

LUTHERAN[®] 2020 VISION

Reaching Many in 2020
for Jesus!

LIFE

June/July 2020



LUTHERAN LIFE®

Lutheran Life is the official newsmagazine of the Florida-Georgia District of the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod. The Mission of the Florida-Georgia District is to serve, assist, and encourage congregations in the ministry of Jesus Christ. People of the Florida-Georgia District are equipped, empowered, engaged in the Master's business ... connecting people to Jesus. Lutheran LIFE is designed to inform LCMS church and school members of the activities, personalities and resources offered by the Synod and the District.

Lutheran LIFE may also provide a forum for Lutherans to express their views and ideas on a wide range of topics. Lutheran LIFE is published bimonthly. News items and photos are encouraged. Please send scanned photos as a .jpg attachment rather than embedded in your emails. Or mail your photo print in a good quality resolution to our address below. Advertising is welcome and encouraged; rates and information are available from Lutheran LIFE's office.



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District Calls Accepted

William Murphy accepted Associate Pastor call to
Hope/Bonita Springs, FL

James Weist accepted Pastor call to
Hope/Bradenton, FL

Manfred Poeppel accepted Interim Pastor call to
Shepherd of the Coast/Fort Lauderdale, FL

Kyle Will accepted the Pastor call to
Epiphany/ Lake Worth, FL

Alan Koch accepted Interim Pastor call to
Faith/Merritt Island, FL

John Kyle accepted Associate Pastor call to
Grace/ St. Petersburg, FL

Transferred In from Other Districts

Sheryl Reinisch (C).....Northwest
Pon Chanthaphon (O).....CNH
Luke Beck (C).....South Wisconsin

Ordained/Commissioned Minister Installations

3/4/20 Thomas Eggebrecht at LCEF East Region
3/29/20 Karl Glander at Bethlehem/Fort Myers, FL
4/22/20 Alan Koch at Faith/Merritt Island, FL
5/21/20 Manfred Poeppel at Shepherd of Coast/
Fort Lauderdale, FL

Status Change in the District

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

Called to Glory

3/27/20 Rev. Robert Brown
4/21/20 Rev. Chang Kim
4/26/20 Ms. Esther Barg
5/5/20 Ms. Linda Stoeckel

Emeritus

5/31/20 Gary Faith (O)

Church Changes

4/29/20 Hispanic Lutheran Mission
Tampa, FL Closed

5/14/20 The Gathering Place
Port St. Lucie, FL Closed

CAPSULES

LWML

LWML 2020 Convention Business to be Conducted Virtually

In a called meeting the Executive Committee of the LWML FL-GA District made the decision to conduct the necessary business of the 2020 LWML FL-GA District Convention prior to the 2020 President's Equip Conference in late September. The decision was made due to the uncertainty of what the next few months will bring, but with the knowledge that the important business of selecting mission grants and electing officers must be conducted.

A special convention issue of the district newsletter, the *Evangel*, will be published in June with all the details. The convention information packet will be mailed to all churches and delegates in July; paper ballots will be mailed to all delegates in August. This allows all churches with active LWML units to have two voting delegates without the expense of sending them to a convention.

This change does *not* lessen the importance of LWML participating in the 2020 President's Equip Conference, in fact, it affords the women of the district to fully participate in all events, as there will be only one shortened LWML business session.

Look for more information in the *Evangel*, both the special convention issue and the fall issue in August or on the website, www.flgalwml.com, and on Facebook – LWML Florida-Georgia District.

Online Donation Button Added to LWML Website

With the COVID-19 situation, most members of LWML are not meeting in person. The biennium ends June 30th and they are just under \$14,000 short of meeting their mite goal. They need your help! The LWML has added an online donation button to their website making it easy to donate mites without leaving the house. There is no need to let those mites sit around and become dusty. The website is <http://flgalwml.com/> and there are instructions for making your online donation. The District LWML doesn't want to disappoint any of their grant recipients. If you prefer to mail a check, you may mail it to the LWML District Financial Secretary, Linda Peters. Please include a note stating the name of your church, along with its city and state, so your donation can be credited appropriately.

Checks should be made payable to LWML FL-GA District, and mailed to:
Ms. Linda Peters, 4090 14th St NE, St Petersburg, FL 33703. 📧

John Kyle Accepts Call to Grace/St Petersburg, FL



John Kyle is a recent graduated from Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, MO. As a member and vicar at Grace Lutheran Church and School in St. Petersburg, Florida, he was trained and certified as a Stephen Minister and a Stephen Leader. While executing his position as vicar at Grace, John attended a course at St. Anthony's Hospital and was certified in Mental Health First Aid.

"I felt the urge to pursue the public ministry during – and after – a career as a Process Chemist," he explains. "I am extremely

enthusiastic about serving as Associate Pastor at Grace where I have been serving."

John Kyle is graduate of Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan. He was a life-long member of St. Paul/Royal Oak, Michigan, where he also attended school from 1st -8th grade. He graduated from Troy High School in Troy, Michigan where he lettered in three sports, was captain of the wrestling team, and completed five years of mathematics within the four years of high school.

John also taught hunter safety for the State of Michigan and enjoys hunting, bowling and golf. He is a voracious reader and has three daughters: Kimberly, Christen, and Jacqueline. ☞

Kyle Will To Serve Epiphany/Lake Worth, FL

Kyle Will is a Tallahassee, FL native. He and his wife, Amy, met in middle school and began dating in high school. They both studied music at Florida State University and during their freshman year, Amy asked him to join the "German Christmas service choir" at University/Tallahassee.

"I had not been involved in church for years," Kyle explains, "I didn't even know what a Lutheran" was!" He started attending the Wednesday night college group and then church regularly on Sundays. He quickly became a member involved in a leadership program. It was there that he felt the call to serve in ministry.

"Amy and I graduated, got married, and moved to St. Louis for "summer Greek" at the seminary – all in May 2014!

We experienced so much during our seminary journey but our biggest adventure began when we welcomed our son, August, in May 2018. I look forward to becoming the pastor of Epiphany Lutheran Church and School with joy and honor. My family and I have been richly blessed." ☞



Lawrence Rast Declines Call to Concordia Seminary/St. Louis

Dr. Lawrence R. Rast Jr., president of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN, (CTSFW) declined the call from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO, to serve as the 11th president in the school's 181-year history. He had 15 days to deliberate the call. Had he accepted the position he would have assumed the presidency July 1, succeeding Dr. Dale A. Meyer, who retires June 30 after serving 15 years as president. (see page 14 this issue).



"I was deeply honored by this opportunity," Rast stated. "During my presentation at the president's orientation for Synod officials last September, I shared that I was convinced that we were in the midst of a disruption unlike any we've experienced in more than a generation. That was before COVID-19. Now things have intensified and every aspect of the

Synod's life together is affected: Synod Inc., institutions (including seminaries, universities and schools), districts, congregations, and professional church workers and members alike.

"The next five to 10 years are going to define the future of our church body – and the seminaries are going to play a crucial role in determining the direction we will take. There is an urgency today for the saving faith, healing and comfort that only Jesus can bring.

"The call to serve as the 11th president of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis is one of the greatest honors I have received during the years of my service to the Christ and His church," he responded. "Deliberating on the call that was extended to me has been extremely challenging. In the end, I have decided to remain at CTSFW and am therefore, with great reluctance, returning the call to serve as president of CSL."

"Dr. Lawrence Rast has such vast experience as a leader that would have served this Seminary well," offered FLGA District President Greg Walton. "I have a great respect for Larry's insights as a historian, and have enjoyed working with him during the past eleven years. CTSFW is blessed to have him continue to serve in Fort Wayne!

"I'm sure this was a difficult decision for Larry," Walton concluded. "President Dale Meyer has built a well-rounded, solid team at Concordia Seminary, and they are in good hands as the search process moves forward. I'm confident whoever surfaces to succeed Dale Meyer will be the right man for the job."

Rast has served as president of Concordia Theological Seminary/Ft. Wayne since 2011, and been on its faculty since 1996. He also previously served Concordia Seminary/St. Louis as an adjunct professor of historical theology. Before joining the Fort Wayne faculty, he was the pastor of Ascension Lutheran Church in Madison, TN.

In accordance with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Bylaws, the Seminary's regents now shall promptly call a meeting of the electors and, as prescribed in the Bylaws, determine whether to reissue the call, elect another person from the remaining five finalists or issue a new call for candidates. ☞

PEOPLE

LIFE IN STRESS

Where is God
in the midst
of crisis?
There
have
been
times in
my life when
I've opened my
mind to wonder. I am not
alone. Perhaps you also have
had days in the recent months when
such a question has crossed your mind.
The Bible is filled with Saints who

When he comes to the mountain
God says, "What are you doing here,
Elijah?" Then Elijah lets loose with
his frustrations. He says, "I have been
very jealous for the LORD, the God
of hosts. For the people of Israel have
forsaken your covenant, thrown down
your altars, and killed your prophets
with the sword, and I, even I only, am
left, and they seek my life, to take it
away." So God has Elijah stand before
Him on the mountain.

The Bible says, "And behold,
the LORD passed by, and a great



asked a similar question. In fact, in 1
Kings 19, Elijah was being threatened
by Jezebel after slaying the false
prophets on Mt. Carmel. The Bible says,
"Then he was afraid, and he arose and
ran for his life and came to Beersheba,
which belongs to Judah, and left his
servant there."

Do you suppose Elijah was singing
praise songs as he was running? I
suppose it is possible, but doubtful.
He journeyed into the wilderness and
found a place to sit, under a broom
tree, and said, "It is enough; now, O
Lord, take away my life, for I am no
better than my fathers." Talk about a
man in crisis!

In his frustration, Elijah fell asleep.
Fortunately, for him, God did not
answer his prayer, at least not the way
he wanted.

Instead, God sends an angel to
attend to him. God provided a good
meal for him, and gave him some rest.
In fact, Elijah was likely suffering what
we would call "burnout" in our day.
Strengthened by the food and rest,
Elijah made a forty-day journey in the
wilderness to the Mountain of God.

and strong wind tore the mountains
and broke in pieces the rocks before
the LORD, but the LORD was not
in the wind. And after the wind an
earthquake, but the LORD was not
in the earthquake. And after the
earthquake a fire, but the LORD was
not in the fire. And after the fire the
sound of a low whisper."

During these last few months
as we have been "sheltered in" and
quarantined, I wonder how often
I have missed the whisper of God.
While I am looking for Him to do the
miraculous by providing a vaccine
and returning things to normal, all
around me, as I reflect, God has done
the miraculous.

"Work life" has been different;
traveling has ceased, and I have spent
more time at home since mid-March
then I have in a very long time. In
some ways, it has been stressful,
but in many ways, it actually has
been, miraculously, restful. I have
been able to attend multiple worship
experiences on Sunday mornings,
have been on numerous webinars
and ZOOM meetings, have had the

You'll Never Walk Alone



President Walton, this is Kathy! It's noon in Saint Louis and you have a lunch Zoom meeting with the Council of Presidents in 10 minutes . . . what do you mean you're still in bed?

opportunity to offer encouragement to friends and family members as I have also received it. Social distancing, in some ways, has deepened relationships. The little whispers of God's miracles all around me.

Elijah felt all alone, like he was the only one left with any faith. He felt like no one could understand what he was going through. He felt abandoned and he wanted God to know it! Is there any doubt God knew how Elijah felt? Is there any doubt He knows how you have felt during these pandemic days?

