

# LUTHERAN LIFE

Lutheran Church-  
Missouri Synod  
Florida-Georgia District  
May/June/July 2025

## STATE OF THE DISTRICT

35th Convention Report & 2024 Year End Annual Report



# LUTHERAN LIFE

*Lutheran LIFE* is the official newsmagazine of the Florida-Georgia (FLGA) District of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. The Mission of the FLGA District is to serve, assist, and encourage congregations in the ministry of Jesus Christ. People of the FLGA District are equipped, empowered, engaged in the Master's business ... connecting people to Jesus. *Lutheran LIFE* is designed to inform LCMS church and school members of the activities, personalities and resources offered by the Synod and the District. *Lutheran LIFE* may also provide a forum for readers to express their views and ideas on a wide range of topics. *Lutheran LIFE* is published bi-monthly. News items and photos are encouraged. Please send scanned photos as a .jpg, .png or .pdf attachment rather than embedded in emails.



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## DISTRICT CAPSULES

### Transferred Out of FLGA to Other Districts

04/05/25 ..... Mr. Trevor Fiala (C) to MO

### Transferred Into FLGA from Other Districts

04/28/25 ..... Rev. Allen Kramp (O) ND  
05/28/25 ..... Rev. Lawrence Matro (O) MI  
06/08/25 ..... Rev. Bradley Heinecke (O) MidSo  
06/08/25 ..... Rev. Frank Frye (O) MO  
06/15/25 ..... Rev. William Wilson (O) MO

### Installations

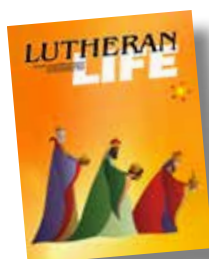
06/08/25 ..... Rev. Bruce Alberts (O) as  
Sole Pastor, Savior of All/  
Cartersville, GA  
06/08/25 ..... Rev. James Kress (O), as  
Assistant Pastor, Zion  
Evangelical/Winter Garden, FL  
06/08/25 ..... Rev. Bradley Heinecke (O)  
as Assistant Pastor, Zion  
Evangelical/Winter Garden, FL  
06/08/25 ..... Rev. Frank Frye (O) as Assistant  
Pastor, Zion Evangelical/Winter  
Garden, FL

### Emeritus

05/01/25 ..... Rev. Robert Steinke (O)

### Called To Glory

01/20/25 ..... Rev. David Hinman (O)  
04/03/25 ..... Rev. Jerome Figuly (O)  
05/16/25 ..... Rev. Elmer Riffel (O)  
06/08/25 ..... Rev. Karl Dunker (O)  
06/11/25 ..... Mr. Edwin Temme (C)



## freepress

*Lutheran LIFE*, the bi-monthly magazine of the Florida-Georgia District of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, is mailed free to all congregation members of the 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).

## Trinity/Rockledge Plants, Animals, Earth

Certified Nature Explore Classrooms are dynamic, nature-based play and learning spaces. Nature Explore Outdoor Classroom Design Services apply research-based, field-tested design principles to create these nature-rich outdoor spaces that can be located anywhere a school, child care center, park, or other community site might have a traditional playground.



Trinity/Rockledge, FL has earned this prestigious recognition. This certification confers on Trinity a number of benefits, including membership in an ever-expanding network of nearly 600 spaces.

"Trinity's commitment to providing research-based and nature-rich learning offers a wonderful example to programs and educators throughout the country," says Heather Fox, director of communications and outreach for the Nature Explore program. "These spaces inspire hands-on activity, creativity, play and plenty of time exploring the natural world for children of all ages."

These unique outdoor classrooms offer interactive, open-ended materials and elements that allow children to use their creativity, imaginations and initiative. Research consistently shows that children who learn and grow in Nature Explore Classrooms exhibit enhanced concentration, develop creativity and problem solving techniques, manage stress in healthy ways and



# Students Embrace in Unique "Nature Classroom"

*Receives National Recognition as a  
Certified Nature Explore Classroom*

develop skills across the spectrum of academic and creative learning.

On May 15, 2025, Trinity held a Dedication and Ribbon Cutting ceremony. Prayer and Dedication were conducted by The Rev. Ron Meyr, Pastor Liaison to Trinity, with the ribbon cut by kindergarten teacher Katy Miller and Principal Becky Houston prior to the school's annual Spring Fling.

"Trinity/Rockledge has been providing learning experiences for more than 65 years and we are always looking for new ways to engage our students" explains Becky Houston, Principal. "We are excited to offer our students opportunities to explore the natural world. God created an amazing world and it is important that we teach children to understand, appreciate and help care for His creations."

Trinity's Outdoor Enrichment Courtyard offers several areas designed for learning and exploration: Nature Art, Music and Movement, Nature STEM, Loose Parts Play, Climbing and Balance, God's Garden, an Outdoor Chapel, and Group Fun. "Under a large shade structure, we added picnic tables to create a gathering space. This is a great spot for our upper elementary classes to have outdoor activities and lessons," Houston continues. "It is also used by students and families at events, such as our Fall and Spring Festivals — an ideal space for fellowship!" This new environment is located between the church and school buildings.

Teaching children about Jesus and helping them to explore, appreciate and help care for the beautiful world God created is a passion of the teachers and staff of Trinity Lutheran School. According to Houston, when they were in the early stages of the design process, they knew they wanted to include



*Above, Becky Houston, Principal, on left, and Katy Miller, Kindergarten Teacher. The staff of Trinity/Rockledge. Pastor Ron Meyr providing the prayer and dedication.*



an outdoor chapel — a place where classes can worship, praise, sing, and study God's word.

At the center of this area is a cross that is made up of small painted squares. Every child and teacher painted a square on that cross. Another special area is their garden area — named *God's Garden*. Each class has their own garden bed for planting, and they are responsible for watering and caring for the plants.

"Living in Florida, we have Monarch butterflies year-round — as a result we have a butterfly garden and Monarch enclosure. We have been blessed to observe the life cycle of the Monarch from egg to caterpillar to chrysalis to butterfly. The children get so excited when we release the butterflies! Being able to observe this amazing transformation has truly given our students a greater appreciation for God's creations.

"Building such an amazing learning space for our students has been such a blessing for us. We are grateful to all those who have

helped us throughout this process: our staff, families, students and volunteers for their time, hard work and donations; Faith/Viera Lutheran Church; Goodson Paving; Rockledge Gardens; John and Katherine Duda Foundation and the Early Learning Coalition of Brevard County, Florida," Houston concludes. "We pray God's blessings on our Outdoor Enrichment Courtyard. May this space inspire wonder and awe to those who enter." ✝



# COMPELLED TO SHARE

Almost two years ago, we celebrated the 75th Anniversary of the Florida-Georgia District. From the very beginning, this District understood that it was **all about mission**. Beginning with 22 congregations, the early leaders looked beyond seeing that they were fed on God's Word and sacraments – to also taking seriously the mission of God.

This District has sought to live that out by being evangelical, a people compelled to "go and make disciples" who make disciple makers! Throughout our District's history we have been abundantly blessed with mission-minded staff and leaders at all levels.

That remains true today as we have a staff who works tirelessly, passionately and joyfully to help every member of our District be *"Equipped, Empowered and Engaged" in the mission of Connecting People to Jesus!*

As the FLGA District staff, we are here to come along side of congregations, workers and lay leaders, to help in the work that God has given them as His ambassadors, reconcilers, and the priesthood of believers we were made to be. To guide our work from the District level, we are led not only by our mission of Connecting People to Jesus, but our Critical Ministry Targets of Outreach and Leadership.

During the past two years, the FLGA Board of Directors and Staff spent time assessing the roles of the Board and Staff. This has resulted in greater clarity regarding our mission and how the District as a whole works together.

The Board and Staff's work has resulted in the development of a Vivid Description for the future and new Critical Ministry Targets. Those can be found on our website. We are the Body of Christ with unique and various gifts, working together and Compelled to share Christ's love.

Our focus is on the opportunities before us today, while we also look to the future. I believe we must take Jesus' words to heart when He said in JOHN 9, *"As long as it is day, we must do the works of Him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work."* Now is the time for us to "go and make disciples." Now is the time for us to "be Christ's witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth!"

Connect people to Jesus NOW! For while we wait or abdicate our responsibility, people are separated from God, dying and going to hell!

The population of the states of Florida and Georgia more than doubled during the last 40 years – and will continue to expand. The harvest fields are right outside our homes, churches, schools, places of work and wherever we find ourselves. Christ's command is clear, so let's "Love our neighbors" by meeting them where they are

VISION  
Brings  
Hope+

and . . . share with them what Christ has done for us personally and what He's done for them!

Let the FLGA District be a people known for loving like Jesus and sharing the gift of forgiveness





# CHRIST'S LOVE

and life. Let us be a people who are so filled with and overwhelmed by the love of Christ that we are COMPELLED to share it in every situation!

At the District Convention, I shared the following – I am not “District.” The staff and Board of Directors are not “District.” My friends . . . YOU ARE the District! Yes, I along with the Staff & Board are here to work alongside of you and your whole congregation as you seek to proclaim the Good News of Jesus with your community. As those who are baptized and filled with the Spirit of God. As those who are regularly fed on the very Word of God. As those who receive Christ personally through His Body and Blood, you and those in your congregations are called, equipped and empowered to share Christ's love. As a matter of fact, I know that each of you have experienced the love of Christ. I know that He has met you in your hurt, fear, pain, grief, abandonment, loss and sin.

## Critical Ministry Targets that will guide our work:

1. Cultivate the Christian Identity of Every Disciple;
2. Support Church Workers and Leaders in Healthy Ministry;
3. Help Congregations Engage Their Communities;
4. Foster a Sense of Shared District Identity.

You – yes – you have a testimony to share! Therefore our lives must reflect, “Christ's love Compels us!”

This is about getting back to our biblical evangelical roots. We, the Church, have been set apart to “go and make disciples, who make disciple makers. We have been set apart to be Christ's holy priesthood . . . “to declare the praises of Him who called us ‘out’ of darkness and into His marvelous light.”

Let me share with you the abbreviated version of the new Vivid Description of what we pray the future of the FLGA District will look like: *The people of the Florida-Georgia District are compelled by Christ's love to connect the lost, confused and hurting to Jesus, who is the true source of peace, hope and life!*

As those saved by grace, we must share the message of salvation. Our focus is on empowering congregations to help individuals discover the hope and joy of salvation. Our task is to ignite the disciple-making potential within our congregations, so that all people experience the life-changing love of Jesus.

Corporate worship and vital community is foundational. We love our neighbors by reaching out to people where they are, building relationships, and discipling others. We are Along-siders, called to live urgently, reflecting Christ's love in our daily lives, so that the hope

and joy of salvation overflow into the world around us.

I encourage you to go to the District website and read the full version. As your along-siders, the Board has set four Critical Ministry Targets that will guide our work:

1. Cultivate the Christian Identity of Every Disciple;
2. Support Church Workers and Leaders in Healthy Ministry;
3. Help Congregations Engage Their Communities;
4. Foster a Sense of Shared District Identity.

There is great value in having a clear vision. PROVERBS 29:18 is one place this is addressed when the Lord says: “Where there is no vision, people perish.” If we have indeed received the gifts of God's mercy and call to live as those “Compelled by Christ's love” to share what we know. Then it is our call to share what we have so that others do not perish eternally.

May the Lord bless us as we work together to make this a reality and see many more be connected to Jesus. Please watch for more information to come. ✝



*Compelled to Share Christ's Love,  
James Rockey*

PRESIDENT FLORIDA-GEORGIA DISTRICT  
LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD

# LIFELINES



# Florida-Georgia District For the Year Ended

Greetings! We in the District Office thank you for your continued prayers, partnership, and financial support. We look forward to the opportunities this year to reach many for Jesus. We also are praying you continue to be in good health and good spirits through Him who strengthens us!

These pages include a summary of the FLGA District Financials for Year Ending, December 31, 2024.

## Overview:

Although the FLGA District fiscal year end was changed to December 31, 2024, congregational giving exceeded our 12-month budget of \$1.97 million. The District continues to operate with *no real debt* and all funds with donor restrictions are *fully funded*.

Expenses continue to be monitored closely as the missions of the District are funded according to the budgeted plan.

## Statement of Activities:

Unrestricted support from congregations totaled \$2,025,689. This is \$54,855 above the 12-month budget of \$1.97 million. Net assets released from restriction are related to funds set aside by donors for a specific purpose. Net assets released from restriction increased by \$326,000 compared to the prior 12-month year. This increase was due to the increase in disaster response funds released.

This increase is also related to the release of AMOs (Annual Measurable Objectives) within the Florida education system – restricted funds which did not occur in the

prior year. Net Assets are released from restriction at the time the purpose has been satisfied.

Restricted funds are not utilized to fund operating expenses and their usage can vary greatly from year to year. Convention, conferences and workshop revenue decreased by \$86,051 compared to the prior 12-month year due to District events such as the President's Equip Conference not occurring the current year.

Gifts, property for the current year, we saw the FLGA District transfer two properties to separate churches within the FLGA District for further development and mission work for a disposal of asset value of \$1.5 million.

Other income increased by \$50,781 as compared to the prior year as the District received more donations from other agencies and individuals.

Total expenses for year end 12/31/2024 were \$3,719,212 versus \$3,769,098 for FYE 2024, or a decrease of \$49,886. Keeping in mind we are comparing 12-months to 12 months; this was due to several factors: The decrease is attributable to congregational services programs which increased by \$120,647 which is the net result of a decrease in conference expenses along with an increase in the disbursement of disaster response grants. There was an increase in world and national missions programs as we distributed AMOs funds related to a property sale. Additionally, preparing church workers programs expense slightly decreased as we had only 12-months

of activity vs. 12-months in the prior year.

