

LUTHERAN LIFE

2015 | Volume 2
The Newsmagazine of the
Florida-Georgia District
of The Lutheran Church -
Missouri Synod

*The Power
of Music*

District Convention
PREVIEW



engaged
IN THE Master's
business

floridageorgia+

32nd REGULAR DISTRICT CONVENTION
JUNE 12-14, 2015



The Mission of the Florida-Georgia District is to serve, assist, and encourage congregations in the ministry of Jesus Christ. People of the Florida-Georgia District are equipped, empowered, engaged... connecting people to Jesus. *Lutheran LIFE* is the official newsmagazine 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 your letters and 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. Please send scanned photos of approximately 300 DPI as a .jpg attachment rather than embedded in your emails. Or mail your photo print in a good quality resolution to our address below. Advertising is welcome and encouraged; rates and information are available from *Lutheran LIFE's* office. Changes of address including e-mail changes, additions or deletions should be directed to our office.

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People of Truth in a World of Lies

Our home receives dozens of telephone solicitations to contribute to charities, political groups and various vendors who begin by saying, "We are not trying to sell you anything." Sometimes they ask me, "How are you Mr. Lieske?" On occasion I actually answer the question. I remember an incident after I had experienced



an injection in my eye for a chronic condition. I replied by describing the procedure and the pain. The solicitor became empathetic, confused and forgot what he was selling. We had a nice conversation.

We live in a world of lies. The product is advertised as "free" but there is often a large postage and handling charge. The politician says, "You can keep your doctor." (But you can't.) The sales lady says, "That dress looks great on you!" (And it doesn't.) The store advertises 50% off! (But inflates the original price.) The Publix clerk asks, "how are you?" You feel terrible but you say, "Fine," and add "How are you!" (Not really caring or even what their answer might be.)

On one occasion a clerk asked me how I was, and I replied "Thankful." That comment opened up a meaningful dialogue. The other day a clerk shared with me, "That man just tried to scam me." I replied

that there are a lot of lies in the world, but that "Jesus is the way, the truth and the life."

She said "Yes He is, but a lot of people don't know it." For me that was a brief experience of koinonia, the "communion of saints," the affirmation of a common bond in Jesus Christ. Precious, because the truth was told.

Telling the truth (and, yes, there are times when we should be silent) opens up meaningful conversation, builds trust, facilitates healing and imitates God — who cannot lie (Hebrews 6:8). Sometimes we know the truth but we are silent, fearing social censure.

Martin Luther King, Jr., an exceptional truth-teller, once remarked, "In the end we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends." Benjamin Franklin in *Poor Richard's Almanac* said it differently: "As we must account for every idle Word, so we must for every idle Silence."

Powerful statement! As Christians, followers of the Christ, God expects us not to be silent but to speak the truth in love. This improves our relationships. Furthermore, there are issues that we should address today such as the persecution of Christians and Jews and the rights of the unborn. We speak out for the unborn because God tells us, "Rescue those being led away to death, hold back those staggering toward slaughter..." (Proverbs 24:11-12) We speak the truth about false religions and harmful ideas even though it makes us uncomfortable.

As "truth tellers" we cannot but help to identify those who deceive — and warn others in the same way that the Good Shepherd, Jesus, warns His flock and protects them from the wolf. "I lay down My life for the sheep." (John 10:15)



One of the great wolves of our time is the false political-religious ideology of Islam which steals, kills, destroys and deceives. Indeed, the Koran says of Allah — "Allah is the greatest deceiver." (Koran 3:54 and 8:30) And from this "truth"

about Allah comes the Islamic concept of taqiyya, the mandate for Muslims to lie to non-Muslims if it advances the cause of Allah.

What then is our mandate? It is to share Him, who is the "way, the truth and the life" in order to liberate the Muslim and any who worship a false god from darkness and deception. The word "truth" occurs 228 times in the NIV Bible.

Lies enslave. Truth brings liberty. Jesus said it. "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free." (John 3:32).

We are people of truth in a world of lies. ■

Prayer March

On May 16, 2015 4 Burning Bush Ministries will again sponsor a prayer march for persecuted Christians and Jews. Participants will assemble at Lake Eola Park downtown Orlando, at the Promenade/Central Avenue at 4:30 p.m. The march will conclude at the First Presbyterian Church with international speakers representing persecuted Christians and Jews from their countries. For further information contact Bruce Lieske at blieske7@bellsouth.net

DISTRICT CAPSULES

by Greg Walton District President

Calling Congregations

Grace/AtlantaGA.....Sole Pastor
First/ClearwaterFL.....Sole Pastor
Holy Cross/JacksonvilleFL.....Sole Pastor
Beautiful Savior/LeHigh AcresFL...Sole Pastor
St John/OcalaFL.....Sole Pastor
Faith/ParrishFL.....Sole Pastor
Our Savior/PlantationFL.....Sole Pastor
Grace/St CloudFL.....Sole Pastor
Our Savior/St PetersburgFL .. Assistant Pastor
Messiah/TampaFL..... Senior Pastor
Trinity/ToccoaFL.....Sole Pastor

Transferred to Other Districts

Rev. David NabingerIndiana (O)

Transferred from Other Districts

Rev. Marvin A HugginsMissouri (O)

New Church Starts

LIVE UCF/Orlando FL
Orlando East Circuit
Hope /Jacksonville FL
First Coast Circuit
Christ the King/Commerce GA
Atlanta North Circuit
SW Florida/Rotunda West FL
Sarasota Circuit

Installations

Rev. Thomas R Wenndt, Pastor
Faith/New Port Richey FL (O)

Rev. Ronald D Pennekamp, Senior Pastor
St. Paul/Lakeland, FL (O)

Mrs.Ruth L. Wessling, Principal
Faith/Hialeah, FL (C)

Mrs.Elizabeth Chitwood, Dir of Parish Music
First/Gainesville, FL (C)

Emeritus

Rev. D Michael Hackbardt
from Non-Candidate to Emeritus (O)

Called to Glory

Rev. Roy A Lidbom (O)
Rev. Paul K Koepchen (O)

Change of Status

Mrs. Sarah Haupt
from Active to Non-Candidate (C)

* Note: In District data above,
C = Commissioned Minister;
O = Ordained Minister



Recently, at the Veterans of the Cross Retreat, I heard our own Pastor Bob Steinke do an excellent Bible Study on the Selah in the

Psalms. The power of music is really incredible isn't it? It has the power to etch into our minds memories and situations, both positive and negative. Music can be soothing, or it can challenge and convict us. It can entertain us. It can bring a smile to our face or tears to our eyes. Even the most rhythmically challenged of us can't help but move to certain sounds.

For me, Christmas music will always evoke special memories. I love all music, but Christmas music is especially uplifting for me. However, I would have to be honest to say that running a close second is the music of Easter.

