

LUTHERAN[®] LIFE

The Newsmagazine of the
Florida-Georgia District LCMS
October-November 2021



**District Welcomes
Fifth Comfort Dog**

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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Lutheran Church Charities Comfort Dog Ministry Ex

Launched in August 2008, the Lutheran Church Charities (LCC) K-9 Comfort Dog Ministry is a national human-care ministry embracing the unique, calming nature and skills of purebred Golden Retrievers. The LCC K-9 Comfort Dogs are a bridge for compassionate ministry, opening doors for conversation about faith and creating opportunities to share the mercy, compassion, presence and proclamation of Jesus Christ.

In 2008, there was a shooting at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb. Some of the volunteers at LCC brought their Golden Retrievers over to the school to bring comfort to the grieving students. They were so well received that Tim Hetzner, CEO of LCC, decided to provide Golden Retrievers to Lutheran Churches throughout the country. There are more than 130 of these highly trained dogs who, along with their teams, share the "Mercy, Compassion, Presence and Proclamation of Jesus Christ to those who are suffering and in need."

Jemimah — named for Job's oldest of the three beautiful daughters God gave to him after making Job prosperous again — is the name of **St Paul/Boca Raton, FL's** new Golden Retriever, arriving in September. She is the District's 5th canine. Luke, from **Christ The Shepherd/Alpharetta, GA** recently retired.

"There are currently four comfort dogs in the FLGA District," reveals Nikki Kubowicz, Top Dog for St Paul. "Like Jemimah, all of them are working animals, trained to interact with people of all ages and circumstances who are suffering and in need. The dogs participate in scheduled and special events. Dogs are permanently placed with churches, schools and other ministries involved in Christian human care by LCC."

"Lizzie was the first dog in the Florida/Georgia district in 2016 when she was 15 months old," offers Cindy Baldwin, Top Dog at **Trinity/Savannah, GA**.

Luke was the next dog placed, at **Christ The Shepherd/Alpharetta, GA**. Although geographically in Florida-Georgia, Christ The Shepherd is a



Trinity/Orlando, FL's Peace pictured with Ms. Judy, one of her newest handlers.

member of the English District of the LCMS. According to Baldwin, Luke was retired in April of this year.

"Hope was the next LCC dog to join ... placed at **Faith/Marietta, GA** and then Peace at **Trinity/Orlando, FL** arrived in June 2018," Baldwin continues.

Currently in line to receive the next inbound canine is **St. Luke's/Oviedo, FL**. St. Luke's is a member of the SELC District of the LCMS.

"Both Lizzie and Luke were in Parkland, FL after the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shootings on Valentine's Day, 2018. Lizzie was recently at the fifth anniversary of the Pulse Nightclub shooting on June 12, 2016 in Orlando. Lizzie, Luke and Peace all went to



Jemimah gives a caring glance to (from left) Tonya Haberlein and Sue Merritt at her installation service at St. Paul/Boca Raton, FL with Pastor Steve Carretto. This was Carretto's first canine installation.

Expands in Florida-Georgia District

Alabama after Hurricane Sally and many of the comfort dogs were in South Florida's Surfside after that Champlain Towers condominium collapse.

"Each dog receives no less than 2,000 hours in training prior to being placed. Lizzie spends 1 to 2 hours at the facilities we visit, we schedule 2 per day most days and we are in the community at least 5 days a week — assisted living, senior centers, schools, safe shelter, community gatherings, home visits, anywhere we are invited.

"An amazing amount of training occurs with the handlers, too," states Linda Hibbits-Helm, one of Jemimah's handlers. "We were thoroughly trained just to get to this point and we are enthusiastic to have Jemimah based at St. Paul. Permanent placement includes the training for handlers and caregivers along with ongoing support, coaching and training. The Comfort Dogs live in the homes of assigned caregivers. In Jemimah's case she'll primarily live with Ben and Sara Willocks and from time to time with Abbey Houren and Matt Wargo."

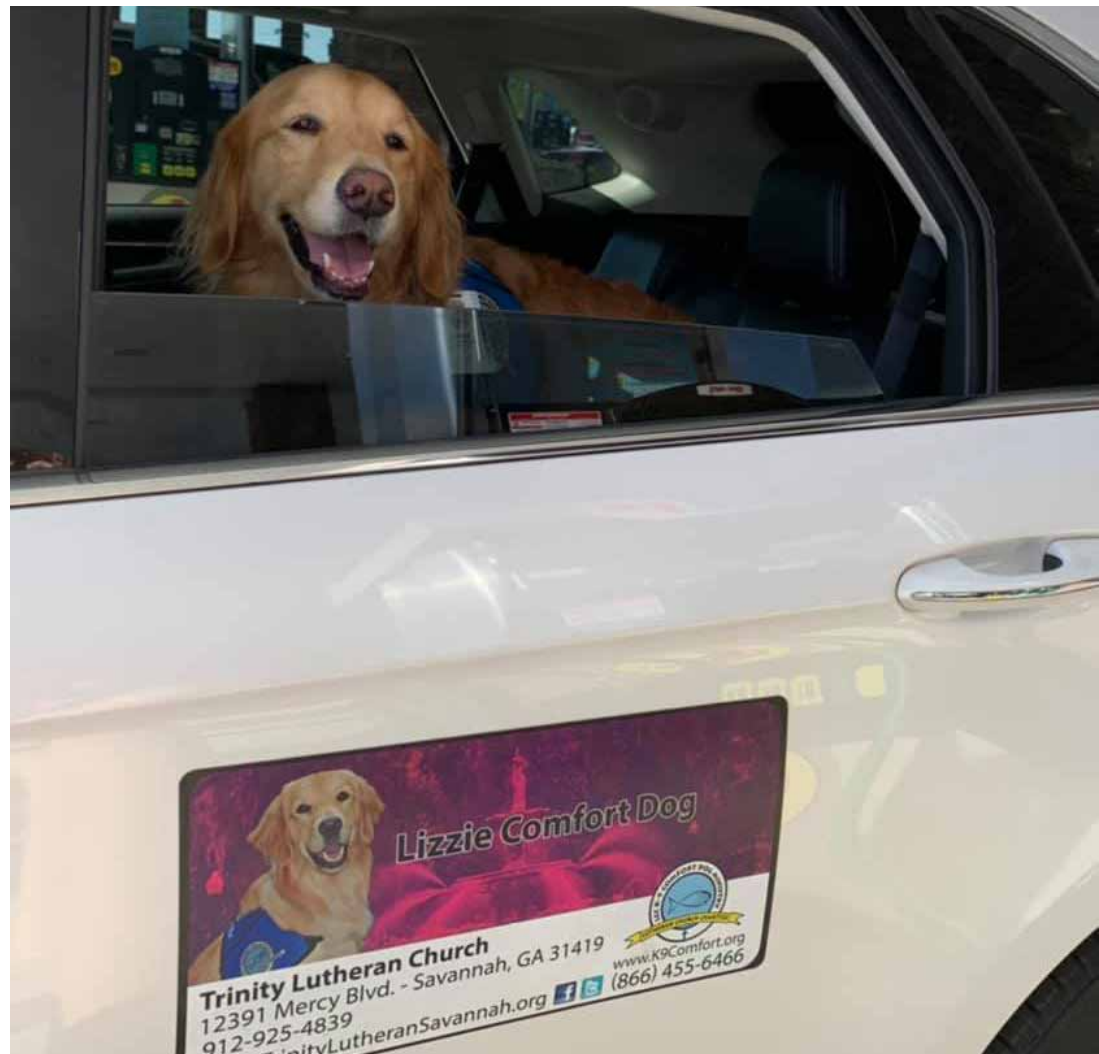
The LCC K-9 Comfort Dogs serve every day in the community in which they are placed and are dispatched in times of disaster and crisis to bring comfort to all those affected, including first responders and the volunteers who serve them. LCC K-9 Comfort Dogs were in New York and New Jersey visiting victims of Superstorm Sandy, and in Connecticut after the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

Lutheran Church Charities currently has more than 130 Comfort Dogs serving in more than 27 states. LCC operates training facilities in Illinois and Nebraska. ▲



Above — **St Paul/Boca Raton FL's** team with Jemimah — Wayne Lindeman, Linda Hibbits-Helm, Susan Merritt, Tonya Haberlein, Abbey Houren, Matthew Wargo, Sara & Ben Willocks and Nikki Kubowicz. Kubowicz is Top Dog at St. Paul.

Below — Lizzie, from **Trinity/Savannah, GA** is chauffeured in style as she makes appearances around the FLGA District with Trinity's Top Dog, Cindy Baldwin.



COVER STORY

Recently I was given a book entitled *The Great Sending*, assembled and edited by Rev. Dr. Wilbert J. Sohns. It is a series of Bible Studies to refocus God's people on God's heart for the world working through you and me. We have a sending God and His heart aches for the world He created. Since mankind's fall into sin God has desired to restore a relationship with His creation, something we, in our own strength, are incapable of doing. It made me realize again the nature of our God, sending us into the mission field.

A quick survey of Scripture reminds us how God has been sending us into the world since the earliest of times. Adam and Eve, because of disobedience, were sent out of the garden — but they were sent into the world. God could have destroyed them right then and there and no one would have ever known. He could have declared a “do over,” but even then He had a plan.

was so convicted they were willing to lay down their life for Jesus. As you study the Bible you can find even more instances of God sending His children into the world.

Our God always does His work with purpose. He leaves nothing to chance, even when we can't comprehend it. He sent Jesus to a people who despised Him. John tells us, “He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him. But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God...”

Jesus was sent to redeem the people of Israel, but many in the nation rejected Him. However, to see Jesus only as one sent to the nation of Israel is too small a thing. In one of the most beloved Scriptures in the whole Bible we read, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son

judgment on the sins of the world, often unwilling to look in the mirror of the law to see our own sinfulness. Perhaps the difference is we know the truth of God's forgiveness of our sins through the death and resurrection of Jesus. This is the very message we are sent to the world to share.

Throughout the past twelve years I have seen a variety of things I would call “distractions” which keep us from fulfilling the mission of God. Certainly there are plenty of “worldly” distractions which can divide people. We wrestle with political divides, with racial divides, and even whether or not masks should be worn. These things infiltrate many churches at a time when unity is most necessary. Distractions are things which tear at the fabric of the unity within our congregations, allowing the devil to plow deeper to divide the church. He knows if he can distract us from God's mission it won't get done.