God has a message for Elijah. Despite how frustrated he felt, despite what he thought he knew, God has a purpose and plan for Elijah, even as He does for each of us. And the LORD said to Elijah, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus. And when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael to be king over Syria. And Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint to be king over Israel, and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint to be prophet in your

place. And the one who escapes from the sword of Hazael shall Jehu put to death, and the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha put to death. Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him."

God assured Elijah that he was not alone. The same is true for each one

of us. Our faithful God, the very One who sacrificed His own Son, Jesus, to redeem us from sin and death, despite how we might, at times, doubt Him, reminds us that He will never leave us nor forsake us. Hear the word of Jesus, spoken to you, "I am with you always, to the end of the age!" This is His promise to each of us. As we reflect on Easter 2020, one that will long be remembered among us, we again celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus for each one of us.

We are not alone! God continues to shower us with whispers of His miraculous love. They are all around us. Jesus has promised to remain with us and send His Spirit as our Advocate. I hope you will stop long enough to listen, and feel the hand of our Triune God holding you, caring for you as he did Elijah.

This edition of *Lutheran Life* has been designed to reflect the loving whispers of God displayed in His people. Even now, as we begin to live in this strange, new world, people are searching for the love of Jesus. It is now made manifest in each of us, flowing through our lives in Jesus.

It's simply amazing how, even in the midst of crisis, the blessings of God still shine through—in your life, and in mine. In the following pages you will find wonderful stories of how the people of God in the Florida-Georgia District have used this time for His glory. You will see many have reflected the love of Jesus as they have learned and grown as His disciples. There is no doubt that God has been whispering, and has been heard as His people have responded in joy. ☞

Resting in His Peace, GREG



2020 VISION
Reaching Many in 2020 for Jesus!

We once again come to the Annual Report edition of Lutheran Life. The information we share has been somewhat modified this year due to the COVID-19. We are fully aware of the financial impact the virus has created in many of our parishes. The following information is provided as a means of providing transparent reporting on behalf of the Florida-Georgia District.

More Than 200 Ministries

It begins with a huge “thank you” to the congregations that have faithfully, and continually support the work of the Florida-Georgia District. It is only by these tithes and gifts that we are able to serve our over 200 ministries throughout Florida, Georgia and the Bahamas. We are grateful for your partnership and trust which enable us to work together for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

New Missions Executive

Through the tremendous partnership of about 75% of the congregations who have contributed to the Florida-Georgia District, we have been able to reach many in 2020 for Jesus! Your partnership allowed us to bring on to the staff Rev. Dr. Peter Meier, who serves as the Executive Director for Missions and Outreach. In spite of travel restrictions, he has already made virtual forays

annual report



into several areas of the District, working with pastors and lay leaders to plant new ministries and bolster existing ones. Dr. Meier has led training in all five of our District regions during the Pastors Spring Regional Gatherings in April and May. He is vigorously planning on how we can better connect people to Jesus by raising up disciples and sharing the love of our Savior. At the same time, while we have come to the end of a formal arrangement with Five Two, we are still working with our congregations that are involved in this process, and encouraging them as they seek to plant new and sustainable ministries within the district.

More Than 1,000 Miles

The Florida-Georgia District covers nearly 1,000 miles from end to end, which often results in pockets of ministries in a particular area.

Through your partnership, we are able to offer our pastors and teachers opportunity to connect with other parts of the body of Christ. Fall Conferences are provided, which challenge our workers to grow and learn, to provide fellowship, to celebrate accomplishments and milestones in ministry. Your gifts help us provide these conferences at a reasonable and affordable cost.

Putting An End To Child Abuse

Last year we made a commitment to help put an end to child abuse, and have provided the program “Not Even One” to every single congregation, every single ordained pastor, every commissioned minister of religion, and every member of every congregation of the Florida-Georgia District. The goal is to train people to recognize the signs of “grooming,” to end child abuse and help protect our children. Together, as a district, we are able to make this initiative happen! Talk to your Pastor to find out how you can register for this free training.

Leadership Training of Laity

Your partnership allowed us to work with more than 200 lay leaders, providing training, skills and resources to use in serving alongside their pastor in their local parish through our Lay Leadership Summits. *Three of the five regions* have had the opportunity to experience this event, and we hear wonderful things that are continuing to grow as a result. Any investment into our laity, strengthening their faith, their skills and encouraging their passions for Jesus, is a worthwhile investment, indeed!



by Greg Walton

President

Florida-Georgia District

Training & Coaching

The Florida-Georgia District is committed to critical targets of leadership and outreach. By focusing on raising up leaders and encouraging outreach, we believe these two targets will lead us to healthier congregations. With that in mind, the district has *trained more than 100 leaders* through the Emergent Leaders program, strengthening and enhancing the skills of ordained and commissioned ministers as well as laity, all working together to learn as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Serve, Assist, Encourage

All these things, and so many more, are enabled by the support of the congregational ministries across the Florida-Georgia District. Your District staff is engaged in serving, assisting and encouraging congregations throughout our states. Often this involves coaching, advising, resourcing and directing congregations to help them get the answers they need. While we are careful to remember that our role as staff is advisory, the staff provides direction to vacant congregations, schools that are adding or replacing staff, congregations needing a minister of music or a DCE, walking with them through the process. We

provide information and guidance in regard to constitutions and bylaws.

Financial & Legal Counsel

Through our legal counsel, we have provided access to solid and trustworthy legal assistance. Our finance team, including our District Treasurer, have assisted numerous congregations with questions about finances and taxes.

Throughout this time, we have remained debt-free and have continued a 20% tithe. Fully 17% of that is an ongoing support of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and the remaining 3% has gone into a revitalization fund, used to support ministry here at home in the Florida-Georgia District. At times we have had to adjust the budget and reduce spending to maintain this balance. Imagine what the Florida-Georgia District could accomplish with 100% participation from all of our congregations! Like a heart muscle, it works best when it is fully functioning.

Connecting People to Jesus

As I begin looking at my final year of service, despite the current economic circumstances, your District remains in good financial shape due to good stewardship decisions, an excellent finance team, and the committed generosity of our congregations working together to equip, empower and engage, connecting people to Jesus.



President
Florida-Georgia District
Lutheran Church—
Missouri Synod



District Continues to Operate

Greetings! We in the District Office thank you for your continued prayers, partnership and financial support. We look forward to the opportunities this year to reach many for Jesus. We are also praying you are in good health and good spirits through Him who strengthens us! This report includes a summary of The Florida-Georgia District Financials for Fiscal Year End January 31, 2020.

Overview:

Last year the Florida-Georgia District congregational giving revenue exceeded budgeted projections. The District continues to operate with no real debt and all funds with donor restrictions are fully funded. Expenses continue to be monitored closely, as the missions of the District are funded according to the budgeted plan.

Statement of Activities:

Unrestricted support from congregations totaled \$2,139,416.

This was above the budgeted number of \$2.1 million and an increase of \$24,804 over the prior year. Net Assets Released from Restriction are related to funds set aside by donors for a specific purpose. Net assets released from restriction decreased by \$165,323. This was largely due to less Disaster Relief funds released compared to the prior year. Net Assets are released from restriction at the time the purpose has been satisfied. Restricted funds are not utilized to fund operating expenses and their usage can vary greatly from year to year.



by Laura Zirbel

Director of Finance & Administration
Florida-Georgia District

Total expenses for FYE 2020 were \$2,956,451 versus \$3,169,180 for FYE 2019, or a decrease of \$212,729. This decrease was due to several factors: Congregational Services had less Disaster Relief fund expenses, World and National Missions continues

to phase out Mission Grants and a reduction in Emergent Leaders Training costs through our Preparing Church Workers program. With Mission and Ministry Support, now including Convention expenses, there was an increase in expenses — in part due to Synodical Convention costs, an expenditure every three years, compared to prior year District Convention costs, also an event occurring every three years. Included were small increases in ministry publication, clerical and office rent related expenses.

We continue to strive to be good stewards with the funds entrusted to us and work diligently to use them

Florida-Georgia District The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Statements of Financial Position Audited Results

	January 31, 2020	January 31, 2019
Assets		
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$ 2,898,856	\$ 2,791,621
Accounts Receivable	35,590	46,184
Prepaid Expense	89,786	67,217
From Split-Interest Agreements	129,722	157,475
Property and Equipment, net	371,093	429,329
Advance Sites	1,724,297	1,716,526
Long-Term Investments	2,025,358	1,824,584
Other Assets	804,382	695,070
Total	\$ 8,079,084	\$ 7,728,006
Liabilities and Net Assets		
Accounts Payable	\$ 140,779	\$ 189,399
Deferred Revenue	67,727	23,260
Other Liabilities	222,780	222,780
Total Liabilities	431,286	435,439
Net Assets		
Without Donor Restrictions	4,379,176	4,397,867
With Donor Restrictions	3,268,622	2,894,700
Total Net Assets	\$ 7,647,798	\$ 7,292,567
Total	\$ 8,079,084	\$ 7,728,006

Florida-Georgia District The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Statements of Activities Audited Results

	2020	2019
For The Years Ended January 31,		
UNRESTRICTED REVENUES		
Congregation Support	\$ 2,139,416	\$ 2,114,612
Net Assets Released from Restriction	165,224	331,547
Agreements with LCEF	152,947	157,371
Convention, Conferences and Workshops	395,739	454,083
Gifts, Property	-	-
Other	84,434	135,159
Total revenues	2,937,760	3,192,772
EXPENSES		
Synod	365,813	368,806
Congregational Services *	749,810	900,549
Preparing Church Workers	61,422	86,412
Missions	599,071	661,450
Mission and Ministry Support**	844,537	815,186
Ecclesiastical Administration	335,798	336,777
Total expenses	2,956,451	3,169,180
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS		
Without Donor Restriction	(18,691)	23,592
With Donor Restriction	373,922	73,766
Total change in net assets	355,231	97,358
NET ASSETS - BEGINNING OF YEAR	\$ 7,292,567	7,195,209
NET ASSETS - END OF YEAR	\$ 7,647,798	\$ 7,292,567

* Includes School Ministries, Convocation, Conferences, Disaster Relief, Human Care, Church Worker Family Care
** Includes Conventions

With Fiscal Responsibility

in a manner that meaningfully benefits and supports ongoing ministry. During FYE 2020, we continued to fulfill our tithe commitment to the Synod of 17% of all congregational giving for a total of \$365,813. Additionally, we allocated \$64,000 or 3% of congregational giving towards the District Revitalization Fund.

The change in Net Assets for the past fiscal year was an increase of \$355,231. This was largely due to the tremendous response in donations for the Bahamas and Hurricane Dorian relief. The District is currently working to distribute funds to those in the Bahamas affected by this devastating storm.

2020 Work Program:

The highlights of the 2020 work program are as follows:

Congregational support continues to be budgeted at \$2,100,000. Through unanimous support of the Board of Directors, the budgeted tithe on congregational support received at the District remains set at 20%. This is broken down into two components. Synod receives 17% of this support and the remaining 3% is budgeted to further fund District Revitalization efforts.

The Mission Grant budget currently supports seven approved missions throughout the District. This will be the last year for Mission Grant disbursements. Going forward, a 0% interest Mission Loan program will be offered. The Missions budget continues to support our four campus ministries and nine other Lutheran Service Organizations (e.g., Lutheran Services Florida and Mission Haiti), as well as taking care of various maintenance expenses at District owned property in Athens, Georgia, Fort Myers, Tallahassee and Naples, Florida.

