



# LUTHERAN **LIFE**

Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod  
Florida-Georgia District  
November/December, 2024

FOR TO US A CHILD IS BORN, TO US A SON IS GIVEN;  
AND THE GOVERNMENT SHALL BE UPON HIS SHOULDER,  
AND HIS NAME SHALL BE CALLED WONDERFUL COUNSELOR,  
MIGHTY GOD, EVERLASTING FATHER, PRINCE OF PEACE.

# 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.



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# DISTRICT CAPSULES

## Transferred In to FLGA from Other District

06/01/24..... Ms. Sonya Timmerman from Missouri  
06/19/24..... Mr. David Timmerman from Missouri

## Transferred Out of FLGA to Other Districts

09/05/24..... Rev. Carl Schneider to Ohio  
09/13/24..... Rev. James Drummond to Indiana  
10/02/24..... Rev. John Ramey to Texas

## Initial Placements

08/03/24..... Ms. Bethany Nummela-Hanel from Concordia/Nebraska to Faith/Eustis  
10/01/24..... Rev. Gary Bowman from Colloquy St. Louis Sole Pastor Trinity/Albany, GA  
10/20/24..... Rev. Orlando Ramirez from Colloquy St. Louis Sole Pastor Iglesia Luterana Confesional Conexión/Naples, FL

## Installations

08/03/24..... Ms. Bethany Nummela-Hanel as Teacher at Faith/Eustis (C)  
08/04/24..... Ms. Sonya Timmerman as Principal at Grace/Jacksonville, FL (C)  
08/11/24..... Ms. Madison Massey as Teacher at St. Paul/Boca Raton, FL (C)  
08/18/24..... Ms. Audrey Sado as Teacher at St. John/Ocala, FL (C)  
08/18/24..... Ms. Kylee Sullivan as DCE at Faith/Merritt Island, FL (C)

08/25/24..... Rev. Russell Anderson as Sole Pastor at Trinity/Holly Hills, FL (O)  
09/01/24..... Rev. Dr. Kent Fuqua as Sole Pastor at Faith/New Port Richey, FL (O)  
10/01/24..... Rev. Gary Bowman as Sole Pastor at Trinity/Albany, GA (O)  
10/20/24..... Rev. Orlando Ramirez as Sole Pastor at Iglesia Luterana Confesional Conexión/Naples, FL (O)  
10/20/24..... Rev. Gary Koltz as Sole Pastor at Trinity/Cape Coral, FL (O)

## Called To Glory

09/06/24..... Rev. Dr. Timoty Parsch (O)  
09/26/24..... Rev. Donald Roberts (O)  
09/27/24..... Rev. Robert Strickert (O)  
09/30/24..... Rev. David Raetz (O)  
10/01/24..... Rev. Dr. Paul Foelber (O)

## Congregation Changes

08/29/24..... Atlanta Evangelical Church Mekana Yesus | New Church Start in Circuit 1 Atlanta, Georgia  
10/22/24..... Iglesia Luterana Confesional Conexión/Naples, FL Circuit 17 SW

You are invited to join in the daily reading  
of our Advent Devotions!



Sign up to receive the daily Florida-Georgia District Advent Devotions!

You can sign up now at: [flgadistrict.org/adventdevotions/](http://flgadistrict.org/adventdevotions/)

— or scan this QR code with your mobile device.



# freepress

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 and email to [LutheranLife@aol.com](mailto:LutheranLife@aol.com). Want to subscribe? It's FREE! Send your name and address to [LutheranLife@aol.com](mailto:LutheranLife@aol.com). Want your entire congregation to receive LIFE? Send your mailing list in any format supported by Excel. Please send address corrections or deletions, to [LutheranLife@aol.com](mailto:LutheranLife@aol.com).

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## A GUIDE TO **Christian INVESTING**

Seven points LCMS Lutherans  
should consider when investing

## Discover Seven Essential Investing Principles **FOR LUTHERANS**

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the QR code.



AS you read this you are probably beginning to be surrounded by the “sounds of the season.” Whether it’s holiday music and Christmas carols, the seemingly never-ending din of commercials trying to entice you to buy some product, or the sounds of family and friends gathered together to celebrate, the holiday season is upon us.

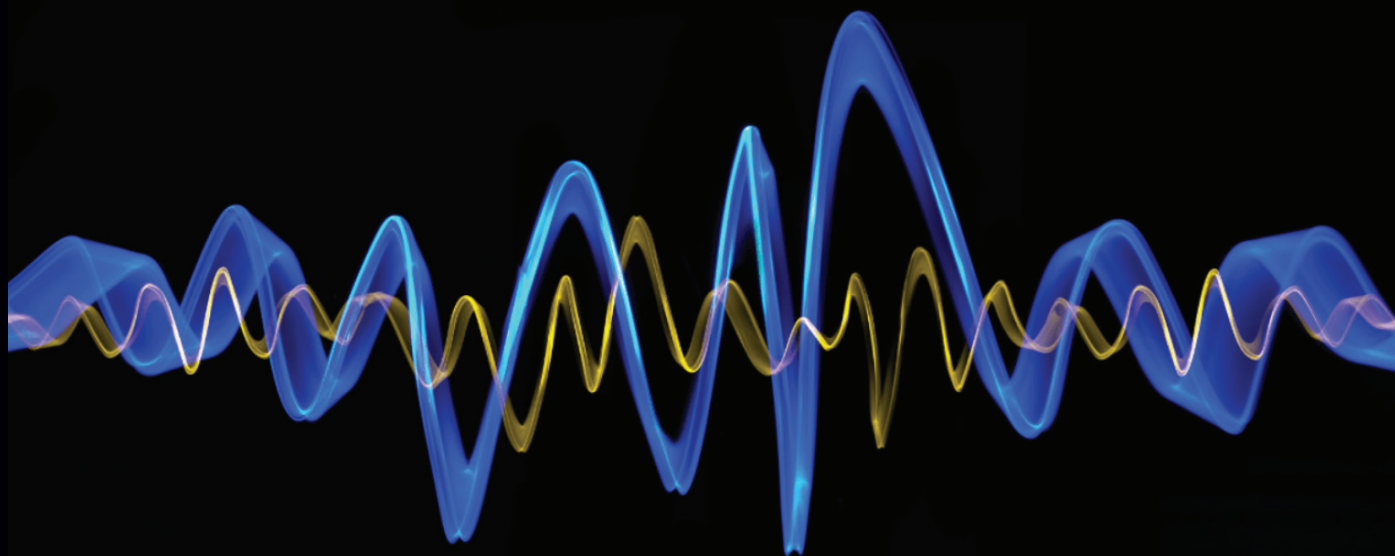
processing the damage and how they would recover.

We know that life is filled with storms of all types. It could be a health crisis, a struggling relationship, a financial crisis, a job loss or some tragedy or natural disaster. When these things come, it seems that all our attention turns to that circumstance and when that happens, it’s hard to hear...the sound of God.

are likely different than mine. Yet no matter what our favorite sound, the impact is the same: they can stir up powerful emotions.

National Public Radio did an interview with Dr. Seth Horowitz, an auditory neuroscientist, that revealed for the hearing, our sense of sound drives our emotions. It immediately grabs our attention. He said, “Everything you hear has some kind of impact on you and

# THE SOUNDS OF GOD



However, as I write this devotion, I am sitting in my office at home reflecting upon the past week and the sounds that came with Hurricane Milton and before that, Helene. Those sounds began like the wonderful sound of rain falling and a breeze blowing through the trees. Yet that changed as the storm grew and approached and the sounds turned to a howling wind, eaves rattling, rain hammering the windows and the cracking of branches and trees coming down. When the storm had passed, the sounds changed again. This time it was the hum of generators across the neighborhood, chainsaws and for some, the sighs of people

Some of my favorite sounds are waves along the beach, a fish slamming my lure as I reel in my line and the laughter of our family gathered together. I’m sure you have your own favorite sounds, and they

changes how you respond to the rest of the world.”

I’d suggest you read that quote again. “Everything you hear has an impact on you” and me! In our world today, the sounds we hear are



*the laughter  
of family  
gathered together*



mostly loud, angry and lack hope. They are anything but comforting. Instead, they are depressing, exhausting, discouraging and even scary.

read the Bible daily and more than half of Americans have read little or none of the Bible. We are being influenced, even disciplined, sadly, by the sounds of the world.

pretty great explanation.

In this very noisy and dark world, let us commit to paying attention to the sounds of God — in His Word, in worship, through

**“Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, and all that is in it. Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them; let all the trees of the forest sing for joy.”**

Research estimates the percentage of negative news to positive news is about 9 to 1. When you consider that “everything we hear has some impact on us,” this research should cause us to pause because if this is true, that 90 percent of news is negative, then this is changing how we see and respond to the world. It changes our outlook and attitude. When our auditory senses are pounded by this kind of noise, it impacts the rest of our lives. Short tempers, quick to anger, no patience and even fear and hopelessness can begin to filter into our lives.

Becoming aware of this and how serious it is, should cause us to find out how we can listen for other sounds in the midst of all the noise. I remember once using a four-letter curse word around my mom. Not only was I quickly set straight, but she said, “If you hang out with people with potty mouths, you’re going to have one too!” Her wisdom applies also to the impact of the sounds we hear. Therefore, as disciples, Christ-followers, we should consider what sounds we are letting in. Maybe we should pay less attention to the sounds and noise of the world and more attention to the sounds of God.

Our God and Creator loves to speak to His children. He loves for His children to come and listen to Him. Yet research indicates that less than 11 percent of Americans

So, when the storms of life come, when the day-to-day realities of living in a sin-tainted world hit you, what will you draw from in response? Where will you find counsel and hope? Remember this, the Lord comes to us in His Word. He does it as we open and read it on our own or with other faithful followers. He does it as we gather together around His Word in worship. I also love how you can hear the sound of God in His creation. Psalm 96: 11-12 says: “Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, and all that is in it. Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them; let all the trees of the forest sing for joy.”

Last night it was in the quiet of night and the full supermoon. This morning it was in the singing birds.

A little boy was going to church with his parents one Sunday morning, and in the Children’s Time, he put up his hand and asked the pastor, “What does the voice of God sound like?” It was an interesting question. As a matter of fact, everyone waited and looked at the pastor for the answer. And this is what he said. “The voice of God sounds like your mother or your father or your favorite babysitter. When they comfort you because you’re having a bad dream at night, you hear them next to your bed saying everything is all right. I’m right here beside you.” That’s a

other believers, in creation and prayer! Since “Everything you hear has an impact on you,” let’s fill our ears, and our hearts, with the

## LIFELINES

One who brings love, joy, peace and hope, the One who comforts and strengthens us through every season. ■

*Oh, how I love the  
sounds of God!*



*James  
Rockey*

PRESIDENT FLORIDA-GEORGIA DISTRICT  
LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD

# Growing Tomorrow's Leaders — High School Leadership Event

by Lori Schwan  
DCE | St. Michael/Fort Myers, FL

Forty-two high school students from 16 congregations across the Florida-Georgia District gathered for a transformative weekend at Lake Yale Conference Center, November 1-3, for the annual **Youth Ministry Leadership Event**. Focused on developing the next generation of leaders, the weekend offered students a chance to grow in their understanding of leadership through biblical teachings and practical applications.

The theme of the event centered on the story of Nehemiah, exploring how God called him for a specific purpose. Students learned about five key leadership approaches:

- Prayer and Planning
- Setting Goals
- Building a Team
- Developing Strategies
- Staying Focused and Fresh

The larger group was divided into two teams: 25 freshmen and sophomores, and 17 juniors and seniors. Each group participated in sessions designed to meet their developmental stage and leadership needs. One group, led by DCE Dave Timmerman (**Grace/Jacksonville, FL**) and Rev. Pete LeBoriosis (**Mount Calvary/Warner Robins, GA**), explored biblical and strategic leadership. They delved into what it means to lead from a Christian perspective.

