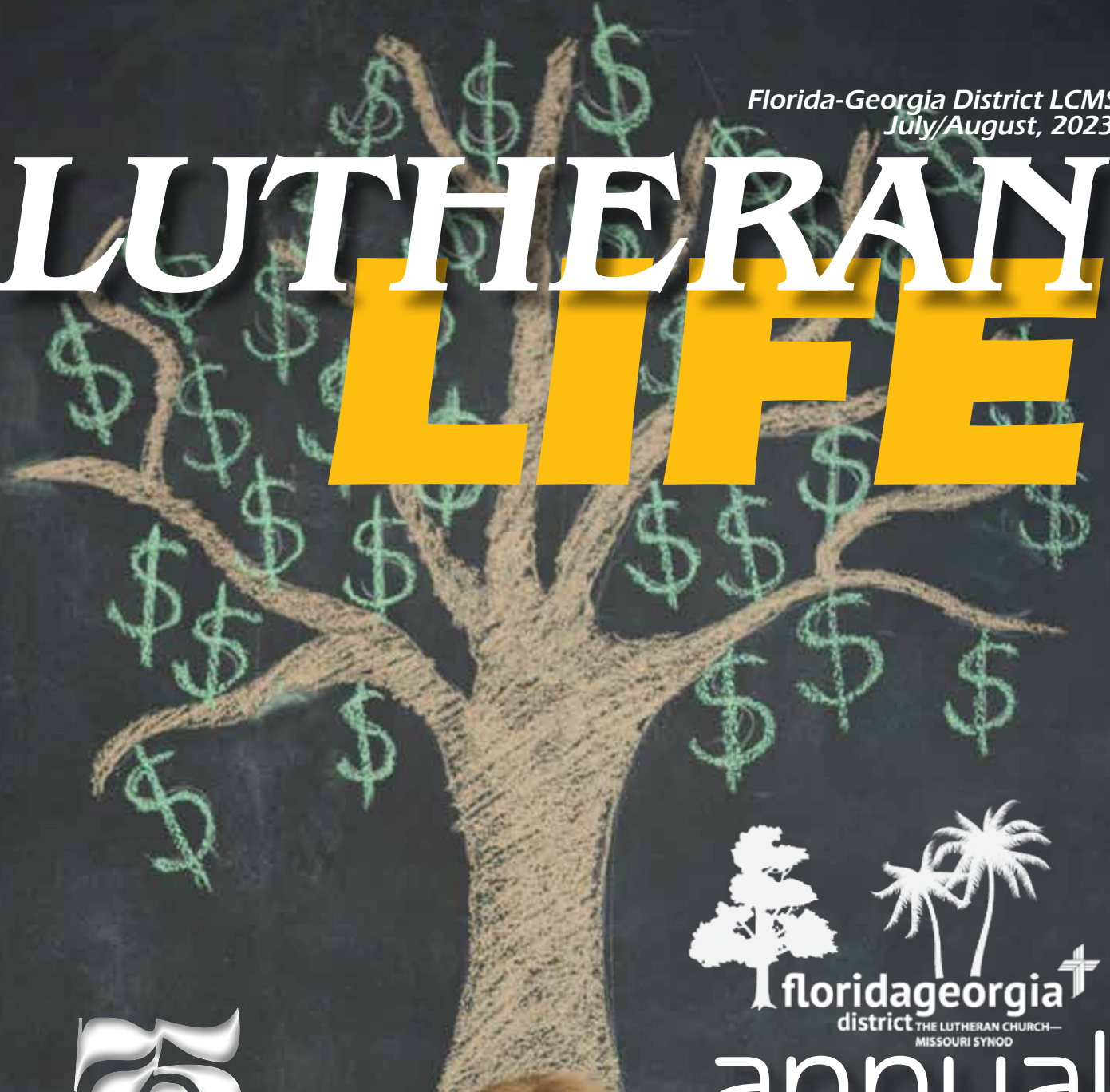


Florida-Georgia District LCMS
July/August, 2023

LUTHERAN LIFE



75
YEARS
1948-2023



annual
report



LUTHERAN LIFE

Lutheran LIFE is the official newsmagazine of the Florida-Georgia (FLGA) District of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. The Mission of the FLGA District is to serve, assist, and encourage congregations in the ministry of Jesus Christ. People of the FLGA 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 readers to express their views and ideas on a wide range of topics. Lutheran LIFE is published bi-monthly. News items and photos are encouraged. Please send scanned photos as a .jpg, .png or .pdf attachment rather than embedded in emails.

Please send address additions, corrections or deletions to: LutheranLife@aol.com.



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Lutheran LIFE

DISTRICT CAPSULES

Transferred Into FLGA from Other Districts

03/13/23 Rev. Paul Neuman from IN (O)
03/14/23 Rev. Christian Ikanih from SW (O)
05/03/23 Ms. Amanda Goodwin from CNH (C)
05/15/23 Mr. Gerald Lustilla from MI (C)
05/22/23 Dcs. Alejandra Rojas De Robles from KS (C)

Initial Placements

03/03/23 Ms. Elizabeth Sabbides as DCE at Marco Lutheran/Marco Island, FL (C)

Ordinations & Installations

03/19/23 Ms. Elizabeth Sabbides as DCE at Marco Lutheran/Marco Island, FL (C)
04/23/23 Rev. Gary Koltz as Sr. Pastor, Marco/Marco Island, FL (O)
04/30/23 Rev. James Zang III as Pastor Hope/Hudson, FL (O)
05/07/23 Rev. Jeffery Moore as IIM Trinity/Holly Hill, FL (O)
05/07/23 Ms. Amanda Goodwin as Teacher at St. Paul/Peachtree City, GA (C)

06/04/23 ... Rev. David Kruger as Pastor of Savior of All/Cartersville, GA (O)
06/04/23 ... Rev. Charles Kanefeke as Pastor of St. Peter/Dahlonega, GA (O)

Status Changes

12/31/22 Rev. Michael Zwemke from Active to Emeritus (O)
05/01/23 Rev. Robert Steinke from Active to Emeritus (O)
05/07/23 Rev. Jeffery Moore from Emeritus to Active (O)
05/07/23 Rev. Paul Sizemore from Active to Emeritus (O)
06/04/23 Rev. Gerhard Michael from Active to Emeritus (O)

Called to Glory

04/17/23 Rev. Geary Bird (O)
06/04/23 Rev. Kenneth Farnsworth (O)
06/05/23 Rev. David Mueller (O)

Note: (O) = Ordained; (C) = Commissioned (IIM) = Intentional Interim Pastor

St. Louis Seminary Announces New Internships Director

The Rev. Joel P. Fritsche has accepted a call to serve as director of Vicarage and Deaconess Internships and assistant professor of Exegetical Theology at Concordia Seminary/ St. Louis, MO, beginning July 1. He will be formally installed Aug. 25 during the Opening Service of the 2023-24 academic year.

For more than two decades, Fritsche has served The LCMS as a pastor, church planter, missionary and theological educator in the United States and in the Dominican Republic. He will succeed Dr. Glenn Nielsen who will conclude 33 years of service at the end of the 2022-23 academic year.

"As Dr. Nielsen retires from his many years of excellent service overseeing vicarages and deaconess internships, Rev. Fritsche is the ideal person to carry on directing this vital piece of our students' formation for ministry," said Seminary President Dr. Thomas J. Egger. "Joel is highly

relational, fair-minded, hardworking, cheerful and direct. He loves the church and her mission, and he loves students. As a professor, he brings a robust commitment to confessional Lutheran theology and to the study of

the Scriptures. Plus, he can teach in Spanish! His gifts will benefit multiple Seminary programs, and he and his family will be a great addition to our Seminary community."

Since 2014, Fritsche has served as a missionary pastor and church planter in the Dominican Republic. Since 2017, he also has been serving as the director and professor of biblical languages at Concordia Seminary the Reformer, where he helps form Lutheran pastors and deaconesses for partner churches and mission fields throughout Latin America.

Since 2007, Fritsche has served on the Board of Directors for Higher Things, an LCMS Recognized Service Organization (RSO).



Joel Fritsche



Glenn Nielsen

W

We all know that people use peppermint candy to hide bad breath and have done so for years. Early advertising for Life Savers Candy pictured an old seaman

throwing a life preserver to a female swimmer with the caption "For That Stormy Breath." That kind of makes me laugh, but we know that there is some truth behind that advertisement!

Over the years I've been in a lot of funeral homes. Funeral homes can vary from simple family-owned businesses to a well-rehearsed production.

Yet some things are the same no matter the location, business model or owner. This can include the lighting, music, greeting at the door and the services they provide. But there is one thing that I have found at almost every funeral home that captures my attention ... a bowl of individually wrapped, Pep-O-Mint Life Savers.

When I first noticed this practice, it struck me as a kind gesture. Then the irony struck me ... that a place noted for death made "Life Savers" available to visitors.

It was with this thought that my curiosity kicked in and I wanted to know more about the meaning behind lifesavers candy. One story circulated for years says that the inventor of Life Savers®,

Clarence Crane of Cleveland, Ohio, lost a daughter due to choking on a piece of hard candy. So, he invented the candy with a hole in the middle so that wouldn't happen to anyone else. The truth is that story is only a myth. Actually, Clarence Crane designed the "Crane's Peppermint Life Saver" in 1912 to look like the ring-shaped flotation device used on ships. In order to improve summertime sales of his chocolate candy company he began to produce this peppermint candy. He wanted his product to stand apart from the pillow shaped peppermint candy produced in Great Britain, so he chose the life preserver image as a marketing strategy. Well, it worked! His sales of the candy more than made up for his melting chocolate sales and today it remains a top selling hard candy.

The truth is we live in a day when many are drowning in the storms and challenges of life. They need a lifesaver. They look to the things of this world, a new philosophy, another self-help book or podcast, a new job, a new inner-commitment or just about anything to help them survive. And it's not just "other people" who are struggling and need a lifesaver. We too need help from outside of ourselves and this world. I find great comfort and hope knowing that our Father in heaven is watching over us. He knows what we face. Our challenges, our hurts,


our fears, our failures, and our need for rescue. Incredibly, He not only knows our need, but He meets our need. Yes, when I see a Lifesavers mint it reminds me of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who said of Himself, "the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost" (LUKE 19:10).

My friends, that includes each and every one of us and all people. Paul writes in Romans "that all have fallen short of the glory of God." So, we're either lost or found. Paul explains, "when the kindness and the

love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (TITUS 3:4-7).

I love the image of a lifesaver or a preserver, like the ones you find on a ship or by a pool. I've been present twice when children were drowning. They needed someone to throw them a life preserve or to reach

out a hand to rescue them. The Lord does just that. He reaches out to save us. Consider the Lord's words in ISAIAH 41:10: "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

Notice the One doing the action, the saving in those words in Isaiah? So, our God reaches out to us. Yet, as those who know this true "Life Saver," we are called to throw those drowning around us drowning a lifeline! This isn't just a one and done —Jesus daily saves us. We are compelled to share the Life Saver with those around us during life's storms. As Christians, we often say we love our neighbors and those in need. Yet do we take it beyond words? With the Apostle John, I say, "Let us love not with words or speech, but with actions!" (1 JOHN 3: 18). 



James Rackey

PRESIDENT
FLORIDA-GEORGIA DISTRICT
LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD

May the Lord bless His Kingdom as we share with all the true-Life Saver!



LIFE SAVER

A WORD OF THANKS

This issue of Lutheran Life contains our Annual Financial Report. We rejoice in the Lord's provision for the mission and ministry to which He has called the Florida-Georgia District!

As you read this Annual Report, I want you to know that we thank you for your partnership and faithful giving to the Lord! You see your giving or offerings are not to an institution, an organization, a corporation or even to the FLGA District or Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. No. Your giving is to the Lord in response to His faithfulness in daily providing for all our needs, and in response to His teaching in His Holy Word.