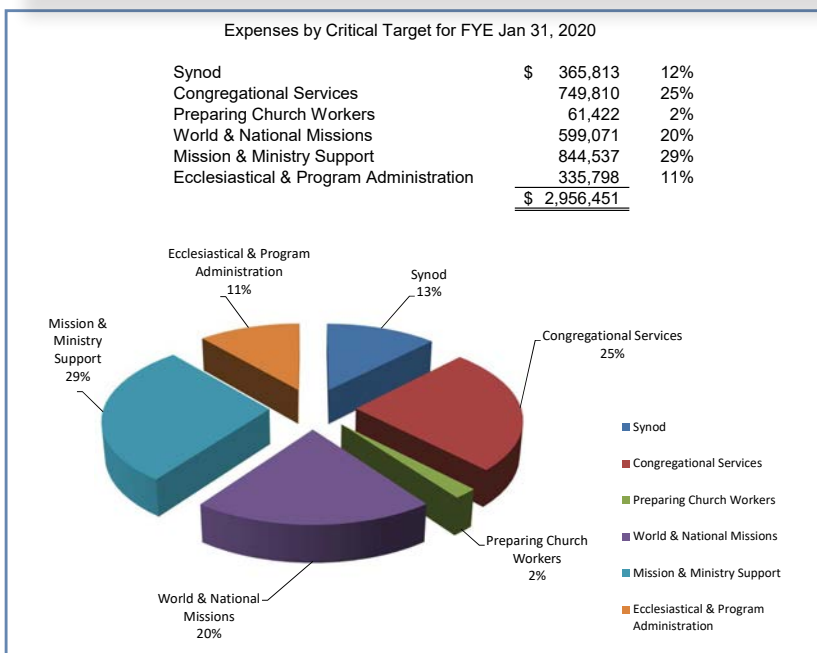
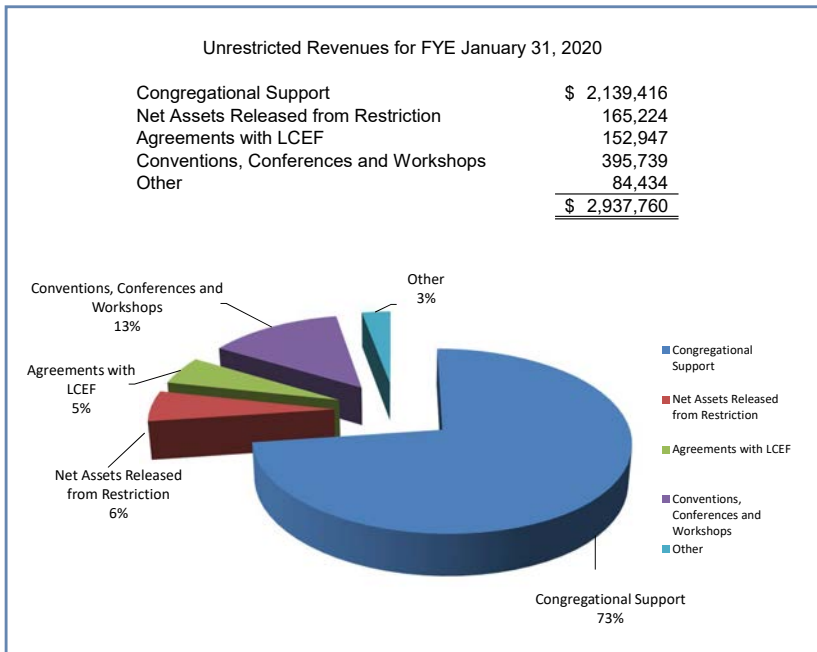
We believe that this work program is fiscally responsible, within our current funding forecast and it continues to enable the District to serve, assist and encourage the congregations of the District in the ministry of Jesus Christ.

The Board of Directors and District Staff continue to monitor expenses and will make necessary adjustments as required.

If you have any questions about any portion of this report, I welcome your inquiries via my email at lzirbel@flgadistrict.org

May God continue to bless and keep you in His care. 🙏

flga
district
annual
report



Andy Wrasman Headed to Oak Road/Lilburn, GA

Andy Wrasman has a Bachelors of Arts in Theological Studies and a Masters of Arts degree in International Studies from Concordia University Irvine. Before entering the Resident Alternate Route program at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO, he spent nine years teaching World Religions



and Christian Apologetics at Crean Lutheran High School in Irvine, CA. While on the Crean Lutheran team, Andy launched Contradict Movement (www.contradictmovement.org), published a book, *Contradict – They Can't All Be True*, and became a rostered minister of religion in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Prior to his teaching in Irvine, Andy spent three years teaching English in China. He


comes to the Florida-Georgia District with his wife, Jessica (who taught Core Literature at Concordia/Irvine, CA, and English in China. Andy and Jessica have two children, Arabella (5) and Rocky (2).

Jessica enjoys gardening, home decorating projects, and party planning. Andy enjoys writing and making videos for his YouTube channel. Together, they enjoy trying new foods and exploring new places of interest, both culturally, historically, and in outdoor beauty and activities.

"When Jessica and I left California with Bella and Rocky, we were hoping to be sent to a church that was close to my family in Knoxville, TN," he states. "We also hoped to find the cultural diversity we enjoyed in Southern California, along with good schools, nature walks, and safe and affordable neighborhoods.

"When the seminary courses went online due to pandemic, we took a visit to Lilburn and discovered a place that already seemed like home. We saw a perfect mix of the culture I grew up with in Tennessee and what Jessica loves from growing up in California.

"Most importantly, we are enthusiastic about this congregation that seeks to live together in community while seeking and desiring Jesus and his Word to be central in all congregational activities! The weekly family dinners with choir practices, monthly book club, and bi-monthly men's breakfasts all demonstrate Oak Road's desire to be together during the week in fellowship with one another, and not just on Sundays."

Vicar Andy Wrasman will be under the supervision of Pastor Gary Dehnke at Oak Road. 



Andrew Simpson Headed to Bethlehem/Jax Beach, FL


"I am delighted to be spending my vicarage year at Bethlehem/Jacksonville Beach, FL," Andrew exclaims. "I have heard that Bethlehem is a thriving congregation with caring members, and I am looking forward to developing skills that will be essential for me as I work towards serving God in the pastoral ministry."

Andrew married Holly in November, 2016. They are both from Michigan: he from Warren, and Holly from Port Austin, where they met.

Their daughter Anastasia was born June 20, 2018 and they are expecting their second child in December.



Both Andrew and Holly enjoy reading, bicycling, hiking, swimming and watching action-adventure movies together — perhaps starring a superhero or even a young hobbit. They also delight in raising their young daughter, reading her stories and going for walks.

Vicar Andrew will be under the supervision of Pastors Dana Brones and Nathan McCarty at Bethlehem. 

Tim Barber Headed to Mount

Tim Barber grew up in Glenview, IL a northern suburb of Chicago where his father, David, and mom, Anna, serve as pastor and DCE at Immanuel Lutheran.

Tim married Amber, in October, 2019. They met in college at Wisconsin Lutheran College (a WELS college for non church-work programs) located in Milwaukee, WI where Tim majored in accounting and played football.

Tim is a huge football fan — and loves watching the University of Florida Gators and the Green Bay Packers game. Amber is creative and enjoys painting and a wide range of artistic craft activities.

"We are extremely excited to head south and begin

Michael Duffy Headed to Grace/Winter Haven, FL

"Sarah and I are so excited and very blessed to be joining Grace/Winter Haven's ministry team this year," Michael offers. "It is a long way from Kenesaw, Nebraska — where I grew up!"



Michael comes from a family of five brothers and two sisters. His mother has intermittently taught preschool at our church and has also had a cookie baking business. "My mom makes the best cookies — my dad frequently reminded us that our mom was the greatest chef in the whole world!"

Michael's father is pastor at St. Paul's /Kenesaw, NE. "He's been a great role model for me as I prepare for my own ministry."

Sarah has two sisters and a mother

who is also a teacher and a father who is also a pastor at Mount Olive/Rockford, IL. Michael and Sarah met in college at Concordia University/Seward, NE, where he majored in English and pre-Seminary while Sarah was a triple major in Elementary Education, Music Education, and Music. They were married after graduation in 2018.

"We enjoy exercising, taking walks, hiking and riding bikes, and we both enjoy listening to — and playing — music. We both like to read and we both enjoy good movies and quality television shows. I have played a lot of sports in my life — football, baseball, wrestling while Sarah devoted herself to music — she's an excellent violinist and violist."

Vicar Michael Duffy will be under the supervision of Pastor Charles Reich at Grace. 🐾

Joseph Reineke Headed to St Paul/Boca Raton, FL

"Emily and I are very excited about our opportunity to spend the next year serving and learning at St. Paul/Boca Raton," Joseph reveals. "We both grew up in Northern Wisconsin. We are worshiping online with home congregation Peace/Antigo, WI. We met while working and serving at Camp Luther in Three Lakes, WI (where we developed a love for ministry, music, and God's creation).

Joseph graduated Concordia University/Chicago while Emily graduated Concordia University/Wisconsin.

"We have now been married for a year and a half. While we are indeed excited to trade the snowy and sub-zero winters of Northern Wisconsin for the warmth and sunshine of Florida, we are even more excited for the people we will meet and the relationships we will form. We can't wait until we are able to be down there and join in sharing the good news of Jesus Christ!"



Both Joe and Emily really enjoy hiking and exploring and being anywhere outdoors. They also enjoy music — both play guitar, which we learned while working on the summer staff at Camp Luther. Joseph plays both saxophone and cajon as well. Both of them also enjoy board games.

"Disc golf and ultimate frisbee are hobbies that I've really gotten invested in during the past couple of years," Joseph states. "Disc golf is a flying disc sport in which players throw a disc at a target; it is played using rules similar to golf. It is usually played on a course with 9 or 18 holes.

"I also enjoy swimming and was on a swim team in high school, and was the head lifeguard for Camp Luther."

Emily's hobbies include photography, baking/cooking and quilting, and Joe is expecting to learn a lot about grilling.

Vicar Joseph Reineke will be under the brutal supervision of Pastors Steve Carretto and Andrew Kubowicz at St Paul. 🐾

Calvary/Warner Robins, GA

serving Mount Calvary and the Warner Robins, GA community," he says.

Vicar Tim Barber will be under the supervision of Pastors David Brighton and Andrew Howe at Mount Calvary. 🐾



What Will Worship Look Like

Ed and Jack, two elders of the congregation, seem to represent the stress and strain at church and in our society. There's been an increasing amount of tension around how we should do church. The last couple elders meetings (held on Zoom) were a bit testy. Some elders seem to think we should trust in God and just open the doors, no social distancing rules, no masks, no worries! Ed is the most vocal

What seems to make it worse are the various media posts on facebook and on the television. It seems that one minute you are swayed to feeling silly if you are afraid — to the next minute feeling embarrassed if you are not afraid! Then you get on a zoom meeting and all those emotions begin to swirl and build and sometimes worse.

What to do? The pastor is trying

Then from that place of subservience to Christ, other questions can lead to God pleasing direction, such as . . .

How do we best serve people with the Gospel? Well, who are these people? No doubt the people include the factions on the elder board and church and all points in between on the spectrum. It also includes the multitude of people in our community. So what is required

of the leaders of the church? What is required of faithful and mature Christians in relationship with others?

What does the Bible say?

"Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters" ROMANS 14:1 "Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak" 1 CORINTHIANS 8:9. "And we urge you, brothers and sisters,

warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone...always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else" 1 THESSALONIANS 5:14-15.

The coaching leader will ask the preceding questions deliberately. The answers and direction may seem



Will congregations and choirs sing liturgy and hymns in corporate worship?