Mission and ministry support costs decreased by \$488,133 as we moved Lutheran LIFE publishing related costs to the congregational services program, and there were no synodical convention expenses which had occurred in the prior year.

A decreased cost of \$78,042 in ecclesiastical administration primarily related to less travel costs compared to prior year as well as switching year end to 12/31/2024 and only having 11-months of activity.

As always, we strive to be good stewards with the funds entrusted to us and work diligently to use them in a manner that meaningfully benefits and supports ongoing ministry.

In July, 2022, the FLGA District signed a new lease agreement beginning January 1, 2023, with our current landlord for a new space in our existing building located at Citadel near the Orlando International Airport. Currently, we have been informed by our landlord, we will most likely remain in our current Suite 500 for the remainder of our lease at the reduced rent.

During FYE 2024, we continued to fulfill our commitment to the Synod of 17% of all congregational giving for a total of \$353,462. We allocated \$61,000 or 3% of congregational giving towards the District Revitalization Fund, which helps underwrite District events such as the Pastors Conference, President's Equip Conference, and other District-wide events.

The change in net assets for the past 12 months decreased by \$1,454,070. This decrease was largely due to the transfer of those two properties to churches

# Financial Highlights

## December 31, 2024

within the District for future mission work.

Pelican Community Center and Lutheran Church in Naples, FL and Lake Oconee Lutheran Church receiving Milledgeville, GA property for use and expansion of mission work.

### 2025 Work Program

The highlights of the 2025 work program are as follows:

Congregational budgeted support remains the same at \$2,150,000. Through unanimous support of the Board of Directors, the budgeted tithe on congregational support received at the District remains set at 20%.

This is broken down into two components. Synod receives 17% of this support and the remaining 3% is budgeted to further fund District Revitalization efforts.

The missions budget continues to offer 0% mission loans through Kingdom Seed and Miracle Grow programs exclusively. The Missions budget also supports three campus ministries and eight other Lutheran Recognized Service Organizations (RSOs) (e.g., Lutheran Services Florida and Mission: Haiti), as well as taking care of various maintenance expenses at District owned property in Athens, GA, Milledgeville, GA, Fort Myers, FL, Tallahassee, FL and Naples, FL.

We believe this work program is within our current funding forecast and it continues to enable the District to serve, assist and encourage the congregations of the District in the ministry of Jesus Christ. The Board of Directors and District Staff continue to monitor expenses and will make necessary adjustments as required.

If you have any questions regarding this report, please feel free to contact me at the District office. I am always happy to answer any questions. May God continue to bless and keep you in His care. ✝

*Respectfully Submitted,*

*Laura Zirbel*



Laura E. Zirbel,  
Director of Finance & Administration  
lzirbel@flgadistrict.org  
Office: (407) 258-5053



## Ministry Targets



### Christian Identity

*Cultivate the Christian Identity of Every Disciple*

We will equip, empower, and engage workers and lay leaders to help individuals fully understand their Christian identity as disciples created, loved, redeemed, and sent by God.



### Healthy Ministry

*Support Church Workers and Leaders in Healthy Ministry*

We will equip, empower and engage workers and lay leaders in healthy ministry practices for self and others.



### Engage Community

*Help Congregations Engage Their Communities*

We will equip, empower, and engage workers and lay leaders to move beyond the church doors and become actively involved in their communities.



### Shared Purpose

*Foster a Sense of Shared District Identity*

We will equip, empower, and engage workers and lay leaders to align Florida-Georgia District congregations around the God-given culture of disciple-making.



# ANNUAL REPORT

## Missions

In the Florida-Georgia District, missions are rooted in prayer and powered by partnership. While congregations serve as God's local mission agencies to do the work of missions, the District comes alongside to encourage, equip, engage and resource. This reflects our commitment to **Healthy Ministry** and **Shared District Identity**. "You can do it – we can help" is not only the motto of the Home Depot, but also a motto of District Missions. We support **Christian Identity** by training and coaching of church planters, pastors, and everyday missionaries through programs like the Missionary Pathway, Visioning Workshops, and individual mentoring.

Through REV7:9, we **Engage Community** by equipping leaders to reach across cultures. Mission dollars fund efforts in Puerto Rico, Haiti, and throughout our District. Campus ministries in Athens, Tallahassee, and Estero, along with several RSOs and new worship starts, expand our reach. Outreach is strengthened through initiatives such as Kingdom Seed Investments and Miracle Grow grants, helping congregations launch new ministries, ethnic outreach, and micro-churches. Kingdom Seed Investments of up to \$10,000 were given to 13 congregations this past year. Miracle Grow Outreach grants of \$300 each were distributed to multiple congregations. Assisting with 5 new congregation and school starts/expansions further support our mission targets.

At the heart of it all is prayer—join us daily at 10:02 to pray for the harvest (Luke 10:02) as we seek God's blessing on His mission. Set your alarm and join your fellow District members in daily prayer for God's mission here! ✨



## Schools And Youth Ministry

School and Youth Ministry advances the mission of the Florida-Georgia District to connect people to Jesus through four key focus areas. First, it fosters **Christian Identity** by providing doctrinal training for teachers and helping students and youth learn Biblical truths and recognize their identity as redeemed children of God. Second, it promotes **Healthy Ministry** by supporting healthy workers. School and youth leaders are encouraged, uplifted, and supported in various ways, including training for school boards, encouraging strong church-school partnerships, and supporting worker wellness through the Ministerial Assistance Program. Third, it helps schools and youth programs **Engage the Community**, recognizing that only 12% of students are LCMS members. Through outreach, service projects, and programs like the Servant Event Camp for middle schoolers, the Gospel is shared in neighborhoods across the District. Lastly, it builds a shared **District Identity** by offering conferences and training events such as the Educators Conference, Youth Ministry Conference, Middle School Youth Gathering, and High School Leadership Event. ✨



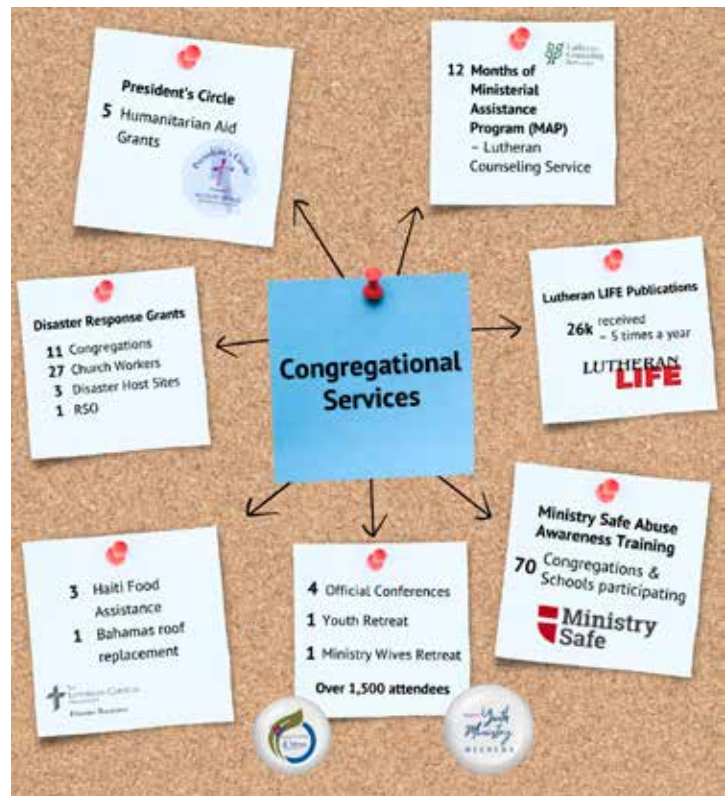


# ANNUAL REPORT

## Congregational Services

Congregational Services through the Florida-Georgia District supports mission work in our member congregations, as well as their members and communities. This program focuses on several mission targets. Through providing Disaster Response Grants and President Circle Grants to those affected by natural disasters and in financial crisis we prioritize our ministry targets of sustaining **Healthy Ministry** and **Engage the Community**.

This last year through partnership with LCMS \$800,000 of funds were distributed to those most in need of help during Hurricane Helene and Milton. Ministry Safe abuse awareness training furthers the focus on uplifting and sustaining **Healthy Ministry**. We also work to build our **Shared District Identity** by providing our free publication of Lutheran LIFE magazine to our congregations, and schools. Through our various conferences and workshops, we train, equip and empower attendees in our **Christian Identity** so that they may share the gospel with those around them. ✨



## Preparing Church Workers

Preparing Church Workers through the Florida-Georgia District focuses to support and create **Healthy Ministry** by providing various financial assistance options to qualified students and church workers. Every year students can apply for scholarship funds through the [flgadistrict.org](http://flgadistrict.org) website. A scholarship committee reviews applicants and approves grant dollars to support educational costs at the various Concordia learning institutions. The District supports qualified students' educational costs through the Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (EIIT) and Center for Hispanic Studies (CHS). Annually the Student Debt Repayment Program issues grant dollars to assist our qualified rostered church workers with funds to reduce educational debt as they are working in the Florida-Georgia District. Through these programs we can assist with the weight of debt that may be a result of an education with the goal of focusing on ministry work and less on financial matters. By assisting with the reduction of educational debt, the Florida-Georgia District works to advance the mission of creating health church worker which supports our mission of fostering **Healthy Ministry**. ✨

The Triennial 35th Convention of the FLGA District was held June 5-7, 2025 at the Embassy Suites Lake Buena Vista/Orlando.

During the three-day event, abundant business was conducted as well as worship and Bible study. The event opened Thursday evening with a communion service with The Rev. Matthew Harrison, President of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod serving as special guest preacher. Grace/Winter Haven, FL served as the host congregation with Grace's pastor, The Rev. Charles Reich, District VP serving as officiant and celebrant. The Rev. James Rockey read the Gospel and the lector was The Rev. Adolfo Borges, the convention chaplain.

Following worship, Opening Session I commenced in the convention hall with President Rockey introducing Convention Chairman, The Rev. Jay Winters, University/Tallahassee, FL along with Chaplain Borges and The Revs. Ken Green, Prince of Peace/Orlando, serving as the Judge of Elections and Greg Michael, Christus Victor/Athens, GA serving as the District Secretary. The Revs.



Pat O'Brien, First/Clearwater, FL and Brian Stolarczyk, Lutheran Church of the Cross/Port Charlotte, FL serving as dual Parliamentarians. O'Brien introduced the standing rules

# 35th Convention of the



to the delegates and guests and then President Rockey declared the convention open with a pounding of the official gavel.

Mr. Bill Gaik gave a brief report from the Convention Nominations Committee and Secretary Michael explained the procedures for nominations from the floor.

Mr. Jonathan Schultz, President of Concordia Publishing House brought greetings to the assembly with a short video. He is the ninth president of CPH.

President Rockey introduced the Triennial President's Report to the attendees before The Rev. Dr. Chad Lakies, North American Regional Director for Lutheran Hour Ministries gave a comprehensive report.

First Vice President of the FLGA District, The Rev. Dr. Victor Belton assumed leadership of Session I for the election of the FLGA District President. The Rev. James Rockey ran unopposed and was re-elected almost unanimously.

Regional caucuses were held around the convention facilities to elect the five regional vice presidents. Region I VP replacing Belton — who was not running — elected was The Rev. Jeffrey Jordan, Rivercliff/Sandy Springs, GA. He was elected to be 5th Vice President.

Region 2 VP, The Rev. Jay Winters, University/Tallahassee, FL ran unopposed and was elected 1st VP. Winters has served as Chairman of the Board for the FLGA District.

Region 3 VP, The Rev. Charles Reich, Grace/Winter Haven, FL was elected 3rd VP. He ran unopposed.

Region 4 VP, The Rev. David Brockhoff, Holy Trinity/Masaryktown, FL was elected 2nd VP. He ran unopposed.

Region 5 VP, The Rev. Scott Henze, St. Paul/Weston, FL was elected the 4th VP. He is replacing The Rev. Stephen Carretto who elected not to run again. Henze ran against The Rev. Richard Norris, Trinity/Lake Placid, FL.

During those regional caucuses, both the commissioned and lay representatives to the FLGA Board of Directors were elected. The results were Karen Cerny, from Region 1; Tracy Cripe and Debra Beck from Region 2; Sheryl DeWitt and Becky Hartman from Region 3. Jon Boeche and Tim Gerken from Region 4; and Stephen Bradshaw from Region 5.

After Chaplain Borges closed the business on Thursday with prayer, a President's reception was held in the hotel.

Friday morning business began at 8 a.m. with the assembly



Vinovskis

ratifying the new Board of Directors — the regional VPs and the commissioned and lay delegates. It was received by acclamation.

The Rev. Wally Vinovskis, President of the SELC/LCMS brought greetings before The Rev. Peter Lange, LCMS Vice President was



# Florida-Georgia District | LCMS

introduced. President Harrison interacted with the assembly answering questions.

Three Floor Committees were charged with bringing resolutions to the assembly for action. The Mission and Outreach Committee, chaired by Pastor Reich, presented Resolution 1-01-2025, "To Equip Disciples to Share Their Faith and Boldly Speak the Name of Jesus;" Resolution 1-02-2025A "To Encourage Church Multiplication as a Means of Making New Disciples;" Resolution 1-03-2025 "To Celebrate, Support and Expand Lutheran Schools as a Vital Means of Outreach;" and Resolution 1-04-2025 "To Offer the National Synod Mission and Ministry Emphases."

