

LUTHERAN[®] LIFE

The Newsmagazine of the
Florida-Georgia District LCMS
April/May 2021



Faith Lutheran School • Eustis, FL

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. Robert Steinke, Intentional
Interim Pastor, Hope/Hudson, FL
Rev. William Whitehead, Pastor,
Lake Wales/Lake Wales, FL

Transferred Out of FLGA to Other Districts

1/7/21 Rev. Patrick Runk (O)
to New England District
1/13/21 Ms. Staci Welburn (C)
to Southeastern District
1/29/21 Rev. George Lobien (O)
to Southeastern District
2/28/21 Rev. Joshua Obermann (O)
to Eastern District
3/1/21 Rev. Hubert Temme (O)
to Southeastern District
3/7/21 Rev. Steven Naylor (O)
to Northwest District
3/8/21 Rev. Bafel Deng (O)
to English District
3/10/21 Mr. Michael Nowicki (C)
to SELC District

Transferred Into FLGA from Other Districts

1/31/21 Rev. John Ramey (O)
from Southeastern District
2/25/21 Rev. Michael Hanel (O)
from Northern Illinois

Installations of Ordained/ Commissioned Ministers

1/31/21 Rev. John Ramey (O)
Church of the Redeemer,
Columbus, GA
2/24/21 Ms. Jessica Shea (C)
Faith/Marietta, GA
2/20/21 Rev. Robert Steinke (O)
Hope/Hudson, FL
3/21/21 Rev. Michael Hanel (O)
Bethany/Leesburg, FL
3/27/21 Rev. William Whitehead (O)
Lake Wales/Lake Wales, FL

Status Changes in the District

1/31/21 Rev. Thomas Fuqua (O)
to Emeritus
3/10/21 Ms. Eunice Mathews (C)
to Emeritus
3/10/21 Ms. Evelyn Johnson (C)
to Emeritus

Called to Glory

1/21/21 Rev. James Knuth (O)
3/1/21 Rev. Hubert Temme (O)
3/10/21 Rev. Walter Halfmann (O)

Reinstated to the Roster

2/11/21 Ms. Kristin Becker (C)

Removed from the Roster

1/29/21 Ms. Donna Koren (C)
2/5/21 Ms. Rhonda Stucky (C)

Post-Easter 2021:



He is Risen! He is Risen, indeed!
Alleluia!

This ancient and familiar Easter greeting has been used for centuries to celebrate the Resurrected Jesus! I still remember speaking this for the first time as a child. It was at a sunrise service, while it was still very dark outside. At the time I honestly wondered why we were up this early, and why we had to be in the early morning chill. But as the pastor explained this early greeting, my attention was captured and my soul was awakened. He shared the first Easter morning from the Gospel of John, explaining the events took place early in the morning and this is why we had gathered. At about 10 years old I discovered that Easter was more than simply about candy or colorful dye for eggs. It was transformational. It was exciting. It helped shape my early faith. To this day, John's version of Easter morning is my favorite. I can still hear the explanation of Mary's grief turning to instant joy as Jesus called out her name. John reports, "Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb... But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. They said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.' Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?' Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary.' She turned and said to him in Aramaic, 'Rabboni!'"

I've always loved the fact that John's Gospel makes the Resurrection story very personal and relational. We understand Mary's grief. We can relate to Peter and John's race to the empty tomb, gripped by heart-wrenching fear of a missing and possibly abused corpse. We sense the despair of the disciples huddled together in the Upper Room, and the shock and fright when Jesus appears among them. These are all very human responses in the face of something they couldn't fully understand. Rather than scolding any of them for their lack of faith or for not remembering all He told them, Jesus simply loves them, as He seeks them out in the midst of their

Confident Living with a Future Fixed on Jesus!

LIFE LINES

lowest points of despair and their highest level of grief. He does the very same thing for each of us, no matter what our circumstances might be.

Over the past few months there have been multiple times I feel like I've been in Mary's sandals as she stood forlornly at the empty tomb wondering. I have lost several close friends to COVID and heard of many others who have

in Africa. Christ's victory over the grave is a laugh in Satan's face. What a great reminder that Jesus' victory is now our victory! It helps us place the focus on His victory rather than our loss. It reminds us that we are Resurrection people, a people of hope who can be confident that our future is fixed on Jesus!

A future fixed on Jesus is a wonderful blessing. In fact, this is the theme of the District Convention which was to take place later this year in June, but due to the Synod Referendum will now be held June 16-18, 2022. The fact is, none of us knows what the future holds, but I am leaning more and more on the One who holds my future in His hands. He has your future in His hands as well. He says, "I know the plans I have for you; plans to prosper you and not to harm you; plans with a hope and future."

In the Greek this word overcome has the same root as victory—NIKE!

Because Jesus has overcome the world, by faith in Him we are overcomers. *Nothing* can separate us from His love, and even through the difficult times of life, even in death, Jesus promises He will never leave us nor forsake us. For me, it all comes together in the simple phrase, "He is Risen; He is Risen, indeed! Alleluia."

May your heart be filled with this truth, not only in the Easter season, but every single day as we remember the length Jesus went, the suffering He endured, the penalty He paid for our sin. He has risen and our life in Him is eternal, no matter what happens!

So when those "Mary" moments of despair rise up in your life, remember that Jesus rose victoriously over sin, death and the devil. And shout it out over and over: "He is Risen; Jesus is Risen, indeed! Alleluia! HA, HA, HA!"



battled this virus. In January, Edith's father went home to be with Jesus after a short hospital stay and health which declined quickly. Both of my parents have experienced a great deal of health issues over the past year, in and out of the hospital, and my 90 year old father was recently placed on hospice care because he's become so weak they can no longer treat the cancer slowly destroying his earthly body.

At times things have seemed overwhelming. If I wasn't confident of their individual faith in Jesus, I do not know how I would cope. I have rediscovered a great joy and peace in this ancient Easter greeting. Jesus is Risen! He is Risen, indeed! Alleluia! What hope this instills, what comfort it offers as I remember the promises which come as a result of the truth of the Resurrection.

In fact, I learned a new twist on this statement in Warner Robins, Georgia at the funeral of Pastor David Brighton. David taught his people to end this greeting with a hearty laugh of HA, HA, HA to signify the victory of Jesus over sin, death and the devil, something he learned from some missionaries serving

We can have great confidence in the future because the Lord of Life has conquered death, and He did it just for you and just for me, undeserved as we are. Knowing He holds our future does not mean we will skate through life untouched by sin or untouched by hardship and sorrow. I would love to tell you that the COVID virus will end in the next 30 days and will be a bad memory. Perhaps it will be true someday soon.

I would love to tell you people will flock to churches in the days ahead. If we focus on God's mission of reaching people with the love of Jesus we may see people seeking a place where they can come without judgment and receive genuine care. I would love to tell you that all your troubles will disappear and life in the days ahead will be trouble free. I wish I could tell you this, but we all know it just isn't the case. What I can tell you is what Jesus said in JOHN 16:33b, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." This is the result of His death and resurrection for our sins. He has overcome the world.



*He is Risen, indeed!
Ha, Ha, Ha!*
GREG

Former First Lady of District, Jacquelyn Ruth Zehnder, Called Home

Beloved wife, devoted mother, and cherished grandmother, Jacquelyn Ruth Zehnder was called to her heavenly home on December 12, 2020 in Oviedo, FL. Jackie and husband, District President Emeritus Rev. Dr. Thomas R. Zehnder, were residents of Lutheran Haven/Oviedo, FL.

Born in Elmhurst, IL on March 1, 1937 to Carl and Ruth (Schroeder) Rudow, Jackie had three older brothers Donald Richard Rudow, Eugene Carl Rudow (decd. 2013), and Allen Arthur Rudow. Jackie graduated from St. John's College, Winfield, KS, in 1957 with a Lutheran Church Administrative Secretary degree, and after graduation worked at Bethany Lutheran Church in Detroit, MI.

In 1960, Jackie married Tom Zehnder. After he graduated from Concordia Seminary/ St. Louis, MO, they embarked together with 8-week-old daughter Kristi on a journey to Tokyo, Japan, where they served as missionaries to the Japan Lutheran Church. After Japanese language study, Tom was assigned to Izumi Lutheran Church as Pastor, and the family lived in Yokohama. Jackie, like Tom, was proficient in the Japanese language, and together they ministered in Japan for nine years, spreading the Good News of God's redeeming Grace.

After returning to the United States in 1970, Jackie spent the next 50 years as a faithful pastor's wife to Tom, providing him with unfailing support and encouragement as they served different parishes in Georgia, Florida, Virginia, Texas, Arkansas, Wisconsin, and Missouri, and as a loving mother to their four children, Kristi, Karen, Kathy, and Tom. Jackie also worked in the medical field in both Stuart, Florida for a family practice, and later in Orlando, Florida for an OBGYN until she retired in 2000. She cherished her days serving patients.

An incredible Mom, Jackie was the heart, soul, and strength of the family, serving as caregiver, comforter, leader, and counselor for her children and husband. Jackie's strength was legendary, overcoming the untimely death of her eldest Kristi Lynn (Zehnder) Suttie, and even



defeating pancreatic cancer, to everyone's amazement but to no one's surprise. A woman of great faith, Jackie exemplified modesty, good humor, inner strength, and steadiness, and because of her extraordinary strength and tenacity, her kids lovingly nicknamed her "The Beast!"

Jackie is survived by her husband Tom; daughter Karen Lois (Zehnder) Williams and her husband Scott Porter Williams; daughter Kathryn Jean (Zehnder) Strauss and her husband James Erin Strauss; her son Thomas Alan Zehnder and his wife Leigh Sigman Zehnder; her brothers Donald and Allen; her 13 grandchildren and step-grandchildren; and many nieces and nephews. ■

Photos Below — District President Emeritus Rev. Dr. Thomas R. Zehnder with his bride, Jackie and surrounded by some of the Zehnder clan she leaves behind.



Pastor Hubert Temme, Worldwide Influential Voice for Lutherans

Rev. Dr. Hubert H. Temme of Ashburn, VA, was called to glory on Tuesday, March 2, 2021 after a brief, sudden illness. This past December he and his wife, June, celebrated 65 years of ministry and marriage.