Meanwhile, DCE's Nick Moss (**St. Paul/Lakeland, FL**) and Lori Schwan (**St. Michael/Fort Myers, FL**) led the other group in discovering the various components of leadership. Through

small group challenges and personal inventories, they identified tasks that bring joy and energy versus those that may lead to burnout and frustration.

This practical exercise helped students gain a deeper understanding of their own leadership styles and preferences. The weekend also featured three young adult leaders —Andrew Cheyne (**St. Paul/Lakeland**), Jonas Mark (**Grace/Jacksonville**), and Janet Oliver (**St. Michael/Fort Myers**) — who shared their experiences of faith and leadership with the students, providing inspiration and mentoring for the next generation. In addition to the leadership sessions, the weekend offered plenty of opportunities for fun



and fellowship. Students enjoyed free time, scavenger hunts, and campfire devotions that allowed friendships to form across congregational boundaries.

Please pray for these young leaders as they continue to grow in faith and leadership. May the relationships they've built and the lessons they've learned at this event inspire them as they attend future District events and step into leadership roles within the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. ■





# A Weekend of Faith, Fellowship, and Relief from Pressure FLGA Middle School Youth Gathering

by Cindy Hammerstrom  
FLGA Executive Assistant | Schools & Youth Ministry

More than 440 middle school students and adults gathered at the Lake Yale Conference Center from November 1-3, 2024, for the **Middle School Youth Gathering**, part of the FLGA District Youth Ministry Weekend. This year's event, centered around the theme "Pressure," was an unforgettable experience that encouraged youth to explore the burdens they face and how they can find rest in Christ.



The theme was inspired by Matthew 11:28: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

The weekend kicked off on Friday evening with a Mass Event featuring Cassie Moore as the keynote speaker and Tribe and Tongue as the Gathering band. The night began with high-energy music that set the tone for the weekend, and Cassie invited two youth volunteers onstage to participate in a creative challenge. They were tasked with building a tower of boxes, with the pressure mounting to succeed.



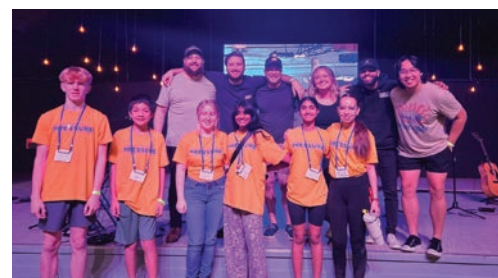
It was a powerful visual metaphor for the pressures we all face in life. Saturday was packed with activities that encouraged both spiritual growth and fun. The day began with breakfast and a Bible study before moving into the morning Mass Event.

Wesley Wright and Peyton Popp led the group in fun, interactive games, followed by music and another inspiring message from Cassie. During this time, youth were asked to reflect on their own pressures and write them down on the boxes that had been used during the Friday night challenge.

The afternoon included engaging breakout sessions on topics like "Creating Diamonds vs Bursting Pipes," "Failing Pressure," and "Pressure and Pop Culture." Each session provided practical and spiritual insights on how to handle life's challenges. Afterward, students had some free time to burn off energy with games like volleyball, kickball, trivia, and even sno-cones sponsored by LCMS Youth Ministry. The evening Mass Event once again brought the group together for a powerful time of worship and learning.

Tribe and Tongue led a spirited praise session, and the room was filled with joyful music. In a meaningful moment, the pressure-filled boxes from earlier in the weekend that had been flattened and reassembled into the shape of a cross. This powerful image reminded everyone that, just as Jesus carried our burdens on the cross, we can give our pressures to Him.

Sunday morning provided time for packing up and a final worship service before the journey home. Rev. Cris Escher, **Grace/Port St. Lucie, FL** delivered a sermon that encouraged attendees to remember that Jesus is always there to help carry our burdens, providing lasting relief from the pressures of life. The 2024 Middle School Youth Gathering was a weekend full of fun, faith, and fellowship. It was a powerful reminder that, no matter how heavy the pressure may feel, Jesus offers us rest and the strength to face any challenge that comes our way. ■





# HE Restores My Soul

March 10-12, 2025

## 2025 Veterans of the Cross Registration Is Open

"The greatest blessing any of us can know is to be bought and born into the flock of God," exclaims Ruth Wiedenmann, Veterans of the Cross Event Chairperson. "The pressures of this world can lead us astray. Like sheep we wander off and no longer enjoy the true joy found in following the voice of Jesus," she continues. "We get disorientated by injustice, drained by conflict, disappointed by outcome, or disheartened by suffering."

God will use the gathering's sessions, fellowship, and worship to bring fresh strength, hope, comfort and encouragement to His flock. This Gathering is for all retired lay and rostered Servants of Christ. Plenty of rest, reflection, and replenishment await all attendees. Participants are invited to come and enjoy the 'still waters' of the Indian River at the St. Stephen Christian Retreat and Conference Center in beautiful Titusville, near the Space Center.

"Don't hesitate! We expect this event to sell out quickly!" she concluded. "Tell your friends to register now — registration closes February 14th, 2025. If you have any questions, please contact Kathy Keene in the District Office."

Register on the FLGA District website either using the QR code below or at [flgadistrict.org/voc](http://flgadistrict.org/voc). ■

### REGISTRATION COSTS:

(Includes meals & lodging)

Two persons to a room .....\$500.00  
Single room .....\$350.00  
Commuter.....\$75.00 per day  
Commuter for just Wednesday.....\$15.00  
Please don't let the fees discourage you from attending.  
Contact Kathy Keene in the FLGA District Office for discreet financial assistance: [kkeene@flgadistrict.org](mailto:kkeene@flgadistrict.org).



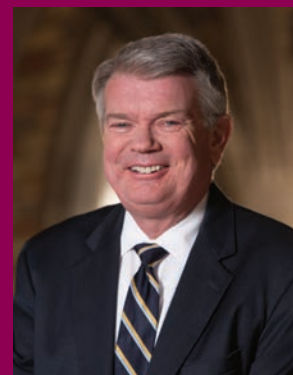
### REGISTER HERE:



### VOC Keynote Speaker & Festival Worship Preacher

The Rev. Dr. Dale Meyer served 12 years in parish ministry (St. Salvator/Venedy, IL; St. Peter/New Memphis, IL; Holy Cross, Collinsville, IL; and various vacancies in the Southern Illinois District). He was The Lutheran Hour speaker for 12 years and served 22 years at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO — the last 15 as president. He currently is writing the Concordia Commentary on 1 Peter.

Meyer, with his wife, Diane, lives in Collinsville, IL. They have two grown daughters, Elizabeth (Darren) Pittman who is a director at Concordia Publishing House and Catharine (Charles) Bailey, legislative director for United States Senator Mike Braun of Indiana. The Meyers have five grandsons, Christian, Connor and Nicholas Pittman, and Andrew and Jacob Bailey.



### VOC Event Bible Study Leader

The Rev. Dana Brones, pastor of Bethlehem/Jacksonville Beach, FL will serve as the Bible Study Leader for the event. A Denver, CO native, he did his undergraduate work at Concordia Teachers College (now Concordia University), Seward, NE. He is a 1983 graduate of Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, MO.

Brones planted Fuente De Vida (Fountain of Life) Lutheran Church in

Puerto Ordaz, Venezuela. The first young man he confirmed in 1986, later became the pastor of that congregation and ultimately, the president of the Lutheran Church of Venezuela.

Prior to his call to Bethlehem in 2000, he served three congregations in Pennsylvania. He's been senior pastor since 2004.

Pastor Brones is happily married to Diane. They have six children: Rick, Justin, Joel, Jonathan, Paul and Lena.



**This event will sell out! Registration Closes February 14, 2025**

## **A Special Message About VOC From President Rockey**

Greetings in the name of Jesus, our coming King!

If you are one of our retired laypersons, educators, pastors or other church workers — you are a valued servant of Christ. Although you are retired, I rejoice knowing that you continue to honor and serve Him in many ways!

I encourage you to attend the annual Veterans of the Cross (VOC) Gathering March 10 - 12, 2025, at the St. Stephen Christian Retreat Center in Titusville, Florida. This year's theme is "He Restores My Soul." Come join us at the 2025 gathering and rediscover the meaning of the beloved words of Psalm 23, especially vs. 3: "He restores my soul, He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake."

We will gather Monday through Wednesday at St. Stephen's—located directly on the Indian River with a beautiful campus with meandering walkways and outstanding meeting facilities. The renovated rooms are equipped with mini refrigerators, two double beds or a king size bed. The registration costs include meals and lodging. The courteous professional staff does a wonderful job of providing delicious breakfast, lunch and dinner buffets with comfortable tables that invite great conversation.

The Florida-Georgia District has held this gathering for retired professional church workers and their spouses for 44 years, and recently expanded it to include laypeople.

I am enthusiastic about our Keynote Speaker — The Rev. Dr. Dale Meyer, former speaker for The Lutheran Hour and President Emeritus of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO. Leading us in Bible Study will be our own Rev. Dana Brones, Senior Pastor serving at Bethlehem Lutheran Church & School,

Jacksonville Beach, FL. Dr. Meyer will also be serving as the Proclaimer for the worship service on Tuesday night.

We have listed the information you need about the gathering, including fees, FAQ's & the online registration link, which is now open, on our District Website [flgadistrict.org/voc](http://flgadistrict.org/voc). You can also point your phone or tablet at the QR code on the facing registration page of this issue of Lutheran LIFE. Payment can be made through your registration or by mailing a check to the District Office:

**Florida-Georgia District LCMS**  
**Attention: Kathy Keene**  
**5850 T. G. Lee Blvd., # 500**  
**Orlando, Florida 32822-4410**



For those wishing to register without access to a computer, you may contact Kathy Keene at the District office by phone (407) 258-5044, or by email [kkeene@flgadistrict.org](mailto:kkeene@flgadistrict.org) to receive additional help or information. Please know there is NO onsite registration at the event.

All registrations must take place prior to the event. Don't delay, register today as registration will close on February 14, 2025. Please don't let the fees discourage you from attending. The Florida-Georgia District has some scholarship funds for those who need assistance. Please contact my office and we will discreetly assist you as we are able.

You can be certain there will be plenty of singing, inspiration, stories, and conversations, laughter, and great food! We hope you join us! You will be blessed! We are grateful to your VOC Gathering Planning Team, headed up by chair, Ms. Ruth Wiedenmann, for doing such a wonderful job in planning this inspirational gathering. Exhibitors may contact Ms. Ruth Wiedenmann, (407) 677-4437, or via email at [rjwiedfl@aol.com](mailto:rjwiedfl@aol.com).

I look forward to being with you in March!

**Rev. James H. Rockey, President**  
**The Florida-Georgia District, LCMS**



Jacob Anderson was born in Warsaw, Poland, however, after God closed the window of overseas missions for his parents, his family settled in a small town called Ocheyedan, Iowa, where his dad served two congregations. "This is where I spent most of my childhood, hunting, fishing, and as much time outdoors as I could until my parents decided to retire and move to Florida," Anderson said. "I questioned the move, but once I discovered deep-sea fishing, I embraced the Florida life while still spending summers on my brother's farm in Iowa."

Jacob attended Concordia University/Seward, Nebraska, where he majored in Theology and Pre-Seminary studies.

"I am the youngest of ten siblings — having seven brothers and two sisters! My father is an LCMS pastor, and my mom was a nurse. When God called them to Nigeria, she became a stay-at-home mom, teaching and raising all of us."



*The Rev. Andrew Howe, pastor at Mount Calvary/Warner Robins, GA with Vicar Jacob Anderson on the day of his installation.*

# Meet the Vicar

## Jacob Anderson Serving Mount Calvary/Warner Robins, GA

When Jacob was young, he would play in his dad's church office. "At that time, there were just two computers: one my dad used for his studies and an old clunky one that could only run Solitaire. I joked that one day I would have an office as a pastor with the new computer while my dad would get the old one. This joke stuck with me and sometimes haunted me as I felt the expectations of being a pastor. As I grew older, I wanted to do anything but go into ministry — I considered driving a semi truck, joining the military, working with horses, entering the medical field, or becoming an auctioneer," he continued. "I didn't even really want to go to college, but that's what kids my age all seemed to do."

