

# LUTHERAN LIFE

Lutheran Church-  
Missouri Synod  
Florida-Georgia District  
May-June 2026



Lutheran education is built on more than 500 years of educational philosophy rooted in the Protestant Reformation. Lutheran schools emphasize that academic excellence and faith are inseparable partners rather than competing priorities.



# 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 and those opinions may not necessarily be those of the District or the LCMS. 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

03/16/26..... Ms. Deborah Hammes (C)  
to Rocky Mountain  
07/25/26..... Ms. Alexis Dippel (C) to Texas

## INSTALLATIONS

04/19/26..... Rev. Robert Davis (O) Sole Pastor  
Epiphany/Lake Worth, FL

## CALLED TO GLORY

03/03/26 ..... Mr. Edward Gallmeier (C)

## STATUS CHANGE WITHIN DISTRICT

03/31/26..... Ms. Andrea Bell (C)  
from Active to Candidate

## REMOVED FROM THE ROSTER

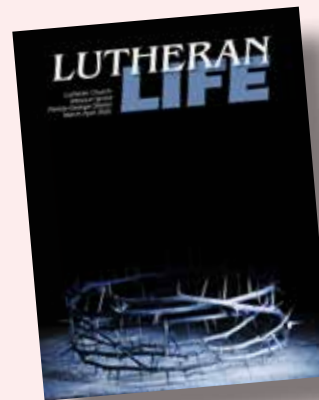
03/31/26..... Ms. Judith Wiebold (C)

## Abbreviation Key

(C) ..... Commissioned Minister  
(E) ..... Emeritus  
(O) ..... Ordained Minister  
(SP)..... Sole Pastor  
SRP)..... Senior Pastor  
(AP)..... Associate Pastor  
(Asst)..... Assistant Pastor  
(SMP)..... Specific Ministry Pastor  
(TIM)..... Transitional Interim Minister  
(D) ..... Deaconess  
(Exec)..... Executive Administrative Pastor  
CSL..... Concordia Seminary St. Louis  
FTW..... Concordia Seminary Ft. Wayne

## LutheranLife@flgadistrict.org

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# Four Florida Teams Compete in 2026 Lutheran Basketball Athletic Association National Tournament

by Meredith Swanson

Four Lutheran schools from Florida traveled to Fort Wayne, IN, from March 27-29 to compete in the 2026 Lutheran Basketball Athletic Association (LBAA) National Basketball Tournament. The event brought together 61 teams – 29 girls and 32 boys – from 13 states, showcasing a high level of competition, teamwork, and sportsmanship. Above all, it was an opportunity for student-athletes to use their talents to glorify God and grow in fellowship.



▲ **Grace/St. Petersburg** entered nationals with strong momentum. Their boys' team held a 15-4 record and finished as state runner-up, but went 0-2 at nationals. With 8 of 12 players returning, they are already looking into the future with hope. Their girls' team went 10-0 in the regular season and placed third at states. Although they also went 0-2 at nationals, this marked their first appearance – a meaningful milestone and a testament to God's work in their program.



▲ **Redeemer/Stuart** entered nationals undefeated at 19-0 and finished 2-2. Despite key injuries before and during the tournament, the team showed perseverance and unity, trusting in God's plan. Their state championship season remains a special and rewarding achievement.



▲ **St. Paul/Boca Raton** arrived with an 18-4 record and finished nationals 3-2, placing 11th/12th overall. The team earned national recognition, with 8th grader James Hough named to the All-Tournament Team.



▲ **St. Luke's/Oviedo** had an outstanding year, going 21-1 in the regular season and finishing as state runner-up. At nationals, they went 2-2 and advanced to the Sweet Sixteen, ending 23-3 overall. Each Florida team represented their schools with determination and integrity, reflecting Christ on and off the court.



# District Partnership Events: Celebrating,

In the course of the past six months, the Florida-Georgia (FLGA) District staff led **Partnership Events** in 20 circuits, connecting with nearly 500 lay leaders and pastors. These events centered on the Four Critical Ministry Targets developed by the Board of Directors and District staff. While these gatherings focused on collaboration and shared learning, our staff emphasized the value of spending time together in dialogue where leaders could share successes and struggles as they navigate today’s ministry landscape. Participants left encouraged, equipped with practical ideas, and reminded that they are not alone in ministry.

These gatherings also reinforced the value of shared District events that are opportunities to strengthen relationships across the Body of Christ.

Through survey responses and group discussions, common themes emerged that reflect both challenges and opportunities impacting discipleship today.

## COMMON MINISTRY

**“We are stronger together as the Body of Christ, moving from isolated efforts to a shared mission of mutual encouragement and collective strength.”**

## CHALLENGES

### ■ Volunteer Exhaustion:

In some congregations the burdens of ministry increasingly fall on a shrinking exhausted core group.

### ■ The Church-School



**Disconnect:** Despite dynamic schools and early learning centers, many churches struggle to integrate school families into congregational life.

### ■ Internal vs. External Focus:



Some congregations described the challenge of moving beyond caring well for one another to equipping more members for community engagement.

### ■ Cultural Distractions:

Busy schedules and competing priorities frequently overshadow worship and spiritual growth.

### ■ Community Visibility

## Challenges:

Many ministries struggle to communicate their presence in the community. Marketing and public events can create opportunities for connections.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

### ■ Unwavering Christian

**Identity:** Flourishing ministries remain grounded in Scripture through clear Biblical teaching, consistent Law and Gospel preaching, and a strong focus on baptismal identity.

### ■ Integrated School-Church

**Mission:** Churches and schools thrive when united in disciple-making through faith development, pastoral presence, and fellowship that connects school families to congregational life, creating natural pathways toward worship participation and, in some cases, baptism.

### ■ Active Community



**Engagement:** A shift from a “come to us” mindset to a “go to them” model emphasizes meeting people through service, practical care, and outreach beyond church property. Engagement often begins with presence and grows through relationships.

### ■ Small Group Models: Healthy

# Encouraging, and Building Each Other Up

churches prioritize time in the Word beyond Sunday worship. Small groups and discipleship networks equip lay members to live as everyday missionaries.

## ■ Embracing Multicultural



**Ministry:** Bilingual and multicultural ministry is emerging as a growing area of strength. Unified worship, culturally responsive outreach, and engagement with diverse communities are creating opportunities for discipleship, new membership, and baptisms.

## ■ Healthy Ministry & Shared



**Leadership:** Congregations that prioritize worship, prayer, mission clarity, and sound governance often report greater unity. They support workers and lay leaders through rest, shared responsibility, clear policies, and volunteer appreciation, helping sustain a resilient ministry culture.

In a time of change and



*Gathering around tables where participants were instructed to not sit with others from their own congregations, there was a collision of perspectives, each one sharpening the other. People leaned in, pushed back, asked relevant questions and made notes — eager to later share with their own congregations. It was evident that the contributors were collaborators and were eager to dive into the deep end together. These are the moments that define the FLGA District.*

challenge, we are blessed to know we are not alone. As the Body of Christ in the Florida-Georgia District, we join together for encouragement, support, and shared mission. Our prayer is that you, the people of the District, will remember that your neighboring congregations are there for you and you for them.

Consider working with your pastors and circuit visitors to plan a Circuit Convocation, Retreat, or Mission Festival. Go ready to receive encouragement, share wisdom, and bless one another in Christ.



*Your Fellow Servant  
and Witness,*



*James Rockey*

PRESIDENT Florida-Georgia District  
LUTHERAN CHURCH—Missouri Synod

# Set Apart To Serve – LCMS Raises Synodwide

God gives His church pastors and church workers for the sake of the Gospel. Pastors proclaim Christ and administer the Sacraments, means through which people receive Christ's saving work. Church workers assist the pastoral office in service to the Word, witnessing to Christ daily in various roles. Christ's church will continue until He returns, and that church will continue to need workers.

Parents and grandparents, pastors, professional church workers, Sunday school teachers and others within your congregation can help influence children to consider serving the church in these sacred and joyful vocations.

**Set Apart to Serve** is building a culture of church work formation and recruitment by helping everyone throughout the Synod – LCMS church workers and families, congregations and schools, circuits and districts, universities and seminaries, and all other entities – raise up future pastors and church workers.

The Concordia University System offers a wide range of educational programs that prepare future church workers:

## PRE-SEMINARY EDUCATION

Since seminary study is graduate-level in nature, an undergraduate degree from an accredited college or university is required for admission to the residential programs of study.

Discover the pre-seminary options in undergraduate education available to those considering enrollment in one of the two LCMS seminaries. The following undergraduate information has been provided by each of the universities. Total costs will vary based on a variety

of factors. Admissions staff at each Concordia will work to help prospective students find grant and scholarship opportunities to assist in pursuing church work education. Contact the Concordia staff members for additional information and to discuss enrollment costs and tuition.

### Concordia University Chicago

Kyle Thoms  
Kyle.Thoms@CUChicago.edu  
708-209-3044  
[www.cuchicago.edu](http://www.cuchicago.edu)

### Concordia University Irvine

Carrie Donohoe  
carrie.donohoe@cui.edu  
949-214-3389  
[www.cui.edu](http://www.cui.edu)

### Concordia University Nebraska

Aaron Rohde  
Aaron.Rohde@cune.edu  
402-643-7233  
[www.cune.edu](http://www.cune.edu)

### Concordia University St. Paul

Breana Winnes  
winnes@csp.edu  
651-641-8718  
[www.csp.edu](http://www.csp.edu)

### Concordia University Wisconsin

Jeff Frosch | Admission@cuw.edu  
512-420-3343  
[www.cuw.edu](http://www.cuw.edu)

## Seminary Education

God has blessed the LCMS with two excellent seminaries – Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri and Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

In all programs, certification by seminary faculty is required before a candidate may receive a call to serve as a pastor in the LCMS. The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod offers various seminary study programs through its two seminaries.

## Residential Programs

The Master of Divinity (M.Div.) program is offered at both seminaries and forms two-thirds of LCMS pastoral ministry students. It involves three years of on-campus study, plus a one-year vicarage (internship). Graduates receive a M.Div. degree and may proceed to additional graduate-level study. Ordinarily, a baccalaureate degree is required for admission.

## Residential Alternate Route (RAR/AR)

This program at both seminaries is open to laymen and male ministers of religion – commissioned who meet specific eligibility requirements involving both age and length of service. The program involves a shorter period of study than the M.Div. program (approximately one year less), and it does not utilize Hebrew in the study of the Old Testament. It does not result in the awarding of an academic degree, though some students in this program may also qualify for admission to the Master of Arts degree program.

## Non-Residential Programs

The Center for Hispanic Studies (CHS) is operated by Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, and offers seminary level pastoral and deaconess formation in the Spanish language. Prior to entering the seminary level, students complete entrance or congregational level preparatory courses. At the seminary level, courses are delivered through short-term intensive courses given on campus or at extension-satellite sites. Some courses are taught online. The curriculum

# Efforts to Recruit Church Workers



## Specific Ministry Pastor–Español/English Program (SMP-EsE)

is a cost-conscious, distance-based, Spanish-language program of theological education offered by Concordia Theological

Seminary/Fort Wayne. The program works in cooperation with Hispanic theological educators from Seminario Concordia el Reformador in the Dominican Republic, and around Latin America for the pastoral formation of Hispanic/Latino men serving in an LCMS Hispanic Ministry.

The program follows the basic structure, guidelines and restrictions of the regular SMP program, but it is focused on preparing bilingual Hispanics/Latinos for service to the Lord's Church in a bilingual Español/English context. Each SMP-EsE is mentored by an experienced LCMS pastor during and after his program of study. ■

*Additional Information on Both Seminaries is Available:*

Concordia Seminary  
801 Seminary Place  
St. Louis, MO 63105  
admit@csl.edu  
(800) 822-9545

Concordia Theological  
Seminary  
6600 N. Clinton Street  
Fort Wayne, IN 46825  
admission@ctsfw.edu  
(260) 452-2155

takes serious consideration of how confessional Lutheran theology is applied in various United States Hispanic/Latino communities. Students serve a two-year concurrent vicarage or deaconess internship under the mentorship of local LCMS pastors. Eligible students can also apply to a M.A. through the Graduate School.

## Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (EIT)

The Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology is a specialized online education program from Concordia Seminary/St. Louis. The program provides theological education and formation for effective pastoral leadership within immigrant-based churches. The program is created for men providing pastoral leadership from within an ethnic immigrant community associated with the LCMS. Participants have the approval and support of their home congregation and the LCMS district where they serve. Each student is supervised by an experienced LCMS pastor.

## Cross-Cultural Ministry Center (CMC)

has been established by Concordia University/Irvine, CA, in conjunction with Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, and the LCMS Pacific Southwest District. The CMC program prepares men for ordained ministry to serve

in the sociocultural contexts of specific ethnic populations and multicultural communities.

## Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) Program

is a distance-based, specialized program of theological education available at both seminaries. It is available to those involved in a ministry site where they will serve as vicars for the first two years of the program. After successful completion of the first two years and certification by the seminary faculty, students are ordained and complete two more years of instruction. Participants have the approval and support of their home congregation and the LCMS district where they serve. Each SMP is supervised by an experienced LCMS pastor during and after his program of study, and each program faces restrictions concerning service in the pastoral ministry.

