

# LUTHERAN

Florida-Georgia District LCMS  
September/October, 2023

# 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](mailto:LutheranLife@aol.com).



Florida Georgia-District LCMS  
Lutheran Ministries Center  
5850 T.G. Lee Blvd, Suite 500  
Orlando, FL 32822  
Toll-Free: (877) 457-5556

[www.flgadistrict.org](http://www.flgadistrict.org)

Lutheran Life Publishing:  
971 SW Pepperidge Terrace  
Boca Raton, Florida 33486

[flgadistrict.org/lutheran-life](http://flgadistrict.org/lutheran-life)

James Rockey,  
*District President*  
Kathy Keene,  
*Exec. Asst. to President*  
Jennifer Tanner,  
*School & Youth Ministries*  
Cindy Hammerstrom,  
*Exec. Asst.*  
School & Youth Ministries  
Peter Meier,  
*Missions & Outreach*  
Debra Arrington,  
*Exec. Asst.*  
*Missions & Finance*  
Laura Zirbel,  
*Finance/Administration*  
Meridith Swanson  
*Communications*  
Jay Wendland,  
*LCEF District VP*  
Rusty Huseman,  
*District Legal Counsel*  
John List, *Editor*  
*Lutheran LIFE*

# DISTRICT CAPSULES

## Transferred Into FLGA from Other Districts

05/22/23..... Rev. Santiago Keinbaum from Kansas  
06/04/23..... Ms. Cathy Driller from Rockey Mntr  
06/06/23..... Mrs. Laurie Steinke from English  
06/27/23..... Rev. Mark Schroeder from SE  
06/30/23..... Rev. Lawrence Eichert from N Illinois  
06/30/23..... Mr. Robert Krall from Nebraska  
07/06/23..... Rev. Timothy Krieger from New England  
07/10/23..... Ms. Jamie McCormick from IN  
07/10/23..... Ms. Rebecca Bumgardner from MN  
07/15/23..... Rev. Kenneth Wagener from IN

## Transferred Out of FLGA to Other Districts

05/18/23..... Mr. Tyler Raabe to OH (C)  
05/18/23..... Mrs. Madison Raabe to OH (C)  
06/23/23..... Ms. Allison Seeliger to SELC (C)  
07/05/23..... Rev. Michael Duchene to MI (O)  
07/16/23..... Rev. Jeffrey Skopak to SE (O)  
08/15/23..... Rev. John Rallison to NW (O)  
08/16/23..... Rev. Vince Putnam to S Wisconsin (O)

## Initial Placements

06/09/23..... Dcs. May Itzcovitch from Fort Wayne, IN Seminary to Grace/St. Petersburg, FL (C) as Deaconess  
07/30/23..... Ms. Becka Prestwich from Concordia/Wisconsin to Our Redeemer/Augusta, GA (C) as Director of Church Ministries  
08/06/23..... Mr. Jason Zehnder from Concordia/Ann Arbor, MI to St. Michael/Fort Myers, FL (C) as Teacher  
08/13/23..... Dcs. Camille Cox from Fort Wayne, IN Seminary to Grace/St. Petersburg, FL (C) as Deaconess

## Ordinations & Installations

06/04/23... Rev. David Kruger, Sole Pastor Savior of All/Cartersville, GA  
06/09/23.... Dcs. May Itzcovitch, Deaconess, Grace/St. Petersburg, FL  
07/23/23..... Mrs. Judy Patterson, Teacher, Messiah/Tampa, FL  
07/23/23..... Rev. John Bumgardner, Sole Pastor, Redeemer/Columbus, GA  
07/30/23..... Mrs. Jamie McCormick, Teacher, Trinity/Delray Beach, FL  
07/30/23..... Ms. Becka Prestwich, Director of Church Ministries, Our Redeemer/Augusta, GA  
08/06/23... Mr. Jason Zehnder, Teacher, St. Michael/Fort Myers, FL  
08/06/23... Mr. Robert Krall, Teacher, Faith/Eustis, FL  
08/06/23... Rev. Craig Mathews, Sole Pastor IIM, Redeemer/Englewood, FL  
08/13/23..... Dcs. Camille Cox, Deaconess, Grace/St. Petersburg, FL

## Status Changes

06/16/23..... Rev. Robert Selle, Active to Emeritus (O)  
07/07/23..... Rev. Dennis Bartels, Active to Emeritus (O)  
08/07/23..... Rev. Matthew Boarts, Active to Emeritus (O)

## Called to Glory


12/30/22..... Rev. Thomas Ramsey (O)  
06/04/23... Rev. Kenneth Farnsworth (O)  
06/05/23... Rev. David Mueller (O)  
08/04/23... Rev. James Shaw (O)


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

## Seminary Opens 185th Academic Year With 122 Students

Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, MO held the Opening Service for its 185th academic year in the Chapel of St. Timothy and St. Titus. Seminary President Dr. Thomas J. Egger preached on the new academic year theme, "We Belong to Christ," based on 1 Cor. 6:19-20 and Rom. 14:8-9.

The service concluded a week of orientation for the Seminary's 122 new students, which includes residential and distance students in both the Ministerial Formation and Advanced Studies departments.

During the service, distance students enrolled in the Specific Ministry Pastor Program, Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology, Center for Hispanic Studies, Cross-cultural Ministry Center and Online Deaconess Studies Program were recognized for their vicarage and internship assignments. 

In the July/August, 2023 Annual Report issue of Lutheran LIFE, we incorrectly reported Grace/Naples, FL's congregational contribution. The 383-member congregation's contribution was \$42,000 for year-end 1/31/2023. This equates to \$110 per congregation member. We regret the error. 



# What Does a Leader Look Like?

What do you look for in a leader? For generations, God's people were hoping and praying for a leader, a King to fight for them. They wanted a strong charismatic leader, one who could problem-solve, a winner-takes-all kind of leader. Yet instead of giving them what they wanted, God gave His people what they most needed. He gave someone they did not expect as a leader . . . His Son.

Contrary to the popular characteristics of leaders then (and now), they received Jesus, not a man of noble birth or the best schools, but a carpenter's son from a "nothing place" called Nazareth. On top of that, Jesus wasn't known for normal leadership attributes, instead He was known for humility.

In PHILIPPIANS 2, Paul reveals his prayer for the followers in Philippi to complete his joy by being united. Paul knew that if Christians were to live a life worthy of their calling (1:27-30), they had to turn from "selfish ambition or vain conceit" (2:3) and be unified through having the same mind, love, and be one in spirit and purpose (v. 2). Such leadership is easier said than done!

I remember watching our girls play soccer when they were very young. There wasn't really much teamwork other than they all had the same uniform. When you watched the team on the field, at times it looked like everyone was going in different directions. Talk about the challenges of getting everyone on the same page and united with one another!

This is also true with our co-workers, friends, and family alike. Paul's solution was to lead through humility, that is considering others above ourselves (v. 4). Paul points us to the ultimate example of humility, Jesus Himself (PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11). Many experts believe early Christians sang these words during worship gatherings. They are filled with rich teaching of the life and saving work of Christ. But don't miss Paul's purpose in writing these words . . . He wants the Philippians to be united, and the only way that will happen is to model their lives after Jesus. Often the greatest lessons in **life** come from the least

expected places and people. As I was reflecting upon this, I thought about a song from Jimmy Buffett that actually speaks to this very thing. The song is "It's My Job."

*In the middle of late last night  
I was sittin' on a curb  
I didn't know what about but I  
was feeling quite disturbed  
A street sweeper came whistlin' by  
He was bouncin' every step  
It seemed strange how good he felt*

*So I asked him while he swept  
He said "It's my job to be  
cleaning up this mess  
And that's enough reason to go for me  
It's my job to be better than the rest  
And that makes the day for me"*

Since I was a teen, I've always had a job, beginning with roofing houses, Publix, church janitor, the State of Texas, and Allstate Insurance. Along the way, I've been asked by people why I do what I do? I think some of that comes from seeing me enjoy working and striving to do it well. My answer, like yours, could be to support a family, because of education or it's something I'm passionate about. But the answer I believe is most profound is saying, "This is my calling!" In a very real sense, this expresses accurately the New Testament's perspective on serving as the way of Christian life!

We who are in Christ are all called to lives of service. Serving is integral to our response to who God is and what He has done for us. When Jesus called His disciples to come follow Him and be "fishers of men," He wasn't just saying, "You sit there in the boat and watch!" No, it was as if He was saying to them, "I have a job for you to do. I want you to be involved in My work and mission!"