I remember years ago struggling to plan Easter worship. The difficulty certainly wasn't the subject matter — there was plenty to celebrate. My challenge was to choose hymns. We have such beautiful Lutheran hymns about the resurrection of Jesus, and I wanted to use them all.

Two hymns I typically included — two of my favorites — were "I Know That My Redeemer Lives" and "Jesus Christ is Risen Today!" Those always brought me back to my childhood, when Easter was such a special celebration, and there was just an atmosphere of excitement and anticipation in the air all around our church.

In those days, we almost always got new Easter outfits. At the risk of oversharing, I still remember the Easter I had blue gingham houndstooth pants with blue suede platform shoes. I now see what a regrettable choice that

may have been . . . but seriously . . . it was the 70s!

We Waltons celebrated Easter early this year. In February we had one of those feared middle-of-the-night calls announcing that Edith's mother had a severe stroke. Only hours before Edith had been on the phone talking to her mother and everything was normal. In a split second life changed.

As we drove to North Georgia we were preparing for the worst, and didn't quite know if she would even be alive. She pulled through, but the next few weeks were a roller coaster of emotions as we watched her make progress and



SWAGGER

then take a turn for the worse.

In His wisdom, God provided the healing that only He alone can bring. It's the ultimate healing as she was set free and Beverly Adams went home to be with Jesus. And we celebrated the power of the resurrection.

The powerful words of the Apostle Paul, words I've proclaimed over the years, have taken on a whole new meaning for me this Easter season. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:51-56: Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed — in a flash, in the twinkling of

an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.

The Waltons celebrating the marriage of Tim & Megan Walton. Beverly Adams is shown between Edith and Beverly's husband George. This December they would have celebrated 60 years of marriage. Between the bride and Greg are Alex & Angie Walton.



When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The death of Edith's mother, and any Christian's death, isn't the end. It's really the beginning of a life without end in a whole new way. We have a chance, amidst the mourning, to witness our faith in the victory of Jesus. Because He lives we believe we will live also. I found in that moment, all the lovely truths I've learned and taught about our Christian faith and the promise of the resurrection became more than theoretical or doctrinal. Somehow, they became more real for us.

We know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that we can trust God in the face of our loss. It doesn't take away the sting of death, but it is such a great comfort to know that death is only the gateway to new life with Jesus.

I realize that many who are reading this have, or are, experiencing similar circumstances. Let the true message of Easter speak to your heart. Listen to the music and the words of the hymns that assure us of our victory.

Hear the words of the Gospel, as Jesus tells us in John 11:25, I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die.

Certainly these are words for the whole Church, but they are also words for YOU! Jesus



Celebrating Easter All Year Long

The Power of Music

makes this promise to each of us individually. Because of our faith in Jesus through His grace, despite our sinfulness, despite our unworthiness, we have this great promise and hope of new life. We may no longer occupy space on this planet, but we will most assuredly live forever. The truth of our Easter celebration is that we no longer need to fear death and the grave. We now live in the reality of a sure and certain eternity because of the resurrection of Jesus.

I know that life will be different, especially for Edith, her

LIFELINES

siblings and her father, George, with the absence of her mother. She was a godly, kind and loving woman, who cared for her family, and was constant in prayer for her family and friends. The Psalmist wrote, Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.

Edith and I know that she was a dedicated, precious child of God who now rejoices at His throne. We take great comfort in this, especially as we celebrate Easter.

One of my favorite communion hymns proclaims: Easter triumph, Easter joy! This alone can sin destroy; From sin's power, Lord, set us free, Newborn souls in you to be. Alleluia! We rejoice in the resurrection.

May our lives be lived for His glory, as we rejoice in this past Easter . . . and with all the Easters before us, and in life or death, may we live to connect people to Jesus, our hope, comfort and joy!



Living in His Promise!
Greg

Departing District Board Members Thanked for Service, Dedication



Bill Gaik



James Guelzow



Sonia Tellez



Nancy Volz



Robert Ziegler

The April 17 Florida-Georgia Board of Directors meeting was the final one for five members who will not be standing for re-election either because of term limits or personal choice. They were thanked for their service and dedication by District President Greg Walton, who presented gifts of appreciation to them.

“We have a great Board,” Walton said, “and I thank all of you for that. It is a pleasure to work with a Board who shares the vision of connecting people to Jesus and wants to make that happen.”

Bill Gaik Laitly Board Member / Region 1

Gaik has served on the District Board for nine years and has been on the Finance Committee. He has been active with Lutheran Services Georgia as Chairman and on the Senior Ministry Task Force.

Gaik’s involvement at the congregational level has included chairing the board of elders and serving on the budget, worship planning and long-range planning committees.

Rev. James Guelzow Second Vice President / Region 4

A long-time member of the Board, Guelzow has served as chairman the past six years. For the nine years prior to that, he was president of the Board. Guelzow

served in the Florida-Georgia District for all 40 years of his pastoral ministry, first at Peace / Okeechobee then at Messiah / Tampa until his retirement in May of 2014.

Guelzow previously served on the District Mission Advisory



Council, as a Circuit Outreach Council Chairman and as Tampa Circuit Counselor. He is a past Florida-Georgia LWML Counselor. He will act as Convention Manager for the June District Convention and will continue to serve on the Lutheran Services Florida Board.

Sonia Tellez Laitly Board Member / Region 3

A member of Prince of Peace / Orlando, Tellez served one term on the Florida-Georgia Board. She has also served on Prince of Peace’s Board of Directors. She is the retired Conference Event Coordinator for the American Bible Society.

Tellez was one of 12 Orlando area volunteers honored in 2014 as a Lutheran Services Florida Good Samaritan.

Nancy Volz Laitly Board Member / Region 5

With this Board meeting, Volz concluded her nine years of service, during which time she was part of various special committees. She is a long-time member of Our Savior / Plantation, where she is Director of Finance and Adult Bell Choir Director.

Robert Ziegler Commissioned Minister At Large / Region 4

Ziegler served two terms on the Board as one of three Commissioned Ministers of Education. He announced at the April meeting that he has accepted the call to join the Nebraska District ministry team as education executive, a position he will assume this coming June. He has served as principal of Saint Michael Lutheran School / Fort Myers since 1999.

Ziegler is a past President of the Florida-Georgia Lutheran Administrators Association. Other service in the District included being a presenter for WebX training on filling empty seats and funding models for Lutheran schools as well as a Board member for the House of Studies. ■

Convention Delegates to Elect Leaders, Consider Direction, Gather for Worship, Fellowship

Pastor and lay delegates from Florida-Georgia congregations will gather in Orlando from June 12-14 under the theme “Engaged in the Master’s Business” for the 32nd Regular District Convention.

