

# LUTHERAN<sup>®</sup> LIFE

The Newsmagazine of the  
Florida-Georgia District LCMS  
August/September 2021





# 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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# CAPSULES

## FLGA District Calls Accepted

Rev. Timothy W. Heath as  
Intentional Interim Pastor at Bethel/  
Hobe Sound, FL

Rev. James R. Jennings as  
Sole Pastor at  
Holy Trinity/Rome, GA

## Transferred Out of FLGA to Other Districts

5/19/21 Rev. Tyler Moore to  
Texas District (O)  
6/7/21 Rev. Zachary Hoffman to  
Minnesota North District (O)  
6/15/21 Mr. Joshua Cromley to  
Rocky Mountain District (C)  
7/9/21 Mrs. Dorothy Wiencke  
to Missouri District (C)

## Transferred Into FLGA from Other Districts

5/17/21 Rev. Dr. Larry Griffin  
from Minnesota South (O)  
5/25/21 Mr. Timothy Gabbert  
from Central Illinois (C)  
6/2/21 Rev. Daniel Sparling  
from New Jersey (O)  
6/2/21 Ms. Donna Muller  
from Southern (C)  
6/12/21 Rev. Andrew Schermbeck  
from Nebraska (O)  
6/17/21 Ms. Denise Dash  
from English (C)  
6/22/21 Rev. Dr. Paul Mueller  
from Northwest (O)  
6/28/21 Ms. Jennifer Loewe  
from English (C)  
6/29/21 Ms. Joy Mueller  
from Northwest (C)  
7/9/21 Rev. Timothy Heath  
from Kansas (O)

## Installations of Ordained/Commissioned Ministers

6/5/21 Rev. Dr. Larry Griffin as IIP  
Epiphany/Tallahassee, FL  
6/12/21 Rev. Andrew Schermbeck as SP  
Faith/Merritt Island, FL  
6/13/21 Rev. Andrew Wrasman as Sole  
Pastor Oak Road/Lilburn, GA  
7/11/21 Rev. Timothy Heath as IIP  
Bethel/Hobe Sound, FL  
7/17/21 Rev. Brendon Moore as Assoc.  
Pastor Grace/Winter Haven, FL  
7/18/21 Rev. James Jennings as Sole Pastor  
Holy Trinity/Rome, GA

## Initial Placements

6/13/21 Rev. Andrew Wrasman  
Oak Road/Lilburn, GA  
7/17/21 Rev. Brendon Moore  
Grace/Winter Haven, FL

## Status Changes in the District

4/6/21 Rev. Larry Dexheimer from Active  
to Emeritus (O)  
6/1/21 Rev. Nicholas Moskovites from  
Active to Emeritus (O)  
6/1/21 Rev. Craig Bode from Active to  
Emeritus (O)  
6/13/21 Rev. Alan Koch from Active to  
Emeritus (O)  
7/1/21 Rev. Richard Boyd from Active to  
Emeritus (O)  
7/1/21 Mr. James Essig from Active to  
Emeritus (C)  
7/12/21 Ms. Margaret Ruyehle-Walsh from  
Candidate to Commissioned (C)

## Called to Glory

6/17/21 Rev. David Kehret (O)

# Florida-Georgia District

Lieutenant Commander (Chaplain)  
Chanthaphon is a member of the Florida-  
Georgia District. He and his wife and  
two children live in Jacksonville, FL.  
Chaplain Chanthaphon is serving with  
the Navy on the USS Iwo Jima. They  
are stationed out of Mayport, FL.



Chaplain Chanthaphon receives his  
COVID-19 vaccination shot.

He and his team deployed in February  
of this year. There are about 900 men  
and women on the ship. The LCMS  
Ministry to the Armed Forces supports  
approximately 200 chaplains, who  
represent the church on active duty, the  
reserves, the National Guard, and Civil  
Air Patrol. Chaplains meet the needs of  
military personnel and their families.

The LCMS cares deeply for those  
who currently serve, for those who  
have donned the cloth of our nation in  
uniform, and for those who served our  
nation and live in our communities.

Chaplain Chanthaphon released  
these photos for use in *Lutheran Life*  
now that the exercise  
was in the past and did  
not pose any security  
risk to his unit.

Congregations may  
honor military veterans,  
members and chaplains  
on Armed Forces Sunday  
in May, on Veterans  
Day in November, or  
any Sunday. The LCMS  
provides liturgical  
suggestions, sermon  
guides, responsive  
prayers, bulletin inserts,  
and other resources  
to help congregations  
remember our nation's  
military members  
and veterans. ■





# Chaplain Sends Greetings From the Middle East


## COVER FEATURE



Of the TWO Religious Ministry Teams: Navy Chaplain Pon Chanthaphon (pictured in center below and in all the photos), Command Element Chaplain of 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) and his Religious Program Specialist (RP) and the Battalion Landing Team 1/8's Chaplain and his RP participated in the Theater Amphibious Combat Rehearsal (TACR) during Exercise Falcon Claw 4 in Tabuk, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) this past June 2021.







Over the summer I had the wonderful opportunity for a brief sabbatical. What had been planned pre-COVID as a three month time had to be trimmed to a month with all the various activities around the Florida-Georgia District. It wasn't exactly the time I had planned or desired, and yet God used it in marvelous ways. A sabbatical is defined as a rest or break from work. It comes from the word "Sabbath," the seventh day of the week set apart by God for rest. We read in GENESIS 2:2-3, *"And on the seventh day God finished His work that He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work that He had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on*



God knew when  
to work and  
when to rest

God, who created the human body, also created us with limited capacity for activity. We need rest. In fact, our bodies were designed to crave rest. In fact, God continues to do amazing things when we are at rest, things that restore not only the soul, but also our physical energy and

*our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life."* We have become those heirs by the mercy and grace of Jesus, but renewal is an ongoing part of our life in Jesus, and often God has to slow us down to build us up!

What I've learned is a sabbatical is essentially a time to be *refreshed*. It doesn't mean you sleep all the time, it doesn't mean you zone out or totally disengage with life. For me it was about regaining perspective, learning what is of value and what is more transitory. Sabbatical gave me time to reaffirm some relationships. It also gave me time to read on the beach, a luxury too often ignored. Much of what occupied our

# SABBATH REST

*it God rested from all His work that He had done in creation."* Our magnificent God not only created a pattern for us, but set the example by Himself resting on the seventh day.

Research is continually showing us the value of rest. In fact, sleep research has shown lack of sleep has emerged as a major health issue. Disruptions in sleep have substantial adverse short-term and long-term health consequences because sleep plays a vital role in brain function and systemic physiology across many body systems. Many have experienced sleepless nights due to worry or stress. For some it is temporary or situational, for others, it has become a way of life. In his working days my father-in-law survived on 4-5 hours of sleep. It always amazed me how he could function at such a high level day in and day out with so little sleep. It probably took its toll on him in his later life.

strength. God is at work in us when we rest as He ministers to us mentally, spiritually and physically. This is why He commanded, "Remember the sabbath, to keep it holy." God desires everyone to set aside and consecrate time for rest. Perhaps it is because with rest comes renewal!

God desires to renew His children. He does this daily through His Holy Spirit. Paul, writing in TITUS 3, says, *"For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ*

time was moving from our home into a smaller rental in preparation for the end of my term as District President. While probably the least restful part of the sabbatical, it was refreshing from the perspective of eliminating a lot of clutter and "stuff" that had accumulated over the past 12 years. At times it was painful letting go of things, but in the end, it was very freeing — a great reminder, by the way, of how quickly we build dependence on things rather than on God!

Part of my sabbatical included traveling to New York to participate in a memorial for my father who went home to Jesus in March. Part of our celebration of his life was to plant a tree in his memory. Martin Luther is quoted as allegedly saying, *"Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree."* Even though life in our





world, especially in our day, is uncertain and we may not know the future, we do know the One who holds our future, and this enables us to carry on, even in the face of grief or stress. So we planted a Crimson King Norway Maple in honor of my dad at the church I grew up in, and where he served as an elder for almost 48 years. God willing, this tree will be around long after my grandchildren are grown, and it will provide beauty and shade for the preschool playground at the church as it keeps on serving people, even as he did. During my sabbatical we also had the opportunity to see our grandchildren. Our youngest, Elsie, will be one year old at the end of August. Spending part of a week with her brother and

and to react to things we would say to her. I learned schedules are built around nap time. Babies sleep a lot, and this is a great thing because they are continually developing and growing, but it does dictate everyone's schedule. I learned there is a great and simple joy in seeing a well-rested baby smile. In fact, it is infectious. It reminded me that I am better equipped, empowered and engaged to live out my faith when I am well rested. God's goal is always to strengthen our faith and witness in the world so we are able to connect people to Jesus. Making time to be in God's Word and prayer will lead us to times of refreshing which come from being in the presence of the Lord.