"To my surprise, I was accepted, and I remember staring at the computer scrolling through the list of majors, the only one I really recognized was Theology — so, I clicked it. Praise the Lord that I did, as those classes helped shape my path to the seminary. All of this to say, I didn't feel the calling until I was living in Tennessee over a summer, working at Federal Express."

I was offered a position on a ranch where I had worked in Iowa, but the condition was that I had to quit school and start immediately. I was crushed! I thought becoming a pastor was what God wanted

me to do, but this job offered everything — money, a truck, a house, and opportunities to grow in the horse business. I asked for a day to think it over. That evening, my manager at FedEx noticed something was wrong and asked me about it. I explained my situation, and he shared his backstory: he was a recovering drug addict and alcoholic, angry at God and the world. His anger had ruined his relationships, including those with his parents and loved ones. My manager told me that he wouldn't talk to God about anyone until a kid from Iowa started working in his warehouse. Week after week, our conversations centered around Christ. He went on to explain that during his years at FedEx, no one could work with a particular older lady who hated her life, but she asked for me. He looked me in the eyes and said, 'Jacob, what I'm trying to say is that you have a gift with people. Don't waste that gift on horses.' Once he said that, I made the phone call. From that point on, I stopped fighting God and said, 'Okay, God, I'm here. I feel your call. I'm yours; wherever you want me, I will go.'"

Jacob had a number of role models who played a major part in his life. He states that his biggest influence has to be his parents. Their love for each other, their love for God and witnessing their missional heart.

When Vicar Jacob isn't working he enjoys motorcycles, fishing, and hunting. ■



# What Does Your Congregations Policy Say About . . .

Has this ever happened to your ministry? Someone calls the church asking to rent space for a special event. Your church approves it and then you learn that the meeting was of such a nature that had you known in advance, you would not have allowed the space to be used by the applicant? Or how about this, you hire someone and shortly after he/she begins posting things on their social media feeds that are, shall we say, not flattering to the ministry and in fact, the posting flies in the face of what we teach, confess, and believe.

Or how about this, a member of the congregation asks the Pastor to perform the marriage ceremony for her daughter. Of course, Pastor advises that the mother that the bride and groom must undergo counseling with him. When the happy couple arrives at their first counseling session, Pastor meets Carol and

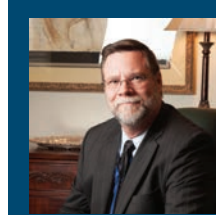
Brenda-the wedding couple.

If you called me about one of these issues or, for that matter, any potential legal issue involving your congregation or school, you no doubt heard me ask . . . What does your Statement of Faith and Facility Use Policies say? OR, What does your Social Media Policy say?

OR, What does your Marriage Policy say?

The question is not intended to embarrass but rather to identify what effective “legal” response would be appropriate for your ministry in that situation. These policies are important “secular” legal documents that help your legal team protect your ministry. The Lutheran Legal League has worked with several congregations throughout the country to assist them with their

various policies. To be sure, no one policy fits every ministry. Nevertheless, your ministry should be establishing ALL the policies that could lead to better protection for the Ministry. Don't delay developing policies for your ministry. Your District Office and Lutheran Legal League want to



**William “Rusty” Huseman**  
Florida-Georgia District  
Legal Counsel  
RustyH@LutheranLegalLeague.com  
904-591-4822

assist you. Contact me at above email or phone to discuss or to have your questions answered.

If you have a legal question you would like addressed in this forum, please email me at [RustyH@lutheranlegalleague.org](mailto:RustyH@lutheranlegalleague.org). ■

## AS LIFE HAPPENS, WE'RE HERE TO HELP.

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FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

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# Fall Pastors Conference Explores Discipleship

by John List, Editor



Scott Rische



Bob Newton



Dave Wesche

District clergy, wives, deaconesses and vicars gathered in Daytona Beach, FL for the 2024 Pastors Conference September 23 through 25, 2024.

Keynoter, The Rev. Dr. Scott Rische, International Director of Pastoral Leadership Institute (PLI), led the conference through “The Why and Ways of Discipleship” – creating communities that foster a discipleship that leads to Christ-likeness and the making of other new disciples.

“It’s always about a deeper relationship with the Father through Christ and His Spirit, and a brighter reflection of Christ to the others in our lives,” he emphasized. “You cannot disciple without teaching, but you can teach without discipling.”

Rische explored discipling within a community. In small groups or gatherings of people we are able to spend time together, build trust, hear God’s truth (the Word), tell the truth (transparency) and provide encouragement and help that can lead to transformation. “It’s about helping each other to seek Christ and follow and obey Him in order that we may become more and more like Him.”

Rische used Acts 2:42-47 as an example of how there were both large and small gatherings. He encouraged the pastors to explore “another wing” of congregations – smaller groups where people can help each other grow in their relationships with God.

Throughout the conference Rische challenged the participants to ask questions in their congregations, help people make time and develop formats for smaller gatherings to not only follow Jesus, but to fish for men in making disciples.

The Rev. Dr. Bob Newton former LCMS District President for California/Nevada/Hawaii, underscored that “God is first and foremost a missionary God!” From the moment of the call, God became the Missionary seeker of the world. He emphasized from Genesis to Revelation God’s word is a missionary story.

“The Old Testament portion of the story told us how our heavenly Father began again and again several times over. Each major restart was in partnership with His children, sinful human beings,” Newton said. “The New Testament portion of the story tells us how our heavenly Father begins one final time.” Newton used GPS as an illustration – with “repent” being replaced with “recalculating, the Kingdom of God is at hand.”

Like a GPS, God views our lives from a vantage point far outside our limited worldview. He sets the coordinates of our journey – discipling our nations – at our baptism. He is able and desirous to complete that journey with us. “I am the way; *follow me!*”

Special breakout sessions were designed for participating pastor’s wives, including a lunch. Those sessions were led by Kathy Meier and Annete Shanks. Other breakout sessions were led by Rick Armstrong, Victor Belton, Dave Ficken, Paul Heins, Ben Hoyer, Chad Lakies, Peter Meier, Tilahun Mendedo, Megan Miessler, Nick Moss, Matt Peeples, Ron & Barb Pennekamp, Andy Schermbeck, Jennifer Tanner, William Utech, Paul vonWerder, Greg Walton, and Dave & Sally Wesche. ■

## Trivia Question!

In the near photo at left, what do the five individuals have in common with **Trinity/Delray Beach, FL**? From left, Junko & Tony Durante (**Our Savior/Plantation, FL**), Scott & Maria Gress (**Our Savior/Lake Worth Beach, FL**), Ken Green, (**Prince of Peace/Orlando, FL**)





## Career Anniversaries

Deaconess Yolima Cobos.....	10
Rev. Orlando Hernandez .....	10
Rev. Justin Pahl .....	10
Rev. Josh Pettit.....	10
Rev. Curt Adams.....	15
Rev. Andy Schermbeck .....	15
Rev. Sam Clay .....	20
Rev. Graham Glover .....	20
Rev. Dr. Tilahun Mendedo .....	20
Rev. Dr. Greg Michael .....	20
Mr. Dave Timmerman .....	20
Rev. James Zang.....	20
Rev. Bruce Alberts .....	25
Rev. Tim Droegemueller.....	25
Rev. Paul Meseke .....	25
Rev. John Schubert .....	25
Rev. Mark Mueller.....	25
Rev. Douglas Bock.....	30
Rev. Ken Green.....	30
Rev. Kevin Loughran.....	30
Rev. Ron Pennekamp.....	30
Rev. Dean Pfeffer .....	30
Rev. Eliexer Ramirez .....	30
Rev. Paul vonWerder .....	30
Rev. Tim Brown.....	35
Rev. Jeff Shanks .....	35
Rev. Jim Thelen .....	35
Rev. Bob Leiste.....	40
Rev. Pat McKenzie.....	40
Rev. Paul Neuman .....	40
Rev. Dr. Richard Armstrong .....	45
Rev. Paul Droutz.....	45
Rev. Rory Hermann.....	45
Rev. Dr. Jonathan Rockey .....	45
Rev. Philip Vangen .....	45
Rev. Dave Wesche .....	45
Rev. Roger Schoolcraft.....	55
Rev. Robert Jacobs.....	60





2024 Fall Pastors Conference











Keynote speaker, Dr. Jim Pingel, Concordia University/Wisconsin



Corrie Johnson, Assistant Director of Graduate Recruitment, Concordia University/Nebraska



Soraya Trujillo, Assistant Principal Holy Cross/ N. Miami, Jim Knoepfel, Principal St. John, Ocala, FL



Jon Peterson, District Accreditation Commissioner, Assistant Principal Grace/Winter Haven, FL



St. Paul/Boca Raton Anniversary recipients Jeff Walcheski, Anita Schawver and Kate Frazier with Principal Jim Richards



Keynote speaker, Dr. Lori Elliott

## Pastor Michael

Since 2015 the FLGA District gives the Barnabas Son of Encouragement Award to recognize outstanding pastoral ministry within a Lutheran school. It celebrates an Alongsider partnership between a pastor and a school. It celebrates an Along-Sider partnership between a pastor and school and is presented to a Pastor at the Educators Conference on behalf of the District's educators. This award highlights the work of pastors who faithfully encourage and support their school community.

This year's award was given to The Rev. Michael Popp, pastor of **Grace/Jacksonville, FL** Lutheran church and school. Pastor Michael was born and raised in Freeport, IL, attending Concordia College/ Seward, NE, receiving his degree in Elementary Education in 1998. After teaching middle school for two years in Columbus, NE and five years in Davenport, IA, he was called to help start the middle school and the athletic ministry at Grace/Jacksonville in 2005. In 2015, he answered the call to enroll in the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program through Concordia Seminary/ St. Louis, MO to be the Associate Pastor of Grace. In addition to his duties at Grace, Pastor Popp is the Director of Athletic Ministries for the FLGA District, the President of the Jacksonville Christian Athletic League, and a board member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

Michael was married in 1998 to Grace's 3rd grade teacher, Jessa, and they have two boys, Peyton (Grace Graduate '15) & Addison (Grace Graduate '16). Pastor Michael loves coaching basketball and watching the Chicago Cubs, Bears, Bulls, and Blackhawks.

"Michael Popp is truly the bridge between school and church ministries," offered FLGA Executive Director for Schools and Youth Ministry. "You walk with us and encourage us every step of the way, meet with us one-on-one — all while remaining tireless, humble. You



# Popp, Recipient of Barnabas Award

cannot think of Grace/Jacksonville's congregation and school without thinking of Michael Popp. Relationships extend beyond graduation—you continue to be involved in marriages, baptisms, counseling, and funerals. You are the spiritual foundation of the faculty.



Jennifer Tanner presents the Barnabus Son of Encouragement Award

“Through difficult transitions, Pastor Popp has been a constant. He’s never lost hope. He’s never lost faith. He relied on Proverbs 3:5 and chose to ‘Trust in the Lord with all his heart’ — a man who walks with grace and always points to Jesus. Pastor Michael Popp is truly a Son of Encouragement,” Tanner emphasized.

“For years I have watched people get awards and thank everyone else on their team, crew, or group for making it possible. Sports, music, movies — it doesn’t matter. And now I know why. They may award an individual, but I think it’s very telling that the one year I have to rely on everyone else to survive, I am honored like this,” exclaims Michael Popp.

“Let me explain. In January of 2023, we lost our principal at Grace/Jacksonville and I was asked to step in as the ‘Temporary School Administrator’ while we explored options. Having taught for more than

20 years and going through SLeD in 2012, I felt somewhat qualified.

