastors Hiruy Gebremichael, Zachary Hoffman, Larry Townsend. Back row are Pastors Victor Belton, George Earhart, George Murdaugh, Khampheuy Munnicha, and Joseph Song.





During the week of November 9-16, 2019, a team of seven individuals from **Amazing Grace/Oxford/The Villages, FL**, were joined by four people — one from **Zion/Fort Myers, FL**, and three from **St. Michael/Fort Myers, FL**, in serving as Christ's hands and presence in Costa Rica. During the week, they constructed a home for a family of three while also doing children's ministry. This was Amazing Grace's 11th mission trip since it began in 2007. Pastor Rockey says, "The Lord said, 'You will be My witnesses...unto the ends of the earth.' So, we serve Him locally and globally sharing Christ's love that lives may be transformed for today and eternity."

Amazing Grace/ Oxford/The Villages, FL continues to celebrate God's faithfulness in "adding to the numbers" throughout 2019. On December 15th, 18 new members joined Amazing Grace's church family. In total, during 2019, "The Lord added (48) to their number..." Pastor James Rockey says, "We rejoice to see the Holy Spirit working through this congregation and continuing to challenge us to 'Experience Christ's Love. Live it and Share it!'"



YouTube Sensations

◀ Pastors Dana Brones and Nathan McCarty of **Bethlehem/Jacksonville Beach, FL** are making their weekly worship services and sermons available on the congregation's Facebook page through their YouTube Channel. Community outreach has been successful with Bethlehem's family regularly serving dinner to the patients and their caregivers who are staying at Gabriel House, part of the Mayo Clinic. They provide salad, dinner, and dessert. Gabriel House provides transportation shuttle between the Mayo Clinic and their residential quarters at greatly reduced rates to help those going through oncology treatment.



Dana Allen Brones
Senior Pastor



Nathan McCarty
Associate Pastor



First/Gainesville, FL hosted a dinner and escape room evening late in January for members of the congregation in their 20s and 30s. First they met for dinner at the Mi Apa Cuban Cafe and then went as a group to Escape Key to try solve the Spellbound Room. A church was ransacked and eight holy symbols were stolen. They split into teams of paranormal investigators to solve a series of challenging puzzles. Their goal was to use critical thinking and teamwork to follow the clues, complete all of the tasks set before them, and ultimately escape the room.

Region 2 Vice President:
James Rockey | Amazing Grace/Oxford, FL
District Secretary:
Jay Winters, University Church & Student Ctr/Tallahassee

Laity Board Members:
Donald Kaufman | St. John/Ocala, FL
Lois Schaefer | Amazing Grace/Oxford, FL
Commissioned Minister Board Member:
Tamie Worthington | St Paul/Peachtree City, GA
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

**REGION 2
N FLORIDA**





Dr. Jeffrey Skopak, Dr. Dale Meyer, Dr. Lawrence Rast and layman Andemichel Tesfazion

*Last March, 2019, the Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Skopak and layman Andemichel Tesfazion of **Grace/Jacksonville, FL**, took Dr. Dale Meyer, Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, MO and Dr. Lawrence Rast, Concordia Theological Seminary/Fort Wayne, IN as their guests on a journey to Ethiopia. Together the lead continuing education seminars for local pastors, met with Mechane Yesus leaders, visited with Mechane Yesus College leadership and visited local congregations. They met with Dr. Bruk, Mechane Yesus Seminary President.*

They also blessed the orphans that Grace sponsors and supports. One of the amazing results of the trip was the decision by Drs. Meyer and Rast to co-fund a Mechane Yesus Seminary program by our two LCMS seminaries.

This program is called “Christian-Muslim Relations” and is an evangelism track at the seminary to prepare pastors for mission work in Muslim communities and nations. Together the two seminaries co-fund the first cohort through this evangelism track at Mechane Yesus.

This past November, Dr. Lawrence Rast came to Jacksonville to present Andemichel Tesfazion a tremendous honor: The three seminaries and their presidents agreed to name this scholarship fund “The Andemichel Tesfazion Scholarship for Christian-Muslim Relations.