People have asked, "How was your sabbatical?" My response is it was busy, but a great time to be refreshed. It took me away from some of the routine tasks, which the District Vice Presidents along with the staff easily managed. It gave me a chance to get re-settled into a new home where I'm still searching for things, to spend some time with family and to be refreshed in the Word and in prayer. While a dedicated time

and in fellowship with other believers. And now is a great time to recommit to making time as we enter back into a busy fall season, filled with all kinds of activities and events. A little Sabbath rest can keep us from feeling overwhelmed by life.

In HEBREWS 4:9-11 we read, "So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience." As I look to the year ahead, my final year as District President of the Florida-Georgia District, I will strive to enter that rest daily so I am renewed and better equipped to connect people to Jesus! I hope you will make time to do this in your own life as you trust in the work of the Holy Spirit to renew and refresh you! Rest easy in Him!



her was amazing. We saw her grow and learn right before our eyes. She was learning to pull herself up, to say words,

of sabbatical is a wonderful gift, each of us has an opportunity to carve out our own daily sabbatical time by spending time in God's Word, in prayer,



In His peace,

*Gregory Walton*  
President  
Florida-Georgia District  
Lutheran Church—  
Missouri Synod



*Will Be Installed August 27th*

## Jennifer Meyer Tanner Accepts Call to District



Jennifer Tanner will serve as the new Executive Director of School and Youth Ministries for the Florida-Georgia District of the LCMS.

Mrs. Tanner has served in the Florida-Georgia District since 2006, first as a teacher, then as principal at **Grace/Jacksonville, FL**. She has served on the District Educators Conference Committee and has been an active participant in the District School Administrators group.

"I believe that God has equipped me to love people, to love Jesus, and to lead our District with passion and grace ... I know from my experience first as a new teacher and then as a new administrator that God equips those He calls," Tanner emphasizes. "I have absolute faith that God will continue to equip me with the gifts and talents to further the ministry

of the Florida-Georgia District."

Jennifer began her work with the District in July to provide some overlap with retiring Executive Director of School and Youth Ministries, Mark Brink. Brink retired on July 31 after 28 years of service to the Florida-Georgia District.

Jennifer and her husband Norm have moved to the Orlando area.

"Our goal is to build a strong team in anticipation of the transition which will take place in the summer of 2022," President Greg Walton explains. "I believe Jennifer will be a great addition to that team."

"Jennifer came in 2006 as the second 6th grade teacher in the history of Grace Lutheran School," offers the Rev. Michael Popp, Associate Pastor of Grace/Jacksonville, FL. A year later, she became the first 8th grade teacher at Grace and as they say, the rest is history.

"For the next 10 years Jennifer was my teaching partner. We were very different. She acted much older than her age and I acted much younger. She was always careful, measured, and organized. I was loud and all over the place. We were very different people with very different methods, but we both love our Lord, loved our students, and loved what God called us to do at Grace Jacksonville.

"There is nothing more rewarding than building something from the start. For every struggle and roadblock,

there was a pure joy in seeing things come together. Seeing students and parents alike experiencing things for the first time. Looking back at it all, from the school plays, student council, athletics, and class trips to North Carolina and the Keys — all this was very special," Popp continues, "and then to move into new roles as principal and pastor and find ways to continue what we love while supporting our teachers, it is hard to describe how special it was. I wouldn't be the person I am today without her — I don't think I'd be a pastor! And I know Grace would look different.

"I will admit it — I didn't want her to be the *principal*. She was so good as an 8th grade teacher in the classroom — but God knew what was best for her. My son is going to graduate in two years with a Master's degree in Secondary Education/English — a direct result of his time learning from Jennifer."

Jennifer is a native of Walburg, TX and is married to Norm, a Georgetown, SC native. They have settled in the Orlando area. ■



◀ Jennifer Tanner and Pastor Michael Popp have worked together since 2006.

▶ Norm & Jennifer open the door to their new Orlando-area home as she begins her new position as Executive Director of School and Youth Ministries





*Had extensive career in campus ministry*

## Trinity/Fort Lauderdale's Pastor David Kehret Called Home in June



Pastor David H. Kehret, on June 17th, 2021, left this earthly home to be with the one whom he was called to share to all people, all ages in various forms of ministry. He was born in Marshalltown, IA on April 1, 1942, was adopted and raised by his parents, George and Caroline Kehret, along with sister Ruth. At the age of nine years, his family moved to Pomona, CA. He would recall palm trees waving him to take a venture off to the mountains, or to go to the ocean, the desert, or where the valley was known for its orange groves.

David attended Lutheran schooling, from St. Paul Grade

School, Lutheran High, and California Lutheran College. He then continued his pursuit to be a pastor, by attending Concordia Senior College, Ft. Wayne, IN, and ultimately his last four years, receiving his Master of Divinity in 1967 at Concordia Lutheran Seminary, St. Louis, MO.

During his vicarage, his ministry internship brought him to First Lutheran/Omaha, NE, where he met and married his wife, Helen Scheumann on August 14, 1966.

Upon graduation in 1967, he received his first call in northeast Iowa along the Mississippi River to a dual parish, St. Paul/McGregor, IA and Redeemer/Elkader, IA. In 1970 Kehret was called to a new type of ministry — campus ministry — where he spent 32 years. The first 14 years he began Lutheran Campus Ministry from 1970-1984, serving Tri-Lutheran Students attending University of Omaha, Creighton University, and University of Nebraska Medical Center.

Kehret's love for music led him to launch "New Song" — a group who would go to congregations, sharing their ministry through both songs and chancel theater dramas that he had written.

David's second campus ministry call was to Valparaiso University, Chapel of the Resurrection, where for 18 years he served as Associate Pastor and Dean of the Chapel. In

those years of ministry, he brought newness to contemporary liturgical music and worship story telling and liturgical drama. A drama troupe was formed on campus called "Soul Purpose."

After Pastor Kehret's retirement, he and his wife, Helen, moved to Charlottesville, VA where he discovered a new ministry format in Intentional Interim Ministry. He served many years as Pastor helping congregations with their transitions through the calling process. He was particularly strong working with congregations who had been vacant after particularly long pastorates, conflicts existing within the congregation, churches with major demographics changes or other circumstances. Each congregation was important to him, as he would serve them through Intentional Interim Ministry: St. Matthew's/Bel Aire, MD; Immanuel/Charlottesville, VA; Trinity/Toccoa, GA; Grace/Demorest, GA; and most recently Trinity/Ft. Lauderdale, FL. David's wife, Helen Claire Kehret, preceded him in death in 2012. He is survived by a large family. His family plans a memorial service at the Chapel of the Resurrection, Valparaiso, IN. ■



## Memorial Day Naval Visit

United States Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Vanessa Rodrigues visited **Our Savior/Plantation, FL** on Memorial Day weekend. Pastor Tony Durante prayed with UT2 Rodrigues in front of our Memorial Day display featuring photographs of sainted loved ones who served in the military. ■





On June 24, 2021, at approximately 1:25 a.m. Miami time, a 12-story beachfront condominium partially collapsed in the Southeast Florida town of Surfside — located on the shore about 12 miles north of downtown Miami, Florida. As of press time, a total of 95 people are confirmed to have died, with 11 injured and approximately 14 still unaccounted for.

News sources have labeled this one of the deadliest building collapses in American history. The building was ultimately demolished a little more than a week later so that response personnel could move from rescue to recovery.

The Rev. Dennis Bartels and his North Miami congregation, Holy Cross, has served as “ground zero” for Lutheran Church Charities. Holy Cross hosted nine comfort dogs on their North Miami campus for a week. Three of the dogs were

from the Florida-Georgia District with the remaining from other districts — deployed to work with the devastating situation in Surfside. Pastor Bartels and Holy Cross issued the invitation to LCC and the dogs were on site July 6.

“Our dogs were available for petting by anyone, including first responders at the scene, those mourning lost loved ones and even residents of the surrounding community who were struggling with the shock of the disaster that has brought grief to their neighbors and friends,” said Bonnie Fear of the Lutheran Church Charities K-9 Crisis Response Unit.