Regardless of how you may serve the Lord in the Church and in your life, it's all about serving and leading like Jesus! Whether you're called to serve as a Bible-study leader, work with youth, volunteer in the school or church nursery, sit on a board or committee, make phone calls, maintain facilities, pray from home, raise children, care for a sick or elderly loved one, or in any number of roles, God's call to service is about being united with Christ and seeing others

united with Him as well.

In Biblical terms, service is not a pathway to greatness; service is greatness. For as Jesus said in MARK 10:45, "Even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." We don't serve sacrificially in hopes that we'll be "promoted," as in the workplace or school, nor do we serve for some reward. Jesus says, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all" (9:35). You see, it's not all about you or me.

Ultimately, we serve the Lord and those around us, so "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (PHILIPPIANS 2:10-11). Do you see? Our focus is not inward upon ourselves or our wants or perceived needs. It is looking with the eyes of Jesus that when He saw the needs of the people, He had compassion upon them.

People of the Florida Georgia District, we are to live united to Christ and for Christ! The apostle Paul understood this clearly when he wrote, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (GALATIANS 2:20).

So, how does the "life you now live" reflect this? My prayer is that each of us will daily remember that through our Baptism, we are united with Christ. And in response to what He has done for us, may we serve Him by humbly serving those around us so that they too may "acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord!" 



*In His  
Service,  
James  
Rockey*

# Veterans of the Cross Retreat Announces Dates, Place and Theme

Retired church workers and their spouses will be gathering once again at the St. Stephen Retreat Center in Titusville, Florida from Monday, March 4 to Wednesday, March 6, 2024 for the annual Veterans of the Cross Retreat.

The retreat was established in 1979 by the late Florida-Georgia District President Dr. L. Lloyd Behnken to stimulate retired professional church workers with relevant ministry and senior presentations in addition to helping people connect with friends from years past.

The theme for the 2024 retreat will be "Pace for the Race."

"As people enter retirement, a major question one might ask is 'What does God want me to do with my remaining time in

this world?' Ms. Ruth Wiedenmann, retreat chairman inquired. "This is critically important!"

The writer of the book of Hebrews explains that, for followers of Jesus, life is primarily a matter of running "with endurance the race that is set before us" (HEBREWS 12:1). For Paul, the goal of that race was to finish strong (2 TIMOTHY 4:7).

In order to reach that goal, Paul set everything else aside, keeping his eyes fixed firmly on the prize. (PHILIPPIANS 3:14). This should be our goals as well — to finish strong, running the race God designed for us and pacing ourselves so we don't miss the opportunities before us.

"No matter who we are, what our age or how far we've traveled on our pilgrimage, the Lord still has a job for us to do," Wiedenmann said. "There is an urgent

need to continue to serve the Lord. Let us find the pace that will see us over the finish line. Come to the 2024 Veterans of the Cross Retreat and rediscover God's purpose for your life and advancing the cause of His Kingdom."

The annual presentation of Behnken Medallions will also be a significant part of the retreat. These are given to "veteran servants" in four categories: pastor, teacher, church at large and lay person.




Ruth Wiedenmann  
VOC Retreat Chairperson



## VETERANS of the CROSS

Retreat registration will open in December and will be available online through the FLGA District website ([flgadistrict.org](http://flgadistrict.org)) Newly retired workers are encouraged to contact the FLGA District office at 407-857-5556 x8 with any questions.

Mark your calendars now to ensure participation. 

# PACE FOR THE RACE

*"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."*

**March 4- 6 2024 • St Stephen Retreat Center • Titusville, Florida**  
**Registration opens in December**



# 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.



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 6-8<sup>th</sup> 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**), and DCE Julianna Shults, LCMS Youth Ministry, St. Louis, MO 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.

## 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 9th. 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](mailto:chammerstrom@flgadistrict.org) or 407-258-5042.



Cassie Moore



Nick Moss



Pete LeBorious



The 68th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod was held from July 29 to Aug. 3, 2023, at the Baird Center in downtown Milwaukee, WI. The Synod gathered 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 remained the same.

The FLGA District Delegation (pictured here) consisted of Ronald Biel, Wesley Borucki, Gary Bowman, Blair Clark, Morris Cook, Jason Dixon, Douglas Fuge, William Green, Mark Greul, Rory Hermann, Fredrick (Rick) Howard, Andrew Howe, Steven R. Jones, Steven L. Jones, Kathy Keene, Lee Knudsvig, Bill Leech, Deb Leech, Keith Lingsch, John List, Michael Mast, Robert Maulella, Patrick McKenzie, Kathy Meier, Peter Meier, Paul Meseke, Gregory Michael, Donald Moore, Michael Mueller, Mark Mueller, Naomi Mungin, Dana Narring, Joseph Peterson, Dean Pfeffer, Ellen Prohl, Richard Robertson, James Rockey, Jake Roedsens, Andrew Sorenson, Don Stier, Jennifer Tanner, Joseph Warnke, Jay Winters, Kathy Yoakum.







FLGA District President, The Rev. James Rockey (center) processes with the Council of Presidents at the convention's opening worship.



The Rev. Gerald B. Kieschnick, President Emeritus of the LCMS and his wife, Terry, were welcomed to the stage and received a lengthy standing ovation.



Opening worship included The Lord's Supper served with the common cup at multiple stations around the convention floor.



The Rev. Dr. Lawrence Rast Jr., president of Concordia Theological Seminary/Fort Wayne, IN addresses the convention as the Rev. Dr. Thomas Egger, president of Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, MO looks on. Rast and Egger spoke to the convention about the importance of residential seminary education.



Lutheran rap artist, author and Concordia Seminary graduate, Marcus Gray, also known as FLAME, discussed his journey to Lutheranism and rapped for the convention attendees.



The Rev. Dr. Daniel L. Gard is recognized after being awarded the Silver St. Martin of Tours medal. Behind Gard, from left, are Army Chaplain Bobby Niemtschk, Navy/Marine Chaplain Kenneth Bomberger and Air Force Chaplain Keith Witte.





District President James Rockey introduced LCEF President Bart Day (left) and SELC President The Rev. Waldemar R. Vinovskis at the Florida/ Georgia District luncheon during the Convention.



## Synod Convention Statistics

- 1050 Voting Delegates
- 182 Advisory Delegates
- 174 Advisory Representatives
- Total Convention Participants: 1406
- 691 are Pastors and 715 are Laypersons

## Other Facts

- 43 International Participants
- 34 Different Church Bodies
- 336 Overtures were submitted
- 96 Resolutions were to be presented
- Approximately 34 hours of business
- Approximately 5.5 hours of worship



FLGA District Missionaries — Rev. Jay & Julie Dass, Lutheran Confessional Church in Pakistan, with President James Rockey at one of the District Delegation breakfast meetings that took place during the week. They are primarily supported by Grace/Naples, FL served by The Rev. Keith Lingsch. Jay and Julie are third generation Christians who emigrated to the US from Pakistan in 1983. They live in Naples, FL.



Pastors Greg Michael (District Secretary) and Jay Winters (District VP Region 2) briefed FLGA delegates at multiple meetings — answering questions and helping to clarify language and meaning of resolutions.



## Convention Approves Revision of University and College Bylaws



The five presidents of the synod's Concordia's stand on stage in unity as the convention voted to adopt Resolution 7-04B, "To Revise Bylaws to Revisit and Renew Relationship of Colleges and Universities with the Synod." This extensive resolution, spanning approximately 25 pages *Today's Business*, is the product of four years of work demanded by 2019 Res. 7-03, passed at the LCMS Convention in Tampa, FL. Floor Committee 7 Chairman Rev. Dr. Scott R. Murray introduced the discussion by asking the five Concordia Presidents to stand. "We are delighted to have those faithful leaders here with us today. All through the process of Floor Committee 7, they have adamantly described their desire to be more faithful and more tightly tied to the church, her confession, her teaching." Murray presented the five university presidents (from left) Dr. Michael Thomas, Concordia/Irvine; Dr. Erik Ankerberg, Concordia/Wisconsin and Ann Arbor; Dr. Russell P. Dawn, Concordia/Chicago; Dr. Bernard Bull, Concordia/Nebraska; and the Rev. Dr. Brian Friedrich/Concordia, St. Paul. Prior to the vote the assembly gave the men a standing ovation as they confirmed they unanimously supported the resolution.

Delegates adopted Resolution 7-03, which affirmed the LCMS Commission on Constitutional Matters opinion that actions taken by Concordia/Texas (CTX) to change its governing documents are in direct conflict with the Synod's Constitution and Bylaws and are thus null and void. Resolution 7-03 also called upon the CTX president, Dr. Donald Christian, along with CTX administrators who advocated for and supported CTX's purported separation, and the CTX Board of Regents (BOR) to submit to the governance of the Synod, repent, and seek reconciliation and restoration by rescinding their actions. Dr. Christian did briefly address the convention delegates. The resolution, which further asked the LCMS Board of Directors (BOD) and others to take action to address the situation, was adopted with 72% of the vote.