THE GREAT SENDING • • • • •

IN A YEAR OF Jubilee

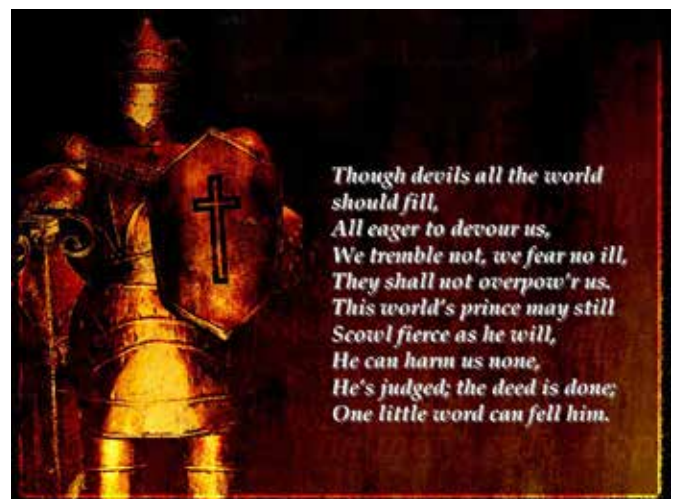
Noah was sent out as a messenger of hope to the world. Abraham was sent to a new land to become the Father of many nations. Jacob, who ran in fear of his brother, was actually sent with purpose. Joseph was sent to gentiles to prepare the way for Israel. Moses was sent to the people of Israel to secure their freedom. Joshua was sent to lead God's people forward. Samuel, David, Daniel all were sent by God. The prophets were sent into the world to proclaim the Word of God. John the Baptist was sent into the world to prepare the way for the Messiah. The Twelve, on the very night of the Resurrection, were sent into the world with these powerful and memorable words: “As the Father has sent Me, so I send you...” Almost all of the twelve would leave the confines of Galilee to proclaim the good news of Jesus to the world, and with some consequences. Each

into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him.”

For many of us, this was among the first Bible verses we memorized in Sunday School. It states a very simple, yet profound truth. Jesus was sent to save the world from sin and by faith we have access to His love and salvation.

It's easy to neglect the second half of this verse, the part about condemnation. We are living in a time when the Church is not known so much for the love of Jesus as it is for the condemnation of the world. Whether intentional or not, the reputation of many churches is one of standing in

Martin Luther wrote,
*“Though devils all the world
should fill, All eager to devour
us. We tremble not, we fear no
ill, They shall not overpower us.
This world's prince may still Scowl
fierce as he will, He can harm us
none, He's judged; the deed is done;
One little word can fell him.”*



*Though devils all the world
should fill,
All eager to devour us,
We tremble not, we fear no ill,
They shall not overpow'r us.
This world's prince may still
Scowl fierce as he will,
He can harm us none,
He's judged; the deed is done;
One little word can fell him.*

This is the Word made flesh — Jesus, our Savior. He already defeated the devil at the Cross, and it is at His Cross we find our unity. We have this promise through the book of ISAIAH, “No weapon that is fashioned against you shall succeed, and you shall refute every tongue that rises against you in judgment. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD and their vindication from me, declares the LORD.”

ISAIAH 54:17 ESV. We have a great heritage and our heritage is in Jesus!

Rather than letting Satan distract us, let our focus be on the celebrations in the church. Instead

**EVERY SUNDAY
IS AN OPPORTUNITY
TO CELEBRATE
OUR FAITH AND
LIFE IN JESUS!**

of all the things which might divide we celebrated the baptisms, confirmations, installations, and accomplishments, the things that unite us in bearing fruit. Every Sunday is an opportunity to celebrate our faith and life in Jesus. As we gather around the Word and Sacraments how might we make it a time to celebrate and fix our eyes on Jesus? For our future is fixed on Jesus and He is the bringer of unity and our cause for celebration.

In the Old Testament, in the book of Leviticus, we hear about the year of Jubilee. It was time set aside to reset. It was a time for renewal. And while not everything fits, for us a year of Jubilee might be seen as a time for repentance and renewal as we grow in God’s Word. In LEVITICUS 18 we read, “Therefore you shall do My statutes and keep My rules and perform them, and then you will dwell in the land securely. The land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill and dwell in it securely.” God’s great desire is for us to bear fruit as His disciples. Jesus reminds us, “You



did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you to go and bear fruit — fruit that would last.”

We don’t bear fruit by trying harder. We bear fruit as we spend time immersed in God’s Word and see His mission for the world clearly in the pages of Scripture.

With all that in mind, I intend to declare 2022 a year of Jubilee in the Florida-Georgia District. As I come closer to the end of my term I was blessed with an additional year to serve here. This unexpected extension is, for me, a time to celebrate God’s grace, for God has placed each of us here for such a time as this. A year of Jubilee is a great time to refocus on our unity around the cross of Jesus, remembering His sacrifice for our sins, and His sending.

For the District, it will be a year when all are encouraged to focus on the local mission of God by encouraging a shared vision and unifying stand on the Word of God — allowing the Word to transform us into the missionaries He has called us to be, beginning in the communities in which He has placed us, connecting people to Jesus! The Great Sending is a wonderful format for such an approach.

For a congregation, it could be an all-out opportunity to gather people in the Word of God. Many of our congregations have already done programs like the Red Letter Challenge. The book, *The Great Sending*, offers yet another opportunity which includes a 42 week preaching series and a weekly Bible Study.

An opportunity to celebrate and grow in our unity while creating a deeper passion for God’s Word and mission in the communities of the Florida-Georgia District.

Seeing your community with “missionary eyes” free from distractions, will not only transform your ministry, but it can transform your community!

It starts with prayer and repentance for allowing distractions to cloud God’s mission. Each of us could no doubt identify particular distractions in our places of ministry. How do you move beyond

the distractions and really focus on the Word and Sacraments, which send us into the world.

Years ago, as a young pastor, at my invitation a pastor in my circuit presented a workshop to my little congregation. I honestly don’t remember much about it, but what I do remember is the focus of ministry he shared. He reminded us the role of the church is to “bring them in, build them up, and send them out.” It’s a great definition of discipleship, those sent on a mission for the sake of the world.

My hope is many congregations throughout the Florida-Georgia District will join us in understanding God’s sending mission of His people, and celebrate a year of Jubilee. Whether it’s because of God’s Spirit at work through His Word (which is His promise) or simply to prepare for a new District President, 2022 is a year to celebrate God’s Sending as we celebrate a year of Jubilee. You will be hearing more about it soon!



Your fellow worker in the harvest,

Gregory A. Walton

PRESIDENT
FLORIDA-GEORGIA DISTRICT
LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD



JOIN THE 10:02 PRAYER TEAM!

Ladies & Gentlemen
Set Your Cell Phones Today!



by Peter Meier
Executive Director of
Missions and Outreach
Florida-Georgia District
pmeier@flgadistrict.org

What is the one prayer Jesus tells His disciples to pray? Most people would say it's the Lord's Prayer (LUKE 11:1-4, also MATTHEW 6:9-15). According to Luke, when He gave the Lord's Prayer, Jesus said, "When you pray, pray this way..." But Jesus didn't tell His disciples to pray the Lord's Prayer. Some may disagree because of how Matthew records it. We can discuss whether or not Jesus actually told His disciples (us) to pray the Lord's Prayer. Nevertheless, it's the best prayer and one we need to pray often.

However, there is one prayer that Jesus actually did tell His disciples (us) to pray. LUKE 10:2, Jesus told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field." Matthew also shares this command, MATTHEW 9:37-38, Then Jesus said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

If we, as Jesus' disciples today, are praying any prayer, let it be the one Jesus clearly told us to pray! This prayer can be prayed every day by every Christian person with the confidence that Jesus will hear and answer. This prayer can be

adapted to any and every situation in which we find ourselves, using every day events and people as the objects of our petition.

Here's your invitation! Join me every day in the 10:02 prayer (LUKE 10:2). Take your cellular phone and set your alarm for a 10:02 (am or pm – you choose either or both). I have mine set for every day except for Sunday, as I don't want it to disturb a worship service! (However, I do have my Fitbit alarm set for 10:02 every day of the week.) When the alarm goes off, whoever I'm with at the time, or whatever project I'm working on becomes part of my harvest prayer.

I remind the Lord of His invitation to pray, and of the need for harvest workers — not

just pastors or professional church workers, but *everyday disciples and missionaries* who know they are sent by the Lord into His harvest fields (places where they live, work, and play) to love, serve, witness, and share the Good News of the Gospel. If I'm visiting a church or with a pastor, I pray for that ministry. If I'm with staff, I invite them to pray with me for

our work in The Florida-Georgia District. If I'm on the road or in a store or a restaurant, I ask God to raise up disciples to gather in the harvest from this place. You get the idea! It's simple. You can do it. Can you imagine if every pastor, teacher, and church member — every disciple — in



the Florida-Georgia District would pray together every day for God to raise up and send workers into His harvest field! Can you even begin to imagine how God might answer these prayers? We know that this is His will, because he told us to pray this prayer. And we know that Jesus said, "Whatever you ask the Father in my name, I will give it to you." In fact,

He said it more than once, see JOHN 14:13, JOHN 15:16, and JOHN 16:23.

So join me! Lord of the Harvest, You have invited me to pray for workers in your Harvest field. Send me and send all Your disciples as workers, witnesses where we live, work, and play. Help me to see the great harvest of people who still need to know

the love of Jesus, and give me the opportunity and courage to share Jesus with them. May my words and actions help to bring in the harvest! Raise up more workers from our churches and neighborhoods who seize everyday opportunities to connect people to Jesus! In the name of Jesus. Amen. ▲

Good Shepherd/Gainesville, GA Steps Into 10:02 Prayer Team Ministry During Pastoral Vacancy

Good Shepherd/Gainesville, GA recently stepped into a Pastoral Vacancy, and decided to use the 10:02 Prayer as their response. Here is their story, shared by Jim Wetherton who leads the Good Shepherd prayer team.

"When our congregation was informed this spring that our Pastor of 7 years, Zach Hoffman, had accepted a call to the "Minnesota Tundra" we experienced a period of chill ourselves. Vacancies never come at a "good time"(COVID-19), but in the Lord's time.

So, as we reset the oars on our "Good Ship Good Shepherd," we discovered some important seeds had been sown for us and were there to encourage and sustain us. This is our unfolding story.

"First, Pastor Zach's final sermons had one overriding theme, *Keep Going!* We took his challenge!

"Second, he made sure we connected with Dr. Peter Meier, FLGA Executive Director of Missions and Outreach. Peter introduced us to the LUKE 10:02 prayer plan which provided our guiding scripture.

"Congregational leadership immediately jumped in and among their guidelines was to select a Prayer Captain and Team for the vacancy process. Our 10:02 Pastoral Vacancy Response:

1. Prayer Captain and Prayer Team were selected.
2. We selected LUKE 10:02 to be our guiding scripture.
3. Beginning June 13, our first vacancy Sunday, we changed our 10:00 AM Sunday

worship service to 10:02 AM.

4. We open every worship service with LUKE 10:02 read by a lay reader from the lectern.

After opening services with the 10:02 reading we add this prayer: "Please Lord send us into the harvest field and join us soon with our new shepherd."

5. We have asked all church group meetings to open with LUKE 10:02.

6. We invite our entire congregation to stop at 10:02 each day, read LUKE and pray accordingly for our congregation.

7. We named our call committee the 10:02 Call Committee.

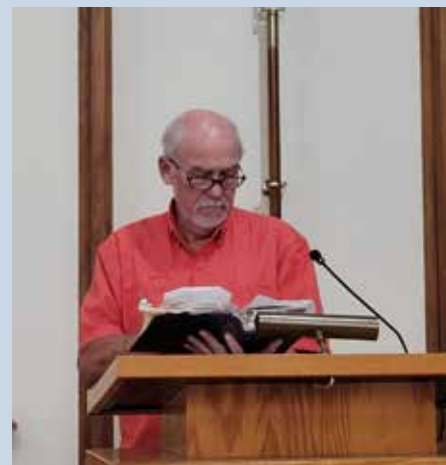
8. We established a 10:02 Prayer Team to partner with the 10:02 Call Committee.