He graduated from Concordia Seminary/Adelaide, Australia in 1955. His first call was as a missionary to the Australian Aborigines, then as a mission planter, and pastor of other congregations.

Rev. Temme was an Australian Army Reserve Chaplain, chairperson of the Board of Aboriginal Missions, and guest speaker on the Australian Lutheran Hour.

In the U.S., Rev. Temme served congregations in Centralia,

IL, Baltimore, MD, and as vice president of development for Wheat Ridge Ministries/Chicago, IL. Temme and his wife, June, most recently served as representatives of Concordia Seminary in the advancement division. They have visited with pastors, church workers, and donors in Florida and elsewhere to keep the visibility of the seminary strong and to encourage financial and other support. Rev. Temme was a powerful and influential voice throughout the LCMS and in the Florida-Georgia District. He and June were regulars at the annual Veterans of the Cross retreat. In addition to June, Dr. Temme is survived by their children,



Jill, Michael and Lisa, and their families. Due to COVID-19, memorial rites have not been finalized yet. ■

Pastor John Glamann, Had Recently Retired

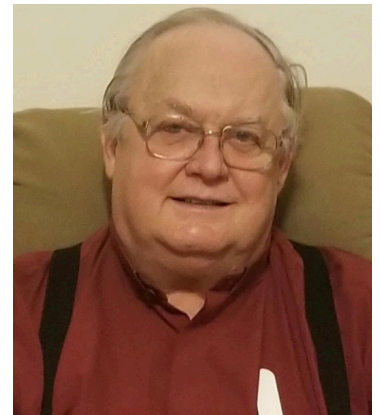
Rev. John Glamann of Lake Wales, FL passed away unexpectedly March 7th, 2021 at Winter Haven Hospital, Winter Haven, FL. John was a 29-year resident of Lake Wales Florida. Pastor Glamann had recently retired November 8th, 2020, after serving as Pastor at Lake Wales/Lake Wales, FL. He was a pastor for 46 years before retiring, with the last 28 years being in Lake Wales. He is preceded in death by his sisters Susanne and Cindy Glamann, and father Vernon Glamann. Survived by his loving wife Sue Glamann, daughter Faith Ann, granddaughter Abigail, stepsons Thor, Rolf, and Kirk, Mother Florence Glamann, sister Sharon Wild, niece Tricia Wild, nephew John (Kathy) Wild, and many loving friends.

John was born November 5th, 1948 to Vernon and Florence Glamann, Beaver Dam, WI. In his early days he attended St. John's Lutheran School, Mayville, WI and Concordia College High School in Milwaukee, WI. He graduated Concordia College/ Milwaukee, WI and later earned his Doctorate of Theology at Concordia Seminary in Exile/St. Louis, MO.

John was a loving husband, father, grandfather, brother, uncle, and man of God. His faith ran deep, and he took any opportunity to share that

faith with everyone. He enjoyed spending time with his wife Sue — they traveled together and made many great memories. He was very proud of his family and would tell anyone who was willing to listen. He loved to sit and talk about memories and fun times from the past. He didn't know a stranger; everyone quickly became a friend. He was very generous, if someone needed help in any way, he was there to lend a helping hand, word of advice, or prayer.

Pastor Glamann will be missed by many. Services were held in March. ■



Walter Halfmann, Lutheran Educator

Walter K. Halfmann, Minister of Religion Commissioned Emeritus, was called to glory on Wednesday March 10, 2021 at St. Joseph's Hospital in Tampa, FL after a 20-month battle with leukemia. Retired after 38 years in Lutheran Schools, serving as Teacher and Principal, in Indiana, New York, Michigan and Florida.

Most recently, Walter served at Messiah Lutheran Church and Preschool in Tampa, FL as a Stephen Ministry Leader, Leader of the Men's Bible Class, and a participant in the Adult Choir. His wife, Norma, survives, along with daughter Meredith Ackerman and her husband, Kevin, plus three grandsons Emmett, Elijah, and Ezra. A Celebration of Life will be held at a later date. ■



Called to Glory February 18th in Fort Myers, Florida

Helen Roenfeldt, District's Director of

by John List, Editor



Helen with husband Lloyd



Helen with Field Director Lophane Laurent who continues to help distribute funds for schools, food, agricultural improvements and more



District President Greg Walton surrounded by Haitian children at one of the orphanages

Helen Marie Abernathy Roenfeldt was born at the Air Force Base hospital in Anchorage, AK to Billy & Dorothy Abernathy. She was the oldest of four children (a sister and two brothers who preceded her in death). As an Air Force "brat" she lived wherever the family was stationed.

"Her stories of growing up included Alabama, Alaska, Nevada, Florida, and Washington," remembers her daughter, Caroline Miller. "My mother married Lloyd Roenfeldt on March 15 1969 at Fairchild Air Force Base in Spokane, WA. Together they lived in Thailand, Texas, Minnesota, Washington, Louisiana, and Florida," she continues. "They raised three of their own children and were second parents to anyone who came through our doors."

Helen was survived by her husband Lloyd until he joined her in heaven on March 3, 2021. They were married 50 years and he remained the love of her life until the end. She is survived by their children; Caroline (Roenfeldt) Miller, Gretel Roenfeldt, and Lloyd Roenfeldt Jr., her son-in-law Dale Miller, grandchildren; Micayah Miller (Brandon Howard), Alina Miller, Alexandra Roenfeldt, Jackson Roenfeldt, and great-granddaughter Bellamy Labrador-Miller."

"When talking to Helen Roenfeldt about the people of Haiti her passion was so evident . . . I had spoken with Helen many times over the years, I knew about her deep commitment and abiding love for this tiny Island nation. I did not fully grasp the extent until I traveled with her and other District Staff members to visit Haiti in 2014," explains Florida-Georgia President Rev. Dr. Greg Walton.

"I had heard so many stories about Haiti — the poverty, the crime, and the Voodoo. Frankly, I was a bit anxious to make the trip. In fact, my initial trip was to be without the staff and had to be canceled due to an uprising going on in the government.

"Even though Helen was unconcerned about it, I was warned by some friends in the LCMS Missions Department (who had planned to be in Haiti at the same time) that it was too risky, and they would not be going. They persuaded me not to go. Helen went anyway, and did her ministry there without any incident. I decided to take staff with me the next time and not go by myself."

Helen, affectionately nicknamed by some as the Mother Teresa of Haiti, loved

the people of that impoverished nation and keenly understood the culture, the history, and the motivations. She was fearless in her passion to help people in Haiti as she worked with them to establish structures, start micro-businesses, and tell them about the love of Jesus.

"Helen was also relentless in her desire for me to join her in this mission and see the nation of Haiti. She told me I would have a greater understanding of Haitian ministry in the United States if I could see the culture and get to know the beautiful people of Haiti. She was right!

"At her persistent challenge we finally established dates which would work for all involved, and I — along with Mark Brink, Doug Kallesen, and Dan Reichard — set off on a transformational adventure I will never forget," Walton continues. "We landed in Port-au-Prince and were picked up by Lophane Laurent and armed escorts, then made our way to a walled complex. It was miserably hot, there were few amenities to which we were accustomed. We had to get used to little or no hot water for showers."

Helen proceeded to show the team where she had been working in Gonaives beginning with the dedication of a church which was down the street from a Voodoo temple. "Worshipping in Haiti is exciting," Walton explains. "We met people whose lives were *changed by Jesus*, and who *enthusiastically worshipped Him*. As we went place to place, seeing people living in such humble situations, I was always struck by how joyful the people remained. We visited schools, we visited churches, and even prayed over property for a future church."

"Her love for the Lord and the people of Haiti was beyond measure," adds Mark Brink, one of the FLGA executive team who traveled with Walton. "Her tenderness and tenacity combined to change daily life for the people of Haiti — as well as life eternal. She changed my life too, and I thank God for that. She will be dearly missed."

"Helen opened up a whole new world to me. Spending time with Lophane — who has served as the field director for Mission Haiti for many years — gave us rich insight into this nation. On a later trip we would meet his family, and even serve with his niece, who has since gone home to Jesus.

"One day we visited an orphanage and the children were so happy to meet

Mission:Haiti, Succumbs to Covid-19

PASSAGES

us, and strangely were fascinated by the hair on my arms. At one point I had five or six children gathered around me stroking my arms, and pulling the hair. It was a little unnerving until Helen explained the children were not used to seeing hair on someone's arms.

"A favorite memory of this trip was sorting clothes that had been donated, and helping a group of children from the orphanage find shoes and outfits. The sheer joy on their faces, the genuine appreciation, the smiles of these children underscored the magnificent work Helen Roenfeldt accomplished. I am certain Helen knew if I would step into this world it would change my perspective, and it did.

"Years later I would return with Helen and a number of teachers from the Florida-Georgia District to assist with a retreat for teachers in Haiti. It was an amazing experience and allowed our group to not only interact with teachers from Haiti, but to tour some schools and see the conditions that Haitian teachers face to instruct students. Thankfully, with the generosity of the people of FLGA, we were able to bring much needed school supplies. The gratefulness of these teachers we were working with was overwhelming, and those of us who participated on Helen's team knew we had been part of something very special, and we were working with a very special lady.

"While Helen now has gone to be with Jesus, her legacy lives on in the lives which have been shaped for Jesus because of His love flowing through her. The impact of her ministry will long be remembered, but the lives she touched with the love of Jesus have been impacted eternally. As a new chapter of ministry opens for Mission: Haiti, with new leadership, the dedication and work of Helen Roenfeldt will be carried on and she will be sorely missed, but never forgotten," Walton concludes. "God used her to change lives all over Haiti, and even here in the United States. I know, because she changed mine!"

Dr. Nancy Swisher is the Medical Director for Mission: Haiti — a Family Practice physician from Wisconsin. She has served in medical missions in the Middle East and South America as well as Haiti. "I had the privilege of working closely with Helen at Mission:Haiti. We made numerous trips, organized many Community Health Outreach clinics, logged countless hours traveling the roads of Haiti. What

always amazed me was Helen's ability to connect with people — communicating the love and message of Jesus through caring words, a warm hug, a soft smile, a delighted laugh, a shared tear," Swisher emphasizes, "and it wasn't just the people who came to our outreach — it was the cook at the guest house, the gas station attendant, the roadside seller. Every interaction was an opportunity for Helen! She prayed for and received a heart filled with the Holy Spirit — a genuine love that drew people to her. She taught me that Christian mission is not about what we do but how we love. It is love that lifts people up and helps them find a path forward in difficult circumstances.