“Our focus will be on Outreach, encouraging us to connect people to Jesus,” said District President Greg Walton. “We will conduct District business and also enjoy time as God’s family, workers in His vineyard.

“It will be a great opportunity to be recharged for our tasks of equipping, empowering and engaging to connect people to Jesus.”

New this year is a Convention Ingathering to benefit Stepping Stones Mission of Atlanta and Redeeming Life Outreach Ministries of Sanford. Congregations are being asked to collect items and conduct a special offering in advance of the Convention to present to the two ministries on Sunday morning.

“This Ingathering will provide a visual to the Convention theme of ‘Engaged in the Master’s Business,’” Walton said.



Robert Kuhn

Friday. Kuhn, who represents the LCMS’ East-Southeast Region, is also scheduled to present a

Synod report on Saturday afternoon.

LCMS President Matthew Harrison will be at the Convention for a question-and-answer session on Sunday morning.

Dr. Kurt Senske, CEO of Lutheran Social Services of the South, will lead Convention Bible studies. These sessions are scheduled for Friday and Saturday.

Essayist for the Convention is Dr. John Denninger, President of the LCMS’ Southeastern District. His presentations are scheduled for Friday evening and Sunday morning.

Chaplain for the Convention is Rev. Brian Kneser, Fourth Vice President of the Florida-Georgia District. Kneser is pastor of Woodlands / Montverde, host congregation for the Convention.



Matthew Harrison



Kurt Senske



John Denninger



Brian Kneser

Walton will be the preacher at the Sunday morning communion service.

Cindy Steinbeck, author of *The Vine Speaks*, is slated to open Saturday afternoon’s session with a special presentation. Using imagery

and metaphor of the vineyard, *The Vine Speaks* is a conversational Bible study that explores how Christ works in us by drawing lessons from the seasons of the vineyard, from the lives of the Apostles, from the author’s experiences and from personal circumstances and perspectives.

Convention Business

Convention delegates will elect District leaders including President, Regional Vice Presidents, Regional Lay Representatives, Commissioned Minister at Large Representatives and Secretary. Elections

Continued Page 8 . . .





Convention Ingathering to Benefit

A new element is being added to the Florida-Georgia District Convention this year — an ingathering to one ministry in Georgia and one in Florida. Selected for this first-time outreach are **Stepping Stones Homeless Mission of Greater Atlanta** and **Redeeming Life Maternity Home of Sanford**.

Backpacks, shoulder bags and fanny packs are being collected for Stepping Stones Mission — so the homeless can use them to carry their personal belongings. Redeeming Life is requesting onesies, newborns to 12 months, and diapers sizes 1, 2 or 3. Congregations are asked to gather donations to send to the Convention with their pastor and lay delegate.

Stepping Stones Mission

Launched in July of 2009 as an outreach to the homeless, Stepping Stones Mission is dedicated to sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. Under the leadership of Rev. Joseph Song, the ministry provides the homeless with food and basic necessities — and “help along the way toward rehabilitation, the healing of one’s



Florida, Georgia Ministries

life and stability,” said Song.

Volunteers from area Lutheran churches help build bridges into the faith community for the homeless, poor and needy. Strategic programs include meal service; homeless leader training; youth experience program; after-school for homeless kids; rehabilitation and spiritual training.

Song also leads outdoor worship experiences to reach the homeless. “Our vision is to be a caring, loving, growing community of Christians who preach the Gospel, teach God’s Word and extend the compassion of Christ to the homeless of Atlanta so that people can be identified, built up and unified in the body of Christ,” he said.

For more information about the ministry, visit steppingstonemission.net.

Redeeming Life Outreach Ministries



Founded by Rev. Ed and Sheryl DeWitt, Redeeming Life provides a safe, nurturing, Christ-centered home for single expectant mothers in crisis.

“We love and support them and their unborn children,” said Sheryl DeWitt, Redeeming Life’s Executive Director. “Our hope is that lives will be saved for now and eternity.”

Resident Director Rachel Woolery meets one-on-one with residents each week. During their stay, residents learn about time management, parenting and financial literacy. They receive regular prenatal care and are expected to work or volunteer if they are not yet able to get a job.

More than a dozen women in the midst of crisis pregnancies have lived at Redeeming Life since it opened in November of 2013. The first baby was welcomed into the home in July of 2014 and baptized by Pastor DeWitt at Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, which is located across the street from the maternity home. Three more babies were welcomed this spring.

For information, visit rlom.org. ■



Pictured above with baby are Sheryl and Pastor, Ed DeWitt of Redeeming Life Outreach Ministries — and below, the Grand Opening of the Sanford, Florida facilities.

Stepping Stones Ministry Center for Stepping Stone Mission is involved with feeding the homeless both physical and spiritual food in greater metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia.



... from previous page

are scheduled for two time slots on Saturday.

Four floor committees will be presenting resolutions for consideration and action:

Leadership, chaired by District First Vice President David Brighton, Region 1

Congregations, chaired by Laity Representative Jay Wendling Region 1

Outreach, chaired by District Third Vice President Steve Wiperman, Region 5

By-laws, chaired by Region 1 Laity Representative Bill Gaik, Region 1.

Floor committees — comprised of members of the Florida-Georgia District Board of Directors — finalized resolutions to be presented to the Convention at the April 17 meeting in the District office.

Delegates will receive the **Convention Workbook** with a listing of all resolutions in advance of the June event. Floor Committees will host open hearings on the first day of the Convention to provide a forum for delegates to discuss the resolutions.



Dave Brighton



Jay Wendland



Jim Guelzow



Steve Wiperman



Bill Gaik



Kathy Keene

Honors & Presentations

Following a long-established tradition, three Doulos tou Christo (Servant of Christ) awards will be bestowed by the District during the Convention. Honored will be a layperson, a commissioned minister and an ordained minister.

These presentations are scheduled for Saturday and Sunday.

Another Convention tradition is remembering Florida-Georgia professional church workers who have died since the last triennial

gathering. This memorial service will be incorporated into Sunday morning’s communion service.

This year’s agenda also include the presentation of the St. Martin of Tours Award.

Florida-Georgia Second Vice President Rev. Jim Guelzow is the Convention Manager, with Kathy Keene, District President Administrative Assistant, the Convention Coordinator and Rev. Pat O’Brien the parliamentarian. ■

Financial Workshop Geared to Teens, Parents



Thrivent Financial representatives Katherine Kyle and Rebecca Lester led a recent workshop on Parents, Teens, and Money Matters for Deland High School.

Chris Dowdell, Volusia County Schools Teacher of the Year 2016, is an American economics teacher at Deland High School who teaches his students about money through The Budget Project. This is an educational program that was developed by Dowdell to assist his students with the basic understanding of budgeting, interest rates, debt and investments throughout the school year.

