



LUTHERAN

LIFE

*Florida
Georgia*
DISTRICT

The Newsmagazine of the Florida-Georgia District
of The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod

Third Quarter 2011

Connecting People to Jesus!

people

Worship

Jesus

Relationship

Discipl

LIFELINES

Lessons Learned . . . Page 4

Every congregation is a church in mission, and every member is a missionary; with all of us working together under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, empowered by His Gospel to share His love. Lutheran LIFE is the official communications instrument of the Florida-Georgia District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Lutheran LIFE is designed to inform LCMS church and school members of the activities, the personalities and resources offered by the Synod and the District. Lutheran LIFE may also provide a forum for Lutherans to express their views and ideas on a wide range of topics. We welcome and encourage editorials, emphasizing that the views and opinions expressed are not necessarily shared by Synod or District personnel or by the editors, churchworkers or personnel of the Synod's or District's congregations or schools. Lutheran LIFE is published bimonthly. Editorials, news items and photos are encouraged and should be received at our publication offices no later than the 10th of the month prior to the publication date. We make every attempt to use all submitted information in the next issue of LIFE, space considerations prevent us from guaranteeing that stories will be used immediately. Advertising is welcome; rates and information is available from Lutheran Life's office. Changes of address including e-mail changes, additions or deletions should be directed to our production office as well.

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District Youth Explore Vocations

Two high school youth from the Florida-Georgia District participated in Vocatio, held June 18-23, at Concordia Seminary-St. Louis.

Laura Schuemann (far right), Faith-North Palm Beach, FL, and Aaron Seigler (middle), Holy Cross Church-Lake Mary, FL, were among the 38 youth who attended Vocatio.

Activities focused on Romans 12:1-2: "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will



is, His good, pleasing, and perfect will."

Vocatio participants delved into this theme through the four disciplines of the formation

of ministry: exegetical, systematic, historical, and practical.

Participants also went to a St. Louis Cardinals game, visited the Saxon Lutheran Memorial and helped out around Concordia Seminary's campus.

The 2012 Vocatio is scheduled for June 23-28. For more information, contact the admissions office: admissions@csl.edu.

Erin McPherson, a junior counselor, is also shown above at far left. ■

Calls, Assignments Announced During Summer Placements

During July 20 morning chapel service at Concordia Seminary-St. Louis, nine students received vicarage assignments and nine their deaconess internship assignments through the Center for Hispanic Studies (CHS). Seven of those students will be serving in the Florida-Georgia District.

Artidoro Mesones received a vicarage assignment to Faith-Hialeah, FL. The following received deaconess assignments — all to Messiah-Tampa, FL: Diana Bermúdez, Raquel Eusebio, Lisa Fernández, Iris Guevara, Flor Sanabria, Yolima Sanabria.

Shown after the announcement of CHS vicarage and deaconess internship assignments are (front, l-r) Antonio Mercado, Nelson Hernández, Flor Sanabria, Iris Guevara, Érica Jofré, Rosaura Martínez; (middle, l-r) Edilberto Alzate Morales, Omar de León, Jorge Mazariégo, Yolima Sanabria, Raquel Eusebio, Diana Bermúdez, Prof. Mark Kempff; (back, l-r) Walter Ramírez, Dr. Glenn Nielsen, Artidoro Mesones, Dr. Bruce Hartung, Ángel Morales, Juan Vallejo, Panchita Portillo, Lisa Fernández, Florida-Georgia District President Gregory Walton and Rev. David Lewis. ■



CAPSULES by Greg Walton District President

CALLING CONGREGATIONS

Pastor

Albany GA..... Trinity
Clearwater FL..... Bethel (Asst/Assoc)
Delray Beach FL..... Trinity (Senior)
Estero FL..... Estero Mission
Fort Myers FL..... Zion (Senior)
Fort Pierce FL..... Trinity
Jacksonville FL..... Hope
Lakeland FL..... St. Paul (Senior)
Lilburn GA..... Oak Road
New Port Richey FL..... Faith
Ocala FL..... St. John (Senior/Sole)
Orlando FL..... Our Savior
Tampa FL..... Holy Trinity
Tampa FL..... Zion
Tucker GA..... St. Mark
Vero Beach FL..... LC of the Redeemer

Principal/Administrator

Bradenton FL..... Hope
Sarasota, FL..... Good Shepherd

DCE/DCO/Music

Boca Raton, FL..... St. Paul

CALLS EXTENDED

Rev. David Horn, Esko MN, to Bethlehem-Jacksonville Beach FL
Rev. Adolfo Borges, FL-GA Mission Developer, Orlando FL, to Prince of Peace-Orlando FL
Rev. Gary Faith, Mandeville LA, to Hope-Jacksonville FL
Rev. Craig Patterson, Trinity, Oregon City

OR to St. Mark-Tucker GA (IIM)
Rev. Jeffrey Scheich, Christ, Lincoln NE to St. John-Ocala FL
Mrs. Joy Schubert to Living Hope-Kennesaw GA

CALLS RECEIVED

Rev. Paul Koch, Holy Trinity-Kingsland GA to Grace-Ventura CA
Mrs. Joy Schubert to Living Hope-Kennesaw GA

CALLS ACCEPTED

Rev. Adolfo Borges, FL-GA Mission Developer, Orlando FL toPrince of Peace-Orlando FL
Rev. Paul Koch, Holy Trinity-Kingsland GA to Grace-Ventura CA
Mrs. Joy Schubert to Living Hope-Kennesaw GA
Mr. Timothy Guelzow, Trinity-Delray Beach to Shepherd of the Coast-Fort Lauderdale, FL

CALLS DECLINED

Rev. Craig Patterson, Trinity-Oregon City OR from St. Mark-Tucker GA (IIM)

TRANSFERRED TO OTHER DISTRICTS

Rev. James E. Golec, Jr. (Non-Candidate) to Michigan District
Rev. James N. Roseman (Emeritus) to Southeastern District
Mr. Andy Stumpf, Bethel, Clearwater FL to Indiana District

CAPSULES

TRANSFERRED FROM OTHER DISTRICTS

Rev. Thomas P. Armour (EM) from New Jersey District
Rev. John C. Zeile (EM) from Pacific Southwest District
Rev. Gary D. Dehnke (EM) from Missouri District
Rev. Donald A. Cario (EM) from Eastern District
Dcs. Angela Carriker from Iowa East District
Mrs. Christine Dehnke from Missouri District

ORDAINED MINISTER ASSIGNMENT

Candidate Joshua D. Brown, St. Louis MO to Messiah-Valdosta GA (Pastor)

CHANGE OF STATUS

Rev. Joseph H. Cockey, Good Shepherd-Sarasota FL, Associate Pastor to Sole Pastor, January 31, 2011.
Rev. Phillip Vance, Prince of Peace-Orlando FL, Sole Pastor to Senior Pastor, July 3, 2011.