“In July our Senior Pastor took a call and I was now Sole Pastor and the TSA. And just to make this a good story 14 months later, our church secretary of 20 years retired and our school board chair was stepping down. And that is when God taught me through perseverance and humility how to delegate. Everyone stepped up. Both the retired pastors at Grace, Pastor Rick and Pastor Pete, started preaching again to keep me at 50 percent.

“The ladies in the office all stepped up. Former Ben Eggars Award Winner Dave Leimer became our Vice Principal and took on a lot more. His wife Ann, our organist and director of Music took over music completely. All of our teachers took on more in terms of discipline, planning, accreditation, paperwork — and we had a new PE teacher and Athletic Director who would normally have the principal for support with any parent issues, but not when it’s your dad.

“But no one took on more extra work and felt the burden more than my wife. I heard her say from time to time it felt like she had no pastor or principal, and I understood completely, but could do little to help. She was on an island. The pastor’s wife can be a lonely position, but the principal’s wife on staff is tougher. And she was both. But praise be to God we got through it. And the blessing of it all is lots of people found new gifts.

More people took ownership of our ministry. And now God has blessed us with the Timmerman’s, not only giving us a wonderful principal, but a new partner in the church office who has been a blessing and is helping me look at the ministry at Grace in new ways with a passion for people like I have. I really want to thank the Grace church and school leadership and the entire congregation for their support.

“I have three more people I need to thank — even though they are no longer at Grace, their support of me over the years was huge AND I bugged

them a lot last year. First I want to thank Pastor Jeff Skopak. When I went through SLeD and had four calls to be a principal and just didn’t feel like the Lord was leading me in that direction, he called me into his office. He had only been at Grace less than a year, but said he’s been watching me and had an idea to run by me. He said I seem to like talking about Jesus more than Math or Science and there is this SMP program to Ordination and he would like my specific ministry to be the pastor to the school.

“It was a wild concept! I’m grateful for his support and vision for me.

“Next I want to thank my former principal, and another Ben Eggars award winner, Rod Jackson,” Popp continued. “I remember going to his office and sharing what Pastor Jeff asked me to consider with SMP and wanted his thoughts. And he said something like, ‘well that makes a whole lot more sense than principal if you ask me.’ I wasn’t sure if I should be hurt or affirmed. He’s the best and I still love him, even though he left us for St. Luke’s.

“And finally I have to thank our Empress of Education, Jennifer Tanner. Having worked together since 2006 as teaching partners, her opinion meant a lot. And when we taught junior high, we would have lunch together everyday. So I asked Jennifer if she thought Grace would ever see me as a pastor after all these years as the crazy middle school teacher and athletic director. She said ‘I think they already do!’”

“It was a pivotal moment for sure. And thank you for allowing me to bug you all last year. She might be more thankful for Sonya than the staff. And a little insight for all of you... Jennifer loves it when you surround her and lay hands on her while you pray for her. Thank you everyone for your support and a special thank you to all of you that nominated me. To God be the glory.” ■

# Fall Educators Conference Encourages Attendees

The Florida-Georgia District Educators Conference recently took place at the Hilton Daytona Beach Oceanfront Resort. Teachers, Administrators, Directors of Christian Education (DCEs), Family Life Ministers all gathered to participate in an event packed with inspiration, knowledge-sharing, and community-building.

This year's conference featured dynamic keynote sessions from educational leaders, including Dr. Lori Elliott, an acclaimed educational consultant, and Dr. Jim Pingel, a longtime Lutheran educator now serving at Concordia University Wisconsin. Their presentations provided valuable insights and practical strategies for those in Christian education, with a focus on learning, teaching and leading like Jesus.

In addition to the keynotes, attendees had the opportunity to immerse themselves in specialized educator camps and a wide range of breakout sessions that covered various topics aimed at enhancing teaching skills and fostering spiritual growth.

The conference also celebrated milestones in the District with anniversaries recognized during the banquet. It was a special moment to honor the dedication of educators, administrators and ministry leaders who have made a lasting impact on their churches, schools and communities.

Beyond the professional development, the event provided ample time for networking and building connections with peers. Attendees had fun during the lively karaoke night—a perfect way to relax and bond after a full day of learning. ■



Conference participants pose with Moriah, one of the Comfort Dogs. Below photos show some of the karaoke singing and group line dancing that happened at one of the lively evenings after a full day of speakers and workshops.



The Rev. Dr. Dan Prugh Leads Worship





# to “Walk Like Jesus Walked”

## Susan Norris Receives Living Light Award



*Susan Norris is flanked by her son and daughter-in-law, her husband, Pastor Richard Norris and Trinity Tots staff.*

In honor of Ben Eggers, who exemplified living the light of Jesus through his devotion to school ministry, the Florida-Georgia District presented the inaugural “Living Light Award” to Susan Norris, the Early Childhood Director at Trinity Tots in Lake Placid, FL. This award celebrates the unique qualities that make Lutheran schools powerful ministries where the love of Jesus changes lives. Jennifer Tanner, the Executive Director of School and Youth Ministry, stated, “Teachers in our Lutheran school model the fruits of the spirit, invest time to listen and care, and actively pray with students and families. While every school may have excellent educators, innovative teaching methods, and creative classroom experiences, what sets Lutheran schools apart is the presence of the Holy Spirit working through dedicated teachers like Susan Norris.”

Working with her husband, Pastor Richard Norris, Susan started Trinity Tots 36 years ago. Known for her unwavering support of teachers, her listening ear for parents, and her example of Christ-like love for students, Susan truly embodies the light of Jesus. A treasured figure in Lake Placid, she opens doors for faith conversations and begins each school year at chapel, singing every child’s name and affirming God’s love for them. She is described as “a home away from home for hundreds of families over the years, including her staff. She is a kind shoulder to lean on, a warm hug, and the heart at the foundation of our school.” ■

## Career Anniversaries

Lisa Jaeger/Grace Jacksonville, FL.....	10
Sarah Pittinger/Grace St. Petersburg, FL.....	10
Marygayle Beasley/ Grace Winter Haven, FL .....	10
Heather Winchester/ Grace Winter Haven, FL .....	10
Helen Hidremichael/Holy Trinity Tampa, FL .....	10
Janice Mitchell/ Holy Trinity Tampa, FL .....	10
Rosalex Benavente/ St Paul Weston, FL.....	10
Lisa Jackson/St. Luke’s Oviedo, FL .....	10
BethBruce/Immanuel Brandon, FL .....	10
Jason Zehnder/St. Michael Fort Myers, FL .....	10
Daniela Sykora/ St. Paul Lakeland, FL.....	10
Anita Shawver/St. Paul Boca Raton, FL .....	10
Marisa Anderson/Trinity Delray Beach, FL.....	10
Christie Wolff/ Grace Jacksonville, FL.....	15
Jenny Hundertmark/Redeemer Stuart, FL.....	15
Kate Frazer/St. Paul Boca Raton, FL.....	15
Betsy Burnham/Woodlands Montverde, FL.....	15
Lesley Agosta/Epiphany Lake Worth, FL.....	20
Cynthia Ennis/Grace Winter Haven, FL.....	20
Chris Miller/Grace Winter Haven, FL .....	20
Carisa Meier/Our Savior Plantation,FL.....	20
Ricky Mercado/Redeemer Stuart, FL.....	20
Heather Lowing/Trinity Delray Beach, FL .....	20
Pete Silva/Trinity Delray Beach, FL.....	20
Kisha Torres/Open Arms CDC Alpharetta, GA .....	20
Brenda Arden/Abiding Savior Gainesville, FL.....	25
Jeremy Becker/St. Paul Weston, FL.....	25
Jessa Popp/Grace Jacksonville, FL.....	25
Jennifer Tippet/Grace St. Petersburg, FL.....	25
Jennifer Tanner/FLGA District Orlando, FL.....	25
Shelly McGovern/St. Michael Fort Myers, FL.....	25
Lori Schwan/St. Michael Fort Myers, FL.....	25
Michael Glowinski/St. John Ocala, FL.....	30
James Knoepfel/St. John Ocala, FL.....	30
Soraya Trujillo/Holy Cross North Miami, FL .....	30
Jan Hoffman/Grace Jacksonville, FL .....	35
Wendy Morris/Our Savior St. Petersburg, FL.....	35
Jeff Walcheski/St. Paul Boca Raton, FL .....	40
Monika Walcheski/Trinity Delray Beach, FL.....	40
Jim Essig/Prince of Peace Orlando, FL.....	50



# PASSAGES

**Celebration of Life Slated for February 8, 2025**

## **“Doc Foelber,” Former Ann Arbor Maestro and Fine Arts Chair, Called Home**

The Rev. Dr. Paul “Doc” Foelber, 98, was called to his heavenly home on October 1, 2024. Foelber served at Concordia/Ann Arbor, MI as both the Fine Arts Department Chairperson and Choral Director from the college’s inception to 1990.

As a founding faculty member of Concordia/Ann Arbor who served the institution for nearly 30 years, Doc Foelber’s impact was felt by decades of alumni. A memorial service and reception will be held on February 8, 2025, at St. Luke’s/Oviedo, Florida. Memorials may be contributed to Trinity HOPE, a charity that provides food to thousands of hungry children attending Christian schools in Haiti. Their website is [trinityhope.org/](http://trinityhope.org/)

Dr. Foelber, the youngest of five children, was born in Fort Wayne, IN to Esther and Elmer Foelber. From an early age, he loved music, sports, and fishing. He studied piano, organ, viola and voice; he also played baseball and tennis.

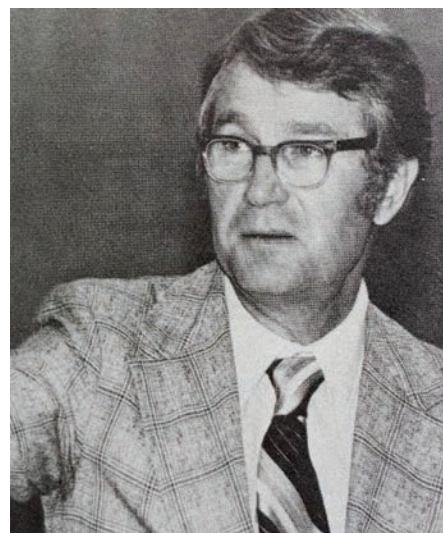
Paul attended Concordia Junior College in Fort Wayne, and then Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, MO. While at the seminary, he played shortstop on the baseball team, captained the tennis team, sang in The Bach Choir of St. Louis, and sat first chair in the viola section of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. With encouragement from the director of the symphony, Paul took a one-year leave of absence from the seminary to accept a scholarship at Northwestern University School of Music and earned a Masters in Instrumental Music. He then returned to the seminary and completed his Doctor of Divinity degree.

Upon graduation from Concordia Seminary, Paul married Dorothea Gerken. They moved to Seward, Nebraska, where Paul taught at Concordia University there for two years. Paul then accepted a call to start a church, St. Andrew’s Lutheran Church, in Silver Spring, Maryland, where he grew a congregation from eight members to more than 400 members in approximately four years and completed his coursework for a Ph.D. in Sacred Music at Catholic University/Washington D.C. He then accepted a position to chair the music department at St. John’s College/Winfield, KS, and completed his Ph.D. while teaching and coaching.

In 1963, Dr. Foelber accepted the offer to chair the Fine Arts Department of Concordia/Ann Arbor, Michigan, where he taught courses in music and humanities. He also coached the tennis team. Dr. Foelber directed the Concordia College Choir and toured with them throughout the United States and in Europe.

During his time in Ann Arbor, Paul also directed the Ann Arbor Cantata Singers and served on both the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Commission of Worship and the Inter-Lutheran Commission of Worship. He was frequently invited to minister to Lutheran churches throughout the Michigan District. He enjoyed preaching — and fishing — in many of Michigan’s enclaves from Walled Lake to Alpena.