We realize that some congregations are going through challenging times. Some are still recovering from the pandemic years. Know that we are here to walk with you through this time and pray for revitalization and Kingdom growth in your midst.

On pages 10-11 you'll find our report of congregational and circuit giving. Regardless of what your congregation gave, we pray that it was given in joy and in faith trusting the Lord to provide in order that great fruit for the Lord's harvest may result.

A final word of encouragement for us to walk evermore closely. Over the past six years, the FLGA District has seen almost no increase in total congregational support. We have been blessed to have designated funds from which we have drawn for missions, worker health and more. But those funds are limited. We believe that everything we need, the Lord will provide through His people ...and we thank you for sharing from what He has first given you. If you would like to know more about how we can work together and provide for the mission, please contact our office.

*James
Rockey*



1948-2023



LIVING as *Along-Siders*



DISCIPLES MAKING DISCIPLE MAKERS



President's Equip Conference

September 28 – 30, 2023

Celebrating Three-Quarters of a Century of Mission & Ministry

Pastors • Educators • Laity • Commissioned Ministers of Religion • Administrators

REGISTRATION

\$149 per person through 8.15.23

HOTEL RESERVATIONS

\$165 Single/Double Occupancy • \$185 Triple/Quad Occupancy
Hilton Orlando Buena Vista Palace • Orlando, FL



Youth Ministry Weekend Slated for November 3-5 at Lake Yale Baptist Conference Center

Middle School Youth Gathering

Stitched — this year's Middle School Youth Gathering theme — is based on Galatians 3:28b. It's all about connecting with one another and growing together in Christ, who has ultimately stitched us to Himself.

Cassie Moore, a former FLGA District DCE, will be the keynote speaker. She has a particular passion for engaging with youth and Gen Z, making her an ideal speaker for this event. Cassie has spoken to groups all over North America and is also a published author.



Cassie Moore



The Concordia University Texas Praise Band will be leading the weekend in song and worship. Youth interested in singing with the praise band

during worship are invited to join the director, Jim Marriott for his breakout session for worship choir.

Who can come? Designed for 6-8th grade youth, small and large groups can attend. Congregation confirmation classes, middle school youth groups or entire 6th, 7th or 8th grade classes are encouraged.

High School Leadership Event

This event connects students with peers from different congregations around the FLGA District, creating a strong community of young believers who can support each other in their life journeys. Through interactive experiences, high schoolers will discover how God has gifted them with unique talents and abilities.

High School youth will form new friendships and strengthen their faith by engaging in meaningful conversations and activities. DCE Nick Moss (**St. Paul/Lakeland, FL**) and Pastor Pete LeBorious (**Mount Calvary/Warner Robins, GA**), will be leading this training. Nick and Pete have decades of experience in training high school youth to be leaders within their congregations. The program will focus on developing a greater sense of purpose and broaden their sense of their God-given abilities. And some fun (including a campfire) will be mixed in.

This is an incredible opportunity to empower and inspire the next generation of Lutheran leaders. This event is open to all students who will be in 9th through 12th grades.



Nick Moss

SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP

Sunday morning worship will combine both groups into one large setting. This will be a chance to join groups to worship our Savior together!

COSTS

The cost for the weekend is \$199 per person for early bird registration — now through October 6th. After that date the price is \$215 per person. The price includes the program, housing for the weekend, four meals and a tee shirt. Please direct questions to Cindy Hammerstrom at chammerstrom@flgadistrict.org or 407-258-5042.



Pete LeBorious





District-Wide Event Slated For September 28-30, 2023

Plans are well under way for this year's **President's Equip Conference** to be held in Lake Buena Vista, Florida September 28-30, 2023.

Lay leaders, congregation members, District pastors, educators, commissioned ministers and church and school administrators will come together in a conference that offers powerful keynote speakers, opportunities for practical workshops to equip servants of every walk for ministry and discipleship.

More than 50 workshop opportunities will be available at this year's conference. These workshops aim to offer practical information, personal growth, and new insights to use in your congregation, ministry, and community.

Some selections include:

- What are the "Ways of the Alongsiders?"
- Why 'Disciples Making Disciples' is Currently a Pipedream and How to Fix It.
- The Rise of Identity and How to Broaden the Conversation Beyond Sex, Race and Gender.
- School Board Essentials.
- From One Pastor's Wife to Another.
- Coming Alongside: Difficult Conversations.
- The World is Upside Down; It's Not Too Late!
- Discipleship in an Age of Connected Loneliness.
- Communications – Community OUTREACH and Church INREACH.
- Making In-reachers and Outreachers.
- Emotional Intelligence in Children and Youth.
- Making Disciples in Micro-Groups.
- Church Treasurer's Toolbox.
- From a Stagnant and Dying Church into a Thriving and Life-giving Church.
- Cyber Security. How to Protect Your Ministry.

Visit the President's Equip Conference webpage flgadistrict.org/pec/ for a complete list of the workshops, descriptions, and who is leading them.

"We invite you to be part of an energizing three-day event where you will discover all the joy and blessings of 'LIVING AS ALONG-SIDERS — Disciples Making Disciple Makers!'" explains FLGA District President, The Rev. James Rockey.

"We are extremely enthusiastic about the keynote speakers we have secured! The Revs. Greg Finke and David Kim along with nationally known leadership coach, Leah Abel, will bring comprehensive energy to our 'Living As Along-Siders' theme.

"This will be far more than a conference," Rockey continues, "it is about us living out Christ's call to 'be His witnesses' and to 'go and make disciples.' The best way for this to happen is through His people, one on one, as we share 'the hope that is within us.'"

"We have secured The Hilton Buena Vista Palace in Orlando, FL. The District website will have details and group costs. Begin to plan and recruit other leaders from your congregations and schools. "



WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

Everyone in your congregation and school should attend this event — volunteers, church council and board members, elders, pastors, vicars, Directors of Christian Education, youth leaders, teachers, Bible Study leaders and administrators.

WHAT IS A PRESIDENT'S EQUIP CONFERENCE?

A comprehensive conference that offers powerful keynote speakers, opportunities for practical workshops to equip servants of every walk for ministry and discipleship. **This happens just once every three years!** A wide range of workshop sessions will be offered providing practical, strategic and achievable ideas that will work in your congregations and schools alike.

WHEN IS IT?

September 28-30, 2023
Thursday, Friday & Saturday

WHERE IS IT?

The Hilton Buena Vista Palace
Orlando, Florida

WHAT IS THE COST?

Registration for the event is \$149 per person until August 15th. After that date registration is \$199 to \$250 depending on registration date. Rooms have been discounted between \$165 and \$185 (see flgadistrict.org/pec/ for more hotel details) for all three days. Based on availability, conference hotel rates are available up to three days pre-conference and post-conference. Bring your family and enjoy the parks!

WHAT DOES IT INCLUDE?

All devotions and speakers plus the workshops and the exhibit hall with Christian vendors. It includes our 75th Anniversary banquet and festival worship and lunch on Friday.

Meet the PEC Keynote Speakers

Leah Abel



Leah Abel has a passion for helping leaders develop their plans into powerful, effective “real life” implementation. Known for high level organizational and planning skills, she works with congregations and leaders to experience success in moving ideas and concepts to tangible plans and results.

Abel has teamed with congregations to design and facilitate events for teachers, youth leaders, and clergy as well as managing large events like the National Youth Gathering and the Lutheran Education Association Convocation.

Leah Abel is a graduate of Concordia University/Nebraska and her training includes work with the Institute of Cultural Affairs, the Project Management Institute, Emergent Leader and the Townsend Leadership Institute. She has served congregations in Florida and Colorado.

She is the former Director of Christian Education for St. Luke's/Oviedo, FL. and now lives in Colorado where her husband, The Rev. Scott Abel, serves as pastor of Our Father/Centennial, CO.



Rev. Greg Finke

The Rev. Greg Finke is the author of *Dwelling 1:14* — a nonprofit ministry which helps like-minded Jesus-followers connect in their neighborhoods, workplaces and schools for discipling and missional living.

Greg Finke had been ordained since 1989, spending decades of his pastoral ministry mentoring churches with 1,000 or more in worship. Finke has more than 20 years experience growing and leading congregations.

Greg and his wife Susan are “neighborhood missionaries” in League City, Texas, a Houston subdivision. He is best known for coming alongside a congregation and leaders to determine the congregation’s level of readiness for engaging the Father’s redemptive mission with Jesus.

“Most of us know or have a sense that ‘things aren’t working the way they used to work’ in our congregations. And, most of us are experimenting and experimenting with new things. Greg brings great passion to the mission. He’s a gifted communicator and leader. And, he’s a proven, tested pastor and has walked where you walk. Greg understands what’s going on and can help build a ‘sending’ culture in your congregation,” states The Rev. Dr. Jock Ficken, Executive Leader, The Pastoral Leadership Institute (PLI).



Rev. Dr. David Kim

Dr. Kim is an experienced cross-cultural, entrepreneurial and glocal-missionary, a true coach and disciple maker. He has involvement as a strategist and developer for church planters and missionary pastors.

Kim was born in South Korea. He met his wife, Juhee (Rebecca), there and they were married in Ecuador in 2001. Dr. Kim came to the United States and, after receiving further training through Concordia University and Seminary, he founded a non-profit ministry called Glocal Mission based in Houston, TX, under ecclesiastical supervision of the Texas District of the LCMS.

Kim served for 12 years on the Board of Mission Administration for the Texas District of the LCMS and serves as an adjunct professor at both Concordia University/Irvine, CA, and Concordia Seminary/St Louis, MO.

Kim is gifted at coming alongside those with disciple-making and church-planting goals, helping pastors, missionaries and church leaders by way of personal coaching and mentoring. He is a believer in one-on-one mentorship and training and is committed to leading God’s people to seek the lost, disciple the found, and multiply disciple makers and churches both locally and globally with the caring love of Jesus Christ.



Florida-Georgia District Financial Highlights For the Year Ended January 31, 2023

Greetings! We in the District Office thank you for your continued prayers, partnership and financial support. We look forward to the opportunities this year to reach many for Jesus. We pray you continue to be in good health and good spirits through Him who strengthens us! This is a summary of the Florida Georgia District Financials for FYE January 31, 2023.

Overview:

Congregational giving exceeded our annual budget of \$2.1M. The District continues to operate with no debt and all funds with donor restrictions are fully funded. Expenses continue to be monitored closely according to the budgeted plan.

Statement of Activities:

Unrestricted support from congregations totaled \$2,139,947. This is slightly above the budget of \$2.1M and a decrease of \$26,419 from FYE 2022.

Net Assets Released from Restriction are related to funds set aside by donors for a specific purpose. These increased by \$870,217 compared to prior year. This increase was due to Disaster Response funds released after Hurricane Ian. Net Assets are released from restriction at the time the purpose has been satisfied. Restricted funds are not utilized to fund operating expenses and their usage can vary greatly from year to year. Convention, conferences and workshop revenue increased by \$389,700 compared to the prior year due to District events occurring in person as planned while the prior year most District events were not held and postponed due to COVID-19 related restrictions. Gifts & Property increased from prior year as the District received property in Milledgeville, GA per the congregation's by-laws as the existing congregation dissolved in January 2023.