## Specific Ministry Pastor to General Pastor Certification (GPC)

is offered at Concordia Seminary/St. Louis. The program is designed specifically for pastors who have completed the SMP program and desire to continue study in order to be eligible for roster as a General Pastor in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod removing the restrictions of service as an Specific Ministry Pastor.

# Pastors and Lay Leaders Gather in Orlando for



*The Rev. Dr. Thomas Egger (left), president of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and the Rev. Dr. Jon Bruss, president of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, listen to attendees during a session hosted at [Christ the King/Orlando](#)*

The Pastoral Formation Committee (PFC), formed at the 2016 convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), is tasked with “ensuring that the Synod’s objective of training pastors is fulfilled consistently” and considering “the long term strategic direction of pastoral formation within the Synod.”

The PFC has sought input from across the Synod of pastors, circuit visitors, district presidents and laity. Much of this in the past few years has been in providing reports in response to the 2023 LCMS convention. Earlier this year it was announced that the PFC would be holding “Listening Sessions” in each of the Synod’s five regions.

The East-Southeast Region was the first to host, with its Orlando event taking place the day after the first session in Maryland. The intent of these events is to seek input by interested individuals and congregations and share their perspectives on LCMS pastoral formation, needs, concerns and opportunities, both now and in the future.

The Orlando listening session was held on March 27 at [Christ the King/Orlando, FL](#) with approximately 35 laity, pastors and church workers attending.

“Synod attendees included President Thomas Egger, Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, MO; President Jon Bruss, Concordia Theological Seminary/Fort Wayne, IN; The Rev. Daniel M. Galchutt, Executive Director LCMS Office of National Mission, and The Rev. James Baneck, Executive Director of the LCMS Office of Pastoral Education,” offered The Rev. Eric Sahlberg, FLGA District Executive Director for Missions and Outreach.

“The PFC members shared opening remarks and then listened to the perspectives on pastoral education shared by the session attendees.

Others attending from FLGA included The Revs. Dan Prugh, Holy Trinity/Tampa, FL; Mike Hanel, Bethany/Leesburg, FL; Andy Ritchie, St. Paul/Lakeland, FL; Ed DeWitt, Redeemer/Sanford, FL and Scott Gress, coach and SMP adjunct instructor. The SELC District was

represented by The Rev. Tony Steinbronn, a retired District President and current interim pastor at Good Shepherd/Titusville, FL. Also attending from the SELC District was The Rev. Ben Hoyer from the Central Florida Cross Network. The Cross Network includes congregations in Lake Mary, Mt. Dora and Orlando.

“I am happy the committee is listening to congregations,” stated The Rev. Charles Reich, pastor at [Grace/Winter Haven, FL](#) and 3rd Vice President of the FLGA District. “Attendees shared with the committee the dire need for more pastors both for our existing congregations in Florida-Georgia and especially for the mission opportunities of our states. It was noted that during the next decade, our two states are expected to grow by roughly 3.5 million people — about the current population of Iowa. The committee received questions and gave answers about the quality of residential based pastoral formation as well as maintaining alternate routes towards ordination. There was quite a bit of discussion about the values and challenges of online learning. Educational costs were also a topic brought up in several different ways from different perspectives; educational debt, tuition being paid for the student by seminary endowments, district aid and local congregation support.

Several attendees advocated a desire to study models used in the early church and how that might fit our context today. A number of the attendees voiced a desire to change the current model, advocating that simply maintaining the status quo is not only insufficient for supplying the present need, but it misses the mission opportunity.”

“I left the Listening Session encouraged — but not overly optimistic. I am heartened by the number of people, both pastor and

# Listening Sessions on Future Clergy Formation

lay, who participated in the event,” reported The Rev. David Brockhoff, pastor at **Holy Trinity/Masaryktown, FL** and 2nd Vice President of the FLGA District. “I am encouraged by the panel’s effort to actively listen and seek clarity and understanding before responding to the variety of questions, comments, and concerns.

“The way the panel acknowledged the data regarding congregational decline and pastoral vacancy, however, I did not pick up the same sense of urgency that I often hear from pastors and congregations in my purview

regarding the same. Furthermore I do not share their optimism for reclaiming or creating a congregational/church culture wherein sons of the congregation are highly motivated to consider a pastoral vocation,” Brockhoff continued. “My lack of optimism is not due to the effort Set Apart to Serve will exert to focus congregations on the desirability and possibility of such a culture; rather, I am not optimistic about the number of sons in our congregations whom we might encourage. I suspect pastors who shepherd congregations with schools will view that possibility with much greater hope.”

According to Eric Sahlberg, the session clearly demonstrated a mutual commitment to the training of quality pastors, a commitment that grows out of the Lutheran conviction that pastors stand in the stead of Christ.

Many of the comments and concerns placed before the PFC during these listening sessions related to filling vacant FLGA

District congregations — due to the increased cost of living and family ties in the Midwest.

While the LCMS has long enjoyed a residentially trained route to ordination, some Coastal vs. Midwest districts see multiple pathways to ordination, such as the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program, as a



Eric Sahlberg



David Brockhoff



Charles Reich

way to address pastoral shortages and keep future pastors within the community. Some concerns expressed by attendees revolved around requirements in the “Policy Requirements for the Specific Ministry Pastor Program (SMP)” document finalized and distributed in November 2025 by the PFC — most commonly the requirement that, ordinarily, those admitted be at least 40 years old.

“The 40-years-of-age requirement was not arrived at arbitrarily,” President Egger underscored. “Men who are younger than 40 have a higher attrition rate in the [SMP] program — which not only hurts the candidate for ministry, but also the congregation that the SMP vicar or pastor serves. It is disruptive to the life of the congregation where that man has begun to serve and has been regarded as, in some sense, the pastor in that place.”

The PFC expressed appreciation for the needs the SMP program can fill and its proper place in the life

of the church. “But for the regular preparation of pastors in the M.Div. route, we are of the conviction that the quality of education and the quality of formation that’s able to be delivered in a residential context is far superior to other modes of delivery,” President Bruss said.

“Concordia Theological Seminary is firmly committed to a residential program. While at seminary the men are assigned a field work church. Then they go on vicarage. The residential program is the best.” Bruss also shared the fact that both seminaries have hundreds of years of collective experience that cannot be replaced in

other settings. Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne has 25 faculty and Concordia Seminary in St. Louis has 35 faculty. “Our seminaries are a place of formation with a peer group of students. It’s an intense time. And for those reasons the residential program is best.

Bruss clearly expressed that he is not against the SMP program. He contended that all Biblically conservative denominations have remained primarily residential including LCMS, WELS, Catholics, and Orthodox. They do not offer online options.

The concern of the seminary presidents is that online training will decrease the overall number of LCMS pastors. President Tom Egger shared that Concordia Seminary has residential, online and hybrid. He reminded attendees that he has been consistent with these three options for the past five years. “We are committed to a ‘both and’ approach.”

Egger also shared that we need alternate route programs along with the M.Div. We have had SMP (hybrid)

*[continued next page]*

# Pastors and Lay Leaders Gather in Orlando for

*[from previous page]*

for four years, Center for Hispanic Studies (CHS), and Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (EIIT) for first generation immigrants.

“Concordia Seminary takes seriously its calling to form shepherds for God’s sheep. We want to be honest about maintaining residential full-time options,” Egger continued. “But we need residential training to be the center of gravity. We don’t want any illusions that the status quo is sufficient. We need to strengthen evangelism and church planting.”

President Egger went on to share that the seminary presidents’ “do not have their heads in the sand.” He said, “I spend the majority of my time with the church listening to District Presidents and our pastors in congregations. We engage other theological schools. Covenant Seminary (PCA in St. Louis) went fully online with M.Div. 12 years ago. It completely gutted their residential program. When they made that switch the incoming class was just three candidates — and there used to be approximately 90 candidates in residential.

“The new Covenant Seminary president shared with president Egger that Covenant is working hard at rebuilding residential and now has 22 incoming students. The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) is ‘residential only’ and they have incoming classes of 35 men.

The LCMS equivalent ratio to WELS would be 170 people at CSL and CTSFW,” Egger said, “Wouldn’t it be awesome to look at the challenges and opportunities to do this together? What if we were more open-handed and see where these future pastors will serve?”

The Rev. Roy Maack, Emeritus District President of the LCMS Southeastern District, was in attendance. Maack graduated from Concordia Seminary in 1956 and is now 94. He shared that he has witnessed a lot of interesting things.

At one point, Joe Farlen, age 70, of **Forest Lutheran/Silver Springs, FL** expressed concerns about the vacancies. He shared that the SMP program costs a candidate about \$60,000! He asked, “How am I going



Roy Maack



Dan Prugh



Mike Hanel

The Rev. Dr. Dan Prugh, **Holy Trinity/Tampa, FL** shared the fact that there are two different issues here. “It was great to talk directly with the seminary and Synod leadership about Pastoral Formation. I hope that I made the point clear that our Synod has two separate issues to deal with as we move into the future.

“The first issue is Pastoral Formation. I do agree that we need to continue to assess and improve our current residential and

alternative route programs to give our pastors the best training. The second issue is the large-scale clergy retirement that is here today. Based

to spend that at a 19-member church? But if I were to go to seminary it’s free. Why can’t we use technology? The technology is neither good nor evil, but it’s how you use it.”

President Bruss responded, “Residential is not guaranteed to be free tuition. It is important to partner with the congregation and the District. The combined funding follows students into the program.”

President Egger also shared, “We’re looking at financial aid for SMP.” Egger then explained the financial burden of the SMP program on the seminary. The SMP program costs three times the amount than to run the residential program. Egger emphasized that the seminary is happy to provide the SMP program, but there is a disproportionate cost burden. In the residential class room there is a professor/student ration of 1 to 24. In the SMP program, the ratio is 1 to 8.

on December 2024 statistics in the FLGA District, in ten years there will not be enough pastors under 65 years of age to serve the current 69 congregations in the District that worship an average of 100+ on Sunday morning. We would be 16 men short based on that data. I believe that a clear strategy needs to be developed and presented by the Synod to address this urgent issue.”

Bruss responded, “We have about 700 calling congregations. We need to have about 5-10% vacancies for movement in the Synod. For example, when your time is up at Holy Trinity, you’ll need a vacancy someplace else so you can move on.” Bruss admitted that the current vacancy rate is a little too high right now.

Prugh went on and expressed a second concern about a demographic cliff in the clergy roster. He explained how he asked for the

# Listening Sessions on Future Clergy Formation

birth years for the district's pastors and he put them in a spreadsheet. "It's very concerning — the age of the clergy!" Prugh explained, "Mike Hanel and I attend circuit meetings and we say to ourselves, "In 10 years it's just us! We don't want to be put in a position where we are pastoring 15 different congregations a decade from now." Prugh went on to share that the Seminaries could exceed 200 graduates, and we still would not have enough pastors.

Egger agreed, "It's a very complex challenge. There may be mergers in the future. We absolutely need more pastors." Prugh expressed his concern. "I left the FLGA district at 32 and I came back at age 40.

Where are the young guys? There were 24 guys younger than me in the entire FLGA district in calendar year 2024." Egger shared, "This is really important! The number of 75–85-year-old pastors in our Synod is the same number as the 25–35-year-old pastors. We absolutely have to encourage more young men into ministry."

Prugh questioned whether the seminary has considered recent trends to meet this demand.

"We cannot reclaim what we had in 1956!" FLGA District President Emeritus, The Rev. Dr. Gerhard Michael expressed his desire for us to consider various routes — while it is daytime. We must do the work of Him who sent Christ. Night is coming when no one can work, Brockhoff elaborated. "In my circuit we have two worker-priests because the income is not enough to afford to live in that area. The SMP needs to

step up more for the worker-priest situation."

Pastor Mike Hanel of **Bethany/Leesburg, FL** shared, "Being out in the parish is a little scary because in 10 years it will be me and no one else. For myself, I went straight through the system. I was adequately prepared. I graduated in 2007 with about 150 seminarians. But I think it is important we do not give SMP a disservice and simply lump it in with online education. SMP is



Anthony Steinbronn



Ed DeWitt



Andy Ritchie

hybrid. I have high stakes in my own SMP guy's success. It is an ongoing education. Being a disciple is lifelong.

"There are shortcomings to residential in the way men deal with congregations. Sometimes their 'people's skills' are lacking. The seminary does not train us in how to lead meetings and how to address conflicts. The apprenticeship track with SMP guys is a true gift. SMP is not second rate," Hanel said.

"The committee spent the majority of its presentation and response efforts promoting one model of theological education — the residential model of pastoral formation — and minimizing proven informal and alternative models of theological education that fully form pastors that meet the biblical and confessional standard," underscored The Rev. Dr. A. J. (Tony) Steinbronn. "It is the observation of many judicatory leaders that it takes an

average weekly worship attendance of 100 in order to adequately compensate a pastor, maintain and operate a ministry site, and provide the necessary programming to meet the ministry needs of His people; if that is indeed the case, less than one-third of LCMS congregations meet that "viability" threshold — so how do we sufficiently compensate those who serve within the pastoral office, provide pastoral care and ministry in the lives of His people, and extend His kingdom through church planting? My strong recommendation is that we significantly expand the SMP formation program to meet those ministry objectives through the addition of part-time adjunct faculty at our seminaries and

the theological faculty within our Concordia Universities.