Andemichel Tesfazion was brought to tears and shared with the congregation: “This award represents all of you — because we, as a church, have worked hard to bring the love of Jesus to the people of Ethiopia.” Pastor Skopak and Andemichel are planning a return trip to Ethiopia in October of 2020. If you are interested in joining them please email Pastor Skopak at pastor_skopak@gracelutheraneagles.org.

Andemichel is shown below receiving the award alongside Pastor Skopak (left) and Dr. Lawrence Rast.





Trinity/Holly Hill, FL hosted a chili and soup luncheon following worship one Sunday in early January. The congregation used this time for a strategic planning session to look at their vision, mission, goals, board membership, activities, policies and procedures for 2020. The event drew abundant discussion and provided the congregation with an organizational management activity that defined priorities, helped them focus energy and resources and strengthen operations to ensure that congregation leaders and members were working toward common goals.

This past December **Hope/Plant City, FL's** Missions and Outreach Ministry Team and the congregation participated in a very special "reverse Advent calendar." The purposes of this calendar were twofold: 1) that the members be in prayer everyday as Christmas approached as each bag contained a special Advent prayer calendar and 2) purchase certain "non-perishable" grocery items (found on list attached to the bag) for the United Food Bank of Plant City (UFBPC). Pastor Dean Pfeffer is Vice-Chairman of the UFBPC Board of Directors. Each day throughout December the members continued to fill their bags to be returned to the church on Christmas Eve. According to team leader George Hayes, "we were overwhelmed by the response of the congregation. The members of Hope once again showed their love and support for those in need in our community." According to Pastor Pfeffer, Hope's members truly understand what Spirit-motivation is all about. They regularly support the Food Bank. Hope/Plant City continues to be a community drop-off point for anyone wishing to donate food to the UFBPC. Mary Heysek, UFBPC's director, said more than 1,250 pounds of groceries were received. Pastor Dean Pfeffer is shown at right with members of Hope's Missions and Outreach Ministry Team.



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

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

Laitry 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



REGION 3

Christ/Lakeland, FL hosted their 8th annual Antique Car show in January. Door prizes, swag bags, music and plenty of food was available for purchase. Proceeds from food sales and door prizes were donated to the Senior Orphans of Polk County — a home founded more than twenty-five years ago to assist those less fortunate. The original goal was to help local, indigent seniors living with no family support and monthly incomes of \$400 or less. Today that amount has increased to include those with monthly incomes of \$600 or less. Senior Orphans is 100 percent volunteer driven with no administrative costs. 



Trinity/Orlando, FL was involved in a downtown Lake Eola Community Outreach event in early December. The event Master of Ceremonies was the Rev. Billy Brath and Trinity's Child Development Center teachers prepared the students for their part — singing about Jesus' birthday on the main stage while Pastor Brath read the Christmas story between songs. The community was able to hear that Christmas is still all about Jesus.





Our Savior/Orlando, FL produced "Christmas Hope" — a skit based on a contemporary story of a family who had lost their husband/father. The widow and her children are overwhelmed — trying to deal with getting through Christmas. They work together to recall the Christmas story of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Every January Concordia University/Mequon's Symphonic Wind Ensemble embarks on a week-long performance tour to various locations across the United States and abroad. This year's tour took them into the greater Tampa, FL area and they were hosted at **Grace/Winter Haven, FL**. The evening concert included sacred and classical music from the standard wind repertoire. In the morning they performed for the students, and then combined with the middle school band for some pieces and solo and ensemble work.



Lutheran Church of the Redeemer/Sanford, FL will host their 7th Annual HymnFest on Saturday, March 14, 2020 at 4:00 PM. This year's theme is "The Lamb" and guest organist is David Ludwig, Jr. from Redeemer Lutheran Church in Winter Park, FL. LCR is located at 2525 South Oak Ave. Sanford, FL 32773. A reception of wine and cheese and a chili supper follows for fellowship.





Hope/Hudson, FL welcomed their new confirmands on Reformation Sunday, October 27th and All Saints Sunday, November 3rd, 2019. Pictured above is Pastor Kent Fuqua with Ashlee Phontipsavath and with other members of the 2019 class.