Other income decreased by \$1,121,204 as in the prior year the District was a beneficiary of a trust dissolution. Total expenses for FYE 2023 were \$3,964,581 versus \$2,663,843

for FYE 2022, or an increase of \$1,300,738. This was due to several factors: The majority of the increase is attributable to Congregational Services programs which increased by \$926,656 due to disbursement of Disaster Response grants. There was also an increase in World and National Missions programs as Kingdom Seed and other mission support was more than prior year. Additionally, Preparing Church Workers programs expense increased as more scholarships were awarded to students at Concordia Seminaries and



by Laura Zirbel
FLGA District
Executive Director
Finance & Administration
lzirbel@flgadistrict.org
407.258.5053

Universities. Mission and Ministry Support costs increased as rent, communications, publication costs and office operating costs increased from prior year. Also, an increased cost of \$116,484 from prior year in Ecclesiastical Administration as there was overlap in administration costs, increased travel costs and the costs related to in person meetings have increased in the Orlando area. As always, we strive to be good stewards with the funds entrusted to us and work diligently to use them in a manner that meaningfully benefits and supports ongoing ministry. In July 2022, the FLGA District signed a new lease agreement beginning January 1, 2023, with our current landlord for a new space in our existing building. This provides a 47% reduction in rental costs. The new space will be on the 3rd floor, Suite 350. During FYE 2023, we continued to fulfill our tithe commitment to the Synod of 17% of all congregational giving for a total of \$364,543. Additionally, we allocated \$64K or 3% of congregational giving towards the District Revitalization Fund, which help underwrite District

events such as Pastors Conference, President's Equip Conference, and other District wide events.

The change in Net Assets for the past fiscal year was an increase of \$353,520. This increase was largely due to the District receiving the property in Milledgeville, GA.

2023-2024 Work Program:

The highlights of the new work program are as follows: Congregational budgeted support was increased by \$50,000 to \$2,150,000. Through unanimous support of the Board of Directors, the budgeted

tithe on congregational support received at the District remains set at 20%. This is broken down into two components. Synod receives 17% of this support and the remaining 3% is budgeted to further

fund District Revitalization efforts. The Missions budget continues to offer 0% Mission Loans, Kingdom Seed and Miracle Grow programs exclusively. The Missions budget also supports (3) campus ministries and (8) other Lutheran Recognized Service Organizations (e.g., Lutheran Services Florida and Mission Haiti), as well as taking care of various maintenance expenses at District owned property in Athens, GA, Milledgeville, GA, Fort Myers, FL, Tallahassee, FL and Naples, FL. We believe this work program is within our current funding forecast and it continues to enable the District to serve, assist and encourage the congregations of the District in the ministry of Jesus Christ. The Board of Directors and District Staff continue to monitor expenses and will make necessary adjustments as required. If you have any questions regarding this report, please feel free to contact me at the District Office. May God continue to bless and keep you in His care!
Respectfully Submitted,

Laura Zirbel

Statements of Financial Position
Audited Results

| | January 31, 2023 | January 31, 2022 |
|--|----------------------|---------------------|
| Assets | | |
| Cash and Cash Equivalents | \$ 4,249,638 | 2,695,452 |
| Accounts Receivable | 20,810 | 1,203,522 |
| Prepaid Expense | 75,684 | 81,840 |
| Contributions Receivable | | |
| From Split-Interest Agreements | 45,117 | 84,634 |
| Property and Equipment, net | 258,550 | 246,001 |
| Advance Sites | 2,118,777 | 1,740,732 |
| Long-Term Investments | 2,044,376 | 2,037,645 |
| Note Receivable | 135,520 | 141,770 |
| Restricted funds held by third-party trustee | 1,849,240 | 2,154,005 |
| Right of Use Asset | 863,087 | - |
| Total | \$ 11,660,800 | 10,385,800 |
| Liabilities and Net Assets | | |
| Accounts Payable | \$ 155,642 | 111,375 |
| Deferred Revenue | 17,787 | 13,021 |
| Lease Liability | 872,448 | - |
| Other Liabilities | 222,780 | 222,780 |
| Total Liabilities | 1,268,656 | 347,177 |
| Net Assets | | |
| Without Donor Restrictions | 5,959,534 | 5,614,729 |
| With Donor Restrictions | 4,432,609 | 4,423,894 |
| Total Net Assets | \$ 10,392,144 | 10,038,624 |
| Total | \$ 11,660,800 | 10,385,800 |

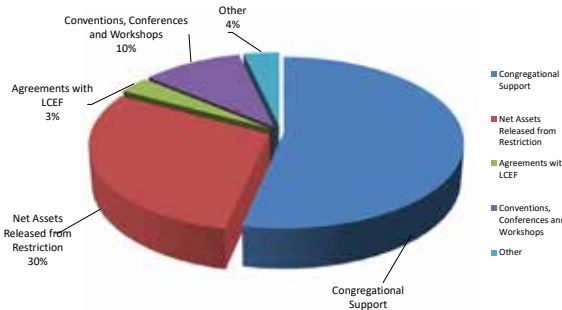
**Florida-Georgia District
The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod
Statements of Activities**
Audited Results

| | 2023 | 2022 |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|
| For The Years Ended January 31, | | |
| UNRESTRICTED REVENUES | | |
| Congregation Support | \$ 2,139,947 | \$ 2,166,366 |
| Net Assets Released from Restriction | 1,184,317 | 314,100 |
| Agreements with LCEF | 127,149 | 134,383 |
| Convention, Conferences and Workshops | 412,079 | 22,379 |
| Gifts, Property | 300,000 | - |
| Other | 145,893 | 1,267,097 |
| Total revenues | 4,309,385 | 3,904,325 |
| EXPENSES | | |
| Synod | 364,543 | 370,561 |
| Congregational Services* | 1,460,806 | 534,150 |
| Preparing Church Workers | 56,331 | 43,002 |
| Missions | 588,076 | 521,384 |
| Mission and Ministry Support | 1,018,548 | 834,953 |
| Ecclesiastical Administration** | 476,277 | 359,793 |
| Total expenses | 3,964,581 | 2,663,843 |
| CHANGE IN NET ASSETS | | |
| Without Donor Restriction | 344,805 | 1,240,483 |
| With Donor Restriction | 8,715 | 97,488 |
| Total change in net assets | 353,520 | 1,337,951 |
| NET ASSETS - BEGINNING OF YEAR | \$ 10,038,624 | 8,700,673 |
| NET ASSETS - END OF YEAR | \$ 10,392,144 | \$ 10,038,624 |

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

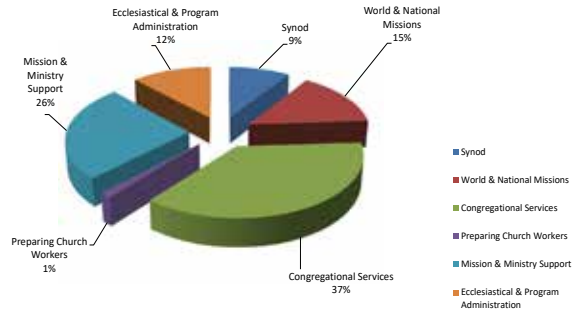
Unrestricted Revenues for FYE January 31, 2023

| | |
|--|---------------------|
| Congregational Support | \$ 2,139,947 |
| Net Assets Released from Restriction | 1,184,317 |
| Agreements with LCEF | 127,149 |
| Conventions, Conferences and Workshops | 412,079 |
| Other | 145,893 |
| Total | \$ 4,009,385 |



Expenses by Critical Target for FYE Jan 31, 2023

| | | |
|---|---------------------|-----|
| Synod | \$ 364,543 | 9% |
| World & National Missions | 588,076 | 15% |
| Congregational Services | 1,460,806 | 37% |
| Preparing Church Workers | 56,331 | 1% |
| Mission & Ministry Support | 1,018,548 | 26% |
| Ecclesiastical & Program Administration | 476,277 | 12% |
| Total | \$ 3,964,581 | |



**Florida-Georgia District
The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod
District Budget - Work Program
For the Year Ended January 31, 2024**

| | |
|--|------------------|
| REVENUES | |
| Congregation Support | \$ 2,150,000 |
| Net Assets Released from Restriction | 660,996 |
| Other | 90,300 |
| Total Revenues | 2,901,296 |
| EXPENSES | |
| Synodical Pledge | 365,500 |
| District Congregational Revitalization | 75,000 |
| World & National Missions | 868,000 |
| School Ministries | 279,150 |
| Congregational Services | 104,200 |
| Preparing Church Workers | 98,500 |
| Mission & Ministry Support, Net | 708,296 |
| Ecclesiastical Administration | 402,650 |
| Total Expenses | 2,901,296 |
| Change in Net Assets | \$ - |

Fiscal Year Ending
January 31, 2023

annual
report



Florida-Georgia District Support by Congregation &

| City/State | Congregation Name | Financial Support in \$ | Confirmed Members | Support/Member in \$ |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| 01 ❖ Northeast Georgia | | | | |
| Athens GA | Christus Victor | 12,905 | 63 | 204.84 |
| Athens GA | Trinity | 12,000 | 205 | 58.54 |
| Buford GA | St. John | 120 | 25 | 4.80 |
| Blairsville GA | All Saints | 13,500 | 118 | 114.41 |
| Commerce GA | Christ the King | 4,081 | 44 | 92.75 |
| Dahlonega GA | St. Peter | 13,171 | 38 | 346.61 |
| Gainesville GA | Good Shepherd | 5,000 | 190 | 26.32 |
| Lilburn GA | Oak Road | 30,700 | 232 | 132.33 |
| Toccoa GA | Trinity | 1,500 | 50 | 30.00 |
| Circuit Totals/Average | | 92,977 | 965 | 96.35 |
| 02 ❖ Atlanta North | | | | |
| Atlanta GA | Grace | 6,000 | 78 | 76.92 |
| Atlanta GA | Rivercliff | 76,037 | 317 | 239.86 |
| Cartersville GA | Savior of All | 13,000 | 185 | 70.27 |
| Cumming GA | Living Faith | 50,000 | 260 | 192.31 |
| Jasper GA | King of Kings | 10,600 | 94 | 112.77 |
| Kennesaw GA | Living Hope | 1,800 | 286 | 6.29 |
| Marietta GA | Faith | 10,175 | 321 | 31.70 |
| Rome GA | Holy Trinity | 1,575 | 101 | 15.59 |
| Tucker GA | St. Mark | 6,081 | 99 | 61.42 |
| Woodstock GA | Timothy | 18,752 | 351 | 53.42 |
| Circuit Totals/Average | | 194,020 | 2,092 | 92.74 |
| 03 ❖ Atlanta South | | | | |
| Columbus GA | Bethlehem | 6,000 | 53 | 113.21 |
| Columbus GA | L.C. of the Redeemer | 3,785 | 188 | 20.13 |
| Decatur GA | Peace | 526 | 70 | 7.51 |
| Douglasville GA | Prince of Peace | 0 | 86 | 0 |
| East Point GA | Christ | 0 | 60 | 0 |
| Griffin GA | Christ Our Savior | 14,013 | 83 | 168.83 |
| Peachtree City | St. Paul | 36,122 | 225 | 160.54 |
| Stockbridge GA | Holy Cross | 100 | 25 | 4.00 |
| Stockbridge GA | Lord of Life | 172 | 23 | 7.48 |
| Tucker GA | Incarnate Word | 500 | 40 | 12.50 |
| Circuit Totals/Average | | 61,217 | 853 | 71.77 |
| 04 ❖ East Central Georgia | | | | |
| Augusta GA | Our Redeemer | 50,996 | 395 | 129.10 |
| Eatonton GA | Lake Oconee | 35,881 | 128 | 280.32 |
| Macon GA | L.C. of the Holy Trinity | 1,000 | 25 | 4.00 |
| Milledgeville GA | Hope | 825 | 17 | 48.53 |
| Perry GA | Christ | 3,000 | 152 | 19.74 |
| Savannah GA | Trinity | 31,100 | 250 | 124.40 |
| Statesboro GA | St. Paul's | 0 | 50 | 0 |
| Warner Robins GA | Mount Calvary | 70,008 | 475 | 147.39 |
| Circuit Totals/Average | | 192,810 | 1,483 | 130.01 |
| 05 ❖ Tallahassee | | | | |
| Albany GA | Trinity | 1,000 | 92 | 10.87 |
| Crawfordville FL | Trinity Lutheran Church | 1,500 | 35 | 42.86 |
| Lake City FL | Our Redeemer | 1,200 | 90 | 13.33 |
| Tallahassee FL | Epiphany | 19,585 | 298 | 65.72 |
| Tallahassee FL | University Lutheran Church | 8,080 | 85 | 95.06 |
| Tifton GA | Peace | 3,639 | 13 | 279.92 |
| Valdosta GA | Messiah | 0 | 103 | 0 |
| Circuit Totals/Average | | 35,334 | 716 | 49.35 |
| 06 ❖ First Coast | | | | |
| Jacksonville FL | Grace | 6,600 | 339 | 19.47 |
| Jacksonville FL | Holy Cross | 0 | 37 | 0 |
| Jacksonville FL | Hope | 3,200 | 60 | 53.33 |
| Jacksonville FL | Our Redeemer | 0 | 88 | 0 |
| Jacksonville FL | St. Paul | 8,000 | 205 | 39.02 |