9. Each member of the 10:02 Call Committee has selected a scripture as their guidepost during the process.

10. Each 10:02 Call Committee member has a partner on the 10:02 Prayer Team and they have shared their personal scriptures. The 10:02 Prayer Team members set aside time to pray for their Call Committee partner and the entire call team and process every time they meet.

11. Every Wednesday at 10:02 our church secretary sends an email blast to our congregation reminding them of the 10:02 call to prayer.

12. Our weekly congregation update email closes with LUKE 10:02.



Jim Wetherton reads from the pulpit on Sunday morning at 10:02

13. We are experiencing growth in missions, ministries and in person attendance as sown seeds are taking root.

Our congregation is learning that during our vacancy period, we are not without a Shepherd and that we have a mission and many ministries that are part of that mission. He has brought us strong support and encouragement from many sources including but not limited to The FLGA District, Vacancy Pastor Dan Sparling, Pastor Dave Wesche, Pastor Gary Denchke, Pastor Vic Belton and each other within the Good Shepherd congregation family. We are witnessing a surge of energy within our congregation as this unfolds including new ministries and growth in existing ones. This has also led us to begin planning October Ministries Month. God is answering our



Education Administrator Retires After 21-Year Term of Service

September 30th was the last day in the office for Lynda Voss. Lynda (front and center) has retired as the administrative assistant for school ministries executive director, Jen Tanner. Previously Voss served as Mark Brink's executive assistant. She stayed on after Brink's retirement to help with the transition for Jennifer Tanner.

Voss started with the District in 2000.

Pictured at left (from left) are Laura Zirbel, Executive Director of Finance and Administration; Jay Wendland, Florida Georgia District Vice President LCEF; Jennifer Tanner, Executive Director School & Youth Ministries; Cindy Hammerstrom, Communications Coordinator and School & Youth Ministries Assistant; Lynda Voss, District President Rev. Dr. Greg Walton; and Debra Arrington, Administrative Assistant to Rev. Dr. Peter Meier (Missions) and Laura Zirbel. Dr. Meier was out of the office on the road this day. ▲

Florida-Georgia HR Services Kick-Off



Let's face it, human resources issues can be complicated in ministry. Concordia Plans has partnered with an industry leader in Human Resource solutions to offer **Human Resource Services**.

The Florida Georgia District has made this valuable service available to our congregations beginning October 1, 2021 for a six month trial basis at no cost with no obligation.

HR Services provides professional help and dependable HR resources, including:

- Staying well informed on current legislation (i.e. COVID related needs).
- Expert assistance walking you through HR challenges.
- Building or updating an employee handbook.
- Access to both an online platform with a plethora of resources and access to an HR call center staffed by certified HR professionals.
- Developing HR documents.

Many congregations are already benefiting from this service and there have been great testimonials.

"The driving force for the decision for St. Paul to sign up for HR Services was the need to update our employee manual and all HR forms. We do not have a dedicated staff member for HR, so over the years many of our documents and policies have become outdated. The employee manual building wizard is a great tool for helping congregations build or retool their HR documents." Joel Dietrich – St. Paul, Peachtree City, GA.

"In the past, when HR issues arose, I had to contact our labor attorney for guidance. And, if it involved more than just a phone conversation, it became billable time. The HR Services provides a multitude of services, from answering HR questions, to establishing COVID protocols, to policy and handbook templates that may be customized. It has been a much simpler process for me overall. I really enjoy the HR Snapshot emails I receive; they more often than not, provide answers to questions I might not have had a chance to email about." Marybeth Keenan – St. Paul, Boca Raton, FL.



Space is limited for this opportunity. For more information, please contact lzirbel@flgadistrict.org.

District Nominations Open Dec. 14th

Nominations will open December 14th for the following Florida-Georgia District positions:

- FLGA District President
- Secretary
- District Committee for Nominations
- Synod Convention Nominations

FLGA Board of Directors consisting of from each region:

- 1 Vice President
- 2 Lay Persons
- 3 at-large commissioned ministers

Nominations must be received to the District Secretary by March 19, 2022. Nominations forms will be available on the District website and from the District Office.

In order to nominate you must first have permission of the individual, and the nominee shall complete a biographical form to validate their willingness for their name to stand. It is extremely important to include the phone number and email of nominated individuals, as this helps the Nominations Committee in verifying their willingness to serve ▲

The pastor at Grace Lutheran Church didn't think much of it when he did it, but after the last verse of the last hymn, he left his microphone on and from the back of the church he said loudly into the silence... "love somebody this week!"

That caught a lot of people by surprise but there were lots of smiles. You see, the sermon that

Sunday was about God's surprising love in Christ from ROMANS 5:8, "But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Yes, the pastor was inviting people to surprise other people with God's love. So often there is a knee jerk response of being unkind when we are slighted. People don't expect others to be nice, let alone loving.

Then the next Sunday the pastor said the same thing.

Then the next.

And then on the following Sunday, the Johnson kids went to the lectern during the offering. They told the story about how their grumpy next door neighbor, who was a widow, let her dog dig under the fence and destroy their flower garden. They had never bothered to stop and get to know her after years of living next door. But instead of getting angry, they wanted to surprise the neighbor with an act of love. They caught the dog, gave the dog some treats and a bath and returned it to the neighbor. When they did that they found out two things. First, the neighbor was actually very nice but getting old and had a hard time keeping up with the dog. Secondly, they discovered that they were more blessed in loving their next door neighbor than being frustrated at her.

The Sunday after that another person took to the lectern. She and her husband were driving early one morning and saw a car on the side of the road stopped. It seemed odd to them and so they thought, well, God surprised me with His love, we'd like to love someone today. With that, they discovered a young girl crying. She was trying to get to her first day on the job but her older car



had broken down. To make matters worse her cell phone had died too and she couldn't even call anyone for help. So the wife got out and loaned the girl her phone to call her new job while the husband checked on the car. Long story short she got to work just a few minutes late and they exchanged numbers to keep in touch. The girl felt like this couple were gifts from God. What a surprise!

Then the Sunday after that, the father of the children who returned the dog went to the microphone. He said that he noticed that the widow next door had a dangerous step on her front porch. After he fixed the fence, where the dog entered their yard, he talked to her and she agreed to let him fix her porch. It turned into a long project that took all day but it gave him a reason to get to know her better. They talked about life and the giver of life, Jesus Christ. She had not been to church in decades but was moved to tears as he said a brief prayer with her before he left. They exchanged telephone numbers and looked forward to being helpful. What a surprise.

Then this past Sunday, a business man in the church, who was always quiet, went to the lectern during the offering. He said that the pastor's encouragement to surprise someone with God's love really touched him. He immediately thought of a receptionist at his office building. Every morning he would say hello and she would grumble in an ugly tone about something in response. Most everyone over time had chosen to ignore her. She just was not a happy person. But he took

it as a challenge to love her in the name of Jesus. So over time he deliberately and intentionally stopped and not just said hello but asked her how she was doing.

For weeks she rebuffed his kindness. But then when he persisted in his gentle care she seemed to soften a bit. She would

grumble and say a word or two about her son or her troubles. He would ask if he could pray for her in his daily prayers. Day after day he would return and ask again about her son or the other troubles she mentioned and ask how God was answering his prayers. One day she said with teary eyes that some very unexpected things have happened that gave them hope. She even admitted she is reading her Bible again. He told the congregation that he is sure that this has been a much bigger blessing to him than it has been to her.

Now, at the end of each service, instead of saying an announcement or "Go in peace and serve the



by Scott Gress
Lutheran Counseling Services
Leadership Coach
Florida-Georgia District
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Lord" the pastor still says, "Go love someone this week!" or "surprise someone with God's love." And every week, someone new will tell a story about how God put someone in their path to love.

God is at work through the body of Christ at Grace Lutheran Church. Without fail each one tells how they are more blessed than the one they are surprising with God's love. ▲

Rev. Scott Gress believes in Growing People for Ministry by focusing on leadership, discipleship and teamwork. Contact Scott if you are interested in him working with you or your church. A free 30 minutes strategy session is available. The Coaching Leader Podcast is also available on iTunes and his YouTube page. You can contact Scott through email scottgress@me.com or his blog page scottgress.com or at 561-542-4472

Mission: Haiti's Board Passionate About Continuing the Work of Helen Roenfeldt Following Her Covid Death

When Mission: Haiti director Helen Roenfeldt passed away from COVID last February, board members quickly realized the need to handle this unexpected transition for the sake of the mission to our partners in Haiti. Roenfeldt had been a very “hands on” director.

“We expanded the board in March and April, inviting new members to serve and then in May we engaged the services of Cornerstone Consulting to help us through a revisiting of our vision, mission and strategic plan — taking what was in the heart of Helen and putting it on paper and within the structure of the board,” explains Paul Klenner, Vice President.

A magnitude 7.2 earthquake struck Haiti in the southwest part of the island on August 14, 2021, at 8:29 am local time. “We have had immediate concern for the people who experienced the quake and then were hit with severe storms, which was especially hard on the those who had lost their homes,” Klenner continues. “Summer is Haiti’s rainy season. Not only are many people homeless, they are getting heavily rained on — particularly hard on the elderly and young mothers with babies and toddlers.”

Mission: Haiti’s immediate need is for food, clean water and tarps.

Mission: Haiti’s representative on the ground in Haiti is Lophane Laurent. Lophane tells us that three towns in the Les Cayes area are especially hurting:

- ▲ Lebedin — seeking \$4,000 to feed 100 families for about a week at a cost of \$40 per family;
- ▲ Cavaillon — seeking \$2,000 to feed 50 families for about a week;
- ▲ Chantale — seeking \$2,000 to feed 50 families for about a week.

“The tarps are used to create tents to provide shelter,” explains Susan Franskousky, a member of Mission: Haiti’s board of directors. “After a natural disaster, like in the United States, some unethical merchants gouge buyers who need tarps. Lophane spent considerable time seeking tarps and



Earthquake photo courtesy Jonathan Alpeyrie/Bloomberg

has found some costing \$30 each. Expensive? Yes, but they are needed! Mission: Haiti needs to purchase 60 tarps at a cost of \$1800.”

Paul Klenner says that Lophane and two of his helpers were visiting the three towns (above), assessing the damage. They were told by everyone they spoke to that no one — no individual, church or service organization — has been to their communities yet to offer any help.

In Haiti, small motorcycles cost about \$1,500 each. Three of them would cost approximately \$4500 US dollars. Lutheran Church Charities has purchased three for pastors serving the area. They have had no transportation. All three are in the Les Cayes/Jeremie areas where the earthquake did its worst damage. “Lophane knows each of these men personally and tells us that they are each a pastor of a church and servants of God who have continued working — even when they are unable to get paid — sharing the gospel in the mountains where there are a lot of people who can’t come to the city.”