“They are highly trained working dogs that remain calm in any situation and they are here for people to pet. A lot of times people come up, they’ll fall to their knees, they’ll start crying or they’ll smile. We try not to say anything, we let the dog be the bridge for those people to grieve the loss, whatever they’re feeling.”

Another portion of the LCC ministry is to create hand-made heart markers. As victims are identified, a heart is added to the memorial area. “The marker has their name inscribed, along with Psalm 34:18 *“The Lord is near to the broken hearted and saves the crushed in spirit,”* explains Pastor Bartels. “Many people come by and write on these hearts with words of compassion and sympathy.”

According to Bartels, the white post has a pale blue heart on it with a noticeable ichthys or ichthus, from the Greek *ikhthūs*. This is a symbol consisting of two intersecting arcs, the ends of the right side extending beyond the meeting point so as to resemble the profile of a fish. The symbol was adopted by early Christians as a secret symbol.

To better manage volunteers and resources, FEMA has developed a guideline on credentialing volunteers for large-scale disasters. The federal guidelines indicate that volunteers

## Holy Cross, Lutheran Church Charities and K-9 Comfort Dog Ministry Responds to Miami Condominium Disaster



District Staff members Jay Wendland (at left) and Peter Meier (far right), along with Rev. Timothy Hartner (Emeritus, St. Paul/Weston, FL) Rev. Scott Gress of Lutheran Counseling Services and Rev. Dennis Bartels (pictured in photo at far right) were on site to offer their assistance with prayers, comfort and help. Near right students from Holy Cross/ North Miami put messages of love on the memorial crosses.







responding to a disaster should be trained and certified. LCC is providing LCMS disaster response training for Lutheran Early Response Teams (L.E.R.T.). Should a disaster strike, these teams would be put on call and may be asked to deploy in 72 hours or less to the disaster site. This training will prepare a team member for credentialing and will focus on the safety, work, and ministry of Lutherans as Early Responders.

Jay Wendland, Disaster Response Coordinator in the FLGA District, explains, “When disaster strikes, lives are turned upside down. Survivors often need food, clothing, shelter and spiritual care as they begin to cope with tragedy and loss. Responding to these hurting people is a vital part of who we are as

members of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). We show mercy and love to our communities because of the great grace and love that God has first shown to us.”

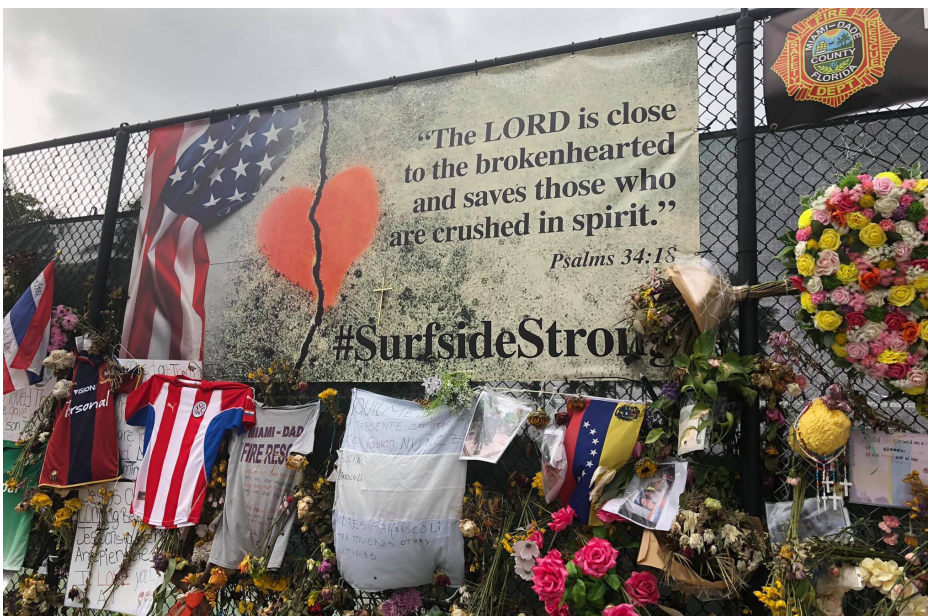
L.E.R.T. has been providing training events around the district where people can learn how congregations and even individual members can be better prepared to show Christ’s love to the community when a disaster strikes. Attendees receive training in the following areas:

- ▲ Volunteer safety,
  - ▲ Legal issues and working with others,
  - ▲ General debris cleanup,
  - ▲ Flood and hurricane cleanup,
  - ▲ Roof tarp and patching.
- Reports coming from engineering inspectors indicate

that long-term degradation of reinforced concrete support structures in this condominium building’s underground parking garage due to water penetration and corrosion of the reinforcing steel is being considered as a factor in—or the cause of—the collapse. Some media sources have stated that these issues had been reported in 2018 and noted as “much worse” in April 2021. A \$15 million program of remedial works had been approved at the time of the collapse, although no main structural work had begun.

For more information about L.E.R.T. or involving your congregation, contact Jay Wendland, FLGA District Vice President, at 407-258-5041 or [Jay.Wendland@lcef.org](mailto:Jay.Wendland@lcef.org). ■

— JL





# FLORIDA GEORGIA

## *Out and About in the District*

*Send Your News & Photos to [lutheranlife@aol.com](mailto:lutheranlife@aol.com)*

### **Brendon Moore Installed as Grace/Winter Haven Associate**



Clergy participants (l to r): Bill Whitehead, Charles Reich, Gregory Walton, Brendon Moore, Tom Block, Dean Pfeffer, Jerry Munz. Not pictured, but participated in the installation, David Meyer. Below, Brendon, Jordan, Lyla and Parker

The Rev. Brendon T. Moore was installed as Associate Pastor at **Grace/Winter Haven, FL** on Saturday, July 17. LCMS FL-GA District President The Rev. Dr. Gregory Walton served as officiant and homilist.

Pastor Moore served his vicarage year at Grace in 2019-2020. The Grace family is thrilled to welcome Pastor Brendon and wife Jordan and children Lyla and Parker back to Winter Haven. The Moores are very excited to rejoin their Grace family. After a great year of vicarage, they feel like they have a running start to join in the incredible work God has been doing through Grace. They can't wait to rekindle old friendships,

build new ones, and serve the Grace and Winter Haven community.

Jordan is a master baker and a wizard in all areas of the kitchen, specializing in all-foods Italian and comfort. She also has a keen eye for interior design, and she loves to craft. Brendon still looks for opportunities to play soccer and is attempting to become a woodworker whose creations will (someday) be worthy of a place inside the house. Lyla is an energetic toddler who loves to climb things and splash in puddles while she sings. And Parker, at six weeks old, likes to sleep. A lot. Unless he isn't being held (like at night). ■





# Mount Calvary Celebrates Life of Dave Brighton in July Post-Covid Reception



When The Rev. David Brighton, Region 1 Vice President and Pastor of **Mount Calvary/Warner Robins, GA** passed away January 10th of this year the country was in lock-down. As a result, the congregation was unable to gather together for the memorial service and had to grieve with the family virtually.

Pastor Brighton always liked to encourage God's people in Christ to be focused on FROG (Fully Rely on God). Fast forward to July 18th of this year and the congregation paid tribute to Brighton's 22 years serving their Georgia parish. Brighton served there from 1999 until his passing this past January.

"On July 18th we gathered to remember God's promises in Christ and to celebrate His provision through the life of Pastor David Carl Brighton," offered Mount Calvary's Senior Pastor Andrew Howe. "We had several congregation members share words of encouragement about how God worked through Pastor Brighton in their lives and the lives of our congregation family." ■

At right — The Rev. Andrew Howe recently accepted the congregation's call to serve as senior pastor. Below left — Jon and Ben Brighton with mom Marcia. Below right — Marcia and her sons with next-door-neighbors, The Papczynki family: Jim, Monika, Alex and Caroline.





# Lutheran Haven Building Major Aquatic Center

Nestled in Oviedo, just outside of Orlando, FL, Lutheran Haven is a faith-based, full-service retirement community providing security, value, and peace of mind. Residents enjoy retirement with like-minded individuals in a close-knit community where neighbors become best of friends. The community is home to many retired professional church-workers and laypersons.