| City/State | Congregation Name | Financial Support in \$ | Confirmed Members | Support/Member in \$ |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Jaxville Beach FL | Bethlehem | 20,000 | 422 | 47.39 |
| Kingsland GA | Holy Trinity | 4,816 | 125 | 38.54 |
| Middleburg FL | St. Peter's | 14,199 | 210 | 67.62 |
| St. Augustine FL | Christ Our Savior | 0 | 68 | 0 |
| Starke FL | Good Shepherd | 154 | 28 | 5.50 |
| Circuit Totals/Average | | 56,969 | 1,582 | 36.01 |
| 07 ❖ North Central Florida | | | | |
| Chiefland FL | Good Shepherd | 500 | 41 | 12.20 |
| Dunnellon FL | Peace | 2,550 | 70 | 36.43 |
| Gainesville FL | Abiding Savior | 30,627 | 187 | 163.78 |
| Gainesville FL | First | 36,367 | 216 | 168.37 |
| Inverness FL | First | 1,507 | 251 | 6.00 |
| Lecanto FL | Faith | 12,736 | 170 | 74.92 |
| Ocala FL | Our Redeemer | 24,620 | 345 | 71.36 |
| Ocala FL | St. John | 10,000 | 418 | 23.92 |
| Oxford FL | Amazing Grace | 51,720 | 269 | 192.27 |
| Silver Springs FL | Forest | 2,930 | 25 | 117.20 |
| Summerfield FL | Trinity | 35,250 | 760 | 16.38 |
| Circuit Totals/Average | | 208,808 | 2,752 | 75.88 |
| 08 ❖ Space Coast | | | | |
| Cape Canaveral FL | Christ | 6,000 | 79 | 75.95 |
| Holly Hill FL | Trinity | 3,000 | 101 | 29.70 |
| Merritt Island FL | Faith | 15,565 | 457 | 34.06 |
| Palm Bay FL | Risen Savior LC | 1,300 | 129 | 16.05 |
| Palm Bay FL | Zion Ev. Haitian Church | 0 | 15 | 0 |
| Rockledge FL | Trinity | 0 | 131 | 0 |
| South Daytona FL | Holy Cross | 0 | 166 | 0 |
| Titusville FL | Good Shepherd | 15,320 | 256 | 59.84 |
| Circuit Totals/Average | | 41,185 | 1,286 | 32.03 |
| 09 ❖ Orlando East | | | | |
| Casselberry FL | Ascension | 22,901 | 270 | 84.82 |
| Deltona FL | L.C. of Providence | 1,300 | 129 | 10.08 |
| Orlando FL | Esperanza Viva | 0 | 10 | 0 |
| Orlando FL | Hope | 15,742 | 86 | 183.05 |
| Orlando FL | Prince of Peace | 18,060 | 576 | 31.35 |
| Orlando FL | Trinity | 30,157 | 868 | 34.74 |
| Sanford FL | L.C. of the Redeemer | 6,359 | 90 | 70.66 |
| St. Cloud FL | Grace | 500 | 121 | 4.13 |
| Circuit Totals/Average | | 95,019 | 2,150 | 44.19 |
| 10 ❖ Orlando West | | | | |
| Apopka FL | St. Paul | 0 | 43 | 0 |
| Eustis FL | Faith | 40,947 | 452 | 90.59 |
| Winter Garden FL | Zion New Life | 0 | 139 | 0 |
| Leesburg FL | Bethany | 12,747 | 98 | 130.07 |
| Montverde FL | Woodlands | 25,940 | 420 | 61.76 |
| Orlando FL | Christ the King | 2,000 | 186 | 10.75 |
| Orlando FL | Our Savior | 3,500 | 105 | 33.33 |
| Circuit Totals/Average | | 85,134 | 1,443 | 59.00 |
| 11 ❖ Winter Haven | | | | |
| Bartow FL | Redeemer | 536 | 48 | 11.17 |
| Lake Wales FL | Lake Wales | 3,250 | 57 | 57.02 |
| Lakeland FL | Christ | 20,000 | 184 | 108.70 |
| Lakeland FL | St. Paul | 35,388 | 1343 | 26.31 |
| Plant City FL | Hope | 39,072 | 350 | 111.63 |
| Winter Haven FL | Grace | 54,000 | 1075 | 50.23 |
| Zephyrhills FL | Our Savior | 9,937 | 194 | 51.22 |
| Circuit Totals/Average | | 162,133 | 3,251 | 49.87 |

& Circuit for Fiscal Year Ending January 31, 2023

| City/State | Congregation Name | Financial Support in \$ | Confirmed Members | Support/Member in \$ |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| 12 ❖ Heartland | | | | |
| Arcadia FL | Grace | 0 | 15 | 0 |
| Avon Park FL | Christ | 6,354 | 30 | 211.80 |
| Belle Glade FL | St. Peter's | 550 | 15 | 36.67 |
| Clewiston FL | Faith | 6,000 | 295 | 20.34 |
| Lake Placid FL | Trinity | 10,500 | 121 | 86.78 |
| Okeechobee FL | Peace | 6,000 | 295 | 20.34 |
| Sebring FL | Faith | 19,203 | 164 | 117.09 |
| Wauchula FL | Peace Valley | 1,000 | 15 | 66.67 |
| Circuit Totals/Average | | 49,607 | 709 | 69.97 |

| | | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| 13 ❖ Suncoast | | | | |
| Brooksville FL | Christ | 2,500 | 210 | 11.90 |
| Hudson FL | Hope | 1,630 | 143 | 11.40 |
| Lutz FL | Holy Trinity | 7,923 | 198 | 40.02 |
| Masaryktown FL | Holy Trinity | 13,947 | 215 | 64.87 |
| New Port Richey FL | Faith | 6,417 | 189 | 33.95 |
| Spring Hill FL | Forest Oaks | 0 | 210 | 0 |
| Trinity FL | Trinity | 3,600 | 215 | 16.74 |
| Circuit Totals/Average | | 36,016 | 1,380 | 26.10 |

| | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|
| 14 ❖ St. Petersburg | | | | |
| Clearwater FL | Bethel | 3,700 | 581 | 6.37 |
| Clearwater FL | First | 7,333 | 259 | 28.31 |
| Dunedin FL | Faith | 10,171 | 144 | 70.63 |
| Largo FL | Christ the King | 6,000 | 370 | 16.22 |
| St. Petersburg FL | Grace | 20,600 | 337 | 61.13 |
| St. Petersburg FL | Our Savior | 60,224 | 858 | 70.19 |
| Circuit Totals/Average | | 108,027 | 2,549 | 42.38 |

| | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|
| 15 ❖ Tampa | | | | |
| Brandon FL | Immanuel | 3,000 | 345 | 8.70 |
| Riverview FL | Christ the King | 18,269 | 95 | 192.31 |
| Tampa FL | Holy Trinity | 4,500 | 210 | 21.43 |
| Tampa FL | Messiah | 77,870 | 676 | 115.19 |
| Tampa FL | Zion | 2,400 | 29 | 82.76 |
| Circuit Totals/Average | | 106,038 | 1,355 | 78.26 |

| | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|
| 16 ❖ Sarasota | | | | |
| Bradenton FL | Hope | 17,236 | 150 | 114.91 |
| Englewood FL | Redeemer | 0 | 152 | 0 |
| Parrish FL | Faith | 13,000 | 224 | 58.04 |
| Port Charlotte FL | L.C. of the Cross | 27,665 | 296 | 93.46 |
| Port Charlotte FL | Trinity | 4,500 | 114 | 39.47 |
| Punta Gorda FL | Faith | 14,250 | 250 | 57.00 |
| Sarasota FL | Beautiful Savior | 54,282 | 332 | 163.50 |
| Sarasota FL | Concordia | 8,700 | 229 | 37.99 |
| Sarasota FL | Good Shepherd | 13,821 | 161 | 85.84 |
| Venice FL | Lakeside | 10,000 | 175 | 57.14 |
| Circuit Totals/Average | | 163,454 | 2,083 | 78.47 |

| | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|
| 17 ❖ Southwest | | | | |
| Bonita Springs FL | Hope Lutheran Church | 635 | 344 | 1.85 |
| Cape Coral FL | Trinity | 6,000 | 217 | 27.65 |
| Esterio FL | Thrive | 5,000 | 74 | 67.56 |
| Ft. Myers FL | Bethlehem | 0 | 74 | 0 |
| Ft. Myers FL | St. Michael | 43,000 | 753 | 57.10 |
| Ft. Myers FL | Zion | 24,000 | 342 | 70.18 |
| LaBelle FL | Christ the King | 0 | 27 | 0 |
| Lehigh Acres FL | Beautiful Savior | 100 | 32 | 3.14 |
| Marco Island FL | Marco | 43,009 | 490 | 87.77 |
| Naples FL | Grace | 0 | 383 | 0 |
| Naples FL | Peace | 0 | 148 | 0 |
| North Ft. Myers FL | L.C. of Good Shepherd | 2,308 | 139 | 16.60 |
| Circuit Totals/Average | | 166,082 | 3,023 | 54.93 |

| City/State | Congregation Name | Financial Support in \$ | Confirmed Members | Support/Member in \$ |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| 18 ❖ Treasure Coast | | | | |
| Ft. Pierce FL | Trinity | 2,600 | 121 | 21.49 |
| Hobe Sound FL | Bethel | 7,500 | 46 | 163.04 |
| Lake Worth FL | New Alliance L.C. | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| North Palm Bch FL | Faith | 4,187 | 167 | 25.04 |
| Port St. Lucie FL | Grace | 12,000 | 134 | 89.55 |
| Stuart FL | Redeemer | 64,772 | 481 | 134.66 |
| Vero Beach FL | L.C. of the Redeemer | 7,500 | 151 | 49.67 |
| West Palm Bch FL | Redeemer | 0 | 32 | 0 |
| Circuit Totals/Average | | 98,559 | 1,135 | 86.84 |

| | | | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| 19 ❖ South Palm Beach | | | | |
| Boca Raton FL | St. Paul | 35,000 | 1618 | 21.63 |
| Boynton Beach FL | Son Life | 17,769 | 201 | 88.40 |
| Delray Beach FL | Emmanuel Haitian | 0 | 68 | 0 |
| Delray Beach FL | Trinity | 0 | 373 | 0 |
| Lake Worth FL | Epiphany | 2,000 | 123 | 16.26 |
| Lake Worth FL | Our Savior | 11,105 | 107 | 103.79 |
| Lake Worth FL | Salem Haitian | 0 | 97 | 0 |
| Circuit Totals/Average | | 65,874 | 2,587 | 25.46 |

| | | | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| 20 ❖ Gold Coast | | | | |
| Davie FL | Gloria Dei | 0 | 304 | 0 |
| Ft. Lauderdale FL | Faith | 1,100 | 46 | 23.91 |
| Ft. Lauderdale FL | L.C. of the Good Shepherd | 0 | 40 | 0 |
| Ft. Lauderdale FL | Mont Garizim | 0 | 50 | 0 |
| Ft. Lauderdale FL | Shepherd of the Coast | 0 | 268 | 0 |
| Ft. Lauderdale FL | Trinity | 2,400 | 251 | 9.56 |
| Hollywood FL | Prince of Peace | 2,000 | 20 | 100.00 |
| Miramar FL | Miramar | 1,000 | 33 | 30.30 |
| Ft. Lauderdale FL | Le Tabernacle De La Grace | 400 | 265 | 0.56 |
| Plantation FL | Our Savior | 13,000 | 314 | 41.40 |
| Weston FL | St. Paul Lutheran Church | 44,200 | 683 | 64.71 |
| Circuit Totals/Average | | 64,100 | 2,274 | 28.19 |

| | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| 21 ❖ Monroe-Miami-Dade | | | | |
| Hialeah FL | Faith Lutheran Church | 0 | 161 | 0 |
| Hialeah FL | St. Andrews | 1,200 | 34 | 35.29 |
| Miami FL | Concordia | 2,200 | 146 | 15.07 |
| Key West FL | Grace Lutheran Church | 0 | 128 | 0 |
| Leisure City FL | Hospital Alma Iglesia | 2,252 | 256 | 8.80 |
| Marathon FL | Martin Luther Chapel | 2,112 | 67 | 31.52 |
| Miami FL | Bay Shore | 5,000 | 75 | 66.67 |
| Miami FL | Our Saviour | 0 | 49 | 0 |
| Miami FL | San Pablo Luterana | 500 | 40 | 12.50 |
| Miami FL | St. Matthews | 2,072 | 73 | 28.38 |
| Miami FL | St. Paul Lutheran | 14,815 | 65 | 227.92 |
| Culter Bay FL | Trinity | 0 | 9 | 0 |
| Nassau Bahamas | L.C. of Nassau | 0 | 125 | 0 |
| North Miami FL | Holy Cross | 16,809 | 196 | 85.76 |
| Tavernier FL | Immanuel | 1,500 | 51 | 29.41 |
| Circuit Totals/Average | | 48,460 | 1,475 | 32.85 |

| | | | | |
|--|------------------------------|--------------|------------|--------------|
| Mission Congregations/RSO Support | | | | |
| Alpharetta, GA | Stepping Stone | 150 | 0 | 0 |
| Tampa, FL | Messiah Hispanic | 6,360 | 152 | 41.84 |
| Fort Myers, FL | Amigos En Cristo | 958 | 0 | 0 |
| Fort Myers, FL | Amigos Ministries SW Florida | 84 | 11 | 7.64 |
| Fort Lauderdale, FL | Trinity Haitian | 600 | 0 | 0 |
| Circuit Totals/Average | | 8,152 | 163 | 50.01 |

Grand Totals/Average **2,139,947** **37,306** **57.36**

Editor's Note: Congregational Financial Support includes unrestricted gifts and additional gifts for missions. Confirmed Members population has been obtained from LCMS Rosters and Statistics — the latest numbers available.

FLORIDA GEORGIA

Out and About in the District


District Educators Selected for LCMS Leadership Development Program



Jacob McGee and Anne Fritz — two FLGA District educators — have been selected for the 2023 School Leadership Development (SLED) program. The year-long program began in June in St. Louis with training designed specifically for rising leaders serving in Lutheran schools. Jacob and Anne will be mentored by well-respected, experienced administrators, and they will complete a major project that will benefit the schools where they currently serve. At the conclusion of the year, they will receive the School Leadership Endorsement from the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod.

Jacob McGee currently teaches middle school at **Grace/Winter Haven, FL**. He came to Grace after serving in the public school

system, wanting to share his faith with his students and families. He is a leader at Grace, helping to move the school forward in ministry by sharing his love for Christ. Jacob looks forward to seeing where God leads as he pursues leadership in Lutheran education for years to come.

Anne Fritz serves at **Faith/Eustis, FL** as a middle school teacher and Athletic Director. Passionate about Lutheran education, Anne serves on the School Advisory Council at Faith. She is a natural leader, holding Christ at the center of all she does. Her care for her students and families promotes the Great Commission as she focuses on making disciples in all she does. 



St. Paul/Weston, FL Celebrates Pre-School Grads



Godwink Girls Supporting Gainesville, FL Community

The Godwink mission at **First/Gainesville, FL** began in December 2018 when member, Judy Varady, read an article about Shoebox Santa. She brought the idea to the congregation and was subsequently overwhelmed by the response to the request. Forty three boxes later, she approached several other members about starting a mission group: Pat Lopez (who suggested the name Godwink after the seeming ease with which things were falling into place,) Barbara Hughes, a member looking for a new purpose after losing her husband with whom she did missionary work in Nicaragua, and Kelly Haynes, a missionary-minded elementary teacher.




The rest is history!
Since then, Godwink has been embraced wholeheartedly by the congregation and is one of their most successful mission efforts to the Gainesville, Florida community.

One of the primary outreach efforts involves Lake Forest Elementary School. With no PTA to speak of, the school struggles to provide many of the extras that make a school successful. With "in kind" and monetary gifts, Godwink has provided

sports equipment, weather- appropriate clothing, outdoor picnic tables, gift books (more than 1,500 so far) for every child at the end of the year, prizes for attendance, behavior, and science fair, school supplies for new teachers, classrooms and students, gift cards, food for teacher appreciation week, a welcome back breakfast at the beginning of the school year, and equipment for the music program.

For the first time, Godwink has purchased two bicycles (boy's and girl's) to be presented to two outstanding students at the end of this school year for perfect attendance. Godwink also stands ready to address emergency needs throughout the school year.


Godwink also provides teacher appreciation events for First/Gainesville's own preschool, Open Arms Child Development Center, necessities, clothing and hygiene items for Grace Marketplace, a community homeless shelter, diapers to Peaceful Paths Domestic Abuse Network, and hygiene items for Days For Girls.

In photo: Barbara Hughes, Judy Varady, Pat Lopez applying encouragement labels to the 400 books for the end of the year 

Hope/Plant City Strives to End Hunger

On May 2, 2023 **Hope/Plant City, FL's** Senior Pastor, Rev. Dean Pfeffer had the pleasure of presenting Mary Heysek, Executive Director of the United Food Bank of Plant City with a special gift from the members of Hope. The check is a portion of the proceeds Hope received from its Annual Turkey Supper in November and their hot boiled peanut sales at the Florida Strawberry Festival this past March.

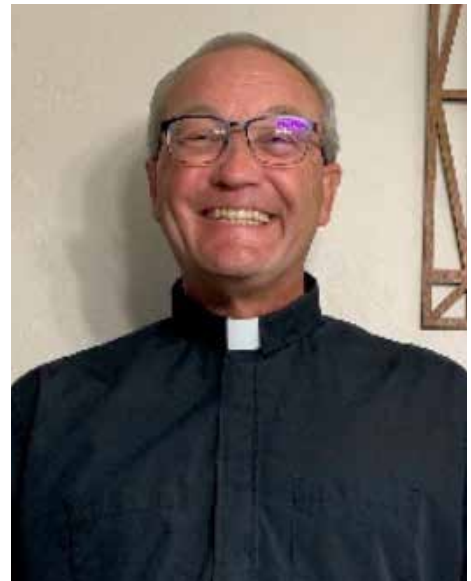
As is the practice at Hope, proceeds from "fundraisers" are given to various agencies in the community and to both LCMS and the Florida-Georgia District. Among this year's recipients are the Florida-Georgia District, Meals on Wheels, Marshall Middle School Uniform Program and others. According to Pfeffer, "It is a joy for us to give back to our community the gifts that God has given us. We want to show that we have been blessed in order to be a blessing to others."

Pictured are Pastor Dean Pfeffer, who serves on the Food Bank Board of Directors as secretary and is a past chair of the board, and Mary Heysek, Food Bank Executive Director. 



Our Savior/Plantation Has Successful VBS

The campus looked like an international space station in June when **Our Savior/Plantation, FL** produced "Stellar" for their summer Vacation Bible School program. Participants were launched into a cosmic quest where they shined Jesus' light to the world. Stellar rockets and out-of-this-world adventures led to faith-building fun.



The Rev. Gary Koltz, a second-career pastor with 4-1/2 years of service at a church in the Michigan District, will serve **Marco/Marco Island, FL** as vacancy pastor. Previously Koltz worked with Good Life — a creation of the LCMS. The idea was to reach unchurched people through music, games, and family-based activities. The ministry was very successful in Michigan.


Koltz moved to Florida to expand the ministry here but when the pandemic hit the US his plans were cancelled. Most recently he has been helping with fill-in preaching at Peace/Naples, FL, Thrive/Estero, FL and Concordia/Kendall, FL.




St. Paul/Boca Raton, FL welcomed Jacob and Shelby Scheler (left) as their vicarage couple for 2023-24. They were recently married on May 20th and are looking forward to settling into the Boca Raton community. The congregation said goodbye to Anthony & Sami Sedotto (right) as they return to Concordia/St. Louis, MO for their final seminary year.





St. Paul/Weston, FL had a Stellar Vacation Bible School with a week of costumes, decorations and fun. In the scene above cast members performed the “can-can” to remind VBS participants to bring cans of non-perishable food. The food was donated to LifeNet4Families. The charity offers services to those who are chronically or newly homeless who are food insecure. The organization in Broward County provides food and nutrition, health and wellness, and stability. 



Trinity/New Port Richey, FL couldn't decide what to do with the big grey electrical box beside the front door of their sanctuary. They contracted a commercial artist to incorporate the congregation's mission statement with the heart and cross into an eye-catching display easily visible to drivers on the recently opened Lake Blanche Rd. beside the church's building. 



The Rev. Dr. Jeff Moore was installed as Intentional Interim Pastor of Trinity/Holly Hill, FL on May 7th, 2023. From left: FLGA District President James Rockey with Pastors Fred Schultz; Jeff Moore; and Russ Anderson.

Breaking News!



Congregations, schools and ministries of the FLGA District can send stories, articles, photos for publication! Lutheran LIFE is free to all congregants of the FLGA District!


Want to subscribe? It's FREE!
Send your name and address to us.
Want your entire congregation to receive LIFE? Send your mailing list

LutheranLife@aol.com

Please attach photos in one of these formats:
.jpg .png .pdf

UGA Students Spend Spring Break in Fort Myers Helping Disaster Response



Christus Victor/UGA Campus Ministry/Athens, GA had the opportunity to serve **Bethlehem/Fort Myers, FL** during their Spring Break. Pastor Greg Michael and students served alongside Concordia/St. Paul, MN and Concordia/Chicago, IL students in two homes in the neighborhood. They primarily worked on taping and mudding, some scraping of popcorn ceilings, and various finishing work. "We had good interaction with one of the families we were serving and spent time in conversation with them as well as playing with their and their neighbor's children," Michael said. "It was a good opportunity to listen to their challenges, recognize the brokenness of the world, and rejoice in the Lord who continues to care for us in the midst of the challenges. The week was also a good opportunity for us to grow together in the joys of Lord as we travelled through the Psalms of Ascent for our daily devotions and enjoyed various games in our down time. We appreciate the support of our District and Synod Disaster Response efforts that allowed for this opportunity to serve." 



sixteen



Faith Lutheran /Sebring, FL Celebrates 70 Years of Ministry



Faith/Sebring, FL members enjoyed a celebration to commemorate 70 years of ministry this past February. A reception was attended by 130 guests including past and present members and clergy.

The theme was: Beyond Imagination based on the scripture: EPHESIANS 3:20 – 21 “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

The Fellowship Hall was decorated with lights and stars hanging from the ceiling, giving reference to God’s promise to Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky. Like Abraham, the founding fathers of Faith/Sebring had no idea how many people this church would reach for God’s kingdom over the course of time. Also, like Abraham and his descendants, their story has had its ups and downs, but through it all, God has been faithful and the congregation has been richly blessed.