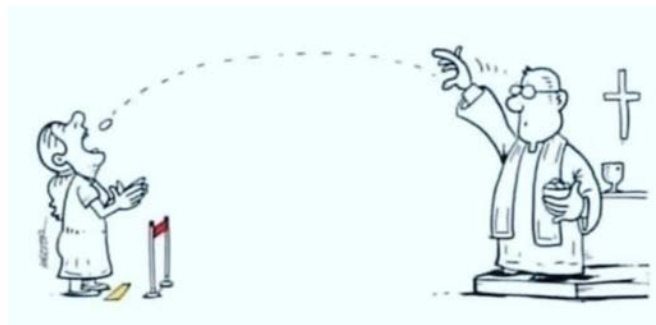
representative of this perspective. There is even a touch of anger in his voice as he gets louder talking about how he wants his church back. Some have even hinted at not coming or even not giving anything unless this is how we do church.

Jack on the other hand seems to represent the other point of view that some of the other elders also hold. He seems scared. He knows of family members and friends who have been hit by this coronavirus and he's had a touch of COPD. He is actually pretty scared that this thing is pretty contagious and that the church should be slow to gather together again and maybe even hold off unless there is a vaccine or some other decisive treatment available. The church should not hurt anyone or be the source of physical trouble. Some of this point of view are even anxious for increased exposure to liability should we begin to meet again.

to calm the ramped up emotions and inject a bit of reason but he is challenged by his emotions as well. It is an anxious time. So what to do?

The coaching leader would bring the leaders together around a series of "essential" (did you catch that?) or core questions: Who are we? Who then are we as individuals and as a church? What is God's purpose for this congregation?

Our unity begins with our baptism in Jesus. We are all forgiven sinners adopted by His grace. That brings humility, confession, forgiveness and grace, all through Jesus our Savior.



Pastor Carretto's college shooting skills were once again paying off

When We Return to Our Sanctuaries?



obvious but they probably aren't to everyone. Processing them slowly out loud will allow the Word of God to work. It will not only bring awareness but also clarity. Then what follows will prayerfully be direction and agreement and mutual support.

These passages originally addressed eating food sacrificed to idols. In recent years, where this is not an issue, we have often applied the concept to alcohol and alcoholism



Will we ever again see congregations celebrating The Lord's Supper with the Common Cup?

and providing Christian ministry appropriately. Might they now also apply to us and our churches as we deal with the pandemic and the questions involved there?

Yes. It may look like two services instead of one to allow for greater distance even with masks. It may look like different worship times to sanitize the seating. It may look like two services: one without masks and one with masks. It may look like a parking lot service in our cars and a loud speaker. It may look like

not passing the plates to minimize touching where others have touched. It may look like hand sanitizing stations at the entrance to the church. It may look like lines on the floor like we see at the grocery store!

Now hold on, that's silly!

Maybe. But it may also comfort those who are afraid so they can overcome their fear to come and hear the good news of Jesus at church! It may also bring comfort people who come to church for the first time in years or the first time ever. So if the leaders of the church show as much or even more concern for people than does the local Big Box store that will send a message. For the person far from Jesus who has been drawn near to Jesus through the time of quarantine they will probably notice what you are doing or not doing!



by Scott Gress

Lutheran Counseling Services
Leadership Coach



Will we ever again see church potluck dinners?



Edith had gotten a little too used to watching online worship from home.

So how are you preparing for loving those people who may come?

How do those passages apply to our behavior as we anticipate encountering them? How will we carry ourselves as those Christian leaders and as individual Christians?

Church is essential because Jesus is essential! Gathering is "normal" as we are the communion of saints. Yet it can also be different during this time of uncertainty. So how can we use this time without being a stumbling block while also being patient with everyone? God will guide you.

Reach out to me if you are interesting in coaching through it

together. Our recent podcasts touch on various aspects of leading through this pandemic. The Coaching Leader is available on iTunes, Google play, Stitcher and Overcast. ↻

Rev.Scott Gress is called by Lutheran Counseling Services as an independent contractor in the areas of leadership,training, consultingand coaching. He can be contacted through email at scottgress@me.com his blog page scottgress.com or at (561) 542-4472.

Concordia Seminary Students Recognize, Laud Dale & Diane Meyer on Graduation Day

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO, celebrated 131 students, six honorees and three retiring professors in an online Commencement ceremony May 15. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 Theological Diploma Service and Commencement exercises, usually held as two separate events on campus, were combined into one online event. The ceremony also marked the end of the 181st academic year with the theme, “Grace. Mercy. Peace. Lives of Significance.”

During the ceremony, theological diplomas were presented to all graduating students eligible to receive a call as a pastor or deaconess in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). Of these students, 60 were recognized in the spring 2020 pastoral candidate class, 16 were recognized in the fall 2019 pastoral candidate class and one was

recognized as a deaconess candidate.

This year’s graduates will join more than 9,000 called leaders of the LCMS around the world and more than 12,500 individuals who have received degrees from Concordia/St. Louis in the school’s 181-year history.


During the service, three retiring professors were recognized — Dr. Andrew Bartelt and Dr. Jeffrey Gibbs, both professors of Exegetical Theology; and Dr. Dale A. Meyer, president and professor of Practical Theology.

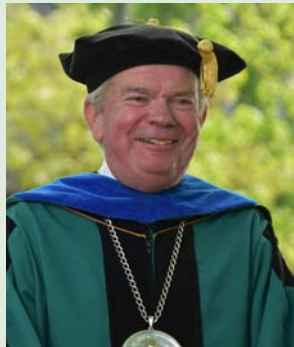
“I often say it’s a great time to be the church. That’s a statement of faith,” Meyer told graduates in his concluding remarks. “Sight does not always tell us that it’s a great time, but faith trusts in a living Lord Jesus that breaks out in hope whatever our outward circumstances may be.”

Earlier in the day on Commencement morning, the retiring

and much beloved Seminary President, Dr. Dale A. and Mrs. Diane Meyer, were greeted by “noodles” on the front lawn of their house and then serenaded in the Main Quad by Concordia Seminary’s Laudamus choir as they made their way to a fully decorated president’s office.

After Meyer officially closed the academic year, the service concluded with the Lord’s Prayer, the Apostolic Benediction, the closing hymn — “Te Deum: We Praise You and Acknowledge You, O God” — and video tributes to the graduates from faculty, staff, students and others.

Graduates will be mailed their diplomas and also will be invited to participate in Commencement exercises in 2021. 



On Commencement Morning, Dale Meyer bows his head in emotion as he is serenaded on the Main Quad by Concordia Seminary’s Laudamus Choir (at appropriate socially distant 6-feet apart). Later Dale & Diane Meyer made their way to a “fully decorated president’s office” with memorabilia honoring his years of service.

How Is COVID-19 Shaping Youth Ministry

“You’re not okay, are you?” my high school student peered at me through her tiny screen. “No,” I replied honestly, caught off guard by her question.

Normally, I was the one asking everyone else how they were doing. Steady and logical, typically unemotional and decisive, I’m the type that takes charge and guides others. This high school sophomore, was the first person to turn the tables and ask me how I was feeling.

A tear rolled down, tickling my nose, as I gazed at the first person in two months who’d asked me that question. As we talked, shedding quiet tears after our online small group Bible study ended, we discovered that we shared the burden of caring for those around us. Since the self-imposed quarantines synonymous with our global COVID-19 pandemic started, we’d constantly checked in on our loved ones, serving as the listening ears and proverbial shoulders to cry on for everyone else.

But here we were, sitting in different houses, now crying on each other’s shoulders. “At least I know I’m not alone anymore,” she finally told me, as we shared the struggles and challenges we’d faced over the last few months. “At least I know you feel this way, too.”

In that profound statement, I found my own comfort. An oft-quoted sentiment from C.S. Lewis strikes the same chord: “Friendship is born at the moment when one person says to another, ‘What! You too? I thought I was the only one.’”

Times like these are unprecedented – and so too are the emotions accompanying this strange moment in history. Never before have any of us witnessed an event that changed our daily lives to such a degree that COVID-19 has.

So vast are the repercussions of this event that I expect historians will spend their entire careers writing about this period.

As the world around me seemed to freeze to a halt, I found my busy ministry changing overnight. Gone were the massive events that sucked up so much of my time, like Easter egg hunts, youth trips, and Vacation Bible School. In their place were simple tasks: phone calls. Text

messages. Video calls.

And though I initially fretted about losing momentum in ministry, I found the opposite to be true. I watched, in amazement, as our youth group actually grew while we were all in isolation.



by Cassie Moore

Director Christian Education
Our Savior/St. Petersburg, FL

My students started freely sharing our video links and passing around my phone number to their friends who were struggling. I started seeing new faces pop up on my computer and in my text messages. For the first time, I was able to watch my students playing with their dogs, show me the posters on their walls, and interact with their parents and siblings from home. Teenagers started calling me on the phone to chat in the afternoon. They started sticking around after Zoom meetings and talking to me, one-on-one.

Nearly every time I have an online video meeting with students, at least two or three people stay on afterwards to chat. And in those conversations, we share truth and joy and sorrow, all mingled together.

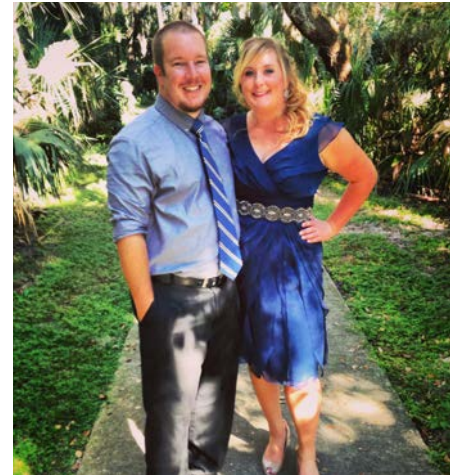
For me, this pandemic has been a refining period. I’ve discovered that so many of the programs I spent so much time on cannot match the impact that one single phone call can make. I’ve realized that my energy is best spent on God’s children, not in the pursuit of a more efficient event.

As a Director of Christian Education, the amount of counseling I’ve been doing in the last several years has skyrocketed up, every year. In the last few weeks, I’ve found myself counseling others daily – not just students, but parents and grandparents and peers, too.

It takes courage to admit what you’re really feeling. But being honest with others spreads that courage. More importantly, it cracks open the door for others to admit they, too, may be struggling. There is no embarrassment, after all, in truth. The only embarrassment would be to live out the rest of your life in a lie.

This pandemic has taught me that we need to care less about impressing each other, and instead concentrate on simply caring for people with the authentic, no-holds-barred love of Jesus.

Right now, the biggest blessing I can give someone else is to simply listen. The people around us are often secretly drowning in loneliness. More than anything, we want to know that we’re not alone. That we are cared about and loved deeply, even with all our flaws. What a simple truth to realize that even though we are physically separate, right now, that we are never alone. Our Almighty God is with us, even in this period of confusion and uncertainty. He showers us with endless forgiveness and mercy, even while we question and fear and doubt. His love never fails, even when the world falters. 🌸



Cassie Moore oversees youth ministry at Our Savior/St. Petersburg, FL. She’s author of *Authentic Youth Ministry: Straight Talk about Working with Kids, Teens & In-Betweens* and contributing author for *Connected for Life: Essential Guide to Youth Ministry*. With more than 80 published articles, she maintains the column *Inside the Teen Mind* at *youthESource*. She is a graduate of *Concordia/Irvine, CA*, and has served as a *Planner* for the last three *LCMS National Youth Gatherings*. In addition to writing and speaking, she enjoys observing culture, travel, kayaking, talking to strangers, and working on her first fiction novel. She and her husband, Pastor Tyler, have two dogs. Connect with her on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram at @DCECassie.