Prior to the pandemic, Lutheran Haven kicked off their “Water Works Wonders” Capital Campaign to build a therapy/swimming pool. Their goal was to raise \$650,000. The COVID-19 pandemic challenged them, but it has also strengthened their resolve to complete the project because of the numerous health benefits it will provide.

Currently Lutheran Haven has secured approximately \$250,000 in funding.

Some of the benefits of the pool include water-based activities designed to decrease chronic illnesses such as diabetes and heart disease while improving the use of arthritic joints and cardiovascular improvement. Aqua therapy increases range of motion, reduces pain and is an excellent clinical tool toward safe progress following an injury, joint replacement, or other orthopedic or cardiovascular issues.

Research has proven many times over that keeping active and engaged physically, socially and recreationally, makes a significant difference in one’s overall well-being and maintaining the highest level of independence for senior adults.

The Landings (shown below) at Lutheran Haven offers a simplified independent living lifestyle complete with meals, utilities, and housekeeping assistance. It is one of several residential lifestyle opportunities. Each of the 48 apartment homes has been thoughtfully designed to offer flexible living spaces, nicely appointed kitchens, living and dining areas. There are six floor plans. The attached Commons building provides an array of amenities including several dining venues,



*Lutheran Haven Foundation Resident Advisory Committee, pictured from left: Marlyce Seaman, Raleigh Sims, Carol Lynn Fink, Mary Ann McCunn, Linda Kirk, David Weidner. Seated: Lori Baker and Bobby Zantua. Standing at right of banner: Tyler Wellington, Rev. Les Kimball, Ann Chandler and David Vorpapel. Not pictured: Stephanie Storey-Gonzalez*

a library-café, a salon, a medical wellness clinic, a concierge, a small market, and many gathering places for socialization, games and pampering!

The cottages, another lifestyle opportunity, offers one- and two- bedroom homes spread over a 60-acre campus. Four floor plans, ranging from 715 square feet to 1,400 square feet, are available.

Included is lawn and home maintenance, woodworking, ceramics, painting, and music activities. Scheduled exercise classes and both on-site and

off-site activities and events are regularly arranged.

Transportation to church, shopping or medical appointments is included. There is an on-campus beauty shop located in The Landings as well as a library. Multiple dining venues are also offered.

For more information about Lutheran Haven contact Stephanie Storey-Gonzalez, 2041 W. State Road 426 Oviedo, FL 32765. Telephone: 407-542-1637 • Tollfree: 800-272-5676.

To support the “Water Works Wonders” Capital Campaign, please make your tax-deductible gift payable to:

The Lutheran Haven Foundation  
2041 West State Rd. 426  
Oviedo, FL 32765 ■





# Successful VBS Program Raises Funds for Food Pantry

Prince of Peace/Principe de Paz/ Orlando, FL recently wrapped up “Rocky Railway VBS- LIVE!” They were able provide free VBS for children in their church, preschool and neighborhood — with 83 children spending at least one day with them as they learned that “Jesus’ Power Pulls Us Through.” The event was very successful as many of the children who did attend indicated on their registration form that they had no church home and lived in the neighborhood. They have three child baptisms and one adult baptism scheduled resulting from the summer program.

The children engaged in a friendly “Boys vs. Girls” competition to see who could raise the most money for the Prince of Peace/Principe de Paz Food Pantry Ministry. The girls emerged victorious and earned the right to have one of them put a pie in DCE Eric Gerken’s face. In an act

of good sportsmanship, Brenda Gerken, Eric’s wife, rewarded the boys by letting one of them put a pie in her face too for doing such a good job. More than \$750 was raised during the week to help feed people in the community. ■



## CORNER

## CONVENTION



The theme chosen for the 2022 Florida-Georgia District Convention is “A Future Fixed on Jesus!” At the center of the logo is the globe, a reminder of the call to go into all the world with the good news of Jesus Christ. It is surrounded by a compass, pointing in all directions, to show direction as we equip, empower and engage to connect people to Jesus.

With the transitions ahead at the 2022 District Convention we can be confident that although we anticipate a lot of change, one thing which will not change is the fact that our future is fixed on Jesus.

“In Hebrews 12:2 we read, ‘Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God,’” explains FLGA District President, the Rev. Dr. Greg Walton. “Jesus is the focus of our ministries — it’s all about Jesus! We may not know what the future holds, but we are extremely confident in the One who holds our future in His hands. Our future is fixed on Jesus, and we will keep our eyes on Him as we reach the world with the precious good news of life in Him.”

Nestled amid America’s oldest city, World Golf Village Renaissance St. Augustine Resort offers both a relaxing haven in a celebrated travel destination and exceptionally functional convention and meeting facilities,” Kathy Keene, convention coordinator, stated. “It is situated near I-95, providing easy access to both our Georgia and Florida participants. Our hotel sits at the gates of the Historic District, where sailboats and pirate ships are moored to the esplanade — it’s quite an impressive backdrop.”

The facility offers a range of restaurants and superb event space with both catering and planning support. Convention participants bringing family members will also enjoy the game room, beauty shop, spa and a sparkling outdoor pool. ■





# Macon, GA Congregation Celebrates Quarter-Century of Christ-Centered Summer Day Camp

Back in December of 1951 — almost 70 years ago — 35 Lutherans gathered to establish **The Lutheran Church of the Holy Trinity/Macon, GA**. According to The Rev. Laird Van Gorder, **Mount Calvary/Warner Robins, GA** later launched in 1980 by a group of Houston County residents who attended The Lutheran Church of the Holy Trinity in Macon but wanted a church closer to home.

Pastor Van Gorder explains, “My last military assignment was at Robins Air Force Base where I served at the Air Force Reserve Command. I had transferred here from Texas. I joined the Air Force during the Vietnam era and served active duty military and worked civil service. I came to middle Georgia in 2002 with my retirement papers already in.”

Van Gorder said he and his family became members of Mount Calvary immediately upon moving to the area.

“I jumped right into being active at Mount Calvary and then when I retired I just jumped in deeper,” he said. “It was then I began getting more and more interested in theology and the ministry.”

Van Gorder said he became involved in the church’s lay deacon program, which allowed him greater latitude to assist pastors and serve the congregation. By special permission, he was allowed to begin serving at The Lutheran Church of the Holy Trinity not only as its preacher but as someone who could administer sacraments. With changes being made to the lay deacon program and new programs established to help second-career and other individuals fill what Van Gorder said were more than 400 pastoral and ministry roles not being filled by young seminarians, he decided to go even deeper still in his education and completed his seminary education and was ordained in 2019.

The Macon, GA congregation had amassed a sizeable amount of land — more than 17 acres — and around the mid 1990s decided to use the largest portion of their property for a summer day camp for children. Trinity Woods Summer Day Camp was launched — a Christian setting where youth, ages five to 13, can have summer fun where they enjoy it mostly OUTSIDE! Campers get to enjoy nature around the expansive 17 acre Trinity Woods and Trinity Creek.

Trinity constructed play structures, a large camp pavilion and other amenities and the first camp was held in 1997.

Today Trinity Woods Camp has their own website: [trinitywoods.org](http://trinitywoods.org) as well as photos and information of the congregation’s Facebook page.

“For about 20 years, Trinity Woods has been the main outreach of the church,” Van Gorder said. “There’s a lot of awareness about the camp and it’s fairly well known in the community — while there’s not a lot of awareness of the church. There’s a waiting list to attend Trinity Woods each year, and with the facilities we have we’re limited to 160 children.”

According to Van Gorder, this past summer’s registration began March 1 and quickly reached capacity. Although the church’s members are mostly elderly, the congregation enthusiastically supports and operates the camp through a professional staff joined by volunteer camp counselors, many of whom once attended the camp themselves.

“Kids get to enjoy the outdoors and do all kinds of things,” Van Gorder said. “There’s archery, kickball and all sorts of sports and games with a lot of team-building activities. There’s play equipment and we bring in a water slide. We supply snacks but don’t have food preparation capabilities here. Kids bring lunch. Each day we have devotions and the kids just have a great time.”

Trinity’s camp is supervised by a director, assistant director and 14 camp counselors. The camp operates weekly from June 1 to August 6 this year. Additional information is available at [l.jvangorder@cox.net](mailto:l.jvangorder@cox.net) or 478.955.0147. ■





# Weston Youth Join Folk Spoke South Dakota 2021 Tour



Spoke Folk is a ministry that started with Lutheran Youth Encounter more 40 years ago. Over the years it has become its own entity providing a few tours each summer for high school and college-age youth.