“Luther’s Small Catechisms have been made available in Haitian

Creole from The Lutheran Heritage Foundation” Klenner continues. “We have ordered three cartons of them (204 catechisms) at a cost of \$3 per book — plus shipping — for a total cost of \$690. They will be shipped to Lophane’s sister’s address in New York where he will pick them up and take them to Haiti in a checked suitcase.”

Franskousky says there are several ways congregations, schools and individuals can help. Donations can be made Via PayPal to Mission: Haiti’s email address at missionhaiti99@aol.com. The organizations website can be reached at missionhaiti99.org with a link for donations.

Checks may be mailed to Mission: Haiti, 3850 S University Dr #290171, Davie, FL 33329. ▲

Mission: Haiti is a faith based 501c3 non-profit, tax exempt corporation that grew out of the Florida-Georgia District. It is registered with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Affairs and files an annual report with the State of Florida, which can be viewed on that website. Mission: Haiti promotes self-sufficiency projects, medical care, nutritional and educational programs, and health education for children and families.

Historic LCMS Church Featured in Paul Newman Tom Hanks Film “Road to Perdition” Destroyed By Fire

An historic church in Beecher, IL that was once featured in the movie “Road to Perdition,” has been reduced to ashes after a devastating fire.

On Sept. 19, as the members of **St. Paul’s/Beecher, IL** were enjoying their annual fall picnic on the church grounds, someone noticed flames coming from the church steeple. Local fire department personnel were already on the scene, having been summoned earlier due to medical concerns about an attendee at the picnic.

The church was quickly evacuated, and firefighters from more than 30 nearby municipalities fought the blaze. Fire officials said it took 91,000 gallons of water to strike the fire — no easy feat considering the nearest hydrant was a mile away, so firefighters had to bring in their own water.

According to various news sources, one firefighter was transported to the hospital for heat exhaustion, and three firefighters were treated and released on the scene.

“Yeah, it is devastating — the 150 years of the weddings and the funerals and the baptisms and all of that are gone — but the church still stands, the people, we still have our folk and our faith,” said Rev. Michael Stein, head pastor at St. Paul’s. According to parishoners, just a few symbols of the church survived, including a chalice and a cross.

The institution had been featured in the Hollywood film “Road to Perdition.” The movie is loosely based on a true story about a mob enforcer’s son who witnesses a murder. The father was played by Paul Newman and the son by Tom Hanks. Hanks is forced to take to the road with his father while focusing on a path of redemption and revenge.

Earlier that day, Stein had preached on MARK 9:30–37, in which Jesus tells His disciples that He will be killed and, after three days, rise. Mark reports that the disciples “did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him.”

With no idea of what the day would bring, Stein told his congregation that God has commanded His people not to be afraid to ask Him for answers but to call out to Him at all times. Stein quoted PSALM 50:15, “Call upon me in



photo courtesy Sauk Village / CBS



the day of trouble, and I will deliver you,” and highlighted the Second Commandment and its meaning in Luther’s Small Catechism.

“God has commanded us ... to use His very name to call upon Him in every trouble, pray, praise and give thanks,” Stein said. “Prayer is a believer crying out to God, His Heavenly Father. Jesus Christ is our mediator. Through Him we draw near to God in confidence and trust.”

It is that confidence and trust in the face of enormous loss that will sustain the congregation of St. Paul’s. According to LCMS records, the church was started in 1862 by a

small group of German Lutherans who first met in a private home and then moved to a public school. Then, in 1865, “about 20 families — along with then pastor Rev. Gustav Polack — founded St. Paul’s Lutheran Church. The group acquired 11 acres of land, half donated by a Mr. Busse and the other half purchased for \$80. Total construction cost was \$1,700 and the parsonage was built in 1879 for \$1,250. In 1879, a cornerstone was added to serve the growing membership.” ▲

Ed. note: this story was supplemented by Cheryl Magness, Managing Editor at LCMS Reporter

FLORIDA GEORGIA

Out and About in the District

Send Your News & Photos to lutheranlife@aol.com

Navy Chaplain Commissioned, Installed in District

On September 12, 2021, Rev. Ross Engel was commissioned and installed to the United States Navy as Chaplain. Participating clergy (from left) are Michel Popp, Frank Marshall, Nathan McCarty, Steve Hokana, Jeff Skopak, Ross Engel, Peter Hoffman, Greg Walton, Michael Hackbardt, Pat McKenzie, Leon Roberts. Hokana is with LCMS ministry to the armed forces.

Pastor Engel says "I will be assigned as the Deputy Chaplain of Destroyer Squadron 21 out of San Diego, CA. I will be reporting in October and immediately begin workups for a 2022 deployment. I will have 4 Chaplains reporting to me that I will supervise and mentor as well as oversight of the Destroyer Squadron's religious ministry program." ▲



Plantation, FL Congregation Holds Faculty Dedication Service



A dedication was held for teachers and support staff of Our Savior/Plantation, FL in mid-August. The church service included a blessing of the students and their backpacks by Pastor Tony Durante.



Ms. Linda Root is the school principal. Church services and school classes are currently held in-person with social distancing as well as a virtual option due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pictured above, left to right, are teachers Carisa Meier, Anette Olsson-Zenchak, Eliza Manuel, Kristin Becker, Trisha DePasquale and Gabrielle Liebertz. ▲

Bounce Into Fall Kicks Off New School Year for Epiphany

The men of **Epiphany/Lake Worth Beach, FL** were responsible for planning and hosting a “Bounce Into Fall” event that took place late August.. One of Epiphany’s members used an Action Team from Thrivent to pay for the whole event.

Parish Administrator, Regina Manor, and Preschool Director, Carolyn Einsteder, helped the men with set-up and break-down. “Bounce Into Fall” was targeted toward the families of Epiphany’s Early Learning Center as well as members of the congregation.

A barbecue was complemented by a bounce house for the children to enjoy and the playground was open. After lunch, the families got to enjoy watermelon and ice cream sundaes.

During the past two years the congregation has seen rapid growth in housing developments surrounding their campus resulting in new school families.

“This event was planned as a way to welcome both new and existing families alike into the new school year,” explains Pastor Kyle Will. “This was an opportunity for school families to get connected with members of Epiphany Lutheran Church. We have developed a vision statement for our 2021-2022 church year: *Welcoming You Into God’s Community.*” ▲



St. Paul/Lakeland, FL has joined with five local ministry partners that are supported monthly with time, talent, and treasure. Recently, 34 St. Paul volunteers put in 170 hours at Lobo Ranch (one of the ministry partners). This particular monthly event is called “Ranch Recharge.” It is an event where foster parents bring their foster kids out for a day at the ranch. The foster parents receive specialized training and a reprieve from parenting. As evening

St. Paul adults and youth come out to help the foster families have a fun and relaxing day and help facilitate the above activities. To learn more about our ministry partner Lobo

Ranch, go to stpaulakeland.org/engage and click “ministry partners” for a link to Lobo Ranch ministry.

As of the end of August, St. Paul volunteers have logged nearly 1,800 hours and given more than \$20,000 to Lobo Ranch in financial support. ▲



rolls around, they are sent out to a restaurant for an all-expense paid dinner date night. The foster kids enjoy a day at the ranch where they play, reconnect with siblings that might be in other foster homes, or meet other kids who are experiencing the same life situation. The kids are served breakfast, lunch, and dinner at the ranch. There are all kinds of activities for them throughout the day like crafts, making a prayer journal, appropriate aged bible time, horseback riding, games, singing, and cuddling many different animals at the ranch.

Marco Island to Host Dale Meyer for November’s Scholar Program

Marco/Marco Island, FL’s Visiting Scholar Program will continue this fall with Dr. Dale Meyer, President Emeritus of Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, MO. The program seeks to bring visiting scholars who have knowledge of the world and the direction the political environment is headed, along with their personal unique gifts and perspectives, as well as a spiritual emphasis.

Objectives are to understand the world view and how the future might be impacted by current political circumstances and spiritual unrest and to learn about the impact that the eradication of Christian religious sites along with the corresponding loss of life would have on future generations

as well as the transmission of the Christian faith in the future.



Goals are to explore how we might influence the future direction of our government and to explore what we might do on an individual level to ensure the continuation of Judeo-Christian ways of life.

Meyer will be on Marco Lutheran’s campus November 5 - 7, 2021. Dr. Meyer has been speaking and preaching for more than 40 years. His areas of interest and study include 1 Peter, the church in a changing culture and the Sabbath applied to life today.

More information is available from Marco Lutheran at secretary@marcolutheran.org or via phone at (239)-394-0332. ▲



Trinity/Ft. Pierce, FL hosted VBS in coordination with the church preschool, *Open Arms*. The 2021 theme was *Treasured: Discovering You’re Priceless to God*.

“In addition to learning how God treasures us, we worked together to show others they were treasured too,” explains Christiana Lee, one of the VBS organizers. Our campers collected hundreds of cereal boxes for families in need and raised more than \$1,000 for Treasure Coast Hope for the Homeless. ▲



St. Paul/Boca Raton, FL took second place at the 44th annual St. Michael invitational soccer tournament. “We beat St. Michael’s in the first game — which was a close match up that ended in a 2 to 1 victory for the St. Paul Falcons,” said Gary Hickey, Falcons coach.

“The championship game was against St. Luke’s/Oviedo, FL and was an extremely competitive game. We scored the opening goal early in the game and held our lead into the second half,” he continued. “A free kick was awarded to St. Luke’s just above the penalty box which gave their team the tying score.

“We ended regular time with a score of 1 to 1. We played two overtime periods with scoring



Coach Gary Hickey with St. Paul Falcons

opportunities but no goals. Each team was given 5 penalty kickers which ended in another tie of 2 to 2. After that set of penalties it was one and one. St. Paul was up first and the shot was blocked. St. Luke’s

had their goalie take the penalty and scored for the win. I’m extremely proud of our team,” he concluded. “We played well with great, passing, communicating, and pressuring the ball.” ▲



The installation of preschool teachers took place this fall at **Bethel/Hobe Sound, FL.**

Pictured ate (back row) Deborah Marcin, Mary Jo Montgomery, Kristin Woods, Pastor Heath, Lisa Mallard, Beth, BJ front row: Brooke Hubbard, Kristy Rose, Karlee Haluska, Elizabeth Hiddemen, Elizabeth Brown,

Samantha Jenkins, Gracen Lang, Kailee Groh, Rylie Cousins, Courtney Haggerty, Skyler Nacarato, Mary Causey, Paul

Not pictured: Michaela Woodward, Lauren Rogers, Amanda Bateman, Jessie Greaves, Autumn Neuman, Rebecca Pomarica, Christine Reeves, Cindy Xinico. ▲



Pictured above — Tony Hunt from the LCMS Foundation (center) presents a check in the amount of \$102,000 from a donor for the purpose of establishing the Thalacker Endowment. This endowment will benefit various ministries throughout Florida Georgia including District mission work for many years to come. It will also benefit Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO. He is pictured with District President Greg Walton and Laura Zirbel, executive director for finance and administration. ▲

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Hiram and Karen Grimm
LCEF Investors



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Thrive/Estero, FL held a Water Sports Day on August 17th in front of the freshmen dorms at Florida Gulf Coast University with other campus ministries. Pastor John Roth reports, “we handed out T-shirts, invitations for a BBQ, a drawing for a TV and other things. We collected about 62 names that day. Some have started to attend.”