"Could a Bachelor of Divinity degree (B.D.) be offered within our Concordia University system, with the student being assigned to a local LCMS congregation for his field work ministry practicums; followed by a one- or two-year vicarage placement, with credentialing from one of our seminaries or through the colloquy interview process?" Steinbronn questioned.

The Rev. Eric Sahlberg expressed his sincere appreciation for the Synod and seminary representation at the meeting. "As a second-career pastor I have deep appreciation for my residential training at Concordia Seminary. Those years in St. Louis were some of the best years for my family." He encouraged the attendees "if you are considering seminary, please book a flight and visit St. Louis or Ft. Wayne. Explore it

for yourself.” Sahlberg underscored that the seminary taught him how to think about things with a Lutheran mind, how to think about things theologically and practically. He expressed the need to recognize that during the next decade Florida and Georgia are expected to grow by 3.5 million people. More church workers are needed including pastors, deaconesses, directors of Christian Education and Lutheran educators are needed to keep pace with that growth.

Pastor Ed DeWitt of **Redeemer/Sanford, FL** shared how he went to seminary in 1991 and he went to school full-time. He expressed his love for the residential track. That said, pastor DeWitt stated, “I am at a small church of 40-50 people. This church is going to struggle to call a pastor, so it is delaying my retirement. Where are the guys who are going to the seminary?”

Pastor Maack asked about people coming into the LCMS from other denominations. The answer was about 25-30 apply to Synod per year with Florida-Georgia and California leading the way.

Pastor Andy Ritchie of **St. Paul/Lakeland, FL** shared how he sent five SMP pastors through the Concordia Seminaries. We need to acknowledge these guys are fully ordained guys, give them a voice, vote and be able to move around.

Other attendees noted that pastoral formation does not end

when seminary classes are completed; both lay and ordained attendees expressed a desire for ongoing training as part of ongoing pastoral service in the LCMS.

Most of the attendees found the listening sessions helpful and appreciated the willingness of the PFC members to visit and speak with them face to face. While the PFC spent significant time with key leaders, pastors, district conventions and laypeople across the LCMS — for example, attending 20 district conventions last summer — to craft

“You can believe that everything that we heard, we take home and think about it,” Baneck stated.

“This event maintained a consistently collegial tone, creating a space where conversation felt both personal and purposeful,” Sahlberg emphasized. “Throughout the sessions, leadership stayed attentive to the specific concerns of those present — most of whom are active pastors serving in a variety of ministry contexts. Rather than taking a top-down approach, the presenters engaged questions and

concerns with genuine empathy, recognizing the real pressures of parish life today while offering steady guidance.

“At the same time, this pastoral warmth was balanced by a clear commitment to **excellence in ministry**.

“The conference underscored the vital importance of well-prepared, professionally trained Lutheran clergy, framing rigorous theological education not as an academic luxury, but as a necessary tool for the health of the Church,” Sahlberg concluded. “By validating the practical challenges faced by pastors while championing high standards of preparation, the

PFC reinforced a shared vision of a ministry that is both deeply compassionate and intellectually grounded.” ■



*Concordia Theological Seminary / Fort Wayne, IN*



*Concordia Seminary / St. Louis, MO*

the guidance offered to the Synod regarding pastoral formation, the committee appreciated hearing from more LCMS people and remains committed to ensuring that LCMS congregations have both the quantity and quality of pastors who will serve the church for years to come.

# DID YOU KNOW?

- The LCMS has roughly **5,800** churches.
- The Florida-Georgia District has **28** calling congregations served by interim pastors.
- At the end of 2025, LCMS reported that about **22%** of its congregations (approximately **1,300** churches) were vacant.
- FLGA currently has **10** non-calling congregations currently being served by interim pastors.
- Around **608** of these vacant congregations are actively in the call process to find a new pastor.
- Both Florida and Georgia are projected to see substantial population increases during the next decade (leading up to 2035), though recent census data indicates the breakneck pace of the early 2020s is beginning to stabilize. Combined, the two states expect to add more than **3.5 million** new residents in the next 10 years.
- The remaining +/- **700** congregations are in a state of "indefinite vacancy." They are not currently approved or are unable to issue a call.
- Florida remains one of the fastest-growing states in the United States – growth driven by domestic and international migration rather than natural birth rates.
- FLGA has **192** congregations – **24** being served by Specific Ministry Pastors, along with several churches served by Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology and Concordia House of Studies graduates.
- Florida's Current population is approximately **23.5 million** residents with a 2035 projection expected to reach **26 million**.

# Christ IN OUR CHAOS

The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS) Florida-Georgia District hosted its “Veterans of the Cross” (VOC) retreat March 9-11, 2026, in Titusville, Florida, providing a dedicated space for spiritual renewal and fellowship for retired church workers. Held annually, this gathering serves retired pastors, teachers, and other professional church workers and lay leaders along with their spouses.

The retreat is designed to honor their decades of service while addressing the unique transitions of retirement.

The 2026 theme was “Christ in Our Chaos” — celebrating the eternal security and freedom found in Jesus Christ, even when personal or global circumstances feel overwhelming. The theme was chosen to memorialize the 25th anniversary of the 9-11 terrorist attacks in 2001. It also commemorated the 250th anniversary of the United States.

Keynote speakers were The Rev. Dr. Gerald Kieschnick (former President of the LCMS) and his wife, Terry, along with the Rev. Dr. David

Benke (former President of the Atlantic District) and his wife, Judy. All four speakers brought personal experiences, sharing stories of faith during some of the most “chaotic” moments in recent history, illustrating how Christ remains a constant source of strength. Moving and somber curated collection of images provided a visual reflection on the chaos of 9-11.

Both Kieschnick and Benke shared their experiences — particularly with the interfaith prayer service held at Yankee Stadium — “A Prayer for America” — that took place on September 23, 2001, twelve days after the terrorist attacks, to honor the victims, their families, and the first responders.

VOC attendees participated in worship services and Bible studies, that focused on maintaining a vibrant spiritual life and staying connected to the mission of the LCMS after formal retirement.

The L. Lloyd Behnken Retreat Medallion is a prestigious award presented by the LCMS Florida-Georgia District to honor individuals for their

exceptional service and dedication to ministry. Behnken served as the President of the Florida-Georgia District from 1969 to 1987. Individuals who have modeled the “servant-leader” heart within the church community are honored each year.



**Rev. Dr. Rick Armstrong** served for more than 25 years in the parish ministry of the FLGA District was honored. His first call after Concordia Seminary was to start a congregation in north Atlanta. Rick served that congregation — Timothy/Woodstock, GA until 1990 (while there he helped start Savior of All/Cartersville, GA. In 1990 he accepted a call to be Co-Pastor at Ascension/Casselberry, FL (1990-

1994). In 1994 he accepted the call to be Senior Pastor at Grace Lutheran Church and School/St. Petersburg, FL and served there more than ten years. While at Grace he received his Doctor of Ministry Degree in Marriage and Family Counseling from Gordon-Conwell Seminary Hamilton, MS. Also, while at Grace he co-authored “God’s Care in Times of Crisis” and “God’s Care For Congregations in Times of Crisis” manuals for selecting and training crisis teams in Christian Schools and Churches to prepare for, respond to and provide aftercare in crisis situations.

In August, 2004 Rev. Dr. Armstrong accepted a call to serve as Associate Director of Lutheran Counseling Services in Winter Park, FL., He chaired the original steering committee and the Board of Directors at LCS for eight years. Rick eventually served as Operations Coordinator at LCS and then Executive Director until 2019. He is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in the State of Florida, a Florida Approved Clinical Supervisor and a Certified Pastoral Counselor.



# DISTRICT CELEBRATES VETERANS OF THE CROSS



**Mark Brink**

is a Commissioned Minister of Religion. He attended St. John's Lutheran School and the Lutheran School Association of Decatur, IL, from Kindergarten-eighth grade. Then he graduated from Stephen Decatur High School in 1970.

Mark attended Concordia College/River Forest, IL, and graduated in 1975.

He received his placement call to teach at Concordia/ Springfield, IL, where he had 32 9th graders. He taught every subject except Spanish and Science and he also coached the boys' and girls' basketball teams.

In 1976 Advent Lutheran Middle School in Boca Raton, FL called Mark to teach, coach and serve as Youth Director.

It was at Advent that he met Mary Beth Bickel. They married in 1977. While in Boca, the Brinks were blessed with the birth of son Brian in 1981 and son Andrew in 1983.

Mark accepted a Call to serve as principal at Redeemer/Columbus, GA, and later to Faith/Marietta, GA, where son Joshua was born in 1988.

In February of 1993, Mark received the Call to serve as Director of Parish Services for the Florida-Georgia District. During his 28-year tenure in that position, Mark worked directly with school principals and educators as he coached numerous schools, preschools, and youth groups thrive. He served admirably as Executive Director of School and Youth Ministry until his retirement in 2021.

Mark and Mary Beth moved to Minneola, FL in March of 2022, where they enjoy a lake life — with a boat and a convertible. They enjoy cruising the waterways of Central Florida's vast chain of lakes.



**The Rev. Jon Henry Geyer Zehnder**

Proverbs 3:5-6 is Jon's confirmation verse and it became his life of faith verse: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight."

Pastor Zehnder was born on April 1, 1956, on Easter Sunday (and April Fool's Day). His maternal great grandfather, Arthur Eggers, was a Lutheran Educator and Principal, and his paternal great grandfather, George Zehnder, another Lutheran Educator and Principal. The Zehnder family has abundant

examples of relatives who answered the call to serve in pastoral ministry.

Jon's faith was not only shaped at home, but he was blessed to attend Lakewood Lutheran School and Lutheran High West in Cleveland, where he met his wife and life partner, Joni Petri. He first attended Concordia Junior College in Ann Arbor, MI, graduating in 1978, with a BA in Biblical Studies, and a minor in Greek and Humanities. Jon and Joni were married on June 10, 1978, and headed off to Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, MO.

Jon's vicarage was in Rochester, NY, where Jon and Joni's son Jason was born.

Returning to Saint Louis, Jon completed his studies in 1982 and received his first call to Hope/Munger, MN. While at Hope, the Zehnder family sons, Joshua, Joel, and Jacob were born. During his ministry in Munger, Jon also served on the LCMS Board for Parish Services and the Concordia Publishing House Board of Directors.

*[continued next page]*



# Christ IN OUR CHAOS

In 1991, when he was 35, Pastor Zehnder received a Call to St. Michael/Fort Myers, FL. The campus provided opportunities to launch new ways for the growing church and school to serve the community: Interfaith Volunteer Care Providers, Alvin Dubin Alzheimer Center, Parish Nursing, LCEF Oasis Youth Shelter, Multicultural Center Backpack Giveaway, as well as new mission opportunities locally through the Circuit Outreach Council, and internationally in Liberia and the Dominican Republic.

Jon had the privilege to serve as a member and as President of Rotary, and, since 2009, he continues serving as a Fort Myers Fire Department Chaplain (twice receiving its Dedicated Service Award).

Serving Saint Michael and the District for 32 years, Jon has served as Circuit Counselor/Visitor, on the District Board of Directors, and as a Regional Vice President. Along with Rev. Dennis Bartels, he received the FLGA District Barnabas Award in 2015.

Working with his Board of Elders, Jon began the process of planning Pastoral Succession that would be more of a “baton pass.” Those plans were interrupted as Jon became an early “participant” in COVID, which by God’s grace and a lot of prayers, Jon survived. Saint Michael successfully saw their succession plans come to fruition in 2023.



## Julia Neimes

is not someone who set out to build an organization or create a legacy. She is someone who kept saying yes when God placed a need in front of her. Not once or twice, but over a lifetime. Through different seasons of life. In different places. Through moments of confidence and moments

of uncertainty.

Always guided by a simple question placed on her heart: How can the love of Jesus be shared, especially with those who might otherwise be left without access to His Word? Julia’s story begins where so many faithful stories begin, in the life of the Church.

Julia grew up as a farm girl in central Illinois at Saint Paul’s/Mattoon, IL. There, she was shaped by faithful women who showed her what Christian service looks like, not through speeches or programs, but through example. Teaching Sunday School, organizing church meals, preparing for Christmas and Easter Service. In other words, doing the kind of work that rarely draws attention, but quietly forms a life of faith. From these Christian sisters, Julia learned something essential. That serving Jesus is not about position or recognition. It is about presence. About showing up and being faithful in what is right in front of you and trusting God with the rest. That lesson showed itself early. As a young woman, Julia

volunteered alongside her mother and sister embossing Braille Bibles. Long before titles or leadership roles, she was already helping place the Word of God into the hands of people who could not see the printed page.

Julia trusted what we confess as Lutherans, that God’s Word does exactly what it promises to do. That calling never really left her. Even as her professional life took her into banking, the Postal Service, and later education, God kept placing the blind and visually impaired in her path. And each time, she paid attention. She listened. And she responded.