Dowdell saw the need to reach the parents of his students and asked Thrivent Financial to get involved. Thrivent hosted a workshop called *Parents, Teens, and Money Matters*. Only three classrooms participated, and Dowdell said he was stunned they had almost 100% participation for the Tuesday night workshop held at Deland High School. More than 200 people were in attendance.

The free educational workshop was designed for parents and their teens and helps increase understanding of stewardship, discusses making intentional choices about sharing, saving and spending money, and helps parents learn new ways to talk to their teens about money and values as a family. It was led by Rebecca Lester and Katherine Kyle, Thrivent Financial representatives of Ormond Beach. ■

Fourth Consecutive Year

Thrivent Named a 'World's Most Ethical Company' by Ethisphere Institute

Thrivent Financial has been recognized by the Ethisphere Institute, the global leader in defining and advancing the standards of ethical business practices, as a 2015 World's Most Ethical Company.

The World's Most Ethical Companies designation recognizes organizations that have had a material impact on the way business is conducted by fostering a culture of ethics and transparency at every level of the company.

Being a four-year honoree underscores Thrivent's commitment to leading ethical business standards and practices ensuring long-term value to key stakeholders including customers, employees, suppliers, regulators and investors. Thrivent is one of only four companies in the Financial Services category honored this year.

"Conducting our business according to highest ethical standards is what our membership expects, and we strive to meet those expectations," says Teresa Rasmussen, senior vice president, general counsel and secretary for Thrivent. "Being named to this prestigious list for the fourth year in a row is a wonderful acknowledgment of our commitment to business ethics."

"The World's Most Ethical Companies embrace the correlation between ethical business practice and improved company

performance," said Ethisphere's Chief Executive Officer, Timothy Erlich. "These companies use ethics as a means to further define their industry leadership and understand that creating an ethical culture and earning the World's Most Ethical Companies recognition involves more than just an outward facing message or a handful of senior executives saying the right thing."

"Earning this recognition involves the collective action of

sampling of definitive criteria of core competencies, rather than all aspects of corporate governance, risk, sustainability, compliance and ethics.

Scores are generated in five key categories: ethics and compliance program (35%), corporate citizenship and responsibility (20%), culture of ethics (20%), governance (15%) and leadership, innovation and reputation (10%).



a global workforce from the top down. We congratulate everyone at Thrivent for this extraordinary achievement."

The World's Most Ethical Company assessment is based upon the Ethisphere Institute's Ethics Quotient framework developed over years of research to provide a means to assess an organization's performance in an objective, consistent and standardized way. The information collected provides a comprehensive

Thrivent Financial is a financial services organization that helps Christians be wise with money and live generously. As a membership organization, it offers its nearly 2.4 million member-owners a broad range of products, services and guidance from financial representatives nationwide. For more than a century it has helped members make wise money choices that reflect their values while providing them opportunities to demonstrate their generosity where they live, work and worship. ■

District Calendar of Events

Prayer March for Persecuted Christians & Jews
May 16, 4:30pm
Lake Eola Park
Orlando

2015 District Convention
June 12-14, 2015
Orlando Airport Marriott
Orlando, FL

Annual Thrivent Day with the Rays
July 11, 4:10pm
Tropicana Field
Tampa, FL

2015 National Hispanic Convention
July 28-31, 2015
Grand Hyatt
Tampa Bay, FL

District Educators & Pastors Conference
September 23-25, 2015
St. Paul Lutheran Church & School
Lakeland, FL

LWML District Retreat
September 25-27, 2015
Sirata Beach Resort
St. Petersburg Beach, FL

Regional Outreach Conference #2
November 6-8, 2015
Lake Yale Baptist Conference Center
Leesburg, FL

LHM Regional Outreach Conference (ROC)
November 13-14, 2015
Buena Vista Palace
Orlando, FL

Hockey Team Honors Chris Card

The Tampa Bay Lightning honored Chris Card, COO of Lutheran Services Florida, as the

32nd Lightning Community Hero of the season during the first period of the March 5 game against the Toronto Maple Leafs.

Card received a \$50,000 donation from the Lightning Foundation and the Lightning Community Heroes program that he donated to LSF.

Over the past two decades, Card has been trailblazing initiatives to improve child welfare. He is noted for leading the State of Florida through restructuring the former child welfare system toward the current Community Based Care model, in which services of

child welfare are transferred to community non-profit agencies. This integration has produced many notable results for abused and neglected children, including significantly increased adoptions.

LSF is a statewide, non-profit, human services agency dedicated to helping all people regardless of religious affiliation, age or national origin. LSF is based in Tampa and has more than 60 programs throughout the state of Florida.

Since its establishment in 1982, nearly 900,000 children and families have received assistance from LSF's vital services. ■

Photo at left — Brenden Morrow (far left) joined Lightning owner Jeff Vinik (right) to present Chris Card with a check for \$50,000.



LSG Helps Provide Bikes for Refugees

During the first months after arriving in the United States, refugees often express a need for reliable transportation to attend English and employment classes, shop for groceries, visit friends and commute to school and medical appointments.

“Even clients with a good grasp of the English language need a few months to prepare for and complete Georgia’s driving test,” said Taryn Arbeiter, Lutheran Services of Georgia Matching Grant Coordinator for Refugee and Immigration Services. “It can take several months or even years for refugees to save enough money to buy a car.”

In response to the call for better transportation, LSG partnered with Sopo Bicycle Cooperative volunteer Patrick Davis to connect newly arrived refugees with refurbished bicycles. Sopo and LSG held two Saturday workshops in Atlanta’s Grant Park neighborhood.

“We opened the opportunity to eight current clients, with a special

focus on women and children,” Arbeiter said.

Several LSG staff and volunteers donated their time for the workshops, which included a short service project to help organize the Sopo bike shop and repair tire tubes. Volunteers assisted clients in cleaning and making adjustments to their refurbished bikes – and used a nearby cul-de-sac to teach two clients how to ride a bike.

The workshops ended with a safety presentation, teaching clients about traffic laws and equipping them with helmets and bike lights. At the end of the workshops, every participant found a bike to take home.

“Equally important, every client, volunteer and staff person had the opportunity to practice English, share stories and laughter and forge new, supportive relationships,” Arbeiter said. ■



LWML Mites Donations Pass \$100 Million Mark!

The Lutheran Women’s Missionary League reached a staggering and inspiring milestone recently — donating more than \$100 million to missions in its 73-year history.

Since its establishment, the LWML has focused on supporting global missions, affirming each member’s relationship with Christ and equipping women to live out their Christian lives in active mission ministries.

In the Florida-Georgia District, mission grant funding is ongoing. Among the recent check presentations were:

- Food of Life Food Pantry at Lutheran Church of the Redeemer / Melbourne FL.
- Food bank of Concordia Seminary / St. Louis.