“We held another event on August 31st — “Get the Scoop” on campus ministry where we handed out ice cream scoops and toppings,” Roth continues, “and another 35 student contacts were collected that day. We also held an event handing out popsicles in front of the freshmen dorms, participated in a few other ‘tabling events,’ and started a podcast on campus.

“We once again participated in the student involvement fair at FGCU — bringing our contact data base to about 240 names of students we invite to our events.

“Our weekly gatherings started August 18th, the day before classes launched. September 8th’s event had about 30 students attending. The drawing for the TV comes up this month and we expect about 40 students at that event — most are new to ThriveFGCU.

“This fall our series is on Identity. On Sundays we are focusing on the Gospel of John and the different interactions about identity Jesus had with people like Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, Nicodemus, the Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin mentioned in three places in the Gospel of John, and the Samaritan Woman at the well, The Woman caught in Adultery in John 8, The Jewish Leaders, Peter, John and others.

“On Wednesday nights we are exploring aspects of our identity — race, body image, work, and how they need to be de-centered so that Jesus becomes the center of our identity, remembering we are made in God’s image and that Christ is our life.

“On September 22-23rd we will host a tie-dye T-shirt event on campus inviting in new students. October 29-31st we will have our retreat for the fall focusing on our Identity in Christ and the story God is creating in our lives.” ▲



UNIVERSITY of GEORGIA

Christus Victor Lutheran Church & Student Center/

Athens, GA continues to foster relationships with the current students while create a welcoming environment for new students arriving on campus at the University of Georgia.

“We continue our efforts with posting on social media and had a pre-arrival Zoom meeting with some incoming freshmen students,” explains Pastor Greg Michael. “We also have reached out with texts and emails to try to connect with students and to invite them to participate in various opportunities.

“We also have been utilizing our sidewalk sign to provide Bible passages and invitations, have tables planned for for appropriate informal invitations and we plan a game night and a service project in the works. Some of our students have been handling social media posts and others led our pre-arrival Zoom meeting after a brief word from me. One student is leading a small group meeting on Sunday nights and students are reaching out to each other to get the word out.

“We constantly seek to utilize the students for planning, making decisions, implementation and overall leadership development. We want the students to be part of the whole effort so that they can serve both while here on campus and be ready to serve as they graduate and move to their new locations.

“Currently the leadership development is helping students see the goals and how our activity is related to those goals. We have one student taking the lead on Sunday night studies with meals. We also have employed students to help with planning on Wednesday night activities after the worship/study opportunity.

“Our goal is to establish a more formal meeting date and time — currently I am asking folks to take care of various matters and providing some guidance towards that end. We have some informal brainstorming and planning because of our numbers, but I think that getting back to a formal meeting might help foster improved commitment and ownership. To achieve this more established meeting, we will need to identify those who should be involved with such a meeting as we move forward.

“We regularly work with students through worship, study of Scriptures, service and time together talking and want them to grow as God’s people during their time at UGA and have that growth be sustainable when they depart. We want students regularly engaged in our worship services or those at their home churches. We have been having decent participation thus far between Sunday morning and Wednesday evenings. We are constantly challenged to find better ways to welcome folks and foster conversation and communication in spite of COVID barriers.” ▲





**THE FLORIDA
STATE
UNIVERSITY**

“Go Noles! **University Lutheran/Tallahassee, FL** has been having a blast as we have been getting back to more in-person classes and events,” Pastor Jay Winters conveys. “The exciting thing about this beginning semester is welcoming back students from past years as well as welcoming in new students. Since we really believe that the people are the more exciting thing about campus ministry, I’m going to introduce you to a few of our students.

“Emma is the newest student on our student leadership team. This team is five students who are nominated by their fellow students at University Lutheran. They function together as a team in order engage other students. Emma was a freshman last year and has been interested in seeing the planning that goes into some of the gatherings and discipleship that was happening last year.

“Zachariah is a returning student who returned to our events late in the first semester. Zachariah moved in and was planning on attending worship and our small group nights, but within the first little while that he was at FSU, he contracted the COVID Delta Variant and bronchitis. The doctors told him that if he hadn’t gotten to the hospital when he did, he would have drowned in his own mucus (yuck!). He’s getting connected again with a whole new perspective on eternal life.



“Elizabeth is a new student who started over the summer. She comes from a non-Lutheran home church that she says ‘preaches about budgeting a lot.’ She was attracted to us and found something interesting in the way that the Bible is taught.

“Michael just started showing up to our events this semester. Michael was raised thinking of himself as a Roman Catholic although he never really went to church. He is currently in the process of trying to determine what he believes and has found a place at University Lutheran where he can ask questions safely and explore what the Bible says.

“Lowery is a pastor’s kid who is a freshman with us this year. He’s been a great guy to have around and is one of the few freshmen that we have leading a ‘Triad,’ a small group of 3-5 people who get together once a week to read the Bible, discuss, and pray for 15-30 minutes together.

“We would love to continue to tell you about more of our students, but we would be writing for a while. Suffice it to say that we are super excited to be able to share the Gospel and bring clarity to college students around who Jesus is. If you know a FSU student who might not be connected yet, please to reach out to me and let me know about them!” Winters concludes. ▲



**UNIVERSITY of
CENTRAL Florida**

“With school starting this fall and LIVE actually being able to be on campus this year at **University of Central Florida/Orlando, FL** it feels like we have started a whole new ministry,” offers Kalli Wied, DCE Outreach Minister for LIVE Ministries @ UCF. “Our leadership is new, new students, and a new way of doing things. One of the ways we are trying to reach more students on campus and engage students who wouldn’t normally attend ‘church’ or a ‘churchy club’ is by offering an event on Memory Mall every month.

“Memory Mall is a place where students hang out after class and the central point of campus. This past month, we had a tie-dye event where students could come and relax, while making tie-dye shirts or socks just for fun! It was amazing to see our leadership team engage with students and make connections.

“Most of the students who stopped by were confused as to why we would do something like this for fun and for free. Events like this I believe to be a new way of connecting and engaging students who wouldn’t normally be interested. It allowed LIVE to provide a space for students to relax and engage with Christians who wanted to show them His love.

At one point, we had half the UCF football team surrounding our tables, wanting to tie-dye a shirt and know more about LIVE and what we do. There really isn’t a lesson on how to do campus ministry . . . a lot of times, it seems like we’re trying to do things outside the box and reach students in new ways to see what works! But when things stick and you are able to sow seeds, it makes it all worth it!” ▲

CAMPUS CONNECTIONS

Milan & Marge Weerts Recognized For His 60 Years in Ministry and Her 70 Years on the Organ Bench!

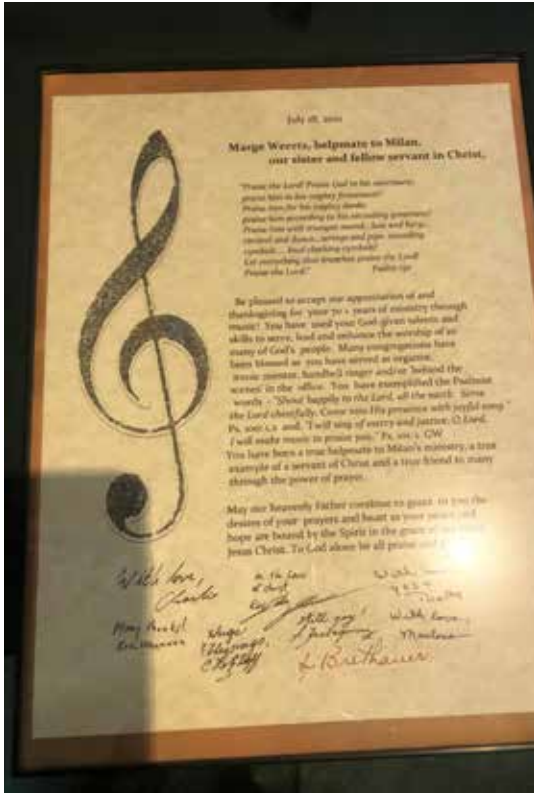
Rev. Dr. Milan Weerts and his wife, Marge, were celebrated in August by the **Woodlands/Montverde, FL** congregation, where Weerts has been serving as visitation pastor alongside senior pastor

Rev. Joshua Pettit. There was a brief ten-minute recognition ceremony following both services on August 15th.

Pastor Weerts has served six decades in ministry and Marge has served seven decades as a church organist.

There were flowers, cards, notes, plaques, photos, a cake and plenty of hugs. The congregation gifted the Weerts with an all-expense paid trip to his class reunion. ▲

At right — Congregation Secretary Norm Rein was one of the presenters. Below — Marge & Milan Weerts with Lily and Norma Rey Below right — Congregation President Wayne Varga presents Marge and Milan Weerts with the plaque from the congregation.



Above — Commemoration from Woodlands Music Ministry
Below — Brooklyn Rice, the acolyte in the background, is the daughter of Tracy Rice, chairperson for education ministry at Woodlands



Leesburg Congregation Partners With Community To Support, Encourage Faculty and Student Enrichment

Lake County Schools launched their new school year this past August. Teachers at Beverly Shores Elementary returned to school this week to a special surprise breakfast from the Beverly Shores Partnership — a group from various area churches that have come together to show the school a little extra love and support.

The group consists of volunteers from the **Bethany/Leesburg, FL**, and the neighboring congregations of Christ United Methodist, Salvation Army and Macedonia Church of the Living God, along with individual volunteers who have joined in.

“They supply fundraising drives for us, help us with our Trunk-or-Treat, help us with uniforms and regularly provide breakfasts and lunches and cook-outs. Last year they helped provide masks and hand sanitizer,” Beverly Shores Elementary Principal Cindy Christidis said. “We’re really excited about this school year and this partnership helping us move our students further.”

Two years ago, the school was given an ‘F’ rating after poor performance on standardized testing.



Mike and Bethany Hanel with daughters Magdalena and Katherina

When Christidis was brought in, she put a call out to the community to really help improve the school and the partnership was a huge part of that.

“When I came to the school two years ago, I reached out to them,” Christidis said. “I wanted to make sure we were reaching all our students and their families — helping the whole child, yes academically, but we wanted to make sure they had uniforms and food, incentive for attendance and incentives for our teachers. It’s hard work. Our goal is an ‘A’ I know with our community support we are going to get there.”

The partnership kicked off their 2021 year with a hot breakfast for the teachers and have many things planned throughout the coming school year.

Throughout the year, they collect snacks to provide the kids breakfast and food to take home if they are in need, and beginning in January, they will offer Wonderful Wednesday program once again which is an after school program offering tutoring, music, arts and crafts and Bible class.

“We are also going to do something new this year,” partnership member Cindy Henry said. “We are going to do a Christmas closet where kids can go in and choose a gift for their parents *and for themselves*. We are going to be starting collecting gift donations for that real soon.”