When a congregation needed a Braille work center, Julia was there, helping to set it up, training volunteers, and keeping the work going. When a Christian library was on the verge of closing, she did not simply watch it happen. She asked questions, sought partners, and found a way forward. When other likeminded ministries were struggling to survive on their own, she saw the



# DISTRICT CELEBRATES VETERANS OF THE CROSS

bigger picture and helped bring them together and when changing technology threatened to cut people off from Christian resources, she did not shy away from it. Rather, she learned, adapted, and made sure no one was left behind.

There were difficult moments along the way including moves, closures, relocations, and the COVID pandemic. All this while the buildings housing the library was in a deteriorated state and resources were stretched thin. Yet Julia did what Julia does, she prayed when the future of the ministry itself felt uncertain. God provided.

What we today know as the IRIS Lending Library for the Blind did not begin with a business plan or a grand strategy. It grew out of simple faithfulness, steady hands, patient hearts, and a great deal of prayer. It came from trusting that when God opens a door, He also provides the strength and the means to step through it. Today, through IRIS, people who are blind or visually impaired have access to Christian books in Braille,

large print, and audio. These resources do more than share information. They strengthen faith and deepen engagement with Scripture. IRIS opens hearts to the good news of Jesus Christ. Think about this . . . fingers moving gently over the raised dots, discovering words that come alive through touch. Each pattern of dots formed letters, each line a verse, and together they tell the story of God's love in a language of touch.

Scripture was not just read — but felt! And in that quiet exchange between hand and page, hearts opened to the living Word of Christ. Julia Neimes service embodies love for neighbor, and whose faithfulness continues to bring the light of the Gospel to those who walk by faith and not by sight.



*The President's Emeritus Club*  
 Front, from left, The Revs. Thomas Zehnder [FLGA], Gerald Kieschnick [LCMS/Synod], David Benke [Atlantic], Roy Maack [Southeastern]; back row, Gerhard Michael [FLGA], Anthony (Tony) Steinbronn [New Jersey], Greg Walton [FLGA] and James Rockey [Current FLGA District President].



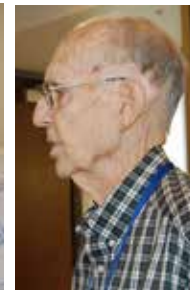
Both Rev. Dr. Jerry Kieschnick (former LCMS President) and Rev. Dr. David Benke (former President of the Atlantic District) are deeply tied to the church's response to the September 11 attacks, and are remembered and appreciated for the complex theological discussions that followed the "A Prayer for America" event at Yankee Stadium.



# DISTRICT CELEBRATES VETERANS OF THE CROSS



Members of the Armstrong family were present when The Rev. Dr. Rick Armstrong received his L. Lloyd Behnken Medallion.



## 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)



# New Florida-Georgia Mission Congregations Underway

The Florida Georgia District of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is deeply committed to reaching all people with the good news of Jesus Christ. Some of our newest Lutheran churches are in their earliest stages while others will be launching soon.

“These are multi-ethnic mission starts in the District. Some are up and running (Atlanta and Naples) and some are about to get started (St. Cloud/Lakeland and Port St Lucie). It’s a great lens to look at the Compelled Mission Advancement Initiative and how walking together we are making disciples of all nations in

the United States (Matthew 28; Acts 1:8),” exclaims The Rev. Eric Sahlberg, FLGA Executive Director for Missions and Outreach.

“Please keep these evolving congregations in your prayers! All FLGA District church plants are supported with two years of best-in-class, globally tested church plant training and church plant coaching in multiple languages.

“The LCMS provides church plant training and coaching primarily through the Office of National Mission and the Center for Missions and Evangelism. The “best-in-class” and most consistently applied models are

those that have been refined globally through international mission work and then adapted for domestic use,” Sahlberg continues. “This is the premier national training initiative. It provides a standardized framework based on three pillars: Witness, Mercy, and Life Together.

“In FLGA, church plant training and coaching are applied through a highly structured path that prioritizes congregational ownership and long-term sustainability. The district is currently executing a vision to plant 20 new churches by 2035.”



*Pastor Saint Luc Charelus and his wife, Annie, from **Siloe Haitian/Naples, FL***



*Vicar Dr. Gachena Denu and his wife, Zion, wearing traditional Ethiopian clothing on Easter. Denu is Vicar at **Atlanta Mekane Yesus Lutheran Church**, currently meeting at **Oak Road/Lilburn, GA** – about 20 minutes from Atlanta.*



*A new Haitian ministry will begin this coming summer, 2026, at **Grace/Port Saint Lucie, FL**. Second-year Vicar Claubert Pierre will serve.*



*A new Hispanic church plant at **Christ/Lakeland, FL** and **Grace/Saint Cloud, FL** is being led by The Rev. Wilfredo Ramirez.*



## The Mystery of Revitalization Part 5

Part of the incredible blessing of being a part of a Christian church is the love and care that is given and received. In the third century, the christian writer Turtullian wrote about the character and behavior of the Christian church when compared to the local Roman neighbors. He said "see how they love one another!" History records some amazing truth behind these words!

Indeed, in our bulletins and from our altars we hear many prayers for members about their hurts as well as joys. Thanks be to God! We enjoy gathering on Sunday to see again and renew faith ties with our brothers and sisters in Christ. What a blessing to be part of the communion of saints! Yet did not Jesus teach us also to love our neighbors?

Didn't Jesus tell the parable of the lost sheep in LUKE 15 where the good shepherd left the 99 and sought out the one? Then he returns with the sheep and urges people to rejoice with him? Likewise didn't Jesus urge the disciples in JOHN 4:35 to "...look up...see the fields are white to the harvest"? In fact, Jesus left heaven to come to this fallen world for our salvation.

All of these says something very powerfully about shifting our focus toward others rather than ourselves! That is then the third realm, shifting from internally

focused to externally focussed ministry. Perhaps over time we have developed a blind spot for this in our ways of "doing church." As our mission executive The Rev. Eric Sahlberg wrote in his recent Lutheran LIFE article, established churches tend to grow more slowly as they age. Shouldn't that be rare for those who know the love of Jesus?

What might be some clues that might indicate the need shift to an external focus? How often do you pray for your neighbors and friends, the harvest field, from that same altar? How often at board and committee meetings do you begin by reporting on your conversations with unbelievers and considering how you may love and bless them?

How clearly and up to date on your church's home web page are your service times, address and contact information? I am constantly amazed at how difficult it is to find such information when I look at many of our congregation's websites! Imagine the frustration of someone looking for a church for the first time! Perhaps we have a blind spot for those further from Jesus. Perhaps also there is no surprise that a church needs revitalization.

What to do? Your first instinct is likely to get busy inviting people to church. That's fine but it goes much deeper than that. Being a revitalized church is far more than just drawing a crowd. It begins with an attitude of selfless service like Jesus who "came not to be served but to serve" MATTHEW 20:28 and those motivated by the gospel who "love because He first loved us"

I JOHN 4:19.

An external focus is the "GPS" of your congregation motivated by Jesus. It asks, "how may we love those further from Jesus (our neighbors, our day school or pre-school parents who send their



**Scott Gress**  
The Coaching Leader  
Lutheran Coaching Network  
Leadership Training  
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561-542-4472

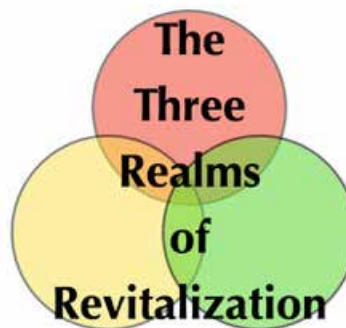
children to our campus)?" "How may we bless those who struggle with....(then fill in the blank from your personal conversations and research)."

Instead of seeking your own desires it is following the B.L.E.S.S. model: **B**e in prayer, **L**isten to their concerns, **E**at together, **S**erve them,

**S**hare your story (of faith). It will require an investment of time, energy, prayer, even anguish on the part of you and your church. But with every baptism you can rejoice just like the good shepherd who brought back the lost sheep!

The surprise?

Externally focused ministry has a funny way of helping us forget what we thought we wanted so much for ourselves! What joy it is to see someone confess faith in Christ for the first time! More can be said but we look forward to supporting you in shifting to a more external focus. Reach out to us to continue the conversation. ■



*Rev. Scott Gress is a Professional Certified Coach and believes in Growing People for Ministry with a focus on leadership, discipleship and teamwork. Check out The Coaching Leader podcast and Scott's YouTube channel for more on revitalization. Contact Scott if you are interested in working with him or your church: scottgress@me.com, scottgress.com or at 561-542-4472*

# 2026 President's Equip Conference Announced

Flourishing in a Changing World invites Lutheran educators, pastors, DCEs and lay leaders to gather in hope and shared purpose amid rapid cultural, technological, and ministry change.

According to President James Rockey, "this Florida-Georgia District Conference moves beyond the simple adoption of new tools to explore the ethical, theological, and instructional implications. Workshops and conversations will focus on worker well-being, vocation, and faithful leadership in a fast-paced world."

Grounded in Scripture and centered on Christ, participants will be strengthened through worship, keynote insights, and meaningful connection—leaving equipped to see change not as a threat, but as an opportunity for joyful, resilient, and flourishing ministry.

Registration will be opening in May, 2026. To learn more about sponsorships please contact Laura Zirbel at the FLGA District Office at [lzirbel@flgadistrict.org](mailto:lzirbel@flgadistrict.org)

## Save The Dates!



September 30 –  
October 2, 2026

## Keynote Speakers Announced!



Dr. Eugene Paul Kim is a Professor of Leadership and Organizational Change at Concordia University Irvine (CUI), where he also serves as Chair of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and a dissertation chair in the Ed.D. in Leadership program. He earned his Ph.D. in Social Sciences & Comparative Education from UCLA (2004). He also holds an M.A. in the same field and a B.S. in Psychobiology from UCLA. His focus includes organizational leadership, international education, faith-learning-vocation integration, and innovation. He specializes in mentoring doctoral students in sectors ranging from K-12 and higher education to non-profits and business. He co-founded House For Kids, which provided social and educational services to homeless mothers and children in Los Angeles.



Megan Miessler is the Executive Director and a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) at Lutheran Counseling Services (LCS) in Florida. She oversees the clinical and administrative operations of LCS and has served as Executive Director since 2013.

Megan specializes in counseling children, couples, and families. Her clinical focus includes play therapy, anxiety, depression, crisis intervention, and marriage therapy. She founded and leads the School Counseling Ministry at LCS, providing mental health support within private and public school settings. She has extensive experience in disaster response, assisting congregations and schools following tragedies in Florida, Virginia, and North Dakota. She earned her Master of Social Work (MSW) from the University of Central Florida and is a trained Director of Christian Education (DCE) through Concordia University/St. Paul, MN.

**WHEN:** September 30 – October 2, 2026  
**WHERE:** Rosen Centre Hotel,  
9840 International Drive  
Orlando, FL

Registration will be available in May 2026

Event sponsorships are available.

Please contact **Laura Zirbel** at [lzirbel@flgadistrict.org](mailto:lzirbel@flgadistrict.org)

# Called To Serve Event Held at St. Luke's/Oviedo May 23rd

Are you interested in a career in professional church work? The Rev. Jesse Kueker, director of Enrollment at Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, will be speaking at St. Luke's/Oviedo, FL on the doctrine of vocation and the status of enrollment at Concordia Seminary.

Prospective clergy and laity who are interested in pursuing a career in church work or helping recruit the next generation of church workers will find this informative. It will be held from 5-7 pm on Saturday, May 23, 2026. There is no cost to attend but prospective participants are asked to register online or call 800-822-9545. Online registraton is at csl.edu.

St. Luke's is located at  
2021 W State Road 426  
Oviedo, FL 32765



Jesse Kueker

## *Vocatio: High School is a fun opportunity for high school men and women entering grades 9 through 12 to explore God's guidance and direction for them*

**Vocatio: High School**, an annual weeklong visit event for high school students held on the campus of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, is set for June 20-26, 2026. The visit provides an introduction to Seminary life and the ministerial formation process. Specifically, the retreat offers young people the opportunity to explore the vocations of pastor and deaconess and consider future service in the church. Participants will engage in theological conversation, hear from Seminary professors and attend a Concordia University System college fair. Group

sessions will focus on thoughtful conversation about the Lutheran faith, aspects of vocation and the call to pastoral or diaconal ministry. Participants also will walk through the admissions process, learn about the St. Louis area, and engage in some fun and recreation!

"As I went through high school, I thought about pursuing several different vocations, including helping with my dad's business, going into youth ministry or studying to become a Lutheran teacher. While the idea of becoming a pastor was on

my mind as well, it wasn't until I visited the Seminary campus that the idea became a real possibility," said Rev. Craig Reiter, admissions officer. "It's a joy now to lead Vocatio: High School and I pray our youth are blessed by their time on campus and are encouraged toward considering church work like I was."

The registration fee is \$300, which includes lodging and meals. The deadline to register is May 31, 2026. Register at 800-822-9545. ■



Craig Reiter



# District's Rapid Growth Demands Mission Advancement Vision

Across Florida and Georgia, communities are growing rapidly. As a result, so is the opportunity for spreading the Gospel. The Florida-Georgia District has launched a Mission Advancement Initiative focused on planting new congregations, launching outreach ministries, and raising up church workers for the harvest.