Each month, **Christ the King/Largo, FL** serves dozens of families in Pinellas County with non-perishable food items through a food pantry. They collect crackers, noodles, spaghetti sauce, canned meat, macaroni and cheese, boxed rice, soups, canned fruit & vegetables and peanut butter. Congregation members and neighbors are asked to bring food items to the office during the week or on Sunday to drop it in a basket located in the back of the Sanctuary or Christian Ministry Center lobby.

The Social Ministry Team at **Messiah/Carrollwood, FL** performed two special Christmas projects for underprivileged children in their community. The first was for Hope Children's Home. Messiah members held a Christmas party on Hope's campus. The gymnasium was filled with excitement as the children opened their gifts after enjoying a few sweet treats and punch. Afterwards Messiah's members and friends were then treated to a mini-concert of Christmas carols performed by the Hope children. The congregation also worked together to ensure that Lutheran Services Florida's annual toy drive would be a success. Members were encouraged to take a special item off the "angel tree" and donate gifts that would be appropriate for children age 9 and under. The gifts represented God's love and care to the children who received them and to their parents.



- 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 Burtzlaff | Our Savior/St. Petersburg
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





Our Savior/Plantation, FL, had 36 church and school volunteers break into two groups to visit members in rehabilitation centers, assisted living homes, and members who have recently had a death in their family. Under the leadership of Pastor Tony Durante, they read the Christmas Gospel, sang Christmas hymns and carols and prayed for those they visited. They put a smile on the faces of many people and were themselves blessed in this beautiful act of sharing Jesus Light!



At left and below, the confirmation class and the children's ministry team at **Our Savior/Plantation, FL** worked together to create baskets for 18 families in the community. They wanted to give a "helping hand" enabling them to have a happy Thanksgiving. Turkeys and all the trimmings were delivered to their homes. Pastor Tony Durante formed teams of volunteers and sent them out with prayers and scriptures for each family.



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

- 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

**REGION 5
SE FLORIDA**





Holy Cross/North Miami, FL kicked off the new year with their PK2 hosting "Muffins with Mom." It enabled moms to enjoy a breakfast treat, time with their kids, some hot coffee, and some quick fun before heading off to work.



Immanuel/Tavernier, FL had a new event this year before their Christmas Eve service. A young family in the church volunteered to host and provided gingerbread houses to be decorated and a variety of homemade desserts.

Lutheran Church of the Redeemer/Vero Beach, FL hosted its first annual Breakfast with Santa. It was designed to help our church make connections with families in their community, as well as teach kids about the Christmas story. The event was open-house style from 9-11 am, and the church was decorated to look like the North Pole. In addition to getting to see Santa, and enjoying a great breakfast, the families could participate in a variety of themed Christmas activities around campus.

Activities included cookie decorating, a nativity ornament craft, a photo op, and a station with a variety of sensory bins, where kids could play with snow and ice.

Themed "Symbols of Christmas," each activity station taught the kids a Bible verse, as well as how a common

symbol of Christmas (such as the tree, star, presents, candy cane, holly and berries, and more) pointed to Jesus.

The highlight of the morning was at 10 am, when Santa came into the Fellowship Hall to read the Nativity story from the Book of Luke. Santa reminded everyone that his favorite part of Christmas was not delivering presents, riding the sleigh, or enjoying cookies and milk, but hearing the story of Jesus. About 70 people attended. The event was free, but the congregation was able to collect a large box of non-perishable food items for the Treasure Coast Food Bank. More than 30 volunteers helped to make the event possible and the congregation plans to make Breakfast with Santa an annual tradition.



Lutheran Church of the Redeemer's Volunteers at Breakfast with Santa



Tim Tebow Foundation's annual "Night to Shine" is an unforgettable prom night experience, centered on God's love, for people with special needs ages 14 and older. On February 7, 2020, 655 churches, from around the world, host Night to Shine for 100,000 honored guests with the support of 200,000 volunteers! Now in their sixth consecutive year, **St. Paul/Boca Raton, FL** entertains more than 150 "special needs guests"

who enter this complimentary event on a red carpet complete with a warm welcome from paparazzi and crowd. Once inside, guests receive the royal treatment and are treated to shoe shines, hair and makeup applications, limousine rides, a buffett dinner, soft drinks and dessert and plenty of music and dancing.