Attendees enjoyed an array of delicious hors d’oeuvres prepared by the celebration committee and served by students from Sebring High School. Entertainment was provided by Harpist, Pastor William Reister of Jacksonville, FL. Guest speaker was Pastor Dean Pfeffer of Hope Lutheran/Plant City, FL. Pastor Pfeffer had been an assistant pastor of Faith Lutheran for two years beginning in 1994.


A slide presentation was presented showing church history and current church ministries and activities. A history display was made with photo albums, past church directories and past school yearbooks. Historical documents show that the first service was conducted



at the Women’s Club in Sebring on March 4, 1952, and officiated by Rev. August Bernthal (Pastor of Grace/Winter Haven, FL), who also had served Faith/Sebring during this time. By March 22, 1952, the constitution was adopted and signed by 19 charter members.

Rev. Edward G. Tippin was ordained and Installed as the first Missionary and Pastor of Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church at the Women’s Club in Sebring, FL on Sunday, August 3, 1952. Ground breaking for the first church building was October 2, 1955.

Faith/Sebring has been served by Senior Pastor, Robert Maulella since 2014; and Assistant Pastor, William (Bill) Roberts, ordained in 2021. Faith is a very active and friendly growing congregation that serves the community in a variety of ways including Faith Lutheran Child Development Center, Faith’s Closet Resale Store, Weekly Food Pantry Distribution, Tax Preparation Services, Free

Community Thanksgiving meals, Samaritan’s Purse Shoebox ministry, Good News Club at a local elementary school, and a Prayer Shawl Ministry. 



Pastors Robert J. Maulella and Richard Norris



Guest speaker Pastor Dean Pfeffer



Dorcas Hirst, James Olckers and Pastor John Hirst



Hope/Hudson Welcomes James Zang

The Rev. James T. Zang was installed as **Hope/Hudson, FL's** new pastor on Good Shepherd Sunday, April 30, 2023. His wife, Sonia, and his son, Jason along with his parents were also in attendance.


Pastor James was baptized when he was 18 at Resurrection/Brooklyn Park, MD. He attended Concordia/Bronxville, NY and then Concordia Seminary/St. Louis MO. His first call was to Christ /New Castle, PA. After serving fourteen years at Mount Olive in Lockport, New York, he is excited to serve Hope as their new under Shepherd.

Pastor James is passionate about conflict reconciliation, spiritual formation and direction. He believes it is critically important for churches and communities to form dynamic relationships, which is vastly different than a "silo" philosophy of ministry.

His son is about to graduate from Lockport high school, and he will be attending Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University

in Daytona Beach, FL this fall. He is looking forward to having his family join him in Hudson this summer.

Hope has been without a pastor for the last two years and they are thankful that the Lord of the harvest has sent Pastor James to serve them in making disciples for our Lord.

Attending Pastors were front row from left: Richard Arndt, James Rockey, FL-GA District President, James Zang, Paul Meseke, back row, Justin Pahl, Thomas Wenndt, Kenneth Redmann, David Brockhoff. 




Pastor James Zang (left) with his wife, Sonia and son, Jason



Good Shepherd Sunday Celebrated With Bluegrass Gospel Hymns in Athens

Trinity/Athens, GA enjoyed some spirited bluegrass gospel music during their worship on Good Shepherd Sunday in May. Bluegrass music is a genre distinguished from the older string-band music by its more syncopated (off-beat) rhythm, its relatively high-pitched tenor (lead) vocals, tight harmonies, and a strong influence of jazz and blues.

At right, the Bluegrass musicians are Horace Hudson, Mandy Dixon, Anne Weaver, John Keeble, Rylie Keeble, Mike Harrison, and Allen Harrison. 



Pastor Tim Davis and Elmo during the children's message on Good Shepherd Sunday.



District Leads Way in Connecting People to Jesus

MATTHEW 7:7-11 has captured my imagination. It reads, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!"

Is this you? It was certainly me. Lord, I wish I had someone with whom I can share my ministry plans. Lord, I wish I had someone to help me think this through. Lord, I wish someone would help me understand

Pathway cohort will be like an additional staff person keeping you company as you move

finding renewed focus, new life and encouragement for themselves and those they serve.



forward and walk with you. **REV7:9**, Transformation Tuesday with Dr. Peter Meier, and the Missionary Pathway will help you access the training you desire.

Lord, I wish Your people, who are feeling discouraged, like they need more encouragement, training, and better resources would appreciate that their prayers have been answered and they only need to engage.

So my friends, your prayers have been answered. Get up off your knees, come out of your prayer closet, slow down, get focused, and tune in to those things the Lord has given to help answer your prayer. There is as much, probably more prayer, more



Peter Meier



Matt Peebles

the changes happening in my neighborhood. Lord, I wish I had someone, an additional staff person, to walk with me through ministry. Lord, I wish I had access to the training I need to be more effective in ministry. Lord.

I wish, I wish . . . I wish! I think your wish has been granted. I wish mine had been the same way. **REV7:9** will listen to and help you refine your ministry plans through coaching. **REV7:9** cohorts will help bring clarity to your thoughts as would participation in the Missionary Pathway with Rev. Matt Peebles. **REV7:9** will provide demographics to help you understand neighborhood trends. **REV7:9** and your Missionary

training opportunities, more assessment instruments, more partnership opportunities than there has ever been in our District.

Our District President, James Rockey, is leading the way in connecting people to Jesus.

My question for you is if you are so busy chasing second and third tier objectives that the first thing, connecting people with Jesus, is being neglected? Think about it dear friends. If you find yourself in a dry place, or a place where you are wondering where to turn, then I invite you to double down on **REV7:9**, the Missionary Pathway, and Transformation Tuesday. It's all there and those who are participating and investing themselves are

Come on dear friends, let's get off the periphery and get deeper into the game.

Our neighbors are crying out for us and the great multitude from every nation, tribe, people and language will be grateful that you were obedient to the call of Christ to disciple, train, and deploy them for their salvation and the growth and grace of their families and community.

Let's refocus, put on a full court press saints and see what the Lord will do.

I hope to see you online engaged in some of these opportunities to be strengthened and encouraged. Continued rich blessings and peace.

The Trinitian God is with us and the fullness of the God of Jacob is our Refuge. Thanks Lord!



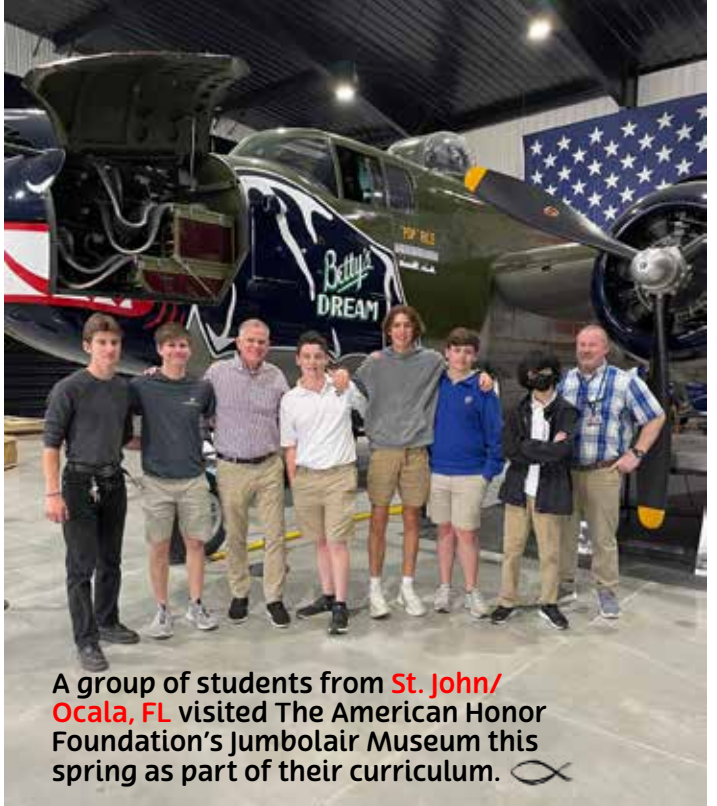
by Victor Belton
FLGA District First
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Ocala Volleyball Team Headed to States



St. John/Ocala, FL's Beach Volleyball Team won Regional Championship and made it to the state tournament. Sadly they were defeated in the playoffs by Kings Academy/West Palm Beach, FL.


Graduating seniors at **St. John/Ocala, FL** tossed their hats in the air on stage as they were presented to their families and friends. 



A group of students from **St. John/Ocala, FL** visited The American Honor Foundation's Jumbolair Museum this spring as part of their curriculum. 



Pastor Dean Pfeffer and Becky Hartmann — chair of **Hope/Plant City, FL's** Missions & Outreach committee — had the honor of presenting a check for \$2,000 to Mr. Dennis Mayo, Principal of Plant City's Marshall Middle Magnet School, for use toward the student uniform program. As Mayo explained to Pfeffer and Hartmann, school uniforms are required of all students but being a Title 1 school, a number of families cannot afford the simple T-Shirt. These funds will be used to help those families in need receive the required uniforms for their students.

The funds presented to Marshall Middle School are a portion of the proceeds Hope received from its Annual Turkey Supper in November and their participation in the Florida Strawberry Festival where they sold hot boiled peanuts. Funds were distributed to the Florida Georgia District, Marshall Middle School, United Food Bank of Plant City, Meals on Wheels, church worker scholarships among others. It has been Hope's tradition to use these funds to the benefit of the community. 



Two Middle School Handbell groups from **Redeemer/Stuart, FL** competed in the "Music in the Parks Festival" at Busch Gardens in April. Both groups directed by Joy Beach received Superior ratings as well as the highest scores of all of the groups in the festival that day. 

Boca Raton Hosts Arts Festival



St. Paul/Boca Raton, FL enjoyed the school's annual arts festival near the end of the school year. The congregation and school families — and lots of grandparents — came to view the artistic achievements of the students. ✝

Trinity/Athens Youth Group Enjoys Lumberjaxe Outing



Trinity/Athens, GA Youth group enjoyed an outing to Lumberjacks for ax throwing! As two years of formal catechism classes conclude, they relieved some stress over their Public Essay/Examinations. Pictured are Pastor Tim Davis with youth group and parents. ✝

Concordia/Miami Trike Race



The staff, students, and families of **Concordia/Miami, FL** raised more than \$5,700 for St. Jude's Children's Hospital through their annual Trike-A-Thon. Concordia's Parent-Teacher Association turned the parking lot into a racetrack, and parents enjoyed watching their children race around the course. The President of St. Jude's called Early Childhood Director Jennifer Lauture to congratulate the preschool for beating their school's fundraising record. Director Lauture is proud of the Concordia family that never hesitates to help others and serve in the community. ✝


St. Paul/Weston Installs New Stephen Ministers



Six new individuals completed the Stephen's Ministry Training bringing **St. Paul/Weston, FL's** total active Stephen Ministers to 15. The photos shows the team following a celebratory barbeque. ✝

On Trinity Sunday, June 4th, the members of **Hope/Plant City, FL** recognized those in their congregation who graduated this past spring. Those recognized (pictured with Hope Sr. Pastor Rev. Dean Pfeffer on left and Vicar Owen Duncan on right) are Keaira Griffin/ Tampa Bay HEAT — will attend Mars Hill College, Bryan Greatens/Polk State Gateway Collegiate High School — will attend Polk State College; Kristin Spengler/ Florida State University, Bachelor of Music with a major in music therapy. Also graduating but not pictured are Nathan Gall/Blake High School — will attend Hillsborough Community College; Thomas Goethe/Central Florida Aerospace Academy — enlisted in the Marines; and Anjelia Rivera/ Strawberry Crest High School. All the graduates received special gifts from the congregation and quilts were made and presented by Hope's quilters. 



Seventeen students graduated from **Redeemer/Stuart, FL** in May. These students will be attending three different high schools next year. We pray they will continue to shine the light of Christ and show what it is to be a Christian leader. 