"We invite you to prayerfully learn more about this effort and consider how you might join us in this important work as we trust God to guide and provide," offers The Rev. James Rockey, President of the FLGA District.

## NEW CHURCH PLANTS

"Of the total funds raised, \$6 million will be endowed to support new church plants throughout the District," he continues. "The earnings from this fund will support at least two new church mission start grants each year, providing \$150,000 for every new start."

The FLGA District celebrated its 75th anniversary in 2023. Since



its founding in 1948, God has grown this District from 22 congregations to nearly 200. Grateful for this history and eager to expand the reach of God's Kingdom, the FLGA District remains committed to establishing new congregations so that more hearts may be connected to Jesus.

## NEW OUTREACH MINISTRIES

"Of the total funds raised, \$2 million will be endowed to support new ministry starts launched from existing congregations," Rockey reinforces. "These earnings from this fund are expected to generate



more than \$100,000 annually – which will be distributed through Kingdom Seed Grants of up to \$10,000. These investments build on a compelling truth: new ministries and new churches reach significantly more new believers.

"As congregations across the FLGA District work to 'make disciple-makers,' we are compelled to strengthen their efforts through valuable resources like Kingdom Seed Investments. In 2024 alone, 13 congregations received Kingdom Seed Grants of up to \$10,000 to launch new ministries that connect people in their communities to Jesus. Many others received \$300 Miracle Grow Grants to support a wide range of outreach initiatives."

## RAISING UP NEW CHURCH WORKERS

"Of the funds raised, \$2 million will be endowed to support the studies of new church work students through financial aid – generating more than \$100,000 annually. Over the past three years, scholarship requests from students

preparing for ministry have nearly tripled," he stresses. "At the same time, expanded church planting will require

even more trained and rostered workers to serve these new missions."

Choosing a vocation in ministry is a life-shaping commitment. Whether becoming a pastor, teacher, Director of Christian



Education (DCE), or another ministry professional, students must weigh many factors – including the financial realities of higher education. To ensure that cost never becomes an *obstacle* to answering God's call, the FLGA District remains dedicated to supporting future church workers through a strong and sustainable Student Financial Aid Program. ■

# Empowering the Next Generation: Faith, Friendship, and Impact in Youth Ministry



## Orange Nation Young Adult Servant Event

Get ready for the 2026 **Orange Nation Young Adult Servant Event**, happening July 23–26 in Detroit, MI, at Camp Restore. The camp is a ministry of historic Mount Calvary Lutheran Church and School, RAI Ministries, and is supported by the Michigan District of the LCMS. Young adults (groups or individuals) ages 18–30 are encouraged to register to serve, learn, and share the love of Christ with others.

Cost: Registration is \$295.

Information: [NationOrange@gmail.com](mailto:NationOrange@gmail.com)

The theme this year is “IN HIM” based on Acts 17:28. Even as we prepare to serve, we want to remember that it is through our Lord and Savior Jesus that we Live, Move and have our Being!

In Him we LIVE: Through Bible Study, devotions and singing worship songs we will be reminded that by ourselves we are hurtful, prideful and full of sin. But in Jesus we receive grace and a new life.

In Him we MOVE: Through Christ’s Love, and not of ourselves, we will serve the Detroit community. We will be working alongside camp restore and their partners throughout the weekend. In Him we have our Being: We are children of God and will Gather in fellowship and worship.

## LCMS U Campus Ministry Staff Conference

Supporting college students and young adults in your congregation and community doesn’t have to be complicated, but it does require intention. As they navigate transitions, questions, and new responsibilities, young adults benefit deeply from a church community that values them and invests in their growth.

This summer provides opportunities for sharpening skills, building community, and serving in the name of Jesus. Highlighted on this page are opportunities for church workers to invest in their service to college students and for young adults to serve together in Detroit.

**The LCMS U Campus Ministry Staff Conference** is taking place June 4–5 in Lawrence, KS. Campus ministry leaders from across the Synod will gather for two days of learning, connection, and encouragement. Centered on the theme “From Generation to Generation,” the conference will offer plenary presentations, breakout sessions, and roundtable discussions designed for idea-sharing, strengthening networks, and deepening theological engagement for pastors, DCEs, deaconesses, and laypeople serving in campus ministry.

Cost: Registration is free.

Lodging: Attendees will receive a complimentary single-occupancy hotel room on June 4 on a first-come, first-served basis.

Meals: Provided during the conference.

Information and registration here: [lcms.regfox.com/lcms-u-campus-ministry-staff-conference-2026](https://lcms.regfox.com/lcms-u-campus-ministry-staff-conference-2026)

## National Lutheran Youth Workers Slated For July, 2027 in San Antonio

“National 27” is the next **National Lutheran Youth Workers Conference for the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod**. Scheduled for July 14–17, 2027, in San Antonio, Texas, the conference serves as a standalone event for youth ministry practitioners — including pastors, Directors of Christian Education (DCEs), and lay leaders — to equip and encourage them in their service to young people. The purpose is to connect and resource those who serve youth in the Church and

to help adult leaders prepare for the upcoming 2028 LCMS Youth Gathering — scheduled for July 3–7, 2028, also in San Antonio, TX.

While primarily for adult leaders, limited spots are available for high school students specifically participating in YouthLead training with some scholarship opportunities.

Registration opens this summer, 2026 and details will appear in Lutheran LIFE.

**Save the Date for NATIONAL27**

- July 14–17, 2027
- InterContinental San Antonio Riverwalk Hotel
- Hotel Rate: \$142/night + tax
- Registered participants who stay in the conference hotel receive a transferable, complimentary registration to the 2028 LCMS Youth Gathering

Please note, there will *not* be a YouthLead track at NATIONAL27. For youth interested in building their leadership skills make plans to join us at a future YouthLead training.

# Protecting Creative Integrity: The Global Push for Stricter Copyright Enforcement

From time to time, a congregation, school, or ministry receives a letter alleging unauthorized use of a photograph on its website. The letter often comes from a copyright enforcement company acting on behalf of a photographer or agency, and the amount demanded may seem disproportionate to the use at issue.

When such a letter arrives, it should neither be ignored nor treated as a crisis. It should be evaluated carefully and deliberately. These claims are becoming more common for a straightforward reason. Enforcement has become automated. Many companies now use web-crawling software powered by artificial intelligence and reverse image recognition tools to scan publicly accessible websites. These automated systems capture images and compare them against databases of licensed works.

When a match is identified, the system generates a claim. In most instances, no one is personally targeting a particular ministry. It is software operating at scale across thousands of websites each day. Because the process is automated and inexpensive to run, the number of these claims will continue to increase. Because these claims arise under federal law, it is important to understand the legal framework that governs them.

Copyright is regulated exclusively by the federal Copyright Act, 17 U.S.C. § 101 et seq., and federal law preempts state equivalents. That means there is no Florida or Georgia statute that shields a church from a copyright infringement claim, and nonprofit status does not create immunity. At the same time, the statute places meaningful limits on what may be recovered, and those limits should be understood before any payment is considered.

Under 17 U.S.C. § 507(b), a claim must be filed within three years of accrual. Timing matters, but registration timing matters even more. Under 17 U.S.C. § 412, statutory damages and attorney's fees are available only if the work was registered before the alleged infringement began or within three months of first publication.

If registration was not timely, the claimant is generally limited to actual damages and any proven profits attributable to the use under 17 U.S.C. § 504(b). Statutory damages, when available under § 504(c), are assessed per work, not per visitor, not per click, and not per day of display. Courts retain discretion within the statutory range, and innocent, noncommercial use is treated differently from willful infringement.

If statutory damages are unavailable because registration was untimely, recovery is typically measured by the fair market value of a license for the specific use. In most ministry website situations involving a single image and no commercial revenue, that amount is often far less than the numbers cited in demand letters.

Whether statutory damages and attorney's fees are available can dramatically change exposure, which is why proof of registration timing is critical. The first practical step upon receiving a demand is to remove the image while the claim is evaluated, since continued display after notice increases risk. What should not occur is an immediate admission of liability before proof is produced. A demand letter is not evidence. Documentation should be requested establishing ownership, chain of title, enforcement authority, registration number and effective date, date of first publication, the specific URL involved, dates of alleged display, and the basis for the damages calculation. Ministries are entitled to require proof before payment is made, and doing so reflects responsible leadership rather than resistance.

This situation also presents a stewardship issue. Many website images are selected in good faith by volunteers or staff who are unaware of licensing requirements. Automated enforcement tools do not distinguish between commercial enterprises and churches or schools. While good faith does

not eliminate infringement, it may affect how damages are evaluated. Going forward, ministries should adopt clear internal policies requiring properly licensed stock images, documented Creative Commons permissions, or original photography. Preventative diligence is far less costly than reactive



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response.

Although there is no statutory obligation to respond to a private demand letter within a fixed number of days, formal legal process must not be ignored. If a complaint is filed and served, or if a DMCA notice is issued through a hosting provider, deadlines become real and must be honored promptly. Technology will continue to change the environment in which ministry operates. Artificial intelligence and automated monitoring systems are now part of that landscape. Yet faithfulness does not change. Churches and schools operate within the law, respect the rights of others, and also protect the ministries entrusted to their care from unsupported or inflated claims. Acting calmly, requiring proof, documenting carefully, and responding deliberately reflects both integrity and prudence. The Church has always ministered in changing cultural and technological settings. Each new tool brings new responsibilities. Our calling remains steady. We conduct ourselves honorably, steward what has been entrusted to us, and act neither carelessly nor fearfully, but faithfully. Even in something as ordinary as a website image, we bear witness to Christ through diligence, honesty, and wise leadership. When handled rightly, even a demand letter can become an opportunity to demonstrate careful stewardship and steady Christian confidence. ■

# FLORIDA GEORGIA

## *Out and About in the District*

On Palm Sunday, **Prince of Peace/Orlando, FL** hosted a community Easter Egg Hunt where they got to share the Easter Story with more than 225 children and their families. Participants began the fun by joining one of the Egg Hunts that started every 15 minutes.

While families waited, Pastor Ken Green got to tell the Easter story to those waiting in line. Then the kids were let on to the course to search for empty (like the tomb) eggs. They got to “eggs-change” their eggs for pre-filled goodie bags that not only held candy, but Easter story books that children and parents could use again and again at home.

After leaving the course, families were invited into the Family Life Center where they created Easter crafts, got their faces painted, played a variety of carnival games, had the chance to register for this summer’s Rainforest Falls Vacation Bible Camp and get more information about the church and school. The church was blessed to have about 40 volunteers working the event- including several from the Colonial High School Key Club. ■





*In what has become an annual tradition for the Human Care Ministry Team at **Hope/Plant City, FL**, love baskets were prepared and delivered to the congregation's shut ins. Under the leadership of Sandy Howell, members of Hope donated gifts of activity/puzzle books, greeting cards, notebooks, pens, night lights, stamps, basic hygiene items, and candy. The items were lovingly packed and delivered by team members to each of the congregation's shut ins. Pictured following the packing event are some of the team's members: (from left) Janet Reitzel, Sue Griffin, Pam Laatz, Sandy Howell, Cindy McClure and Sandy Bessey. ■*

## **Immanuel/Brandon Celebrates 5th Hispanic Ministry Anniversary**



**Immanuel/ Brandon, FL** celebrated their 5th Anniversary – and the LCMS 100th anniversary – of Hispanic Ministry on April 19 .

Clergy attending, from left, The Revs. Kent Fuqua, Wilfredo Ramirez, James Rockey, Phil Ressler, Stephen Heimer, Miguel Sanabria Jr., Eduardo Martinez, Miguel Sanabria Sr., and Steven Massey. ■

**Faith/Punta Gorda, FL** joyfully gathered on last January for the rededication of its beloved Trinity Tower Mural, following damage sustained during a recent hurricane. The rededication was a cherished occasion, bringing together members of the congregation, neighbors, and community leaders in a spirit of fellowship, celebration, and unity, all to the glory of God.



to pause, pray, and reflect on the story of Jesus Christ.

Each wall of Trinity Tower proclaims a distinct yet unified message of the Christian faith.

The South Wall depicts the hand of God the Father pointing toward the Bible, inviting all to know that "In the beginning was the Word" (JOHN 1:1). This panel emphasizes God's truth and his loving direction for all people through His written Word, which reveals Jesus Christ.

The East Wall portrays the resurrected Jesus Christ, lovingly reaching out to us wherever we are in life. With open arms, He offers forgiveness, grace, mercy, and love, echoing His invitation: "Come unto Me" (MATTHEW 11:28).

The North Wall represents the work of the Holy Spirit. Shown as a living flame, the Spirit inspires, motivates, and creates faith in the

human heart. This panel reflects Faith Lutheran Church's mission of Empowering All People to Know Jesus Christ, expressing God's love for everyone in the community as we work, play, and live together.

The three walls are visually and spiritually united. Each panel is connected by sky and clouds – symbols of heaven and salvation – drawing the images together as one: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is this unity that gives Trinity Tower both its name and its powerful witness.