"Helen loved the people of Haiti fiercely and they loved her in return. We mourn her loss and look for ways to continue her vision for the people of Haiti. But most of all we pray for the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with that genuine love and that like Helen, we share it with abandon."

"Helen was more than the face of Mission: Haiti she was the heart and soul," states Karen Smith, Mission:Haiti's board chairman. "Her love for being the hands of Jesus to the Haitian people was amazing. The first trip I took to Haiti was of course with Helen and a group of naive team members who had a vision of making some sort of a difference in the few days that we were there. It was a teacher conference. Helen had it all planned out and we happily followed her like ducklings wherever she went. We not only worked hard, taking duffle bag after duffle bag of supplies and clothing, and preparing our workshops, but also took little side trips to see the beautiful countryside and of course the marketplaces in Port-au-Prince. She was organized and prepared for anything that might come along.

Through the years we took several trips — some very primitive and others quite comfortable. She saw to it that we were *always safe*, steering us clear of any potential crisis and supplying us with body guards. She truly was the Mother Teresa of Haiti. People flocked to her and they saw Jesus through her."

"Helen loved this thought: 'You do not go to Haiti to change Haiti. You go there so Haiti can change you!'" interprets Pastor Tim Hartner, emeritus at St. Paul/Weston, FL. "Her mission trips

were about *relationships*. She was often asked 'Why do you send people over there when you could just send the money?' and she would answer, 'Because money does not make relationships happen. Money does not allow people — white and black — to stand next to each other in a cement bucket brigade passing buckets from one to another! Money does not teach a Haitian child to play a recorder making a joyful noise! Money does not give you the *essence* of Haiti where you are surrounded by people who have *nothing* and celebrate as if they have *everything*!'

"My recollections of Helen was that she would never *assume* to know what Haitian people needed. She would ask what they needed for their community," Hartner continues. "When you went to Haiti with Helen, she would insist that before you return you were to have an 'elevator speech' you could give people when they asked about your trip. Elevator speeches were no more than 20 seconds!"

In her young adult life Helen had planned on becoming a mission worker in Africa. That was not the direction her life went, but she said when she stepped off the plane for the first time in Haiti, she knew she was living her life-long mission field dream.

Both friends and family emphasized that Helen always appreciated husband Lloyd's love, devotion and commitment to Mission:Haiti. While he never made the trip, he never complained about her frequent travels there.

"The first time I went to Haiti with Helen, and saw her love for those people and their country," Hartner remembers, "I told her, 'You know we will have to spread some of your ashes here in Haiti!' Her response: 'You better!'"

Celebration of Life Services will be held in two locations to accommodate as many friends and family as possible. "We are still navigating details," her daughter Caroline concludes, "but have set aside May 29th and June 5th and will be updating everyone as details are formalized. One service will be held in Fort Myers and one will be held in the Fort Lauderdale area." ■

*Second Reaffirmation in Past Decade***Fort Wayne Seminary Receives Highest Academic Rating**

Concordia Theological Seminary/Fort Wayne, IN has received the highest ratings from accrediting agencies of Association of Theological Schools (ATS) and the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), it was announced by the school's board of regents late in February.

"The rating is for the next ten years — the longest term the accrediting agencies can approve. This reaffirmation of accreditation builds upon the strength of the ten-year reaffirmation achieved in 2010," said President Lawrence R. Rast, Jr. "Both commissions recognized CTSFW's strong sense of mission and identity."

"Both visitation teams commended the culture of assessment that informs integrated planning," noted

Prof. Robert Roethemeyer, Vice President of Strategic Planning and Mission Execution and self-study chair. "These are great characteristics to celebrate in this 175th year of forming pastors, deaconesses, and other servants of Jesus Christ for the congregations and service organizations of The LCMS and beyond."

The accreditors noted that CTSFW's "mission and [Lutheran] identity permeate, animate, and guide the school and are supported by a strong sense of community." They also complimented the seminary for "exceptional financial stewardship and generosity of the seminary's constituency (both local and global) that make it possible for students to graduate with manageable debt."

The tremendous amount of work that goes into preparing an institutional self-study of this magnitude allows the Seminary to celebrate and build upon its strengths and recognize areas for potential growth and improvement. President Rast continued, "The 2020 Institutional Self-Study provides a foundation for our next

deep dive into strategic planning, which will align the seminary's budget to the plan and engage the full seminary community in its creation and implementation. This cycle of planning and assessment frees CTSFW to embrace new opportunities and challenges and build on what it means to be distinctively Lutheran, community-oriented, and committed to excellence." Rast further noted, "CTSFW is planning for the future by assessing broad external influences and partnerships. In the coming years, CTSFW will engage the broader Synod to partner in the development of a plan for the future of pastoral and diaconal formation in the LCMS."

"In spite of the challenges we have all experienced this past year, there is much to celebrate," said Dr. Charles A. Gieschen, Academic Dean. "The reports that we have received from ATS and HLC are great affirmations from widely-respected accreditors of the excellence and integrity of all that God is doing through CTSFW on a daily basis to form more servants in Jesus Christ who teach the faithful, reach the lost, and care for all." ■



Concordia's campus is sited in the middle of Fort Wayne, Indiana's metropolis. The educational haven was designed by Eero Saarinen and opened for its first academic year on Sept. 10, 1957. It contains a wealth of art, architecture and history for visitors to enjoy.

Egger Accepts Call as Concordia Seminary President

Dr. Thomas J. Egger, the Gustav and Sophie Butterbach Professor of Exegetical Theology and chairman of the Department of Exegetical Theology at Concordia Seminary, has accepted the call to serve as the 11th president of Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, MO.

Egger announced his formal acceptance of the call during chapel service on Monday, February 15th as well as on a YouTube Video on Concordia's channel.

"It is with a lot of joy and anticipation, and also with some trembling and prayers to God for grace and wisdom, that I announce today the acceptance of this call," Egger said. "The Lord has been so kind to me, in calling a poor, miserable sinner to speak in His name, and to serve His bride, His dear church, first as a parish pastor at Zion Lutheran Church in Storm Lake, Iowa. Those were wonderful years that I will never forget. For the last 16 years as an Old Testament professor here, studying the sacred Scriptures with many of you — also wonderful years that I will never forget. And now, He has called me to serve His dear church as Seminary president, and to lead this renowned Seminary into the heart of the 21st century."

Egger will succeed President Emeritus Dr. Dale A. Meyer, who retired June 30, 2020, after serving 15 years as president. Dr. Daniel Preus has been serving as interim president of the Seminary since July 1. Egger is an associate professor of Exegetical Theology and the academic advisor for first-year students at the Seminary and has been a faculty member since 2005 — having been installed at the same service at which Meyer was installed as president.

"We have a strong, personal and impactful leader at the Seminary in Dr. Tom Egger," emphasized FLGA District Vice President Stephen Carretto, pastor at St. Paul/Boca Raton, FL. "I had Dr. Egger for my Old Testament Exodus and Torah exegetical class. One thing I know of him is that he loves the Word of God and has a passion for others to

grab a hold of that Word as he does.

"What I saw from him in class is not only the passion of the Word, but also keen preparation for the class which always led to good discussion and leadership. I look forward to seeing Dr. Egger bring that same leadership, preparedness and passion to the President's office of the Seminary."

"I had Dr. Egger for a class called *Isaiah and the Prophets*, which true to its name discussed mostly Isaiah but also some of the other prophetic writings. Many pastors and theologians know the controversies that arise with an academic study of Isaiah — including if there were just one Isaiah, two or even three," explains FLGA Secretary Jay Winters, pastor at University/Tallahassee, FL. "Professor — now President — Egger was able to handle the differing opinions that existed with a matter-of-fact tone, recognizing that the different academic opinions existed and had to be reckoned with, but also noting how our interpretation of the Scripture ties to our witness of the Gospel. My hope and prayer



Stephen Carretto



Jay Winters



Benjamin Haupt

is that President Egger will be able to do more of the same that he did as Professor Egger — recognizing the differences that exist within and outside of our Synod, but always couching those things in how they tie to our witness of the Gospel."

"Over these last eight years since I joined the faculty, Dr. Egger has been a wonderful colleague and has consistently demonstrated his pastoral heart, often sending personal messages when people on campus are going through difficulties or mourning the loss of a loved one, said Dr. Benjamin Haupt, associate



Thomas Egger

provost and associate professor of Practical Theology at Concordia Seminary and former pastor in the FLGA District. "Tom's academic work in the Old Testament has been recognized with distinction within our LCMS as well as in the broader

Christian community. His love for people and his love for the Scriptures are tremendous assets to Concordia Seminary and Christ's Church. I look forward to serving with him as we press forward with Concordia Seminary's mission to train up more laborers for the harvest fields."

Egger earned his Master of Divinity (M.Div.) at Concordia Seminary (1997), and received his Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) in English and German from Central College in Pella, Iowa (1993). He completed his Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) at Concordia Seminary in 2019. His dissertation focused on the phrase "visiting iniquity of fathers upon sons" from the book of Exodus.

Before being called to Concordia Seminary, Egger served as pastor at Zion Lutheran Church in Storm Lake, Iowa (2000–05).

Egger transitioned to his new role in mid-March, and his formal installation is expected to be in August. ■

LCMS National and FLGA District Conventions Delayed A Year

The congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) have approved a proposal to extend the current 2019–2022 triennium — pushing the Synod's previously scheduled 2022 national convention to 2023 and extending the timeline for Districts that wish to delay their conventions from 2021 into 2022. The measure comes as the impact of COVID-19 continues to be felt in both the church and the world.

"Overall, across the Synod, more than 63% of congregations participated, with more than 90% affirming the desire to delay," stated FLGA District President Rev. Dr. Greg Walton. "In our District we had 132 out of 185 congregations participate (71.35%) and of that 127 congregations agreed to delay (96.21%). This was done with the strong support of both the Synods Council of Presidents and Board of Directors."