“Spoke Folk is a ministry that exists to help train high school and college-age youth to be better missionaries in their daily lives,” explains Jeremy Becker, Director of Youth & Family Ministry at **St. Paul/Weston, FL**. “They do this by providing an opportunity to come together at a host church from Wednesday through Saturday. During this time a concert is put together including songs, skits, sharing, and puppet shows. The group also prepares to ride bikes each day with training rides including bicycle safety training.

“After the concert is ready to go the group leaves the host church on Sunday and rides their bikes from church to church sharing the concert with each community along the way,” Becker continues. “We’ll ride anywhere from 25 to 90 miles each day with the week’s total mileage somewhere in the range of 250 miles. The group returns to the host church to share the concert with the congregation during Sunday morning worship. Throughout the entire 12-day tour, there are four habits that are taught and practiced: 1) spending time in prayer, 2) reading the Bible, 3) spending 5 minutes sitting still and listening to God for 5 minutes each day, and 4) Discipling Relationships (having prayer and accountability partners).

The South Dakota 2021 Tour host church was Our Savior/Sioux Falls, SD. Nineteen youth and six adult leaders gathered from Florida, Texas, Virginia, South Dakota, and Minnesota to put together a concert and ride 240 miles from church to church during the tour week. “A couple of highlights from our week included being a part of the VBS Kickoff for more than 200 people with DCE Liz Peters at Memorial/Sioux Falls, SD and playing an

outside concert for the folks at the Dow Rummel Village Retirement Community in Sioux Falls.”

This tour was led by Bobby DePasquale (St. Paul/Weston, FL) who has been on more than 20 Spoke Folk Tours. Assisting as other adult leaders were Trisha DePasquale and Jeremy Becker, St. Paul/Weston, FL and Todd Chesser, John Schomberg and PJ Thacker. St. Paul Weston had a group of 13 participants and leaders attend. ■



*Jeremy Becker (far right) along with Bobby DePasquale (center) led a St. Paul/Weston, FL group of 13 participants and leaders on this summer’s South Dakota Folk Spoke Tour 2021*





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# Grace Winter Haven Installs Worship Arts Team



Grace/Winter Haven, FL Pastor Charles Reich with Nick and Stephanie Klemetson

Sunday, June 6, 2021, **Grace/Winter Haven, FL** installed husband and wife team, Nick and Stephanie Klemetson, as Director and Associate Director of Worship Arts.

Nick holds a Bachelor of Music degree in Piano Performance from St. Olaf College/Northfield, MN; and a MSM degree in Choral Conducting from Emory University/Atlanta, GA. He comes to Grace with 15 years of experience leading music ministry, the last ten of which were at St. Paul's/Waverly, IA. Before that, he has served as a church musician in the Twin Cities, MN, as well as in Atlanta, GA. An avid champion of the choral arts, he was Artistic Director of Bel Canto Cedar Valley, an auditioned community chorus centered in Cedar Falls, IA, from 2017-2021. An active pianist, he regularly collaborates with schools, colleges, and other organizations for freelance piano work. Nick is a published composer, contracted with Augsburg Fortress and Morningstar Music Publishers. In his spare time, he enjoys spending time with his wife Stephanie and Siberian Husky, Buddy; as well as cooking, powerlifting, video games, and video/audio editing.

Stephanie, a 2008 graduate of St. Olaf, holds a degree in K-12 vocal music education and is currently pursuing her Master's degree in arts administration through the University of Kentucky. Prior to her current role at Grace, Stephanie was the Music Tour, Camp, and Promotion Manager at Wartburg College/Waverly, IA, and assisted her husband Nick with the music ministries at St. Paul's Lutheran Church and School where she was an active leader of worship on the praise team, member of the chancel choir and handbell choir, and co-director of the 3-6 grade choir.

Stephanie looks forward to returning to the classroom this fall to share her love of music and not only help her students to find their voice as a means to express themselves creatively but also to encourage them to share their musical gifts with others to connect people with Jesus and glorify God. ■

## Zion's Amavida Craft Team Receives Thrivent Grant

Four members of **Zion/Fort Myers, FL** are residents at Amavida Living, a 55+ continuing care community in South Fort Myers. As an ongoing way for Zion to serve the community during the pandemic, they asked other residents to join us in making a monthly craft for the children in Zion's Early Childhood Center (ECC).

Zion applied for a Thrivent Action Team grant to purchase Christian-themed foam crafts that would remind their "Littles" that God loves them!

Thrivent approved the project, enabling Zion to create a monthly seasonal craft through December of this year. The crafts

are presented to the children during their weekly Chapel service.

The craft group pictured, which included some grandchildren, completed "You Are My Sun Shine," a more intensive craft, requiring lots of peel and stick pieces. Initially their workroom was quiet as each participant got into the make-it rhythm.

Once comfortably underway, the group began to share stories about the reactions of the ECC children receiving these "gifts. One mom said that when her son came home with the St. Patrick's Day craft in March, he immediately went outside to proudly share it with his older siblings.

Zion's Amavida Living Craft Team is pictured below. ■





# Craig Bode Retires After 41 Years in Ministry

The Rev. Craig Bode retired last month after completing eight years of service at **Trinity/Fort Pierce, FL** — and 41 years in the pastoral ministry. Pastor Craig and his wife, Mary, plan a vibrant retirement.

Pastor Bode, a Concordia Theological Seminary/Fort Wayne, IN graduate, was ordained at Holy Cross/Cary, IL and installed at Bethlehem/Euclid, OH. He began serving Trinity in 2013.

Craig and Mary Bode married in 1977 and served three congregations, had three children and moved more times than they care to count.

The congregation hosted a reception for the Bodes following worship and presented them with a cake and plaque. Pastor Bode estimates he led more than 2,300 worship services during his 41 years in ministry — 512 of them at Trinity/Fort Pierce.

The congregation noted that Mary Bode held the best attendance record of any Trinity members for attending BOTH first and second service each Sunday. Mary holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology and Child Development — which the congregation says helped her deal with all their idiosyncrasies.

According to Trinity's leadership, Mary has been a driving force behind Pastor Bode . . . always encouraging others but most importantly getting Craig to church on time. ■





# Downtown Trinity Celebrates Comfort Dog's Birthday

Members of **Trinity/Orlando, FL** gathered in the loggia following services on Saturday, July 10 and Sunday, July 11, 2021 to celebrate Peace's 4.5 birthday — her actual birthday falls at Christmas time, so they celebrate her half birthdays during July, which is also when she began her ministry.

Peace, a Golden Retriever, has been with Trinity for three years now. The birthday party included "people treats," coloring sheets, and a photo location to get a picture taken with Peace. There was also a raffle to win an "Off Leash" experience with Peace, including some training, play time, and lunch.

As part of Peace's outreach into the community, Trinity has started painting "Peace Rocks" and leaving them around the community. The rocks share a fun inspirational message or picture and invites people to visit Peace's Facebook page. Members and friends of Trinity frequently gather in the fellowship hall to paint these Peace rocks so they can be scattered throughout the community to expand awareness of the comfort dog ministry. Pictured at right are some of Peace's artists and samples of some of the painted rocks. ■



**Hope/Hudson, FL's** Carla Fox Norris, with 'conductor' Ward Norris (below) and VBS participants (right)



Members of **Woodlands/Montverde, FL** celebrated this summer both the 60th Anniversary of Ordination for The Rev. Dr. Milan Weerts and the 72nd Anniversary of Marge Weerts as a church organist.

They presented the couple with a basket of remembrances overflowing with love, cards, gifts and memories. ■



**St. Paul/Weston, FL** High School Youth have been meeting all summer long on Wednesday nights from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. They play games, have fun, and talk about life, faith, and God! Many of the congregation's youth bring friends along to participate. ■



## Paul Sizemore Achieves 40 Years In Pastoral Ministry

On Sunday, June 6, 2021, District President Rev. Dr. Greg Walton preached at **Trinity/Holly Hill, FL** as the congregation, family, and members of his former congregations celebrated Pastor Paul Sizemore's 40th anniversary of his ordination.

A potluck lunch followed the celebratory service.

Pastor Sizemore is a native of Holly Hill and was both baptized and confirmed at Trinity. In October, 2018 he returned to his home congregation as pastor, having served two congregations in Georgia and two in South Carolina. He and his wife Lisa share six children and seven grandchildren.