The rededication of Trinity Tower stands as a reminder that even after storms and damage, God restores, renews, and strengthens His people. Once again, Trinity Tower rises as a beacon of hope – welcoming all, proclaiming salvation, and pointing hearts to Jesus Christ. ■

## A Beacon Renewed, A Vision Rooted in Mission

The vision for Trinity Tower began with a simple but profound desire – to help people know Faith Lutheran Church, connect them to Jesus Christ, and beautify the church campus. In 2011, Pastor Dana Narring met with muralist Michael Vires to discuss what could be painted on the church tower. A sketch was created, prayerfully considered, and ultimately approved.

The three-sided mural was completed just before the rainy season in May of 2012 and was officially dedicated as "Trinity Tower" on January 26, 2013. Since that time, it has stood as a visible beacon in the Punta Gorda community – drawing visitors



**St. Paul/Weston, FL** has had a busy first quarter. They held their Annual Easter Egg Hunt on Sunday, March 29th with an abundant number of eggs for the children to enjoy. The event was filled with excitement, laughter, and a special visit from the Easter Bunny.

On Good Friday, April 3rd, they held their Stations of the Cross Service at Peace Mound Park in Weston. This meaningful, walkthrough service – led and put on by the Middle and High School youth of St. Paul – guided participants through Jesus’ final steps leading to the cross. It was a beautiful and reflective experience in a peaceful outdoor setting.

Easter morning included their annual “Rez Run” on April 5th. This 5K run, held at Tequesta Trace Park in Weston, continues to be a great way to bring the whole community together while supporting the youth of St. Paul. It was a joyful and energetic start to the Easter celebration and worship. ■



*The entire St. Paul Weston cast of “Stations of the Cross” with Pastor Scott Henze (far left) and Jeremy Becker (far right)*





Rusty Huseman, FLGA District Legal Counsel, recently had the opportunity to participate in Career Day at a Jacksonville charter school, spending time with students and faculty to discuss the practice of law and how Christian faith shapes a professional vocation. "It was a meaningful opportunity to speak with young people about how God calls each of us to serve Him through the unique gifts and talents He provides," Huseman stated. "The legal

profession has always been more than a career – it is a vocation through which I seek to serve both neighbor and church."

During the visit, Rusty shared how faith and law intersect in daily work, encouraging students to think about their future careers not only in terms of success, but in terms of service to Christ and care for others. Moments like these reflect the broader mission that has guided Rusty's work through his work with our LCMS churches and

schools and through the **Lutheran Legal League**, a ministry that connects LCMS congregations, ministries, and members with attorneys who share their faith and desire to serve God's people through their professional gifts.

Conversations with students about faith, vocation, and service remind us that every profession can become a place of witness when our work is offered in gratitude to the Lord and for the good of our neighbor. ■



As a part of their Palm Sunday worship, **Hope/Plant City, FL** opened its heart and arms to welcome new members into the Hope family. Pictured following the worship are (from left) Brittany Gombarick, Amber Gombarick, Arie Wiggins and Robert Gombarick; Rev. Dean Pfeffer; Alice, Daxter and Brittany Heaton and Tracey Panek. ■

# Time, Talents, Treasures Alive at First/Gainesville

Time, talents and treasure –God’s gifts to His children and their gifts back to Him was evident recently at **First/Gainesville, FL** where “time and talents” took center stage.

Woodworking artist and member, Tom Wendling, built two beautiful wooden tables for the narthex. They replaced plastic folding tables that were unattractive and always looked temporary. His design mirrored First’s beautiful altar and have made the narthex even more beautiful as well as functional.



First has a long stretch of windows on both sides of the sanctuary. A group of “artists” decided to paint some faux stained glass designs on some of them. Designed and transferred to the glass by Christine Dietrich, the rendering with glass paint was completed over a period of two months by several members of the congregation – Sheila and Merlyn



*Linda Wendling, Sheila Dungey, Diane Rivers and Christine Dietrich in front of their favorite circle.*

Dungey, Debbie Jones, Linda Wendling, Stephanie Smith and Diane Rivers.

On the north windows the ten designs represent Old Testament teachings. The south ten designs are from the New Testament.

The congregation has enjoyed a long history and positive relationship with the University of Florida’s Department of Music – especially Organ professor Dr. Laura Ellis, through several of its music ministers: Art Swett, Miriam Zach, HyeJin Park and currently Stephanie Smith.

Most recently some of Dr. Ellis’s organ students gave a recital on the Kinsey-Angerstein organ in First’s sanctuary – which was dedicated in 1966 with space

available for a magnificent organ. At that time funds were not available to install an organ, but a leap of musical faith took place in the early 1980’s.

Committee members included the late Dr. Robert Cade (Gatorade) and current member, John Helling, who commissioned the magnificent Keller-Angerstein to be built. It was a small company that did not make a lot of pipe organs making its existence even more special.

“This particular organ followed design principle’s of Dutch and German instruments from the 17th and 18th Centuries,” Joan Meyer, First’s historian explains. “It was dedicated in November, 1982. The organ has actually turned out to be a minor celebrity in Gainesville, FL – with many musicians requesting the opportunity to play it.”

Most recently it included eight of Dr. Ellis’s students. ■



*University of Florida students, Anait Piloyan, Keilana McGreevy, Grace Nielson, Thomas Chancy, Sebastian Lazo, Jason Thrower, Ryan Stone, Marco Polo, gave a recital on First’s Keller-Angerstein organ.*

# Robert Davis Installed at Epiphany/Lake Worth

Sunday, April 19th was truly a celebration for **Epiphany/Lake Worth, FL** as they rejoiced in the installation of their new pastor, The Rev. Robert Davis. He had served at **Good Shepherd/North Fort Myers FL** since November, 2019. Davis is widely recognized for his leadership during and after the devastation of Hurricane Ian in 2022 – which destroyed the school’s cafeteria and damaged classrooms and his own home. He led the congregation’s recovery efforts, emphasizing that “God is still here” despite the lack of power and water. Beyond Good Shepherd, Davis was a true shepherd to the community of North Fort Myers.

The Rev. John Johnson served as liturgist and The Rev. James Rockey, FLGA District President, served as officiant and preacher with a message focusing on “every Sunday being a ‘little Easter!’”

President Rockey underscored the shepherding reputation of Pastor Davis and challenged the congregation to “go and share the Gospel, continuing the battle against Satan, reminding us that the Lord’s faithfulness does not change.”

Epiphany is 49 years old, having organized in December of 1976. Pastor George Muehlich led the new mission congregation as it joined the Florida-Georgia District. In December they’ll celebrate their Golden Anniversary.

Dr. Douglas Fountain served the congregation until 2013. Epiphany was also served by The Revs. James Weist from 2014-2018 and Kyle Wills from 2020-2025. Most recently Epiphany has been served by The Rev. John Johnson as transitional pastor. Pastor Johnson also participated in the service. In addition to his sermon, President Rockey told of his 28 years of knowing Robert Davis. He brought greetings on behalf of the 192 congregations and 59 schools and early learning centers of the District.

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In addition to his sermon, President Rockey told of his 28 years of knowing Robert Davis. He brought greetings on behalf of the 192 congregations and 59 schools and early learning centers of the District. ■



*Pastor Robert Davis and his wife, Charlotte, are flanked by their family*



*Pastors participating in the installation service included, from left, The Revs. Scott Gress, Ken Larson, John Johnson, James Rockey, Robert Davis, Jeff Neederstadt, Jim Weist and Jake Roedsens*

# Invest Together in Faith

Now is the time to make the most of the blessings God has entrusted to you. With Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF), you gain a trusted partner who shares your Lutheran values, helping you achieve financial growth while making a meaningful difference in the LCMS community.

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**Redeeming Life Outreach Ministries** welcomed Ruth Latzke to its ministry team, serving women and families at the East Dundee, IL maternity home. Ruth is currently enrolled in Deaconess formation studies through Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, MO, and brings a deep heart for Gospel-centered service and compassionate presence.

In her role, she will walk alongside residents through daily life in the home— offering program support, spiritual care, and relationship-based mentorship rooted in Christ’s love. Redeeming Life provides a home, help, and hope to women during pregnancy and the postpartum season. The ministry’s residential program supports each woman holistically, addressing prenatal and postpartum care, infant care education, employment and life-skills development, emotional and behavioral health resources, and most importantly, the consistent

proclamation of God’s grace.

Ruth will serve alongside Jessica Thompson, who supports residents across Redeeming Life locations and assists with ministry growth in Northern Illinois and the St. Louis region. Together with staff and volunteers, they help create a safe, Christ-centered home where women can find stability, healing, and renewed hope for the future.

Ruth’s husband is The Rev. Jeremy Latzke, who has served at St. John’s/Algonquin, IL since August, 2022. A graduate of Concordia Seminary/St. Louis, MO, he previously served at congregations in Chenoa and Quincy, Illinois.

Redeeming Life Outreach Ministries, a Recognized Service Organization (RSO) of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, is currently operating maternity homes in Florida and Illinois and is preparing for future expansion to meet the growing need for Christ-centered residential care for



women in crisis pregnancies. To learn more about Redeeming Life Outreach Ministries and its Christ-centered maternity home ministry, visit [www.rlom.org](http://www.rlom.org). ■

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

**Personal Loans**

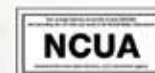
**Auto Loans**

**Credit Cards**

**Refinances**



We are *the* credit union of The LCMS.





On April 21st, 2026, **St. Paul/Weston, FL** held “Blessing of Our First Responders” – a church event that their preschool children were able to attend. They welcomed more than 30 of Weston’s First Responders to the sanctuary and breezeway. The children sang a special song for them and presented handwritten notes and cards as a small token of appreciation for all they do each day. Pastor Scott Henze (far left) also shared a time of prayer with them, and they enjoyed breakfast on the breezeway with attendees.



On Monday, March 2, **St. Paul/Weston, FL** had the joy of hosting the Concordia Kapelle in concert. It was a beautiful evening of sacred music, worship, and fellowship as their voices filled our sanctuary with inspiring hymns and choral selections. Kapelle is composed of select voices, performing a broad repertoire ranging from Renaissance works to contemporary choral music. They are the Concordia University/Chicago, IL premier choral ensemble. Since 2003, the group has toured internationally to locations including Argentina, Chile, Russia, and throughout Europe. A special moment of the evening came when four members of the St. Paul Adult Choir joined Kapelle on stage to sing a hymn together – sharing in a meaningful moment of praise and music ministry. ■



Several youth and families at **St. Paul/Weston, FL** gathered items from the congregation to pack 40 boxes of hope to go to cancer patients through Phil’s Friends in March. Phil’s Friends is a national faith-based nonprofit that provides Christ-centered support and hope to those affected by cancer. Founded in 2006 by two-time stage 4 cancer survivor Phil Zielke, the organization sends free care packages and ongoing “Cards of Hope” to patients throughout the United States. ■

## A Small Primer on the Easter Connection to Baptism

by Leslie Frerking

Happy Birthday, Judi! What? Yes, I know it isn't the day you were born but I wouldn't want you to forget another birthday — the day you were "born again"!

and all the children of men. Life can become so complex, because of so many choices of action that present themselves. Some are eminently worthwhile.

# KNOW THERE IS BUT ONE GOD, SAVIOR

*Editor's note: The Charlotte Observer & News had asked six Charlotte, NC clergymen to tell what they, as religious leaders, waned their own children to believe about God, man and the world about them. The fifth article was authored by The Rev. Dr. Leslie Forrest Frerking. Dr. Frerking (1907–1986) was a prominent Lutheran minister and a pivotal figure in the expansion of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in the Southeastern District. He is most notably recognized as the founding pastor of Ascension Lutheran Church in Charlotte, NC, where he served as senior pastor from 1931 until 1972. Under his leadership, the congregation grew from a small mission effort into a self-sustaining congregation with a parsonage and Christian Day School. Dr. Frerking was well known for being active in race relations work in the Southeast during a period of significant social change in the United States. A visionary, Frerking served on the Charlotte, NC School Board and pushed hard for equal pay for all teachers — black and white. Before establishing the Charlotte congregation, Dr. Frerking served as a "missionary at large" for the Carolinas and Georgia and served as President of the Southeast District of the LCMS. His article takes the form of a letter to his daughter, Judi. He was one of five leaders of the formation of that District in the 1930s. One of his vicars was President Emeritus of the LCMS, The Rev. Dr. Gerald Kieschnick. Dr. Frerking was the father of The Rev. John Frerking, known for his 35-year tenure as the senior pastor of Faith Lutheran Church in North Palm Beach, FL. Currently serving as Pastor Emeritus, he remains a vocal advocate for refugees, having led his congregation to welcome and support more than 200 refugees in Palm Beach County.*

The day of your baptism is a date worth remembering, for it was the day that almighty God adopted you as His very own child, took you into His family, gave you His name ("Christian"), made you His heir, and guaranteed you His unfailing love, care and concern throughout your LIFETIME!

What a wonderful thing to know in these confusing and dangerous days! So while you have a dad who might forget your birthday, you have a Heavenly Father who never forgets or overlooks any detail of your life. Indeed, He has promised to "make all things work together for good."

This is an astounding thing, Judi, that God should give such a favor to anyone who in no way qualifies for His love. And no one does, for "all have sinned and come short of His glory."