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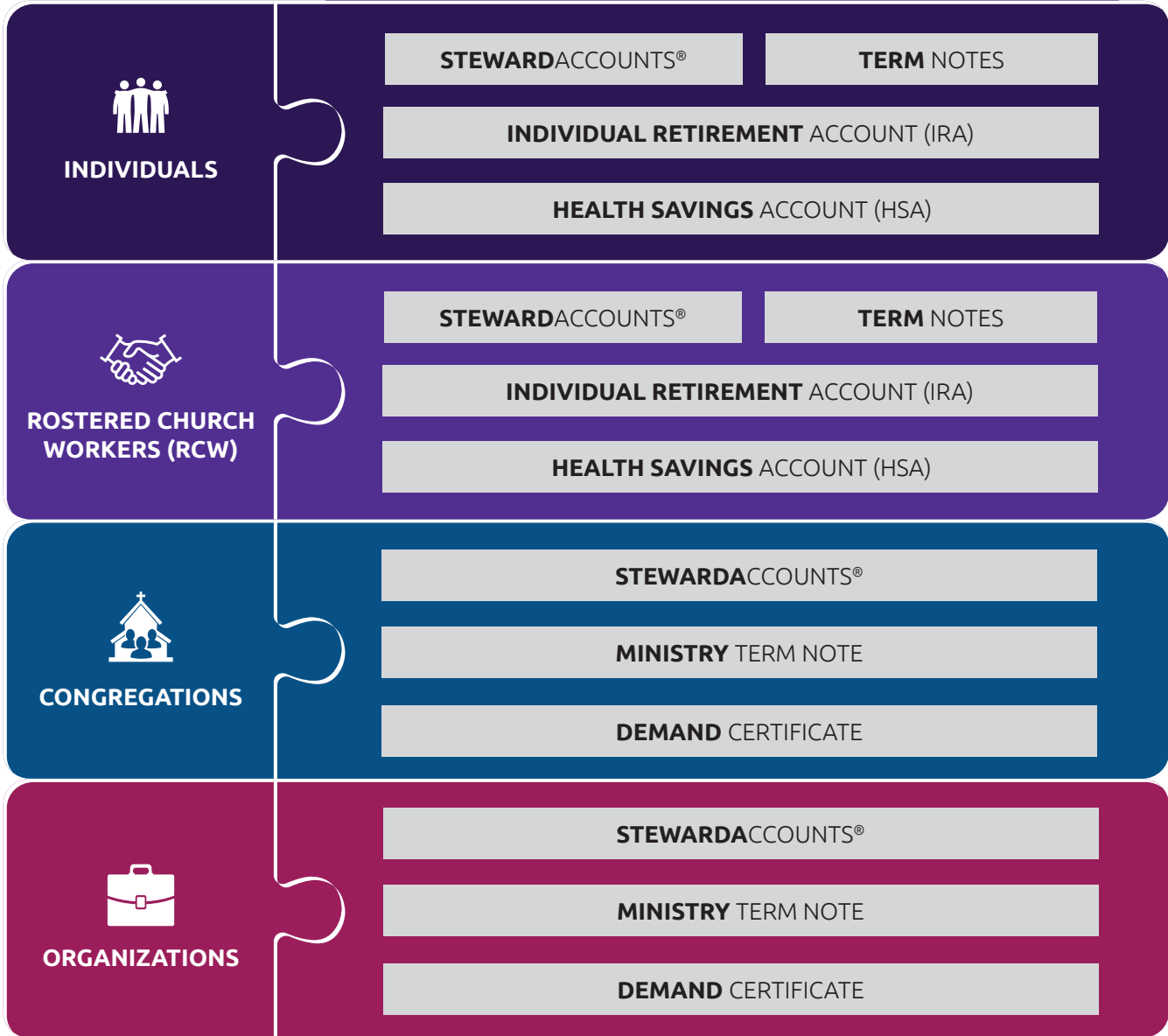
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Are you ready to receive forgiveness?



Rusty Huseman
Florida-Georgia District
Legal Counsel



Renee Varga
Florida-Georgia District
Treasurer



See what we did there? Catchy title huh? Yes, we know you are already forgiven in Christ and we rest in that assurance. However, is your

organization ready to submit your application for PPP (Paycheck Protection Program) forgiveness (Form 3508)? PPP should have stood for "Perpetually Perplexing Policies."

With all the changes there is one thing that has held true, the *PPP IS A LOAN!* If your organization does not use the funding in accordance with the CARES ACT and provisions of the loan a portion of or all of the loan may not be forgiven.

Therefore, to be fully forgiven by the SBA as well you will need to keep track of the specific use of the funds. The SBA has provided some general rules that until last week were a big part of our perplexity.

Covered Period General Rule:

- Eight-week (56-day) period begins on the PPP loan disbursement (funding) date.
- This would require payroll periods that cross the first or last day of the covered period to be prorated to exact day in that period.

Alternative Payroll Covered Period for weekly or bi-weekly payroll periods:

- Eight-week (56-day) period begins on the first day of first pay period following the PPP loan disbursement date.
- This avoids the allocation of payrolls to the exact days in the covered period under the general rule.
- This does NOT change the covered period for non-payroll costs.

Eligible costs:

- Gross salary, wages, paid leave, and allowances. This may or may not be W2 Box 1 wages.
- No more than \$15,385 should be counted for an employee during the covered period.
- Employer contributions to employee health insurance including self-insured and group health plans.
- Employer state and local taxes assessed on employee compensation (typically state unemployment taxes)
- Employer contributions to employee retirement plans.



Other costs

- Mortgage obligations: the debt must have been established before February 15, 2020 in order to have qualifying interest for forgiveness purposes.
- Rent obligations: must be pursuant to a lease in effect before February 15, 2020.
- Utility payments include electric, gas, water, telephone, and internet service in place prior to February 15, 2020.
- Remember that you are only allowed up to 25% of the funding to be used on Other Costs. The spirit of the loan is to maintain your employees and their wages.

Timing:

- Payroll costs are considered paid on the day that paychecks are distributed (or ACH credit transaction).
- Payroll costs are considered incurred on the day that the employee's pay is earned.
- PAYROLL COSTS INCURRED BUT NOT PAID DURING THE

BORROWER'S LAST PAY PERIOD OF THE COVERED PERIOD ARE ELIGIBLE FOR FORGIVENESS IF PAID ON OR BEFORE THE NEXT REGULAR (AFTER 56-DAYS) PAYROLL DATE.

- Therefore, no special payroll processing is required on the last day of the covered period.

FTE Calculation:

- FTE is based on 40 hours (yes, this was increased from 30 hours)
- A simplified method has been approved that assigns a 1.0 to employees who work 40 hours and 0.5 for employees who work less than 40 hours. This is at the election of the borrower.
- The goal is that your FTE did not drop before and after PPP funding
- Exceptions - you are able to keep the following employees in the calculation of your FTE:

- 1- if the borrower made a good-faith, "written offer" (electronic message or fax) to rehire an employee during the covered period was rejected by the employee
- 2- Any employee who during the covered period but only if the position was not filled by a new employee that
 - a) Were fired for cause
 - b) Voluntarily resigned
 - c) Voluntarily requested and received a reduction of hours

[Remember these exceptions are in place to protect the Borrower from decisions made by the employee.]

- Count employees the same way that you did when applying for the loan.

Form 3508 is rather simplified. If you have not already been provided the Form 3508 by your lender it can be found at <https://www.sba.gov/document/sba-form--paycheck-protection-program-loan-forgiveness-application>.

The devil always lies in the details. In this case the details would include bank statements, payroll journals, payroll reports, cancelled checks, vendor invoices, etc. These may be (will be) items that your lender might request when submitting Form 3508 at the end of your 56-days.

What happens if the SBA is not as forgiving as our God? Our suggestion is that you are good stewards of the funding so that you qualify for full forgiveness. Any unforgiven portion

MONEY

of the loan will become recourse debt to the organization. Although it is difficult to determine at this time that may also mean that the persons legally responsible for the affairs of the organization may, may be personally liable for any fraud, waste, or abuse. The organization can always repay the excess funding. It is also our hope that you will have spent the majority, if not all, of your funds on eligible expenses and the amount remaining unforgiven be small. When the application was submitted the



organization acknowledged that there was immediate need for the funds.

The Code provides that the monies shall convert to a "loan" with a maximum maturity of 10 years at an interest rate not to exceed 4%. What is unknown at the moment is whether the "loan" would then be collateralized. We suspect more guidance will be coming in the days and weeks ahead. This should have been disclosed to you by the lender prior or at closing.

Now what?

Lots of information and it really boils down to this, use the funding on the costs, in the amounts, on the employees that you included on your PPP loan application in 56 days. If you have any further questions please contact Laura Zirbel at the FLGA District office. Psalm 46:10 has been our mantra during this pandemic – "Be still, and know I am God." We applaud those who have successfully made it through the application and funding process. May this Psalm provide you assurance as you move through the forgiveness process. 🌿

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FBI Warns of Child Sexual Abuse Material Being Displayed during Zoom Meetings

The COVID-19 crisis has caused many organizations and schools to conduct virtual meetings/events – some of which are open to the public. Additionally, links to many virtual events – such as virtual chapels and worship – are being shared online, resulting in a lack of vetting of approved participants.

During the last few months, the FBI has received more than 195 reports of incidents throughout the United States and in other countries in which a Zoom participant was able to broadcast a video depicting child sexual abuse material (CSAM). The FBI considers this activity to be a violent crime, as every time child sexual abuse material is viewed, the depicted child is revictimized. Anyone who inadvertently sees child sexual abuse material depicted during a virtual event is potentially a victim, as well.

The FBI is committed to apprehending any individual who produces or distributes child sexual abuse material and is seeking the public's assistance to identify the person or persons responsible for these egregious crimes.

The FBI is suggesting:

- If you are the administrator or host of a Zoom meeting in which CSAM was broadcast, please contact the FBI; do not delete or destroy any of your computer logs without further direction.
- If you recorded a Zoom meeting in which child sexual abuse material

was broadcast, please contact the FBI for assistance in removing the CSAM from your device.

■ If you believe you are a victim of a child sexual abuse material broadcast during a Zoom event, as defined above, please contact the FBI to learn about your victim rights and possible victim assistance.

■ If you know who is committing these most recent egregious crimes, please contact the FBI.

The following steps may mitigate future child sexual abuse material issues during Zoom events:

■ Do not make meetings or classrooms public. In Zoom, there are two options to make a meeting private:

- 1) Require a meeting password, or
- 2) Use the waiting room feature and control the admittance of guests.

■ Do not share a link to a teleconference or classroom on an unrestricted, publicly available social media post. Provide the link directly to specific attendees.

■ Manage screensharing options. In Zoom, change screensharing to "Host Only."

If you are a victim of child sexual abuse material being broadcast during a Zoom event, or if you have information regarding the identity of any individual distributing or producing CSAM, please report it to the FBI at 1-800-CALL-FBI (225-5324) or anonymously online at tips.fbi.gov. 🌿

District Partners With MinistrySafe in Free Resource Training Program to Combat Child Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse of children is a "quiet" epidemic that is only occasionally brought to light when a sensational news story hits the press. The reality is that one in every four girls and one in every six boys in the United States, is sexually molested before the age of eighteen. Ninety percent of the time, they are molested by someone they know and trust.

The FLGA District has partnered with MinistrySafe to launch the,

"Not Even One" initiative, to better educate and equip the workers in District congregations and schools to recognize the signs of Child Sexual Abuse and understand better the tendencies of child predators...at no cost to congregations and schools.