The vote, held electronically, commenced on Jan. 1 and closed on Feb. 15. It was conducted by the LCMS Office of the Secretary and assisted by the LCMS Department of Rosters, Statistics and Research Services and the LCMS Technology Application Group. To be effective, the vote required participation of at least one-quarter of the Synod's 5,872 congregations. The final percentage of congregations responding was 63.32%, or 3,718 votes. Of those, 90.67% — a number of votes also representing the majority of all member congregations — favored lengthening the triennium.

What Does This Mean?

According to a communique from LCMS/Saint Louis, MO, the delay of the Synod convention shifts some timelines for prior events. The national Synod office is working to make arrangements for the next regular convention of the Synod to convene in the summer of 2023 and will keep the Synod apprised as plans are finalized.

"The vote to delay the Synod's national convention does not mandate that individual districts also delay their conventions; each district may decide for itself whether to proceed with its convention as scheduled in 2021 or postpone it until 2022," explained President Walton. "Our District Board of directors has decided to delay our Summer 2021 District Convention and work with our hotel to secure dates for June, 2022. God has granted us an extra year of His favor to work together for His mission, confident, even now, that our future is fixed on Jesus!"

The delay also affects other aspects

of the national Synod convention timeline. The period for submission of officer, board and commission nominations for consideration by the Committee for Convention Nominations has already opened and will be held



open until nine months prior to the rescheduled 2023 convention. Task forces formed by the 2019 convention are being urged to issue reports on their original schedules for the sake of districts meeting in 2021, while being free to continue to develop, revise and extend their work in the "extra" year of this triennium.

Overture and report due dates, as well as dates for other registration, nomination and election processes related to the convention, will be announced when the 2023 date is finalized. ■

Lutheran Heritage Foundation Offering Free Resources

The Lutheran Heritage Foundation (a recognized service organization of the LCMS) has a variety of FREE new resources available in the Spanish language, including Luther's Small Catechism, The Bible with Small Catechism (combined volume), A Child's Garden of Bible Stories, and "Jesus Never Fails" devotional tract. These materials are available to any LCMS church, mission or individual who wants to share the Good News with their Spanish-speaking neighbors. To order, send an email to info@LHFmissions.org



Bernard Bull Accepts Challenge to Pilot Concordia/Seward

Dr. Bernard D. Bull will become the 11th president of Concordia University/Nebraska (CUNE), Seward, NE this summer. Bull, who currently serves as president of Goddard College in Plainfield, VT., will succeed the Rev. Dr. Brian Friedrich, who accepted a call last year to serve as president of Concordia University/St. Paul, St. Paul, MN.

Stuart Bartruff, chair of the CUNE Board of Regents, said that Bull is "known nationally for his innovative insights regarding Christian education at all levels" and that he had the unanimous support of the board. "[CUNE] will be well served given Dr. Bull's leadership attributes and experience," Bartruff said.

"I'm humbled to heed God's call to serve as the next president of Concordia/Nebraska," Bull emphasized. "I've long admired Concordia's legacy of cultivating a rich, academically challenging, vibrant and Christ-centered higher education community and its inspiring track record of equipping men and women for lives of learning, service and leadership in the church and world."

Bull earned a Bachelor's Degree in education, theology and history from Concordia

University/Wisconsin (CUW), Mequon, WI, in 1994, and a Master's in curriculum and instruction from Concordia University/Chicago, River Forest, Ill., in 1997. He earned a Master of Liberal Studies from the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, in 2005, and a Doctor of Education in instructional technology from Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL, in 2007.

Before becoming president of Goddard

College, Bull served CUW in a variety of roles, including vice-provost

for curriculum and academic innovation, chief innovation officer, assistant vice-president of academics and associate professor of education. He has also served Lutheran middle and high schools in Illinois and Wisconsin.

The Rev. Russ Sommerfeld, currently serving as interim CUNE president, will continue in that role until Bull's arrival. ■



*The Haven Becoming the Riviera for Retirement . . .
Will Honor the Vision and Legacy of Founder Andrew Duda*

Lutheran Haven Embarks on Capital Campaign to Build Swimming/Exercise & Therapy Pool

Undoubtedly, this past year has been full of challenges, but Lutheran **Haven/Oviedo, FL's** story is one of caring for one another and for those who wish to enjoy excellent retirement living among great neighbors and friends in a Christian environment. As a Registered Service Organization of the LCMS and the Florida-Georgia District, they have been caring for others in sunny, Florida for more than 70 years!

Recently The Haven announced a vital new project: A Swimming/Exercise & Therapy pool that will expand current rehabilitation and

fitness efforts. For the senior living community, aquatic therapy has significant and numerous benefits. So many Haven residents would benefit from aquatic-based rehabilitation for various cardiac and orthopedic challenges such as joint replacement, cardiac strengthening, balance issues, painful movement, increasing strength and range of motion — all of which are easier in water!

Research has proven many times over that strong, healthy people live longer, more productive lives, and remain independent far longer. Research has also shown that keeping

active and engaged physically, socially and recreationally makes a significant difference in one's overall well-being, especially for seniors.

The Haven meets and exceeds the healthcare needs of the community, continuously honoring the vision and legacy of founder, Andrew Duda, Sr.

More information about the project and support is available from Ms. Mary Ann McCunn at the Lutheran Haven Foundation at 407-706-1281 or via email at mmccunn@lutheranhaven.org. ■

Ruth Wiedenmann Named 2021 LEA Distinguished Lutheran Elementary Teacher

Ruth Wiedenmann was selected to receive Lutheran Education Association's 2021 Distinguished Lutheran Elementary Teacher Award. Ms. Wiedenmann, a 45-year veteran of Lutheran education, teaches fourth grade at **St. Luke's/Oviedo, FL**. St. Luke's is a member of the SELC District — one of the 35 districts of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). It is one of the Synod's two non-geographical districts, along with the English District, and has its origins in the congregations

of the former Slovak Evangelical Lutheran Church, which merged with the LCMS in 1971.

Wiedenmann also directs the hand bell ministry of the church and school and serves as an organist and developer of the school's Advent services. In addition to serving other positions at St. Luke's, she has served Lutheran schools in Texas and Illinois. Wiedenmann earned a B.A. in elementary education and church music from Concordia University Chicago, IL. She has been honored with the Outstanding Lutheran

Educator Award from the LCMS Florida-Georgia District and the Good Samaritan Award from Lutheran Services Florida.

"Choosing the Distinguished Teacher Award is an objective process," explains Dr. Jonathan Laabs, Executive Director for LEA. "Ruth checks all the boxes in so many ways. Nearly her entire ministry has been at St. Luke's/Oviedo, FL but it's important to note that she served two terms on our LEA Board of Directors as well as being intimately involved in our accreditation process. Her work reaches far beyond the classroom or her personal congregation. She exemplifies faithfulness and humbleness."

In initiating Ruth's nomination, one administrator provided a comprehensive case for Ruth. He said, "Ruth is a Lutheran educator of remarkable faith, enduring passion, and a tremendous heart for service to children and families of all kinds. She is known for her generosity and sacrifice; it's routine for staff, church members, or parents to receive a fresh-baked pie or gift card with a kind, handwritten note. She also serves the school and church ably

outside the classroom through her musical gifts. Ruth has been active in the school accreditation process as a team leader and commission member."

The Rev. Wally Arp, Ruth's pastor, commented, "Ruth, like her biblical namesake, is a faithful, committed, self-giving servant of the Lord. Her creativity has blessed St. Luke's church and school in more ways than I can count. Her Christian

love and generosity has blessed me personally with unique gifts and words of encouragement over and over again. What a joy it is to call Ruth a fellow-follower of Jesus, a friend, and a co-worker in the kingdom of God."

When asked about her achievements in the teaching ministry, Ruth said, "Some of my greatest joys in working with students come from watching the Lord develop their servant hearts and love for others." Ruth's personal mission statement is based on Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." She commented, "When you are rooted in Christ, He is constantly changing and empowering you for new avenues of service." ■



Concordia Sem's Multiethnic Symposium Set for May 4–5

Registration is now open for Concordia Seminary, St. Louis' online 2021 Multiethnic Symposium, set for May 4–5. The symposium brings together missional leaders including pastors, congregational lay leaders and others from across the LCMS. The symposium explores what it means and what it will take to become a truly multiethnic church.

The theme of this year's symposium is "The Rest and the West: What the West Can Learn from Global South Christianity" with a focus on how Global South customs can contribute to practices such as preaching, teaching, worship, arts, evangelism and social engagement.

"Like the rest of Christianity, the fastest growing Lutheran churches are now in the Global South," said Dr. Leopoldo A. Sánchez M., interim Multiethnic Symposium chairman and the Werner R.H. Krause and Elizabeth Ringger Krause Professor of Hispanic Ministries at Concordia Seminary. "Through migration and birth rates, the people of the Global South and their children also are in our communities and churches in the United States. What can we in the West learn from the rest? We are so excited to explore this question in our Multiethnic Symposium."

Factors like unprecedented global migration and increasing birth rates have

made the documented growth of Global South Christianity not only a distant reality there but also a present-day reality in the United States. What can the church in the modern West, preoccupied with the rise of cultural realities such as secularism and nihilism, learn from the church in the Global South?

The symposium will gather a group of voices, including prominent scholars and practitioners from the Global South, to reflect on these questions. For more information, visit csl.edu/multiethnic or contact Continuing Education at 314-505-7286 or ce@csl.edu. ■

Believe it or not, I could have used a longer Lent this year. There were some sins going on in and around me that I needed to see more clearly. I am referring to some of the Racial Reckoning matters that have been swirling around us. So thank God for Easter Optometry. There are sins I still can and need to see. There is Easter's promise that the blinders are off as we behold and embrace all in God's family.

Easter Optometry!

I often refer to myself — only half-jokingly — as the ultimate “*North American White Guy*.” That is wired into my DNA. It is hard for someone like me to do much reckoning on matters of race because I can get so shameful and trite and judgmental and self-righteous all at the same time. The issue is so multi-faceted. The problem so pervasive. The sin so personal and systemic. The congregations I have served in 42 years of parish ministry — while reasonably diverse by LCMS standards — were never genuinely reflective of the diverse communities around us. I assumed that was just the way it was. I am disappointed I was okay with that.