Several ministry guests were introduced, including The Rev. James and Dcs. Christel Neuendorf from Puerto Rico; Anne Dobbins from Mission: Haiti; Joseph Song from Stepping Stones Ministry; Keith Logan from Trinity/Hope; Dr. Rich Rudowske from Lutheran Bible Translators; Sheryl DeWitt from Redeeming Life Ministries; Julia Neimes from IRIS Lending Library for the Blind; Rev. Dean Pfeffer from the All Nations Cultural Commission; and Dcs. Elizabeth Borth, FLGA District LWML President.

Four Doulos tou Christou [Servant of Christ] Awards were presented during the convention (see sidebar).

The Floor Committee on Mercy/Life Together and Leadership was introduced by Chairman Victor Belton. Resolutions presented and discussed prior to being passed were Resolution 2-03-2025 "To Continue and Establish New Ministry to Next Generation Leaders in the FLGA District." Resolution 2-01-2025 "Dedicating Time at the Annual FLGA District Pastors Conference to Address the

Pastoral Shortage."

Resolution 2-02-2025 "Ensuring Pastoral Ministry in the LCMS During Times of Shortage." Resolution 2-05-2025A "To Reduce Restrictions on SMP Pastors." Resolution 2-04-2025A "To Encourage Ministry Sabbaticals for Church Workers."

Afternoon business included a presentation on Concordia University System by The Rev. Dr. Mark Braden and The Rev. Dr. Thomas Egger, representing both Concordia Seminary and Concordia Theological Seminary.

The Rev. Dr. Bill Harmon, LCMS Southeastern District President, served as both the Bible study leader and convention essayist.

The Rev. Dr. David Brockhoff, Chairman of the Floor Committee on Administration and Theology presented Resolution 3-01-2025 "To Increase Clarity in the Charter and Articles of Incorporation and the Bylaws;" Resolution 3-02-2025 "To Clarify Transitions of Officer;" Resolution 3-03-2025 "To Provide Clarity about Amendments to Resolutions;" Resolution 3-04-2025 "Regional Vice President Selection;" Resolution 3-05-2025 "To Provide Guidelines for Ecclesiastical Supervision in an Internet Age;" and Resolution 3-06-2025 "Support and Clarify the Prior Approval Process."

As with all floor committee business there was discussion from the floor by delegates. All of the resolutions were passed with overwhelming majority, though a few were tabled for future study.

Saturday's business sessions included a report by The Rev. Mark Eisold, FLGA Hispanic Ministry and Pastor at Pelican/Naples, FL.

Ms. Laura Zirbel, FLGA Executive Director for Finance and Administration and FLGA Treasurer, Rene Varga gave a

comprehensive financial report to the assembly. Varga is completing 13 years as District Treasurer and is termed out. She was honored from the stage and received a standing ovation from the assembly.



*Winters with Varga*

Closing worship included the installations of officers and directors for the FLGA District. The Rev. Christopher Esget, representing Synod as the 5th VP, installed FLGA District President, James Rockey. ✝



*President Rockey installs the five VPs*



*Rev. Christopher Esget installs President Rockey*



*President Rockey with wife Martha and daughter, son-in-law Elizabeth and Peter Robbins*

# 35th Convention Floor Committee Membership

## Floor Committee 1

Missions and Outreach

Chair: Rev. Charles Reich

Members: Mrs. Deb Beck; Mr. Steven Bell; Mr. Stephen Bradshaw  
Mrs. Becky Hartmann; Mr. John List; Mrs. Tamie Worthington;  
Staff: Rev. Dr. Peter Meier.

## Floor Committee 2

Mercy/Life Together and

Leadership – Chair: Rev. Dr.

Victor Belton; Members: Mrs. Michele Branham; Mrs. Karen Cerny; Rev. Stephen Carretto; Mrs. Sheryl DeWitt; Mrs. Jody Schweichler; Mrs. Nancy Volz;  
Staff: Mrs. Jennifer Tanner & Mr. Jay Wendland.

## Floor Committee 3

Administration and Theology

Chair: Rev. Dr. David Brockhoff

Members: Mr. Jon Boeche; Mr. Tracy Cripe; Mr. Gary Engel; Mrs. Lori Lee Joerz; Mr. Bob Kirklin; Mrs. Renee Varga;  
Staff: Mrs. Laura Zirbel



*FLGA 35th Convention Planning Committee gathered for a group photo the day before opening for business.*



*President James Rockey installs the Circuit Visitors for the circuits of the FLGA District. They are (in circuit order numerically), 1. Northeast Georgia Rev. Dave Wesche; 2. Atlanta North Rev. Daniel Brammeier; 3. Atlanta South Rev. Wilton Heyliger; 4. East Central GA Rev. Andrew Howe 5. Tallahassee Rev. Bert Matlock; 6. First Coast Rev. Patrick McKenzie 7. North Central Florida Rev. Jeffrey Shanks; 8. Space Coast (Vacant) 9. Orlando East Rev. John Hohe; 10. Orlando West Rev. Marc Kappel; 11. Winter Haven Rev. Ron Pennekamp; 12. Heartland Rev. Scott McLean; 13. Suncoast Rev. James Zang; 14. St. Petersburg Rev. Pat O'Brien; 15. Tampa Rev. Kevin Yoakum; 16. Sarasota Rev. Dr. Brian Stolarczyk; 17. Southwest Rev. Keith Lingsch; 18. Treasure Coast (Vacant); 19. South Palm Beach Rev. Jacob Roedsens; 20. Gold Coast (Vacant); 21. Monroe-Miami-Dade Rev. Tony Mandile.*



*The Rev. Charles Reich, Third VP of the District, served as officiant and celebrant for opening worship, devotion leader for closing worship as well as chairman of floor committee #1.*

*At right, The Rev. Stephen Carretto, Outgoing Region 5 VP, receives applause from the assembly for his past service to the Board of Directors and Presidium.*



*Members of the assembly pause for prayer prior to one of the votes.*





Enjoying fellowship at the 35th Convention were, from left, The Revs. Tom Eggebrecht/LCEF; Bill Harmon, Southeastern District President; James Rockey; Bishop Charles Bameka, National Presiding Bishop Lutheran Church of Uganda; Greg Walton, Grace Place Wellness; Wally Vinovskis, SELC President; Peter Meier, retiring FLGA District Executive Director for Missions.



Mrs. Michelle Branham presented one of Floor Committee #2 "Mercy/Life Together and Leadership" Resolutions.



Pastor Jay and Julie Dass, The Lutheran Confessional Church of Pakistan – a mission project to establish a Biblical Lutheran Church body in the capital city of Islamabad, Pakistan— brought greetings to the assembly. Behind them are, from left, Rev. Keith Lingsch Grace/Naples; Rev Paul Meseke and Mr. David Koch.



The Rev. Bill Harmon, President Southeastern District, served as essayist and Bible study leader. Meridith Swanson, retiring Communications Specialist, takes a moment to hug one of the Comfort Dogs from Lutheran Church Charities.



Meschac St. Amour, Executive Director for Habitat For Children Ministries, Inc. Treasure Coast at his exhibition.



Tony Hunt, LCMS Foundation Gift Planning Counselor addresses the assembly.

## Convention Ingathering Lutheran Church of Uganda



The Convention Ingathering & Offering collected more than 6,000 pounds of supplies on eight pallets that were shipped off to the Lutheran Church of Uganda. The pallets included books, bibles, music, banners, communion ware, sanctuary decor. The materials are expected to arrive in Uganda in December. The convention offering totalled \$5,538.00 which was also distributed to the LCU.

In photo above from left, Steve Kranz, director of facilities and services for the Rafiki Foundation, Larry Zirbel, volunteer, Laura Zirbel, FLGA Director of Finance & Administration, Bishop Charles Bameka, Lutheran Church of Uganda, Greg Walton, President Emeritus, FLGA District and VP Ministry Solutions for Grace Place Wellness, Edith Walton, volunteer, Peter Meier, FLGA retiring Executive Director of Mission, Stephen Maxwell, Our Savior Lutheran, McKinney, Texas.

# 2025 Dulos tou Christo Award Recipients Announced



Among the enduring FLGA District Convention traditions is the presentation of the prestigious

Doulos tou Christo — Servant of Christ — award to an Ordained Minister of Religion, a Commissioned Minister of Religion, and a layperson. This year's recipients includes two couples — Mr. & Mrs. Joel Mathews of the District's Lutheran Early Response Team, and Pastor Benito Pérez López and Deaconess Jessie Pérez — who

## *Joel & Kathy Mathews FLGA District Lutheran Early Response Team*

Mr. & Mrs. Joel and Kathy Mathews have been active in disaster responses since 2004 — serving across multiple U.S. states in roles ranging from volunteers to response managers. They are both certified LERT trainers and frequent



presenters at LCMS Disaster Response Conferences. Joel is a retired Master Sergeant with 26 years in law enforcement. Joel began disaster work after

Hurricane Andrew in 1992. His training includes Homeland Security, Incident Command, and chainsaw safety. He has trained hundreds in chainsaw handling and currently chairs the Board of Florida-Georgia Lutheran Early Response and RSO of the LCMS. Joel has also served his church in various positions of leadership including congregation president, elder, and disaster team leader.

Kathy retired from a 25-year career in sales administration and became involved in disaster response after the 2004 hurricanes in Florida. She's also active in church ministries, serving as a youth ministry leader, handbell choir member, a certified LERT trainer and providing volunteer support for LCMS-LERT database systems

## *Mr. Jon Peterson, FLGA District Accreditation Council Commissioner*

Mr. Jon Peterson has been a District Accreditation Council Commissioner since the early 1990s. His leadership has ensured that LCMS congregations and schools in the



FLGA District maintain high standards of academics and spiritual formation.

Since Jon's first site visit in 1992, he has been on more than 50 accreditation

teams. Next year he will retire as Middle School Principal at Grace/Winter Haven, FL. In the great Lutheran tradition, he won't entirely retire. He'll continue to carry on as a Commissioner for the FLGA DAC. Jon has the unique ability to get things done with gentleness and love because Jon leads with love . . . love for his family, Love for school ministry, love for bringing order and excellence to our Lutheran schools through the accreditation process.

## *William Alan Sielk, San Pablo Apostol & St. Paul Lutheran/Miami FL*

The Rev. Alan Sielk is married to Norma with two children: Nathan & Hannah. He is an excellent and caring pastor, a shepherd who makes himself available to his people and to the community.



He has served 40 years at parishes and vacancies in the Texas District — since 2002 in Miami. He has served as Circuit Visitor and a collaborator

and team player, a true AlongSider. He is rarely seen without a smile on his face. He has a zeal for the Gospel and a true servant heart. Pastor Sielk serves both the English and Spanish congregation at St. Paul. He is an evangelist and a church planter, carrying on ministry at Pinewoods Villa since Trinity Lutheran closed a year ago. He trains new workers in the harvest — vicars, pre-seminary students, serves on Lutheran Services of Florida's Board of Directors and is an LWML Pastoral Counselor.



have been heavily involved in a wide range of FLGA District and LCMS Synod ministries.

The Rev. Alan Sielk was presented to the assembly by The Rev. Dr. Peter Meier, retiring FLGA District Executive Director for Missions. Mr. Jon Peterson was introduced by Ms. Jennifer Tanner, FLGA Executive Director for School and Youth Ministries. Joel and Katy Mathews from the District's Lutheran Early Response Team was presented by Mr. Jay Wendland, LCEF District VP & FLGA

District Disaster Response Coordinator. Pastor Benito and Deaconess Jesse Pérez López were unable to attend. Their presentation was bestowed by the Rev. Alan Sielk, pastor at San Pablo Aposol and St. Paul Lutheran Church in Miami, FL.

One of the Dulos tou Christo awards was given posthumously at the last convention to the Rev. David Brighton, pastor at Mount Calvary/Warner Robins, GA and a District Vice President. Brighton had also been Chairman of the Board of Directors for the FLGA District.



## *Benito Pérez López & Jessie Pérez | Center For Hispanic Studies | FLGA District Church Planters*

The Rev. Rev. Benito Pérez López has been married to Deaconess Jessie for 54 years. They arrived in the United States in 1980 where Benito served as a handyman from for six years. Together they were confirmed in 1981 at San Mateo Lutheran Church in Little Havana (Miami, FL) by Rev. Eugene Gruell where Benito served as an usher.

In 1981 they both graduated college — Benito in architectural drawing, (Magna Cum Laude), from Garces Commercial College in Miami, and Jesse in Cosmetology, also in Miami. Jessie holds a Bachelor of Science and Literature degree from Cuba.



From 1985 to 1991, the family joined St. Pablo Mission (Church Planter), with Rev. Alvey Yates. Benito was president of the Hispanic group, and Jessie was president of the Hispanic ladies group.

From 1987 to 1995, Jessie and Benito joined the Hispanic Institute of Theology, later renamed the Center for Hispanic Studies, part of the Concordia Seminary of Saint Louis MO. From 1991 to 1992, Jessie and Benito (Certified Lay Workers) were called to Prince of Peace/Hollywood, FL during the vacancy left by Dr. Alberto Garcia while awaiting the arrival of the new Pastor, William Miller.

District President, The Rev. Dr. Thomas Zehnder, authorized Benito to preach the Word and Sacrament exclusively at Prince of Peace. Jessie also was in charge of children, youth and clerical matters.

From 1992 to 1994, Benito and Jessie served with Rev. David Mueller at Concordia/Miami, FL. Together they began an Hispanic ministry; Benito

mentored four students at the Hispanic Institute of Theology (TEE). They hosted the radio program “En Confianza” under the auspices of Christ for All Nations (Lutheran Hour Ministries).

In 1995, Jessie was commissioned as a deaconess at Concordia/Miami and Benito was ordained and installed as a mission developer for the Homestead/Florida City area of Greater Miami.