For more information about Florida-Georgia LWML activities, visit the newly redesigned website – flgalwml.com – or visit the organizational page on Facebook. ■

LWML National, District Calendars Remain Busy

“We have so much going on in the LWML right now both on the national and the District levels,” emphasizes Joan Koch, District Vice President Communications. “On the national level we have a convention in Des Moines, IA, in June. Not only will we be voting on numerous items, we will also be receiving a new mite goal.”

As of January 31, 2015, LWML has collected \$1,513,892.57 in mites. “What a phenomenal amount of mites!” Koch states.

Have you registered for the convention? It is so easy to do. You simply go online and register or download the registration form, fill it out and send it in.

“In our District LWML we have much going on as well,” she continues. “We are looking into using online registration for retreats and conventions. Our fall retreat will be in September at the Sirata Beach Resort, and we hope to be able to offer online registration for the first time ever. More information on the retreat will be forthcoming shortly.”

In the next issue of the *Evangel* there will be retreat registration forms. Donna Pyle will be the guest speaker. Pyle’s recent book, *Quenched*, has been nominated as one of Christian Retailing’s Best books in women’s non-fiction.

“LWML is very excited to have Donna Pyle at the retreat,” Koch continues, “and we hope to have great participation from our members.”

The LWML will be an exhibitor at the Florida-Georgia LCMS District Convention in Orlando in June. Koch is encouraging pastors, teachers and lay people to stop by the booth and say hello.

The LWML offers 15 scholarships ranging from \$500 to \$2,000 to full-time church worker students. Love Gifts are also available. The Florida-Georgia District supports ALL the students (who apply) enrolled in full-time church work at the colleges and seminaries of the Concordia University System.

Deadline for applications to be submitted is June 1. For more information visit <http://flgadistrict.org/2015-student-aid-and-scholarship-applications/>. ■



The check for the first Mission Grant funded this biennial was presented by Carol Koch (right), Vice President of Mission Grants to Tori Simpson, Director of Bread of Life Food Pantry at Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Melbourne, FL.



During a recent trip to St. Louis, Florida-Georgia District LWML President Bunnie Koelsch (center) went to Concordia Seminary’s Food Bank to deliver the mission grant check for this academic year to Kim Chapman (left), Administrator of Residential Services, and Cindy Bunte (right) Coordinator of the Food Bank.

College — and What to Do About It

by Mary Rowley, Campus Missionary at Florida State

Parents, it's that time of year again. Your high school seniors are deciding where to go to college. Through the tears, you're wondering: What now? How can I continue shaping my child's life when he or she is hundreds of miles away? There's a course of action for

grades or teachers who take attendance. They are bombarded with new-ness on every side, and with this new-ness comes exposure to people with new morals. From professors to counselors to "besties" met in the hallway, everyone has a different opinion.

How will your child deal with this astonishing amount of change, you ask?

By sticking with the One who is the same yesterday, today and forever. Your child will need to find the Constant, and He is found in campus ministry. So here's your course of action: find the **campus ministry** at your child's school of choice by checking lcms.org/lcmsU. (If they're going to Florida State, University Lutheran is the place to be!)

Tell your child about the campus ministry, and tell the campus ministry about your child. *Do this before they even leave your front door!* And after they leave, do it again, because college students are not known for their memories. While they're away, maintain the connection you have with them. Remind them that they're on your mind and in their prayers.

The more reminders of Jesus they have, the more



likely they will be to seek Him out through campus ministry.

Those are just the basics... you've got it from there. And remember — through the change of your suddenly empty nest, Jesus is your Constant too. ■

Below — University Lutheran Pastor Jay Winters with Mary Rowley, Campus Missionary at Florida State University



you, but before I describe it, it's important for you to have some context.

College explained in one word is this: *change!*

Freshmen especially experience change in abundance. They move away from home into a small dorm room often with a random roommate. They no longer have a curfew or someone checking their

Consistent Follow up Key in Connecting People to Jesus

Pastor Brian Kneser of Woodlands/Montverde, FL, recently spoke to me about how the Outreach Initiative impacted his congregation. Woodlands was among the first District churches to join the Outreach Initiative.

Pastor Kneser said, "Woodlands has taken connecting people to Jesus through consistent follow up seriously. We believe that every name that we received was a soul that God had entrusted to us.

"We made a conscientious effort to follow up on every visitor, every pre-school family, especially those with unbaptized children. We followed up on every name we had a lead on!"

The results of this effort are that 51 new members were recognized at



Woodlands on January 25, and the congregation has already identified 20 more people to follow up with.

According to Pastor Kneser, Woodlands followed up on each lead until "they joined, died or told us to stop."

Woodlands had three adult baptisms, four child baptisms and several professions of faith included with the 51 new members. This God-led

follow up effort at Woodlands includes:

- ✓ pastoral visits;
- ✓ establishment of a detailed database, keeping records with meticulous notes on each visit so that personalized information could be shared on subsequent visits to build ongoing relationships;
- ✓ holding the 10 lesson Adult Information course "I Have Good News for You" to build on the strong relationship that had already been established in worship, visitor follow up, home visits and letters;
- ✓ follow up expanded to include phone calls, emails and tracking worship attendance to see if visitors were returning.

Asked how the congregation is responding with all these new members, Pastor Kneser responded, "They are sitting in 'my pew,' the parking lot is too full and communion is taking a long time! But we really are EXCITED!"

"This is a wonderful atmosphere — focusing, as a congregation on outreach in everything we do."

Through consistent follow up with each lead Woodlands connected people to Jesus. Imagine what God can do in your church through consistent follow up! ■

Adult Small Group Study Celebrates Foundations of Faith

Amazing Grace /Oxford, FL, is using the "God Connects" adult course developed by Lutheran Hour Ministries for the Outreach Initiative in nine small groups.

This video course celebrates the foundations of our faith for those who are already Christians and lays the groundwork for those who do not yet know Christ as Lord and Savior. Amazing Grace has approximately 97 people the classes plus an additional 15-20 who were already part of other small groups. Training is broken up into two six-week courses and is happening mostly in home settings.

"Sermons are tied to the God Connects topic of the week," said Pastor James Rockey. "We want them to hear the same message a few different ways."

By using this approach both small groups and the congregation are focused on the same topic. Using this method encourages participants to ask questions and explore the topic further, giving depth to discipleship efforts.

Amazing Grace has an extensive, exciting outreach culture. I have

worshiped with this vibrant and welcoming congregation – you just know God is there! Outreach examples include:

- ✓ The congregation set a goal of collecting 4886 – the church street address – food items for the local food pantry.
- ✓ A task force is exploring establishing an Early Childhood Center to reach out to the families with young children.
- ✓ Sponsorship of 100 children from India.
- ✓ Hosting an EmPOWERment Witness Workshop for their circuit. Last April this course trained 35 members of the congregation.
- ✓ Leading VBS in the Park, billed as a mini VBS for 3.5 hours with Bible study, crafts, games and a meal.