The Rev. Peter Marty is a dedicated bicyclist. He recently wrote about white privilege from the perspective of a bike rider. When you are riding with the wind at your back, you are able to pedal with a good push helping you along. It is just easier. Only when you turn into the wind are you mindful of the resistance of the headwind. Pedaling becomes more difficult. Only then do you realize how much assistance the tailwind was offering.

White privilege is like that. It tends to be something one is not mindful of. It is a kind of life-long tailwind. If you are white (and we could add male, middle-class, college educated) like most of us reading this article, we have existed with a pretty good tailwind helping us along. There have usually been good schools, good jobs, good health care, good housing, etc.

White privilege does not mean life is never challenging and difficult. It does mean the color of one's skin is not one of the things

making it challenging and difficult.

Thank God for Easter! Confession and Absolution are not just for Lent! In the Easter Light of the empty tomb, we can let the Law do its diagnostic work of showing us our sin, the privileges we have just assumed, the evil we have done and the evil done on our behalf. We can confess all that is wrong because Christ has stepped into this world and taken all that is wrong, broken and sinful into His great heart of love. Reconciled to Him through His death and resurrection we can be reconcilers. We can confess attitudes and prejudices (pre-judgments) that need to die. We can repent for

living racially unaware lives and learn from our siblings of color in the Body of Christ. We can let go of our comfort and contentment at living

in racial denial and come out into The Light, Christ's Light, with some “Easter Optometry” where God shows no partiality (Acts 10:34) and is breaking down dividing walls of hostility. (Eph. 2:14).

At last fall's FG District President's Equip Conference,

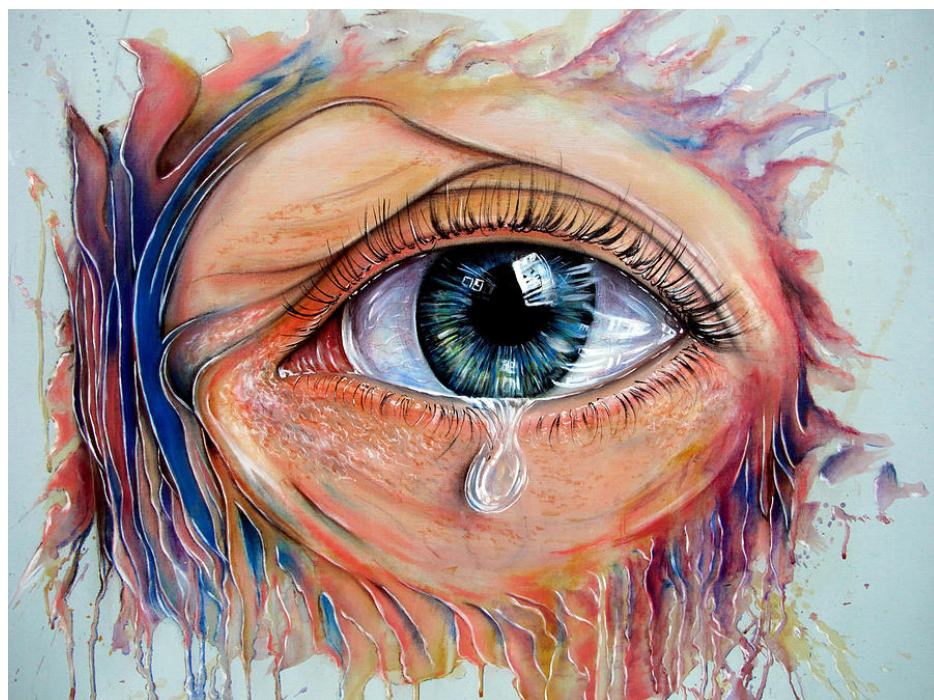
David Kinnaman said, “If you care about the next generation of Christians, you have to care about race.” His counsel: The white church



by Tim Hartner
Pastor Emeritus
St Paul Lutheran Church
Weston, FL
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needs to learn... to be discerning... to read widely... pray faithfully... think deeply... repent sincerely... act justly... and we could add: see clearly!

I am ready for some Easter Optometry. How about you? ■



ARE YOU READY FOR SOME EASTER OPTOMETRY?

Mark Brink is Lutheran Education

Mark Brink was selected by Lutheran Education Association's Board of Directors to receive the organization's top honor — the Christus Magister Award. Since 1965, this most prestigious LEA award has been presented to Lutheran educators who have made significant contributions to Lutheran education.

Brink is Executive Director for School and Youth Ministries in the Florida-Georgia District LCMS. He previously served as a teacher and principal in Lutheran schools in Illinois, Florida, and Georgia. Mark has also served in a variety of capacities working with youth, older adults, athletics, Sunday school, social ministry, and family ministry. He did his undergraduate work at Concordia College, River Forest, IL (now Concordia University Chicago) and received his master's degree in administration from Nova Southeastern University, Davie, FL.

When asked about his greatest joys in ministry, Mark said "Working with a great team and celebrating their accomplishments with them is awesome. God has blessed the Church with so much incredible talent to accomplish His mission, and I love giving people the opportunity to use their talent to His glory and for the benefit of people He places in their path."

Of the many leadership challenges that Mark faces, he said, "My greatest challenge is establishing relationships with new workers and lay leaders, as well as maintaining and nurturing established relationships. As the months go by and we adapt to an unsettled new rhythm, it has become even more difficult." Mark's personal mission statement is "Partnering with God's people to be and do."

According to Dr. Jonathan Laabs, Executive Director for LEA, the nominating process recognizes variety of areas in Lutheran education. "The process looks at a variety of levels for serving

— with a broad reach into not just service within a school but churchwide . . . reaching into communities while exemplifying what Lutheran education is all about: Mission. Outreach. Classroom. The selection committee saw all of these characteristics in Mark."

"Having known and worked with Mark Brink in a variety of capacities since 1987, I can validate what a



Greg Walton

wonderful choice the LEA made in him for the Christus Magister Award," emphasized President Rev. Dr. Greg Walton.

"Having him as a teammate on the District Staff has been an honor and privilege. He is thoughtful and wise, with a servant's heart and a great sense of humor. He deeply cares about his ministry, and those he ministers to. As Mark prepares for retirement in July it will leave a huge void to be filled in the FLGA District — and across the LCMS. Like his predecessors, Ben Eggers and Rick Herman, Mark's legacy of faith and ministry will continue to shine into the future."



Mark Brink & Lynda Voss

"I have been privileged to work with Mark for more than 20 years," said Lynda Voss, Brink's administrative assistant at the FLGA District Office, "and I can easily say that he is the kindest, fairest, and most gracious leader I've ever worked with. The easiest way to describe him is he loves the Lord, and in all circumstances tries to follow Jesus' servant

example whenever possible.

Many times, I've heard him remain calm and understanding as he eases the tension of a situation where a parent in one of our schools feels that their teacher or principal was not doing enough to understand their child. He has an amazing way to help the parent rethink the situation and helps reshape that parent's opinion by seeing things from the other side.

Mark is well-respected throughout the LCMS, the FLGA District, his local church, neighborhood, and especially his family. He served as a Confirmation teacher when my youngest son and his youngest son were of Confirmation age, and we all know how trying 8th grade students can be. We have had very few controversial situations, and I feel blessed to have worked with a person of this caliber for all these years. Congratulations, Boss!"



Leslie Duda Schnake

"Webster's dictionary definition of a principal is: one who holds a post of presiding rank especially the head of an elementary

school. It also says that principal is: first, highest, foremost in rank, chief. The first time I met Mark Brink face to face was at Faith/Marietta, GA," explains Leslie Duda Schnake. "Mark was my new principal and I was his new second grade teacher. Not only was I feeling the pressure of meeting my "chief," but I was also feeling the pressure of meeting a parent!"

"Mark's son Andrew would be a student in my class. Fortunately for me, that meeting began a lifelong friendship based on respect and admiration. Mark Brink has that rare ability to listen intently, respond thoughtfully and act intelligently. This ability formed the foundation of his humble and competent leadership style. He was able to calmly and effectively face the myriad of issues presented to him on a daily basis. I can still hear Mark responding to my teaching "emergencies"



Jon Laabs

Association's 2021 Christus Magister

with a calm “is that right?”.

Mark's capable leadership also served him well in his next position as Executive Director for Schools in the Florida-Georgia District. It comes as no surprise to me that LEA has chosen Mark Brink to receive the prestigious 2021 Christus Magister Award. Mark's accomplished career of ministry and service to the LCMS has been one of our churches greatest blessings! Mark, your reaction to all of this praise may be a calm, “is that right?”. The answer is a resounding: yes it is! Congratulations friend!”



Tom Zehnder

“Mark became our District Educational Point Man in 1993. What a Gift of and from our Lord!” stated District President Emeritus Rev. Dr. Thomas Zehnder. “Mark always listened with the kind of ears the Prophet Isaiah spoke of: the kind of ears that listened and understood. Never judgmental, Mark's heart was attuned to that of the Lord he served.

“His quiet, clever humor, and sympathetic manner helped to create a gentle, interesting, and always welcoming atmosphere in our District Office. Mark is one of the great educational leaders in our Missouri Synod and his recognition from LEA, the prestigious Christus Magister award, is well placed. Our lives, personally and professionally are enriched by good friend and colleague, Mark Brink!”



Rick Herman

“I am so pleased that Mark has been honored as this year's recipient of LEA's Christus Magister Award. He joins a long list of outstanding Christian educators and this honor is so well deserved. Mark has dedicated his career to serving

students, teachers and other church leaders. He is highly respected by Lutheran educators throughout the country for his wise, steady and caring approach to ministry. Mark is a great friend and I'm so happy for him,” reported Richard Herman, former FLGA Executive Director for Parish Services and President Emeritus of Wheat Ridge Ministries.

“It was always likely that I'd become an educator with so much teacher blood in me,” offered Joshua Brink, Mark and Mary Beth's son.



Joshua Brink

“With parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins in the profession, I'm not sure I could choose just one as my inspiration to join in on the fun of teaching. However, once I made the leap into the classroom, I could, without hesitation, point to the one man who has pushed me to be the best educator that I could be.