In 1995, The Revs. Robert Scudieri and William Reagan along with Benito helped the Lutheran Synod of Mexico establish its mission statement, values, and mission. During that time Benito completed the 4-Unit Clinical Pastoral Education (extended program) at Jackson Memorial Hospital of Miami. Also in 1995, the couple rented the facilities of Saint Andrews/Homestead where Jessie continues to serve as Deaconess at Hospital del Alma Lutheran Church and where Benito has served as an instructor in the TEE program for Concordia Seminary.

Benito also serves as Coordinator and Visiting Professor of the Center for Hispanic Studies at Concordia Seminary for the FLGA District. He has participated in the training of pastors and deaconesses in Lake Worth, Tampa, Bonita Springs, and Miami.

In 1996, he was elected President of the LCMS National Hispanic Conference, which during his term as President was successfully changed to the LCMS National Hispanic Convention – a gathering of Latino congregations, institutions, missions, and ministries within the LCMS. It aims to foster the growth and support of the Lutheran Hispanic community within the Synod. The convention is organized by the Hispanic Missionary League and includes opportunities for worship, learning, and fellowship.

Other accomplishments by Benito include in 1996, participation in the

First Church Planter Institute in LCMS, Concordia University/Bronxville, NY; in 1997, Open Arm Workshop (Open a Church with a Day Care) invited by Rev. Dr. Robert Scudieri and Rev. Gerald Seaman; in 1998, coach of four pastors in the FL-GA District Concordia/Irvine, CA.

While Jessie's service includes Staff Chaplain at Miami Children's Hospital, Benito began serving in 1998 (to present) as Relief Chaplain at Miami Children's Hospital. Jessie currently serves as the Chaplain at Baptist Hospital of Miami and Hospital del Alma Lutheran Church.

In 2006 both Benito and Jessie received their Master of Divinity degrees from the Florida Center for Theological Studies in Miami. Jessie also became a Certified Specialized Pastoral Ministry/ Specialized Care Ministry, LCMS.

Other areas where the couple serve or have served includes: Association of Professional Chaplain Certified Board; Working Priest at Hospital del Alma Lutheran Church/Leisure City, FL; Guest instructora at the Center for Hispanic Studies at Concordia Saint Louis Seminary and at the Church of Paraguay for deaconess candidates; Chaplain for VITAS Hospice; Certified Specialized Pastoral Ministry (SPM now Specialized Care Ministry), LCMS.

In 2020 they began broadcasting on Facebook, Instagram, Spotify, YouTube, and WhatsApp. They have moved into their own buildings with Day Care at the Hospital del Alma Lutheran Church through a loan from LCEF. They also celebrated the dedication of the new church building by then District President, The Rev. Dr. Gerhard Michael, Jr. The couple is currently in the process of retiring as chaplains at (Benito) VITAS & Miami Children's and (Jessie) Baptist Hospital of Miami.

# Dr. Peter Meier Enters "Refirement"

The Rev. Dr. Peter Meier has officially entered into "refirement" — as he so eloquently described the launch of his retirement from the Florida-Georgia District as Executive Director of Missions and Outreach. Meier's official start date with the District was February 1, 2020.

Dr. Meier came to the FLGA District from the Center for U.S. Missions — where he served as Executive Director. Before joining the Center in 2013, Meier served in the Minnesota South District as Executive Assistant to the President (2005-2006) and Assistant to the President for Missions (2005-2013).

Meier also served from 1982-2005 as Senior Pastor of Zion Lutheran Church and School in Mayer, MN. Peter received his undergraduate degree from Concordia Teachers College/ River Forest, IL in 1978, and his Master of Divinity from Concordia Theological Seminary/Fort Wayne, IN in 1982. His Doctor of Ministry degree was granted in 2011 by Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne. Peter's research and doctoral thesis was on the topic of missional leadership in Lutheran schools.

Peter met his wife Kathy at Concordia River Forest; they were married in 1979. Kathy earned her Masters Degree in Special Education from Concordia/St. Paul, MN in 2009 and served as Coordinator at the Center for US Missions beginning in 2013. The couple is blessed with three married children and six very active grandchildren. Their three adult children attended without their spouses and tied the weekend into Father's Day. Daughter, Jennifer, brought grandson Victor along.

The FLGA District feted Dr. Meier and Kathy at a Refirement Dinner in Orlando on Friday, June 13, 2025. Debbie Arrington, Peter's Executive Assistant, coordinated the evening — attended by 50 family members and friends. Peter and Kathy's three children, along with grandson Victor, also attended and told of the passion their parents had growing up in a mission environment. Toasts and roasts were delivered by President Emeritus, The Rev. Dr. Greg Walton, The Rev. David Dahlke and Dan Reichard. Debbie Arrington also underscored the energy, enthusiasm and work ethic Peter Meier brought to his position these past five years.✝



The Peter & Kathy Meier Family



The Dessert



President James Rockey welcomed the guests and gave opening prayer



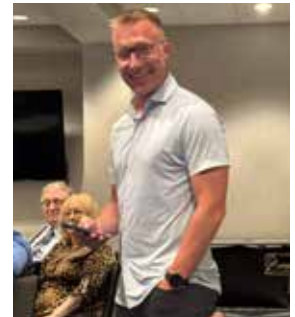
Kathy Meier in prayer prior to the meal of Chicken Marsala



Dan Reichard talked of Nona Hope and church planting with Peter



Peter & Kathy's Children, David Meier, Jennifer & Victor Smith, Daniel Meier



Greg Walton brought more of a "roast" than a "toast" to the evening



David Dahlke spoke of Peter's mentorship in the areas of missions



Debbie Arrington underscored Peter being "all about mission!"



## Epiphany/Tallahassee Celebrates 75th Anniversary

For 75 years **Epiphany/Tallahassee, FL** has been blessed mightily by God and the path He has chosen for the congregation. Through our church services, adult education, youth programs, preschool, outreach, and many diverse ministries they continue to strive to live their vision with God's help to make lifelong, committed followers of Jesus, Here, There, & Everywhere. Pictured at the celebration are L-R: Rev. Tim Barber, FLGA District President James Rockey, with former pastors, Rev. Chuck Kosberg with wife, Beth, and Rev. Richard Boyd. ✝



## Grace/Naples Bids Farewell To Vicar James



**Grace/Naples, FL** held a farewell luncheon for Vicar James Gramzow, his wife, Jill, and son, Peter. They will be returning to Concordia Theological Seminary/Fort Wayne, IN. James is a Concordia University/Seward, NE graduate with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Music, with an emphasis on Church Music. While at Seward, he was active in the Pre-Seminary Program and sang in the University's A Cappella Choir. "Thanks to everyone who came to show their love and support for Vicar and his family. They have been a delightful blessing to Grace Lutheran and we know God will bless their ministry," offered The Rev. Keith Lingsch. Vicar James is shown leading the luncheon prayer. ✝

The Rev. Adam Gray (SMP) was ordained as the Associate Pastor of **Holy Trinity/Kingsland, GA**, on Sunday, May 18. Pictured are The Revs. Joel Meyer, (from left) Adam Gray, Jay Winters, Nathan McCarty. ✝



St. Matthews Lutheran church's leadership was starting to get a bit anxious about a trend that they noticed. It was harder to ignore the decline in worship and offerings. In their shock and panic they were starting to throw out ideas about what they could do to fix it.

Jessica wanted to start a food pantry. Howard wanted to get a youth leader and build a gym – if they could find the money. Blanche, her husband Joey and a few of the others thought the best thing to draw a crowd was to get some guitar players and spice up the worship service with more contemporary worship.

of intentional follow up is there? Is there a clear pathway for people to grow in their faith?

"Are there any orientation, classes and ways people can get plugged in to serve right away? Or are they just supposed to attend church? Is member care just left to the pastor and his memory along with the secretary or is there a systematic way for the body of Christ to provide prayer support, visitation, driving to doctors, food and so on?"

"How about the website and social media? What about other kinds of online promotion and



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561-542-4472

Then as for worship Bob asked, "I'm wondering if instead of some trendy worship we will want to commit each of these things to prayer on Sunday and throughout the week and maybe even preach about them."

By now everyone was looking down because most of what Bob had questioned, they weren't doing. They all mumbled as



## Questions Church Leaders Should Be Asking

Then the newest member, Bob, started talking. He said, "I know I'm new around here I wonder is it ok if I ask some questions?" They all said sure. Then he said, "I understand the sense of worry about the budget and paying the light bill and the pastor's salary too. I also understand the temptation to look for some way to attract people. Yet, before we go there, I'd like to ask about some things I'm not so sure about."

With that Bob went through a list of questions about how they do certain things . . . because he is so new. He asked, "What do you do for first time guests? What kind

follow up, especially for Christmas, Easter and other quarterly or annual events?"

"Is there a team to take care of all of these things and do it well? Are the current leaders engaging in an intentional apprentice process to grow the next generation and broaden participation?"

"As for finances, how transparent is your budget and expenses? Do you have an annual stewardship process for financial giving and a specific invitation to people to share their God-given talents as an act of worship and discipleship?"

much in reply to Bob's rhetorical questions. Then Bob thought out loud. "I'm wondering how we can try some big new idea when the foundation of standard menu items of a healthy church aren't in place yet." Then he concluded, "what do you guys think?"

What do you think? ✝

*Rev. Scott Gress is a Professional Certified Coach and believes in Growing People for Ministry with a focus on leadership, discipleship and teamwork. Contact Scott if you or your congregation are interested in working with him. You can contact Scott through email [scottgress@me.com](mailto:scottgress@me.com) or his blog page [scottgress.com](http://scottgress.com) or directly at 561-542-4472.*



# Together *In Faith*

God's blessings to all attending the  
LCMS Youth Gathering  
from the Florida-Georgia District!

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a proud sponsor of the 2025 LCMS  
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**Contact your LCEF District  
Vice President or visit  
[lcef.org](https://lcef.org) to learn more!**



**Jay Wendland**  
District Vice President  
Florida-Georgia District  
[jay.wendland@lcef.org](mailto:jay.wendland@lcef.org)  
407-258-5041

*Save The Date!*

# Fall 2025 Pastor's Conference Announced



The 2025 FLGA District Pastors Conference will be held September 22-24, 2025 at the Hilton Daytona Beach Oceanfront Resort. The Conference will be developed from the bible verse of JOHN 7 under the theme "Rivers Through the Rubble: Thirsting for More in a Broken World."

The keynote speakers are Leo Sánchez, Professor of Systematic Theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis and Chad Lakies, North America Regional Director for Lutheran Hour Ministries.

"Drs. Sánchez and Lakies will unfold our theme with a focus on the work of the Holy Spirit within each of us and through our works of ministry . . . knowing your story, knowing the power of the Holy Spirit, and knowing your 'sphere of influence,'" explains The Rev. Dave Wesche, chairman of the conference. "We will be challenged with the questions, 'How do we as the Church approach theology in a Post-Christian Culture?' and 'How do we embody the Sanctified Life to be attentive to our neighbor's needs?'"

Wesche went on to explain as we wrestle with our theological understanding, we will be taken further into its practical implications . . . "A Winsome Witness in an Age Where the Church is Not Trusted." How do we notice the cracks that need to be engaged/repaid? How does our life make faith plausible to "outsiders"? It begins with an appropriate understanding of Vocation, not only as a pastor, but also to equip our parishioners to realize their purpose and fulfillment of life and faith in the Kingdom work of bringing in and making disciples.

Three 45-minute Breakout Sessions will supplement either our need to be filled with more or to slake the thirst of those who are "sitting by the wells" of our specific communities. These sessions will satisfy your need of a quiet place by still waters, renewal of refreshment in the Spirit's flowing river, or preparation for your return

into the wilderness of ministry.

"We again are excited to include a special venue for the Pastors' Wives with a lunch gathering and specifically-designed sessions during the Breakout time. We are also adding a designated space for Mothers with Kids – which will be a place of interaction for the kids and respite for moms to share time together," Wesche concludes.

Additional information will be forthcoming via the District Office and its various media platforms and the next issue of Lutheran LIFE. These announcements will include information on conference and

hotel registration, schedule, updates on breakout leaders, and other necessary logistics for a great time of walking alongside one another as Jesus quenches our thirst for mission and ministry. ✝

**JOHN 7:37b-38:** Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of His heart will flow rivers of living water.'"



## 2025 Pastors Conference

**THIRSTING FOR MORE  
IN A BROKEN WORLD**

**September 22-24, 2025 • Daytona Beach, FL**



The Rev. Dr. Leopoldo A. Sánchez is Professor of Systematic Theology and the Werner R.H. Krause and Elizabeth Ringger Krause Professor of Hispanic Ministries at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. His research interests include the Holy Spirit, sanctification, Trinitarian theology, theologies of migration, and the intersection of theology and Hispanic cultures. In 2016, Sanchez was awarded a prestigious Sabbatical Grant for Researchers from The Louisville Institute. Sanchez regularly teaches in the U.S. and abroad. In the community, Sanchez is Principal Double-Bass player with the St. Louis Civic Orchestra.



The Rev. Dr. Chad Lakies is the regional director for North America at Lutheran Hour Ministries and provides leadership and operational management for the North America region. His primary area of scholarship is the intersection of church and culture in the North Atlantic world. He regularly speaks at national and international conferences for pastors, church professionals, and scholars and has published in several journals on the topic of faith and culture. Lakies most recently served as Department Chair and Associate Professor of Religion at Concordia University, Portland. He and his wife Bethany live with their two daughters in St. Peters, MO.



# Why is VBS Such Serious Fun?

Why is VBS such serious fun? The fun part is easy. First of all, it's for kids, and kids are just plain fun to be around. They are also sponges who soak in all that they can. And then there's the crafts, the colors, the décor, the fun music with motions and everything in between. Yes, VBS is a blast!

But what makes VBS also serious? I'll start with a story. When my brother-in-law was a boy, someone asked his family if they would like to come to Vacation Bible School. They did, and from that something wonderful happened. His family got connected, and they started coming to church.