Region 5 Celebrates Ascension Day

Following a day-long Region 5 Pastor's Conference held at **St. Paul/Boca Raton, FL**, participants from throughout Region 5 (Key West to Lake Placid, FL) gathered for a Ascension worship celebrating the conclusion of Jesus' earthly ministry.


A mass festival choir under the direction of Mr. Mark Lohmeyer, Minister of Music at St. Paul, opened worship with "O For a Shout of Sacred Joy" followed by an Easter proclamation.

Confession and absolution was led by Host Pastor Steve Carretto, with Pastors Dennis Bartels, Scott Henze, Jacob Roedsens and Kyle Wills handling the service of the word readings, Gospel and prayers of the church.

As the Paschal Candle was extinguished by St. Paul Vicar Anthony Sedotto, as a symbol that Christ has ascended into heaven, "Alleluia, Sing to Jesus" was sung by the congregation.

The Rev. James Rockey, District President, delivered the Ascension Day sermon. The offering collected will be added to the 75th Anniversary capital campaign with a goal of \$1.5 million to provide \$150,000 in grants to start ten mission congregation ministries over the next five years. 

Trinity Academy/ Athens Celebrates Graduation


Trinity/Athens, GA began its early childhood ministry in 1987 with the introduction of a half-day preschool. In 1991 the congregation prayerfully created an addition to its early childhood ministry with the introduction of the full day preschool program. They now have 11 classrooms serving ages six weeks old through four years. Trinity Lutheran Academy strives to keep classrooms small and student/teacher ratios low. 



Front Row from left — Vicar Anthony Sedotto, Pastor Kyle Wills, Pastor Bill Roberts, District President James Rockey, Pastor Luis Diaz;
 Middle Row from left — Pastor Jake Roedsens, Pastor Alan Sielk, Pastor Rob Maulella, Pastor Dan McPherson;
 Back Row from left — Scott Gress, Pastor Dennis Bartels, Pastor Scott Henze, Pastor Stephen Carretto

Clearwater Students Hit Homerun With Baseball-Themed Heros of Faith Musical



The students at **First/Clearwater, FL** presented "IN the Big Inning," a musical about the Heroes of Faith found in Hebrews told from a baseball perspective. They meet Moses ("he got his start in the bush leagues"), Noah ("that guy can really swing the lumber"), and Abraham ("... with his son Isaac at the plate, it looks like the manager is calling for a sacrifice..."). With shades of the iconic "Casey at Bat," it all leads to the climatic finish of "Jesus at the Cross" and the good news of the Gospel is driven home with power! The musical was dedicated to First Lutheran member, positive role model, and hero of faith June Schultz, who received her crown of glory weeks before the presentation. Directed by Minister of Music, Ann Hinz, staff members Natalee Hallsted and Joe DeCresie and volunteers Rick Howard and Ellen Bowlin also contributed to the production. 





Oak Road/Lilburn, GA recently celebrated two baptisms on Pentecost Sunday, 2023. They celebrated the birth of the Church and the giving of the Holy Spirit. The baptismal family is pictured below right. The grandparents wore earphones during the celebration, enabling them to hear the language translation from English to Spanish. Beginning this summer Oak Road will be offering continuous English to Spanish interpretation in worship. Gwinnett County has a large Hispanic population and has grown immensely in the past few years. "We already have members who were born on five different continents and from eight different countries. I hope and pray we can continue to see God bring people from more nationalities into our Kingdom-gatherings at Oak Road," said Pastor Andy Wrasman. 🐟



St. Paul/Boca Raton, FL installed Casey Schweim as their Director of Christian Education intern on Sunday, June 11. He is a Concordia/Irvine, CA graduate. Schweim jumped right in the week after helping with VBS activities. He will be working with St. Paul's youth and families. He is shown with his two internship supervisors, Rebecca Schaffer and Pastor Steve Carretto. 🐟



In May **St. Paul/Weston, FL** joyfully celebrated the confirmation of these 12 young adults. They are shown with Jeremy Becker, DCE and Pastor Scott Henze. 🐟

Mission: Haiti Responded Quickly to June's Torrential Storms

Mission: Haiti walks beside our brothers and sisters in Christ living in Haiti — the Caribbean country that shares the island of Hispaniola with the Dominican Republic to its east. Though it's still recovering from a 2010 earthquake, many of Haiti's landmarks dating to the early 19th century remain intact. These include Citadelle la Ferrière, a mountaintop fortress, and the nearby ruins of Sans-Souci Palace, the baroque former royal home of King Henry I.

"Mission Haiti invests in residents and celebrates with them as they achieve self-sufficiency and their vision for an abundant life in Christ," explains Anne Dobbins, a board member and administrator for the FLGA District sponsored organization.

"Mission: Haiti is a faith based 501c3 non-profit, tax-exempt corporation that grew out of the District," she continued. "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. Despite hardships like extreme

poverty and political violence in the country, God is still using Mission: Haiti as a vessel to reach out to people, help them, and share with them the Good News of Jesus Christ."

Haiti is currently in a crisis. Violence, political and economic instability, and natural disasters plague country. Cholera kills many people as it spreads through contaminated water and food.

"While we hear that many missions have pulled out of Haiti, Mission: Haiti has focused on staying the course," states The Rev. John Roth, pastor of Thrive/Estero, FL and a member of the charity's board of directors. "This




Lophane Laurent

is because we are blessed by God to have our Field Director, Lophane Laurent, and his team on the ground directly in Port-Au-Prince. Even

though it is currently unsafe for American teams to travel to Haiti, Lophane and his team are there and they are doing an excellent job of making sure that the mission's programs continue and that people in Haiti receive the help that they need in the name of Jesus Christ."

During the first week of June, Haiti's coast received torrential rains and the village of Leogane suffered very

badly. Rain running off the mountains brought mud and trash into people's homes. "Lophane was able to send us video and photos of the damage. We put the word out and because of generous donations, Mission: Haiti was able to send enough Cholera kits and food bags for 90 families in Leogane," Dobbins concluded. 



The first week of June, Leogane, Haiti had massive flooding. Thousands were displaced. After the water retreated, work began. They had to remove standing water, remove all soaked and contaminated materials, shovel out mud and silt before it dried, clean and dry the walls, scrub floors and woodwork, attempt to dry surfaces to prevent disease. At left and below, residents receive food bags and Cholera kits to be shared in the community. The flood was the latest calamity to strike Haiti's already weak infrastructure, which has been repeatedly wracked with criminal violence, political turmoil and natural disasters in recent years.



Mary Poppins Visits St. Paul/Boca Raton



It was a “jolly holiday with Mary” when the **St. Paul/Boca Raton, FL** student body came together, as they do each Spring, to present a major musical production.


“It enables the students to grow in skills and talents,” music and drama teacher Rebecca Schaffer offered. “We put on two performances on the stage in the Family Life Center. Many church members and students from the early childhood attended as well as the parents of students in the shows.”

Classrooms, homes, and hearts were singing all the classics — *Let’s Go Fly a Kite*, *Spoonful of Sugar*, *Feed the Birds*, *Step In Time*, and learning new tunes like *Anything Can Happen* and *Practically Perfect in Everyway*.

“Characters in the story learned about what they value (time, money, reputation, versus people) and how to share love and kindness with those around them,” she continued. “The Banks family learns from Mary Poppins to care for those even who don’t earn it or seem less desirable by the world’s standards. We are thankful to proclaim the hope of Christ with this broken world and be the Light in our relationships we value.

Every student in grades 1 through 8 shared in putting on the production! Students sing as a chorus in the bleachers enhancing the 31 Middle Schoolers on the stage who auditioned for their role in the cast. About 30 Joyful Singers Choir 3rd and 4th graders were

the bees for *Spoonful of Sugar*, and 5th graders as the kite flyers at the park. Middle Schoolers created stage craft with Dr. Amy Carlson, our art teacher, and many helped as crew members backstage.

“It is incredible to see our students try new expressions of the fine arts! The chimney sweeps ‘Stepped in Time’ to learn tap dancing for their role with the guidance of our choreographer Dr. Laura Iossi, a parent of two students in our school. Each detail of staging, costumes, makeup, music, set design, props, and on and on are brought about by an incredible team of volunteers. This experience every year is an encouragement and bond for the family of St. Paul!” 



During the sermon, Pastor John brought up what the Bible teaches about the church and he also mentioned financial giving. There was a lot of animated discussion right afterward as people were gathering for Bible class.



Scott Gress
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Pastor began the Bible class as normal, asking for prayer requests and praise reports of how God had been at work in their lives. Grumpy George, one of the elders spoke up. He wanted to address the “elephant in the room.” He said, “Pastor, in your sermon you talked about the church and giving. It sounds like you agree with me that the church should be run like a business!”

Pastor John listened intently like always. Then in response he said to George and those gathered for the class, “Well if you want the church to be run like a business then I think we should clarify some assumptions.” Then he continued, “first, who is the owner?” The assembled group said almost in unison, “God.” Then pastor said, “yes it’s God.” Then asked, “but who

are the employees?” Again the group answered, this time not at all together. Some said, “the pastor!” Many others said, “We are.” He said, “yes, we all are!” Then he asked very deliberately, “now, who is the customer?” A number of answers were said aloud. A few said, “we are.” Half said, “others” and the rest just seemed to be puzzled. George was silent and stared at his coffee.

Pastor John smiled with empathy. Then he said, “the truth is that God indeed is the head, the Lord or owner of the church.

We are His body, His servants, which means you could call us His employees. Then what about the customer? Well, certainly your most loyal customers will hopefully be the employees, but any good business puts their focus on the people outside their walls. For us it is our community,


Mindset: noun, a belief that orients how we handle situations and helps sort out what we should do. Mindsets help us spot opportunities, but they can also trap us in self-defeating cycles.

especially those who don’t know Jesus. Remember the great commission? They are the customers if you want to use business language. They are the ones we should be serving!”

Then he concluded, “how a church thinks about God and themselves will affect our



interactions with outsiders. Our mindset, as it is shaped by the scriptures, matters. How we answer those questions determine what we focus on.” The group reacted with approval. Grumpy George went to get more coffee.

What is your church mindset? It matters! In future columns we will continue to explore various mindsets related to church and ministry and how they powerfully impact church health, vitality, mission and ministry. 

Rev. Scott Gress is a Professional Certified Coach and believes in Growing People for Ministry by focussing on leadership, discipleship and teamwork. You can learn more at scottgress.com, The Coaching Leader Podcast and his YouTube page. Contact Scott if you or your church are interested in working with him at scottgress@me.com, or his blog page scottgress.com.

As a Church Member Are You More of a Customer or an Employee?



Concordia Nebraska Senior Publishes “Old Testament for Children”

Seward Senior, Goldie Manning, describes herself as a non-traditional student. Manning’s husband is retired from the Navy, her son is married and serves in the Army and her daughter attends college at University of Nebraska Omaha.

“I took time off after my associate’s degree to be a stay-at-home mom and raise my children. My husband was in the military so we moved every few years from the east coast to the west coast to Hawaii to Italy,” she explained.

Manning discovered Concordia Nebraska during her daughter’s college admissions search. A talented artist, Manning chose the university for its art therapy program. This past spring, two of her pieces — an oil painting and a wooden sculpture — were on display as part of the student art exhibition.

In addition to her art studies at the university, Manning recently published a book titled “Old Testament for Children.” The idea for the book was born when she worked with the children’s program at a church her family previously attended.


“When my son was in preschool, we ended up in a church that did not have ‘children’s church’ during the adult service,” she said. “I volunteered to run a children’s program but could not find a curriculum that I liked, so I began writing my own, starting in Genesis and going through the entire Old Testament.

This was back in 2003–2004. This past summer, I felt the pull to revisit this curriculum and to publish it.”

She said both the development of the content for her book and her time at Concordia have helped her grow and deepen her faith. “Each professor I’ve had has helped me to learn something new about myself or furthered my walk with God,” she said. “Concordia has a very friendly atmosphere, and the professors care about the students as people. They know each student individually and want to see each one succeed. When I have questions, the professors are happy to provide answers and to guide me toward what the Bible says about the subject.