EMERITUS

Rev. Dr. Martin M. Platzer, Duluth GA, March 31, 2011
Rev. Steven J. Hess, Ft. Myers FL, March 6, 2011
Rev. Lee H. Stisser, Tampa FL, April 30, 2011
Mr. William Patrick, Marietta, GA, June 30, 2011
Mrs. Gladys Wendt-Foust, June 15, 2011

CALLED TO GLORY

Rev. Dr. Ted D. Westermann, July 7, 2011

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LIFELINES

As I've traveled around the Florida-Georgia District, I have been privileged to meet some wonderful folks in our congregations. Often I am asked, by professional workers and laity alike, "What have you learned?"

This has been a tremendous learning experience. By and large, it has been an awesome experience. I have been in some interesting situations, both good and bad. The truth is, I have, and continue, to learn a lot each day.

I have gained a great knowledge of the highway systems in Georgia and Florida, and have a firmer grasp of my Florida geography now. I feel much more comfortable with the Council of Presidents, the Circuit Counselors (who do tremendous work in our Circuits), the District Board of Directors and the staff at the District Office. When I share these kinds of things, some people will generally lean in and say, "But what have you really learned?"

While I have learned a great many things since assuming this office, let me share twelve things I've learned in the past two years.

1. **The Office of the District President**, while having great responsibility, really has very little authority—in other words, I'm not nearly as important as I think. Serving in this office one would think that you have great power. The greatest power I have is the Lord with me. After that, I have the power of influence — a weak second! The greatest power for a congregation, beyond that of our Lord Jesus, is the congregation itself, or at least the voters who make up the congregation. Our polity states very clearly that the real authority lies in the voters in the congregation who are empowered with the responsibility and privilege for making decisions for God's people in that place.

2. **District President's don't have all the answers** . . . sometimes we don't have any! God gave the special gift of Wisdom to Solomon — unfortunately, not to every leader, least of all to me.

I have learned that the collective 'we' are often smarter than 'me.' I rely on the staff and other leaders to help me understand and navigate good, honorable solutions. There are situations that just don't have quick answers, but you can bet I'm seeking others input to help me help you.

3. **While I pledge to do the best I can**, I've learned that despite my best attempts, sometimes not everyone will be pleased. This has been a tough one to learn. My role as Ecclesiastical Supervisor is to care for the needs of workers and congregations; when they are in conflict, someone isn't going to be happy — in fact, sometimes, no one ends up being happy! The pastoral side of me wants everyone to be happy as we come to the knowledge of the truth. One time, when I was serving in a parish, a teacher brought some kindergartners to me who were not getting along. We had a nice chat, and discussed how Jesus wants us to treat one another, then we



Greg Walton
District President

our congregations. However, we all know that there is a gap in our Stewardship Education that we continually need to recognize and address. When we can release our finances to God's control, we will truly see miraculous things happen.

5. **I have learned that I can't own your problem**, or take responsibility for what has been created in some places. I had to be taught that by my friend Dr. Rick Armstrong. Often I am drawn into situations where I don't know the people

or the culture of the parish setting, not to mention the history (and we Lutherans are historical if we are anything ...) and expected to "fix" the problem. What I often find is that the answer lies within the midst of the people, but it's hard work to work toward reconciliation. However, when God's people are committed to working toward a solution in God's way, through confession

and absolution, through forgiveness and reconciliation, it revolutionizes God's Church. When people own their problem

and deal with it in a mature way, it not only grows God's Church, but it grows God's kingdom.

6. **One of the most important lessons I've learned** is that every day I learn that there is still more to learn. Just when I think I'm getting a handle on the work load or tasks of the office, I learn that either I didn't quite understand the scope or that there's more to it! That's really the life in ministry, not just for professional workers, but for all believers. Ministry today is different than ever before, and we need to stay in God's Word, be empowered by His Sacrament, and keep learning and growing, as people, as servants, as sharers of the good news of Jesus.

7. **I've also learned that when I think I've seen it all or heard it all, I'm always proved wrong.** Sinful human nature never ceases to amaze me. Sin leads us into all kinds of crazy situations. On the other hand, I have also seen

what happens when grace is operational in our lives. God does amazing things through His people, and I am constantly in awe. God is God and I am not. I am thankful that at the end of the day He is still in charge! His ways are higher than my ways, His thoughts higher than my thoughts. Sometimes He chooses to reveal things on a different schedule than mine. As we trust in Him, I've learned that calls for workers come at the right time — whether you are the one calling, or the one hoping to be called! The Psalmist wrote, "Unless the Lord builds the house they who build labor in vain ..." Sometimes His answer is a resounding "Yes and Amen!" Sometimes it's a clear "NO!" But often His answer is, "Not yet, but put your trust in Me!"

8. **I've learned that everyone is redeemable** and has redeeming qualities. Sure, sometimes you have to search, but they are there because God, in Jesus, says that they are. Part of the growth we experience is discovering what these redeemable qualities are in each person we encounter. I am convinced they are there. Sometimes I need to work harder to discover them. Part of that is remembering that the same Jesus who died on the Cross to redeem me has also done that for everyone else. If He values them, then I need to learn to value others,

too, even when I don't feel like it or think they deserve it.

9. **I've learned that what I think should be** is not nearly as important as how God knows it should be. Jeremiah 29:11 reminds me that God has a plan beyond the ability of my mind to conceive. He already knows the answer He desires. Often we choose poorly as we choose to go our own way. What a blessing when that plan is worked out in marvelous ways, far better than I could imagine, in God's time, and in His way. The Lord is constantly teaching me this one, and I suspect that I am not alone.