In 1991, Dr. Foelber accepted a position as pastor of Our Savior/Heartland, MI, where he served for three years. He and Dorothea then moved to Lutheran Haven/Oviedo, FL. During his time there he has



served as pastoral assistant or interim pastor at several LCMS congregations in Florida for more than 20 years. He also created and directed the Lutheran Cantata Choir. Ever aware of the needs of others, Paul and Dorothea organized a community-wide volunteer visitation system so Lutheran Haven Assisted Living and Lutheran Haven Nursing Home residents would be visited once a week, and they oversaw that visiting program during the time they lived in Florida. In February, 2024, Paul and Dorothea moved from Florida to the Goodwin House, a retirement community in Falls Church, VA to be closer to family. Dorothea and their children were at Paul’s bedside at the Goodwin House on the day he peacefully went to heaven. ■



## Jesus Calls Pastor Bob Strickert Home

The Rev. Robert H. Strickert went home to be with the Lord on September 27, 2024, under the care of Ogeechee Area Hospice in Statesboro, Georgia. Pastor Strickert was 93.

The youngest of seven children, he was born in Jackson, Missouri, on September 18, 1931, and was baptized two weeks later. His father and three brothers were Lutheran pastors, and his sister married a pastor.

At his confirmation at age 13, Bob also decided to become a pastor and eventually attended St. Paul's College, Concordia, Missouri, where he served as yearbook editor and student body president. Later he attended Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, MO. While there, he served as a resident counselor and earned degrees of master of divinity and master of sacred theology.

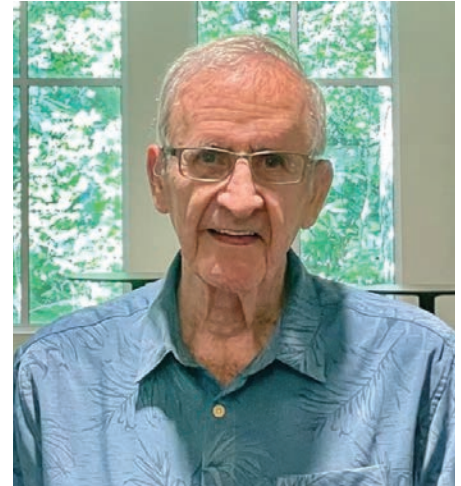
Bob met his wife, Eunice, at St. Stephen's/St. Louis, MO. They were married in 1956. God blessed their marriage with three children, the youngest of whom, Mark, preceded them in death in 2014.

Bob and Eunice remained deeply devoted to each other until she died in 2015. She supported him in his ministry, and they enjoyed traveling, the beach and various places in North America and Europe. Left to mourn Bob's death and to celebrate his victory in Christ are his son, Kevin and his wife, Anne; his daughter, Carla Branch and her husband, Gary. He is also survived by seven grandchildren.

Bob spent his entire ministry in Florida and Georgia. His first call was to begin a new mission congregation at Hope/Bradenton, FL, where he served for 15 years. He then became pastor at Rivercliff/Sandy Springs, GA, where he remained until retirement 25 years later. After retirement, he also responded to the call to be part-time interim pastor at congregations in Cumming, Marietta and Dahlonega — all in Georgia.

Bob's service in the Florida-Georgia District included nine years as the district vice president, 16 years as circuit visitor, pastoral counselor for the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, 30 years on the board of Lutheran Services of Georgia, synodical reconciler and Consecrated Stewards facilitator.

In 2000, the District Convention recognized him with the "Servant of



Christ" award. In 2022, he moved to Statesboro, Georgia, to be closer to his family. His friends, family and parishioners will remember him as funny, gentle, humble, wise, compassionate and selfless. A memorial service was held October 1, at Rivercliff/Sandy Springs, FL. Bob and his family have requested any memorials given in memory and to the glory of God be made to the Strickert Endowment at Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, MO, Lutheran World Relief, The Lutheran Hour or The Florida-Georgia District LCMS. ■

## District Pastor, David Raetz, Passes in September

The Rev. David W. Raetz was born March 25, 1936 in Milwaukee, WI to the late Raymond and Ann (Schreiber) Raetz, and passed away on September 30, 2024. His service was held in October at Lake Oconee Lutheran Church in Putnam County, Georgia.

Raetz graduated from Milwaukee Lutheran High School (Class of 1955), and joined the US Air Force, serving in Biloxi, MS, Iceland, and Ft. Walton Beach, FL.

After marrying his wife Grace (Nienow) in 1964, David attended Concordia Theological Seminary in Springfield, IL (now Ft. Wayne, IN) where he earned a Master of Theology degree. During his 55 years in the ministry, David

served churches in Lawrenceville, IL; East Troy, WI; Milwaukee, WI; Mobile, AL; Granite City, IL; Atlanta, GA; Lakeland, FL; Crawfordville, FL; Milledgeville, GA; and finally Inverness, FL.

Later in life, David resumed his military service by serving as a Chaplain in the Civil Air Patrol (Auxiliary of Air Force) where he reached the rank of First Lieutenant.

After retiring, David and Grace spent time traveling to Europe and the Caribbean, as well as enjoying many vacations with their family. David loved water skiing, amateur radio (where he was licensed with the FCC) and building Balsa Wood Airplanes. David is survived by his wife of 60 years, Grace;



his daughters, Rebecca Reid and Mary Atkinson (Larry); and four grandchildren. ■

## Pastor, Author, Actor, Singer, Chaplain, Don Roberts, Passes

The Rev. Donald Stephen Roberts, 78, departed this life in Leesburg, Florida, on September 26, 2024. Don, born in Kentucky, was the only child of Donald Ross Roberts and Helen Jean Angel. His family moved around the country but eventually settled in Ft. Myers, Florida, where Don graduated from Ft. Myers High School. He attended the University of Florida in Gainesville where he was a member of Chi Phi Fraternity. He also attended the University of South Florida. He graduated with a B.A. in Psychology and later a M.S. in Rehabilitation Counseling. Immediately after, he served in the US Army at Ft. Sam Houston at the end of the Vietnam War.

After marrying his wife Paula in 1971, he returned to Ft. Myers High School as the Counselor at the Exceptional Learning Center. He later became the Vice President of First Leasing and Funding of Florida and started a practice in marriage and family counseling. He and Paula began working in community theater and television, acting in some of the first Crime Stopper TV reenactments. He was President of the Cape Coral Players and was involved in nearly every production for 11 years. When several groups joined together to purchase the historic Arcade Theater downtown, he and Paula were involved in almost every

musical. His favorite role was as Arthur in Camelot. He also served as President of the Society of American Magicians Assembly 150.

In 1982, Don answered God's call to the Pastoral Ministry. His vicarage was at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Falls Church, VA. Don graduated with an MDiv from Concordia Seminary/St. Louis in 1986 and moved back to Florida, becoming the assistant Pastor, and later sole Pastor, at St. John/Ocala, FL. In 1992, he accepted a call to Martin Luther Chapel in Marathon, Florida Keys, where he also served for 15 years as Chaplain with the Monroe County Sheriff's Department, as well as Chaplain for Hospice, Fisherman's Hospital, and the Key West Jail. He also was President of the Rotary Club. Always a theatre buff, Don also directed for and acted with the Marathon Community Theater. As a Sheriff's department Chaplain, he spent time working with multiple groups throughout the Florida Keys, as well as the Trauma Star Emergency Rescue Helicopter team.

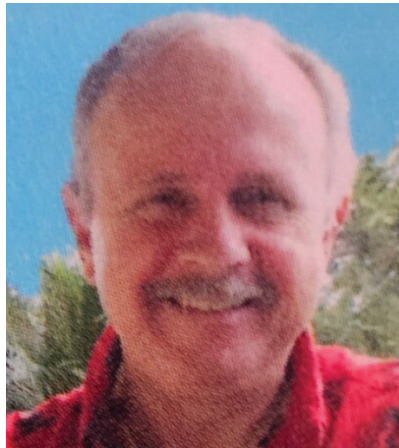
Pastor Roberts was also an author, writing numerous books for a wide

audience including children and adults. One book was a devotional targeting women in law enforcement. He also wrote many poems, songs, and other short stories that are unpublished. Along with his loving wife Paula, and dear friend, Richard

Warner, he was part of the musical group Warner-Roberts, which recorded and released an album of original music titled Backwards.

In 2012, Don was forced to retire from active ministry due to Parkinson's Disease. He and Paula moved to Leesburg, FL, to be closer to family and became part of Bethany/Leesburg, FL.

They continued to spend time at their cabin in Park Rapids, MN, and traveled the world, visiting 49 states and most of the National Parks. Don is survived by his wife, Paula Suzanne Roberts, with whom he shared 52 years of marriage. He leaves behind his son, Sean William (Becky) Roberts of Citra, FL, and his daughter, Kathryn (Ian) Cullen of Apopka, FL as well as five grandchildren. ■



## St. John/Ocala Layperson, Susan Dean Laid to Rest



Susan Elaine (Rummel) Dean went to be with her Lord and Savior Jesus Christ on October 2, 2024. She was 64. She was born on February 25, 1960 to Mary Ann (Schuknecht) and the late William Rummel. Susan attended St. Lorenz Lutheran Church and School in Frankenmuth, Michigan. She was a graduate of Frankenmuth High School prior to attending Michigan State University and Cooley Law School where she met her future husband Jonathan S. Dean.

Jon and Sue were married on December 30, 1987 at St. Lorenz.

The couple then moved to Ocala Florida to practice law.

Susan was very active in St. John/Ocala, where she served on many boards and committees for the church and school. Along with her husband Jon, Sue enjoyed golf and travel and was a dedicated Detroit and Michigan State sports fan. She enjoyed time with her dear friends and her large extended family of beloved aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Sue is survived by her husband Jon, mother Mary Ann Rummel, one brother and two sisters. ■



## Former President of Concordia Bronxville

### Model Musician, Educator, Ralph Schultz Enters Eternal Rest



The Rev. Dr. Ralph Clarence Schultz, 92, entered eternal rest on September 24, 2024 after a brief illness. Ralph's life was built around

his love of Christ, music, and his family. He is survived by his wife of 70 years, Dorothy R. Schultz. Ralph and Dorothy have six children, 14 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

Dr. Schultz's life as a musician and educator included earning degrees from Concordia/River Forest IL, and the Cleveland Institute of Music, culminating with a Sacred Music Doctorate from Union Theological Seminary in New York City. After serving seven years as a teacher and musician at Trinity/Cleveland, OH, Schultz accepted a call to Concordia College in Bronxville NY, where he served for 37 years as Music Professor, Choir Director and President. In those roles and as a man who lived his faith, he positively impacted the lives of many people.

While in Bronxville, Ralph was also a member of the Bronxville School Board and Bronxville Rotary. He also served as Minister of Music at Village Lutheran/Bronxville, NY.

Upon his retirement from Concordia College in 1998, Ralph and Dorothy relocated to Slingerlands, NY where they became active members of Bethlehem/Delmar, NY.

Dr. Schultz will be remembered as a prolific composer of choral, instrumental, and orchestral works and with a passion for sacred music, Ralph founded the Jubilate Singers and Orchestra. This choir performed 20 annual concerts of praise in the Albany Capital Region. ■

### Rev. Dr. Timothy Parsch Called to Glory



On September 6th, 2024, surrounded by his loved ones, reading Scripture from his personal Bible, listening to his favorite hymns, Reverend Dr. Timothy John Parsch went to be with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He was 77 years old and had just celebrated his birthday together with family, friends, communion, and love. Rev. Parsch is survived by his wife Sherri Parsch, his son Jason Parsch

and family, his daughter Jeannie Sanders and family, and his stepchildren Natalie Paull, Steve Stuart, Amber Dees, and their families, his eldest brother, Rev. David Parsch and family, and his younger sister Deb Sumner. He was preceded in death by his father, Rev. Harold Parsch, mother Dorris (Toots) Parsch, and older brother Rev. Dan Parsch.