In keeping with the spirit of Resolution 7-03, on Tuesday, Aug. 8, the LCMS BOD reached out to the CTX BOR to request a board-to-board meeting in August. Members of the current Concordia University System Board of Directors will also be invited to attend the meeting.

Convention Delegates elected 22 pastors, commissioned ministers and laypersons to fill seats on the Concordia University System Board of Directors, as well as on the boards of regents for the Concordia universities and seminaries.

## Resolutions About Schools, Family Life, Young Adults and Youth Passed With High Margins

Convention delegates adopted six resolutions presented by Floor Committee 12 on Schools, Family, Young Adults and Youth.

Since convention business was running slightly behind schedule, LCMS President Matthew Harrison asked the assembly if they wished to “move with alacrity on less controversial overtures” by voting on the resolutions without hearing any debate. The assembly voted in favor of this motion.

As a result, delegates proceeded to adopt the following resolutions.

First, advisory commissioned minister Dr. Christopher Cody, education executive for the LCMS South Wisconsin District, introduced the rationale for Res. 12-01A, “To Produce Uniform Set of Lutheran Academic Standards for Our Schools.” This resolution was composed in response to four overtures calling for distinctively Lutheran curricula for all subjects and grade levels. “Standards and curriculum are often used interchangeably,” Cody explained. “Standards are goals for instruction that remain constant; curriculum is the content of the instruction — the textbooks and other materials that are used to achieve the standards that can change over time. Estimated expenses for the creation of Lutheran curricula for all subject matter is cost-prohibitive — an estimated \$30 to \$50 million.”


A uniform set of Lutheran academic standards would provide guidance when purchasing textbooks and other curricular materials. Furthermore, these standards could be used by Concordia Publishing House in future curriculum development.

Next, the convention considered Res. 12-02A. In light of “governmental, legal and related institutional overreach,” which often results in children being subjected to anti-Christian indoctrination on a variety of matters, Res. 12-02A moves to affirm and confess the God-given authority of fathers and mothers in the education and raising of their children.

Res. 12-03A, “To Address Commissioned Minister—Teacher Student Debt,” resolves to encourage congregations and schools to regularly conduct salary and benefit reviews — with an emphasis on assisting teachers with student debt repayment as a regular employee benefit, and contribute to church work scholarship funds in their districts. These actions are especially urgent given that low salary is a primary reason that fewer students are studying to become

teachers, and student loan debt is a primary motivation to seek higher paying employment.

A resolution giving thanks for Lutheran schools passed unanimously as did on encouraging family devotions putting an emphasis on “fathers” leading devotions in the household.

One final resolution — Res. 12-06, was passed encouraging the use of Current Research and Resources for Ministry to Youth — urging LCMS congregations to involve high school youth and young adults in the lay leadership of the church; encouraging pastors and youth leaders to develop relationships with young people; commending LCMS Youth Ministry and LCMS Rosters, Statistics and Research Services for their research efforts; and encourages all Synod congregations to study “Relationships Count: Engaging and Retaining Millennials.” 



Rev. Serge Maschewski (left), Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ukraine, presented LCMS President Matthew Harrison with a pitted and damaged helmet. The LCMS had purchased the helmet and other equipment like it to protect ELCU pastors as they serve their members in Ukrainian war zones. The helmet saved Maschewski’s life as well as another colleagues with whom he was traveling when their convoy was attacked. Two of the vehicles in the convoy were destroyed. Harrison promised to include the helmet in the LCMS’ historical exhibit.



# REPORT

**WE PREACH**  
**CHRIST CRUCIFIED**



Rick Howard (left) a delegate from **First/Clearwater, FL** met up with his son, Marcus, an advisory delegate at the convention. Marcus is Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries at Immanuel in Loveland, CO.



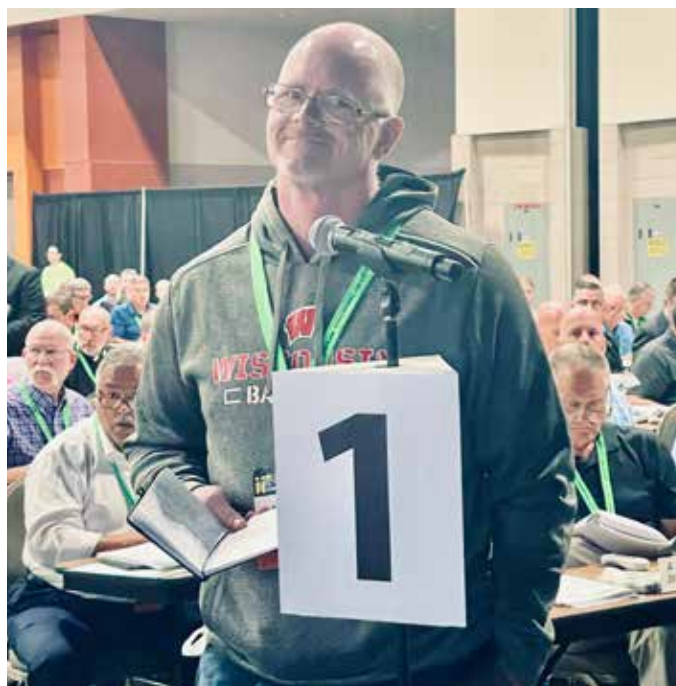
The Rev. Jacob Roedsens, **Our Savior/Lake Worth Beach, FL**, ponders discussion at the FLGA District breakfast pertaining to a resolution encouraging the appropriate use of social media.



The Rev. Keith Lingsch, **Grace/Naples, FL** reacts to discussions during open hearings prior to the opening of the convention. Open hearings enabled delegates to ask questions.



The Council of Presidents demonstrated their exceptional sight-reading skills as a group choir during one of the worship sessions. FLGA President Rockey is in the red tie.



The Rev. Andy Sorenson, **Faith/Dunedin, FL**, steps to the floor microphone to make a point prior to delegates voting on a resolution. About 14 microphones surrounded the convention hall.



## Mission: Haiti Launches “Meals for Months” Program, Community Health and Development

Mission Haiti is a faith-based 501c3 non-profit, tax exempt corporation that grew out of the Florida-Georgia District of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. 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,” explains Mark Brink, board chairman for the FLGA organization. “Mission: Haiti walks beside our Haitian brothers and sisters in Christ, investing in them and celebrating with them as they achieve self-sufficiency and their vision for an abundant life in Christ.”



All of the financial resources received from supporters of Mission: Haiti are utilized exclusively to enrich the lives of the people of Haiti through a variety of ministries. Donor support has made this ministry possible for nearly 25 years.

“Community Health Outreach events are designed to evaluate and aid those with physical concerns and to educate families and community leaders how to better care for themselves and others,” offers Dr. Nancy Swisher, a Family Practice physician from Wisconsin. She has served in medical missions in the Middle



Dr. Nancy Swisher

East and South America as well as Haiti. She has served with Mission: Haiti since 2012, traveling three times a year to bring medical education and help to many different

areas of Haiti. Her compassion, expertise, skill and concern for helping Haitians learn how to take the best possible care of their families has alleviated a great deal of suffering and illness.

“Certified medical professionals lead workshops for expectant mothers and mothers with infants. Participants learn about healthy birth practices, proper nutrition for mother and child and safe infant care. Infants also receive ‘well-baby check ups.’ Sessions for families focus on making healthy food choices, the importance of clean water, how to avoid cholera and parasites and the importance of personal hygiene,” Swisher says.

Haiti is the most impoverished nation in the Western Hemisphere. Nearly 75 percent of children in traditional orphanages have a parent or adult relative who could care for them if they were able to afford the child’s schooling and food. GROWW is a Mission: Haiti program that provides everything needed for children to thrive in their home and stay in school.



“For just \$1 per day, a family can be supported enabling a child to stay in school,” points out Anne Dobbins, one of Mission: Haiti’s staff persons working in the Orlando area. “Walking alongside the residents of each community we are able to develop sustainable projects that enrich their quality of life — things like chicken coups and goat farms, agricultural improvements and clean water projects.”

To learn more about how you can help Mission: Haiti and the work they are doing in that impoverished country, contact Dobbins at [annejdobbins@gmail.com](mailto:annejdobbins@gmail.com) or visit the Mission: Haiti website at [missionhaiti99.org](http://missionhaiti99.org). You can also visit the Mission: Haiti booth at September’s President’s Equip Conference in Orlando. 