This is free and encouraged. Information is available on the District website at flgadistrict.org/not-even-one/ 🌿

FLORIDA GEORGIA

REGION 1

REGIONAL NEWS

Out and About in the Florida-Georgia District

send your news & photos to lutheranlife@aol.com



Faith/Marietta, GA's faculty and administration held graduation in May and arranged a parade through the campus parking lot to greet their 8th-grade students and celebrate their accomplishments. Many of Faith's teachers and education team members held signs and waved to the families as they paraded through campus. In left photo, Pastor Carl Schneider, his daughter Angie Rush (3rd grade teacher) and wife Patti (in red, preschool-3 teacher) greeted student families. At right, Kindergarten teacher Karla Kraft and her husband Mark hold up signs of encouragement.



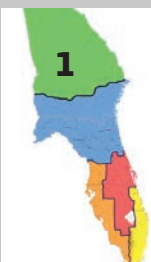
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Mount Calvary/Warner Robins, GA

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- Circuit 4 Central Georgia Circuit Visitor:
John Lehenbauer | Christ/Perry, GA

Above left — May 17th was the first sanctuary worship service since March 15th for **Mount Calvary/Warner Robins, GA**. Just prior to letting members into the room, last minute checks were made for the painter's tape which was shutting off the use of two out of every three pews for appropriate social distancing. Participants wore masks, the singing was great, and they got to shout our Easter victory cry LIVE to each other! Above right — Pastors Andrew Howe and David Brighton with Vicar Aaron Hickey practice social distancing during their weekly meeting. The congregation had members donate nearly \$12,000 above regular giving to be contributed to the community food banks of greater Warner Robins, GA.

REGION 1
GEORGIA





On Saturday, April 25th at 4 pm, **Faith/Eustis, FL** offered communion for the first time since campus was closed due to COVID-19. Members drove through a car line to receive their sealed communion



package via a tube from Pastor Marc Kappel. After receiving the elements, all cars proceeded to the tree lined parking lot to wait for the communion service to begin with more than 140 participants.

Hope/Plant City, FL, used social media, email blasts and their website to communicate to members, friends and the community that on Palm Sunday they should deocate their doors. The idea went over so well that they repeated the

idea for Easter Sunday. Ideas could be downloaded from the church website or craft ideas were encouraged using chalk art, wood, or any interesting media that could be found around the home. Participation was enormous!



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

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

Laity Board Members:
Rebecca Hartmann | Hope/Plant City, FL
Sheryl DeWitt | Redeemer/Sanford, FL

Commissioned Minister Board Member:
Lois Ford | Faith/Eustis, FL

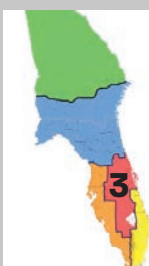
Circuit 8 Space Coast Circuit Visitor:
Bruce Alberts | Good Shepherd/Titusville, FL

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

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

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

REGION 3
CENTRAL





Hope/Plant City, FL's new sanctuary will seat 300 compared to the current 190 with ample room for the congregation's music and other worship ministries. This is phase one of a three-phase building program for Hope. The additional phases will relocate their offices allowing additional space for fellowship events and provide a larger kitchen area. Hope's current sanctuary will be demolished following completion of the new building to allow room for handicapped and visitor parking along with a covered walkway connecting Hope's campus. Hope began serving the Plant City community in February, 1957. Two of Hope's initial founding five families, continue to be active in the congregation. Projected completion date of the new facility is Spring of 2021.



At **Grace/Saint Cloud, FL**, pastor Josh Obermann has been leading his congregation with "Aquarium Side Chats." Each morning at 9:00, he reads though a psalm and uses it to guide his prayers. All of this is done through Facebook. He also leads his Connected2Grace Bible study on Thursday nights as a Facebook Premier and afterwards uses Facebook Live to answer questions or encourage discussion.



In April, **Woodlands/Montverde, FL**, organized a "drive through" food bank drop off. Both members and friends put food in their trunks and drove to church. Volunteers (pictured above and below) moved the food from their trunks to the church van. In two short hours they collected 1,057 lbs of food and dropped it off to Faith Neighborhood Center who is serving 5,000 meals per month to the community.





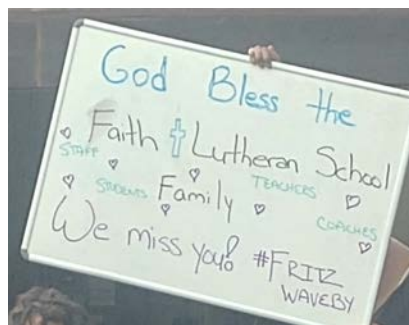
Some of these photos were taken in 2019 as St. Paul launched Moving Hope — before social distancing was required.

In the spring of 2019, **St. Paul/Lakeland, FL**, knew they needed to start something new from their brick-and-mortar food pantry. Food storage was a problem. Types of foods were limited to boxed or canned and there was no chance for food choice as people were simply handed a bag of food. Moving Hope was born thanks to FiveTwo Start New and the FLGA District Office. Fresh and frozen produce, meats, and dairy products, health care and personal hygiene products that St. Paul receives from distributors are taken into government housing neighborhoods. Along with these needed items, they bring in medical professionals, pro-life counselors,

local semi-pro sports teams, events for kids like volleyball, seasonal crafts and tutoring in reading, all helping to form relationships in these government housing neighborhood backyards so that St. Paul has the opportunity to share Jesus with them. As of March, 2020, Moving Hope has already served 1,458 families — about 5,880 people in the Lakeland, Florida community.

Then came Covid-19! Moving Hope was no longer able to go into the neighborhoods twice a month due to the government public housing guidelines. They knew, now more than ever, people were going to need help, so Moving Hope began a weekly "Drive-Up" food distribution on the

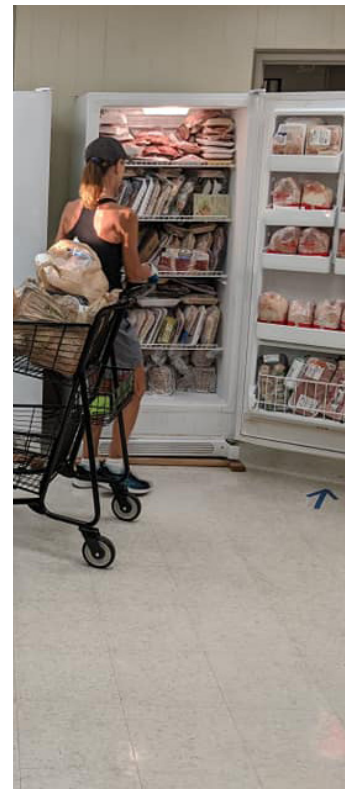
campus of St. Paul. People drive up and receive 2-3 bags of fresh and frozen foods from volunteers who wear masks and gloves. Each week St. Paul's team reminds them of God's provision, that they are glad to see them, and that they look forward to coming back into their neighborhoods soon. Visitors to campus receive some form of devotional, CD or DVD along with their bags of food. They also offer a "prayer station" where someone will pray with them while they are in their car. St. Paul has been serving 150+ cars/households each week. Everyone is very thankful and grateful for what we are able to supply to them. God is good and continues to bless Moving Hope's work in Lakeland.



Jeremy and Anne Fritz are teachers at **Faith/Eustis, FL**. They had been trying to figure out how to complete steps to earn vitality points without the demands of classroom activity. They developed the #FritzWaveBy. As part of their PE emails they asked church and school families if they would like a face to face visit. It allowed them to maintain good relationships with families and see them from a safe social distance.



In Region 3, the food pantry at **Prince of Peace/Orlando, FL** has been working overtime during this pandemic! A group of 8-10 volunteers gathers once a week to organize and prep for the regular monthly distribution. In April, their food pantry distribution served 407 families, totaling more than 1,700 individuals! "This was a record number for us," says Meredith Swanson, communications coordinator for Prince of Peace. "We are looking forward to serving as many — if not more — at the May and June distributions."



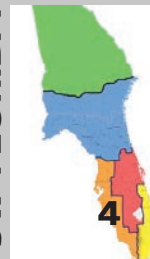
Our Savior/St. Petersburg, FL's Steel Orchestra and Choristers performed in the Florida/Georgia Lutheran Schools Music Festival at St Luke's/Oviedo, FL. This Festival is for all Lutheran school music groups in the FLGA District. All age groups of choir, band, orchestra, praise band, and bells are invited to attend. Our Savior took 41 students (pictured above, grades 2nd through 8th) and received one of the highest remarks with a Superior rating and a score of 285 out 300. It's the second year in a row they received Superiors. They are also the first FLGA District school to have a steel drum program as part of their regular curriculum. The steel drums and instrumentalists are behind the singers in the photo below.



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

- Laity Board Members:
 Evita Gonzalez | Beautiful Savior/Lehigh Acres, FL
 Daniel Najjar | Beautiful Savior/Sarasota, FL
 Commissioned Minister Board Member:
 Jesse Crosmer | Our Savior/St. Petersburg, FL
 Circuit 12 Heartland Circuit Visitor:
 Richard Norris | Trinity/Lake Placid, FL
 Circuit 13 Suncoast Circuit Visitor:
 David Brockhoff | Holy Trinity, Masaryktown, FL
 Circuit 14 St. Petersburg Circuit Visitor:
 Paul Burtzloff | Our Savior/St. Petersburg, FL
 Circuit 15 Tampa Circuit Visitor:
 Gilbert Kuehn | Messiah/Tampa, FL
 Circuit 16 Sarasota Circuit Visitor:
 Rossetter Leavitt | Beautiful Savior/Sarasota, FL
 Circuit 17 SW Circuit Visitor:
 Richard Browning | Hope/Bonita Springs, FL

**REGION 4
SW FLORIDA**





Holy Trinity/Masaryktown, FL conducted an Easter worship "drive in" style on their campus with Pastor David Brockhoff using an FM transmitter that enabled worshippers to tune in on their in-car radios. He distributed the elements of the Lord's Supper in sanitized plastic bags with individual bread and wine (photo, upper right). The

format was so successful they plan to continue it until the community has worked through all the pre-opening phases — eventually leading them back into the sanctuary. The congregation will continue to live stream even after COVID-19 clearance and will use the FM transmitter in service for those with hearing difficulties.



Easter services were different from the usual for members of **Trinity/New Port Richey, FL**. Pastor Marc Naumann conducted "Drive-In" style worship in the front yard — but without popcorn or soda. He led services from the entry to the church while parishioners parked their cars in the lawn turned toward the front door. Offerings were collected as members pulled into the lawn, and service ended with a rousing horn blowing chorus.



Masks on a Mission was a spur-of-the-moment project for the Quilters and the LWML members at **Hope/Hudson, FL**. They teamed up to make more than 500 "designer-style" face masks. Many ladies sewed and assembled the masks at home. Hope's Elders and members of their

Stephen Ministries group distributed them to the church members, their families, and the community. First, however, Pastor Kent Fuqua blessed the masks and sent them out to everyone among prayers.

"We could not have done it without the generous donations, the skill of the sewers, and the fun fellowship (Ladyship) of everyone at Hope as we work through this crazy pandemic," Karen Haubenchild explains. "We'll never forget this project, that's for sure! Praise the Lord for keeping us all protected and healthy."



Left to right-Back row: Dorothea Wilson and Kim Paulson. Front row: Karen Haubenchild, Barb Lathrop and Dona Marino.