Lisa's faithful service as a teacher, youth leader, and musician were also celebrated, noting that a pastor's wife has a special and challenging ministry of her own. ■



From left — Pastor Jeff Moore, President Greg Walton, Lisa and Pastor Paul Sizemore and Pastor Frederick "Rick" Schultz, former pastor at Trinity, Holly Hill



The Rev. Andrew Schermbeck was installed at **Faith/Merritt Island, FL** on Saturday June 12, 2021. He was the pastor at Holy Trinity/Tampa, FL for seven years prior to serving in the Nebraska District.

Andy, his wife Rebecca and their children are enthusiastic about serving once again in the FLGA District.

Clergy pictured: (front row from left, Bruce Alberts,

Ron Meyr, Alan Koch, Andy Schermbeck, Greg Walton; (back row) Jeff Moore, Chris Kollmann, Dan Prugh, James Fernandez, Steve Schafer, Greg LeSieur. ■



## Fort Lauderdale's Shepherd of the Coast Becomes "Seed Sowers" With Miracle Grow Grant



**Shepherd of the Coast/ Fort Lauderdale, FL**, is a FLGA District Seed Sower with the help of the Miracle Grow Grant!

"This year's LCMS theme is *Sent to Serve*, offers Larry Ueltzen, retired Principal and Parish Administrator for the congregation. "This January, during Lutheran Schools Week, the students participated in several outreach projects to connect people to Jesus."

The students, ages 4-14, made sandwiches to feed the less fortunate children of God. The end result was more than 600 sandwiches! The students realized that their efforts made an impact in the Fort Lauderdale community and wanted to help raise more funds to continue their outreach project more regularly. The students are now making more than 100 lunches every other week. The lunches include a sandwich, chips, and a cookie that are delivered to Hope South Florida for distribution.

Lutheran Schools are centers for service with faithful pastors and teachers helping the students learn how to serve the Lord. We are mission outposts for our communities. Giving our youth various opportunities to serve provides rich examples of servants following Jesus. We celebrate our Savior who was *Sent to Serve*. ■



**St Paul Lutheran School  
Boca Raton, Florida**

"It has been amazing to watch these students learn and grow — not only this year, but throughout their journey here at St. Paul as well," exclaimed **St. Paul/Boca Raton, FL** Principal Jim Richards. "Each one of these students brings something unique to our family here at St. Paul, and we will be sad to see them leave our school and go off to high school. However, we are so proud of these students and what they have accomplished. We have formed amazing relationships with these students and at times have learned just as much from them as they have from us."

"I speak for the entire St. Paul faculty and administration when I say we are honored to have them represent St. Paul as they go on to high school and beyond. They will always be a part of our St. Paul family." ■



The Rev. James Jennings was installed on July 18th at **Holy Trinity/Rome, GA**. Prior to being called to Holy Trinity, he was a pastor at Faith Lutheran in Huntsville, TX. Participating clergy included (L to R) Jeff Jordan, Danny Anderson, James Jennings, Jack Karch, Greg Walton and David Krueger ■



Below — Cecilia Roedsens, wife of Pastor Jake Roedsens, **Our Savior/Lake Worth, FL**, places flowers at the Wall of Hope near the Champlain Towers condominium that collapsed in Surfside, FL in June. Photo courtesy of Crystal Vander Weit / The Palm Beach Post ■





# Mt. Calvary/Warner Robins, GA Vicar Tim Barber Describes Vicarage Year Among Covid Pandemic

“What a year it has been!” exclaims Vicar Tim Barber, 2020-21 vicar/intern at Mt. Calvary/Warner Robins, GA. “A year ago Amber and I were relaxing on the beach with no idea what the next year would hold. We had no idea we would truly experience not only the highs and lows of life but of ministry. But I am thankful.”

Barber says he and Amber are both thankful for the great saints of Mount Calvary who welcomed them with open arms and we’re always there with whatever they needed. “Many of these saints became close friends and mentors — such as the saints who volunteered on Christmas to feed 434 meals or those who regularly provided feedback and encouragement throughout vicarage to continually improve.”

Two blessings for Barber this past year were the amazing gift of daughter, Savannah, and the miracle of giving his dad a new heart — both incredible gifts of God.

Barber also refers to five of his coworkers who made it a joy to come to work each day. “They took time out of their busy schedules to invest in me and my future ministry and they encouraged me to grow. They showed how to lead as a team through crisis,” he continues.

“Of course I am incredibly grateful and thankful for not one — but two ecclesiastical supervisors,” Barber emphasized. “I take a lot of pride in being Pastor David Brighton’s 20th vicar. And I will always cherish our Tuesday afternoon meetings where he poured knowledge out and shaped my understanding of the pastoral office. I am so grateful for the six months I spent under his shepherding. I am equally honored to be the first vicar of Pastor Andrew Howe who gave a master class on servant leadership, stepping up to the plate and doing anything and everything that is needed. Who taught me the importance of simply being physically present with people.

“And finally, I am so incredibly thankful for my better half, Amber, who truly made this vicarage possible. She walked through this year with me every step of the way



From left — Mt. Calvary’s pastoral team, David Brighton (who passed away from COVID this past year), Tim Barber and Andrew Howe, who has been called to serve Mt. Calvary as senior pastor. Below — the Barber family.

and encouraged me relentlessly. Amber truly embraced the role of a vicars wife and I know there are many members at Mt. Calvary who are sad to see her go. She is an amazing partner and is going to be a superb and spiritual pastor’s wife as we complete our final year at Concordia Seminary and await our first placement. Amber put up with a wacky schedule and did it all while we were sharing just one car. I sincerely thank her for her contribution and

support this past vicarage year.

According to Barber, this year was certainly a year of ups and downs — and no doubt supremely different than typical vicarage internships. “And yet I am so thankful, he concludes. “While God’s will doesn’t always make sense to us on this side of heaven, I am genuinely and wholeheartedly thankful for this past year’s challenges and the successes. I will always be extremely proud to be Brighton Vicar #20!” ■







Clergy participants at the ordination/installation are, front row left to right, Hiruy Gebremichael, Dave Wesche, Greg Walton, Andrew Wrasman, Gary Dehnke, Roland Vega, Paul Frouitz, Wilton Heyliger. Back Row, Greg Michael, Joseph Song, Mike Ramey, George Murdaugh, Dennis Tegtmeier, Aaron Reinking, Wayne Reddering.

## Andrew Wrasman Ordained and Installed as Pastor at Oak Road/Lilburn, GA

The Rev. Andrew Wrasman was ordained and installed as pastor at **Oak Road/Lilburn, GA**, on June 13, 2021, with Florida-Georgia District President, Rev. Dr. Greg Walton officiating. Pastor Wrasman completed his studies at Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, MO as an alternate route student by fulfilling his requirement as a vicar for the past year at Oak Road Lutheran Church. Pastor Wrasman is from Hendersonville, TN. He has been married to Jessica for 13 years and they have two children, Bella (6) and Rocky (3). Andy enjoys writing and making videos for his YouTube channel. He and Jessica enjoy trying new foods and exploring new places of interest, both culturally and historically. And they enjoy outdoor activities as well. Andy enters the pastoral ministry after a 12 year teaching career — three years teaching English in China and 9 years teaching World Religions and Christian Apologetics at Crean Lutheran High School in Irvine, California. ■



Andrew, Jessica, Rocky (3) and Bella (6) Wrasman



## Plant City Congregation Holds Final Worship in Original Sanctuary

On Sunday, July 18th, the members of **Hope/Plant City, FL** joined together for their final worship service in their sanctuary that was dedicated to the glory of God on May 10, 1964. As a part of their worship the congregation joined in the baptism of Hudson Charles Venrick, infant son of Ryan & Candice Venrick and little brother to Jackson. Hudson's baptism marked the last baptism to take place in that sanctuary. Also present for the final worship service was Darbie Pfeiffer who was the first child baptized in the current sanctuary on May 10, 1964.

In marking this special occasion Hope's Sr. Pastor, Dean Pfeiffer, shared in his message entitled "Thanks for the Memories" that since the dedication of their church building in 1964 and beginning with Darbie and ending with Hudson, 450 children have been baptized at Hope.

Plans call for the congregation to move into their Fellowship Hall beginning July 25th, with the targeted first service in their



new "mission hub" is August 29th with the formal dedication scheduled to take place upon the completion of the campus renovation on October 10th.