# FLORIDA GEORGIA

*Out and About in the District*

## Dahlongega, Georgia Congregation Enters Patriotic, Christian-Themed Float in Town's Parade



**St. Peter/Dahlongega, GA**, planned, built and participated in their town's annual 4th of July Independence Day parade. Members created a theme around Psalm 33:12, "Blessed is the Nation Whose God is the LORD." On the very top of the float, they broadcast CDs of patriotic Christian hymns. Several members wrote prayers for the country and assembled them into a booklet and as the float drove down the road, members walked alongside it handing out more than 400 of these booklets to the crowd. This is St. Peter's fifth entry in a parade. The congregation feels it's an opportunity to engage and create a visible witness to the community of not only the church — but also of God's love for his people and this nation. In addition, several members wrote prayers for our nation. 




# Lutheran Counseling Services Social Worker Publishes Devotional Journal



**Trinity/Orlando, FL** member Mary Jo Hoard recently authored a devotional journal, "Sacred & Settled: Spiritual Applications for Embracing Conscious Serenity." The book is dedicated to those seeking to achieve and maintain conscious serenity — a deep relaxation and inner peace often done with soothing music to help with anxiety relief, mindfulness, and meditation.

Hoard states the inspiration for writing the book centers around her belief that approaching life's challenges from a God-centered perspective affirms opportunities for intentional peace of mind.

The meditations found in "Sacred & Settled" are relatable to normal every day situations and include prayers and biblical readings.

Hoard is a licensed clinical social worker serving the Central Florida community for more than 50 years and is employed by Lutheran Counseling Services. She was married to The Rev. Samuel L. Hoard for 36 years before his death in 2007. The Hoards are the parents of two grown sons. The book is available online at Amazon, Barnes and Noble, Books-A-Million and Target. 



## Lutheran Social Services Repeats Successful Mother/Son Duo-Piano Performance

**Lutheran Social Services of Northeast Florida (LSS)** is proud to welcome back Michelle Chen Kuo and her son, Christopher Kuo, of "Two Piano Journey," for a benefit recital Saturday, September 16 at Friday Musicale, 645 Oak St, Jacksonville, FL.

The world-class talent mother and son piano team raised more than \$48,000 last year for LSS.


Tickets are available online at [lssjax.org/twopianojourney](http://lssjax.org/twopianojourney). The performance begins at 7 p.m. and is followed by a champagne reception.

"The power of music combined with the spirit of giving creates a harmonious impact," LSS President & CEO, Bill Brim, said. "We are thrilled to welcome back the Kuos for this concert, which will benefit thousands of our neighbors in need. Don't

miss this unforgettable recital!"

Two Piano Journey began with the dream of a son wanting to share his mother's music with the world by joining her on stage. Michelle Kuo was a child prodigy. At 13, she won the Taiwan National Piano Competition (as well as at 14 and 15 years old).


But Michelle had put aside the dream of touring to start a family and raise her children.

In 2015, her son, Chris, launched TPJ to give his mother the opportunity to showcase her talents and love of her craft. To do this, Chris lives a double life. By day, Chris works in the finance industry in New York City. At night, he practices for hours to prepare for the TPJ performances. He makes those daily sacrifices to fulfill their dream — to perform around the world, for the world. 









In July, **Hope/Plant City, FL** said goodbye to Owen & Evangeline Duncan as they head back to Concordia Seminary for their final year. Among the gifts given to the Duncan's were a quilt made by Hope's Quilters, a stuffed gator from Hope's youth, a blue Advent stole with the word "HOPE" on one side as a constant reminder of their at Hope, a scholarship from the congregation to assist while at the Seminary, and a cash gift from the members. 



**Messiah/Tampa, FL** welcomed Judy Patterson as their new Preschool Director in July. "Messiah is excited to have both Judy and Pastor Chris Patterson join. Patterson previously served at **Concordia/Kendall, FL**. Above — Pastor Mark Adrian (standing) with Judy and Pastor Chris Patterson. 

## St. Paul/Boca Raton Installs Jacob Scheler




**St. Paul/Boca Raton, FL** installed Jacob Scheler and as the new vicar for 2023-24. Pastor Steve Carretto introduced Jacob and Shelby and installed Jacob on Sunday, August 6th. 

## Annual Blessings Held at New School Year Launch at Hope/Plant City




**Hope/Plant City, FL** held a congregation blessing of their teachers and those serving in the public school system and higher education. Pastor Dean Pfeffer does this at the launch of every school year. The blessing serves as a reminder for participants as well as the congregation that God calls us to our vocations and places us there to share His love.

The congregation also joined together in the Blessing of the Backpacks. Hope's youth from pre-school through high school are encouraged to bring their backpacks (but they are not required). This is a time for the congregation to pray for all the students as they begin a new school year. Special name tags for their backpacks are distributed along with encouragement notes for parents to slip into their lunchboxes or their backpacks. 




# “Fiesta Latina” Celebrated at St. Paul Weston

The congregation enjoyed a great evening on campus celebrating Latin culture, food — and even some delicious Sangria! A Mariachi band ensured great music throughout the night with plenty of spirited dancing by all ages.

The community surrounding **St. Paul/Weston, FL** was invited to participate as were neighboring churches. It all took place in spring before the weather got too hot to enjoy an outdoor event. 



**St. Paul/Weston, FL** held their annual “Blessings of the Backpacks” for their youth in August. The congregation ensures that the youth know that their church home stands with with them in prayer as they head back to classes ... emphasizing that their academic journey be blessed with success. 



## Preschool Graduates Celebrated at Timothy/Woodstock GA



The preschool at Timothy/Woodstock, GA celebrated the graduation of 39 students at the close of the 2022-2023 school year. Students sang songs, parents viewed a video of the school's past years activities and students were presented their preschool diplomas. This is the 37th year of Timothy's outreach ministry to the Woodstock community with the motto of "Love Grows Here." The preschool has been accredited since 2005 by the National Lutheran Schools Association.



## St. John High School Seniors Celebrate Their Annual "Senior Sunrise" in Ocala, Florida







The **Amazing Grace/Oxford, FL** Early Learning Center (AGELC) hosted a ribbon cutting ceremony in early August in honor of completing the construction of its new addition and expanded building and playground area. They are now able to serve 123 children. The AGELC began construction in October 2022 and now has two classrooms for each age group from one-to-four-year-olds, a large indoor activity room and an additional playground area. The administration office also was remodeled for the director and office staff.



“We are wholeheartedly committed to learning and developing through active play, and our new center will allow us to serve and teach even more children as they learn and engage in God’s wonderful world,” said Director Aimee Knoepfel. In 2018 Amazing Grace began operation of an Early Learning Center on its campus. This fully


licensed, professionally staffed facility offers children from 12 months to 4 years an opportunity to meet Jesus and learn basic Christian principles to guide their development. The emphasis of nurture, educate and equip the whole child is practiced here. It is also VPK certified. Currently, every classroom is full, but parents are encouraged to add their children to the school’s waiting list because openings do become available during the school year when families move. 

Last Christmas Eve, Athens, Gorgia experienced a 5 degree hard freeze that resulted in burst pipes at **Trinity Lutheran Academy**. The Academy sustained more than \$200,000 in damages which resulted in a near total close down. For the past 7 months Trinity volunteers and subcontractors worked diligently to repair the damages. They celebrated its reopening on July 28th by hosting a luncheon/open-house with games, water features, face painting and an exciting carnival atmosphere. God has richly blessed Trinity and the TLA once again and we are all looking forward to seeing the Academy back in action. 




From left — Glenn Husfield (general contractor), Ron Hendricks (chair of the Property Committee), Janet Rodekoer (chair of the Board of Governors, Carol Parker (TLA Director), Pastor Davis, and, below, Sue Ensley (face painting).



**Christ The King/Largo, FL** dedicated their new education building in July. Pictured are (from left) Graham Barber, Jon Boeche, Nichole DuBois, Jennifer Tanner, Rev. Joe Adams, FLGA District President Rev. James Rockey, Rev. Mike Mast 




**Redeemer/Columbus, GA** installed The Rev. John Bumgardner on July 23. In photo, front from left: Pastors Jeff Jordan and John Bumgardner, back row from left: Pastors Joe Warnke, Brad Arnholt, Joel Dietrich, Victor Belton, Andrew Schroeder, Mark Dahn and Wilton Heyliger 




**Redeemer/ Englewood, FL** recently held an Installation Service to install The Rev. Craig Mathews as Intentional Interim Pastor, and also several members of teaching and administrative staff for their School & Child Care.