10. **God still does miraculous things** — and He even uses us sometimes! As I look around at this District, I see God doing miracles every day: in congregations, in workers, in communities. Many lives are being impacted and hearts transformed as people show the love of Jesus in their ministry and in their lives. People are being fed and clothed, in some cases

given shelter. Hope is dispersed and prayers are offered. Sorrow is turned to joy as God enters the situation through people like you and me! I am blessed by so many of you who offer prayers on my behalf, and for the District and Synod. That is miraculous.

11. **Having the right people around you makes all the difference!** I am convinced that having the right leaders, having the right volunteers, having the right staff is a key to success. Jim Collins, in his book "Good to Great," talks about having the right people in the right seat on the right bus! It makes a difference, and I am blessed to work with an excellent, committed and dedicated staff. We have wonderful workers and lay leaders throughout this District, who truly love the Lord and desire to see the growth of God's Kingdom in this part of the world!

12. **Finally, I've learned that at the end of the day, what's most important is connecting people to Jesus!** This is what our faith is all about. It's the meaning of Christmas and Easter and Pentecost and every Sunday — in fact, every day. We are to connect people to Jesus because He is

Also because of my time at Bronxville, I ended up attending Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. During that time the Lord was molding and forming me, as He continues to do to this day. From there I ended up in the Florida-Georgia District in Toccoa, a little mission in the mountains of Northeast Georgia, where I was privileged to serve 12 years.

All the time, the goal was the same — connecting people to Jesus. The desire was for people to experience the joy of salvation that I had discovered through Jesus.

There have been plenty of times that I've veered from the course, but God is faithful, and He's gently directed me back, always instilling in me that same desire to connect people to Jesus.

As I conclude the first two years of service as your District President, and reflect on the whirlwind that this has been, I look with great anticipation to the future. I've learned enough to know that there's still plenty to learn. I've made a few mistakes along the way, and am grateful for the patience that folks have had with me. I can't tell you what the future holds, but I can tell you who holds my future, and yours! It's the same Jesus that touched my life so many years ago, first in the waters of baptism, and subsequently in so many ways I've lost track and couldn't possibly count them! This is the One who holds the keys to eternal life. This is the One who forgives our sins, heals our wounds, binds up the broken hearted, and has plans for each of our lives — individually. How could we not desire to connect people to Him?

Much of this next year will be spent equipping, empowering and engaging people to connect people to Jesus! That's His call on my life. But that's His call on your life too. Jesus speaks these words to each of us from John 15: "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last!" May we be bearers of that fruit as we work together to connect people to Jesus!

With you on the journey,
Greg



A Dozen Lessons I Have Learned in the Past Two Years

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Effectively Reaching Out to Others With the Love of Jesus

Recently District President Greg Walton and I toured the Community Garden at Peace Lutheran-Decatur, GA. The Community Garden resulted from teamwork: Peace provided the land and water; area residents purchased table-top gardens to tend. Excess crop goes to feed those less fortunate. Now the church and community are considering a walking trail for exercise and meditation.

During the summer, Peace hosted a neighborhood fun day. Pastor Vic Belton was in his office when he heard a knock on the door.



Pastor Vic Belton, Peace/Decatur
 in the Community Garden

"Hey mister," said one of the young boys who had come for the summer fun, "can you give me a juice box?"

Belton replied, "No — if I give you one I will have to give everyone a juice box." When the young visitor pointed out, "They're not asking, I am," Belton opened the door and escorted the boy to the refrigerator.

Wide-eyed, the boy looked around, and asked, "What's that?"

Belton replied, "You mean the cross."

"Yeah, what's it for?"

Belton queried, "Have you ever

said one of the participants.

"Not everyone has an easy time sharing their faith but I learned that it is 'my' witness of who Jesus is to 'me,'" said Donna Knocke.

In reliving the witnessing stories of my life, I discovered that several of them led to reconciliation for the individual being witnessed to. This was an 'ah ha' moment for me

that makes our witness even more powerful when the past hurts, failures and sins of someone's life can be and are reconciled right then and there, by God's grace. They find out they are forgiven and freed, truly right with God and empowered to be at peace with all the people of their life.

The workshop was born out of a meeting between the District and King of Kings, a young mission church that is a daughter congregation of Timothy Lutheran-Woodstock. Rev. Ernie Knoche serves the congregation in retirement. Several of the leaders shared the need to know how to connect with the community and how to share their faith.

This training is available for churches and schools and is tailored to the needs of the community and ministry. ■

MISSIONMOMENT
 by Doug Kallesen
 Executive Director Mission & Outreach

heard of Jesus?"

"Yeah, you mean the baby and Mary and the donkey story — but what about the cross?"

Belton quietly and gently sat aside his schedule to do that which was appointed for him to do: tell this young boy about Jesus. The boy finished his juice box and ran back outside to play, but soon was back knocking on the door to ask: "Can you tell me some more about Jesus?"

He was invited inside and joined Belton in his office for a bit more of the story.

It might be said that the boy came to play but he stayed to pray. I hope that this story warms your heart and reminds you that it can be the smallest things that open big doors of opportunity for us to share our faith. I also hope it reminds you whose servant you are and how to set aside what we are doing to do what God has appointed for the day. ■

I taught outreach and reconciliation for the first in the same workshop when, in September,

King of Kings-Jasper, GA, hosted a training event for leadership to become more effective in outreach. Participants spent 3.5 hours learning how to create natural relationships and conversations using questions and short comments to speak casually of Jesus.

"Our group learned how to share their faith -- it's easier than I thought,"



District Outreach Executive Doug Kallesen (lower left) and Pastor Ernie Knoche (upper right) with leadership of King of Kings-Jasper, GA, at a recent seminar.

LWML in Action Across USA ... Awe-Inspiring Sight

By Patricia Aamoth, LWML District VP Communications

This year is proving to be a fantastic opportunity for me to not only see, but also actively participate in, the full scope of LWML. Now I'm looking forward to the District Retreat, Clothe Yourself in Love, 9-30 – 10-2.