Pictured above following the service are (from left) Ryan, Candice, Hudson & Jackson Venrick, Pfeiffer, and Darbie Pfeiffer. ■

## Dahlonega Nation Prayer Float Wins Independence Day Prize



**St. Peter/Dahlonega, GA** took advantage of the city's annual Independence Day parade to demonstrate its commitment to its community by entering its float, "Pray for Our Nation."

It featured large praying hands positioned in front of two large USA flags over the float's theme. Assisted by a Thrivent Action Team grant, members and friends spent two evenings constructing the float, using not only what they had purchased but also donated items like wood, plastic table cloths and the like.

Walking with the float were 16 volunteers — members and friends of the congregation — who gave out more than 380 prayer booklets. Written and printed by members of the congregation, the "Prayers for Our Nation" included petitions for officers of the law, elected officials, the military, families, as well as for responsible citizenship, honesty, a positive attitude toward taxes, the pandemic, education, international relations and the like.

The members of the congregation were thrilled to have their float be awarded the third place prize by parade officials. ■



# Looking Back on a Year of Vicarage in Region 5 of the Florida-Georgia District

by Vicar Joseph Reineke, St. Paul/Boca Raton, FL

As I write this, I'm sitting in my office looking around at all of the boxes that I have packed as I prepare to leave **St. Paul/Boca Raton, FL** to return to St. Louis for my fourth year. The experience still doesn't feel real. As I go through the process of packing I keep finding things that spark memories of the year that I've had. I've found notes and ideas jumbled on loose paper that I used to prepare my first Bible study. I ran across a notebook filled with sermon ideas, and the beginnings of what would become my first sermon series.

I also came across a first-place ribbon proving that I once beat my supervisor Pastor Steve Carretto in a race. Other items:

- Gift cards that are just a remnant of the overflowing generosity of the family here at St. Paul;
- A picture of a llama that a four-year-old student colored and then proudly presented to me;
- A cut-out sheep covered in notes of encouragement from all of the students;
- Sheet music from when I played saxophone for last New-Year's Eve service;
- A back-up mask, just in case I ever tried to drink coffee through my first one;
- A prayer shawl that was given to me by one of the congregation's ministries — filled with people who care so deeply;
- A volleyball signed by many people who have become such good friends;
- Numerous cards that are so filled with encouragement that they can overwhelm me;
- And so many, many more good memories besides ...

Yes, it has been a challenging year for me. But not because of Covid-19. The challenge came as I had to learn and grow as I discovered what it looks like to do ministry each and every day. As I learned how to consistently lead Bible Studies, how to preach in a way that clearly proclaims the Gospel, and how to walk alongside people in their own lives of faith.

In this respect, my challenge was no different than the challenge for vicars in years past, or probably in years to come. And when I look back on this year, the memories of a pandemic, masks, and social distancing are not going to be the ones that come to mind. Rather, I'm going to remember the family that



Vicar Joe, dressed as Jesus, visits Mrs. Susan Franskousky's Pre-K 4 classroom. Below — Pastors Andrew Kubowicz and Steve Carretto — along with their families — send Vicar Joe & Emily Reineke back to seminary with a poolside cookout.



From left — Nikki holding Adalynn, Andrew holding Logan Kubowicz; Joe & Emily Reineke; Steve & Jessica Carretto and their three boys Caden (in pool) Jaxon and Kylan.

Emily and I made here at St. Paul.

I'm going to remember how the congregation welcomed us with open arms and showed us the love of Christ in so many amazing ways. I'm going to remember the opportunities that people gave me to explore and experience Florida. I'm going to remember the friendships I made with people that I will always hold dear.

I will remember the amazing bond that I made with the St. Paul Lutheran Church and School staff as we were able to live life together. And I will always remember fondly both my supervisors — Pastors Steve Carretto and Andrew Kubowicz. Both of these men became more to me than just mentors; they became close friends. They helped me to learn and grow not only as a vicar, but also as a husband and a man of God as well.

Yes, this year was challenging. Yes, there was a pandemic. Yet, in the midst of it all God has continued to work powerfully, and He has poured out His blessings on me in ways that I never would have expected. He has been at work in the congregation of St. Paul and the community of Boca Raton.

Emily and I cannot thank the pastors and people of St. Paul enough for all that they have done for us. We pray that God would continuously bless the congregation here, bless future vicars who have the privilege of being placed here, and that God would continue to work powerfully through this people in their community and the world. ■





# Trinity/Summerfield Holds Pentecost Celebration

The members of **Trinity/Summerfield, FL** enjoyed a special day of celebration on May 23, 2021. First, and best, was the celebration of the Holy Spirit and Pentecost. As a reminder of His blessings, one of the members, Debbie Thompson, celebrated the day as the 78th anniversary of her confirmation in Ohio.

Another part of the celebration was recognizing God's hand of blessing on the congregation for 25 years, growing from their first sanctuary into a larger, beautiful sanctuary, and recently purchasing approximately nine acres for future growth in the Bushnell area — an area that will soon see The Villages expansion.

Another great blessing was celebrated as the parish burned the original \$2.7 million mortgage for the property and first building. A generous Trinity family gave a \$250,000 gift in matching funds, and offerings were received reaching and surpassing their goal the week of our celebration. The \$500,000 offering allowed Trinity to pay off that loan.

As another celebration befitting Pentecost, 12 new members were welcomed into the congregation. The day was also the first time they resumed “normal” worship while still taking precautions for the continued pandemic. All of this came together in an outdoor picnic, capped by a magic show performed by Trinity's audio and sound technician. ■



Photo above — some of the new members welcomed on Pentecost Sunday. At left — checks presented to pay off the congregation's mortgage. Below left — Trinity's own sound technician performs a magic trick. Below — the burning of the church's mortgage.





## Dean & Liz Pfeffer Honored For 25 Years Serving Hope



On Sunday June 27th the members of **Hope/Plant City, FL** recognized and gave thanks to God for The Rev. Dean Pfeffer as he marked 25 years of ministry at the congregation. The service was led by Pfeffer who preached the anniversary sermon based on 1 Corinthians 9:16b, where Paul says “Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel.” That verse has been his guiding verse throughout his ministry. Pfeffer

inscribed that verse under the pulpit in Hope’s new sanctuary.

During what would normally be Family Bible Hour, the congregation hosted a special reception in honor of Pastor & Liz Pfeffer and their family. Congregational President Wendell Lattz presented them with a specially made wooden box designed by a friend of the congregation. Inside that box was their gift — the congregation was sending Pastor & Liz on a Carnival cruise.

In his remarks Pfeffer thanked the congregation for their love and patience and emphasized how they arrived at Hope 25 years ago, a family of 5 and now are becoming 11 with the upcoming wedding of their youngest Jason & Trish.

Pictured above are (from left) Jason and fiancée Trish; daughter Kristin & Ellie, Liz Pfeffer, Alex, Pfeffer, Eddie (son in law), Jesilynn (daughter in law); Evan, and Daniel. ■



The Rev. Timothy Heath was installed as the Intentional Interim Minister at **Bethel/Hobe Sound, FL** on July 11, 2021. He is joined by his wife Susanna.

Clergy pictured at left is Mark Stillman, Stanley Allen, Timothy Heath and Dave Albers



Just in from the National Gathering Office:

## Things To Know About The 2022 LCMS Youth Gathering in Houston, Texas

Held every three years since 1980, the LCMS Youth Gathering provides thousands of youth and adults the opportunity to come together as a community of God's people to be encouraged in their walk with Jesus Christ and learn about the Christian faith and their Lutheran identity.

Thousands of youth and adults from all 35 districts will join together in Houston, TX July 9-13, 2022 for the 15th triennial LCMS Youth Gathering.



"The Gathering is more than the five days of the event," explains Cindy Hammerstrom, FLGA District Coordinator for the event. "The preparation process for the Gathering brings together young people and supportive adults to encourage each other in their baptismal identity. The Gathering provides young

people a vision for the vastness of Christ's Church and equips them for vocational service as they continue their walk with Jesus."

This event is organized by LCMS Youth Ministry in Saint Louis, MO. For additional ways to connect to LCMS Youth Ministry, please visit [www.lcms.org/youth](http://www.lcms.org/youth). The Gathering poster, along with your congregation ID number is headed to your church!

According to Hammerstrom, there are a few things to note:

1. Keep your Congregation ID number! You will

need this number to register your group this fall!