The new president will succeed Dale A. Meyer

Forty-four Individuals Nominated for Concordia Seminary's 11th President

Forty-four men have been nominated as candidates for election as the 11th president of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, per Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) Bylaws, and have allowed their names to stand for consideration.

According to the LCMS Handbook, the names were submitted by LCMS congregations, the Seminary's Board of Regents and the Seminary faculty. During the next phase, the Presidential Search Committee will evaluate each of the candidates and will recommend at least five candidates from the list of nominees to the four electors.

The electors meet May 16, 2020 to elect the new president. The four electors include one vote from the Board of Regents voting as a group; one vote from the LCMS district president serving on the board as a voting member; one vote from the chairman of the LCMS Board of Directors; and one vote from the LCMS president. The election of the president requires three of four elector votes.

The new president will succeed President Dr. Dale A. Meyer, who will retire June 30, 2020. Meyer became the Seminary's 10th president in 2005.

Current information about the Seminary's presidential search can be found at csl.edu/president-search.

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) operates two seminaries for the formation of its pastors: Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri, and Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Both seminaries grant the Master of Divinity degree which is ordinarily required to be ordained in the LCMS. They also offer a "colloquy" program for pastors who were ordained in other church bodies and want to join the LCMS.

Advanced degrees such as Doctor of Philosophy and Master of Sacred Theology are also offered.

The seminaries operate independently of the Concordia University System, which comprises ten undergraduate institutions of the LCMS. Rev. Dr. Lawrence R. Rast, Jr. is president of Concordia Theological Seminary/Fort Wayne, IN.



Rev. Dr. Dale A. Meyer



Rev. Dr. Lawrence R. Rast, Jr.

Seminary President Nominees Are:

*Dr. Joel D. Biermann
Dr. Ralph Blumenberg
Dr. Gerhard H. Bode Jr.
Dr. Jon S. Bruss
Dr. Kirk M. Clayton
Dr. Anthony A. Cook
Dr. Burnell F. Eckardt
Dr. Joel C. Elowsky
Dr. Glenn K. Fluegge
Dr. Kevin S. Golden
Dr. Paul J. Grime
Dr. Gifford A. Grobien
Dr. Benjamin D. Haupt
Dr. Erik H. Herrmann
Dr. Jeffrey J. Kloha*

*Dr. Robert R. Lessing
Dr. David P. E. Maier
Dr. Walter A. Maier III
Aaron M. Moldenhauer
Dr. Steven P. Mueller
Dr. Edward A. Naumann
Dr. Martin R. Noland
Gerald A. Paul
Robert W. Paul
Dr. Paul A. Philp
Dr. Christian A. Preus
Dr. David R. Preus
Dr. Jacob A. O. Preus III
Dr. Lawrence R. Rast Jr.
Dr. Harold Ristau*

*Dr. Matthew W. Rueger
Dr. Douglas L. Rutt
Dr. Leopoldo A. Sánchez M.
Dr. Peter J. Scaer
Dr. Travis J. Scholl
Dr. Klaus D. Schulz
Dr. William W. Schumacher
Dr. Ken R. Schurb
Dr. Mark A. Seifrid
Dr. Jeffrey E. Skopak
Dr. Dien A. Taylor
Dr. James W. Voelz
Dr. Lucas V. Woodford
Dr. Thomas J. Zelt*

The Challenges:

First: Pastors, church leaders and congregations and schools do well at being the church in general yet often fall short of stewarding their focus for intentional ministry.

Second: The church is often looking for leaders yet leadership training is often overlooked, irregular or insufficient.

Third: Pastors are often stretched thin in every day pastoral ministry leaving little time for coaching and mentoring younger or newer volunteer leaders.

Questions: What would it be worth to find more focus and intentionality in ministry while

also raising up, training and coaching newer leaders who will in turn replicate their experience with another? What strategies can be used to “put these pieces together” and live into healthy change without all the stress of making it happen?