To see the LWML in action at the "national" level is nothing short of awe-inspiring. That's LWML in the broadest sense – every woman of the LCMS. The Fall 2011 Lutheran Woman's Quarterly has full coverage of the Peoria Convention, and more information is available at www.lwml.org. The Florida-Georgia District LWML sent two Young Women Representatives to Peoria, Suzy Eberle, Georgia, and Kristen Wilkerson, Florida. Here is what they had to say about the experience:

Suzy Eberle: The best thing was learning about LWML circles. As long as you are meeting for a devotion and collecting mites, you can become a circle. That made me think about the Bible study groups in my church. If they would collect mites, our giving could grow much faster! Look at groups in your church. If they don't already, encourage them to say a devotional and start collecting mites.

My next favorite thing was hearing grant recipients talk about how they used their money. As a past grant

recipient, I can appreciate how just a little bit of money can be stretched to go so far. On the national level, it was amazing to see the effect these grants had on the worthy causes. It reminded me of Jesus feeding the 5,000 as the money donated seemed to go five times further with the efforts of these organizations and God's hand.

In this diverse world, it's time for the LWML to become diverse with age, ethnicity, background, and skill.

Kristen Wilkerson: My weekend started with the Gifts from the Heart servant event. Each quilt donated to the Orphan Grain Train was a piece of art. As we packed the "welcome kits," our boxes reached the ceiling over and over. The first evening we attended an incredible worship led by Pastor Ken Klaus of Lutheran Hour fame who talked about what it means to live on the edge for Jesus. We should be standing on the edge sharing the truth of Christ's resurrection with the world.

The rest of the weekend was a continuation on that theme. At every turn I asked myself, "How am I living on the edge? How do I get closer to the edge? Why do I run from the edge?" It was a soul searching weekend and because of the worship and fellowship I experienced, I truly feel that my faith grew and today I spend more time on the edge!!



District LWML President Marilyn H. Treanor (left) enters the Convention with Kristen Wilkerson (center) and Suzy Eberle (right).

What takes place at National and District Conventions proves that the LWML is more than collecting mites and having business meetings! It's NOT just for the older ladies of the congregation! It's about serving the Lord with gladness, on many levels, in many ways and in many different capacities. What a challenge for all of us as we go about our daily lives.

The Evangel, the District LWML quarterly newsletter, is electronic! Every member can receive it directly to their email address. Societies and churches may subscribe and print copies for those without email. To subscribe at no cost email Karen Gott at karengott@bellsouth.net with your name, email address, church and zone information. The subject line should read: Subscribe to the e-Evangel.

The Evangel is also posted at www.flgalwml.com.

Lutheran Hour Ministries Regional Conference Planned for Orlando January 13-14, 2012

Lutheran Hour Ministries' Regional Outreach Conferences help empower our witness for Christ, making us better equipped to share Jesus with a world in need of the Savior. ROC-Orlando will be at the Doubletree Resort and will feature *Lutheran Hour* speaker Rev. Greg Seltz; Rev. Robert Newton, president of the California-Nevada-Hawaii District; practical breakout sessions; translation of main stage events and an entire track of workshops in Spanish; age-appropriate training events for children and teens-and much more. www.lhm.org

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eligibility, sign up or to select the recipients for your "Choice Dollars." Alternatively, you can call 800-847-4836 and state "Thrivent Choice" to get more information or to make your selections. Visit the web site at <https://www.thrivent.com/thriventchoice/program/>



Fitch Affirms AA Rating For Thrivent

Fitch Ratings has again affirmed Thrivent Financial for Lutherans' AA (Very Strong) rating with a stable outlook. The agency cited Thrivent Financial's strong market franchise, good profitability in relation to surplus levels, and sound risk adjusted capitalization.

"The affirmation is yet another sign of our ongoing strength and stability and reflects Fitch's high level of confidence in our organization," said Randy Boushek, chief financial officer for Thrivent Financial. "In times of economic uncertainty, we are proud to be able to continue to serve our members well."

Fitch also cited Thrivent Financial's strong life and annuity businesses as well as improved operating earnings and investment income as other reasons for the affirmation. The AA (Very Strong) rating is the third-highest of Fitch's 19 categories.

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Mary Byrd Honored For Milestone in Service

Lutheran Church Extension Fund congratulates Mary Byrd on 25 years of service!

Mary, LCEF Loan Consultant with the Florida-Georgia District, was recently honored at a dinner held at the home

Lutheran Church Extension Fund



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of Vice President – LCEF Daniel J. and Andrea Reichard. Staff, family and friends enjoyed an evening celebrating her quarter of a century in ministry with LCEF.

Reichard expressed his appreciation, "Mary is an integral part of LCEF and its mission, as well as the ministry of the Florida-Georgia District. With her 25 years, she brings a wealth of experience: 17 years of St. Louis loan operations and eight years out in the field.

"By having this background, Mary provides a unique insight for our Customers, Loan Committee, and the entire LCEF Team. Indeed, she is a blessing to all and is MUCH appreciated. To her I say, well done, good & faithful Servant!"

When Byrd shares the ministry of LCEF with someone unfamiliar with LCEF, the first thing she tells them is, "LCEF is the only place where your invested dollar goes to help build an LCEF church or school. Your local bank cannot tell you what your investments are going to be used for."

Byrd said, "It is very difficult to sit in a beautiful new sanctuary that has been funded by an LCEF loan and not be in awe of the investments made by people in the pew that make the loan possible."

She said that one of her favorite LCEF experiences is related to the loan at St. Paul-Peachtree City, GA: the same church and loan that started LCEF President Rich Robertson's involvement with LCEF.

"I was a loan officer in St. Louis and if LCEF received an invitation for a church dedication from a loan we had funded, the loan officer would attend the dedication and present the LCEF dedication plaque," Byrd said.

"I was fortunate enough to attend the dedication for St. Paul's multipurpose building and school. But, before I made the trip, the greatest thing happened: the children of that school sent thank-you letters to LCEF. In their own words, they wrote about how thankful they were to have this new school. I took some of the letters with me to the dedication and read them to the congregation.

"That is the real reason why I love my job, and the real reason why LCEF exists."

President Greg Walton shared that he first met Mary when, as a parish pastor, he would approach her at conferences asking her to bring the LCEF stamp program to Georgia. He asked Reichard to read for him from Romans 16:6, which states, "Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you."