From left — Rev. Craig Mathews, and Rev. Brian Stolarczyk, Sarasota Circuit Visitor and pastor of Lutheran Church of the Cross/Port Charlotte, FL 



**Redeemer/ Englewood, FL** Teachers and Staff are — Front row: Steve Hopkins (Music & Bible classes, K-6), Samantha Espinoza-Margarito (1-year old room), Jazmyne Crady (VPK), Madison Kern (Infants), Donald Rattey (5th & 6th grade). Back row: Emily Byrkett (classroom aide, 3rd & 4th grade) Pamela Cataloni (classroom aide, K through 2nd grade), Debra Buel (Director, Child Care), Georgina Danu-Ezias (K-2nd grade), Frances Hopkins (3rd & 4th grade), Wendy Horvath (Administrator of Educational ministries) 



In January 2022, **Messiah/Tampa, FL** launched Game Day! After the Covid pandemic there was a need to renew relationships and build new ones. After the Wednesday morning Bible study, lunch is served and then a three hour session of games takes place. The Game Day attendees vary from 12 to 20 people. They play cards (mostly) with board and dice games sprinkled in. It's a great time to establish relationships and meet new people. Often, a game of pickleball is enjoyed after the indoor activities. Participants are encouraged to invite friends for Bible study and the fun and games.



## Calling All Newscasters!




Lutheran LIFE is mailed free to all congregation members of the FLGA District. Send us your news! Attach photos of at least 300 pixels in .jpg or .png or .pdf formats.

Want to subscribe? It's FREE! Send your name and address to us. Want your entire congregation to receive LIFE? Send your mailing list in any format supported by Excel.

[LutheranLife@aol.com](mailto:LutheranLife@aol.com)






**Redeemer/Stuart, FL's** staff dedication (above) was held on Sunday, August 6 at both services. The staff is ready to "shine our lights for Jesus"! At right — Volunteers and participants held a stellar evening VBS program organized by DCO, Katie Wenger. Music, skits, crafts, bible studies, games and snacks were included. New this year was a parent Bible study that Katie created to coincide with what their children were learning each evening. 




## Hope Congregation Members Participate in Summer Reading Program to Boost Student Skills



Sharon Moody of the Plant City Black Heritage Celebration and Director of the Lots of Hugs summer reading program joined the members of **Hope/Plant City, FL** to thank the members of Hope for their outpouring of love during this year's Hugs program.

Sharon Moody presented plaques to Hope members for their assistance. From left: Kathy Drapp, Geff & Vicki Ferguson, Pastor Dean Pfeffer and Moody, Nick & Nora Trivunovich, Ron & Barb Pennekamp and Gloria Warner. Absent from photo are Eleanor Loveland and Evangeline Duncan. 



**Our Redeemer/Augusta, GA** was blessed to commission and install Becca Prestwich as their Director of Christian Ministries on July 31. She is pictured with Rev. Roger Schwartz. 

At right, the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Department with Pastors Pfeffer and Cobos at a July "Back to School" event held on Hope's campus. The event included games and prizes plus free health checks for adults and the Sheriff's Office participated in games, did crafts and scheduled a fly over of the Sheriff's Department helicopter.






# Good Shepherd/North Fort Myers Re-dedicates Following Hurricane Ian Disaster

A "re-dedication of **Good Shepherd/North Fort Myers, FL** took place on August 13, 2023. Good Shepherd was one of the most severely damaged congregations resulting from Hurricane Ian — a deadly and extremely destructive Category 5 Atlantic hurricane, which was the third-costliest weather disaster on record, the deadliest hurricane to strike the state of Florida since the 1935 Labor Day hurricane, and the strongest hurricane to make landfall in Florida since Michael in 2018.

"Due to the generosity of God's people around the FLGA District and throughout the LCMS, we were able to help our congregation with grants that not only enabled them to complete the repairs but to come back even stronger!" offered FLGA District President James Rockey.

In their worship on that Sunday, Rockey preached on the theme: "He Came to Them..." based upon the Gospel account in MATTHEW 14, of Jesus walking on the water to the disciples in the storm. 



From left — Rev. Dr. Ross Johnson, LCMS Disaster Response; FLGA District President James Rockey; Rev. Robert Davis, Good Shepherd Lutheran/North Fort Myers, FL pastor; and Jay Wendland, FLGA Disaster Response Coordinator and LCEF Vice President.



From left — FLGA District executives Jennifer Tanner, James Rockey and Jay Wendland.



# Lutheran Social Services of Northeast Florida Participates in “Summer Without Hunger”

Summertime, for many, means vacations, and days of play in the sun. But for some children and families, it's a time of less access to food. Thousands of children in Northeast Florida rely on free and reduced lunch programs and Lutheran Social Services of Northeast Florida (LSSNEFL) worked hard to provide these throughout the summer.

“It's heartbreaking to think of a child or a family to go without food,” offered Bill Brim, President & CEO of LSSNEFL during a June live interview with First Coast Connect.

“LSSNEFL predicted the need this summer to increase by approximately 10 percent based on previous years. The LSS Food Pantry saw a 30 percent need increase in 2023 compared to this time in 2022.”

According to Brim, they responded to the need by kicking off the “Feed the Future” summer campaign. The goal of the campaign was to raise at least \$10,000 by June 30th. Because of those who generously donated during the Feed the Future summer fundraiser, the LSS Food Pantry was able to ensure almost every food-insecure family stayed fed this summer!

“That's more than 85,000 meals for children and their families!” he explained.

“The LSS Food Pantry has been seeing an increasing need for food this year. In May, 2023, we served 45 percent more families than in May, 2022. We asked for help from the community, and so many came to the aid of our food-insecure neighbors.

“Our original goal was \$10,000. Once we got halfway there, a generous donor offered to match the next \$5,000 raised, dollar-for-dollar. In the end, our campaign exceeded \$18,000 to support the pantry in a time of need, ensuring fewer families struggle with hunger in our city.

“While the need is still pervasive, we're so inspired by how our community bands together to support one another in a time of struggle.”

## About LSSNEFL

Lutheran Social Services of Northeast Florida was incorporated in 1979 by a consortium of Lutheran churches and Jacksonville, Florida community leaders. The first initiative operated by the nonprofit was the Nourishment Network — a small food pantry that has fed hundreds of thousands of food-insecure families for more than 40 years.

Just one year after the launch of the Hunger Relief program (formerly known as Nourishment Network), LSSNEFL began resettling refugees admitted to the United States due to dangerous political climates or natural disasters in their own countries. Four




LSSNEFL Presidents and CEO, Bill Brim, (left) next to First Coast Connect Host, Melissa Ross after an interview about the Feed the Future summer donation drive.

decades later, the Refugee Services program team still helps hundreds of refugees each year, from finding them places to live to assisting them with employment. In 2022, LSSNEFL, along with its partners, served over 2,500 refugee clients.

In 1992, LSSNEFL established the AIDS Care and Education (ACE) program to provide case management, mental health services and education for people living with HIV and AIDS.

In 1995, the Representative Payee Services program was implemented after the Social Security Administration and the Florida Department of Children and Families approached LSSNEFL to help with the management of fiscal affairs for low-income people who need help managing their income appropriately to provide for their basic needs. This includes but is not limited to those receiving Social Security and disability benefits as well as VA and Railroad Retirement pensions.

In 2017, LSSNEFL partnered with LISC Jacksonville, United Way of Northeast Florida, Family Foundations and the New Town Success Zone to launch Steps 2 Success, Florida's first Financial Opportunity Center. S2S provides integrated employment and financial coaching, along with emergency income supports, to help people attain their goals and realize their vision.

“Everyone needs a fresh start at some point. Whether it's a family having a hard time putting food on the table, or a refugee trying to find their place in a new world, Lutheran Social Services of Northeast Florida is here to help. For more than 40 years, we've empowered hundreds of thousands of people in Duval County to start again,” Brimm concluded. 



# Redeeming Life Celebrates Milestone Anniversary

Lives are changed in an instant sometimes — a lottery win, a car accident, a promotion with relocation, or a positive pregnancy test. At Redeeming Life Outreach Ministries (RLOM), the acceptance of a pregnant mom into our maternity home and program can be one of those life changing moments. It can end homelessness, food scarcity, and fear for physical safety from abuse. Overnight, a young woman can go from living in crisis and terror to a predictable and safe lifestyle.

Yet, so much of the success with the residents Of RLOM is built, fought and won in the everyday moments, in small accomplishments and in single steps on the path toward independence. These courageous women who chose life for their unborn babies make choices each day and those choices shape their lives, for the better.