You know that even in your heart you are often in rebellion against Him! You find it so difficult to do His will, and not to be selfish and willful and weak! Nonetheless, His love was so great that "He was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself;" "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

"From a child, you have known the holy scriptures which are able to make us wise to salvation through Jesus Christ." You therefore know and believe:

- that there is one God who justly deserves to be worshiped by all His creatures;
- that there is one Savior of sinners, Jesus Christ, who is your best and truest friend;
- that there is one Book, the Bible, in which God speaks to you

Others are trivial or even harmful! You are often torn between two desires. The question what to do requires an answer from you.

IN THE BIBLE God gives you standards of judgment and absolute truths. You may not be able to always find the packaged answer in a Scripture text; you can't just step on a scale, deposit a coin, and always get a card with the ready made message. But the Bible tells you in broad outline what God's will is in all moral and ethical matters.

And then God gives you the privilege of seeking His council in prayer. And while you are in these counseling sessions, be sure to ask one question: "How does my Savior feel about the decision I am about to make? Would God be pleased?" This is in line with the word and promise of Jesus: "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all other things will be added unto you."

Remember that the world doesn't owe you a living-or anything else, but that you are a debtor to God and men! Great privileges involve also responsibilities. "Christ died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him!"

I want you always to remember

1. That this world did not come into being by accident, but is a Masterpiece of Divine Creation;
2. That you are not a product from lower animal life, but the handiwork of almighty God;
3. That you were created a responsible individual endowed with certain talents, and given

## *Retie the Knot: Celebrating Love and Commitment at Marco Lutheran Church*



- so much time in which to use them, for the glory of God and the good of society;
4. That as God's steward you must have higher ideals and aims in life than the attainment of smug "status" or snug "security;"
  5. That you are placed into this world and brought into God's family not to be served, but to serve: That in God's sight "there is no difference" between races or classes, but all are equally precious and have the same privileges by Divine right, and that prejudice and discrimination are sins of pride and idolatry, offensive to God;
  6. That you are to be a "light" and a "salt" in a dark and decaying society;
  7. That you were not designed primarily for the State, or even for the Home or Church, but for the glory of God's Name, and the service of his Kingdom;
  8. That your country's greatness is not assured by its frenzied flag waving citizenry, but only by its Christ-centered, God honoring, Bible-loving, law-abiding people who believe as you do that "every soul should be subject to the higher powers . . . for conscience' sake."

When you have faith in the God of your salvation, Judi, you can face life with emotional stability. Your faith will enable you to take the "bumps" without suffering "blow-outs" or "breaking your springs."

And when the going gets rough, you will remember that Christ, your Savior, travelled rougher roads to bring you peace with God. Through victory and defeat, in spite of dangers and many changes, a heart rooted in Christ will survive and keep its balance. Emotionally stable, because you are properly oriented with God, and you can go on — living and working — with assurance and sustained effort. ■

God's holy Angels keep you!

*Love, Dad*

Love, laughter, and heartfelt promises filled the sanctuary at **Marco/Marco Island FL**, as 27 couples gathered to "Retie the Knot," renewing their marriage vows in a joyful and meaningful worship opportunity. Together, the group was celebrating more than 1,000 years of wedded bliss.

The special event was designed to commemorate and rejoice in the gift of marriage, and to give couples an opportunity to pause from the busyness of life and recommit themselves to one another before God. Standing side-by-side. Some of the couples were married just a few years, others were celebrating decades together. Together, the couples once again spoke words of promise, gratitude, and enduring love.

"Our world has gone crazy, and the pressures on couples have gotten greater over the years," offers Pastor Jim Thelen. "Taking the opportunity to retie the knot gives couples a chance to reset their relationship, celebrate their lives together, and renew their commitment to each other before God."

Watching husbands and wives recommit their lives to one another before God was a beautiful reminder that marriage is a gift from the Lord — one that grows stronger through grace, forgiveness, and faithful love.

The atmosphere was both sacred and joyful.

Smiles, tears, and gentle laughter blended together as husbands and wives reflected on the journeys they have shared — through blessings, challenges, and the everyday moments that shape a lifetime together.

Following the renewal ceremony, the celebration continued with a festive reception featuring food, fellowship, and dancing. The fellowship hall quickly filled with conversation, music, and celebration as couples and friends enjoyed an evening that felt both elegant and warmly personal.

"Many participants shared how deeply meaningful the experience was," Thelen continues. "One couple, renewing their vows for the very first time, summed up the evening beautifully during a conversation afterward:

"This was so much fun. I wish we could do this every year. I think once people hear about this, they will want to do it as well."

Another couple shared that they weren't able to take a honeymoon after their wedding 15 years ago. So they took this opportunity to set the world aside and take that long-awaited honeymoon. Such a trip is different from other vacations.

Comments like these were heard throughout the evening, as couples expressed gratitude for an event that not only celebrated marriage but strengthened relationships and created lasting memories. ■

# Plantation Congregation Marks Sapphire Jubilee

**Our Savior/Plantation, FL** celebrated 65 years of ministry on April 19, bringing together current and former members for a commemorative service and dinner to honor its long-standing community impact. The event featured reflections from church leadership on the congregation's growth, including its early development and resilience through challenges – highlighting decades of multi-generational dedication and faith.

The Revs. Richard Arndt was the liturgist, and Tony Durante preached. Greetings from District President James Rockey were shared at both morning services.

After worship, people gathered at Colony West Golf Club in Tamarac for dinner and shared stories. Former pastors and church leaders

shared memories and experiences from their time at Our Savior. Nancy Volz served as the emcee with the program titled: *"The Good, the Bad and the Funny."*

Pastor Arndt described the congregation's early history. He told the audience about the congregation's first meeting at Peter's Elementary School, just south of Sunrise Blvd. in 1961, and how the first church was built in less than a year for approximately \$125,000 – and was fully air-conditioned.

Lutheran Hour speaker, The Rev. Dr. Oswald Hoffman, was the dedication preacher. Longtime member Howard Fischer spoke of his late wife, Barbara, who was the Early Childhood Director for the church's preschool for 28 years. Two members,



*The Revs. Tony Durante, Our Savior's current pastor, with Richard Arndt, the congregation's third pastor*

Juli Mellott and Lerryn Latimer, described how their families had been blessed by Our Savior for four and five generations respectively, a rarity for a South Florida church.

Kristin Volz Iannarone, daughter of the late Pastor Walter Volz (who served the congregation for 21 years) spoke on behalf of her mother, Gloria, and shared memories of growing up at the church along with two building programs.

Jane Nicklas, wife of the late Pastor Edwin Nicklas, traveled from Virginia and shared some of their experiences. Nicklas' first day in the church office was 9-11-2001 – the day of the terrorist attacks on the United States.

The school's golf tournament was also begun during Nicklas' ministry, as Jane served as the school's principal.

Pastor Tony Durante – the sixth and current pastor – celebrated his eighth year at OSL on April 15, 2026. ■



# Charter Service Held in March for Florida Siloe Haitian Lutheran Church

After worshipping several years as a mission plant, **Siloe Haitian Lutheran Church in Naples, FL** was accepted into the LCMS as an official Chartered Congregation on Sunday March 1, 2026. This new congregation currently meets at Pelican Lutheran, using their fellowship hall during the same time Pelican is meeting on Sundays. Pastor Saint Luc Charelus, is the shepherd leader of the congregation.

“We rejoice in the growth of this new congregation and their ministry to the growing Haitian population of SW Florida,” The Rev. Keith Lingsch reports. Pastor Lingsch serves as Circuit Visitor for the Southwest Circuit #17 of the Florida-Georgia District of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Siloe Haitian — also known as Église Haïtienne Siloé de Naples— is closely connected to Grace/Naples, FL where Pastor Keith Lingsch serves. Siloe is part of the District’s local outreach and mission efforts. Services are conducted primarily in Creole. The congregation has seen steady growth and plans to host its first yearly conference in 2026 for the broader Haitian community. ■



*Participating clergy, from left, The Revs. Karl Glander, Curtis Deterding, Richard Browning (in back), Saint Luc Charelus, James Rockey, Keith Lingsch, Rochenel Jean Jaques, Mark Eisold and Eric Sahlberg*

## Trinity Delray Celebrates Earth Day

Earth Day is an annual global event observed on April 22 to demonstrate support for environmental protection. First

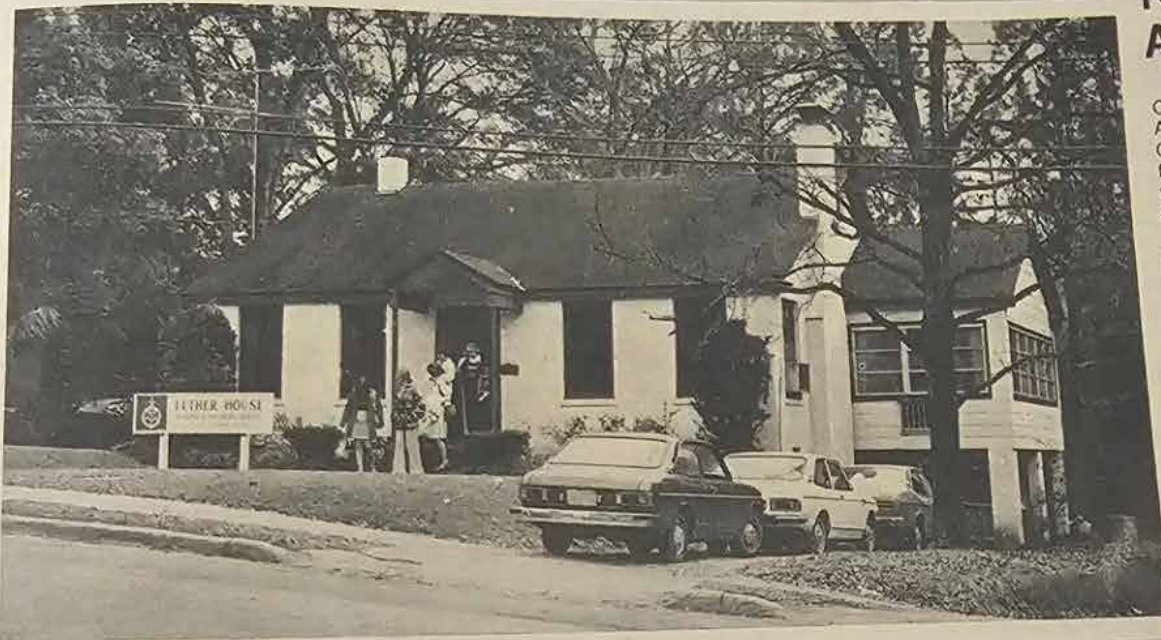
held in 1970, it now coordinates events in more than 193 countries — mobilizing more than a billion people to take action for the planet.



The day serves as a critical reminder of the challenges facing our world, including climate change, deforestation, and plastic pollution. It encourages individuals and governments to adopt sustainable practices, such as reducing waste and transitioning to renewable energy.

**Trinity/Delray Beach, FL** celebrated Earth Day beginning with Ms. MacPhee’s 5th graders leading morning chapel. They reminding everyone that caring for creation is part of our calling as Christians. “God has entrusted us with the beauty of His world, and we are called to be faithful stewards of His gifts. By uniting through local cleanups and advocacy, we can protect our ecosystems and ensure a healthier, greener future for generations to come,” MacPhee emphasized. ■

**“The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it.”  
— PSALMS 24:1**



## News From Around Synod

Representatives of Church-Missouri Synod Association of Evangelical Churches met in September for the first time in fellowship between church bodies.

Participants reported meeting and that they had a better understanding of each other's view on fellowship. A plan has been planned for the future.

The discussions at the LC-MS convention called on the Synod meetings with all Lutheran churches.

Dr. Robert C. Saunderson, Chairman of the LC-MS Joint Commission, said, "I was especially impressed by the eagerness on the part of the other churches to discuss the questions in mutual respect."

Dr. C. Thomas Washington, National AELC Committee Chairman, commended the effort to promote mutual understandings and fellowship relationships previously been discussed in various ways. "I believe that direction is being taken."

Others representing church bodies were: Dr. Louis and Mrs. Minnesota, Dr. Bernthal, President of Milwaukee.

# New Student Center

The building in the picture above no longer exists. It had served as the center and chapel for the Lutheran Campus ministry at Florida State University since 1964. It was known and loved under the name of Luther House. The old bungalow has been moved to make way for the new Lutheran Chapel and Student Center which is under construction right now and should be ready for our Easter Sunday worship in 1979.

The new Chapel and Student Center is a project of the Florida-Georgia District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod which began full time work on the campus in 1964 when they called Pastor David Kruse to be the campus ministry. Prior to this time campus ministry had been an extension of Epiphany Lutheran Church in Tallahassee. Pastor Emory Hingst came to Florida State University in 1968 and Pastor Eric Heintzen has been campus pastor since 1975. The ministry includes work not only at Florida State but also at Florida A&M University and Tallahassee Community College.

The District Convention meeting in St. Petersburg last June gave its unanimous endorsement to the construction of the new center.