Last month, in September, the Beverly Shores Partnership helped Beverly Shores Elementary host a grandparents day for the school. More events are in the works. Bethany also continues to collect books for Beverly Shores so that each classroom can have library books available for their students.

Bethany is shepherded by Pastor Mike Hanel, a Concordia/Seward, NE graduate who earned his M.A. in Classics from Washington University/ St. Louis, MO and his M.Div. from Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, MO. During his Seminary training, he served as a Vicar in Clio, Michigan and after graduation previously served Zion in Cincinnati, OH (2009-2015) and St. Paul’s in Bourbonnais, IL (2015-2021). Mike and his wife, enjoy cheering for the St. Louis Cardinals and being parents to two spirited daughters, Magdalena and Katherina. ▲

“See You at the Pole” is an annual gathering of thousands of Christian students nationwide at school flag poles, churches, and on the internet for the purpose of worship and prayer. **Faith/Marietta, GA** students and staff met at their campus flagpole on Wednesday, September 22 to pray for their school, their community and their country. ▲



Lutheran Haven's Christmas Seals Commemorates Diamond Jubilee

In the 1920's, Lutheran immigrants from Czechoslovakia living in Cleveland, Ohio, dreamed of building an orphanage for children and a retirement home for pastors who had limited income. Several of these early settler families moved to Slavia — now part of Oviedo, FL, to live in the country away from the temptations and congestion of city life. They cleared the land and started farming. After they became established, the thought of a haven for retired pastors and orphaned children once again resurfaced.

In 1937, one of Oviedo's settlers, Mr. Andrew Duda, Sr., in gratitude to the Lord for His many blessings, offered the Slovak Evangelical Lutheran Church (now the SELC District of the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod) 40 acres of land and \$90,000 for the first two buildings — a home for the elderly and a home for needy, dependent children. The offer was graciously accepted by the Synod. In 1946 at the Synod Convention in Cleveland, Ohio, Articles of Incorporation were approved and a board of trustees was elected. The doors were opened to children and the elderly on May 30, 1948.

Jump ahead to 2021.

Lutheran Haven/Oviedo, FL, is celebrating the 75th Anniversary of Christmas Seals! Sharing the long, storied history of Lutheran Haven is a gift the Haven's residents often

provide — their recollections are both precious and profound.

According to Mary Ann McCunn, Development Associate at Lutheran Haven, a current resident, whose Slovak name means "Joy" remembers the opening



announcement of the Lutheran Haven at her church in Chicago when she was a young girl. Joy remembers praying for the Haven as a child. Nearly 65 years later, Joy became a resident of the Haven and even reunited with three classmates from her Chicago high school who live at the Haven as well.

Joy says that "only the Lord could have orchestrated this reunion — that kind of beauty and heritage is what sets the Haven apart."

McCunn went on to explain that when Lutheran Haven began, tuberculosis was gaining a dangerous foothold in the United States. To raise money to combat the disease,

a special Tuberculosis Christmas Seal was produced. This came to the attention of St. Luke's then-Pastor, Rev. Stephen Tuhy, who thought this could be replicated for the fledgling "Lutheran Haven."

"Through the Duda family's generosity, that seed was planted, and for 75 years that seed has been watered by folks who have prayerfully given to Lutheran Haven's Christmas Seals outreach. They have helped build the Mission & Ministry of Lutheran Haven," McCann said.

"While many things have changed in the generations that followed, the core values and commitment have not," she continued. "Now 75 years later, the vision of our founder remains — to provide a quality Christ-centered haven of care . . . remaining committed to serving the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of senior adults, and we can only do that through the faithful gifts of our supporters."

To support the 75th Anniversary Christmas Seals program, visit the Haven's website at lutheranhaven.org, contact Mary Ann McCunn at mmccunn@lutheranhaven.org or participate with a check: The Lutheran Haven Foundation Christmas Seal Outreach 2041 West State Road 426 Oviedo, FL 32765. ▲



St. Paul/Boca Raton, FL's Vicar Brandon & Taylor Bettcher posed on campus as they launched into the new school year. Taylor is on St. Paul's school staff as a "Preschool 3-Year-olds classroom aid. Brandon is from the Greater Detroit, Michigan area and Taylor hails from Munising, Michigan, the Western Gateway to the Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan at the Edge of the Hiawatha National Forest. She's a long way from the U.P.!

Both are outdoor enthusiasts and have quickly taken to hiking and biking, and the beach and boating.

"We are thankful to be able to serve our Lord and His people at St. Paul during my vicarage year," Brandon said. ▲



St. Paul/Lakeland Recognizes Frontline Workers, Distributes Bibles to School & Church Youth



St. Paul/Lakeland, FL will host their annual Fall Festival on October 30th from 1pm until 5pm. The campus is located at 4450 Harden Blvd, Lakeland, FL 33813.

Events include a trunk or treat —until the candy runs out! Always popular, the congregation offers a chili cook-off that has judging at 3:30 with the winner being announced at 4 o'clock.

Some of the concessions include pulled BBQ Pork, chips, hot dogs and drinks.

Also included is a car show with trophies. Families can enjoy a photo booth and there is a special Katie's Ladies Bake Sale.

In other news, knowing it continues to be a tough and trying time for frontline workers, St. Paul had their students draw, color, or make cards thanking workers at different health agencies throughout the community.

St. Paul's classes were encouraged to continue to pray for those who serve the community (in photos above and at right) in such a loving way and show their thankfulness.

Also, 35 3rd graders from the school (pictured below) and 8 3rd graders from the church received a Bible as part of St. Paul's faith stepping stone program. The parents surround their children as a blessing is given at the time of the children receiving their new Bibles and all are reminded of Psalm 119: 105 "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path." ▲



Katie, Ken Sherman, Max and Ethan. (Max has the bible)



Katie and Ken Sherman with Max and Ethan. Max received his Bible during the stepping stone program



Bill Roberts Completes SMP Program, Ordained in August



William J. Roberts (center) retired in 2007 from EDS, an electronic data systems and computer business solutions company based in Detroit, Michigan. Bill began investing his time in serving the Lord in various churches in the Detroit, MI area as an elder, bible study/small groups leader and Stephen Minister. After wintering in Florida and attending **Faith/Sebring, FL** his heart began to stir and he entered Concordia Seminary's Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) Program in 2018. This is a four-year state of the art distance education learning program that prepares men for specific pastoral ministries in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). Students receive academic training in the setting where they will continue to serve following ordination. While taking classes through Concordia Seminary, they work with local pastor-mentors who support them in the program with day-to-day guidance, encouragement and prayer.

The SMP curriculum incorporates the concurrent practice of ministry and pastoral formation, leading to certification as a specific ministry pastor. The SMP Program consists of 16 courses taught in an online learning community, including a one week on-campus intensive course per year. He served his vicarage from 20-21 and was ordained at Faith/Sebring on Sunday August 8, 2021. Bill has a wife and two grown sons. His wife, Karen, has a Therapy Dog, Ernie, who is a comfort to many in the Sebring area. Rev. Dr. Gregory S. Walton was in attendance along with the pastors of the Heartland Circuit. A dinner was held in Pastor Bill's honor following the service. In photo above, the pastors of the Heartland Circuit are (from left) Anthony Arias, Robert J. Maulella, Scott McLean, Bill Roberts, Richard Norris, Dr. Gregory S. Walton (FL-GA District President); Angel Ramos. Missing: James Olckers (Vacancy Pastor, Peace, Okeechobee). ▲



Bethany/Leesburg, FL was formed in 1962, broke ground in 1963 and dedicated their first facilities in 1964 (their updated new facilities were dedicated in 1987). This past August, in partnership with the Beverly Shores Faith-Based Partnership, the congregation provided supplies and breakfast items to their

school. Other ways Bethany members are serving is volunteering at the school and participating in “Wonderful Wednesday” — a program that will launch in January, 2022. A few of the church members — Marjorie Icenogle, Jon Anderson and Bob Groh — are pictured helping deliver items to the school. ▲

Downtown Trinity/Orlando Hosting Month-Long Pumpkin Patch



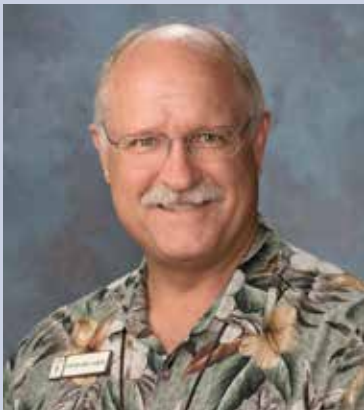
Trinity/Orlando, FL resurrected their Pumpkin Patch this year. It is being held October 2nd through Oct 30th where they'll be selling pumpkins and gourds of all shapes and sizes and every price range.

“We'll also have our photo ops set up so you can come in with your family, take some photos, make some memories and buy your favorite pumpkins to take home,” says Chanda Gillenwater, Communications and Ministry Coordinator for Trinity.

Pumpkin Patch hours are Mondays through Fridays 3-6pm, Saturdays and Sundays 9am to 5pm. All proceeds benefit Trinity's Child Development Center. ▲



St. Paul/Boca Raton, FL staff gathered for a photo in the family life center during the Florida-Georgia District Educators Conference, “in All Things” last month. They were joined by Jemimah, the congregations new comfort dog (see cover story). Pastor Steve Carretto joined them on video. In photo below, six staff members celebrated number of years in Lutheran school anniversaries: Bill Vollman (8th grade) 35 years, Laurie Exner (5th grade) 30 years, Sunny Troncale (4th grade) 10 years, Tonya Haberlein (admissions coordinator) 25 years, Sue Merritt (reading specialist.) 15 years and Jen Majhess (not pictured, 6th grade) 10 years. ▲



In recognition of Pastor Appreciation Month, the members of **Redeemer/Stuart, FL** showered Senior Pastor Dave Albers with letters, cards, pictures and warm greetings while he was on a retreat in Illinois the first week of October.

“We, the church members as whole, appreciate Pastor Dave and we often try to let him know this on an on-going basis, but October is Pastor Appreciation Month and we have a golden opportunity to let him know how much we value his ministry with us,” said Redeemer’s Executive Director, Russ Reaver.