CHURCH LEADERSHIP COACHING

A practical, healthy way to “put the pieces together” and steward a congregation’s strengths to be more focused in mission and ministry.

The Strategies:

Area One: Scott Gress meets with the pastor and key leader(s), such as the congregational president, head elder, principal and/or chairman of the school board for two sessions. With their primary involvement, the congregation’s purpose and the area of focus needed for the next 12-24 months is clarified. This also would include identifying what should be measured.

Area Two: Scott Gress facilitates a leadership workshop every two months for those willing to attend and grow. A brief teaching is followed by personalized action steps on how each participant will live into the learning. Possible subjects include: leadership, self leadership, emotional intelligence, the power of team, communication, empowering others, coaching, etc.

Area Three: The pastor and/or principal and lay leaders identify

three to six teachable, growing leaders to be coached regularly by Scott. The coaching will be timely, with customized support, planning and learning. Action steps will always be included plus identifying another with whom they can replicate the learning.

Note: Ongoing contact with Scott will be throughout.

The Outcomes:

Outcome One: With clarity of purpose (from area one), more members and ministries can come into alignment. Decisions, programs, board and committee meetings can more easily choose to

steward energies and attention toward that purpose. For example, in the case of a clear outreach purpose, member-only programs can shift to member- and non-member. Fellowship activities can choose to have a decidedly external focus.

Members also will increasingly shift from “what’s in it for me” to instead, desiring to grow as a disciple and servant of others. All this can be accomplished without overwhelming the pastor with yet one more thing to do.

Outcome Two: Through the leadership training and the coaching (areas two and three), people will begin to grow into their leadership potential.

More programs and ideas will be initiated and they will be in greater alignment with the clear purpose of the church (area one). Attention to self will shift more toward attention to others. More will experience a better ministry fit and increased joyful service. More ministry will be accomplished in the name of the Lord.

Outcome Three: By working in the three areas simultaneously: purpose, leadership training and coaching newer leaders, healthy changes will take place and take root. New habits will be created and become the culture of the congregation and/or school ministry. Forward movement will also be seen because numerous people participated, experienced church leader support and there was a commitment to taking action steps along the way.

The Cost: The cost for congregations of the Florida-Georgia District are nominal — during the initial pilot phase only the cost of travel is required. This would likely involve 2-3 on-site visits during the 9-10 months. Other contact and coaching would be through virtual meetings and telephone calls.

Inquires may be directed to Scott Gress at scottgress@me.com or via phone (561) 542-4472.

Editor’s Note: Rev Scott Gress is a Professional Certified Coach (PCC) through the International Coach Federation. He holds a Master’s of Divinity from Concordia Seminary St. Louis and a Master’s of Leadership from Palm Beach Atlantic University. Throughout his 30+ years of ministry he has been a full time pastor for 22 years plus 10 years working with congregations and leaders to be even more productive in ministry. You can learn more about Scott through his podcast, The Coaching Leader and his book, A Christian Coaching Guidebook: How to Come Alongside Others for Ministry Results.





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An Outreach of Grace/Port St. Lucie

Florida Alzheimer Facility Breaks Ground



The Grace Lutheran/Alzheimer Care Center is a 6300 square foot multi-use facility that broke ground in January in St. Lucie West. The space will be used as a place for worship and a Care Center, attending to the needs of those afflicted

with Alzheimer's in our community. It is a ministry of **Grace/Port St. Lucie, FL.**

The initial planning for the facility began in September of 2018. The congregation worked with TRM Construction Management on both

the architectural and engineering designs. "This center will care for elderly Alzheimer's patients during working hours," the Rev. Chris Escher said. "We are enthusiastic to be working on this outreach to our community."



Attending the groundbreaking ceremony in January were Rev. Chris Escher, pastor at Grace/Port St. Lucie, Circuit Visitor Rev. Mark Stillman, LCEF Vice President Jay Wendland and District President the Rev. Dr. Greg Walton



Members of TRM Construction Management, the city and the congregation participated in the January groundbreaking.