One resident stands out as a beautiful story of a life deeply changed during her time at RLOM. This young lady came to us as a foreign refugee, having grown up in an orphanage. She arrived in Central Florida pregnant and alone yet found RLOM and was welcomed in. With a grade school education and no job skills, she worked hard to earn her GED while working at a fast food restaurant. This mom diligently followed the RLOM program and managed to save money each month despite her low income.

Her child was born healthy on Christmas Eve and this mom took to motherhood beautifully, seeking to give the baby all that she never had. When her maternity leave was up, she took a job in childcare so she and her little one could be together on their commute and she could check in during the day. While this childcare position was convenient with her new baby boy, it created another obstacle— poverty level earnings. She worked hard and yet at the end of a year in the maternity home, she found she earned so



little that she didn't qualify for most housing despite her savings.

She applied to and was accepted into Redeeming Life's Transition Home Program. At the transition home she could pay a lower, income-based monthly fee, live in a safe neighborhood and receive continued support from the RLOM ministry. This includes weekly meals and worship, and one-on-one life skills coaching. Here, she continued to work hard and take steps to realize her goals. She took classes and eventually attained her Child Development Associates Certificate and got a raise, which qualified her for more housing opportunities. Her child grew and flourished, she aimed to teach him English and Spanish as well as her native language. She continues to teach him life skills and he is becoming a responsible household member who thoroughly enjoys cleaning with his mother as one of his favorite hobbies!

The small choices she made each day — get to work, study for a new certification, parent this child to develop strength and character, save money— built a changed life for this mom and child. Over the course of three short years, she has saved enough for a fully funded emergency savings account and then some! This sizable nest

egg and practice of savings, coupled with her modest salary increase gave her great hope for fully independent living.

The most impactful thing that happened during this resident's time in the Redeeming Life Program was that her son was baptized and she became a confirmed member of the Lutheran Church. By His grace, they know saving faith. Their eternal lives are forever changed. This young woman is deeply faithful to God and continues to prioritize her involvement in her faith community. Her son is a light in the Church and enjoys being involved in all aspects of the worship service.

Now, after three years this brave young woman has graduated from the RLOM program! She found nearby housing that she can be proud of, housing that is safe for both her and her son. For the first time ever they will each have their own bedrooms! As she leaves the RLOM program she is working to gather all of the household essentials her little family will need.

Redeeming Life Outreach Ministries is headquartered in Sanford, Florida where it began in 2013 with a vision and a Christ-centered maternity home to help single moms in crisis pregnancy situations who courageously chose life for their unborn babies. Several years later they opened a transition home to allow moms and babies to live in a sheltered environment while continuing to build job skills and complete educational goals before living independently. Redeeming Life's program offers moms more than just housing with the inclusion of a life skills curriculum, support for education and job skill training, a family-like setting, and the personal and spiritual support to build a successful and independent life.





# LWML and Florida-Georgia

A total of \$37,000 of scholarships have been announced by the Florida-Georgia District and the LWML Florida-Georgia District for 2023/2024. The announcement came from the Scholarship Committee consisting of Chairman, Lois J. Ford, Faith/Eustis, FL, FLGA District President, James Rockey; LWML District Counselor, Pastor Dana Narring; LWML District President, Gayle Caruso; LWML

VP Mission Grants, Karen McCarthy, Redeemer/Stuart, FL; Lonna McEwen, Trinity/Savannah, GA; Laura Howie, Grace/Winter Haven, FL; and, FLGA District Representatives, Lois Schaefer, Amazing Grace/Oxford, FL, and Trish Aamoth, Christus Victor/Athens, GA.

The LWML FL-GA District scholarship funds are administered by the Scholarship Committee appointed by the

Executive Board and are granted to students preparing for full time church work in the LCMS schools and churches. The FLGA District scholarship fund is administered by the District Scholarship Committee appointed by the FLGA District President.

Applicants must have been a member of a congregation of the FLGA, SELC, or English District of The LCMS in the states of Florida or Georgia for 18 months prior

## Where are they going?

### CONCORDIA SEMINARY ST. LOUIS, MO

**Jacob Anderson**  
Christ Our Savior/  
St. Augustine  
Master of Divinity 2nd year

**Timothy Handrick**  
St. John/ Ocala  
Master of Divinity 2nd year

**Tristan Jones**  
St. Paul/ Weston  
Master of Divinity 1st year

**Euder Paul**  
Concordia/Sarasota  
Master of Divinity 2nd year

**John Simmons**  
Savior of All/Cartersville  
Master of Divinity 1st year

**Joshua Wareham**  
Faith Eustis  
Master of Divinity 2nd year

**Benjamin Westcott**  
Messiah/Valdosta,GA  
Vicar

**Joshua Willoughby**  
Trinity/ Savannah  
Master of Divinity 1st year

### CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY FT. WAYNE, IN

**Stephen Lane**  
First/Lecanto  
Master of Divinity 1st year

**Nichola Sinatra**  
Faith/Marietta  
Vicar

### CONCORDIA/MEQUON, WI

**Jane Michael**  
Christus Victor Athens  
Education, Freshman

**Camryn Varga**  
Woodlands/Montverde, FL  
Education Freshman

**Laci Beth Vonada**  
St. Paul/ Lakeland  
Director of Church Ministries

### CONCORDIA/IRVINE, CA

**Trevor Hudlin**  
Mt Calvary/Warner Robins  
Director of Christian Education



**Laci Beth Vonada**  
St. Paul/Lakeland, FL  
Director of Church Ministries

**Maranda Macking**  
Our Savior/St. Petersburg  
Director of Christian Education

### CONCORDIA/ANN ARBOR, MI

**Evelyn Schwartz**  
St. Paul, Peachtree City  
Education, Freshman



**Moranda Macking**  
Our Savior/St. Petersburg, FL  
Director of Christian Education

### CONCORDIA/CHICAGO, IL

**Nathan LeBorious**  
Mt. Calvary/Warner Robins  
Education, Senior

### CONCORDIA/ST. PAUL, MN

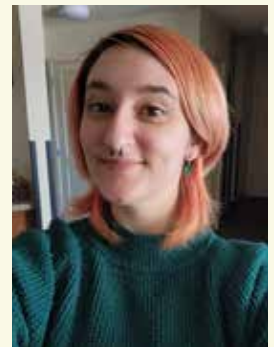
**Faith Deterding**  
Zion, Ft. Myers  
Education, Senior



**Evelyn Schwartz**  
St. Paul/Peachtree City, GA  
Education Freshman

### CONCORDIA/SEWARD NEBRASKA

**Naomi Faile**  
Living Faith/Cumming  
Church Music, Freshman



**Faith Deterding**  
Zion/Fort Myers, FL  
Education Senior



**Benjamin Westcott**  
Messiah/Valdosta,GA  
Vicar



**Camryn Varga**  
Woodlands/Montverde, FL  
Education Freshman



**Jane Michael**  
Christus Victor/Athens, GA  
Education Freshman



**Naomi Faile**  
Living Faith Cumming/GA  
Church Music Freshman




# District Scholarships Announced

to filing an application and be enrolled full time in a rostered church worker program. An applicant may only receive a scholarship from one district. A District scholarship may also be awarded for the spring and summer terms and for special programs (SMP, EIIT, etc.) that fit the guidelines. LWML FL-GA District scholarships are dependent upon maintenance of a 3.0 GPA. Scholarships are

given in two installments — half at the beginning and half at mid-point of the school year. LWML FL-GA District requires the submission of a transcript copy at the mid-point of the school year. Three (3) current letters of recommendation are required. Applicants also must have a signed letter outlining applicant's:

- a. vocational calling,
- b. educational goals,
- c. previously attended schools

and degrees awarded,  
 d. activities, and  
 e. plans for educational financing. Scholarships are available to members of the FL-GA District congregations for full-time service in The LCMS and attending one its Concordia University System colleges or seminaries. LWML FL-GA District also awards a Kuiper scholarship for a mission- minded individual.

Scholarships are awarded based on need, scholastic progress, and aptitude. 

## What Are These Schools?

At this time, the Concordia University System (CUS) is comprised of six colleges and universities: Ann Arbor, MI; Chicago, IL, Irvine, CA, Seward, NE; St. Paul, MN; and Mequon, WI.

Together, along with two seminaries in Fort Wayne, IN and St. Louis, MO, they offer more than 160 undergraduate and 50 graduate programs. While each institution is unique, all eight campuses

approach learning from a Lutheran context. The common goal is to develop Christian leaders for the church, community and world. Recently a supporter of Lutheran higher education

commented, "The Concordia University System is one of the most powerful and far-reaching tools the Lord of the Church has given The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to take the Good News of life in Jesus Christ to a

world desperately in need of hearing and believing in Him, through professional church workers and those trained for other service in our communities."