Church and God became such an integral part of my brother-in-law's life that he became a Lutheran educator. His family got connected to Jesus – the most important thing that can happen to anyone.

Quite a few years ago I had a girl named Heather in my VBS class. I was teaching 5th grade that year. God blessed us with many great discussions about Himself, salvation, and how to spend forever with Him. We were discussing MARK 16:16 which says, *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned."* Heather – who was visiting Florida at the time to see her father – was concerned because she believed but had not been baptized yet but wanted to be. She asked if she died, would she go to heaven?

I explained that yes, she would, because she believed, but that it would be good to follow that up with baptism, and we discussed the reasons why. She was relieved to hear that. VBS ended, and a couple days later I got a call from my pastor that Heather had died; she had died in her sleep from a heart problem that no one knew about. He then went on to say that Heather was in 4th grade; she shouldn't have been in my 5th grade class in the first place. I was shocked by it all – but totally humbled to see how God had laid it all out – humbled that He had chosen little old me to possibly be the last one to share spiritual truths with her, spiritual truths that mattered for eternity.

But isn't that what it's all about? It's about little old you and little old me being chosen by the God of the universe to share spiritual truths with those who don't know Him or those who are young in their faith.

Every single day He lays out those opportunities right in front of us. In the Great Commission in MATTHEW 28:19 He tells us to *go and make disciples of all nations*. That's you and that's me who He is talking to, and He gifts us in different ways to do that. I am always amazed at how our VBS comes together like a well-oiled machine – the oil of the Holy Spirit that is.

I am always amazed at how our preschool crew reaches the little children with all that they do; that area is not where God has gifted me. I am always blown away at how our kitchen crew can cook dinner for 100 people or more five days in a row; that is not where I am gifted.



Becky Hartmann is a member of Hope Lutheran Plant City, FL and the FLGA District representing Region #3 [bhartmann3@verizon.net](mailto:bhartmann3@verizon.net)

I am thankful to be able to lead our middle/high school class for VBS; that is where I find great joy. Those are just a few examples. Our whole VBS comes together because God places us in the areas where we are gifted, and He oils up the VBS machine with His Holy Spirit to make it run well.

So why is VBS such serious fun? Because it is about eternal truths. It is a chance to creatively connect people to Jesus with these truths. My prayer is that those same eyes that are looking at me so intently when we are talking about God and heaven and how to get there will be the same eyes looking at me when I am someday walking the streets of heaven. Oh God, may You work in the hearts of those we encounter this summer in VBS so that we may share in eternity together – because forever is a really long time! ✝





# FLORIDA GEORGIA

*Out and About in the District*

## Redeemer Celebrates Nine Baptisms

**Redeemer/Stuart, FL** held a chapel service focused on baptism which included nine students and parents being baptized. Redeemer's Pastors and Director of Christian Outreach went into the classrooms for several months talking about baptism – which led to these families meeting with Pastor Stan Allen to learn more and be baptized. At the end of the chapel everyone in the church received party blowers to celebrate! ✝



## Good Shepherd Celebrates National Day of Prayer



On May 1st, **Good Shepherd/Sarasota, FL** participated in National Day of Prayer, and had each classroom create a prayer chain. The students and teachers went outside to the circle on their campus and took a photo with the whole student body joined in prayer. ✝







Since 2013, **Abiding Savior/Gainesville, FL** has packaged more than 850,000 meals for the food insecure throughout their community. On Saturday, April 26, Abiding Savior held its annual Meals of Hope food packaging event. More than 100 enthusiastic volunteers packaged 40,000 meals between 9 a.m and 1 p.m. Volunteers from all over the community including the Buchholz High School girls lacrosse team, girl scouts, preschool families and church members participated. Bread of the Mighty will distribute the meals to families, children and seniors in need in the North Central Florida region. ✝



The Ladies of **Trinity/Athens, GA** prepared 120 bouquets of flowers for mothers living in various nursing homes in the Athens area. This has been a tradition/mission of Trinity for the past 20 years. ✝



## Faith/Hialeah Celebrates James Tino's Installation

With much anticipation the congregation at **Faith/Hialeah FL** received word that The Rev James C. Tino accepted the call to be their pastor. This news is a blessing for the FLGA District, Circuit 21, and especially all the saints at Faith.

Gathered to celebrate are The Revs. (from left to right) front row: Luis Santana, Enrique Orozco, James Tino, Jeff Johnson, and Alan Sielk. Back row: Esteban Mesa, Scott Gress, Eliexer Ramirez, Anthony Mandile, Tony Durante, Dennis Bartels, Jeff Wilhelm, and Scott Henze.

Pastor Tino, formerly from Peace/Sandusky, MI, was installed on May 4, 2025. Rev. Anthony Mandile (CV) performed the rite of installation. "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.



Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send our laborers into his harvest." (Lk:10:2). We

praise Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for granting our petitions on behalf of the saints at Faith/Hialeah. ✝



A sold-out audience once again enjoyed **St John/Ocala, FL's** annual dinner theater. They were treated to a delicious meal as well as the original comedy "The Party Room" written by Pastor Jeff Shanks. The performance consisted of 13 youth and 9 adults actors and actresses and raised funds for the National Youth Gathering and Alaska Mission Team. On May 18, they celebrated the confirmation of five youth. The service began with Joclyn being baptized and then all five Bennet, Elsa, Julia and Sydney and Joclyn reading their statements of faith and sharing in the gifts of Holy Communion for the first time. Pictured below is Senior Pastor Jeff Shanks with Joclyn and, at right, Shanks with Pastor Timothy Mehl (back row right) and Family Life Director Anette Shanks (front left) with the students.



CHURCH & MINISTRY  
ALLIANCE

## LEGAL GUIDANCE FOR CHURCHES & MINISTRIES

The ADF Church & Ministry Alliance is an affordable membership program designed to ensure churches and ministries can operate, teach, and serve in accordance with God's call.

Through legal guidance and practical resources, we equip you to confidently pursue your mission:

- ✓ Legal Support
- ✓ Resources & Education
- ✓ News & Insights
- ✓ Community Building
- ✓ Constituent Support

We are excited to partner with the FLGA District. Through this partnership, we are offering a discounted membership rate to FLGA District churches and ministries. Use one of the codes below to receive 20% off.

Churches: **LCMSdistrict**  
Ministries: **LCMSdistrictMA**

[JoinADF.com/LCMS](http://JoinADF.com/LCMS)





# Peter Pan Flies at Boca Raton Stage, 30+ Baptisms Celebrated



Peter Pan is one of the most beloved and frequently performed family favorites of all time. This high-flying Tony Award-winning musical has been performed around the world.

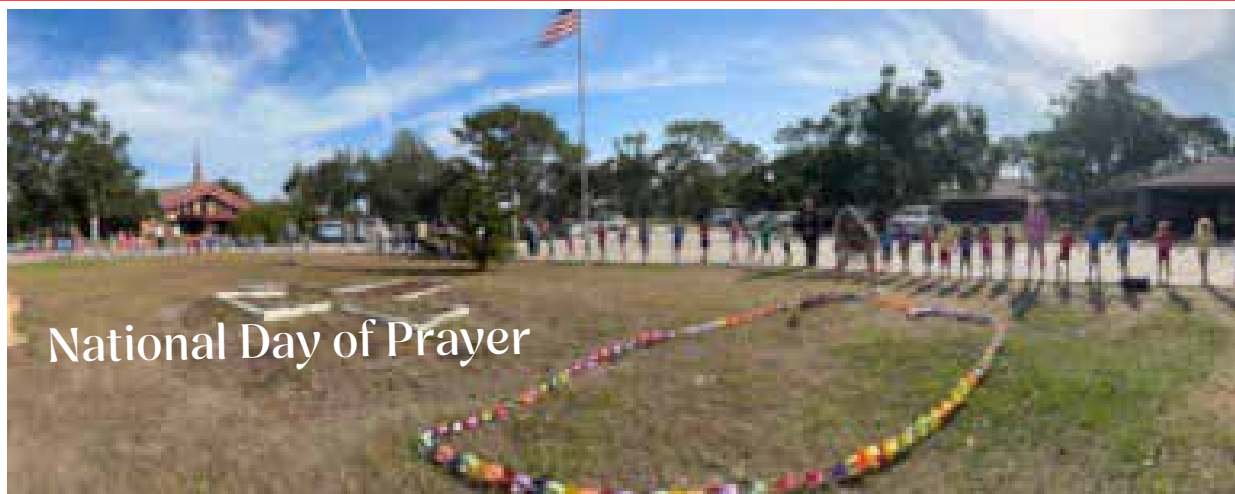
**St. Paul/Boca Raton, FL** students presented two performances on May 16th where Peter and his mischievous fairy sidekick, Tinkerbell, visit the nursery of the Darling children late one night and, with a sprinkle of pixie dust, begin a magical journey across the stars that none of them will ever forget.

Featuring the iconic songs, "I'm Flying," "I've Gotta Crow," "I Won't Grow Up" and "Never Never Land," and a rousing book full of magic, warmth and adventure, Peter Pan Jr. was a success with amazing costumes and set design. The musical was directed by St. Paul's music teacher extraordinaire, Ms. Rebecca Schaffer.

On Easter Tuesday during St. Paul's morning chapel service, Pastor Steve Carretto performed seven baptisms. (below at left). Since the beginning of the school year, Pastor Carretto has baptized more than 30 individuals — many of them St. Paul school students and many from the surrounding community. ✝



On May 1, 2025, **Good Shepherd/ Sarasota, FL** students participated in the National Day of Prayer and had each classroom create a prayer chain. They circled the entire campus. ✝



National Day of Prayer

# St. Michael Celebrates Three New Ministers

On Sunday, April 27th, the voters assembly of **St. Michael/Fort Myers, FL** extended two Divine Calls: the first Call to Mr. Dan Maser for Principal of St. Michael Lutheran School, and the second Divine Call to The Rev. Dr. Roy Peterson as Associate Pastor and Chief Financial Officer.

Both Divine Calls were accepted.

Mr. Maser is a graduate of Concordia/St. Paul, MN and has a Masters Degree from the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, MN. He has been an educator and Principal in Minnesota for more than 20 years.

Dr. Peterson, a well-known clergyman within the national LCMS church body, has served in multiple positions at Concordia University/Wisconsin, including Senior Vice President of Advancement, Chief Financial Officer and Vice President of Economic Development. He also served as board chairman and president of the Concordia University Foundation while being active with CU Ventures, an organization affiliated principally with the multiple universities of the Concordia University System. Established initially at Concordia University Wisconsin, the purpose is to provide a conduit to promulgate ideas, concepts,



*Dan Maser*

inventions and products that can develop into viable business opportunities ultimately benefiting the missions of our entrepreneurial founders, investors and university partners.

Most recently Peterson has served as Senior Ministry Advancement Counselor for Lutheran Hour Ministries, working remotely. His career started in the financial markets and that led to starting his own firm with a colleague. After ten years of successful growth, he sold his interest in order to attend the seminary and become a Lutheran pastor.



*Roy Peterson*



*Sam Morganstern*

Prior to coming to Concordia Wisconsin, Peterson served a large, growing congregation in a Milwaukee suburb for almost ten years. He holds advanced degrees, including an MBA in finance and a Doctor of Ministry, the highest professional degree in pastoral ministry offered by seminaries within the LCMS. St. Michael is also welcoming a DCE Intern, Sam Morganstern, joining them from Concordia University/Irvine, CA. His ministry focus will be Jr. and Sr. High Youth. ✝

## Winter Haven Receives 2025-2026 Vicar

**Grace/Winter Haven, FL** is thrilled to announce they have been selected for a new vicar in 2025-2026. They'll be welcoming Stephen Moore, pictured here



with his mom and dad, Pastor Charles Reich and Grace Congregational President Dr. Ken Rogers.

The previous vicar in 2023-24, Mark Esser, received a call as Pastor to New Thing Lutheran Church in Towson, Maryland. NewThing is a church plant between First Lutheran and Concordia Prep School in Towson, MD., and is part of the Southeastern District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. ✝



*Mark Esser*





**St Paul/Weston, FL** had the ultimate True North adventure at VBS. They sang praise to Jesus, participated in group activities like crafts and hands-on games all centered around how easy it is to lose sight of what's true in our wild world today. Guiding them towards Jesus, True North VBS revealed that He is a faithful friend we can always trust. That's Mountain Man Jeremy Becker, St. Paul Director of Youth and Family Ministry recounting his days in the north.



**Trinity/Delray Beach, FL** won the FLAA State Golf Championship on April 30th with a score of 7 under par. According to Nathan Loewe, athletic director, Charlie L, Charlie S., and Kayden were a part of the winning team. Charlie S finished second in the 9 hole individual portion of the Tournament.



**Our Savior/St. Petersburg, FL's** 8th graders spent their last day roaming the Middle School halls. Some of the Middle School Spartans posed for a quick "selfie" before heading to graduation that evening.



**Amazing Grace/Oxford, FL** sent 15 members off on a Cuba Mission Trip. They traveled with 30, 50- pound bags of supplies and 1,500 pounds of medication, clothing, shoes, power sources, and other much needed items.





# Two Congregations Team Up for Bless Broward

**Our Savior/Plantation, FL** partnered with **St. Paul/Weston** to share the heart of Jesus with the surrounding community. The event was "Bless Broward", a morning of community service at five different sites across multiple municipalities.

Volunteers had the choice to serve in a beach clean-up project in Ft. Lauderdale, the creation of a "serenity garden" at the Lippman Youth Shelter in Oakland Park, the installation of a spring themed experience room at a Plantation school for children with disabilities, the delivery of non-perishable groceries to the homes of the needful in the surroundings cities or "spring caroling" visits to local residences rehab facility and a senior living community to share the love of Jesus with song.