2. If you are not responsible for checking the mail at your church, considering notifying the person that does.

3. Hang your poster and get your youth excited to attend In All Things next summer! ■



- *Do you listen to podcasts? Even if you don't, you might consider listening to KFUO and their LCMS Youth Gathering podcasts. A new one just dropped.*
- *Are there young adults (ages 19-25) in your congregation who want to volunteer?*
- *These registration dates are now open:*
  - a) Young Adult Volunteer (YAV) Team Captain;
  - b) Young Adult Volunteers (YAV)
  - c) Team Flex registration is also now open.
- *Priority for downtown hotels will be given on a first-come, first-served basis. Registration opens in September, but don't postmark it in before November 1 or it will be returned to you.*



Drew Boggs was installed on Sunday, June 18th at **St. Paul/Lakeland, FL** as their Director of Christian Education intern. Similar to a pastoral vicarage, this one year internship allows Boggs to put his learning into practice at St. Paul, while being mentored by a supervisor. He comes to the FLGA District from Concordia/Seward, NE. ■



On May 16th the **St. Peter/Dahlonega, GA** honored Tanner Young with a cake, cards and gifts celebrating his recent graduation from Lumpkin County High School. He has been a faithful acolyte at St. Peter since he was four years old. Tanner is enrolled in electrical engineering classes this fall at Lanier Technical College with eventual plans to enter the United States Air Force — continuing his education towards a degree in aeronautical engineering. ■



Courtney Small has been consecrated/installed as "Director of Youth & Family Life Ministry-Intern" at **Amazing Grace/Oxford/The Villages, FL**. This is a new position at Amazing Grace. They are expanding their staff to further their ministry out into the community. Courtney comes to the congregation from Concordia/Irvine, CA. ■



## Course explores leadership styles

### Third CSL/CUW Online Course Set to Begin Sept. 14

Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, MO is again partnering with Concordia University/Mequon, WI, (CUW) for a third online continuing education course for ordained pastors, commissioned church workers and lay leaders.

The course, "Four Leadership Approaches Every Leader Should Know and Use," will run Sept. 14 through Oct. 26. The course will be taught by Dr. Benjamin Haupt, associate provost and associate professor of Practical Theology at Concordia Seminary; Dr. Luke Schnake,



Dr. Benjamin Haupt



Dr. Luke Schnake



Dr. Ryan Peterson

pastor emeritus of Christ Lincoln Lutheran Church, Lincoln, Neb.; and Dr. Ryan Peterson, vice president of administration at Concordia University, Ann Arbor, Mich.

"If you are in a leadership role of any kind, this continuing education opportunity is for you," said Erika Bennett, director of Continuing Education at Concordia Seminary. "This course will give participants a broader view of all they are asked to do in their leadership roles and provide them with new tools for their various calls to service."

The course will include a leadership assessment and cover topics on leading through the frame of human resources, symbolism, structure and politics.

The course will conclude with ways to reframe a person's leadership style.

The course is fully online and features six modules over six weeks, with video lectures, optional readings, recommended assignments and peer discussion activities to enhance the learning experience. Each class will begin with a live Zoom discussion between the presenters and students. Each session will be recorded so students can view it later if they are unable to attend.

The course costs \$99, which includes six Continuing Education Unit (CEU) credits per course for pastors. Registration closes Sept. 10, 2021. To register, complete CUW's online application.

For more information, contact Concordia Seminary's Continuing Education department at [ce@csl.edu](mailto:ce@csl.edu) or 314-505-7286, or contact CUW's Continuing and Distance Education department at [continuing.education@cuw.edu](mailto:continuing.education@cuw.edu) or 262-243-2027. ■

## District Seeking Contact Information for High School Graduates Heading to College

Is your high-school graduate headed for college? If so, your son or daughter, your grandchild, your church member, your youth group member are starting a new new adventure. Staying connected in their faith life once they are on the college campus is vital.

Consider this story shared by Rev. Gerhard Michael, Pastor at St. Peter/Dahlongega GA, shares this:

"During this past week, I received an email from an ELCA pastor in LaGrange, GA expressing his gratitude that we welcome students from the University of North Georgia. His son is entering the Doctor of Physical Therapy program there. Reaching out on the home campus of UNG with nearly 8000 future leaders in our country is important for us to do!"



The FLGA District has active campus ministries. If you know someone who will be studying at one of these colleges, please connect with the campus minister:

- ◆ Live Ministries, University of Central Florida, Orlando. DCE Kalli Wied: [kwliveucf@gmail.com](mailto:kwliveucf@gmail.com)
- ◆ Thrive Community Church and Thrive FGCU, Florida Gulf Coast University, Estero. Pastor John Roth: [john@thrive-fl.org](mailto:john@thrive-fl.org)
- ◆ Christus Victor Lutheran Church and Student Center, University of Georgia, Athens. Pastor Greg Michael: [pastor@cvlc@gmail.com](mailto:pastor@cvlc@gmail.com)
- ◆ University Lutheran Church and Student Center, Florida State University, Tallahassee. Pastor Jay Winters: [pastor@universitylutheranchurch.org](mailto:pastor@universitylutheranchurch.org)
- ◆ St. Peter Lutheran Church, University of North Georgia, Dahlongega. Rev. David Kruger: [dfkruger@comcast.net](mailto:dfkruger@comcast.net)
- ◆ First Lutheran Church, University of Florida, Gainesville. Rev. John Glover – [office@flcgainesville.org](mailto:office@flcgainesville.org) ■





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## Well Done Good and Faithful Servant

Think back with me for a moment . . . to the summer of 1989. It was the 57th regular national convention of the LCMS in Wichita, Kansas. The theme of that convention was “Tell Everyone What He Has Done!” Saturday night was a special Cowtown Festival to forget momentarily about all the business at hand and enjoy good old-fashioned Kansas barbeque and rodeo fun and food.

Ralph Bohlmann was synod president; Gus Mennicke first VP, Walt Rosin, secretary and Norm Sell, treasurer. I was a voting delegate — my first synodical convention! Lou Abel, pastor of Trinity/Fort Lauderdale, FL was my roommate.

I met Mark Brink that night. He was an advisory delegate (as a commissioned minister) from Marietta, GA. We shared a few “cold ones” as well as excellent barbeque, corn-on-the-cob, chilled potato salad and introductory conversation. We became fast friends and had the same thoughts, theology and goals for our church and district despite him being a Concordia/River Forest and me being a Valparaiso graduate.

Times were immensely different then. Gas was 97 cents a gallon and not much more than a buck for premium. You could buy a 3 series BMW heavily loaded for about \$25,000 and the average cost of a 3-bedroom home in Greater Fort Lauderdale, Florida was \$125,000.

We discussed our jobs — Mark was an educator and administrator and I was in marketing and real estate. We discussed our congregations and schools. We discussed our wives. I heard about how he married “the bosses daughter” Mary Beth Bickel when Mark was teaching at Advent/Boca Raton, FL under principal Ralph Bickel. We discussed his three sons — Brian was 8, Andrew was 6 and Josh was just a year old!

Fast forward to the summer of 2021. Friday, July 30th was Mark’s last day of work before retiring and Saturday the 31st was his birthday. It seems like I’ve known him for a lifetime. Our paths crossed regularly. He eventually became the Executive Director of School Ministries for



the entire Florida-Georgia District under then president Tom Zehnder. My district responsibilities included communications and public relations and along with my wife Eileen, producing Lutheran Life — which transitioned from a 4-page newsletter into a black and white 11”x17” newspaper to today’s 32-page color magazine. Abundant changes for both of us. Indeed.

We all feel the excitement in the heart of a servant after hearing about jobs well done.

Before Jesus left and ascended into heaven, he left his disciples three commands: preach the gospel, make disciples, get power from the Holy Spirit so you can preach the gospel and make disciples. These are the most important responsibilities of every Christian.

“Well done” is not just reserved for pastors, teachers or for those who serve in the church. Mark emphasized that — to his students, fellow faculty, coworkers and me. A good and faithful servant is the one who will

take his life and occupation and make a difference right where they are. It’s Mark’s mantra.

I can’t wait to see what God has in mind for him in retirement! He won’t sit still — I promise you that. He is immensely enjoying his three sons and daughters-in-law along with his grandchildren. He and Mary Beth will travel. A lot! Even though gas is up north of \$3 a gallon this summer.

He’ll continue to make a difference in the lives of those he comes in contact with like he has done for me . . . and maybe you. ■

### The LAST WORD



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