The Outreach Initiative is in the implementation phase where we see congregations, such as Amazing Grace, implementing the training and tools they have at their disposal, even making up their own. Thank you, Amazing Grace and Pastor Rockey, for sharing your story! We hope others will do the same. May others be blessed by what you are doing. ■



Lutheran Church Extension Fund

> where investments build ministry

Shared Blessings

LCEF remains excited about the Shared Blessings Rebate Program ... and so are 17 congregations of the Florida-Georgia District. The 2014 Rebate checks were recently distributed, and these 17 Congregations received checks totaling nearly \$23,000!

Pictured here are six of those congregations receiving their rebate checks.

The Shared Blessings Rebate Program is a partnership between LCEF and Churches & Schools of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Simply put, Congregations are eligible to receive loan rebate dollars based on the percentage of communicant members who are LCEF investors. With more than 50 investment options, there is something for everyone; all ages included!

If you have any questions or comments related to the Shared Blessings Rebate Program, please reach out to your Florida-Georgia LCEF Team. May God bless your ministry efforts!

Congregations Receiving Shared Blessings Checks:

- St. Paul / Lakeland
- Christ / Perry
- Amazing Grace / Oxford
- Trinity Downtown / Orlando
- Forest Oaks / Spring Hill
- Our Redeemer / Augusta
- Immanuel / Brandon
- First / Gainesville
- Holy Cross / Jacksonville
- Trinity / New Port Richey
- Trinity / Summerfield
- St. Paul / Weston
- Living Faith / Cumming
- Bethlehem / Jacksonville
- Holy Trinity / Macon
- Peace / Decatur
- Faith / Marietta

Florida-Georgia District LCEF Team

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 Debbie Talbot, Administrative Assistant, dtalbot@flgadistrict.org

www.flgadistrict.org
 877-457-5556, ext 4

St. Paul / Lakeland, FL — Displaying the congregation's rebate check are (l-r) Tracy Trinklein, CFO; Paul Sicca, LCEF Congregation Advocate; and Pastor Ron Pennekamp.



Trinity / Downtown Orlando, FL — (l-r) Bruce Haun, LCEF Congregation Advocate, and Rocky Smothers, President of the Voters Assembly, with the congregation's rebate check.



Amazing Grace / Oxford, FL — Daniel J. Reichard, Florida-Georgia LCEF Vice President, presents congregation's rebate check to (middle and right) Pastor James Rockey and Lyle Mueller, LCEF Congregation



Christ/Perry, GA — Shown with the congregation's rebate check are (l-r) Robert Pinckney, LCEF Congregation Advocate, and Rick Hill, Treasurer of the congregation.



Forest Oaks / Spring Hill, FL — Daniel J. Reichard, Florida-Georgia LCEF Vice President (left); Judy Ward, President; and Jess Ward, Treasurer; display the congregation's rebate check.



Our Redeemer / Augusta, GA — Pastor Roger Schwartz (left) with Marv Timm, LCEF Congregation Advocate, and Peter Slipman, President, and the congregation's rebate check.



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When you invest in Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF), you become part of something bigger. As an LCEF investor you are empowering the ministries of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

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Learn more at lcef.org or call 800-843-5233.



Lutheran Church Extension Fund

> florida-georgia district

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LUTHERAN NATIONAL NEWS

Concordias Alabama, New York Honor 50th Anniversary of Civil Rights Movement

Christian Law Enforcement Chaplaincy Workshop Set

Concordia Seminary / St. Louis and Peace Officer Ministries (POM) will host "Christian Law Enforcement Chaplaincy—Theology and Practice" from June 1-5 on the Seminary campus.

The workshop offers accredited training for chaplains, peace officers and pastors, focusing on effective Christian ministry to and through law enforcement.

Key principles that workshop participants can expect to take away with include understanding law enforcement as vocation (God's calling); distinguishing and properly applying Law and Gospel and God's Two Kingdoms within a law enforcement context; addressing practical, legal, historical, cultural and missiological considerations; employing Christian stress management and officer spiritual survival strategies; and identifying characteristics of a competent Christian chaplain.



Rev. Richard Norris

Rev. Frank Ruffatto, executive director and chaplain of POM, will serve as the introductory speaker on Monday morning. Presenters will include Rev. Richard Norris, pastor of Trinity / Lake Placid.

Registration cost is \$410 and includes on-campus meals, materials and CEUs. Limited on-campus housing is available on a first-come first-served basis.

Register online at csl.edu ■

Concordia College Alabama hosted its third annual Civil Rights Symposium March 1-8 in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of the 1965 Selma-Montgomery civil rights marches.

During the "Recollections of '65" segment, former leaders and participants of the 1965 Civil Rights Movement recounted their experiences from 50 years ago. Among the speakers were Rev. Dr. Frederick Douglas Reese, who had a large part in organizing the marches and worked closely with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and The Honorable James Perkins, Jr., the first African-American mayor of Selma.

Others who shared their experiences were Diane Harris, who participated in one of the 1965 marches while attending Alabama Lutheran Academy (now Concordia College Alabama), and John Ballard, a white supporter from New York who traveled to Selma to join in the fight for civil rights.

On March 25, close to 300 people gathered on the Concordia College New York campus to commemorate the historic 54-mile marches from Selma to Montgomery. Participants included Concordia College students, administrators, faculty, and staff; students from The Chapel School; clergy from local churches; and local civic leaders, including Bronxville Mayor Mary Marvin and Mount Vernon Mayor Ernest Davis. ■

The Concordia Bronxville march featured a re-creation of a banner seen in pictures of a 1965 march in Harlem, NY.



FLORIDA GEORGIA

REGIONAL NEWS

*Out and About in
The Florida-Georgia District
Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod*

Only Georgia Team Present

Faith's Rockin' Robots Compete in 2015 FIRST FTC World Championships

While FIRST Robotics FTC competitions are primarily for high school students, Faith Lutheran/Marietta Middle School's Rockin' Robots earned a place at the 2015 FIRST Tech Challenge World Championships in St. Louis in April. It's the first such trip in the team's three-year existence.

FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Tech Challenge was established as a community focused on building a better world for tomorrow by engaging students in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM).

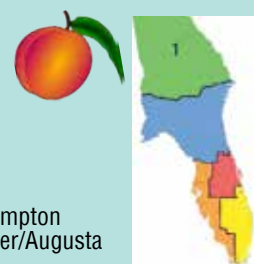
After competing in the Georgia FTC State Championship in February, the Rockin' Robots finished as an alternate to go to the Super Regional FTC match

and Ethan Schaag, 13, both 8th grade; and JP Westin, 11, 6th grade. Honors this season include the Inspire Award at the FTC Qualifier and 2nd Place in the Think Award Category at the Georgia FTC State Championship.