“Our members recognized that there is nothing more impactful than a personal, handwritten note from someone thanking them for the job they do or have done.” ▲



District Calls Accepted

8/8/21 Rev. Ross Engel (O)
Active Duty Navy Chaplain
for LCMS Board of
International Missions
9/14/21 Rev. Richard Cox (O) to
Trinity/Fort Pierce, FL

**Transferred Out of FLGA
to Other Districts**

7/9/21 Ms. Dorothy Wiencke (C)
to Missouri
7/12/21 Mr. John Wiegand (C) to
Rocky Mountain
8/4/21 Rev. Geo. Murdaugh (O)
to Southern
8/8/21 Ms. Margaret Ruehle
Walsh (C)
to MN North

**Transferred Into FLGA
from Other Districts**

6/24/21 Ms. Diane Katz (C)
from Northern Illinois
7/27/21 Ms. Betsy Burnham (C)
from California/Nevada/
Hawaii

7/31/21 Rev. Gregory Sawyer (O)
from Atlantic
8/8/21 Mr. Chris Olsen (C)
from Nebraska
8/16/21 Rev. Daniel Ritter (O)
from MN South
8/17/21 Ms. Joy Mueller (C)
from Northwest
9/2/21 Rev. David Hansen (O)
from Iowa East

Initial Placements

8/15/21 Ms. Karla Hardies (C)
from Concordia/Ann Arbor,
MI to
St. Paul/Boca Raton, FL

Ordination

8/8/21 Rev. William Roberts (O)
from Concordia Seminary/
St. Louis, MO
Assistant Pastor/SMP
to Faith/Sebring, FL

**Installations of Ordained or
Commissioned Ministers**

7/18/21 Mr. Timothy Gabbert, (C)
Principal
First/Clearwater, FL
8/8/21 Rev. Gregory Sawyer (O)
Principal
St. Paul/Lakeland, FL
8/8/21 Rev. William Roberts (O)
Assistant Pastor/SMP
Faith/Sebring, FL
8/8/21 Rev. William Schmidt, Sr.
(O) Assisting Pastor/SMP
Christ the King/Largo, FL
8/8/21 Ms. Jennifer Loewe (C)
Teacher Trinity/Delray
Beach, FL
8/8/21 Mr. Chris Olsen (C)
Teacher Faith/Eustis FL
8/15/21 Mr. Gordon Stuckert (C)
Principal Faith/Marietta, GA
8/27/21 Ms. Madison Raabe (C)
Teacher
St. John/Ocala, FL
8/27/21 Mr. Tyler Raabe (C)
Teacher St. John/Ocala, FL

9/12/21 Rev. Ross Engel (O)
Active Duty Navy Chaplain
LCMS Board of
International Mission
Middleburg, FL

District Status Changes

**All From Active
to Emeritus Status**
5/29/21 Ms. Karen Arndt (C)
6/30/21 Mr. Robert Boyd (C)
7/27/21 Rev. George Murdaugh (O)
7/31/21 Mr. Mark Brink (C)
7/31/21 Rev. Kenneth Larson (O)

Called to Glory

8/9/21 Rev. Robert Hinz (O)
8/14/21 Rev. Martin Platzer (O)
9/3/21 Rev. Gerald Schultz (O)
9/17/21 Rev. Alvey Yates (O)

Removed From Roster

7/26/21 Rev. Kenyatta Cobb
8/10/21 Rev. Mark Jurkowski
8/25/21 Mr. Micah Korb

Out and About in the District

More than 30 students and their parents participated in the September car wash at **St. Michael/Ft. Myers, FL**, raising about \$1,010.40! Almost 50 cars were washed. And to celebrate the 80th anniversary of St. Michael, the 6th through 8th grade students held a “church history” scavenger hunt and a party. In photo below right, they are celebrating. ▲



Our Redeemer/Augusta, GA DCE Josh Eckstein and Hallie have been producing weekly video chats about praying. They get into a spirited discussion about what we can pray for . . . at meal time, at bed time, all the time. The weekly series is posted on their Facebook page.

Josh is a 2017 graduate from Concordia/St. Paul, MN. Before moving to Georgia, Josh lived in North Dakota, where his father currently serves as an LCMS pastor. His upbringing in a pastor’s family shaped his faith and led him to pursue a degree in Christian ministry. He met his wife, Kara, who also grew up in a pastor’s family and has a passion for ministry and outreach. Josh is looking forward to serving Our Redeemer through the educational ministries. ▲

Hundreds gather in person, online for historic event

Thomas Egger Inaugurated as 11th Seminary President

PEOPLE



August 27th this year as faculty, staff, students and friends gathered in the Chapel of St. Timothy and St. Titus for the inauguration of Dr. Thomas J. Egger as the 11th president of Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, MO. The inauguration also was live streamed.

Egger was presented for inauguration by Dr. Timothy Saleska, co-chairman of the Presidential Search Committee and dean of Ministerial Formation.

"I trust that the Lord has fitted Tom for this task," Saleska said. "I know that Tom wants the very best for all of us here at the Seminary and

for the people of our church, and he will work hard in service to our Lord."

Dr. Todd A. Peperkorn, chairman of the Board of Regents, performed the Rite of Inauguration.

"Jesus Christ is the Light of the world, the Light no darkness can overcome, as St. John attests," said Peperkorn, speaking to Egger. "It is that light of Christ given to us in the sacred Scriptures which shapes everything we are, everything we do here at Concordia Seminary. The world needs that light of mercy and the forgiveness of sins today more than ever. And God has put you at this place, at this time, so that light will shine forth in every graduate at this institution."

Afterward, Egger delivered his inaugural address.

"Our Seminary motto is well-put: Light from above," said Egger. "As we reflect on the heart of our work and the reason for our existence as a school, the summons of Isaiah really is foundational: to the Torah and to the testimony! Listen to the Spirit-inspired authors of the Bible. Listen to the prophets and the apostles. They must sit on our lecterns, and we and our students sit down below and listen to them."

Following Egger's speech, greetings were presented by:

- Dr. Douglas L. Rutt, Provost, on behalf of the faculty of Concordia Seminary;
- Donald Stein, fourth-year seminarian, on behalf of the students of Concordia Seminary;
- The Honorable Michelle Harris, Mayor, City of Clayton, Mo., on behalf of the civic community;
- Dr. Michael Kumm, Chairman, Board of Directors, on behalf of the Board of Directors of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod;
- Dr. Lawrence J. Rast, President, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind., on behalf of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod's universities and seminaries;
- Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, President, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, on behalf of the LCMS. In the final greeting, Harrison said, "There have been times when I sensed that I was being carried along by the prayers of thousands upon thousands of people. And I pray that you have that same sense. You're going to hear people saying 'We're praying for you. We're praying for the faculty. We're praying for your work.' That is the highest honor among God's people." ▲

Rev. Russ Sommerfeld to Lead Church Engagement for Concordia University, Nebraska



After faithfully serving as **Concordia/Seward, NE** interim president since Jan. 1, 2020, Rev. Russ Sommerfeld has been named assistant

to the president for church engagement, where he will lead the university's church engagement efforts throughout The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and the Church at large.

As part of his duties, Sommerfeld will engage with the LCMS and the wider Church around critical issues and themes and focus on how Concordia can support the LCMS, while simultaneously cultivating, soliciting and stewarding congregations in direct support of the university. Dr. Bernard Bull, Concordia incoming president, made the announcement in August. Sommerfeld

was the LCMS Nebraska District president 2003-2015 before serving as a theology faculty member at Concordia/Seward, NE.

As part of Sommerfeld's role, he will collaborate and receive feedback from the Concordia community, as well as the university's supporters and governance bodies on how the university can partner with the Concordia University System, the LCMS and beyond. He will play a key role as a Concordia representative to the Synod at various LCMS district conventions in 2022 and the LCMS Synodical Convention in 2023.

"I am honored and privileged to continue serving Concordia and the LCMS in this new role," said Sommerfeld. "Ministry began for me with a passion for serving at the congregational level, and this position will allow me to engage closely with our brothers and sisters in Christ as a way to build stronger, more meaningful connections between the university, the LCMS and the Church at large." ▲

New Dean of Chapel Named for Concordia Seminary

The Rev. Dr. Jon Vieker has joined **Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO** faculty as chief steward of worship life on campus. He will serve as associate professor of Practical Theology and dean of chapel.

Vieker's areas of academic expertise include the study of hymns, hymn writers and hymnals, especially as viewed through the history of American Lutheranism and the wider American ecclesial context.

"We are thrilled to have Dr. Vieker joining our faculty. With his years of pastoral ministry, his background in the history of Lutheran worship and hymnody, and his broad familiarity with our church body and its current discussions on worship, Jon is a strong addition to our team," said Concordia Seminary President Dr. Thomas J. Egger. "My prayer is that he will lead our students and our Seminary community to fix our eyes upon Jesus and to rejoice in receiving Jesus' gifts and spending time together in Jesus' presence."

Before coming to the Seminary, Vieker served as senior assistant to LCMS President Dr. Matthew C. Harrison (2010-21).

From 1998 to 2010, Vieker served as assistant director for the LCMS Commission on Worship, and was involved with all aspects of research, development, editing and production of the seminal Lutheran Service Book and its core companion volumes.

Before his service with the LCMS Commission on Worship, Vieker was a parish pastor for nine years at St. Mark's/West Bloomfield, MI, and has served as organist and choir director in a variety of settings. Vieker served as co-editor of the two-volume Lutheran Service Book: Companion to the Hymns (Concordia Publishing House [CPH], 2019) and was lead editor in a translation of Friedrich Lochner's The Chief Service of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church (CPH, 2020).

An accomplished musician, Vieker also is a composer, with choral settings



and organ preludes published by CPH and Liturgy Solutions. He is a member of the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians, The Hymn Society in the United States and Canada, The Hymn Society of Great Britain and Ireland, and the Internationale Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Hymnologie. He also is a member of Concordia Historical Institute.

Vieker earned a Doctor of Philosophy, Master of Sacred Theology and Master of Divinity from Concordia Seminary (2004, 1990, 1987). He received a Bachelor of Arts in music from California Lutheran University, Thousand Oaks, Calif. (1983).

Vieker and his wife, Kim, live on campus and are members of St. Paul's/Des Peres, MO, where they sing in the parish choral ensembles. They have two adult children and two grandchildren. ▲

Vicar Profile

Jonathan Sharp Serving Bethlehem/Jacksonville Beach, FL

Jonathan Sharp will serve **Bethlehem/Jacksonville Beach, FL** this year as vicar. Sharp is a native of Angleton, TX, where his parents attended First Baptist Church and where he was baptized, regularly attended Sunday School, Sunday Worship, and Wednesday Night Youth Group. His Bonus-Mom, Michelle, married his father Mike in 2005. Though officially an only child, he has two bonus-siblings and numerous cousins.

Sharp moved to the Kansas City to attending college, graduating in 2013 with a Bachelor's in Education, with an emphasis in Social Studies, and completed graduate school with a Master's in History, both from University of Central Missouri. Sharp met his future wife, Bridgette, who was preparing to attend Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, MO in order to become a deaconess. One of her requirements for dating, was that they attend church together, and so Jonathan began attending services at Bethlehem/Warrensburg, MO. Since he was already interested in

the Reformation, he was drawn to the richness of the theology of the Lutheran Church and began to study more deeply the Confessions of the Lutheran Church and was confirmed in 2014. Jonathan and Bridgette were married on All Saints Day in 2014.

Their firstborn child, David, was welcomed this past July.

When they moved to St. Louis for Bridgette's seminary education, Jonathan was already starting to feel the growth of the seeds planted by his pastor and campus ministry pastor, but it was while he was substitute teaching in the St. Louis public school system that he realized he was being drawn to study

for the pastoral ministry. After making friends with many of Bridgette's classmates and meeting her teachers, he was encouraged to apply to the seminary, but waited until after Bridgette's internship was completed to begin his studies. He and Bridgette



moved to Fort Worth, Texas for her internship, where she served at Holy Shepherd/Haslet, TX and the two of them learned much about ministry and one another during this year. Jon and Bridgette are enthusiastic about his vicarage year in Jacksonville

Beach. They are both avid readers, board and card games enthusiasts and video and movie buffs. Jonathan likes to cook and loves the outdoors. ▲

Oviedo Pioneer, Celery King, Lutheran Education Icon

John Duda, Cocoa Beach, FL

John L. Duda, 90, the eldest member of the third generation of Dudas and the son



of the late John Duda, whose father, Andrew, founded A. Duda and Sons in 1926, passed peacefully on October 1.