Nichola Sinatra  
 Faith/Marietta, GA  
 Master of Divinity 1st Year



Stephen Lane  
 First/Leonto, FL  
 Master of Divinity 1st Year



Tim Handrick  
 St. John/Ocala, FL  
 Master of Divinity 2nd Year



Trevor Hudlin  
 Mt. Calvary/Warner Robins, GA  
 Director of Christian Education



Euder Paul  
 Concordia/Sarasota, FL  
 Master of Divinity 2nd Year



Joshua Wareham  
 Faith/Eustis, FL  
 Master of Divinity 2nd Year



John Simmons  
 Savior of All/Cartersville, GA  
 Master of Divinity 1st Year



Nathan LeBarious  
 Mt. Calvary/Warner Robins, GA  
 Education Senior



Tristan Jones  
 St. Paul/Weston, FL  
 Master of Divinity 1st Year



Tim Handrick's Daughter  
 St. John/Ocala, FL  
 Coaching Tim in his Greek

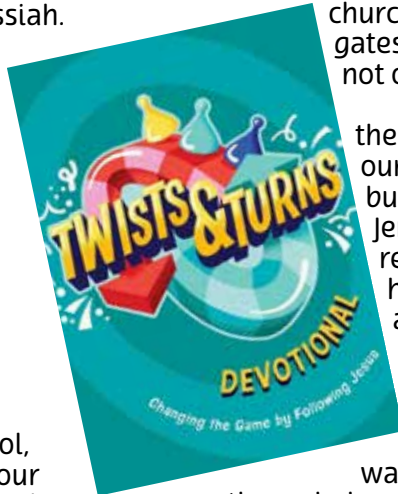


# Out and About with the District VBS Programs

## Messiah VBS Changes The Game

**Messiah/Tampa, FL** celebrated Vacation Bible School in June with 90 participants. "We discovered that Following Jesus Changes the Game!" offered Abby Moss, Family Life Minister at Messiah.

"We absolutely loved learning that Jesus is Holy, Trustworthy, Forgiving, Worth Following, and For Everyone. We learned about the disciple Peter — and his ups and downs (twists & turns) in scripture. Each year during Vacation Bible School, we like to dedicate our offering from the week to help others. As a part of our mission time, we learned about missions and we prayed for missions and missionaries, and did a project of packing 190 snack bags for a local food pantry. We also gave our offering to support missions and missionaries, and sought to encourage those serving in the mission field."



According to Moss, VBS participants discovered that Jesus told the disciple, Peter in Matthew 16:18 "on this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."

"Throughout the week we put our funds into building a giant jenga tower that represented helping to build a church here in Florida," she continued. "During VBS week, \$595.86 was collected through donations and offering funds to benefit future church plants of the Florida-Georgia District as part of the District's 75th anniversary. We were privileged to pray for this initiative and are excited that these themes so closely aligned with Messiah's own history as a mission plant. 



## Woodlands Takes VBS to Africa!

**Woodlands/Montverde, FL** traveled to Liberia, West Africa and put on VBS there with 10 members from the congregation — and that was after producing a successful VBS week in their home community. They provided the Hope and Care Orphanage in Monrovia, Liberia a comprehensive week filled with spirited messages from the 2019 themed "Roar" from Group Publishing. More than 60 children from the orphanage participated. This was done in concert with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Liberia. 



Pastor Bob Roegner Roars

Reading Lutheran LIFE in Africa





St. John/Ocala, FL



Our Redeemer/Ocala, FL

**Abiding Savior/Gainesville, FL's** Family Life Center was transformed into a Rainforest for an end-of-summer VBS where children learned that "Jesus is our greatest treasure." More than 50 children and 30 volunteers enjoyed the event featuring jungle animals, great music, games, crafts, snacks and Bible lessons. ☩



St. Michael/Fort Myers, FL



St. Paul/Weston, FL



Bethlehem/  
Jacksonville Beach, FL



# Community Service Church Mindsets

After the closing prayer at the council meeting, a few members were milling about. The treasurer, the president, the head of properties and the LWML president were all wrapping up some details. Then Fred decided it was the time to confront the pastor. He had retired from a career in the financial sector and had done quite well.

Fred was struggling with the direction of the church. The last few years it seemed like they were shifting from trying to do a little bit of everything (without much impact), to now trying to be externally focussed and serve the community. They helped feed those with food insecurity and provided clothing, rent assistance, job training and the like. They

real agenda came out. "Don't you think we should focus at least half of our efforts to the rich community to the north? We need their offerings!"

Pastor was taken aback at Fred's bluntness so he asked a question. "What does the Bible require of disciples?" Fred said, "sure we're supposed to help poor people but those to the north need help too — and they can help with the bills — including your salary!" Pastor thanked Fred for his concern. Then he went on. "Yes, we are to serve people in their needs, that's what Jesus did and now we are His hands and feet.


served." He continued, "And amazing things happen when you and I invite our friends, neighbors and colleagues to join us in serving others. It gives them meaningful things to do and we can invite those far from Jesus to help us serve



**Scott Gress**  
Lutheran Counseling Services  
Leadership Coach  
Florida-Georgia District  
scottgress@me.com  
561-542-4472

others. As they join us they will be amazed at how God's love shines through you in caring for those who can't pay you back!"

Fred then paused and said. "That's a whole lot more powerful than trying to get people to come to the church for a cook out or a bounce house. We're actually living out our faith right in front of them." Pastor then asked. "So Fred, who are you going to invite to the community service project?"

Lesson: externally focussed ministry like community based serving is not an end in itself. It is a means for members to live out their faith. Yet it can also be a significant "side-door" into the church for friends of members. They will powerfully experience the love of Jesus from the member team. In this way the blessing will expand far more than just to those who are served. 

*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](http://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](mailto:scottgress@me.com), 561-542-4472 or his blog page [scottgress.com](http://scottgress.com).*

often partnered with other local charities to do it. It has been truly inspiring to see the members step up. It all seemed to start when the church decided a few years back to lead a VBS in the housing project just two blocks away.

So Fred said out loud what he thought many were thinking. "Pastor, you heard the financial report at the meeting...how can our work in that housing project neighborhood help our money problems?" Then his

But the goal is not to twist arms so they come to church or give. Rather, as people gifted by God, we match our gifts to the needs around us. That's what Jesus meant when He invited us to be salt and light." Fred scratched his chin, obviously thinking.

The pastor went on. "Our ministry and programs are not meant to attract people but demonstrate the love of Jesus. In fact, we are more blessed in serving than they are in being





# DISCOVER A LIMITED-TIME INVESTMENT THAT WORKS FOR YOU AND THE LCMS

# 5%

## 18-MONTH FIXED-RATE TERM NOTE

The **NEW 5% 18-month fixed-rate term note** is perfect for anyone who loves The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) and wants to see its ministries thrive.

When you invest with Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF), you earn a competitive interest rate, and you can feel good knowing your investment supports LCMS churches, schools, organizations and church workers.

At LCEF, we call that Lutherans helping Lutherans.

Invest today to join thousands of Lutherans honoring their values and commitment to strengthen, sustain and start LCMS ministries. New money only.

Start today at [lcef.org/values](https://lcef.org/values).



**JAY WENDLAND**  
LCEF District Vice President | Florida Georgia  
407-258-5041 | [Jay.Wendland@lcef.org](mailto:Jay.Wendland@lcef.org)

LCEF is a nonprofit religious organization; therefore, LCEF investments are not FDIC-insured bank deposit accounts. This is not an offer to sell investments, nor a solicitation to buy. LCEF will offer and sell its securities only in states where authorized. The offer is made solely by LCEF's Offering Circular. Investors should carefully read the Offering Circular, which more fully describes associated risks. Rates as of August 2023. Balance restrictions apply. Rates subject to change. Visit [lcef.org](https://lcef.org) for details.




# Floyd Behrens Called to Glory

Dr. Floyd Frank Behrens, 92, of Seymour, passed away on June 15, 2023 in Seymour, Indiana. He was a native of Lincoln, KS. He graduated from St. John Lutheran School, Lincoln, KS (1945), Concordia High School (1949), and Concordia Teachers College/Seward, NE in 1954. Behrens held a Masters Degree in Elementary Administration and Doctorate in Elementary Education from Appalachian State University, Boone, NC and the University of Northern Colorado, Greeley (1966).




On March 30, 1974, Dr. Behrens married Janet E. Wessel, Seymour, IN, at Peace/Arvada, CO. Floyd and Jan worked together in the teaching ministry at Concordia/Seward, NE, and Grace Lutheran School/Winter Haven, FL, for more than 30 years.