Rev. Parsch was born in Detroit, Michigan on September 4th, 1947 and grew up in Wisconsin. He graduated from Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, MO in 1974, accepted a call to Clearwater, FL and later in his ministry, received an honorary Doctorate of Divinity. He was blessed to spend 45 years in ministry at First Lutheran Church followed by Bethel

Lutheran Church, in Clearwater, Florida. During his career and ministry, Rev. Parsch married, buried, counseled, baptized and celebrated hundreds of people and families.

Rev. Parsch left a profound impact on countless lives during his lifetime and ministry. He loved his heritage passed down from his beloved parents. He was the light that lit up a room in every situation. He was a fun loving, happy man who enjoyed dancing, laughing, worshipping, and loving life. He was a lifelong, devout Packers fan, an average golfer, great fisherman and exceptional Fisher of Men with sparkling blue eyes and a genuine, contagious smile. Later in life, he enjoyed deep conversations

about theology, politics, and meaningful relationships. Often you would find him telling a good or bad joke at the end of a church service, sharing his greatest advice, or quoting his favorite BIBLE (Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth) verse.

He enjoyed life passionately and he deeply loved our Lord.

Rev. Parsch survived a stroke and surgery in February of 2024. After months of rehabilitation, he took a turn the week of Labor Day and, after asking for his kids and quoting Bible verses that suggested he knew he was nearing his end of life, Rev. Parsch went to Heaven peacefully. A memorial service was held Saturday, September 14th at Bethel/Clearwater. ■

# Really Loving Your Neighbor

Marge and Helen were members of St. John's Lutheran Church. They lived close to one another and enjoyed crafting. One day they were talking out in front of Helen's house. Helen's neighbor Joanne was nearby, tending her small garden on the side yard. They all ended up talking together.

The conversation became serious as Joanne admitted that she was really worried about her daughter Jan but even more so about Jan's daughter Jill. Three year old Jill had a rare disease and the whole family was heart broken. The bills were mounting and they were all becoming discouraged.

As the conversation was ending Marge offered to say a quick prayer. Joanne eagerly said yes even though she didn't go to church and neither did Jan or her daughter. Marge respectfully

money for missions or just the budget. Why don't we talk to the ladies about donating the proceeds for Jill?" Helen thought that was a wonderful idea.

They quickly called Joanne to ask if it was ok and she was so touched. "You would do that for us? And we aren't members of your church. In fact we don't even go to church!" When

Joanne called her daughter Jan they both broke into tears. Jan said, "Maybe there's a God after all!" The committee loved the idea. In fact it energized the whole group and they even recruited another church's LWML to join them in bringing in items to sell. Word spread about the craft show and the telephone lines were buzzing.

When they handed Jan the money from the craft show she asked Marge

and Helen why they did it. They said, "Jesus loves us so much that we wanted to show His love to you and Jill." Tears started to flow from Jan's eyes again, especially when they said



that they prayed for Jill by name at every planning meeting. You see, last week the doctor said he didn't understand it but that Jill was doing much better. She was going to make it.

Yes there is a God. And God's people are the hands and feet of Jesus.

*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.*



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and briefly asked God for His grace for the family and healing for Jill.

After they all returned home, Marge called Helen. "You know Helen, our church craft show usually raises

## 1st Annual Youth Worker Event — A Must-Attend for Youth Ministry Workers

Are you a volunteer, Director of Christian Education (DCE), Pastor, or any other worker in youth ministry? If so, the 1st Annual Youth Worker Event is just for you! Sponsored by the FLGA District Youth Ministry Council, this exciting event will take place in Orlando on February 10-11, bringing together those who are passionate about serving youth.

This two-day event will focus on the seven Practices of Healthy Youth Ministry, a framework developed by the LCMS Youth Ministry Staff. These practices will serve as the foundation for enriching conversations, presentations, and workshops

designed to strengthen your ministry and your connection with youth.

Along with professional development and learning opportunities, this event offers invaluable fellowship and the chance to connect with others in similar roles. It's an excellent opportunity to meet new people, share insights, and create lasting relationships with fellow youth workers.

Whether you're just starting out or have years of experience, this event will equip you with the tools, ideas, and connections to enhance your work with youth and support your ministry's growth. Don't miss out on this

incredible opportunity! Registration will open soon. Please join in for a weekend of growth, inspiration, and connection. ■

### Event Details:

Dates: February 10-11, 2024

Cost: \$75/Person

(includes lunch and dinner)

Hotel: Room reservations will be made individually, with a room rate around \$140.



# Habitat For Children Ministries Hosts Mobile Health Clinic

On Saturday, September 14, 2024, Habitat Care Center held a mobile health clinic in La Jeune, Haiti — located in the region of Nord.

“As the crow flies, the distance to the regional capital of Nord, Cap-Haitien (Cap-Haïtien), is approximately 33 miles. The distance from La Jeune to the capital of Haiti, Port-au-Prince, is approximately 55 miles, explains Meschac St Amour, President of Habitat For Children Ministries, Inc.

“We served more than 200 people who came to consult for different diseases and we had several specialists serving the people including an eye doctor, gynecologist, internist, orthopedic and pediatrician,” he continues. “We started the day at 6 o’clock in the morning and people were already lined up to meet us. We finished around 5 o’clock in the afternoon.”

According to St Amour, the people were enthusiastic about the opportunity to receive such specialized health care services. Many people are suffering in this community. Although there is a large hospital in the Nan community, the vast majority of rural residents cannot afford to travel to a health center, the mobile clinic team was determined to bring health care to them. And thanks to the generosity and partnership of community members, they were successful in their mission. These people cannot afford to pay for the services.

For information about how you can support, please visit: [habitatforchildrenministries.org/](https://habitatforchildrenministries.org/) ■





# FLORIDA GEORGIA

*Out and About in the District*



Pastors from around the Florida-Georgia District gathered together at Our Savior/Zephyrhills, FL on Sunday, October 27 to celebrate Reformation. Bottom row from left, Vicar Ken Sherman, John Cobos, FLGA President James Rockey, Charles Reich, Andy Ritchie, Robert Steinke; Top row from left, Jonathan Horsman, Ken Redmann, JR Reinke, Dean Pfeffer, Brian Kneser and Ron Pennekamp.



## First/Clearwater Holds Fall Festival

It was an evening packed with **Fall Fun at First/Clearwater, FL** — a delicious free meal, awesome games, fantastic prizes and more!

“We wore our coolest costumes and decorated our car’s trunks for our Trunk-or-Treat, and then voted for the most amazing Trunk decorations,” explained Ann Hinz. “This was a family-friendly bash, and we brought along family, friends, and neighbors for a night of laughter and fun. This community celebration was a great success and a wonderful way to celebrate together!” ■



## St. Paul/Boca Raton Team Participates in 41st “Walk For Life”



Members of St. Paul’s Walk for Life team included Ruben Perez, from left, Susan, Tim and Zackary Brooks

The 41st annual Walk for Life was delayed due to hurricane Milton and the venue was moved to Lake Osborne Presbyterian Church in Lake Worth, FL. “We were grateful for their last-minute hospitality and support,” Tim Brooks of **St. Paul/Boca Raton, FL** reported. “Our team was also impacted with some of the walkers already having plans for the newly scheduled weekend. Our team was small — but mighty!”

According to Brooks, the St. Paul team exceeded their personal goal raising \$3,083 and First Care exceeded their corporate goal of \$150,000. This event supports the life-saving ministry of First Care Women’s Clinic. Their clinics empower women facing crisis pregnancies to choose life for their unborn children while sharing the love and good news of Jesus Christ. ■



# District Welcomes Mekane Yesus/Atlanta —

The Dr. Peter Meier, FLGA District Executive Director for Missions & Outreach, was guest preacher in October at the inaugural weekend launch of **Mekane Yesus/Atlanta, GA's** celebrations. This new congregation is hosted by **Oak Road/Lilburn GA** and Pastor Andy Wrasman — a participant in the REV7:9 project, a partnership of the FLGA District and Mission Nation Publishing, thanks to a grant from the National LWML.

The REV7:9 project is to help congregations become enthused about doing ministry together with people of other cultures in their community. The LWML grant and Mission Nation Publishing provide useful resources to accomplish this.

“This was the weekend of Hurricane Helene, which did not dampen enthusiasm or keep guests from attending,” Meier said. “Guests came from Mekane Yesus LCMS churches in North Carolina.”

According to Meier, the Atlanta Mekane Yesus Church has been preparing for this launch for approximately a year with help from FLGA Mission Facilitator and Regional Vice President, The Rev. Dr. Victor Belton, among others.

“This is the first Mekane Yesus congregation to be welcomed into the FLGA District,” Belton explained. “Mekane Yesus takes its name from the first congregation in Addis Ababa — meaning ‘the Place of Jesus.’”

The Ethiopian Evangelical Mekane Yesus Church (EEMYC) is the world’s largest Lutheran denomination includes more than 12 million members — or approximately 15% of the world’s Lutherans. Mekane Yesus members in the United States often affiliate with the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. ■



*Preparing to cut the celebration cake at the banquet following the service are, from left, Gachena Denu (AMYC Leader), Pastor Andy Wrasman (Oak Road/Lilburn GA), Pastor Zegeye Hambissa (Chairman, Ev Mekane Yesus Fellowship in North America), and Rev. Dr. Peter Meier, FLGA District Executive Director for Missions & Outreach*



*Roasting coffee beans for the Traditional Coffee Ceremony. Celebrants at the reception following the service.*





# First Ethiopian Congregation in Florida-Georgia



Above and at right — Dr. Meier prays over members of the congregation. The “Children’s Prayer” is a custom of the Evangelical Mekane Yesus congregation.



Above, Pastor Hambissa leads the Rite of Baptism. Eight children and youth were baptized at the inaugural service. At left are members of the families. At right is The Rev. Dr. Yared Halche (Southeastern District Mission Exec), who preached at the Saturday evening service.







**First/Gainesville, FL** welcomes congregation members, families from their Open Arms preschool, and neighbors to the annual Trunk or Treat (minus the trunks) fellowship event. Thanks to a Thrivent Action Team grant there were plenty of treats for this event. Children also played games, had their faces painted, rode in a train borrowed from sister congregation Abiding Savior, and enjoyed a huge slide. ■



Sunday, November 11th, the members of **Hope/Plant City, FL**, paused to thank God for the Veterans in the congregation. As a part of the service each veteran was recognized by their Human Care Ministry Team and presented with a special thank you card. Following the morning worship service, a special fellowship time took place honoring the veterans.

Pictured following the service are: (from left front) Chris Kernan, Jack Goetsch, George & Amy Grosskopf, Doug Shaw. (top from left) Hope's Sr. Pastor, Rev Dean Pfeffer, Charles Bravis, Geff Ferguson, Stuart Howell and Sierra Corliss. ■



**Redeemer/Stuart, FL's** congregation sent Amazon Gift Cards via text to 23 of their college-age students. "We also let them know that we were praying for them as they started a new school year," said Joy Beach, director of music for both Redeemer's school and church. "There were wonderful responses from the students filled with gratitude and letting us know that they are praying for us too." Pictured are church staff members Kristen Cruz, Joy Beach and Katie Wenger. ■



### Our Savior/St. Petersburg, FL

celebrated Pastor Appreciation month with lots of brats, “adult German beverages,” polka dancing and more. The event was held in their Wegner Hall on campus with more than 250 in attendance — celebrating Pastors Chris Futch and Dan Ritter.

In the photos below, the school’s students celebrated the 50th day of this school year — with some of them dressing up like the 1950s.