Walton noted that "Mary has indeed been a hard worker for the Florida-Georgia District," and prayed "God's blessings on her as we celebrate her 25th Anniversary, and looked forward to many more years of her service to our Lord and His Church!" ■

Meet the Lutheran Church Extension Fund Team

Mr. Daniel J. Reichard has served as *LCEF Vice President* for the Florida-

Georgia District since January 2010. Dan has more than 30 years of experience in finance and accounting positions. He has held senior financial positions in the manufacturing and industrial services industries. Dan has a Bachelor's Degree in Accounting and an MBA in Finance. In addition, he is both a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) and a Certified Management Accountant (CMA). Dan leads the LCEF Team with a servant heart, grounded in sound financial experience and with this operating philosophy:

- ❖ Treat People Like You Want to be Treated (Matthew 7:12)
- ❖ Do the Right Thing (Deuteronomy 6:18)
- ❖ Give 100% (Proverbs 3:27)
- ❖ Have Fun (Psalm 126:2)
- ❖ Maintain Balance (James 2:22)

Mrs. Mary Byrd, *Loan Consultant*, has just celebrated 25 years of service with LCEF. Mary brings a vast

knowledge of Loan Operations with extensive expertise in guiding congregations through the loan process. She is available to consult with your

leadership in determining which of our loan products will meet the needs

of the ministry and will walk with your team through completion.

Mrs. Chyrl Durling, *Administrative Assistant Financial Services*, joined the Florida-Georgia District Staff in March of this year in the Finance department serving as the Bookkeeper. Chyrl will continue to work with congregation's treasurers and financial secretaries with documenting the remittance of funds to the district, while serving as the Administrative Assistant for LCEF and the Finance-Administration Department.

Mr. John Elliott joined the Florida-Georgia District in September of 2010 as the *Business Manager*, filling the role upon the retirement of Mr. Don Lauher. John brings more than 20 years of experience in technology, operations, insurance and finance. He has an MBA and a BS degree in Computer Systems. With John's extensive finance background he is available to assist congregations with their financial reporting, providing guidance in the completion and maintaining of financial recordkeeping.

Mrs. Kathy Keene began with LCEF in June of 2006 as the Administrative Assistant for the

Florida-Georgia District. She now serves as the *Administrative Services Consultant*, working with churches to match LCEF Ministry & Investment Services with ministry opportunities in their congregations and communities. ■

The Mission of LCEF

The mission of LCEF is to support the church in fulfilling its mission of sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ by being a Christ-centered servant partner of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, ensuring that funds and services are available now and in the future. LCEF accomplishes this mission through **Investments, Loans & Services**. If you are seeking to expand your ministry, looking for some financial guidance or simply have a question, a member of the Florida-Georgia LCEF Team is available by phone (877 457-5556, ext 4), email (see below) or to meet with your leadership team to discuss opportunities available through our partnership. We are here to serve Christ by serving you. ■

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Daniel J. Reichard



Chyrl Durling



John Elliott



Mary Byrd



Kathy Keene



Trinity-Summerfield Dedicates New Sanctuary

Members and guests of Trinity Lutheran Church-Summerfield, FL, gathered to dedicate the new sanctuary on February 27. Rev. Dr. Gerhard Michael Jr., president emeritus of the Florida-Georgia District, was the guest preacher.

Trinity was organized in 1997. The congregation's communicant membership is "about 700," said Pastor Mark Abram, "and the average Sunday attendance is more than 550."

The new sanctuary, which has seating for 700 people, was completed at a cost of just under \$3 million – "some 15% under the original estimates provided in 2008 when the capital campaign first began," Abram noted. The original sanctuary, which was built in 2000, now serves as the fellowship hall/ministry center.

Trinity is served by its full-time Senior Pastor Abram and a number of retired pastors in the congregation. In 2010, Trinity added a parish nurse to the staff, Dr. Doris Branson. ■

When Trinity-Summerfield, FL, celebrated New Member Sunday on March 20, 42 new members (shown in photo below) were received, including 15 people who joined the congregation by adult confirmation (photo at far left).



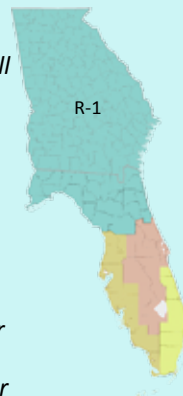
FAITH LUTHERAN SCHOOL- MARIETTA, GA, honored Joan Trinklein (left) as she celebrated 45 years of ministry at the school. She served as first-grade teacher for 30 years, then after her retirement, as the school librarian for 15 years. She currently serves on the Board of School Ministry. She was presented a quilt, with each square made by a different class in the school. "Praise God for faithful servants like Joan Trinklein," said Faith Principal Jack Hibbs (right).



REGION 1 NEWS

Florida-Georgia District - Region 1

The largest geographic sector of the District, Region 1 encompasses all of the State of Georgia and approximately the upper third of the State of Florida. Representing Region 1 on the District Board of Directors are Rev. Frank Marshall of Jacksonville, FL, who recently retired as pastor of St. Paul-Jacksonville; Jean Weinrich, a member of All Saints-Blairsville, GA; and Bill Gaik, a member of Trinity Lutheran-Toccoa, GA.



New Church Plant in West Atlanta

A new church is being planted in West Atlanta by West Georgia Ministries.

On July 4, West Georgia Ministries sponsored a booth at Hunter Park in Douglasville to benefit victims of the year tornadoes that in April ripped through 25 Georgia counties. Gift cards were donated by Lowes' and Kroger. Led by Pastor Robert Maulella, the group of two dozen -- including children -- participated in shifts to hand out red, white and blue balloons and tattoos along with pens and pads and to take prayer requests and share the love of Jesus.

According to Maulella, West Georgia Ministries members meet in homes according to the model in Acts 2:42. They intend to launch their first service in a new facility sometime in early 2012.

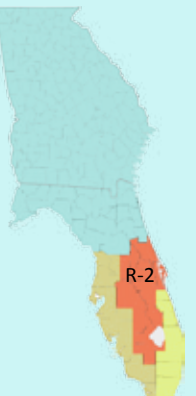
"The vision of West Georgia Ministries is the transformation of the people of West Georgia into Up, In and Out Followers," Maulella said, noting Jesus' whole life was lived in balancing three relationships: "Up" with the Father, "In" with the community (His disciples) and "Out" to the World. For more information visit www.WestGAMinistries.com.