An estimated 44,500 students on 4,450 teams around the world will participate in the 2014/2015 FTC season. The FIRST FTC Championship is the culmination of the season's FIRST program, bringing together 128 teams from around the world and 100 teams from the four Super Regions in the United.

Students program their robots to operate in both autonomous and driver-controlled modes on a specially designed field. The object of the 2014-2015 game is to score more points than an opponent by placing balls into rolling goals and then moving goals into scoring areas. Points can also be awarded when balls are shot into a center goal. ■

REGION 1 CONNECTIONS



Vice President: Rev. David Brighton | Mount Calvary/Warner Robins
Laity Board Member: Mr. William Gaik | Trinity/Toccoa
Laity Board Member: Mr. Jay Wendland | Living Faith/Cumming
NE Georgia Circuit Visitor: Rev. David Wesche | All Saints/Blairsville
Atlanta N Circuit Visitor: Rev. Ray Borchelt | St. Mark/Tucker
Atlanta S Circuit Visitor: Rev. Larry Townsend | Christ Our Savior/Hampton
E Central Georgia Circuit Visitor: Rev. Roger Schwartz | Our Redeemer/Augusta

in San Antonio. When another team could not go, the Rockin' Rockets were tapped to compete.

The Rockin' Rockets won seven out of eight matches at the Super Regional Tournament, and went on to captain an alliance in the Semi-Final matches. They were the only Middle School team to make it that far in the FTC South Super Regional Championships. Winning so many matches against stiff competition earned the Faith students a spot at April's FTC World Championship.

The Faith FTC team (Rockin' Robots #5940) includes Jordan Mitchler, 12, 7th grade; Rob Montgomery, 14,



Below — Shown with their robot are Rockin' Rockets members (l-r) Rob Montgomery, Ethan Schaag, J. P. Westin, Jordan Mitchler.

Milestone Anniversary, Media Splash Highlight Year for All Saints

Members of All Saints / Blairsville are gearing up to celebrate the congregation's 25th Anniversary in November. Along with the upcoming festivities, the church has been re-vamping and creating new outlets to reach the community and beyond.

The new initiatives began last year and included a new website and Facebook presence, which has been collecting "likes" from as far away as Thailand and South Africa.

A YouTube channel was launched to showcase Take2, a new video mini-series that is a continuing discussion about the previous week's sermon and takes the place of the weekly Sermon Tidbits previously posted to the Facebook page.

Filmed and edited entirely in-house, each Take2 video is presented in two short segments. The two- to five-minute "shorts" are designed to grab a viewer's attention and speak to them in a warm, conversational tone they will find appealing and engaging.

All Saints' 25th Anniversary logo is displayed in print and online. "The logo's design honors the past while looking towards the future with a modern look that works in concert with the new branding strategy," said Heidi Steward, secretary of media and community outreach, "It isn't typical of the media presented to an older congregation."

More changes made to honor the spirit of the next 25 years include a new business card with a fresh look and feel. It both conveys important contact information and has ample space to leave a note to the recipient adding a more personalized touch.

Also in the works is a new brochure which will be available in print and online as a downloadable pdf. As with all the current media, it is being developed in-house and



Pastor Dave Wesche's new business card folds in half vertically with space on the inside and back for a personal note. Take2 is the congregation's new video mini-series.

speaks to the unreached part of the community by answering some basic questions about what it means to be a Lutheran, and who All Saints is as a congregation. The design is meant to be inviting and work hand-in-hand with other media in both hard copy and digital formats.

All Saints is shepherded by Pastor Dave Wesche. ■

Pray Me a Rainbow Children's Book Proceeds Benefit International Adoptions

With lilting rhyme and sweet illustrations, a little girl's bedtime prayer as presented in the book *Pray Me a Rainbow* counts the gifts of each day by color.

Illustrator Stephanie Schulz of Tallahassee, FL, collaborated with her daughter Jessemyn Pekari on the book. This is their first book together.

"My daughter and I are both LCMS pastor's wives," said Schulz, whose husband Mark is pastor of Epiphany / Tallahassee. Pekari's husband serves in the New England District.

"All the profit from the sale of the book is pledged to international adoption," Schulz continued. "We

have two granddaughters from China and a grandson coming this summer."

Pray Me a Rainbow includes a bonus page with ideas for parents and educators to use the text in creative ways to help young ones pray as they learn their colors.

Schulz works with students in her private art studio, Art in Hand. Pekari cares for her five children and spends her extra hours as an adoption advocate. The book is available on Amazon. ■

Stephanie Schulz and Jessemyn Pekari were inspired by their years of parenting — and professional experience teaching — in crafting *Pray Me a Rainbow*.





THE LADIES of Bethlehem / Jacksonville Beach crafted friendly, smiling dolls for the refugee children helped by Lutheran Social Services of Northeast Florida. The dolls represented many different ethnicities.



AMAZING GRACE / Oxford recently sponsored a successful golf tournament with the North Central Florida Group - Thrivent Financial as a sponsor to build the youth community center on the church's second floor. The fundraiser was held at Eagle Ridge Golf Club.

REGION 2 CONNECTIONS

Vice President: Rev. Frank Marshall | St Paul/Jacksonville
 Board Secretary: Rev. Jay Winters | University Church & Student Center/Tallahassee
 Laity Board Member: Mr. Donald Kaufman | St. John/Ocala
 Laity Board Member: Ms. Lois Schaefer | Amazing Grace/Oxford
 Tallahassee Circuit Visitor: Rev. Mark Schultz | Epiphany/Tallahassee
 First Coast Circuit Visitor: Rev. Dana Brones | Bethlehem/Jacksonville
 N Central Florida Circuit Visitor: Rev. James Rockey | Amazing Grace/Oxford



Faith Lecanto

During the past 25 years, Faith / Lecanto has grown from a small gathering of worshippers in borrowed rooms to a vibrant parish with an active and growing ministry. It all started with a unique gift that had a challenging string attached.



Pastor Steve Lane at the piano in the sanctuary of Faith Lutheran Church in Lecanto (Citrus County).

Faith's original 25 members and founders began worshipping in 1990 at a local funeral home. The opportunity to grow and establish a permanent home soon followed.

"We had land donated to us, but we had to use it within one year," said Marlene Griffin, one of the church's original members. "We said, 'Yeah, we'll take it.'"

The land was in Lecanto's Crystal Glen subdivision. The members established a building fund and began planning their church. Membership, and the fund, took off, and on Christmas Eve 1993, the church celebrated its first service in the new sanctuary.

"The fire trucks were out front because we didn't have the sprinkler system in yet," recalled Griffin. "The firemen came in to worship with us. It was really nice."