The congregation and school families — as well as those in the neighborhood — also enjoyed a Sunday afternoon Trunk or Treat. ■







**Our Savior/St. Petersburg, FL** celebrated the 50th day of school in November with a wide range of “50’s” inspired activities. At Our Savior, school activities are beyond academic excellence — but about nurturing their student’s spiritual growth by integrating the Lutheran faith across all subjects and fostering Gospel-centered relationships. ■



**St. Paul/Boca Raton, FL** took second place in the State Soccer Tournament after a sudden death shootout. The first place team was St. Luke’s/Oviedo. The tournament is made up of Lutheran Schools from across Florida. The finals had a score of 1 to 1 at the end of regular time. After the first 5 penalties St. Paul was tied so it went to sudden death. St. Luke’s made their penalty first and St. Paul missed just off the top corner. Trinity Lutheran was the host team for this year’s state tournament. In photo above, St. Paul’s second place team. ■



Caden Carretto received all tournament team honors. He’s flanked by coaches Gary Hickey (left) and John McDonough





**Redeemer/Stuart, FL's** Middle School Students attended the Florida-Georgia District Middle Youth Gathering held November 1-3, 2024 at Lake Yale Baptist Conference Center on the shores of Lake Yale in Leesburg, FL. They joined a large group of students from throughout Florida and Georgia as they worshipped, played games, enjoyed meals together, and discussed the idea of pressure. They learned that God is the one who they can run to in all of those times of pressure in their life. ■

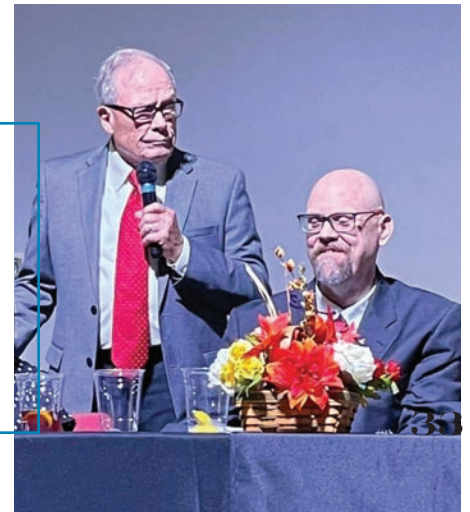


**Amazing Grace/Oxford, FL** celebrated the installation of The Rev. Dr. Paul Burtzloff late summer, 2024. At left, FLGA District President James Rockey installs Burtzloff. Pastor Burtzloff's wife, Suzanne, stands beside him. ■



**Trinity/Savannah, GA** held their 45th annual Novemberfest Bazaar offering craft items, a bake shop, flower shop and lunch served by their youth. Pictured above is Sherry Kreger decorating the tree with ornaments for purchase. Proceeds go towards individuals and charities at Christmas. Trinity's LWML ladies stay busy all year preparing for this annual event. ■

A Ministry Anniversary Celebration at **Prince of Peace/Principe de Paz, Orlando, FL** took place in October. Eric Gerken was celebrated for 28 years in ministry — the recent five at POP where he serves as Director of Family and Youth Ministry. The congregation shared cards, messages and videos. In addition to his years at Prince of Peace, he's served **Our Savior/St. Petersburg, FL**, Trinity Lutheran Church and School in Fremont, NE and Camp LuWiSoMo Outdoor Ministries Center in Wild Rose, WI. Pastors Ken Green and Adolfo Borges also celebrated anniversaries at the event. ■







**Hope/Hudson, FL's** LWML ladies quilting group, Piecing for Peace, boxed 168 quilts, 119 personal care kits and 119 school kits for Lutheran World Relief. Shown making the drop off are (at left) Jim McHugh, Judy Conway, Dianne Murphy and Pastor Emeritus, The Rev. Kent Fuqua ■



**First/Gainesville, FL** recently wished Godspeed to two longtime members as they moved to Tennessee to be nearer to family. According to Pastor Jonathan Rockey, "Norm and June Nesheim joined First in 1987 and served in a multitude of positions. Norm was a member of the executive board, choir, served as trustee and oversaw a massive renovation project. His contacts in the community was the envy of many contractors. June served as Church secretary for 12 years, working with five different pastors and 13 vicars including our most recent pastor, Rev. John Glover. She also served as a Stephen Minister, member of card ministry, and the Caring Committee. We will miss them so much but wish them the best in this next chapter of their lives."

The congregation hosted a farewell reception in Besalski Fellowship Hall. ■



**Amazing Grace/Oxford, FL** had the joy of witnessing five baptisms. Welcomed into God's family is the Stiles family. From left — Matthew Stiles (father), Pastor Paul Burtzloff, Antanas Augustus Caesar Killen, Jacob Matthew Stiles, Caitlin Elizabeth Stiles, Michael Oliver Stiles, Jason Matthew Stiles. ■



**Redeemer/Stuart, FL's** students celebrated our veterans at special chapel service with a reception following. The students loved hearing the veteran's stories and sang songs as a thank you to all who have served so that we may have freedom of country and faith. ■





# Faith/North Palm Beach Celebrates 25 Years For Adult Care Center

One of first adult day care facilities in Palm Beach County celebrated 25 years. When New Day Adult Care Center, a non-profit mission of **Faith/North Palm Beach, FL**, opened its doors 25 years ago this month, it was one of the first of programs of its kind in the County. “We saw a need to help our senior citizens who could not afford or who were not ready for long-term care, by providing care during the day and returning to their home in the evening,” said church member Fran Hickman. Additionally, the impetus of the Center was to provide respite for caregivers of those who have physical frailty, as well as those who have begun their journey through cognitive decline.

Those missions continue today. According to the Center’s long-term Administrator, Julie Tombari, “Our goal is to find or provide services to allow clients to stay in their home as long as possible.” In recognition of its momentous milestone, the Center held a celebration on Tuesday, October 15, 2024. On any given weekday, more than ten public transport buses, as well as family members arrive at New Day’s

doorstep dropping off participants to spend the day enjoying a variety of activity programs and access to needed health care/support. “New Day’s success stems from our administrator, said Benjamin Schuemann, president of Faith. “She takes time to work with the families. New Day was purposely designed to have a home-like feeling when you walk in. It gives clients the warm comfortable feeling they need.” Scheumann noted that as New Day progressed through the years, Tombari saw a need to implement more in-depth services for those on the path of Alzheimer’s, and related disorders, hence nearly 10 years ago its Integrative Memory Enhancement Program (IMEP) was added. New Day boasts of being the only such provider of IMEP in the county. Created by St. John’s Council on Aging, this highly beneficial program affords mental and physical exercise, as well as brain games and an assortment of fun and beneficial therapies. “This unique program is a structured, research-based program that integrates the mind, body and brain connections to

boost cognitive reserve and minimize the progression of dementia,” Schuemann continued. One IMEP client sdescribed the program as “adding so much to my life. There’s fun companionship and encouragement. Your program really works. I have seen a real improvement in my memory since I have been coming. My family has noticed it too.” Anyone who has cared for an aging loved one knows the mental, physical, emotional and spiritual toll it can take on a daily basis. As such, New Day, in conjunction with the local chapter of the Alzheimer’s Association holds monthly educational support groups with guest speakers who address dealing with everyday situations. Practical examples of issues faced by caregivers include dealing with a parent who doesn’t want to shower, incontinence, or walking through the house in the evening after bedtime. The mission of New Day Adult Care Center is to enhance the lives of dependent adults and their caregivers by providing quality social emotional, intellectual, spiritual and compassionate care in a community-based program. ■

*Photos of administrators, patients and guests celebrating at the October 15th reception*





## Hope Serves Thanksgiving Dinner to Community

As has become the tradition at **Hope/ Plant City, FL**, Sunday, November 3rd was their 28th Annual Turkey Supper. This annual event has evolved over the years from taking the form of a fundraiser for the congregation to an outreach to the community and the proceeds of the event used to benefit the community.

“Through the amazing generosity of a number of community businesses providing sponsorships for the event, Hope is enabled to truly give back even more to the Plant City community,” The Rev. Dean Pfeffer offered. “This year, proceeds have initially been earmarked towards our Florida Georgia-District Disaster Relief Fund.”

The dinner, which features home cooked turkeys, cranberry sauce, homemade mashed potatoes, green beans, cole slaw, corn, dressing, gravy, roll, beverage and dessert is undertaken by the congregation. “We thank God for the 124 volunteers the Lord provided us to make this happen. The volunteers consist of prayer warriors, potato peelers & mashers, servers of all ages, carvers. But most important, members of Hope’s Missions & Outreach Team served as minglers throughout the day and gave each visitor a leaf to be placed on a mural. On that leaf guests were asked to write what they thank God for,” Pastor Pfeffer concluded. “As we look back, we can truly say God blessed us with a beautiful day both outside and inside our Hall to serve the community!” ■



Above right — the serving line as the day began with a line of people waiting to enter the hall. Near right — Kathy Drapp (left) and Sierra Corliss who served as the chief potato mashers and cooks.



## Amazing Grace Holds Oktoberfest



**Amazing Grace/Oxford, FL** hosted their annual Oktoberfest, complete with brats, hot dogs, red cabbage, German potato salad, beer, and more. The Villages German Band entertained the church members and guests. At right — Suzanne Burtzlaff, Beth Fye, Rev. Dr. Paul Burtzlaff, and Sharon Burtzlaff. Pastor Burtzlaff goes through the Oktoberfest serving line. ■





## Redeemer/Stuart Delivers Hurricane Relief Supplies

**Redeemer/Stuart, FL** collected supplies the first week of October to be delivered to those affected by Hurricane Helene in Steinhatchee, FL — one of the hardest-hit areas overwhelmed by a 10-foot storm surge and 140 mph winds.

Both Redeemer's congregation and school worked together to quickly collect items such as generators, gas, water, sheets, yard tools, diapers, towels and cleaning supplies to fill a truck.

The church and school staff worked together to load everything. ■



## Georgia Congregations Join Forces for Hurricane Relief

God chose a partnership of several Georgia congregations, born from the Spirit's stirring in the heart of 28-year-old, Micah Arnholt.

**Bethlehem and Redeemer/Columbus, GA, Good Shepherd/Gainesville, GA** and **All Saints/Blairsville, GA** joined together to gather and take multiple pallets of water, flood buckets, hygiene kits, and non-perishable food items to the Western North Carolina region devastated by Hurricane Helene. Arnholt and good friend Gabe Powers took off from Columbus on Friday, October 11 in a 26-foot rental truck and made stops in Gainesville and Blairsville to collect additional supplies. The weekend was a whirlwind of unanticipated activity, with sights of the water and wind damage — watermarks, downed trees, land & mudslides — which made the driving an interesting adventure around the washouts and road closures.

Amid other relief convoys and utility workers, Micah and Gabe made their first drop-off on Saturday at St.

Peter Lutheran in Conover, NC.

Instead of their planned mucking out of a church in Tryon, there was a greater need for drivers and the ability to transport various supplies to other areas. They assisted the "His Glory Search, Rescue, & Aid" team in Lenoir who also loaded up their unneeded goods to find another location.

Pastor Tom Olsen of Trinity Lutheran, Columbus, NC put Micah and Gabe in touch with Pastor Jonathan Christensen of Mt. Pisgah Lutheran, Hendersonville, NC. That area had been hit so hard and more than 50 percent of the county was still without water.

After Sunday morning worship, members donated to their efforts so that the more unfortunate would

be served. Upon ministering to the needs of people and seeing the rubble of houses and businesses, Micah and Gabe experienced a small taste of God's calling for this mission, witnessing the blessing of delivering much-needed support, and the partnership of the extended church. In total, they drove 1,167 miles and picked up or dropped off supplies in seven different cities and towns, some even multiple times. Overall, not only had God used them to witness to so many in dire straits, but, in turn, to be ministered to and fed spiritually as well. Prayers are appreciated for future and further opportunities to help and care in this recovery process. ■





## South Palm Beach LWML Rallies in Boca Raton in October

LWML's South Palm Beach zone rallied at **St. Paul/Boca Raton, FL** in October with 20 ladies celebrating "being equipped with the Full Armor of God," St. Paul member Cynthia Foley reported. Foley gave a presentation on her recent mission trip with Lutheran Association of Missionaries and Pilots (LAMP) to a fly-in community in northwest Manitoba, Canada. She had joined a Missouri-based team of volunteers that offers Vacation Bible School each summer to more than 50 children.