“There is no doubt that my father was called to be a teacher and a leader in the educational community. His love and joy for his work is apparent to everyone he meets. He was also called to be a dad as well . . . and his love and joy

for this work is even more apparent to me (and probably everyone he meets as well!). Fortunately for me, I have been the recipient of that love and joy through BOTH callings. It's not always easy to tell which hat he is wearing when we chat about work stuff, but my dad continually leads me to grow in my own calling and to push the limits of my own potential. He takes a genuine interest in the work I do, both as an education executive and as a father. And not only does he guide me in my own work, he also values my insights as a young teacher in a 21st century classroom. He has a unique way of imparting so much wisdom through valuing the wisdom of others.

“He has told me on multiple occasions that he does not see himself as an educator anymore — that he is so far removed from the classroom to hold that title. I'm sure Jesus himself laughed each time he said that. He is the model of who I strive to be every day when I stand in front of my students. And it's not just his model as a teacher and principal, but as a leader and man of God.

“I am so proud of my father for pushing the limits of his potential and modeling for his son (and his grandson) what it's like to respond to God's calling and to shine Jesus' light in everything he does. Congratulations dad!”



Mark and his wife, Mary Beth Brink



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“Retirement Plan: Part B” Leads to Life at Lutheran Haven

The vision and plan I had in 2014 when I retired from the FLGA District Office is far different from the reality of the retirement life that I’m living now. A downsize to a smaller home, a drastic change in my health, and a divorce required a new plan for my retirement future which I call “Retirement Plan: Part B” or “My New Life at the Lutheran Haven.”

Among my special needs was a place where I could live within a secure support system of caring Christian neighbors, a controlled housing cost that would fit my



Natives of Cumberland, Maryland, Dave Weidner, JoAnn (Smith) Torbet, and Bill Torbet share their high school yearbooks with each other. The Torbets are the parents of former FLGA District Financial Director Kim Mason.



by David Weidner
Retired Congregational
Services Director
Florida-Georgia District
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budget, access to health care including rehab, strength training, and recreational activities. In addition, I was looking for a large array of fellowship activities through which I could build a new community of friends and acquaintances. I found all of these things — and more — at Lutheran Haven.

I can’t emphasize enough the advantage of living in a Lutheran community and receiving the benefits of the many ministries at **St. Luke’s Lutheran Church and School/Oviedo, FL** which is right next door to “The Haven.” Pastor Wally Arp and the staff do a tremendous job of providing outstanding worship opportunities as well as Bible studies and pastoral care. The congregation is exceptionally caring and very mission focused.

I have been truly blessed in making my home here. It’s been great to reconnect with so many retired Lutheran church workers with whom I was blessed to work during my ministry career. That group includes Rev. David Ludwig, Sr. whom I first met as an 18-year-old camp counselor in 1970 to Rev. Lyle Muller who was my

boss when I served at The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod headquarters in St. Louis as Director of the National Youth Gathering. Interspersed in the group is Rev. Gerald Seaman, former Director of Missions for the FLGA District, and former district presidents: Rev. Bob Kuhn, Rev. Oswald Lehenbauer, Rev. Roy Maack, and Rev. Tom Zehnder all of whom are neighbors and good friends.

A number of Lutheran lay people have also retired here including my new friends Bill and JoAnn Torbet, a couple from my hometown of Cumberland, MD. We share common memories of our younger days in that town, but give thanks for the great life we live at the Haven.

Merriam/Webster defines “Haven” as a harbor or port; a place of safety or refuge; a place offering favorable opportunities or conditions. The Lutheran Haven is all of that and more. Knowing that my future is secure and guaranteed as my needs change from independent living to assisted living to nursing home care is very comforting to me. I know that no matter what, I have a home in the Lutheran Haven until the Lord calls me home. That brings me great peace. ■

At right, Dave Weidner shares a humorous story of playing volleyball against Rev. David Ludwig, Sr. In the summer of 1970 when he worked on the staff at Camp Pioneer in Angola, NY and Ludwig served as the leader of the Michigan Confirmants’ Retreat at the camp. Front Row, L to R: Rev Lyle Muller, retired Synodical Executive; President Emeritus Rev. Dr. Osmar Lehenbauer, [New England District]; Weidner. Back Row, L to R: President Emeritus Rev. Dr. Thomas Zehnder [Florida-Georgia District]; President Emeritus Rev. Dr. Roy Mack, [Southeastern District]; President Emeritus Rev. Robert Kuhn [LCMS Synod]; Rev. David Ludwig, Sr., retired Prince of Peace/Orlando, FL; Mr. Gerald Seaman, retired FLGA District Mission Executive.





A Tale of Two Churches

There are two Lutheran churches in town, St. John and St. Paul.

On the outside it seems that they are both pretty much the same. They both have a nice pastor and a nice sermon and worship services that are on the more traditional side. But they are two very different churches. Even at this stage with the pandemic, St. John seems to have a sense of life and optimism while St. Paul seems a bit discouraged.

Both churches are concerned about getting people back in worship. It has been a problem for all churches, or so it seems. The members in the core have returned (mostly) while others are returning more slowly and some not at all. This is not an unusual problem.

St. Paul is talking about it amongst themselves and it is obvious that they feel one way about "those of us who are back to 'faithful' worship" and another way about "those who are not obeying God." Some have noticed that the offering plate is less full because of it. They talk about it in Bible class and in the narthex and by the coffee pot on Sunday morning. They quote verses like, "Let us not give up meeting together as some have a habit of doing" from HEBREWS 10:25. Others quote the third commandment, "remember the Sabbath day." Meanwhile attendance is unchanged.

The pastor and people at St. John are talking about it differently.

One day the pastor began to ask the people "how can we be the church to those who aren't here yet?" That sparked a lot of conversation. They knew they had less opportunities to meet people at church in person. The chit chat before church just wasn't possible in the pandemic and they even went without communion for a while. Some people don't have e-mail or cell phones or even internet to watch the services. So what could they do?

Then someone, it was probably Margaret, a wise mature Christian who said, "we still have the Word of God and prayer." That got people thinking. If folks won't or can't come because of fear or transportation or even internet challenges, then we can certainly go to them. "How?" Edward asked. "We can call them on the telephone" Sherry said. "Who do we call?" Asked Donna. "Well, we've got maybe 45 households that have not returned to church." Said the pastor. "We can call them and just check in on them, not to guilt them to come back! But to love them." "We can do it every week," said Jim. "I do that with a couple families as it is now," said Lois. The others clapped!

Everyone agreed that they would be happy to just call and say hello. The pastor helped with a little orientation on how to do it. They didn't want to twist anyone's arms but just to call and

genuinely say hello. They offered to share a Bible verse from the lessons that pastor would pick out and ask if they had any prayer requests.

As the weeks went on, you wouldn't believe the friendships that were renewed and how people appreciated the calls. A couple asked them to stop but most really appreciated it. They got to talking about their families and over time, their cares and concerns. The callers assured them of confidentiality and would ask permission to share the prayer request. Many callers would even say a simple prayer before they hung up. All callers would ask on their next call how God was answering their prayers. You wouldn't believe the amazing stories people told about how God was showing up.

As weeks turned into months, "call-ers" turned into "pray-ers." Those prayed for came closer to Jesus and became worshippers. Those stories shared were retold from the lectern at church from the people who experienced God's love in answering prayer. Those 45 households turned into 130 as people



by Scott Gress
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began to include others from their circle of relationships who were alone or were far from God. God's Word was at work and His people were praying!

St. Paul is a good church with good people, but they are still struggling. St. John Lutheran church on the other hand is filled with life and optimism all because they asked and answered the question, "how can we be the church to those who aren't here yet?"

How will you answer the question? ■

Contact Scott if you are interested in him working with you or your church. A free 30 minutes sample session is available to explore what might work best. Rev. Scott Gress is called by Lutheran Counseling Services as an independent contractor in the areas of leadership training, consulting and coaching. The Coaching Leader Podcast is also available on iTunes and his YouTube page. You can contact Scott through email scottgress@me.com or his blog page scottgress.com or at 561-542-4472.

Be a Summertime Missionary!

Over the years, I've had conversations with pastors who are frustrated when their members "disappear" during the summer months. These members may spend Sundays at the beach, head up north to another climate or just be "on vacation," or maybe spend summertime with their kids who

to be an extension of the Body of Christ wherever they are.

The challenge for pastors and leaders is to help every Christian person be intentional about seeing themselves as church. That means pastors and leaders need to equip them with resources that can be used or adapted in various situations. Use Bible Classes and Sunday school classes and VBS — whether in person or digital — to help them understand their missionary vocation and to share stories and practical helps. Devotional

tools, activities, spiritual discussion starters, and Bible studies are some of the resources that could be shared for use by your missionary force. Weekly e-mails or text messages could encourage and bless them as they go. Don't discontinue your online presence. Look for ways to actually increase engagement. Share the Word you use in church on Sunday with a few appropriate application or action points. Suggest resources. Offer a prayer. Text a Bible verse. These media could also be means for everyday missionaries to share their stories of God at work with their pastor or church staff.

Summer is great time to consider God's creativity as we travel and relax. Summertime can be a time for us in the church and on the road to be intentionally creative too! Rather than make church members feel guilty and ashamed because they are not attending church, make them aware of who and Whose they are, and their missional calling as The Baptized. Summer provides us with a great opportunity to disciple them as disciple-makers "as they are going." Then send them as summer missionaries!

If you are "just a lay person," replace the "just" with "Called!" Your baptism is your Call to the

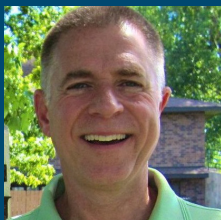
mission field — at work, in the neighborhood, at the beach, while traveling, at the ball field. You are called as an everyday missionary whose vocation is to make disciples as you live for and share Jesus. That's true in summertime, and all the time!