The Bless Broward slogan is "One heart, many places." With roughly a hundred people volunteering this third year, it could be said that it was, "Many bodies, one heart" as everyone shared the love of our one Lord Jesus Christ at each site. Among those participating were youth and parents from American Heritage Girls Troop 1483, Our Savior Lutheran Schools National Junior Honor Society students and DCE Jeremy Becker of St. Paul Lutheran Weston.✝



## *Lutheran Basketball Association of America*

### Trinity/Delray Coach Named Recipient of Tom Schultze Memorial Leadership Award

#### **Trinity/Delray Beach, FL**

Coach Pete Silva, Early Childhood Director and Varsity Boys head basketball coach, received the Tom Schultze Award at the Lutheran Basketball Association of America (LBAA) National Tournament. The Tom Schultze Memorial National Basketball Coaching Leadership Award is presented by the Lutheran Basketball Association of America (LBAA). It recognizes coaches who demonstrate outstanding leadership in the context of Lutheran basketball.

"I watched Mr. Silva interact with his team and carry himself on the sideline. He uplifted the boys — no matter what the score was. His interactions with everyone involved was what this award means," said Nathan Loewe, Trinity Athletic Director.

Coach Silva has been the head coach of Trinity's 7th and 8th grade boys team for eight years while participating in the program for 18. Leading the team to the National tournament for the first



time was a product of the last four years of teams showing that they could compete with anyone.

"Coach Silva is proud of the family environment the team has developed and loves to see the alumni come back every year to encourage the current team," Loewe concluded.✝



# Students Dive into God's Creation During Marine Science Trip



This spring, the 8th grade class at **Trinity/Delray Beach, FL** had the incredible opportunity to travel to the Florida Keys for a multi-day marine science experience at the Marine Lab – a hands-on marine science education facility in Key Largo, Florida.

The lab offers school field trips (from day trips to weeklong stays), virtual programs, summer camps, family days, and teacher workshops. Students were able to study coastal ecosystems – coral reefs, mangroves, and seagrass beds – through guided snorkeling, labs, and interactive lessons. The oceanfront campus includes marine science labs, dorms, and a dining hall, making it ideal for overnight STEM trips.

The lab has more than 40 years experience working with students and is trusted by teachers, parents, and students for unforgettable marine science adventures in the Florida Keys.

“Surrounded by the beauty of God’s creation, students participated in hands-on activities including lagoon and

ocean snorkeling, zooplankton identification, and field identification of reef fish. The trip not only enriched their science curriculum but also deepened their appreciation for the intricacy and wonder of the natural world. It was a memorable adventure that brought learning to life – right in the heart of God’s underwater masterpiece,” offered Jenna Barnhouse, Trinity’s Marketing and Communications Manager. ✝





# Veterans of the Cross Announces Dates, Keynote Speakers

Come to the 2026 Veterans of the Cross Gathering and be reminded that we can overcome the chaos of this life because we are empowered by the strength of Christ to proclaim the Good News, to boldly stand up for the faith within us, and to celebrate the freedoms found in living in our nation.

As we look forward to celebrating our nation's 250th anniversary and approach the 25th anniversary of 9-11 we are facing turbulent times.

Four distinguished and notable Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod personalities, The Rev. Dr. Dave Benke and wife, Judy, and The Rev. Dr. Jerry Kieschnick and wife, Terry, will bring powerful words and related Bible study pertaining to Christ remaining our refuge and strength during tempestuous and calamitous times. All four of them plan to take us through some of the chaos surrounding the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks and the civic service where New York political leaders and leaders of several different religions in the U.S. participated in a prayer service in Yankee



*The Rev. Dr. David Benke, and Judy; The Rev. Dr. Gerald Kieschnick and Terry.*

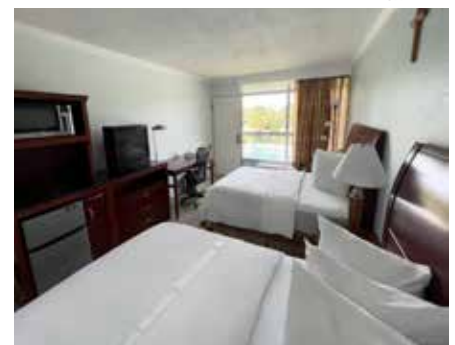
Stadium for for our country, for the missing, and for the families of those killed or missing. Religious leaders represented Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, and Hindu faiths. The ceremony also featured both sacred and patriotic music.

As it is also the 250th anniversary of the United States of America, participants will also celebrate the fact that we remain one nation under God.

Drs. Benke and Kieschnick will underscore that in God's presence there is peace, connection, and rest. "Christ Jesus reminds us that He delights in us, and that one day when we join Him in His Heavenly Kingdom, the chaos of life's worries will forever be

replaced with the peace of God that passes all understanding." LCMS President Emeritus Kieschnick emphasized.

The dates are March 9-11, 2026 at the St. Stephen Christian Retreat & Conference Center in Titusville, Florida. More details will come in the next issue of Lutheran LIFE. ✝



*St. Stephen sits on the waterfront with modern meeting rooms, comfortable sleeping accommodations and flavorsome meals.*





# Lutheran Haven Prides Volunteer-Run Village Shoppe

Step into the Village Shoppe at Lutheran Haven Retirement Community in Oviedo, FL and you'll feel like you are stepping into a charming boutique that rivals those in any shopping mall or tourist district. The difference, however is that this one is entirely run by resident volunteers with all proceeds go right back into enriching life at the Haven. Over the years, the Village Shoppe has helped to provide wonderful amenities such as purchasing new rocking chairs, and golf carts and many other items from the Haven's "Wish List" — all benefiting the entire community.

"The Shoppe opened in March of 1981 with a simple idea: sell handmade items and greeting cards to raise funds for Lutheran Haven" explains Sally Row, manager. "The small space has grown over the past 44 years into a delightful shopping destination filled with a wide variety of specialty items at fantastic prices. Everything except the broad selection of new greeting cards is generously donated by residents and community members."

According to Row, it's not uncommon for the Shoppe to receive items that have been donated to the Haven Flea Market that are a better fit for this boutique setting. You'll find men's and women's clothing, shoes, purses, jewelry, art, dishes, glassware and like-new kitchenware, plus seasonal décor and the kind of eclectic treasures you didn't know you needed! There is even a "feature table" showcasing items for specific holidays or occasions.

The Village Shoppe is a proud part of the Lutheran Haven Auxiliary and is lovingly maintained by a devoted team of volunteers. These residents serve as cashiers and salespeople who tag and price merchandise, dust and tidy displays.



"We always want our buyers to go home happy with their treasures. This is a team effort, and we want to keep both our shoppers and our volunteers happy," Row concludes.

Currently, the Shoppe is open to the public from 1 to 4pm on Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays.



Protecting our congregations and schools from scam artists is a critical issue throughout the Florida-Georgia District and in churches nationwide. Across our churches, schools, and even our homes, good stewardship often includes maintaining and improving the physical plan buildings entrusted to us. Whether

contractor misconduct. In both Florida and Georgia, contractor fraud may take several forms.

### **Invoice Falsification**

One common issue is invoice falsification, where the contractor charges for work that was never performed or materials never delivered. Under both states' laws,

### **Unsolicited Offers**

Another prevalent scam involves unsolicited offers, such as the notorious 'asphalt scam.' A person claims they have leftover materials from a nearby job and offers to perform the work at a steep discount for immediate payment, often in cash. (Any reputable contractor would likely NEVER

# **Tips for Avoiding Contractor**

it's ground up construction, paving a parking lot, installing a new roof, or renovating a parish hall, working with contractors can bring both opportunity and risk. Unfortunately, dishonest contractors do exist, and they have left a long trail of unfinished work, falsified invoices, and outright scams across Florida and Georgia.

This article offers practical, legally grounded guidance to help you recognize warning signs, understand your rights, and respond effectively if you suspect

this can constitute civil fraud and, in some cases, criminal theft.

If your church, school, or your home receives a suspicious invoice, do not submit payment until you receive a detailed breakdown of the charges and verify them against the original contract. Maintain written correspondence and document every phase of the project with photos and notes. If discrepancies are not resolved promptly, seek legal counsel, early intervention often limits further loss.

have left over materials – it's too costly.) Once paid, the work is either substandard or never completed. These tactics are not just unethical, they are often illegal. Both Florida and Georgia have consumer protection laws that prohibit deceptive trade practices and can entitle victims to remedies including restitution, attorney's fees, and punitive damages. In cases where churches or elderly parishioners are targeted, prosecutors may pursue enhanced penalties under elder protection





or nonprofit fraud statutes. Both states also impose important legal requirements on contractors that serve to protect property owners, including churches, schools, and our homes.

In Florida, a contractor must file a Notice of Commencement (NOC) before beginning work

does require contractors working on residential or commercial projects to be properly licensed through the State Licensing Board for Residential and General Contractors.

**William “Rusty” Huseman**  
Florida-Georgia District  
Legal Counsel  
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state’s consumer protection office. In Florida, you may contact the Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR).

In Georgia, reports may be filed with the Governor’s Office of Consumer Protection. In addition,

# Scams in Florida and Georgia

valued at \$2,500 or more. This document must be recorded in the county public records and posted at the job site. The NOC provides notice to all parties involved in the project and is critical to limiting lien exposure. A contractor’s failure to properly file the NOC can result in unanticipated liens from subcontractors and suppliers.

Similarly, Florida law requires the issuance of a

## Required Licensure

Any person performing work without a required license is subject to fines and legal penalties, and any contract entered into may be deemed void or unenforceable. For our congregations, schools, and our individual homes, it is especially important to verify licensure and insurance before entering any agreement. Both Florida and Georgia provide online tools to check the license status of a contractor.

## Written Contracts

Contracts should always be in writing and should clearly state the scope of work, materials to be used, payment terms, timelines, and penalties for non-performance and above all, signed by both contractor and property owner. *Avoid paying large deposits.* A typical good-faith deposit is around 10–20% of the contract amount. Pay the remainder in installments as work progresses and is verified.

If you believe your church, school, or your home has been targeted by a fraudulent contractor, report the incident immediately to your local law enforcement agency and the

churches and nonprofits may want to consult with an attorney to explore options for civil litigation or recovering losses through a contractor’s bond or insurance, assuming your church, school or home was under contract with the contractor. While our faith teaches us compassion and forgiveness, it also calls us to exercise vigilance and wisdom in protecting the property and resources entrusted to us. As a community, we can work together to ensure that dishonest contractors are held accountable and that our churches, schools, and our homes remain safe places for worship, education, and family.

For readers in other states, requirements and protections vary. Please consult your local building department or permitting office, or seek legal advice specific to your jurisdiction. You are always welcome to reach out to one of our Lutheran Legal League attorneys through our website. Staying informed is the first step in faithful stewardship. ✝



Notice to Owner (NTO) from subcontractors and material suppliers not in direct contract with the property owner. The NTO must be delivered within strict statutory deadlines to preserve lien rights. Georgia’s process is similar, though slightly less formal. There is no statewide mandate for a Notice of Commencement, but property owners or contractors may voluntarily file one to limit lien risks. Georgia

# Considering A Career in Law?



**Faith First — Even in Law? Absolutely! Come Chat With Us!**  
Have you ever wondered what it looks like to put your faith first in the middle of a fast-paced, high-pressure career like law? Come visit the Lutheran Legal League booth at the LCMS National Youth Gathering.

We're not here to hand out business cards or talk your ear off about courtrooms. We're LCMS attorneys who love Jesus, love our church, and want to share what it means to live out our calling as Christians in the legal world.

Whether you're thinking about becoming a lawyer, a teacher, an engineer — or you're still figuring it all out — we'd love to chat with you.

This isn't about recruiting. It's about encouraging you to carry your faith boldly into whatever direction God leads you. The world needs Christian leaders who aren't afraid to stand on truth and lead with grace.

Please stop by and see us in the exhibit hall. Grab a sticker or a snack, and let's talk about faith, work, calling, and whatever else is on your mind. No pressure. Just good conversation with people who get it.

Enjoy the 2025 LCMS National Youth Gathering — we look forward to meeting you.



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Faith-based schools in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod are committed not only to academic excellence but also to ministry through education. Tuition payments are a necessary part of sustaining these ministries, yet challenges arise when accounts fall into delinquency.

Addressing unpaid tuition requires balancing financial stewardship with Christian compassion. This article provides an overview of the legal landscape in Florida and Georgia, with practical guidance for LCMS schools seeking to manage tuition

collections faithfully and lawfully. In both Florida and Georgia, the time limit to pursue collection of unpaid tuition depends on whether the obligation is based on a written or oral agreement.

In Florida, the statute of limitations for written contracts is five years, as provided in Florida Statutes section 95.11(2)(b). For oral agreements, it is four years under section 95.11(3)(k). The time period begins on the date payment became due and was not made, in accordance with section 95.031(1). Monthly billing notices do not reset the statute. Only a partial payment, a written acknowledgment of the debt, or a new promise to pay will restart the limitations period.

In Georgia, the statute of limitations is six years for written contracts under O.C.G.A. section 9-3-24, and four years for oral contracts under section 9-3-26. As in Florida, the deadline runs from the date of default, and routine billing communications have no legal effect on the limitations period. In Florida, the Florida Consumer Collection Practices Act (FCCPA) applies even to original creditors, including schools, under section 559.72. This law prohibits

practices such as harassment, threats, misleading statements, or disclosure of the debt to third parties. LCMS schools must take care not to violate these provisions



proceed with great care when considering lawsuits against families. Filing suit may be perceived as inconsistent with the mission of Christian service, especially in communities where personal relationships and church ties are deeply rooted.