Left-to-right — Kim Paulson, Karen Haubenchild, Pastor Kent Fuqua, and Dorothea Wilson



Pastor Jake Roedsens offers drive-thru communion at **Our Savior/Lake Worth, FL**. He is able to keep congregation members "socially distant" while offering the Lord's Supper, praying together as well as some casual catching up in the few minutes each car pauses on campus.



The 6th Grade students and their families at **St Paul/Boca Raton, FL** had a good drive to support Boca Helping Hands — a community organization that provides food, medical and financial assistance to meet basic human needs as well as education, job training and guidance to create self-sufficiency. Sixth-grade teacher Jan Majess coordinated efforts for the "Our Pantry Bag Program" open to qualifying Palm Beach County residents during the pandemic. The students and their families raised more than 470 pounds of non-perishable food, which was carefully packed and delivered to Boca Helping Hands

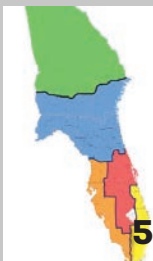


Each week at **Redeemer/Stuart, FL** during school chapel the students were challenged to give different types of offerings — such as a note to their mail carrier or a note that could be sent to the fire or police department. They were told to draw your hand and send a high five to a friend . . . draw a picture of yourself with arms outspread to send a virtual "hug" to a loved one, a doctor or nurse. Chapels have actually taken off and our church members started watching them and participating in the offering! Redeemer also created an Action Team for putting together care packages for people who lost their jobs. It has food, masks, hand sanitizer and prayers with bible verses to let those people know they are loved.



Joy Beach, below, demonstrates the drawing of a "high five" and above the reaching out for a virtual hug.

REGION 5
SE FLORIDA



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

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



St Paul/Weston, FL's Director of Youth and Family Ministry, Jeremy Becker, decided to take advantage of downtime during the COVID-19 pandemic and arranged for some well-deserved rest at one of Broward County's most luxurious resort and spas — the Cleveland Clinic.

"It is not typically good when the doctor says he can do an appendectomy in 30 minutes but it takes him 90 because it was so bad," Becker explains. "This has been a new kind of pain to experience!"

Becker spent four days at the resort being pampered with gourmet food and a bed that adjusted to the perfect angle for his laptop — which enabled him to stay on top of the empire he runs in the youth and family services portion of the Weston congregation.

"I am extremely thankful to Doctor Roy and the team of physicians and nurses at Cleveland Clinic for helping me get back to health," Becker says, "and to everyone for all the prayers offered during my surgery and recovery."

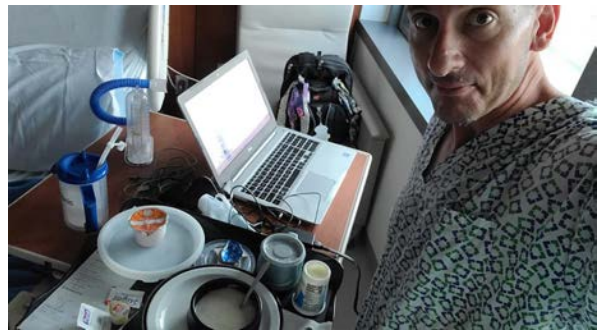
Pausing just long enough to let the pain medication wear off, Becker took to his YouTube channel to

challenge St. Paul's youth. Becker has been communicating with his Weston subjects through a series of "Coronavirus Monologues."

He suggested they focus on completing their end-of-year online studies successfully and then use some of their quarantine time at home to write a letter of thanks to a health care worker — perhaps someone they know personally or even to workers they didn't know.

"Right now these health care professionals are amazing people and they don't skip a beat," Becker concludes. "They are on the frontlines of battling this novel coronavirus disease that's spreading rapidly throughout our cities, states and nation. They are putting themselves in the path of this virus

— here in South Florida and around the world — in this unprecedented crisis. Our doctors, nurses, technicians, transporters, EMTs, pharmacists and everyone who supports patient care are rising to the occasion and caring for our most vulnerable populations."



The teachers and staff at **Our Savior/Plantation, FL** have always felt appreciated throughout the year, but especially in the last week when the nation focused on Teacher Appreciation. Thanks to Room Parents and School Board, drive by visits were made to our instructional staff to drop off thank you cards and to deliver yard signs to the teachers to share the thanks for students and their families. Pictured, top photo, are Pastor Tony Durante, Debra Kraft (middle school social studies and 6th grade math), Lerryn Latimer (school board), Linda Root (principal), Carol Tucek (school board). Lower photos, from left, Kristin Becker (middle school language arts), Kristin Volz (4th and 5th grades), Todd Bennett (middle school math and science), and Gabrielle Liebertz (VPK).

Mission:HAITI Responding With Food, Supplies to

The past year has been very difficult in Haiti. Several times the country was on a complete lockdown due to the political unrest, street protests and gang



by Helen Roenfeldt
District Executive Director
Mission:HAITI

violence. Haiti's economy is in shambles with runaway inflation, fear, food insecurity, political confusion and now the COVID-19 pandemic.

Even before the virus, one world food insecurity watchdog organization estimated that Haiti was in danger of losing fully one-third of its population to hunger related illness and starvation before the end of 2020. Seventy-five to eighty percent of the population believes that the pandemic is a ploy by the government to stop the protests and regain control, making social distancing and extra hygiene measures seem like part of the government's plan to continue a plan of misinformation and oppression. Even those who believe there is a dangerous virus in their midst must choose food and work to survive over possibly becoming ill since there is no unemployment insurance, SNAP, or public assistance in Haiti.

There is overcrowding whatever you do, whether it is riding a taptap or bus to work or market, shopping for food, walking along a street or even sleeping at home. Millions of people live practically stacked on top of each other with no sanitation,

contaminated drinking water, suffering from hunger and malnutrition, with little or no health care. Many public and private hospitals and clinics had already shut down before the pandemic started due to lack of funding and supplies. The government says it has spent 20

million dollars on COVID-19 but supplies no details as to how the money was spent. There are no community Food Banks, many international Non-governmental organization's have been leaving the country since the violence started last year and Government food sharing has been sporadic and pitiful, distributing only enough rice, oil and canned fish for one or two meals per family.

Reporting of COVID-19 illnesses and deaths is unreliable at best since there is minimal testing and the majority of Haitians have no funds or ability to get to a



doctor or hospital and either recover on their own or die at home.

There is some Good News, however. While Mission:HAITI has been able to take only two teams into Haiti since last August, the Lord has still used us to show his Love and Mercy in very difficult times. One of those teams was to connect with the families

and children in our GROWW program.

The GROWW initiative is designed to help the poorest families from giving children away to orphanages or worse, provide education for children and work toward greater self-sufficiency for the family. As a result of that trip we were able to start two new goat co-ops and enroll six new families in the program. This program now has 46 students enrolled in school or university and each of the families is now involved in a goat co-op, family business or mentoring program.

Lophane Laurent, our Field Director in Haiti, attended a week long independent study program and a conference in Fort Myers, FL at ECHO Global Farms, a 35+ year old organization dedicated to sustainable farming, particularly in the developing world.

ECHO provided Laurent with individualized study specific to the areas of Haiti that Mission:HAITI serves — including books and manuals (in both English and Haitian Creole), supplies and seeds. He also has now become part of an international network of help and resources. So far he has developed a test garden, trained Mr. Maxime Chaperon, as an assistant teacher and held two three-day workshops in Colminy and Deluge for 40 farmers. He and Maxime are overseeing the farmers test gardens to be sure they are learning how to apply their new skills and techniques.

Since food insecurity has been one of the biggest concerns of the past year, Mission: HAITI, with the

support of Lutheran Church Charities and our generous donors has provided more than \$26,000 in food for more than 4,000 people in the 12 communities or congregations that we walk alongside. Each distribution has contained a week or more of rice, oil, soap, seasonings, spaghetti, and canned fish for a family. We will continue to assist with nutritional assistance as funds are available.



We were able to take a medical team in February to hold a Community Health Outreach in four locations. We served hundreds of men, women and children who would have been unable to receive medical assistance otherwise.

Probably our most encouraging moment was the encounter Dr. Ken Seydel, of Hartland, Wisconsin had with the young man he had diagnosed with leprosy a year and a half before. The 19 year old had no hope or future when Dr. Ken met him in the clinic. He was shunned by his peers, could not continue school and could not even walk around freely in the community. Mission: HAITI paid for the year-long treatment he needed to undergo as well as his transportation to and from the Leprosy Hospital in Port-au-Prince. When he saw Dr. Ken this year he was all smiles and told us that he was back in school and

Pandemic-Ridden Nation

could now have a life again. We are so grateful that God put us in the life of this young man to show him the future and the hope that God has for him. Our Community Health Outreach also gave the opportunity to teach pregnant women, nursing mothers and give out new born layettes and the lovely dresses and great shorts to girls and boys, made by many of our Lutheran women's groups.

As the difficult reality of pandemic set in on Haiti, Laurent alerted us to the need for handwashing supplies and training. Again, we provided the funds and he and our Haitian team put together the supplies needed for handwashing station for our partner communities and congregations. More than 150 handwashing stations, containing a five-gallon covered container with a



spigot, five bricks of dry bleach and a case with 20 bars of soap were given to community leaders and designated families to set up a place and maintain the station that families could easily access. The designated caretakers were given instruction on the maintenance of the station and how to teach proper handwashing technique.



While this is the most challenging time we have faced in the 21 years Mission: HAITI has endeavored to answer God's calling to serve the poorest of the poor we have confidence in our Lord and Savior. We know the plans that he has for us and for our bothers and sister in Haiti are plans for good and not for evil. They are his plans for a future and a hope of all of us, together in Christ. 🌀



Before — and after — the 19-year-old boy's 12-month treatment for leprosy, funded by Mission:Haiti

Thrivent's Deb Beck Recognized For 2019 "Voices in Philanthropy"



Deb Beck, a financial consultant with Thrivent in Oxford, FL and a member of the Greater Villages Group, has received the 2019 Voices in Philanthropy (VIP) Award

ACCOLADES

from InFaith Community Foundation in Minneapolis. She is one of just 58 financial professionals nationwide to be recognized.

Beck is being honored for her exemplary service helping clients put their values and charitable goals into action. Selection was based on total outright and deferred charitable gifts made by Beck's clients through InFaith in 2019. These gifts will support a variety of local, national and global charities according to each client's wishes.

"Through Beck's work, she has helped her clients give in ways that match their interests and financial circumstances," says Mandy Tuong, InFaith Community Foundation president and CEO. "The end result not only benefits charities but ultimately has a positive impact in our shared community."

"I find immense fulfillment in helping my clients live out their values by giving to the causes and organizations that mean the most to them," Beck explains.

InFaith Community Foundation is a national charity with a mission to serve donors, spread joy and change lives. Through InFaith, giving is customized to each donor's charitable interests and financial circumstances. InFaith is a proven steward of these gifts, earning consistently high ratings from Charity Navigator and GuideStar for sound fiscal management, transparency and commitment to excellence. Together with donors, InFaith grants millions of dollars annually to charities serving local, national and global communities. InFaith works collaboratively with Thrivent and its financial professionals.

Thrivent Financial is represented in The Villages area by Greater Villages Group, which includes Deb Beck and Steven Molen. 🌀

Phyllis Wallace Passes to Glory

Phyllis Muhlenbruch Wallace, the creator and host of Lutheran Hour Ministries' *Woman to Woman* radio program, died peacefully at her home March 24 after a valiant fight with cancer.