As people are vaccinated, and things "open up," we may find ourselves getting "back to normal" in terms of everyday living. Let's continually look for ways that our lives as disciples and disciple-makers are "not normal," but are focused on outreach wherever we are. Here are some resources to consider:

- Servant Evangelism Ideas. (Note that these are pre-covid, and will likely need modifications for your context!) - <https://www.stevesjogren.com/94-servant-evangelism-ideas-for-your-church/>

- Help your members create a personal testimony or faith story. Remember that your story is the story of God's work in your life. While many of us Lutherans were baptized as infants and were always a Child of God, what are some of the events in your life that caused you to realize how important your faith and relationship with Jesus really is? Here are some helps to preparing your story: <https://www.navigators.org/resource/how-to-prepare-your-personal-testimony/>

- Florida Georgia District's Miracle Grow Initiative – (<https://flgadistrict.org/miraclegrow/>) Miracle Grow will gather stories of what God is doing through our congregations and schools, and share them. To accomplish this, Miracle Grow will offer a seed investment of \$300 to congregations and schools who engage in and share their outreach and mission activity stories, pictures, and videos. The goal is that the people of the FLGA District will learn, share ideas and concrete examples and celebrate God's mission of connecting people to Jesus. ■



by Peter Meier
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play in summer ball leagues.

Conversely, I've had conversations with lay members who are frustrated that their pastors seem to scold them in sermons or announcements because they spend summers at the beach, at their lake home, or take vacations or spend family time with their kids who play in summer ball leagues.

Of course, COVID has only highlighted our frustrations. We may not yet have members attending "in-person," or people are coming back slowly. We wonder if they will ever return. As a pastor, I admit that I got frustrated too. Now that I'm in the pew, I am still frustrated. Let me suggest a simple way to beat the frustration — and best of all, to send more missionaries into more places to connect with more people.

Rather than see church members as absent from church on Sundays, why not intentionally help them to see themselves as church every day? Why not equip, bless and send them as everyday missionaries who are mobilized and deployed on mission "as they are going" (MATTHEW 28:19). Whether going to the beach, or the lake, on a summer trip, or playing summer ball, each family member has the opportunity to be on mission,

FLORIDA GEORGIA

Out and About in the District

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Students from **Redeemer/ Stuart, FL** presented "Jungle Book" on March 5th both virtually and to a small audience. Students in grades K-8 enjoyed sharing their God given talents with others. In photo at right, the cast would participate in a prayer circle before each performance. In photo below, school students made more than 150 goodie bags to distribute at the congregation's soup kitchen.



Congregation's vicar leads annual event

3rd Annual Loved & Sent Event for Winter Haven Members

On a Saturday in February, 2021, **Grace/Winter Haven, FL** held its 3rd annual Loved & Sent servant event. As in the past two years, this year's event was organized and led by the congregation's vicar.

More than 50 members under the leadership of Vicar Michael Duffy gathered together to serve seven local organizations: Meals on Wheels, The Mission, Anchor House Ministries, Life Choice Pregnancy Center, Public Education Partnership, The Haley Center and Heart for Winter Haven.

Even though things were a little different this year due to COVID-19, members served with glad hearts and all participants were blessed through this event.

On Saturday February 13 & Sunday February 14, members of the Women's Ministry held an All-Chocolate Bake sale. Everything was made and baked on church premises using the utmost care to comply with COVID regulations. All proceeds from this event will be used to help local, national and international missions, including supporting two seminary students currently attending Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, MO. ■



Vicar Michael Duffy (with pitch fork) and some of the Grace/Winter Haven, FL volunteers working at Anchor House.





Pastor Steve Carretto of **St. Paul/Boca Raton, FL** has been busy with school family baptisms lately. Some have been in the more traditional style inside the sanctuary while others have taken place out in the congregation's prayer and memorial garden under the Jesus — Good Shepherd statue (above) as well as on the Boca Raton beach (lower left) and in one of the seaside parks (lower right).





Boca Raton Congregation Participates in "Shine Thru"

Perhaps the "first-ever" digital prom took place Friday, February 12, 2021 among the many participating congregations of the Tim Tebow Foundation. **Night to Shine** is an unforgettable prom night experience, centered on God's love, for people with special needs ages 14 and older. This is the seventh anniversary as hundreds of thousands volunteers and guests come together from all over the world to honor and serve those with disabilities.

"Things looked a little different this year!" said Pastor Steve Carretto, **St. Paul/Boca Raton, FL**. "But one thing that hasn't changed — we couldn't wait to love and honor those in our community with special needs on our favorite night of the year."

According to Carretto some of the traditional activities — like hair and makeup styling for the ladies and shoe-shines for the gentlemen — were scrapped as was the lavish banquet and prom dance in the congregation's Family Life Center. "In light of the ever-changing nature of the global COVID-19 pandemic — and for the concern and safety of our honored guests — this year we had a 'virtual' experience where our prom participants stayed in their cars and circled our campus as the 'paparazzi' waved posters and signs, took photos and provided them with a 'take home' meal courtesy of Chick-fil-A. And while we were slightly disappointed the event had to be pared down, we continue to be enthusiastic and committed to creating an unforgettable virtual experience for every honored guest of Night to Shine!"

Guests still received flowers and boutonnieres, their "kings" and "queens" crowns. Replacing the participation of a live D.J. and dance music, St. Paul's praise team under the direction of Keith LeCompte, set up a stage on campus and performed top Christian hits. The music attracted some neighbors who walked over with lawn chairs to watch all the prom action. ■



' During COVID-19 — Tim Tebow Foundation Special Needs Prom



The Night To Shine Leadership Team from St. Paul was comprised of (from left) Sue Merritt, John Gaier, Susan Franskousky and Pastor Steve Carretto.



Above — Keith LeCompte (second from left), St Paul/Boca Raton, FL's worship arts leader, put together an outdoor band comprised of members of the congregation's praise team. They played a variety of contemporary Christian rock familiar to both the volunteers and guests. Many guests gave applause and "thumbs up" signs to the group as they passed by. Left — Volunteers greeting guests at the campus entry point. Below — Traditionally the "men in black" are in tuxedos, but with COVID-19 restrictions moving the prom outside, the guys stuck to white shirts and black pants. All volunteers were masked throughout the evening but removed masks for the pictures.



Lutheran Haven/Oviedo, FL ladies have made a record number of quilts during the pandemic — all to benefit Lutheran World Relief. During the past year they made a whopping 132 quilts! While many organizations were forced to back off, or eliminated their various efforts completely during COVID-19, these ladies did not. They found ways to do some of the work at home and only gathered safely when necessary. Diane Kimball recounts, “Our ladies at Lutheran Haven met and talked about what our strategy would be for getting quilts made during the pandemic. Everyone agreed that NOT quilting was an option. We reached the goal of 100 quilts in 2019 and were hoping we could get that many in 2020, all while keeping the safety restrictions that COVID-19 placed upon us. As it turned out, the Lord guided each of our ladies so faithfully each week to continue the work that we all loved. Some met in the Haven quilt room in the mornings, some in the afternoons, and some worked at home. None of our quilting ladies wanted to give up doing the work that could help tell the people who would

receive the quilts that God loves them dearly and is there for them! At the end of the year, we finished and delivered 132 quilts! We rejoice that they are on their way to help people around the world. To God be the glory!” These quilts go to 23 countries around the world and are given to people facing natural disasters, people without shelter, poverty stricken individuals who are at an increased risk of COVID-19, refugees fleeing unsafe countries, as well as many others who lack basic shelter and heat in often frigid conditions. They are indeed gifts of warmth, hope, and especially love. We are so proud of our Lutheran Haven ladies for their diligence, resourcefulness and gifts of love for those in desperate need amid the challenges and uncertainties of our present world. A global pandemic, war, poverty and disaster haven’t dimmed the hearts of the women of Lutheran Haven, it just opened them to shine even brighter! We are so proud of all of you, and honored you are a part of the loving, Christ centered community of Lutheran Haven! ■



Approximately 60 people were in attendance and musically blessed on Sunday afternoon, February 28 at **Amazing Grace/Oxford, FL** during a fun and interactive celebration of the congregation’s new three-manual Rogers Organ. Organist Ruth Bremer worked tirelessly in preparation — and expressed her joy in finally having an oboe (as an orchestral stop within the organ) in worship, a desire of hers in all of her years in different congregations around the country. The music presented ranged from Bach to Franck to contemporary composers for the church, such as Behnke, Blerch and Ore. Ruth Bremer was synodically trained at Concordia/Seward, NE, where she met her husband, Jerry. ■



For the 11th Year in a row, **Christ /Perry, GA's** youth had a Winter Ski Retreat in North Carolina. The youth stay overnight at Our Savior/Clyde, NC. The theme of this year's retreat was "What is Truth?"; based on Herod's question to Jesus. Besides Bible Study and devotions, the youth spend a day skiing at Cataloochee Ski Area in Maggie Valley, NC and also visit Smoky Mountain National Park. ■■



In February, **Christ /Perry, GA's** youth provided a sit-down Valentine Dinner along with entertainment for the congregation. This year, due to COVID-19 restrictions, the youth put together a plan to provide an elegant "to-go" box Valentine Dinner. Those choosing to receive the free-will offering dinner had a choice of two main entrees, plus sides, salad and two elegant desserts. The meal also came with chocolates, flowers, and a bottle of sparkling grape juice. The youth also delivered meals to shut-ins who might be unable to pick them up. Approximately 90 meals were ordered and served. One single resident wrote, "Thank you youth, for showing your love to me, on Valentine's Day." ■■



The ladies at **Christ /Perry, GA** have been making quilts for some time. Most recently, they were able to provide quilts for residents of Crossroads Apartments in Perry, who had lost most of their belongings due to an apartment fire. They have also supplied quilts for CORE Healthcare for Women in Warner Robins, GA the congregation's pro-life crisis pregnancy center. Many of the supplies needed for quilting have been graciously provided with Thrivent Action Grants. Manit Peterson leads the congregation's quilting group. ■■



Several District Congregations Take Part in Miracle Grow “Seed Sowers” Program

The program is designed gather stories of what God is doing through our congregations and schools, and share them. To accomplish this, Miracle Grow will offer a seed investment of \$300 to congregations and schools who engage in and share their outreach and mission activity stories, pictures, and videos. The goal is that the people of the FLGA District will learn, share ideas and concrete examples and celebrate God’s mission of connecting people to Jesus.



Last November **St. Peter/Dahlonega, GA** initiated plans to enter a float in the town’s annual Christmas Parade. “In 2019 there were no Christian floats,” offered Pastor Gerhard Michael. “We thought this might be a way to reach out to people with the good news of Jesus’ birth.

“Our members planned and built the float entitled ‘Follow Us To Bethlehem.’ It had sheep with children dressed as shepherds who rode on it leading

the way to the manger with Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus. Members also walked alongside greeting the community and wishing everyone a ‘Merry Christmas!’