Campus Ministry has long been a most fruitful place for training young people for ministry and not just for their future place in the church but also for their mission today. Campus Ministry aids in involving the youth of the church in Bible Study, worship, outreach, and Christian activity in Mission and Ministry right now. You can be a part of this ministry by remembering the work on campus in your prayers. You can also participate in the District-wide appeal for funds to undergird this vital ministry.

The District has set aside Thanksgiving Day, November 23, or Thanksgiving Sunday, November 26, as an opportunity to gather a special offering for this new building. Some congregations are planning their Fund drive in December when students are home for the Christmas break. Others

plan to use funds from their 1978 budget or to allocate funds in their 1979 budget for this project. Students and pastors from around the District have volunteered to go and tell the story of the need for this ministry. We hope that you will listen and respond. A film-strip depicting some of the work and activities of our Campus Ministry in Tallahassee is being prepared and will be available for your use. Pastor L. Lloyd Behnken, President of the Florida-Georgia District wrote in a recent issue of THE KING'S BUSINESS, "At this point in the history of our District 30 years young in serving Christ, what could be more wonderful than seeing all hands of all members of our parishes of our District lifted in prayer to God in praise of His name and in the offering of great gifts for a great cause in honor of a great God."

**A Blast From The District Past!**  
Check out these two articles from old newspaper issues of Lutheran LIFE, Volume I Number 1 and Volume I Number 2, circa late 1970s when The Rev. Lloyd Behnken was President of the District. University Lutheran was originally an extension of Epiphany/Tallahassee, FL and called "Luther House."

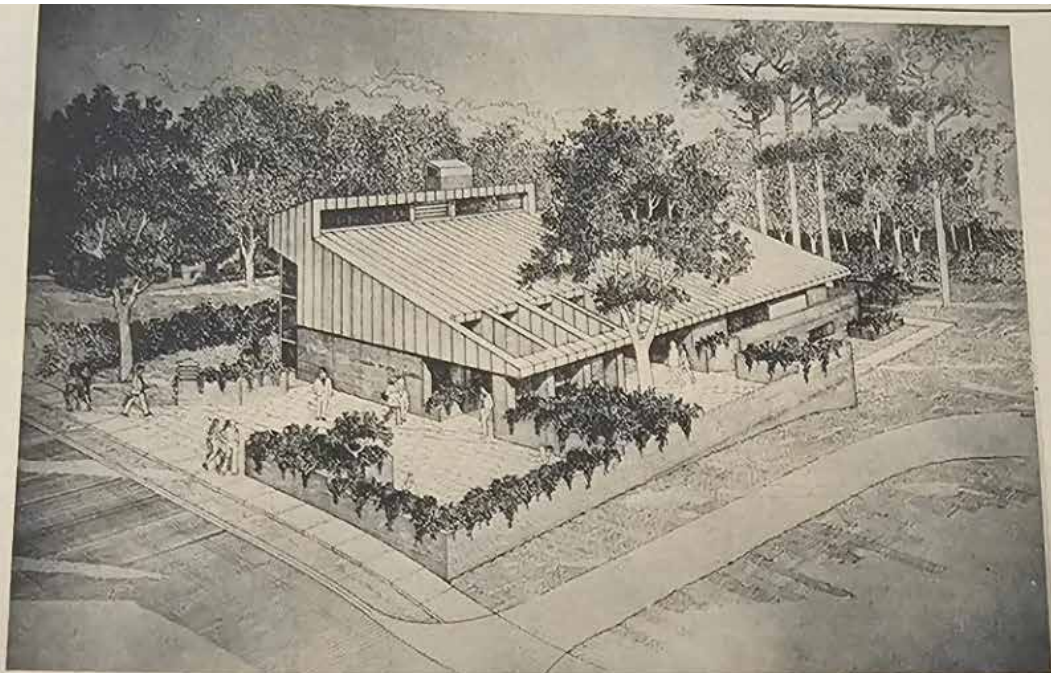
## The Story Things

This is the new Tabloid that this new opportunity for openings in the people.

Each month attention congregations. Also, one better come that make each corner enough corner may receive newsletter Sunday morning.

All corners and lay people and Please

to: The P.O. Box



## New Student Center

This is an exciting time of the year to be on a college campus! We meet new students, and often their parents, greet the ones who are returning, and miss the ones who have graduated and are now 'out on their own.'

Lutheran Campus Ministry at Tallahassee has a variety of programs and activities aimed at involving students in the worship life of the community. We have services every Sunday morning. Students help plan the service, assist in distributing the Lord's Supper, read the Scriptures, provide the Coffeecake, and serve as musicians. Students lead at least one of the Bible Studies each week, serve the Sunday evening Supper, keep the books, serve as the secretary-receptionist at Luther House, carry out most of the planning for social and service programs, and are the officers in the University Lutheran Council.

Most of you know first hand what young people are like. They have the same pressures to do well as do others.

All of the work the students do here in Campus Ministry needs to be coordinated so that we make the best use of the time they are willing to give. Our greatest enemy is boredom or a feeling of uselessness. But we do not have students involved just to keep them busy. We have inherited a great treasure from the parishes of our District, your youth!

Everything we do in Campus Ministry is aimed at enabling our young people to grow in their faith in Jesus Christ, and just as importantly to be able to **share** that faith in the witness of their words and lives. Drawing students together is the first step in strengthening their individual faith. Joyous, meaningful worship builds their relationship with Jesus Christ and their brothers and sisters in Him. Their worship should not end when the liturgy is over, we endeavor to send them out to take that peace and joy they have experienced to the people who live so close around them.

The members of the Florida-Georgia District have been very supportive and helpful in the past. Even now the District is undertaking a new Center for Campus Ministry at Tallahassee which will enable us to do what we have done in the past even better and to more students. We want you to know what we are doing to equip the young people of our Church to assume leadership in the parishes of our District — or wherever they may go. We want you know that we love the Lord Jesus and His 'lambs' who are flocked together at Florida State and Florida A&M Universities.

Will you help us a little more right now with your prayers, your concern, and your response to the special Thanks offering for the new Lutheran Chapel and Student Center to be built on the Florida State campus? You will have opportunity through your congregation to help us. When they ask, please respond.

Rev. Erich Heintzen  
Campus Pastor

### University Lutheran's Pastoral Leadership Timeline:

Rev. David Kruse (1964-1968): Pastored the original "Luther House".

Rev. Emory Hingst (1968-1975): Served until he became the chaplain at Florida State University (FSU).

Rev. Erich Heintzen (1975-1979): Oversaw the construction of the current "University Lutheran Center" building.

Rev. James Bachman: 1981-1989 then joined Valparaiso University and later Concordia/Irvine.

Rev. Tom Dohrman: 1989-2007 (18 years)

Rev. Jay Winters: The current pastor, who has served the congregation since 2007.

Pastor Winters also chairs the Board of Directors for the FLGA District. ■

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# Sent to Serve: New Shepherds

## INCOMING

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod recently celebrated a joyous influx of new ministerial leadership. Following the annual Call Day and Vicarage Assignment services at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis and Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, several candidates and students are preparing to transition to both Florida and Georgia.

This year's assignments represent a vital infusion of energy and theological commitment for the diverse congregations in the FLGA District (and our sister SELC congregation,

St. Luke's/Oviedo, FL).

From the coastal reaches of Florida to the growing communities in Georgia, these men will step into roles as either called pastors or vicars. For the candidates receiving their first calls, this marks the culmination of years of rigorous academic study and spiritual formation. For the vicars, it begins a critical year of "on-the-job" internship residency — where they will learn the practical nuances of parish life under the mentorship of experienced pastors.

"The Florida-Georgia District is known for its mission-minded focus, and

these new leaders arrive at a pivotal time," offers FLGA District President, The Rev. James Rockey.

"They will be tasked with navigating the unique cultural landscape of the region, from serving retiree populations to engaging young families in rapidly urbanizing areas. The transition from the historic halls of St. Louis and Fort Wayne to the vibrant, mission-forward atmosphere of our District

is a testament to the LCMS's commitment to providing well-equipped shepherds for the flock."

As these individuals pack their bags and prepare for their installations and assignments, the District remains in prayer for them. Their arrival is not just a logistical update; it is a renewal of the church's promise to bring the Word and Sacraments to every corner of the region. ■



FLGA District President James Rockey with new Associate Pastor Niclau Alcena, Jr. flanked by his son, Clarence, and wife Jolen. Pastor Niclau was called to **Bethlehem Haitian/Immokalee, FL**. He is a graduate of the Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (EIIT) at Concordia Seminary, a specialized distance-education program designed to prepare immigrant men and women for ministry within their own cultural and language communities in North America.



Vicar Ryan Hicks, left, with Pastor Euder Paul. Hicks is headed to **Mount Calvary/ Warner Robins, GA**. Paul completed his vicarage with Pastor Jacob Roedsen at **Our Savior/Lake Worth, FL** in 2024-25. On Call Day this year he received a call to **St. Andrews/Wichitau, KS**.



Concordia Seminary  
St. Louis, MO

# Arriving in Florida & Georgia



Vicar Micah Cumming  
Concordia/St. Louis  
**Bethlehem**  
Jacksonville Beach, FL



Vicar Michael Felten  
Concordia/St. Louis  
**St. Paul**  
Boca Raton, FL



Vicar Ryan Hicks  
Concordia/St. Louis  
**Mount Calvary**  
Warner Robins, GA



Pastor Niclau Alcena, Jr.  
Concordia/St. Louis  
**Bethlehem Haitian**  
Immokalee, FL



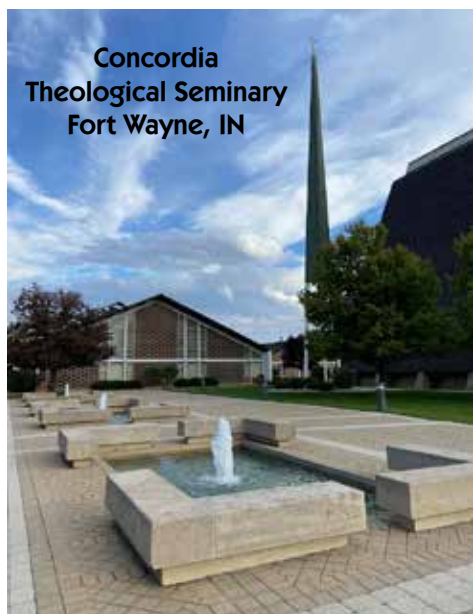
Vicar Harrison Hulse  
Concordia/St. Louis  
**Grace**  
Winter Haven, FL



Vicar Reece Parlier  
Concordia/Fort Wayne  
**Grace**  
Naples, FL



Vicar Garrett Robison  
Concordia/St. Louis  
**St. Luke's**  
Oviedo, FL



Concordia  
Theological Seminary  
Fort Wayne, IN



President James Rockey with Reece Parlier and his fiancé, Katherine. Reece is a **Concordia Theological Seminary/Fort Wayne, IN** student and has been assigned his vicarage at **Grace/Naples, FL**.

## OUTWARD BOUND



The Rev. Keith Lingsch, senior pastor at **Grace/Naples FL** with his wife, Lori, daughter, Rachel and son in law, Alex Uttley. Alex has been assigned to Chapel of the Cross, Saint Peters/ MO for his vicarage.



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Florida-Georgia District  
Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod  
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## End of an Era: Iconic KFUO Radio Tower Felled at Concordia Seminary After 99 Years

On April 3, 2026, the iconic KFUO Radio tower on the campus of Concordia Seminary in Clayton, MO, was demolished. The event marked the end of an era for the site, which had served as the station’s transmitter location for nearly a century. Crews were out early to take the iconic radio transmission tower down so that it could be dismantled and removed. Concordia Seminary is using the cleared space and surrounding land to implement a \$45 million “Transformational” Campus Plan that includes new student housing, a residential subdivision, and a potential elementary school.

KFUO Radio has relocated its present-day transmission equipment and has not been broadcasting from the Seminary campus for more than two years. KFUO’s history with Concordia Seminary goes all the way back to 1924. The station officially went on the air and was formally dedicated Dec. 14, 1924, from the previous campus in south St. Louis — located at South Jefferson Avenue and Winnebago Street.

The seminary resided at the South Jefferson Avenue location for more than 75 years, moving there in 1849/1850 from its original founding site in Perry County.

KFUO began broadcasting on the Seminary’s Clayton, Mo., campus in 1927, nearly 100 years

ago. Today, KFUO is recognized as the oldest continuously operating Christian radio station in the United States and the longest-running religious broadcast station in the world. It is owned by the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

KFUO has a long-standing mission statement — “Keeping Forward, Upward, and Onward,” which reflects its mission to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

with KOA, a “clear-channel” station on the same frequency.

To provide 24/7 coverage, the station uses FM translators (92.7, 104.5, and 105.3 FM) and worldwide streaming at [kfu.org](http://kfu.org).



In 2013 KFUO moved its studios from the seminary campus to the LCMS International Center in Kirkwood, MO. In 2024 KFUO celebrated its 100th anniversary. KFUO Radio has received several prestigious industry honors, most notably winning the Marconi Award for Classical Station of the Year in 1999.

KFUO operates with a unique “daytimer” status on the AM dial at 850. It must sign off at sunset in Denver, CO, to avoid interfering