LAMP's volunteers and staff from Canada and the United States share the love of Jesus to Indigenous people in communities in remote northern Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia through Christ-centered Bible studies and other outreach projects.

According to Foley, LAMP has been providing spiritual witness and nurturing faith in communities in remote areas of northern Canada since 1970 through the ministry of pastor/missionary/pilots, and short and long-term volunteers-in-mission. Each year more than 5,000 children, youth and adults are impacted by the ministry of LAMP. LAMP sent teams to 38 remote Canadian communities this year. ■



From left — Cindy Slinker, Darlene Hoppe and Cynthia Foley (St. Paul/Boca Raton, FL), Lori Durante (Trinity/Delray Beach, FL), Debbie Wilson (St. Paul).



LAMP team members based in St. Louis and Centralia, MO: Ben Kehe, Ally Kehe, Gary Seider, Cynthia Foley (St. Paul/Boca Raton), and leader Ellen Kehe in Sioux Falls, SD en route to Brochet, Manitoba for 5-day Vacation Bible School at end of July. At right — some of the Canadian participants in July's VBS.





# Zion/Fort Myers Celebrates Birthdays and New Beginnings

Sunday, October 6th found **Zion Fort Myers, FL** celebrating the 17th birthday of the congregation's Early Childhood Center, their schools NLSA reaccreditation award and the birth of Zion Lutheran School (ZLS) for grades K-3 children.

Director Beth Wallace introduced the celebration with a video of Zion's program, produced by Cam Wallace. Principal Mac Wallace gave the children's message. Louise Weber, weekday education ministry board chair, explained the ongoing scholarship program, Build a Child, that was launched several years ago — noting that \$25 adds a piece to completing the child and blessing families. This opportunity to Learn, Teach and Lead Like Jesus from our 2024 FLGA District Educators Conference, enabled Zion to invite ZLS student acolytes to participate in worship service.

These students are learning their acolyte role under the supervision of SMP vicar, Tim Richter. Children from both the school and Sunday School sang "Father Bless the Gifts We Bring You" with the adult choir, under the direction of Jacob Roggow, Director of Parish Music. This song is regularly used in Zion's school chapel services.

Zion also expanded their community outreach with staff and members collaborating to create a unique scarecrow for entry into Lakes Park's "Scarecrow in the Park" contest (below photo). The scarecrow, depicting "Zion" the Lion and "Luther" the Lamb, shares the good news of the Gospel to all who visit it. The significance of the design is to show that our Savior is all powerful, yet loved us enough to sacrifice himself for us by dying on the cross to save us from our sins. The Lion contains the names and handprints of each of our students, teachers, and staff to remind us that the Gospel is great news for each of us! ■



Members of **Redeemer/Stuart, FL**'s youth group spent a day picking up litter on one of their local beaches. ■





## Heartland Circuit Joins For Combined Reformation Festival

On Sunday, October 27, 66 members of the congregations of the **Heartland Circuit** gathered for Divine Service commemorating Reformation Day and a dinner of German delights. The Rev. Deon Hull, pastor at **Peace/Okeechobee, FL**, preached the sermon. The dinner menu consisted of bratwurst, sauerkraut, German potato salad, homemade applesauce, and a wide variety of deserts.

Assisting Florida Pastors were from left top row: James Olckers (Trinity/Lake Placid), Antony Arias (Peace Valley/Wachula and Grace/Arcadia), Robert Maulella (Faith/Sebring), Scott McLean (Christ/Avon Park), Deon Hull (Peace/Okeechobee). From left bottom row: Seth DeBartolo (Faith/Clewiston, Christ the King/LaBelle), Richard Norris (Trinity/Lake Placid). Acolyte, Luke Easterday, Crucifer, Brecken Smith, Bible Bearer, Cale Easterday.

The ladies who prepared the delicious dinner are, from left, top row: Elsie Ratliff, Kathleen Crow, Liz Nocker, Mike Meek. From left, bottom row: Marirose Hogan, Verna Van Deman, Carol Angello, Betty Clement. (Not pictured) Mark Brandel, Daryl Rhoem. ■



The Rev. Orlando Ramirez was installed as the pastor of **Connexion Confessional Lutheran Church/Naples, FL**, on October 20 at their charter service. Participating clergy are, from left, Richard Browning, Mark Eisold, Karl Glander, Orlando Ramirez, Keith Lingsch. ■



# Savior Of All Celebrates Pastor Appreciation, Veterans, New Members

**Savior Of All/Cartersville, GA** honored Pastor and Cindy Kruger on Sunday, October 13 during Pastor Appreciation Month. Elders and their wives provided a New Orleans/Mardi Gras-themed meal for the event. In photo at right are L-R: Darik Anderson, Michelle Anderson, Bob Kappel, Jane Kappel, Jeffrey Dale, Alexandria Dale, Cindy Kruger, Pastor Kruger, Cathy Simmons, Carl Simmons, Tiffany Howe and Mark Howe.



The congregation's youth held a costume party on Sunday, October 20 following morning worship. The youth played games, made crafts, enjoyed hot dogs and snacks.



The following week, SOA welcomed New Members: L-R: Derek Rogers, Ben Freed, Paul Heins, Ursula Heins, Jack Hellerstedt, Emilie Hellerstedt (holding Parker) Frank Martin, Mary Henderson and Cooper Batchelder. ■

In November, Savior of All recognized and thanked their Veterans who were in attendance at church on Sunday, November 10. At right are, front: Rose Koch middle row: L-R: John Tate, Chuck Fish, Carl Simmons, Jack Cervero, Carl Schleede, Bill Culp and Carl Langhans, back row L-R: Tom Potteiger and Wayne Wallner. ■



**First/Gainesville, FL's** Vacancy Pastor (and son of the congregation) The Rev. Jonathan Rockey, spent the end of October leading the English Ministry in Wittenberg, Germany. Pastor Rockey was joined by his wife Kathy, and daughter Mary for this special mission trip. When Jonathan's brother, FLGA District President James Rockey helped convince him to leave retirement in Alaska to take the vacancy position he said "yes" but let First Lutheran know he would be in Germany in October. Above — Kathy, Jonathan and Mary inside the church celebrating Reformation Sunday. At left — The Rockey's with one of the groups of worshippers. ■







FLGA District President, James Rockey, officiated the worship service at **Good Shepherd /Titusville, FL** celebrating Pastor Bruce Alberts 25th anniversary of ordination. Rev. Alberts has been at Good Shepherd 16 years. ■

Nearly 500 brothers and sisters came together for the annual Sharing & Caring Fall Festival on Saturday, September 28th. This event, coordinated through the Lutheran Outreach



Partnership since 2017, is always a special opportunity to bear one another's burdens and share the love of Jesus in fellowship with one another.

Food, fruit, daily necessities, shoes, Bombas socks, and clothing was delivered. The Lutheran Outreach Partnership is a collaboration led through Rivercliff Lutheran Church which includes members from **Cross of Life** Lutheran Church, **Holy Trinity** Lutheran Church, **Prince of Peace** Lutheran Church, **Rivercliff**, **St. Luke's** Lutheran Church and **Stepping Stone Mission**. ■



Six students in the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program at Concordia Theological Seminary/Fort Wayne, IN were recognized on November 12 for completing their programs. Those students include: Brian C. Wachter, **St. John the Apostle/Buford, GA**. ■



**Redeemer/Stuart, FL** has Operation Christmas Child boxes packed and ready to be delivered to Samaritan's Purse, the evangelical Christian humanitarian aid organization that provides aid to people in physical need as a key part of its Christian missionary work. The organization's president is Franklin Graham, son of Christian evangelist Billy Graham. The name of the organization is derived from the New Testament Parable of the Good Samaritan. With international headquarters in Boone, North Carolina, the organization also maintains warehouse and aviation facilities in nearby North Wilkesboro and Greensboro, North Carolina. ■



## 9th Annual Pumpkin Patch Raises Funds for Abiding Savior Youth Trip to National Gathering



For the past eight years the youth at **Abiding Savior/Gainesville, GA** come together to host a pumpkin patch. This serves as both a fundraiser for their trip to the LCMS National Youth Gathering and a community outreach event. This year marked the ninth year of the event.

“The pumpkin patch is an incredible opportunity for our youth to raise money for the NYG, which takes place in New Orleans, LA in 2025. Through this event, they are learning the valuable skills needed to run a successful fundraiser, from setting up the patch to helping customers select the perfect pumpkin,” explained Daniel Schmitt, Pumpkin Patch President at Abiding Savior. “This hands-on experience teaches them how to serve others while supporting their own journey of faith. Not only do they gain leadership skills, but they also learn the importance of stewardship and hard work, all while building relationships with members of the community.”

According to Schmitt, “one of the unique aspects of our pumpkin patch is that the pumpkins come from the Navajo Indian Reservation in New Mexico, through our partnership with Pumpkin Patch USA. This organization has helped churches across the country raise funds for their ministries, and we are proud to be part of this effort. The pumpkins are delivered twice during the season, ensuring there are plenty of choices for our visitors.”

The pumpkin patch has also served as an outreach opportunity for Abiding Savior. Many of the families and individuals who visit may not otherwise set foot on our church campus, but through this warm and welcoming environment, they get a glimpse of who we are as a congregation. Our youth, staff, and volunteers are excited to share the love of Christ with every person who stops by, whether they’re here to buy a pumpkin or just enjoy the festive atmosphere. ■





Please send address updates,  
cancellations, additions,  
news and photos to:  
**LutheranLife@aol.com**

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## District Convention Is Right Around The Corner!

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has 35 districts with more than 6,000 congregations and approximately two million members! There are 33 geographical districts representing all 50 United States. Two districts — English and the Slovak Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELC) — are non-geographical districts. The English District has 161 and the SELC has 52 congregations.

The LCMS has district conventions every three years, and the schedule includes time for conducting business, electing officers and sharing information. The conventions also offer opportunities for worship, nurture, inspiration and abundant fellowship with classmates, professors, friends and family.

The Florida-Georgia District will convene this coming June.

In addition to the commitment of the necessary time and energy that goes into a convention, the FLGA District now seeks nominations for service — officers and members of boards and commissions. District

Secretary, The Rev. Dr. Greg Michael, will accept nominations for a wide range of positions — to be decided at next summer's convention.

Basic qualifications for candidates for all positions include:



- good standing in his/her congregation and community;
- a commitment of time needed to fulfill the responsibilities of the position (meetings);
- good communication and participation skills.

Also up at this convention is the District Secretary — who must be an ordained minister, highly qualified in word processing, communications and business practices.

FLGA District Board of Directors is comprised of parish pastors, commissioned Lutheran ministers and laypersons (men and women who are members of our district congregations. Qualifications sought for these people are the ability to make decisions and provide leadership in his/her congregation

and community. Who do you know in your Lutheran circle of influence who would make a good member of the FLGA District Board of Directors? Which pastor in your region would make a great Regional Vice President?

At this June's convention delegates representing each congregation will elect:

- District President;
- Five Regional Vice Presidents;
- District Secretary
- Commissioned Ministers;
- Ordained Clergymen;
- Lay Members.

When electing the Regional Vice Presidents, they are elected from the voting members of their respective regions.

If all of this sounds a little daunting, talk with your pastor! He'll help you understand the general operations of the FLGA District and the importance of selecting qualified participants to the Board of Directors.

Then pray.

Then approach prospective participants and have a talk with them. If you're a good choice — approach your pastor and discuss your interest in getting involved in our district's leadership.

Nominations all go through the FLGA District Secretary:

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Christus Victor Lutheran Church  
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Athens, GA  
706.543.3801 (church)  
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