According to Pastor Michael, St. Peter won first place. This pandemic has devastated collective gatherings for worship and fellowship — and the success of their float has lifted the spirits of both their members and the community at large. ■

Amazing Grace/Oxford, FL provided a pizza party to students at the nearby Wildwood Elementary School. These students are part of Wildwood’s Accelerated Reading Program. “The students were treated to a pizza party,” explained Pastor James Rockey (in left photo and at right with the volunteers). “The top 10 highest scoring students in each grade were given an award book containing a message of encouragement and congratulations from Amazing Grace Lutheran Church. Volunteers from Grace helped the children select their free books and served the pizza and juice boxes.” The photo at right is the Amazing Grace team of volunteers that coordinated the event. ■





First Kingdom Seeds Grant Recipient: Miramar Learning Center

Miramar Learning Center/ Miramar FL was the first recipient of a Kingdom Seeds Grant. Sonrisa Howey, who began the Learning Center shares this story. "A little history on how we came to be... At the end of the 2019-2020 school year, I began to feel out of place in the school where I had been teaching," she offers. "I had been there for eight years and I wanted to continue teaching — but not in a school and was unsure what it should look like with the unknown of COVID-19."

"I started looking for a place that would be interested in helping me piece together this new idea I had of blending e-learning and tutoring. Miramar Lutheran Church caught my eye. The congregation was struggling to find its place in a changing community and I felt connected to them because I, too, was trying to find *my new place*. The facilities were there, but they needed work to get up and running properly."

According to Howey, the Miracle Grow grant helped. They were able to clean up the room, purchase school supplies and materials and advertise to the community. Within the first week of opening they experienced several parents eager for help. "They came to me with concerns of their kids falling behind this school year with everything being virtual," she

explains. "One of my students, Levi, came to me in third grade with a second grade reading level. His mother was concerned he would score low on the winter testing and have to repeat the school year. I worked with him every day for five weeks and was able to improve

me for the huge improvement her son was able to make.

Another first-grade student, Israel, came not knowing his sight words. These are commonly used words that young children are encouraged to memorize as a whole by sight, so that they

can automatically recognize these words in print without having to use any strategies to decode. Israel had also had missing assignments dating all the way back to the start of the school year and was failing. His mother was frantic and in need of help. Within two weeks he caught up on his assignments and was back on track.

"I would really love to grow the tutoring service over the summer as a learning enrichment program," she concludes, "which could then transition back to 'after school tutoring.' Most recently, we hosted an event for St. Nicholas day to connect our school and church. I intend to host more events this upcoming year. I hope these events can bridge the gap between church and school and form a sense of community. My goal with the tutoring program is to not only



Sonrisa Howey

his reading scores. His mother came to me after receiving the test scores with so much joy and gratitude. She couldn't stop thanking

help kids excel in their education, but to introduce them to God and help grow our church family."

Former District Vicar Is Recruitment Ambassador for Concordia Seminary

Wondering what seminary life could be like as a student? Rev. Noah Kegley — a former vicar in the FLGA District — is a Student Recruitment Ambassador for Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, MO. He shares some insight from his own time at



seminary for prospective students — thinking this might be the path they may wish to explore.

"Seminary will challenge you intellectually

and shape your mind to engage the mission field for the 21st century ministry. You also will meet friends in ministry who will walk by your side for the rest of your life," Kegley emphasizes.

Prospective students interested in Concordia Seminary, programs and the admissions process can visit the website at csl.edu/visit.

Waynick Receives Lifetime Achievement Award for Chaplaincy

The Rev. Thomas C. Waynick received the Order of Martin of Tours Award from the United States Army Chief of Chaplains, CH (MG) Thomas Solhjem. Solhjem stated that this was given to Waynick for his 35 years in the United States Army Chaplaincy, as well as the work he continues to do in his retirement.

CH Solhjem commented on the mission of the Pastoral Institute in providing ministry and care for Soldiers and their Families. "It is my great privilege and honor to continue to serve our nation's warriors in this capacity!" exclaimed Pastor Waynick.



Weston Holds Free Car Wash for Community

"We washed for 3 hours this year... our goal was 100 cars — we got to 88! Made a little more than \$3,000.00.

Not bad for a little Saturday morning work!" exclaimed Jeremy Becker (far right) with Team **St. Paul/Weston, FL.**



The Lutheran Church of Providence/Deltona, FL reports that their quilt group just completed their second year of Quilts for World Relief. "Even with the challenges that Covid-19 presented, we worked on the quilts from home and church when it was permissible," reports Sandie Wylie. "Four members completed 70 quilts! Our goal this year was 100 but we were limited in number because of the pandemic. I pray next year with God's help we will complete our goal. I ask God's Blessing as we continue to serve this mission."

Charter School Students Have Food Fight to Benefit Miramar Lutheran's Food Pantry



The students at Pembroke Pines Charter Academic Village Middle School are being encouraged to have a FOOD FIGHT! Sounds crazy, right? Students are bringing in canned and non-perishable food items to be donated to the food pantry at **Miramar Lutheran/Miramar, FL**. The children are fighting food insecurity in their community with a fun dose of competition: "In-School Students" verses "At-Home Students."

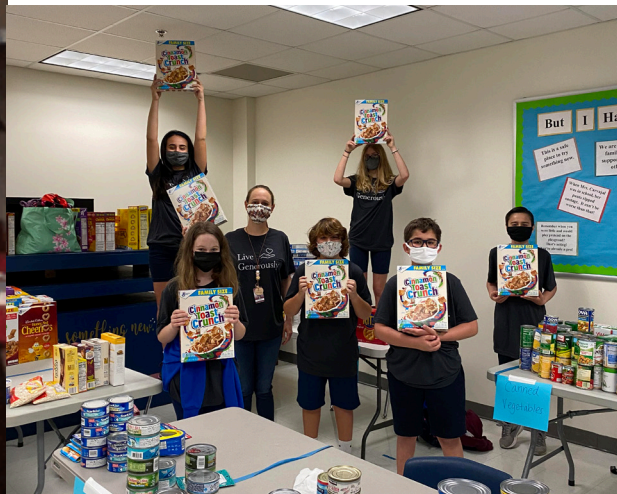
"If the in-school students bring in the most cans, we win a donut party. If the at-home students win, they get a night of no homework. It's not

going to happen! We'll beat them to it!" said Bella Ostendorf, an 8th grader.

Throughout the month of February, the front office has been filling up with cans. The students have been excited about collecting and counting their donations. Deborah Carvajal, the Drama and Leadership teacher at the Academic Village, said "food insecurity in our community is at an all-time high, especially during the pandemic. The Food Fight project not only helps my students understand the causes of poverty, which existed even before Covid-19, but it also teaches them to LIVE GENEROUSLY! We are

collecting cans, but also having larger conversations about how we can create more equitable communities. I believe ending the cycle of poverty starts in the classroom."

"I've learned that even when people work really hard sometimes there just isn't enough money for all the necessities. Having a place to get food can be really helpful for people. The food fight has been a fun way to help out our community" says Mia Martinez, an 8th grade student. "No matter the outcome of the food fight, we learned that we all win when we help our neighbor." ■





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“Mother Teresa of Haiti” Was Term of Endearment for Helen Roenfeldt

I first met Helen Roenfeldt about 20 years ago at a District Convocation in Orlando. My wife, Eileen, and I were there covering activities for *Lutheran Life*. We were introduced by Pastor Darrell Stuehrenberg of Gloria Dei/Davie, FL where Helen had served as that congregation's Discipleship Minister. Gloria Dei was Eileen's and my first Florida church home when we moved here the year we were married. Stuehrenberg had immediately involved us in Gloria Dei's music and youth ministries as well as Lutheran High School — which operated on Gloria Dei's campus.

Stuehrenberg had a gift for marketing and promotion and he eagerly sought us out to help with some of the communications efforts they planned for this new District organization called **Mission:Haiti**. Helen was spearheading this new organization with the purpose of coordinating congregations and individuals to form service teams, develop programs, share the vision and mission, and administer **Mission:Haiti's** day to day activities.

Jump ahead a decade or so and Eileen found herself on Helen's board of directors while I was tapped for logo design and promotion of **Mission:Haiti's** materials including the English and Creole graphic above that was used for one of the District-sponsored Teacher's conferences in Haiti. Eileen was so excited to finally make a Haiti trip with Helen — but Eileen had recently been diagnosed with cancer and as she began chemotherapy **Where** oncologist prohibited her from traveling to such a developing nation with substandard conditions. We prayed about it and together decided she needed to follow her doctor's advice.

Helen had educated us with the challenges in that impoverished country. About 80 percent of the children in orphanages actually have a parent or relative, but the children are either given up or at

times even sold for a small amount of money with the promise that the child will be fed and sent to school in exchange for performing some household chores.

They're given away because the parents or relatives have no means to feed, clothe or educate their children. This frequently leads to the child becoming a slave — what Haitians call a “restavik” and they are abused, trafficked and can even be abandoned should the child fall into poor health. By Haitian law, children in orphanages are to receive three hot meals per day and sent to school but it doesn't always happen when the orphanages become overcrowded, underfunded or poorly supervised. “Even in the best orphanages, many of the children lose a healthy connection with their parents or families and they don't learn healthy family dynamics which leads to the cycle being repeated over and over again — tearing at the very fabric of Haitian society.

Helen's pastor, John Roth of Thrive/Estero, FL, says in the coming weeks the **Mission:Haiti** board will begin discussing a transition plan — re-visioning how best to serve God's kingdom work in Haiti. With the world still in the midst of the COVID-19 **Pandemic**, it will be a while before anyone from the United States can physically visit to continue the work and support of what Helen had launched in 1999. Roth, **In** consultation with President Gregory Walton of the **FL-GA** District, is implementing a scholarship fund in Helen's name for the children of Haiti dedicated to helping fund their education. Please consider

how you may honor her by donating for this cause.

Please, too, continue to pray for the people of Haiti, the pastors, the teachers, the leadership, and our fellow Christians who are in the midst of struggle politically, economically and medically at this time. May God open the door for even more kingdom growth in Haiti through us and others in the coming years. ■



The **LAST**
WORD



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