Floyd also taught and was an administrator in Lutheran schools in Nebraska and Hawaii. One of his favorite roles at Concordia/Seward was advising freshmen as they began their college education. In 1988 a Call was accepted to Grace/Winter Haven, FL, as the school's administrator, retiring in 1998. Floyd was involved in a variety of parish activities, district education committees, and school accreditation teams. After retirement he remained active in Grace — serving on the program committee of Veterans' of the Cross. Jan and Floyd enjoyed ten years of travel in the U.S. and a number of foreign countries following retirement. One of his most fulfilling post-retirement endeavors was assisting the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod's mission to help strengthen Lutheran school ministries.

Dr. Behrens was preceded in death by his wife Jan. 



**Immanuel/Brandon, FL** held VBS under the theme "Make A Splash with Jesus" featuring the Bible story of Jesus' baptism from the Gospel of Matthew. Pastors Miguel Sanabria and Dan Ritter were privileged to baptize 8 children from 4 different families as some 80 other VBS children joyously watched. The 8 children appeared with their parents/ sponsors to witness this special occasion and to celebrate their new life in Jesus with a splash. 

# Remembering

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.

The Rev. Dr. August Bernthal always thought of himself as a family man whose love and compassion carried over to his second family at **Grace/Winter Haven, FL**. Viewed from a larger perspective, the District, the Synod, and the world beyond became his extended family as he vigorously served his Lord. He was born in Saginaw, MI, on November 14, 1922. He received his education at Alma (MI) College; Valparaiso University; and Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, MO.

During World War II he served as 1st Sergeant in the famed "Yankee Division" and was awarded the Bronze Star for heroism in the Battle of the Bulge. While at Concordia, he married Mildred Dorothy Vogel in 1948 after obtaining the required special permission from the Seminary president. Gus once told me that he and Millie lived in "cramped, prefabricated government housing reserved for missionaries along with the very few married couples" on the sem campus. Gus met Millie at Valparaiso University, where she graduated with a degree in social work.

In 1950 the honored World War II veteran and recent graduate of Concordia Seminary accepted a position as Missionary-at-Large in Winter Haven, FL. Some serious problems of the small mission congregation arose during the first year. Yet, as a result of Bernthal's compassion for his members, a sense of congregational family steadily emerged. It was this close feeling of family among the members at Grace that he nurtured and loved. Upon arriving at Grace, Millie played the piano and organ. For the first decade at Grace she was very involved with music, the children's choirs



# "Gus" & Millie Bernthal, Servants of Christ

and Sunday School. In every way her ministry was devoted to children. She humorously recalls, "Gus wanted a large family — he thought it was a good way to fill up the Sunday School — what a better way to help the congregation grow."

The Bernthals managed to raise six children while growing the Grace/Winter Haven congregation. "The church was our extended family, and Gus cared for his people so much we wanted them to be a part of our family. For many years, every time we had a new member reception at church, we had another one at home. He loved having people over to our home. During our 50 years at Grace, there was a sense of continuity, of families being born, baptized, confirmed and married — sometimes for three generations in the same family," Millie said.



Pastor Bernthal served his entire pastorate — from 1950 until his retirement in 2000 — at Grace which remained the primary passion and focus of his ministry. As its first pastor, he saw the congregation grow from 20 communicants to more than 2,800 baptized members and one of the largest congregations in the FLGA District. Despite his many church and civic responsibilities, he also started missions in Bartow, Sebring and Lake Wales.

Dr. Bernthal served as Chairman of the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services from 1975-97, where he championed the cause of those persecuted and forgotten. Grace congregation members opened their hearts and doors to many refugee families throughout those years. Bernthal traveled to refugee camps in Africa, Southeast Asia and the Philippines on behalf of URS and United States Ambassador to Refugees, H. Eugene Douglas, and worked diligently in refugee resettlement. Dr. Bernthal joined a group of government officials and ambassadors on trips to El Salvador and Nicaragua. He served as president of the board of directors of Lutheran Ministries of Florida.

Bernthal was elected to three terms as Florida-Georgia District President from — 1963 to 1974. During his decade of aggressive District leadership, he brought a broader outlook. His new motto was "From Toccoa to Balboa." He was thankful that the District presidency — which at that time was not a full-time position — allowing him time to be primarily a parish pastor, the role he enjoyed the most

He served as Chairman of the District Committee on Missions and Church Extension, a member of the Board of Directors and editor of the District supplement of the Lutheran Witness — the origins of Lutheran LIFE magazine. He also acted as the one-man Public Relations and Communications Department for the District, a member of the Stewardship Committee, Program

Chairman of the District Pastoral Conference and pastoral advisor of the Lutheran Laymen's League.

In 1964 he received the honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from Concordia Theological Seminary/Springfield, IL. Dr. Bernthal was elected President Emeritus of the District in 1994. Yet, despite all these offices and honors, his first love was his family and his church family at Grace.

Dr. Bernthal served the LCMS in many capacities. He was Fifth Vice President of Synod and Chairman of the Committee on Ethics. He was a longtime member of the Board of Directors of Valparaiso University as well as the Lutheran Music Program. His involvement in local civic activities was widespread and diverse. His sermons have been published in a number of books, and worship services at Grace were a staple in radio broadcasting for many years in Polk County.

Rev. Wyatt Kimberley — another FLGA District "Pioneer of Faith," once wrote, "Dr. Bernthal distinguished his office as District President by his dynamic leadership, his evangelical spirit, and his unflinching attention to a multitude of administrative details. The progress of our Florida-Georgia District must largely be attributed to the faith-filled vision, selfsacrificing efforts, and God-given gifts of President Bernthal and his ability to inspire his co-workers to join hands and hearts in the challenging mission of the Church."

Bernthal's church family at Grace and generations of his own family preserve and continue his legacy. Gus and Mildred's legacy includes six children, 17 grandchildren and at the time of his death on January 27, 2004, two great-grandchildren. He was 81.

"He was a good friend, a great Christian leader and an example of what a Christian should be," said Martha Vaughn, a longtime member of Grace/Winter Haven, FL who knew Bernthal for 50 years. "His influence was felt way beyond the city limits of Winter Haven."

Millie Bernthal passed away on December 20, 2019 at the age of 95. ☩

ANNIVERSARY ARCHIVE



# The LAST WORD



My Liege

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


NON-PROFIT  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
BOCA RATON, FL  
PERMIT NO 1767

## You Meet The Nicest People in Milwaukee!

Each year our two LCMS seminaries usually send 3rd year students on a vicarage — basically an internship for future pastors. Working with the supervising pastor, a vicar will gain practical experience in leading Bible class, teaching confirmation, preparing and serving in the congregation and preparing and delivering sermons.

My congregation, St. Paul/Boca Raton, FL, has been involved in the vicarage program for as long as I can remember. Pastor Steve Carretto has an enviable reputation for being an exceptional supervisor and mentor . . . as evidenced by the number of former St. Paul vicars who attended the recent LCMS convention as participatory voting delegates, keenly aware of the many issues that came to the convention floor.

Though these men are now actively serving LCMS congregations nationwide, it was nice to continue

to run into them all week around the convention. Even nicer was having them greet me with my proper title, “My Liege” — not forgetting how they addressed me during their vicarage years. Each asked that I return to Boca Raton and give warm welcomes to St. Paul’s board of elders, church council, school staff and the District. 



John List  
FLGA District  
Communications Director  
Editor, Lutheran Life  
lutheranlife@aol.com



Matthew Lane is now Pastor at Peace/Faribault, MN where his wife JoAnna serves as preschool director.



Andrew Howe is now Senior Pastor at Mt. Calvary/Warner Robins, GA. He says his wife, Whitney Savage-Howe, serves as the Warden of the Howe boys correctional facility.



Noah Kegley is now Pastor at St. Paul/Mountain View, CA. His wife, Monica, grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area.



Kevin Hintze, now Associate Pastor at Zion/Georgetown, TX, is married to Sarah. He is pastor to Jerry & Terry Kieschnick.



Timothy Eden, now Associate Pastor at Bethel/Bryan, TX, stole his wife, Amanda, from St. Paul/Boca — one of our teachers — while on his vicarage at St. Paul.



Dustin Beck and his wife Chelsea brought their three boys to Milwaukee for their first convention experience. Dustin is Pastor at Holy Cross/Warda, TX.



Jacob Schultz, now Pastor at St. Paul/Grafton, WI, worked as one of the “on-floor pages” during the convention. Jacob and his wife, Rebecca, welcomed their first-born, Isaiah, into their family while on Vicarage in Boca Raton, FL.



John Karolus is now Associate Pastor at Shepherd of the Desert/Scottsdale, AZ. John’s wife, Caeli, is a teacher in their preschool.