Schools are encouraged to exhaust all informal options first, such as offering payment plans, discussing hardship situations, or engaging in mediation.

## Stewardship, Compassion, and Tuition Collection

*A Legal and Practical Guide for LCMS Schools in Florida and Georgia*

when communicating with families about delinquent accounts.

In Georgia, the Fair Business Practices Act (O.C.G.A. section 10-1-390) is more limited in scope. It generally targets deceptive conduct in consumer transactions and applies more clearly to third-party collectors than to original creditors. Still, faith-based schools should apply similar standards of fairness and discretion

to avoid public criticism or unintended legal exposure.

A school's right to recover attorney's fees in litigation depends on what the enrollment agreement says. In Florida, section 57.105(7) provides that if one party is entitled to attorney's fees under a contract, the other party is entitled to them as well if they prevail. In Georgia, similar provisions are governed by O.C.G.A. section 13-1-11, which requires that the contract include a fees clause and that proper notice be given before enforcement.

While legal action is sometimes appropriate, LCMS schools should

It is also critical that tuition collection policies be applied consistently to all students and families. Clear written policies, shared at the time of enrollment, help ensure fairness, reduce the risk of misunderstandings, and protect the integrity of the school's



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witness in the community.

As Lutheran educators and leaders, we are called to be both faithful and prudent in our stewardship. Scripture reminds us in 1 PETER 4:10: "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms." That includes managing the resources entrusted to our schools with integrity, mercy, and a heart centered on the Gospel. ✝

# Two Palm Beach Congregations Celebrate Easter Sunrise Together

The Rev. Jacob Roedsens, Circuit Visitor for the South Palm Beach Circuit, conducted a sunrise beach service on Easter Sunday. More than 600 people attended the combined services of **Our Savior/Lake Worth Beach** and **Trinity/Delray Beach, FL**. Praise God that six baptisms were performed during that morning service. ✝



*Aaron Ash, Trinity's I.T. Director who played the guitar for Easter Sunrise Worship, is shown with Pastor Jake Roedsens, officiant, and Ken Lillberg, Trinity's Executive Director.*

## Caden Carretto Named 77th All Tournament Team & Sportsmanship Winner

**St. Paul/Boca Raton, FL's** varsity basketball team participated in the Lutheran Basketball Association of America for the National Tournament of Champions in Ft. Wayne, IN in March, 2025. A standout player from their team, Caden Carretto, was recognized as one of the Boys All-Tournament Sportsmanship Winners. The annual national invitational tournament is for middle school teams. It is a double elimination tournament with a championship bracket and a consolation bracket.

It is the first time one of St. Paul's Falcons has received this impressive award. Caden is headed to St. Andrews School in Boca Raton, FL on a scholarship. St. Andrews is a nationally recognized college preparatory school with a rigorous curriculum that fosters creative thinking and experiences that build strong character. They serve students from more than 40 countries of multiple faiths and cultures. He is shown with his parents, Pastor Steve and Jessica Carretto. ✝





## New Port Richey Celebrates Easter From Golf Carts, 11<sup>th</sup> Fairway



Timber Greens in New Port Richey, is one of the most successful, prestigious, and sought-after golf course retirement communities along Florida's Nature Coast. The 55-plus community offers an exceptional lifestyle

complemented by outstanding amenities. This past Easter they also were treated to a Sunrise Service by The Rev. Richard Arndt, retired Pastor. The service took place on the 11th Fairway at Timber Greens. The Rev. Kent Fuqua is serving Faith as Vacancy Pastor.



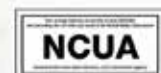
# AS LIFE HAPPENS, WE'RE HERE TO HELP.

**Personal Loans**  
**Auto Loans**  
**Credit Cards**  
**Refinances**



**LECU** LUTHERAN  
FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

We are the credit union of The LCMS.





# INCOMING



Deaconess Jessica Thompson has accepted the call to Redeeming Life Outreach Ministries/Sanford, FL. She will be serving as Program Manager working with Executive Director Sheryl DeWitt remotely, from St. Louis, in the Missouri District. She is pictured with her husband Lawton Thompson, Assistant Pastor at St. Paul's/Des Peres, MO.



St. Luke's/Oviedo, FL received Vicar Grant Burnham and Deaconess Intern Rachel Wegener. They are pictured with SELC President Wally Vinovskis following the Call Day Service at Concordia Seminary St. Louis.

Call Day, the annual event taking place on both LCMS seminary campuses, resulted in concluding students receiving their first pastoral or diaconal ministry placements, and second-year students receiving their vicarage or deaconess internship assignments. All calls and assignments for service are to churches or ministries within The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS).

"I was honored to serve my LCMS Florida-Georgia District and President James Rockey in April for the Council of Presidents and at Call Day at our two seminaries," offers The Rev. Jay Winters. Winters, a past Secretary to the Board of Directors for the FLGA District, currently serves as Chairman of the Board and 1st Vice President. The Rev. James Rockey was unable to attend while he and Martha

were celebrating their daughter's wedding.

"The experience reinforced something I already thought — and encourage you to think about — especially if you're LCMS: Pray for your District Presidents and leaders daily, they are doing much on our behalf," he continues. "Pray for our church body, it is beset by many challenges. Pray that the Gospel goes forth into all the earth, to each person, over and over again. ✝"

*Above Photo — The Rev. Jay Winters, 1st Vice President of the FLGA District, center, with the Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, Missouri candidates and vicars coming into the Florida-Georgia District — from left: Stephen Wareham, Jean-Jacques Rochenel, Stephen Moore, Zachary Boeyink, Caleb Gustafson and Jacob Scheler.*



# C A N D I D A T E S



Timothy Handrick  
Concordia St. Louis  
All Saints/  
Blairsville, GA  
Serving With  
Rev. Dave Wesche



Jean-Jacques Rochenel  
Concordia St. Louis  
Peace/Naples, FL  
Serving With  
Rev. Timothy Abel  
Rev. Richard Mokry



Jacob Scheler  
Concordia St. Louis  
St. Paul/  
Boca Raton, FL  
Serving With  
Rev. Steve Carretto



Stephen Wareham  
Concordia St. Louis  
Messiah/  
Valdosta, GA  
Serving With  
Rev. Richard Lohmeyer

# V I C A R S



Zachary Boeyink  
Concordia St. Louis  
Mount Calvary/  
Warner Robins, GA  
Supervised By  
Rev. Andrew Howe



Stephen Moore  
Concordia St. Louis  
Grace/  
Winter Haven, FL  
Supervised By  
Rev. Charles Reich



Caleb Gustafson  
Concordia St. Louis  
Bethlehem/  
Jacksonville Beach, FL  
Supervised By  
Rev. Dana Brones



Brian J. Frank  
Concordia Fort Wayne  
Grace/  
St Petersburg, FL  
Supervised By  
Rev. Kevin R. Loughran

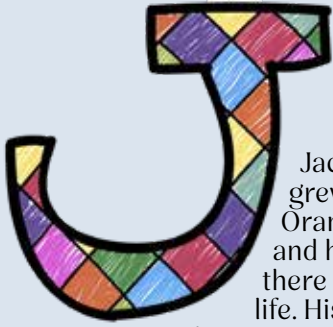


Nathan W. Kieser  
Concordia Fort Wayne  
Grace/  
Naples, FL  
Supervised By  
Rev. Keith Lingsch

The Rev. Jay Winters, 1st Vice President of the FLGA District, center, with the Concordia Theological Seminary/Fort Wayne, Indiana vicars and their wives who will be coming into the Florida-Georgia District — from left, Cosette & Nathan Kieser and Brian & Amy Frank.



# Jacob Manning Serving Bethlehem/



Jacob Manning, grew up in Orange, California and has lived there his entire life. His father,

Mark Manning, is pastor at Searchlight Ministries, an LCMS congregation based in Fullerton, CA. His mother, Heather, serves as the Director of Christian Education.

Jacob is the middle child of two brothers who are both on the autism spectrum. "It was definitely weird and difficult at times to be the only brother without a mental disability, but that does not negate the fact that I love my brothers" Jacob explains. "I became a babysitter for my brothers at a pretty early age and was the unofficial "older brother" even though I was the middle child. I love to joke that I drew the short straw in both cases. I had all the responsibilities of the oldest – but got treated as the middle child.

The majority of Jacob's

Bethlehem. "At times it has been hectic for sure, but I enjoy it so much," he emphasizes. "My pastors, Dana Allen Brones and Nathan McCarty have been great mentors and coaches to me as I am being formed to become a pastor."

Jacob explains that he first felt the call to ministry when he was about seven years old. Prior to his congregation having an official building, they were a nomadic group looking for sites to rent. He remembers sitting in a hotel ballroom on the stairs overlooking their worship space and thinking "this place is pretty cool. I get free donuts, I get to run around wherever I want! How do I stay here forever?" It was then that I looked at my father smiling and talking to someone, and it clicked! He is always here! And so I ran up to my dad and told him, "Dad! I want to be a pastor just like you!"

That feeling has never diminished. "I'm no longer in it for the donuts, but there were many times when this desire should have

a school connected to it, a school that I was going to for my seventh and eighth grade years. Quickly, the kind words and pleasant faces of students, faculty, and the like turned to cold words and callous faces. I initially thought that I had done something wrong, and so I went to my father to talk about it. It was then that he told me everything that was happening. I was shocked. Can a church really do that to a pastor? Can this place that is fed by my father on a spiritual level really bite him instead? I guess the dramatics can only go so far, as you know that I am currently a vicar. This terrible experience of church politics should have steered me away from being a pastor, but instead it strengthened it. I wanted to be a pastor that much more since I knew that bad stuff can happen to a pastor! It isn't all sunshine and rainbows, and I'm ready for that. I want to be a pastor in the joyous times and in the darkest times because, in my father – while he was going through these challenges – I still saw Christ in him.

Fast-forward to Jacob's under-graduate education – at Concordia/ Irvine, California he entered the pre-seminary program. "I grew immensely in my time in college. As a sophomore, I participated in 'Around the World' program – visiting countries like China, Israel, Uganda, and others. We learned part of the languages, the literature, and did mission work at different Christian entities around the world," he offers. "It was right after that program when COVID struck. I was able to finish up college and have a semi-normal senior year being heavily involved in the men's ministry program and had the honor to be a type of mentor to many other students whom I call good friends today."

Jacob will return to Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, MO this summer and complete his education leading to ordination.

"Concordia Seminary is where I also found the love of my life – Julie Baumann, a deaconess



*Vicar Jacob preaching during Advent;*



*Jacob with his fiancée, Julie Baumann;*

responsibilities are a mixture of preaching, leading liturgy, preparing and leading multiple Bible Studies, teaching and leading seventh grade confirmation and Youth Group, helping with social and outreach ministries, and doing mercy work with the members at

been shaken or faltered. My dad was called to a church and we merged. It wasn't until a year or a year and a half afterwards that they wanted my Father to leave. People were speaking poorly of my Father for doing exactly what they wanted my father to do. This church also had



# Meet the Vicar



At left – Jacob on a ‘ruck’ with young adults. In a workout context, a ruck refers to rucking, which is walking or hiking while carrying a weighted backpack or rucksack. It’s essentially weighted walking, a form of cardio and strength training that builds both endurance and muscular strength.

Below – Jacob with members of Bethlehem’s youth who will be attending the National Youth Gathering this summer in New Orleans, LA.

student who is finishing her internship at Lord of Life/Plano, TX. During our vicarage and internship year I proposed to her, and we plan to be married this summer on August 9th.”

When Jacob isn’t working, he enjoys chatting with friends from the seminary or from his college days. He also loves being outdoors and doing sporty activities like spikeball, volleyball, pickleball, and more. He also loves being at home playing video games or watching a good show or movie.

“Vicar Jacob is Bethlehem’s 14th vicar,” offers Senior Pastor Brones. “While every vicar has been uniquely gifted by God, Vicar Jacob brings a lifelong experience of being a ‘preacher’s kid.’ He was raised in the church and was exposed to great preaching and pastoral leadership. It is evident being a pastor is in Jacob’s DNA.”

Pastor Brones takes his supervisory role very seriously. This summer he’ll receive vicar #15. “These young men require an investment of time, energy, and pastoral mentoring. However,

the dividends pay off when the congregation sees a young man, who arrived ‘green as could be,’ now capable of pastoring a church anywhere the Lord calls him.

Vicar Jacob is such a young man, and the Lord already knows exactly where He wants Jacob to serve as Pastor upon completion of vicarage and seminary studies,” Brones concludes. ✝





# FSU's Lutheran Campus Ministry Goes Into

It was Maundy Thursday, April 17, 2025 around 11:55 AM when shots rang out on Florida State University's campus. In just a matter of moments, two people had been killed by a shooter and another six were wounded!

The Rev. Jay Winters was in a meeting on campus when the "FSU Alert," (a campus wide mobile device notification) went out, informing everyone on campus to stay locked down and to shelter in place.

During the lockdown Winters prayed and reached out to students. Thankfully, none of the students who were connected with University Lutheran were harmed physically – but many were locked down throughout a widespread area of campus.

Colten Brown, a student from **Grace/Jacksonville, FL** was locked in a classroom with ten other people.

Joseph DeValle, a student who converted to Lutheranism during his time at FSU, was locked in his ROTC building.



*Molly Kimball, a student leader at University Lutheran, with one of the Lutheran Church Charities Comfort Dogs*

Andrew Cheyne, a student from **St. Paul/Lakeland, FL** – who is planning on attending Concordia Seminary in the coming year – was in the Student Union – the building where the shooter was located. Andrew was in the back of the building and away from danger, but was obviously frightened when people began pouring into the room he was in with news of a shooter on campus.

Other University Lutheran students were in places like their dorm rooms or off-campus apartments, hearing news and watching social media for updates.