REGION 2 NEWS

Florida-Georgia District - Region 2

Region 2 is the only one to share borders with the District's other three regions as well as with the Atlantic Ocean. Representing Region 2 on the District Board of Directors are Rev. Brian Kneser, pastor of Woodlands Lutheran-Montverde, FL; Karen Smith, a member of Peace-Okeechobee, FL; and Jon Brazee, a member of Christ Lutheran-Cocoa Beach, FL.



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL- Winter Haven installed new staff members Debbie Garbrecht, ECE Interim Director; Amber James, music teacher; Kathy Schelp, first grade teacher.



Grace staff celebrating ministry anniversaries included Pastor Charles Reich-15 years; Jeff Wittcop-35 years; Debbie Gaylord-10 years; Bonnie Seckel-20 years.

Hope Plant City Welcomes New Members



New members joining Hope Lutheran-Plant City recently were (front, l-r) Lorrie Daniell and her children Wyatt and Isibael, who were both baptized during the service; Maggie Workley; Susan Reid; JoAnne & Richard Hoag; Ron Wagner (back, l-r) Hope Pastor Dean Pfeffer; Keith Schmidt. Absent from photo is Barbara French, who joined the congregation at

the Wednesday evening Living Hope contemporary worship service. During a late June worship, Hope members Todd and Cathie Warner were commissioned for their service as part of a medical mission to Guatemala the week of July 7-14. The Warners served in Quetzaltenango (about three hours from Guatemala City), assisting with medical missions and Vacation Bible School activities.

Lutheran Child Development Center Opens in Port Charlotte

Lutheran Church of the Cross (LCC)-Port Charlotte, FL, held an open house and ribbon cutting for its newest ministry, Lutheran Child Development Center (LCDC) on Saturday, July 9.

This ministry will be for three- and four-year-old children. Marjorie Bateman, Founding Director of the LCDC, cut the ribbon with Charlotte County Board of Commissioners Chairman Bob Starr. LCC Pastor Kenneth Redmann presided over the ceremony with prayers and thanking all those in the community and the church who assisted in the preparation and planning.

Special guests included Byron Beaber and Tim Byrne, Financial Associates, Thrivent Financial for Lutherans Foundation; Dwayne Leininger, President of LCC, and Warren Miller, Executor, Miller Endowment for the Advancement Christian Education.

After the ribbon cutting everyone was invited to visit the classrooms and playground area. For those parents who were interested in enrollment, Bateman and others answered any and all questions. Snacks were provided along with a bounce obstacle course and balloons for the children.

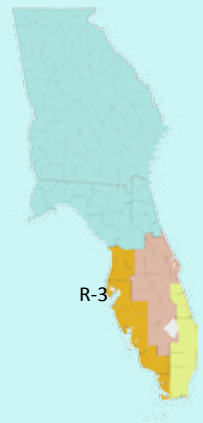
Karla Kemerling was installed as the LCDC permanent director on Sunday, July 17, at the 10:15am service with the Florida-Georgia District President Rev. Greg Walton officiating and proclaiming the Word. ■

REGION 3 NEWS

Florida-Georgia District - Region 3

Region 3 covers the lower southwestern sector of Florida, with much of its area bordering the Gulf of Mexico.

Representing Region 3 on the District Board of Directors are Rev. Jim Guelzow, pastor of Messiah-Tampa, FL; Jeff Richards, a member of Hope Lutheran-Bradenton, FL; and Maggie Bowles, a member of Peace-Naples. FL.



Middle School Servant Event Offers "B.A.S.I.C. Training"

Southwest Florida Circuit Middle school students and their friends came together on June 11 at Marco Island Middle School for some B.A.S.I.C. [Brothers And Sisters In Christ] Training on what it means to be a servant.

The event was inspired by the Synod's challenge to pick a Saturday in June where the teens would serve the local community. Coordinators were Faith Rattei, DCO, Director of Christian Outreach at Marco Lutheran-Marco Island; Rebecca Duport, DCE, Family Life Minister at Zion-Fort Myers; and Kami Jo Mogelvang, DCE, on staff at Grace-Naples.

Before the youth cleaned lockers, classrooms, windows and offices, they did a 'prayer walk' through the school. After lunch, the group traveled to Grace-Naples to pack military care packages using items they collected in advance from their congregations and families.



According to the three planners, the youth looked to Daniel from the Old Testament for inspiration. Explained Rattei CONFIRM THIS IS WHO THE EMAIL CAME FROM, "Many people are familiar with the story of Daniel in the lion's den. What many people don't know is that Daniel's lions den episode took place later in his life. "In Daniel chapter 1, Daniel and his friends were probably around the same age as the teens at the servant event. In the first chapter, the 'basic' training he received from his family, community and directly from God prepared him to be confident that he could stick to the diet plan God required of him and still serve under a pagan king in captivity.

"These youth today also face decisions every day as to what they will or won't participate in because of God's direction in their life. These teens shared that they had said 'no' to putting graffiti on a school or using foul language because they knew God would not want them to do that. Just like Daniel, they don't know the exact result of their choices, but they can be confident that they are doing what God wants for them ... and that's all that matters." ■



MESSIAH TAMPA HOSTS SKATEBOARDERS FOR CHRIST!



Messiah Lutheran-Tampa, FL, partnered with its neighbor, Northwest Community Church, on Sunday July 24, to host Boarders for Christ. "These guys put on a great showcase of their God-given skateboarding talents all while sharing their faith with everyone who gathered," reported Abby Moss, Messiah's Family Life Minister.

"Members of both churches and people from the community were awed by these young men's talent and more importantly, their message of how God called them out of a life of sin and into His marvelous light. It was a great example of how God can use any gift or ability to His glory and how the Christian Church can work together to reach the lost." ■

St. Paul-Boca Hosts “Celebrate Freedom”

South Floridians from Broward and Palm Beach Counties joined members of St. Paul Lutheran Church & School to “Celebrate Freedom” on Sunday, September 11, a time



U.S. Congressman Allen West, left presents St. Paul Senior Pastor J.R. Jones with a flag that had flown over the Capitol building in Washington, DC.

of healing and remembrance on the 10th Anniversary of 9/11. Among those participating in the opening ceremony, which included a moment of silence and the playing of Taps, were St. Paul Lutheran School band for the playing of the National Anthem; Boca Raton High School JROTC Color Guard; U.S. Congressman Allen West; Boca Raton Deputy Mayor and St. Paul member Susan Haynie; St. Paul Senior Pastor J.R. Jones; several city representatives; and Boca Helping Hands Executive Director James Gravilos. “Celebrate Freedom” featured a message tent for sending encouragement and thanks to members of the US military; the showing of a video on the 9-11 memorial in a setting conducive to reflection; children’s activities; food and refreshments; live entertainment; a craft fair.