When Manning is not in the art studio or the classroom, she enjoys reading and quilting. Although she is thoroughly enjoying her art

therapy studies, she said she’d also enjoy teaching art, too. She expects to graduate in December 2023.

Concordia University, Nebraska, founded in 1894, is a fully accredited, coeducational university and one of the LCMS universities. It is located in Seward, NE, serving more than 2,500 students. The University offers more than 100 undergraduate, graduate and professional programs in an excellent academic and Christ-centered community that equips men and women for lives of learning, service and leadership in the church and world. 




September PEC Event Offers Talk The Walk!

Calling all Early-Risers! On Friday, September 29, at 6:30 am, President’s Equip Conference attendees are invited to interact and network with fellow Along-siders. **Talk the Walk** will be a time for easy-going physical fitness and an opportunity to share ministry hearts with other pastors, educators, and laity.

This event will begin with 15 minutes of warm-up stretches, then walking alongside and engaging others with ministry ideas, encouragement, and networking. No registration is required for this event. The first 250 participants will receive a commemorative “cooling towel” to keep (and maybe need) for their

walk around the hotel property. Help is Needed for **Talk the Walk**.

The President’s Equip Conference planning committee is searching for a pastor, educator, or lay leader willing and able to lead the **Talk the Walk** group through a 15-minute series of warm-up stretches before the Health & Wellness event.

The need is for a strong voice, energetic personality, and encourage excitement to prepare and loosen up the large group for exercise, engagement, and enjoyment. Please contact Rev. Dave Wesche if you are interested or want more information. Pastor Wesche is at revdavewoohoo@gmail.com. 



Ken Farnsworth Called to Glory

The Rev. Kenneth Walter Farnsworth, 62, of Brandon, FL entered the arms of his Savior on June 4th 2023.

Farnsworth was born in Mount Clemens, MI on June 13th 1960, son to Kenneth and Delphine Farnsworth. He is survived by his loving wife of 42 years, Tammie Farnsworth, six children, Michael Farnsworth (Danielle) Krista Farnsworth Noda (Jose) Neysa McGowan (Matthew) Sasha Powell (Tim) Helena Flynn (Austin) and Michaela and ten grandchildren

Pastor Ken had a passion for cooking and joined the Culinary Institute of America in 1978 with aspirations of becoming a chef. However, just shy of two semesters away from his degree, he felt a calling to pursue pastoral

work within the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS) completely changing the trajectory of his life.

Following his Concordia Theological Seminary/Fort Wayne, IN education and ordination he began his ministry at Trinity/Utica MI where he would shepherd over a large congregation for five years before receiving a call to **Immanuel/Brandon FL**. Pastor Farnsworth faithfully led Immanuel for 23 years and during this time would baptize countless babies, catechize the youth of Immanuel, counsel families, officiated weddings, visit the sick and dying and faithfully preach the gospel every Sunday morning.

Farnsworth was well known within the Brandon community



for sharing the love of Jesus with just about anyone he came in contact with. A life long hockey fan, Farnsworth remained loyal to the Detroit Red Wings while adopting the Tampa Bay Lightning. He loved taking his youngest daughter to games.

A self proclaimed "best seafood

bisque maker in all the world," Farnsworth loved to share his culinary expertise within his church and community making meals for his parishioners or auctioning off dinners for school fundraisers.

A memorial service was held June 16th at Immanuel/Brandon FL with family and friends welcomed to a reception afterwards. ☩

PASSAGES

David Mueller Passes at 84

The Rev. David A. Mueller passed away on June 5, 2023. He was 84.

David grew up in a nurturing and faith-filled environment — the son of Pastor George and Myrtle Mueller, and brother to the late George Mueller Jr. and Ruth Colket. His parents' dedication to their own ministries instilled in him a deep sense of devotion and a calling to serve others.

David was married to Cassie Mueller for nearly 59 years, a partnership marked by love, devotion, and unwavering commitment. Together, they built a life filled with cherished memories, shared laughter, and steadfast support for one another.

David was a devoted father to two children, Rebecca Williams and Paul Mueller. He took immense pride in their accomplishments and cherished the special bond they shared. In addition, David was a loving grandfather to Daniel "Tre" Williams and Sarah Mueller, who brought immense joy and happiness into his life.

David's upbringing in a family deeply rooted in faith played a significant role in shaping his own spiritual path. He followed in his father's footsteps, becoming a Lutheran minister, and devoted his life to serving God and his congregations. David's commitment to his ministry was a testament

to the values instilled in him by his parents and the deep connection he felt to his faith.

David had a profound love for the water. Whether he was boating, fishing, lobstering, or simply spending time by the ocean, David felt a deep connection to the water and appreciated its beauty. Sports also held a special place in David's heart, and he enjoyed cheering on his favorite teams. His enthusiasm for the Baltimore Orioles baseball team and the Miami Hurricane football team was unmatched.



David Mueller's unwavering faith, compassionate nature, and love for his family and sports endeared him to all who knew him. Although his presence will be deeply missed, his spirit will continue to inspire and guide us as we carry his memory in our hearts.

A memorial service was held at **Faith/ North Palm Beach, FL** on June 10th. ☩

Remembering Orlyn Schlie, Servant of Christ

Editor's note — as the Florida-Georgia District celebrates our 75th Anniversary, **Lutheran LIFE** will be profiling some of the "Pioneers of the District." Special thanks and credit to President Emeritus Gerhard C. Michael, Jr., Charles Hofman and Eileen Bishop-List for past research. Biographies have been edited for space.

A dominant figure in Lutheran education, Orlyn Schlie had a distinguished 41-year history as teacher, principal and District officer. Born in Elgin, IL and a graduate of Concordia High School and College/River Forest, IL he earned his Master's degree at Indiana University.

His extensive career began at St. John/Jefferson City, MO and moved to New Albany and eventually to St. Peter's/Columbus, IN. In 1946 Orlyn married Dorothy Umbach. God blessed Dorothy and Orlyn with four children while living in Columbus.

After serving for 12 years at St. Peter's, Orlyn accepted the call to Trinity/Fort Lauderdale, FL as school principal. Trinity had a well-established school with a history going back to 1933, making it one of the oldest schools in the District. In fact, it was at Trinity that the Florida-Georgia Lutheran Teachers Conference had been established in 1953. Like many parochial teachers, he taught everything from first to eighth grade with added responsibilities like church organist, Sunday school teacher, youth leader and — often the case — janitor.

Orlyn was an exemplary leader at Trinity, which became Lutheran Central School in 1961. He not only guided the growth of the school but was foremost its spiritual leader. As principal, teacher and coach he oversaw the students' academic needs as well as their spiritual well being. He was a strong supporter of his teachers and mentored many of them during their first years in the field.

Two former teachers at Trinity — Lisa Maxwell and Candace

Church — remember fondly these things about Orlyn. "Mr. Schlie had a no-nonsense way of dealing with students and young teachers and



had a straightforward approach to working with parents. He had a ready smile and subtle sense of humor and often enjoyed humming popular hymns in hallways. He was an excellent steward of the school's resources. As young teachers, right out of college, we saw Mr. Schlie as the heart of our school." During his years at Trinity, Orlyn served the District in several capacities on boards and committees. Prior to the calling of a full-time Executive for Parish Services, he filled the position of part-time Executive of Education. While serving as Chairman of the District Committee of Parish Education, Orlyn was asked to head up the steering committee for one of the gatherings sponsored by the Board for Parish Services. Along with Dr. Ben Eggers, Executive for the Board for Parish Services, Schlie coordinated and presented a well-arranged program in November 1979. The event was attended by well-known leaders in the Synod — Dr. Oswald Hoffmann and Dr. Ralph Schultz — as well as District leaders, President Lloyd

Behnken and Dr. August Bernthal.

Schlie was active in the Lutheran Education Society, the sponsor of Lutheran High School located on Gloria Dei/Davie, FL's campus. He served as chairman of the board of directors. After his 41 years of continuous service in many phases of Lutheran education, Orlyn was awarded the District's *Doulos tou Christou* (Servant of Christ) award at the 1985 convention. Approximately 28 of these years were spent at Lutheran Central School and Trinity. In 1994 Schlie received the L.

Lloyd Behnken Medallion at the Veterans of the Cross retreat. His active service continued well after retirement. Both he and his wife, Dorothy, spent much time assisting in building projects with Laborers for Christ at Lutheran churches across the country — 19 in all! In 1995 Orlyn and Dorothy became members of St. Luke's/Oviedo, when they retired to Lutheran Haven. Dorothy went to heaven in 2012 and now Orlyn is there as well, passing there in July, 2019.

Orlyn was preceded in death by his parents, wife Dorothy, and daughters-in-law Cindy & Jean, and son-in-law Robert. Survivors are Stephen (Penny), Carolyn, Roger, and Daniel (Pamm) and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. ☩

LCMS Heading to Milwaukee in July to Preach Christ Crucified

The 68th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod will be held from July 29 to Aug. 3, 2023, at the Baird Center in downtown Milwaukee, WI. The Synod will gather under the convention theme, “We Preach Christ Crucified,” based on 1 Cor. 1:18–25. In a world of uncertainty, the church’s proclamation, mission, and identity remain the same. We preach Christ crucified.

I know what you’re thinking ... why is it the 68th if the LCMS has existed since 1847?

The Synod met annually during its first eight years (1847–1854). Since then, except for when the church convened every two years from 1965 to 1983, the Synod has met triennially.

The convention is open to the public and there is always public seating available with good views of the stage. Guests can visit the exhibit hall, attend worship and Bible studies and enjoy evening events. There is no fee other than the banquet.

The convention is also livestreamed daily and can be accessed at lcms.org/convention/national/livestream.

Our FLGA District will be well-represented in Milwaukee with ordained pastors, commissioned minister educators and lay congregational representatives. Each District of Synod provides voting and non-voting (advisory) delegates from each of the circuits. Congregational confirmed membership determines the electoral circuit. Voting delegates consist of one pastor and one layperson from each

of the electoral circuits. The layperson serves during the length of each triennium following the national convention.

The on-line election for the LCMS President took place in late June and Matthew Harrison was elected to his fifth term with 52 percent of the vote. Previously the president was elected at convention. A new electronic process and related communications has made it easier for every congregation or parish that wishes to participate in the presidential election can now do so. The vice presidents from each of the synod’s regions are elected at the convention. Biographical synopses have been provided already to the delegates who will be voting.

In addition to electing the synod leadership, business will be conducted around overtures and resolutions — these have been prepared in advance by congregations and districts and submitted to the synod to be included in the Convention Workbook. That workbook is already in the hands of delegates and participants have the responsibility to study those items, highlight things, make side margin notes and be ready for discussion. An online copy of the Workbook is at lcms.org/convention/national/publications.

Prior to the opening of convention each floor committee hosts open discussion sessions where delegates can ask questions, offer comments or suggestions. This is helpful to delegates if there are some areas of confusion or if a delegate has some part



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of the resolution that he/she doesn’t understand. Those open hearings take place before the opening of convention.

Opening worship at convention is a celebratory service with Holy Communion and plenty of Lutheran music. It’s amazing to hear more than 500 Lutherans singing in a room. It’s not like 25,000 youth at the National Youth Gathering but it is impressive.

There are about 2 million members of the LCMS in more than 6,100 congregations across the country.

This will be my 13th national convention — possibly my last. I’ve been blessed to have been a participant in our church’s work for about 47 years. I’m familiar with our leadership. I’m proud — but not in an arrogant way — of our FLGA District and the mission-mindedness of Florida-Georgia. Conventions are a chance for us to network with our brother and sister congregations worldwide — and all our national, district and local leaders. I ask for your prayers that our convention participants use our “time, talents and treasures” faithfully, both individually and collectively, until our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, returns in glory. A full convention report will be in the next issue of Lutheran LIFE.