Thankfully, the shooter was apprehended by the FSU Campus Police Force. Students were allowed to return to their friends and living spaces. That night, many of them came to University Lutheran's Maundy Thursday service, an experience of remembering God's presence even during difficult times.

In the coming days, students would be ministered to and would minister to others. Several students were able to be present at the campus-wide vigil held on Good Friday. University Lutheran's leaders were able to help with the Lutheran Church Charities Comfort Dogs that mobilized in order to be with FSU students the week after the shooting.

Joseph DeValle was able to have a significant conversation about God with his roommate, Pablo, who had been resistant to talking about faith until that moment.

Andrew Cheyne was able to witness to his faith while being interviewed by a reporter on the FSU campus.

University Lutheran's Easter services were featured by a television station interested in a story of hope after the shooting.

There is still much for these students to process. Molly Kimball, a student leader at University Lutheran, expressed "I thought I knew what this year was going to be like, and now this has happened and I have to rethink it all."

Sadly, shootings like this one have become more common than they once were. We can pray together that God will somehow stop this violence on our campuses, but this tragedy also provided an example of why the campus ministries of our Florida Georgia District are paramount. These students were able to both find solace and be shining lights of witness to the dark world around them because there is a campus ministry like University Lutheran at Florida State University. ✝



*Pastor Winters with LCC Comfort Dogs wearing FSU Seminoles neckerchiefs*



# Action After Maundy Thursday Shooting



*The FSU campus vigil following the shooting was held on Good Friday at Langford Green, a large grassy area on the campus. It was a public gathering where thousands of students, faculty, staff, and community members came together to honor the victims.*



*Lutheran Church Charities "Hearts of Mercy & Compassion, Crosses for Losses" provides a physical and spiritual symbol through the giving of hearts and crosses to families and friends who have suffered loss or serious illness of a loved one. A caring Christian provides these symbols in order to share the hope of Jesus Christ in their time of need in Presence and Prayer. The Hearts allow people to write a message or signature on them to show their love and support for those grieving or suffering. They were included at one of the many memorials erected on campus following the tragedy.*

# CAMPUS

August marks the start of another academic year on college and university campuses across our Florida-Georgia District. With that new beginning, campus communities have the joy of welcoming students who are excited, nervous, confused, hopeful, questioning, sharing, etc. Put another way . . . campus communities have the joy of welcoming students who are like us – needing the stability and joy of who our God is and what He has done for them!

Those involved in campus ministry in the FLGA District witness God at work strengthening the faithful, reclaiming the prodigals, reaching the lost and growing young adults to be faithful in their vocations. According to Kansas District Campus Ministry Coordinator, The Rev. Mark Boxman, campus ministry is rarely dull! Students are curious – seeking answers to questions like how do dinosaurs, cavemen and millions of years fit into the biblical record? What does the Bible say about gender, abortion, homosexuality? What are fasting and ashes all about? Where did the devil come from? What do Muslims believe? What can I say to a friend who doesn't believe in God? What does the Bible say about tattoos?

The FLGA District is blessed to have passionate and knowledgeable pastors serving several of our colleges and universities.

Towards that end you should *communicate* with our campus clergy – to help them connect with students as they assimilate into a new school environment. We have District-supported efforts on several campuses in our District:

## Christus Victor – The University of Georgia

As a student center and congregation, Christus Victor worships each Sunday at 8:00 and 10:45 am with a Christian Education hour beginning at 9:30 am. They also offer many midweek student fellowship, Bible studies and worship.

Web: [christusvictor.net](http://christusvictor.net)



Contact The Rev. Greg Michael:  
[pastor.christusvictor@gmail.com](mailto:pastor.christusvictor@gmail.com)

## University Lutheran – Florida State University Florida A&M University

Located on the campus of Florida State University in Tallahassee FL at 925 W. Jefferson St., Tallahassee FL 32304 – across Jefferson St. from Ragans/Wildwood halls. Sunday Bible Study at 10 a.m. and Worship is at 11 a.m.

Web: [universitylutheranchurch.org/](http://universitylutheranchurch.org/)



Contact The Rev. Jay Winters  
[pastor@universitylutheranchurch.org](mailto:pastor@universitylutheranchurch.org)

## Thrive – Florida Gulf Coast University

Thrive worships at 20041 S Tamiami Trl # 1, Estero, FL 33928 in the Estero Ridge Plaza, in the heart of Southwest Florida. Worship is Sunday at 10 a.m. and college students meet weekly on Wednesday evenings at 6:30 pm. Students are heavily involved in campus ministry and distant mission trips.

Web: [thrive-fl.org/](http://thrive-fl.org/)



Contact The Rev. John Roth  
[John@thrive-fl.org](mailto:John@thrive-fl.org)

## All Saints – Young Harris College

All Saints is located at 83 Earl Shelton Rd, Blairsville, GA 30512 in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Young Harris is a Christian arts college promoting education, intellectual curiosity and a holistic development of its students.

Web: [allsaintslcms.org/](http://allsaintslcms.org/)



Contact: The Rev. Tim Handrick  
[timhandrick.allsaints@gmail.com](mailto:timhandrick.allsaints@gmail.com)



# MINISTRY

## *Do You Know A Student Heading To College This August?*

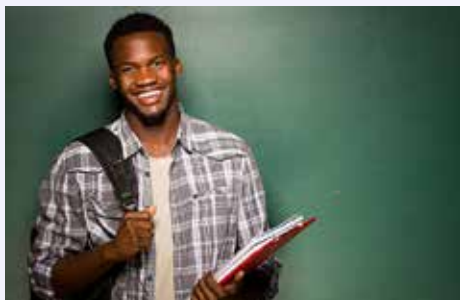
### **First Lutheran — University of Florida Santa Fe College**

Located a few blocks north of UF campus at 1801 NW 5th Ave, Gainesville, FL 32603, the congregation worships Sunday mornings at 10 a.m. Lutheran Student Fellowship (LSF) is a Christian Campus Ministry dedicated to learning more about following Jesus and growing in our faith by building strong relationships with one another through a variety of service and fellowship-oriented ministries. Students have lunch on Sunday at 11:15 and meet for Bible Study on Tuesday evenings at the Campus House at 7:00pm.

Web: <https://flcgainesville.org/>



**Contact: The Rev. Chris Kollmann**  
[pastorchris.flcgainesville@gmail.com](mailto:pastorchris.flcgainesville@gmail.com)



### **Holy Trinity — University South Florida University of Tampa**

Both University of South Florida and University of Tampa students are served at Holy Trinity. Students often gather for breakfast at 8:30 in Fellowship Hall with a contemporary service at 9 a.m. A Young Professionals group often interacts with the college students.

Web: [holytrinitytampa.org/](http://holytrinitytampa.org/)



**Contact: The Rev. Dan Prugh**  
[pastor@holytrinitytampa.org](mailto:pastor@holytrinitytampa.org)



Do you have students headed to one of these areas? Alert the pastors serving those areas! The pastors on these pages can also put you in touch with campus ministries on other campuses nationally — they can help research those ministries to ensure the students entering college or university away from home can plug into an effective and meaningful environment. Please support our campus ministries. — through prayer and financial gifts! The Lord provides for His mission, and you might be the way He provides! ✝





# Pastor Jay Winters and University Lutheran

Three Florida State Seminoles students are heading west to Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, MO in fall. "At our last District Convention

in 2022, University Lutheran, our campus congregation at Florida State University, brought an overture to the assembly that every congregation of the District should pray out loud on Sunday mornings that God would bring about workers for the harvest fields," states University Lutheran pastor, The Rev. Jay Winters. "Additionally, many in our District have followed our Mission Executive, The Rev. Dr. Peter Meier in praying every morning at 10:02 that God would provide workers for this harvest. With all of that prayer, something was bound to happen," Winters emphasizes.

"This year, I'm enthusiastic to report that three graduates of Florida State University are leaving their campus ministry, University Lutheran, to head to Concordia/St. Louis! Each will begin the road of training to become pastors, so that they might lead church communities in sharing the Gospel. Each of them have their own story as they leave FSU for Concordia, St. Louis:

## Andrew Cheyne

Andrew Cheyne grew up at St. Paul/Lakeland, FL attending St. Paul's Lutheran School and came to FSU as a communications major interested in doing something with sports communications.

While at University Lutheran, Andrew began feeling God pull him in the direction of seminary



training and pastoral ministry. He began meeting with and praying with Pastor Jay Winters who shepherded him and the other students through the process of applications, interviews, and other things necessary for seminary. In addition to being a part of University Lutheran's student group, Andrew along with fellow seminarian Scott Swanson were both also the successive presidents of another student ministry group called Ratio Christi which does outreach to students at FSU around the reasonableness of the Christian faith.

## Richard Harry

Richard Harry came to FSU in 2008 when he arrived in Tallahassee to begin work on a Ph.D. degree in Religion, Philosophy, & Ethics. He met Pastor Jay Winters early in that

time period and became a member at University Lutheran throughout his long journey to achieving his Ph.D. degree. During this time he



met and married his wife, Ximi, who was a classmate of his in the Religion department at FSU.

It was while Richard was working as an adjunct professor at the nearby Tallahassee State College that he began to feel God pulling him toward pastoral ministry. He began meeting and praying with Pastor Jay and decided that while it would be possible for him to take an alternate route to ministry, that he wanted the full Masters of Divinity experience that Concordia Seminary can offer. He and Ximi moved to St. Louis in February as God opened a door for a job for Ximi in the Department of Justice.

## Scott Swanson

Scott Swanson came to FSU from Minnesota where he had been attending an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) congregation. Since University Lutheran is the only Lutheran ministry on FSU's campus, Scott showed up to worship at the LCMS University Lutheran. Scott became interested in University Lutheran and eventually left his ELCA membership, becoming a member at University Lutheran. Scott had been praying privately about going



# Sending Three Noles to Concordia Seminary



to the seminary while on a trip to Kenya with others from University Lutheran. "[Pastor Jay] beat me to asking about it when he asked me 'When are you going to talk to me about seminary?'" Pastor Jay remembers Scott saying, "Scott looked like he had seen a ghost when I said that and told me that he had been praying to God for an opportunity to talk to me about seminary. I said, 'Well, here's the opportunity, let's talk!'"

University Lutheran continues to pray for these men as they enter into the seminary and ask that your church would join in praying for them. If your church has not yet, University Lutheran recommends that your congregation begins praying outloud every Sunday morning for God to send pastors, lay leaders, and other church workers into His harvest fields. He is certainly listening and is granting our prayers through young men like Scott, Richard, and Andrew.



*Above – Pastor Jay Winters with Andrew Cheyne at the June 5-7, 2025 Florida-Georgia District Convention, where Andrew served as the lay delegate for University Lutheran. He also was Crucifer for opening worship.*



*From left – Andrew, Scott, and Pastor Jay Winters hiking through the area around a Kenyan village as they helped with Rev. Edwin Nyago's pastoral visits.*



*From left – Local Pastors, The Revs. Dennis Meeker and Edwin Nyago with Pastor Jay Winters and Scott Swanson and Andrew Cheyne after helping lead worship in Kenya.*

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



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## Ministry is Alive and Well in Florida-Georgia

As the FLGA District PR and Communications Director, I manage to get around to anniversaries, installations, ordinations, athletic events, concerts and theatre productions, picnics, convocations, Board of Directors and committee meetings, and, of course, the triennial conventions.

This convention I served on Floor Committee #1 with Vice President Charles Reich and we crafted the language for resolutions pertaining to Missions and Outreach. It was a rewarding experience working with talented District Board members as we fine-tuned issues surrounding equipping disciples to share their faith, encourage church multiplication, celebrate, support and expand our Lutheran schools and to offer ministry emphases to our national LCMS church body.

I'm a bit of a convention junkie . . . always enjoying catching up with friends from not just Florida and Georgia but from across the nation who are passionately *"Equipped, Empowered and Engaged" in the mission of Connecting People to Jesus!* Some of the best convention times are out of the assembly hall during breaks, lunches, dinners and "after parties" in private rooms.

One such gathering, in Pastor Tim Barber's suite, I had the opportunity to get



*Sergio Jurado is President of IT Solutions Center, the technology consultant that takes care of our FLGA District. He's shown here helping me understand the voting procedures from our personal mobile phones. It was the first District convention to utilize this.*

## The LAST WORD



**John List**  
FLGA District  
Communications Director  
Editor, Lutheran Life  
[lutheranlife@aol.com](mailto:lutheranlife@aol.com)

into conversation with Andrew Cheyney, Vice President Jay Winters' lay delegate from Florida State University/Tallahassee. He's headed to seminary this fall.

What a great guy! What a fascinating story and what a joy to meet young men who are pursuing the pastoral ministry. And when writing this issue's campus-themed articles, it's rewarding to

learn of the men from our District who are entering seminary.

Consider regularly praying for pastors, perhaps daily or weekly. You can pray for specific needs and challenges they face and gather with others to pray collectively. Letting them know you are praying for them can offer encouragement.

Then at dinner one night I sat with FLGA District Secretary, The Rev. Greg Michael and his son, Ben. Here was an example of a young recent university graduate serving as the lay delegate to his home congregation before heading to Atlanta and beginning a career in accounting. There were three District Presidents and a Synod Vice President at my dinner table and I just sat back and smiled as they grilled him about "not ruling out seminary" in the future.

After all he comes from a long-line of pastors — his dad is our District Secretary to the Board of Directors and his grandfather, President Emeritus to our FLGA District, The Rev. Dr. Gerhard Michael. I wanted to remind this unofficial Praesidium that, hey!, we need good lay leaders in the church too!

Do you know a young man or woman who might enter one of our colleges or universities for the teaching, diaconess, DCE, music or pastoral ministry? Encourage them. The harvest is plentiful . . . but the workers are few!

*John List*