REGION 4 NEWS
Florida-Georgia District - Region 4

Region 4 covers the lower southeastern sector of Florida, with much of its area stretching along the Atlantic Ocean and down into the Keys. Representing Region 4 on the District Board of Directors are Rev. Stephen Wipperman, pastor of Our Savior-Lake Worth, FL; Diana Geiger, a member of Trinity Lutheran-Delray Beach, FL; and Nancy Volz, a member of Our Savior-Plantation, FL.

Shepherd of the Coast Has Record Enrollment

Now in its eighth academic year, Shepherd of the Coast- Fort Lauderdale welcomed 84 students in Kindergarten through eighth grade -- an increase of 24 students over last year. This is the highest first-day enrollment as Shepherd of the Coast. Overall, we e school is at 78% of capacity in configuration of grades. New to the staff this year is Timothy Guelzow, who joined Shepherd of the Coast as Assistant Principal and upper grade math and art teacher as well as 7/8 grade homeroom teacher. Guelzow, who has served Lutheran schools in Winter Haven, Lake Worth, and Delray Beach, and his wife Lynn have four grown children. Shepherd of Coast has added band to its curriculum, which is open to students in grades 5 to 8. ■

INASMUCH Some Reflections Following a Visit to Haiti

By Rev. David Mueller, District Human Care Advisory Council
Sharing information...Seeding development of Human Care ministry

Jesus calls us to “love the least.” In very simple words, He gives the great principles of Christian living. We are set free in Christ to love our neighbor; *Love the Lord your God with everything you have Love your neighbor as yourself.*

Those words have taken on new meaning for me after a four-day visit to the western half of the island of Hispaniola, a land that we know simply as Haiti. It was a short two-hour flight from Fort Lauderdale.

In that brief time-span, however, we left the very clean, organized, safe, well-governed US of A and entered a land that seems to be defined by chaos...quite literally, chaos.

It is a society where, for the vast majority of the citizenry, housing is a tent, a meal is a sometime event, childbirth is in a polluted stream, medical care is unheard of, education is non-existent, clothing is out of a rubbish heap or a waste pile outside of a rich man’s house and a street side vendor -- of which there are thousands upon thousands -- can turn a profit of maybe a dollar-a-day.

From Port au Prince to Cap Haitian to Leogane to Jacmel and in between ... hovels for homes, garbage on every road ... yet the Church is there, the Body of Christ, putting its arms around these who are indeed the least in our Western Hemisphere.

I returned with this singular thought. I would invite our Florida-Georgia congregations and schools to join the Body of Christ already in Haiti with their own love and assistance.

Many congregations and schools in our District are already involved in ministry that reaches across the span of time and culture and which puts arms of love around these “least ones” who are our hemispheric neighbors. There are many opportunities for others not yet involved. Check out the website for LCMS World Relief or google search the Lutheran Church in Haiti or the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Haiti.

And the Pentecost Spirit will lead you! ■

Florida-Georgia Focusing on Revitalization Ministry

By Rev. Ron Biel, Transforming Churches Network, Co-Chair for Florida-Georgia District

A number of years ago I was stunned when President Gerhard Michael, Jr., reported that for the first time in Florida-Georgia history, baptized and confirmed membership had declined despite the states’ growing population.

Since then the situation has worsened. We are reflecting the reality of our Synod where nationally 80% of congregations are plateaued or declining.

Good pastors, church workers and members faithfully worship, teach and serve. At the same time, society has become more suspicious and cynical toward the church. There is much activity in congregations but there is often a good amount of frustration and discouragement while worship numbers shrink and membership grows older. Perhaps this is why our District passed a convention resolution to “expand the involvement for revitalization through TCN (Transforming Churches Network)” directing that “50% of the congregations be engaged in a revitalization process by the 2015 convention.”

So, what are we missing? What is going on? What can be done?

A number of lessons have been learned as TCN and many others seek to answer those questions. Very often churches have turned their focus and

attention inward toward the membership and have lost sight of the community. Churches have experienced “mis-



Put another way, members seek the Word and Sacraments more often as they put their faith into action through service and they bring others into contact with the Word through their works of love and service. Young and old are being baptized and more people are giving praise to God.

And we are still learning. Both TCN and our District are making changes as we listen, learn and adapt. Pastors, members, churches and parochial schools face unique situations requiring customized approaches. We are transitioning to adapt our approach depending on the needs, size and resources of a congregation. The starting place may be very different for each ministry.

No matter the age, size, or resources of the church, the goal is the same: revitalization. To “revitalize” means (1) To give new life to (2) To give new vitality or vigor to. As followers of Jesus Christ, practically speaking, that means growing in our faith and faithfulness to God

sion drift” as unintentionally actions are taken that serve the membership and their preferences, desires and needs almost exclusively. We are often stuck in some unbiblical assumptions about the role of pastors and lay people in spite of Luther’s teaching on vocation and the “priesthood of all believers.”

In following the convention resolution, our District sought to address this problem initially by “jump starting” a turn-around process through a TCN weekend consultation. At first, these consultations have had mixed results as we learned what to do and what not to do. Yet through this weekend, and the important elements of pastoral learning communities and coaching, we have seen some very encouraging results.

Congregations have transformed from inwardly focused ministry to an intentionally outward focus. Churches are discovering that when that happens, they get their needs met as they seek to be servants to those in their neighborhoods. Along the way they are also seeing their faith grow and the seeds of faith being planted in those they touch.

Church members seek the Word and Sacraments more often as they put their faith into action through service and they bring others into contact with the Word through their works of love and service. Young and old are being baptized and more people are giving praise to God.

through Word and Sacrament and intentionally being salt and light to the people around us. It is to be like Jesus whose ministry was “telling the good news...and doing good” (Acts 10:36-38). Indeed, God our Savior desires “all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (1 Tim 2:4).