The award-winning broadcast, a weekly syndicated radio program produced by Lutheran Hour Ministries, offered hope and help for the great challenges facing women. It had been the consummate vehicle for the kind of soul Phyllis had: poetic yet down to earth — and enlivened and fueled by her love for Jesus. *Woman to Woman* hosted many popular speakers including Charles Schulz, Lynne Cheney, Betty Ford, Suze Orman, and Amy Grant. By introducing her listeners to guests who had expertise on the topics being covered, Wallace filled each show with talk you could trust. Her objective was simple: "Inform, inspire, transform, and set fire to the hearts of women so they could apply God's very practical, loving genius to the demands of everyday life."

Wallace created *Woman to Woman* in 1991 to air on the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

official radio station in St. Louis — KFUE-AM. Lutheran Hour Ministries picked up the program in 1993 and expanded it to 400 stations in syndication. She hosted more than 1,400 broadcasts.

"I always enjoyed my time behind the microphone and I am glad the Lord has allowed me to reach so many men and women through *Woman to Woman*," Wallace recollected after her retirement in August, 201. "God gave me a dream and He made a lot of that dream come true. To have the privilege of lifting Jesus higher through people's stories of faith under fire has been awesome."

Prior to *Woman to Woman*, Wallace was an author, family counselor, and educator whose efforts working with youth addicted to drugs were recognized by the Governor of Illinois. She also led a weekly Bible study for more than 100 women from 14 different church backgrounds at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Collinsville, Illinois, for 10 years, an experience that opened numerous doors to serve as a

keynote speaker at conferences and seminars around the country. She spoke several times in the Florida-Georgia District — oftentimes partnering with Betty Duda, Jean Garton, Marva Dawn and her longtime friend and author, The Rev. Dr. Paul Maier.

"Phyllis had an encouraging and optimistic, refreshing energy that always came through in her stories, frequently eliciting robust laughter and heartfelt tears as she shared how the Truth sets us free," Maier expressed.

Phyllis was born on March 3, 1941, in Pittsburgh, to Carl and Agnes Muhlenbruch, who predeceased her. She is survived by her sister, Joan (Fred) Wenk; Richard, her husband of 55 years; four children: Jennifer (Phil) Ebeling, Brooks (Katie) Wallace, Hannah (Mark) Murray, and Sarah (Ben) Doepke; and nine grandchildren.

Phyllis found bountiful joy in spending summers with her family and friends in Arcadia, Michigan where the family owned several summer homes. It gave Phyllis the opportunity to keynote week-long Bible studies and lead workshops at Camp Arcadia, a Lutheran-based camp on the NW Michigan shoreline. Camp Arcadia came into

Grace/Winter Haven, FL Member

Longtime "Veterans of the Cross" Participant, Janet Behrens



Janet Elizabeth (Wessel) Behrens, 84, of Seymour, Indiana, died on Wednesday, May 13, 2020 at Lutheran Community Home. She was born in Brownstown (Wegan), IN, the daughter of the late Virgil Wessel and Bertha

(Redicker) Wessel. Shortly after birth she and her twin brother, James, were baptized in their home. She was confirmed in Redeemer Lutheran Church, Seymour, IN, in December 1950.

Janet graduated from Immanuel Lutheran School, Seymour High School, and Concordia Teachers College, Seward, Nebraska on August 15, 1963. A Masters Degree in Communications was conferred on her at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln in June 1971.

For 35 years Janet was an elementary teacher and a professor at Concordia University, Seward, NE, of which 19 years were in Lutheran Schools in Stuttgart, AR, Jonesville, IN, Long Beach, CA and eventually Grace/Winter Haven, FL.

While at Concordia/Seward, she served as Dean of Women and professor in the English/Speech Department. Her Master's Thesis was "Oral Interpretation of Biblical Literature." While at Concordia she initiated and directed a student speech choir.

Janet married Dr. Floyd F. Behrens, Seward, NE, at Peace Lutheran Church, Arvada, CO. God blessed them with a son, Joel. He and his wife, Heather, Venice, CA, are employed in the movie industry in the area of special effects. Jan and Floyd made a full-time relocation from Winter Haven, FL to Seymour in 2010 to be near nieces and nephews.

Janet was involved in a variety of parish activities while teaching. After retirement in 1998 she remained active in congregational women's groups at Grace as well as with Immanuel/Seymour, IN.

Janet and Floyd were active committee members of the Florida/Georgia District's

District Musician & DCE

Esther Barg Called to Rest

Esther Marie Barg, 65, passed away in April at her Yulee, FL, residence. She was born in Shawano, FL and moved to Yulee five years ago from Melbourne, FL. She was a Concordia/St. Paul, MN graduate with a Director of Christian Education major and a minor in Family Life Ministry.



Barg was the DCE and Church Organist at Lutheran Church of the Redeemer/Melbourne, FL from 2004-2008. She was a Convention Advisor to the LCMS in 2007 as well as having served on various planning committees for both middle and high school District Youth

Gatherings. Barg was a member of the District Youth and Family Ministry Association and regularly brought youth to the FLGA District gatherings.

Prior to working in the FLGA District she worked at churches in Minnesota, Kansas and Ohio.

A proficient church organist, Esther was also a talented vocalist and played both piano and guitar.

Her hobbies were both quilting and knitting.

No services were planned due to COVID-19. ❧

District Early Childhood Educator

Cheryl Dance Enters Everlasting Life

Cheryl Dance was a non-rostered teacher in the Florida-Georgia District and was on staff at Epiphany/Tallahassee, FL for a number of years before developing an exceptional Early Childhood program at Trinity/Crawfordville, FL south of Tallahassee in the panhandle of Florida. She and her husband, Dr. Donnie Dance, were married just shy of 52 years and were members of University/Tallahassee. She is survived by Donnie, two sons, six grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

“She was determined and committed to serving families and children in the surrounding communities — with a passion for introducing them to Jesus,” said her pastor, the Rev. Jay Winters of University Lutheran Church. Cheryl served as a member of National Lutheran School Accreditation teams and was highly regarded by her colleagues in early childhood education throughout the District and LCMS. ❧



being through a generous gift of land from the Henry Starke family, the town of Arcadia's lumber baron and a dedicated Lutheran.

According to her daughter, Hannah, a celebration of Phyllis's life will be held in the future, when current COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted. Memorial contributions may be made to Good Shepherd Lutheran School for the Phyllis Muhlenbruch Wallace Scholarship Fund, Concordia Seminary for the Carl & Agnes Muhlenbruch Honorary Scholarship or to Camp Arcadia, 3046 Oak Street Arcadia, MI 49613. ❧

Called Home

program “Veterans of the Cross,” the annual retreat held in Florida for retired Lutherans. She and Floyd were privileged to teach together in partnership at both Concordia/Seward and Grace/Winter Haven.

Janet was preceded in death by her parents, Virgil and Bertha Wessel, brothers Victor, Eugene, Robert, Charles, Richard, twin brother, James, and brother-in-law, Bill Dailey. She is survived by her husband, Floyd, son, Joel, and daughter-in-law, Heather, sister, Agnes Dailey, brother, Allan and his wife, Deloris Wessel, sister-in-law, Ginny Wessel, as well as numerous nieces and nephews.

Jan knew the joy of loving - her Savior, family, siblings and their families, church, and numerous friends. Her kindness and warm smile were contagious. “Because I live you will live also.” — John 14:19

A private family visitation and funeral service took place at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Seymour, IN. ❧



The
BACKPAGE
Changes of address, additions or deletions: LutheranLife@aol.com

Lutheran Life
Florida-Georgia District
Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod
5850 T. G. Lee Blvd., Suite 500
Orlando, FL 32822-4410

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LCEF Provide MEVO Cameras to Assist District Congregations with Live Streaming

Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) leaped into action in the early stages of the pandemic when it became apparent that corporate worship in the sanctuaries of District congregations was going to be impossible. According to Jay Wendland, FLGA LCEF District Vice President, "we were able to provide 25 congregations with \$400 MEVO cameras to allow them to immediately launch virtual worship through online streaming to their YouTube channels. Recipient congregations were:

Savior of All/Cartersville, GA
St. Paul/Peachtree City, GA
Trinity/Sebring, FL
University/Tallahassee, FL
St. Marks/Tucker, GA
Grace/Arcadia, FL
Bethlehem/Jacksonville, FL
Hope/Orlando, FL
Trinity/Orlando, FL
Faith/Parrish, FL
St. Paul/Miami, FL
Our Savior/Lake Worth, FL
Concordia/Miami, FL
Christ the King/Riverview, FL
Trinity/Ft. Pierce, FL
Our Savior/Zephyrhills, FL
LC of the Redeeme/Sanford, FL
Faith/Clewiston, FL
St. Peters/Belle Glade, FL.

"This was a Godsend to me because I immediately transitioned from using my phone to the MEVO camera and the change was dramatic," explains the Rev.


Angel Ramos who is serving two congregations — Faith/Clewiston and St. Peter's/Belle Glade, FL. "We just were able to substantially improve our live streaming while serving dual parishes."

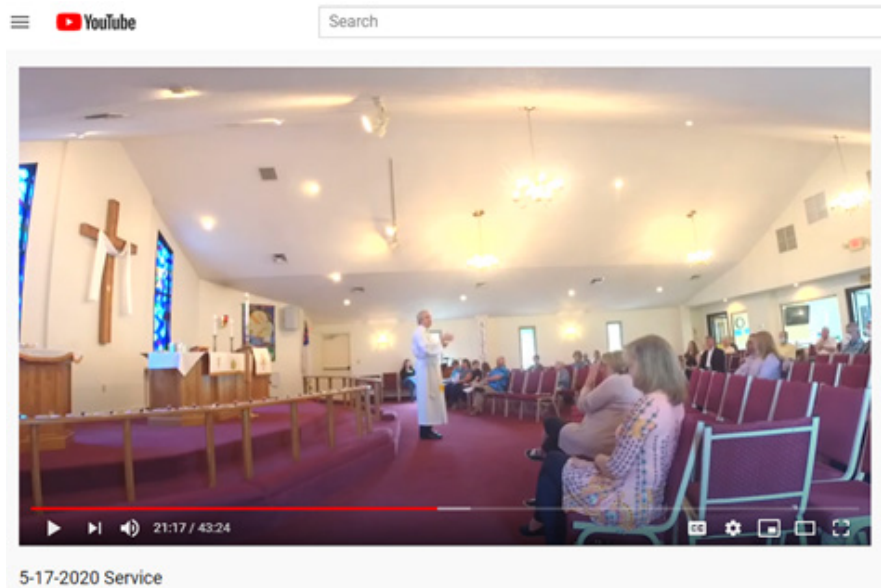
According to Austin Wessel, the East Region Marketing Manager for LCEF, "these cameras really have a value-added benefit for our ministry partners. They stream up to 1080p @ 6Mbps and record up to 4K 30fps. Battery life is approximately one hour. The cameras included continuous power cables, and a built-in microphone."

Direct connection to Video Platforms — such as Facebook Live, Periscope, Twitter, Vimeo Livestream,

YouTube, RTMP — enables congregations to livestream as well as record worship, Bible studies, blogs to be seen at later dates.

"There are really good YouTube videos that provide a comprehensive overview of the Mevo Plus and some of its features," Wessel explains. "The videos are also helpful with tutorials to maximize benefits."

"Our Savior/Zephyrhills, FL began using the MEVO as early as April 12," states the Rev. Tod Shouse, "and we have measured more than 1,700 total views to our virtual worship during the last six weeks from our congregations Facebook page." 



Pastor Mike Zwemke at Savior Of All/Cartersville, GA introduces live streaming on May 17th through the congregation's YouTube channel.