Duda became corporate vice president in charge of real estate in 1982 and headed the real estate sales group as broker from 1990 until his retirement in 1996 after 44 years with the Duda Company in Oviedo, FL. In his retirement years, he continued to monitor the development and sales of Viera Realty in Brevard County. He also remained active in the Florida/Korea Economic Cooperation Committee which promotes trade and cultural awareness.

Duda held a number of positions in the company since he began his career with the family business in 1952 in engineering and shop operations. Following in the footsteps of his father, who died in 1988, he designed and patented a number of machines used in Duda field operations. He later managed Oviedo Tractor Co. and Lake Equipment Co. before moving into the real estate side of the business. Commercial properties are in several states including Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Colorado, Tennessee and Texas.

A. Duda & Sons is probably best known for growing and selling vegetables, citrus and other crops in Florida, Texas and California and is widely recognized as one of the largest family-owned agribusiness operations in the country.

John was married to Elizabeth (Betty), his soulmate, for 64 years. Betty passed away in 2016. They were blessed with six daughters Beth, Linda, Janet (deceased), Pam, Leslie and Jennifer; nine grandchildren Ryan, Rick, Andy, Branden, John Aaron, Kate, Andrew, Gavin and Garet; and four great-grandchildren.

John and Betty enjoyed traveling and regularly spent summers in the islands aboard the Zippity Duda, John's Viking. He knew the coastal waters around the Bahamas like the back of his hand. He loved the beach and walking in the sand and working around his garden.

He was also a life-long fan of the University of Florida Gators. When he wasn't in his season-ticket seats on the 45-yard line in "the swamp," he was cheering for them in front of his TV.

John was a life-long member of St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Oviedo, FL, serving in many capacities, including: radio announcer, master grillster at church picnic fund raisers, and as a member of the board of trustees.

John keenly supported Lutheran education. He helped establish Orlando Luther Academy and served on the board of regents for Concordia University Chicago, IL. John also enthusiastically encouraged Betty in her extensive work in the Lutheran church. John and Betty generously supported a wide variety of Lutheran missions and ministries with their time and treasures. ▲

Long-time Family Therapist

Martin Platzer, of Faith/Hartwell, GA

Reverend Dr. Martin Meyer Platzer, age 75, of Hartwell, GA, passed away suddenly at his home on Saturday, August 14, 2021. He was born on March 28, 1946, in Highland Park, IL. to the late Hans and Edith (Meyer) Platzer. Marty's



brother, Robert predeceased him. He was an active member of Faith Lutheran Church, Hartwell.

Pastor Platzer attended Concordia Prep School and Junior College in Bronxville, NY. He graduated from Concordia Sr. College in Fort Wayne, IN. He completed his

Master of Divinity from Emory University and received his doctorate in Pastoral Counseling. Marty was an ordained Lutheran Pastor and served several churches during his lifetime. He worked for more than 25 years as a Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist at The Link Counseling Center in Sandy Springs, GA.

Marty leaves behind his wife of 36 years, Kay Palacko, and two daughters, Katherine Heyen and her husband, Charles, and Jennifer Schroeder and her husband, David, all in Roswell, GA.

Pastor Platzer and Kay were devoted to marriage enrichment and became active with Better Marriages of Georgia from the beginning of their marriage. They became certified marriage enrichment leaders, believing in the slogan, "To work for better marriages, beginning with our own."

In his retirement, Marty worked tirelessly as a volunteer with the NE Georgia Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) to children placed in foster care. He had a love for music and enjoyed golfing, gardening, and his time on the lake. He ran more than 80 road races in his lifetime, many of them with his daughters. His greatest pleasure was spending time with his family.

Marty was a patient and kind man, well known for his sense of humor, practical jokes and playful spirit. He lived his life with faith, grace, love, and gratitude, waking each morning with a grateful heart for God, his life and his family. As a beloved husband, father, grandpa, and friend, he will be remembered by all with much love.

Pastor Platzer's service was held at Faith Lutheran Church in Hartwell. ▲

Seminary Former Academic Dean & Interim President Dean Hempelmann Enters Eternal Rest

Rev. Dr. L. Dean Hempelmann, a former professor and academic dean of Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, MO, and former president of Concordia Lutheran Seminary/Edmonton, Canada, entered eternal rest in Jesus Aug. 29. He was 82 years old.

A private visitation and burial was held in early September and a public memorial service was held later that month at Faith/Georgetown, TX.

Hempelmann devotedly served the church as a pastor, theological educator and administrator, seminary president and executive of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. His 12 years of parish ministry included serving at Peace /Selah, WA, (1966-70) and St. John/Salem, OR (1970-78).

He joined Concordia Seminary in 1978 as director of admissions and ministerial recruitment and served at the Seminary for 16 years, teaching in the Department of Practical Theology. He served various roles including as acting director of Seminary relations, academic dean and director of the Doctor of Ministry Program. In 1990, before Dr. John F. Johnson became the Seminary's ninth president, he served as acting president. During much of his time at the Seminary, he also was the assisting pastor at Christ/Affton, MO.

“Dr. Hempelmann was such a dignified, lovable man who encouraged us with his genuine interest, his joy in Christ, his laughter and his calm confidence that the Lord would care for His people and care for His church,” said Seminary President Dr. Thomas J. Egger. “It was always a pleasure to be with him and a great blessing to know and learn from him. His faithful labors in parish ministry and in pastoral education will continue to bear fruit for many years to come.”

In 1993, Hempelmann became the third president of Concordia Lutheran Seminary in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, where he served for six years and led the seminary to full accreditation without notation by the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada.

In 1999, he became the director of pastoral education for The LCMS, where he later served as executive director of the Board for Pastoral Education. Additionally, he shared his knowledge and insights about the church's concerns through numerous articles and essays, book chapters and as a guest lecturer in Korea, Japan and Australia.

In 2008, Hempelmann received Concordia Seminary's “Distinguished



PASSAGES

Alumnus Award” in recognition of his lifetime of service as a teacher, educational administrator and pastor. He was a chaplain and captain in the U.S. Air Force Reserve. He was named as one of the “Outstanding Young Men in America” in 1974 and awarded the Walther Fellowship (1981-82, 1982-83).

Hempelmann earned a Master of Divinity ('65) and Master of Sacred Theology ('66) from Concordia Seminary. He earned a Doctor of Philosophy ('84) from Saint Louis University and received an honorary Doctor of Divinity ('08) from Concordia University/Irvine, CA. ▲

Served 33 Years at Christ The King/Orlando, FL Gerald Schultz Called Home



Pastor Gerald & Patricia Schultz with President Greg & Edith Walton at Schultz' 50th Anniversary in ministry celebration.

Rev. Dr. Gerald Neil Schultz returned to his heavenly home on September 3, 2021. Pastor Schultz was born on August 19, 1937, in Detroit, MI. In 1963, he graduated from Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, MO and was ordained into pastoral ministry on June 9, 1963, at Our Savior/Detroit, MI. He was instrumental in the launch of Peace Lutheran Church in Holland, MI. In 1966, Pastor Schultz became Associate Pastor at Our Savior/Detroit, prior to coming to Holy Cross /Jacksonville, Florida in 1972. In 1980, he served as Pastor at St. Paul/Statesboro, GA, while also serving as campus pastor at Georgia Southern University.

In 1989, he received his Doctor of Ministry Degree from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. In 2008, Pastor Schultz was a speaker at the Oxford Roundtable in Oxford, England. He retired in April 2016, after serving 33 years at Christ The King and a total of 53 years of service in the ministry.

“Pastor Schultz served the majority of his ministry in the Florida-Georgia District — both in Florida and in Georgia and was the founding pastor of Christ The King/Orlando, FL in 1983,” President Rev. Dr. Greg Walton offered.

Schultz is survived by his wife, Patricia Schultz and their many children and grandchildren. ▲



Lutheran Life
Florida-Georgia District
Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod
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So, What Are You Doing For Pastor Appreciation Month?

I know what you're thinking . . . "is it already that time of year again? Where did the year go?" Well quarantines and lock-downs aside . . . we've been a little distracted with hurricanes, wildfires, and post-election trauma (to say the least). And then there's the members of the royal family falling apart — and they're not supposed to do anything, beyond existing as a ceremonial celebration of unearned wealth and privilege. So when one of the young princes and his celebrity actress wife announced they were leaving Britain to forge new careers in sunny California, royalists lost their minds.

Pastors feel the stress and chaos too! Many of our worship leaders have had to learn how to preach to video cameras and parishoners whose faces are hidden behind masks. It was a whole new skill set to master!

Guiding a congregation and community through the emotional remembrance of September 11th and offering comfort after the Miami condominium collapse left most of them winded and weary.

So a lot has happened.
And suddenly it's October.

The concept of clergy appreciation started with the Apostle Paul as he was establishing the first Christian churches. Since then, pastors have been recognized and honored at various times of the year by different denominations and individual churches.

Pastors have huge responsibilities. They're our shepherds, for heavens sake. And they have their eyes on us — their flock, so to speak, while still having their eyes on their immediate families. That's something that calls for recognition. Social media posts of praise are nice and always welcome, but a hand-written note is such a treasure these days. Take time to express personally what your pastor means to you.

I'm pretty lucky actually. In my work as Florida-Georgia District communications I have the privilege of interacting with most — if not all — of the guys serving in our two-state area. And that doesn't count the pastors spread nationwide in our synod, at our seminaries, at our colleges and universities. They're really an amazing bunch and I've benefited enormously having worked alongside

many of them. And you know what? They've all been pastors to me in their own way.

The older I get, the more I enjoy watching the careers and paths of many of these men that went through their vicarage program here in my own congregation or around the District. I'm proud of our training ground and grateful for that short year they spend here.

I'm spoiled, too. I've got two awesome pastors — *and a vicar* each year! My pastors are humble, honest, loyal, compassionate as well as being strong preachers and great singers. I mean who gets all of that in one guy? I do . . . and I hope you do too! My pastors work really well together, too, which is a blessing to my congregation of more than 1,600 and our school. Quite frankly I don't know how they keep track of all of us.

Last year I gave them both a Corvette (they keep them on their desks in their office). How do I top that? Maybe a boat (for their bathtub)? Maybe a European trip? (a postcard from some faraway location with a memorable photo). Let your pastors know they make a difference in your life and that you appreciate them.

By the way, those are my shepherds in the picture above, Pastors Andrew Kubowicz and Steve Carretto. Rock star clergymen with hearts of gold. Pair those guys with Brandon Bettcher (this year's enthusiastic vicar) . . . and, as William Shakespeare would say, "I count myself thrice blessed!" ▲



The **LAST**
WORD



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