To learn more about revitalization contact: Rev. Ron Biel, 352-399-5015, rbiel.tcn@gmail.com or Rev. Scott Gress, 561-542-4472, scottgress@me.com.



Parish Nurses Share Powerful Ministry

A special report by Joyce Van Matre, RN, BS, CRRN, CDMS, CCM, the Parish Nurse at Hope Lutheran-Plant City, FL

On the banks of Lake Michigan sits Concordia University Wisconsin, where parish nurses each year to share ideas, concerns, prayers. As the Florida-Georgia District Representative, I attend these meetings and educational sessions which act as an awakening or renewal of our calling to serve in our congregations as well as reach out to other parish nurses and pastors. We all embrace the “body, mind, spirit” in our nursing roll. We all depend on the Holy Spirit to guide us and prepare us for the work we are to do.

The 2011 gathering brought 20 women from different states, Lutheran churches, backgrounds. But one nurse stood out like a beacon in a world of chaos -- Raeda Mansour from Christmas Lutheran-Bethlehem, Palestine, where Christians represent about 2% of the population. She works with her pastor, Mitri Raheb, and just completed her fifth year as a parish nurse. They have ignited the Spirit-led flame of hope and eagerness not to just survive but to celebrate living a

“faith-full” day every day! And they lovingly share this with their Muslim neighbors, offering health education classes, a fitness center with an indoor pool, and school opportunities open to all children.

Raeda is assisting another church in Nablus, Palestine, to begin a parish nurse program.

Dr. Marcia Schnorr, Coordinator of the LCMS Parish Nursing Program, has been leading this ministry for more than 20 years. It has continued to grow and make a difference in congregations all over the U.S. and abroad.

Are you an RN, longing to serve as a missionary short term? “Mercy Medical Teams” is looking for volunteers with big hearts and willing hands to serve. To learn more, contact Jacob Fiene at 800-248-1930, ext. 1278.

Has this bit of information on parish nursing peaked your interest? Want to know more? My function as a district representative is to promote, support, and educate pastors and



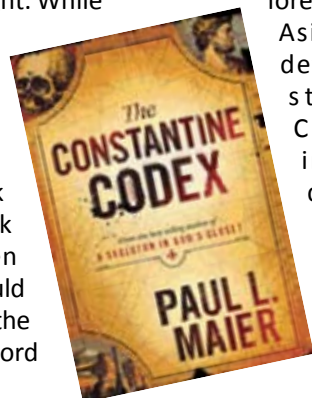
Joyce Van Matre

churches about health ministries/parish nursing. Please contact me at 813-545-4318 or Richjoy65@tampabay.rr.com

New Paul Maier Book Envisions Discovery of Lost New Testament Scriptures

Dr. Paul Maier introduced the world to Dr. Jonathan Weber in best sellers *A Skeleton in God's Closet* and *More than a Skelton*. Now Weber returns --- with archeologist wife Shannon --- in *The Constantine Codex*.

Harvard Professor Jonathan Weber is enjoying a season of peace when a shocking discovery thrusts him back into the national spotlight. While touring monasteries in Greece, Jon and Shannon uncover an ancient biblical manuscript containing the lost ending of Mark and an additional book of the Bible. If proven authentic, the codex could forever change the way the world views the holy Word of God.



As the Webers work to validate their find, it soon becomes clear that there are powerful forces who don't want the codex to go public. When it's stolen en route to America, Jon and Shannon are swept into a deadly race to find the manuscript and confirm its authenticity before it's lost forever.

Aside from fascinating details and engrossing storytelling, *The Constantine Codex* includes an open, rigorous debate between Dr. Weber and a moderate leader of Islam that could serve as an example for real-world engagements.

Maier is the Russell H. Seibert Professor of Ancient History at Western Michigan

University, the third vice president of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod and a much-published author of both scholarly and popular works. More than five million of Maier's books are now in print in 20 languages. Maier is also the author of 250-plus scholarly articles and reviews in professional journals.



Maier lectures widely, appears frequently on national radio, television, and newspaper interviews, and has received numerous awards. He has also penned seven children's books and hosted six video seminars dealing with Jesus, St. Paul, the early church, and current Christianity. Visit his Web site at www.paulmaier.com.

The Constantine Codex was published in June of 2011 by Tyndale House.



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This 4'x8' stained glass image of Jesus is in the lobby of Lutheran Haven's nursing home.

Canine Companion Encourages Shut-In to Attend Worship

As visitation elder at First Lutheran-Inverness, FL, Ron Fullerton made a habit of calling on one of the church's shut-ins, a 95-year-old woman named Mae Witt. It became a weekly habit to visit with Mae and bring her Communion.

During one of these visits Mae began to cry and told Ron about a little dog she had to give up to move into the assisted living facility where she now lives. Thinking she might enjoy a visit from their pet Dachshund, Gretchen, Ron and his wife Sue brought the dog with them on their next visit.

Mae was elated! She was so taken with the little dog that she

proclaimed, "If I can sit with Gretchen, I want to come to church."

Mae is in a wheelchair, so getting her to church is no easy task. But Ron and Sue felt if she was motivated to go (she had been on the rolls for years, but never attended), they would make the effort to get her there.

Over the next eight months, Ron picked her up -- literally lifted her from her chair into the car -- with Gretchen in tow, and drove off to church. Now Mae sits with Gretchen in her lap, both serene

as rose buds. Mae has seldom missed a Sunday since her first visit with Gretchen last fall.

Gretchen is quite a spectacle at First Lutheran. The church's small crowd of young people love catching a glimpse of "God's Dog" (printed on a little jacket Gretchen wears to church), as do the more "senior" members.

According to Pastor Thomas Beaverson, Mae gets a real sense of God's love at church, with one of His created creatures sitting quietly in her lap. As for Beaverson himself, he concludes, "Who am I to say what tool God will use to draw somebody into His presence?" ■

Editor's note: This story was written by Susan and Ron Fullerton's niece Denise Marie Siino, a resident of Northern California. At left — Gretchen with Mae Witt and Ron Fullerton at First Lutheran-Inverness worship service. Above — Gretchen ... God's Dog at First-Inverness.



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