Skip ahead a quarter century and that original sanctuary serves as the fellowship hall. Faith built a

Celebrates Ministry Milestone

new sanctuary in 2005 to serve its growing congregation. The church's 180-plus members hail from all over Citrus County and now participate in Faith's worship, music, Bible studies, quilting groups, movie nights and potluck dinners.

Both Griffin and fellow founding member Marlene Nordquist agree that building the church in such a short period of time had its share of challenges. But Nordquist never doubted they would succeed.

"I didn't have any fear of where we were going to get the money or how we were going to pay for this," she said. "I knew we were going to do it, and we did."



"A heart from God, a heart for others" reads the church's mission, something its members live by, according to Rev. Stephen Lane, Faith's pastor since 2010.

"These members are dedicated to connecting people to Jesus," he said. "One of the things I love about

this church is our outreach to the community. We give regularly to local charities; in fact, the church takes 10% of what we take in and we give it away."

Continued outreach to the congregation and the community is the main goal for Faith. ■

St. John Ocala Students "Walk in Truth"

Each morning of National Lutheran School Week, students from K3-12th grade of St. John / Ocala gathered for devotions focusing on the theme "Walk in Truth," based on 3 John 1:4.

Games and student writings supported the theme. Relay races of different types of walks related to the theme about the example presented by Christ. During the week every student's and teacher's foot was traced, with cutouts used to fashion a huge cross showing how collectively all are walking in the same truth of the cross of Jesus.

Service projects brought in church members to work alongside students on cleanup projects around campus and for a prayer walk. High school students helped those in the elementary classes with a thank you craft for St. John congregational members to hand out at the church services that weekend. ■



Gracie Balkcom and Doug Mahaffey show their crabwalk skills. Below — at the school-wide chapel — are (l-r) kindergarteners Dorien McAleese, Wyatt Frazee, Ellie Damron, Chloe Lamothe



Ian Crawford and Alex Rodriguez working on the craft for the congregation.





GRACE-WINTER HAVEN members have the privilege of worshipping with many winter visitors who come to Florida to escape the cold weather! The congregation hosts a reception/Bible study/fellowship time for their snowbirds each year. Above is a picture those who gathered for a recent snowbird event.

REGION 3 CONNECTIONS

Vice President: Rev. Dr. Brian Kneser | Woodlands/Montverde
 Board Treasurer: Ms. Renee Varga | Woodlands/Montverde
 Laity Board Member: Mr. Jon Brazee | Christ/Cape Canaveral
 Laity Board Member: Ms. Sonia Tellez | Prince of Peace/Orlando
 Commissioned Minister Board Member: Lois Ford | Faith/Eustis
 Commissioned Minister Board Member: Nick Moss | St. Paul /Lakeland
 Space Coast Circuit Visitor: Rev. Gary Held | Risen Savior/Palm Bay
 Orlando East Circuit Visitor: Rev. Jeffery Moore | Trinity/Orlando
 Orlando West Circuit Visitor: Rev. Dr. Milan Weerts | Emeritus/Clermont
 Winter Haven Circuit Visitor: Rev. Dean Pfeffer | Hope/Plant City



THE GOOD SAMARITAN AWARD is bestowed annually by Lutheran Services Florida to honor those who follow the teachings of Christ as illustrated in the parable in Luke 10:25-37. These individuals are honored not so much for the work they do within their own churches, but for the work they do that takes place beyond the walls of the church. Among those recognized this year at the February 22 Good Samaritan Dinner for Central Florida were Megan Galanback, Zion New Life / Winter Garden; Betty Matthias, Hope / Orlando; Lorenzo Phillips, Trinity / Downtown Orlando; Gwen Taliver, Prince of Peace / Orlando; and Paula Bass, St. Luke's / Oviedo.

CRAFTY QUILTERS of Ascension / Casselberry presented nine quilts to Redeeming Life Maternity Home / Sanford to be shared with the facility's residents. Founded by Rev. Ed and Sheryl DeWitt, Redeeming Life provides a safe, Christ-centered home for single expectant mothers in crisis. The home is located across the street from Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, where DeWitt serves as pastor. Redeeming Life Maternity Home opened in November 2013.



Faith Varsity Boys Team Takes First-Time Trip to National Tourney

For the first time in school history, the Faith / Eustis varsity boys basketball team participated in the Annual Lutheran Basketball Association of America National Tournament at Valparaiso University. The four-day 2015 tourney opened March 19.

A first-round loss was followed by a victory that sent the Crusaders on to the consolation bracket. In their third game of the tournament, Faith met familiar opponent Saint Michael / Fort Myers, FL. The Crusaders' tournament play ended with a defeat in that contest, while Saint Michael went on to play two more games before their year ended.

According to Faith Coach Jeremy Fritz, the tournament was an incredible experience for the team.

"Besides playing basketball, they were able to visit the University of Notre Dame, go to the Albanese Candy Factory in Merrillville and visit downtown Chicago," he said. "The boys were also able to participate in the opening ceremonies for the national tournament, with more than 1,000 boys and girls either playing basketball or cheerleading.

"We also had the privilege of worshipping at Immanuel



Faith / Eustis Coach Jeremy Fritz with the Faith Eustis varsity boys basketball team

Lutheran Church in Valparaiso for the Saturday night service."

The Florida-Georgia District was represented by two teams in the girls bracket as well: Saint Michael / Fort Myers and St. John / Ocala. ■



Rev. Ron Pennekamp was installed as senior pastor of St. Paul / Lakeland on February 22. A 1994 graduate of Concordia Theological Seminary /Fort Wayne, Pennekamp joined the St. Paul ministry team as associate pastor in 2005. Most recently he has been serving the congregation as the sole pastor. (Pennekamp preached on his vision for the future of St. Paul. Florida-Georgia District President Greg Walton conducted the installation ceremony.) Pennekamp and his wife, Barb, were joined by several of their family members for the day. Shown at the installation are (l-r) Florida-Georgia District President Greg Walton, St. Paul Senior Pastor Ron Pennekamp, St. Paul Hmong Pastor Zong Yang, St. Paul Pastor Emeritus Ed Trinklein.

Amigos Center Outreach Aids Community

More than 600 Immokalee farmworkers and their families received free medical attention at the health fair hosted by Amigos Center earlier this year.

“Thanks to the work and planning of 120 volunteer doctors, nurses and helpers from Auditorio de la Fe Church in Pembroke Pines, hundreds of people who rarely if ever see the inside of a doctor’s office received free dental care, new eyeglasses and medical consultations,” said Rev. Robert Selle, Amigos Center founder and CEO.

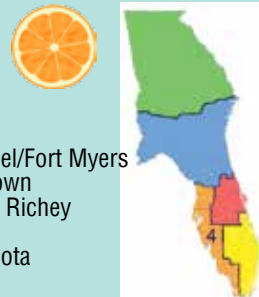
“The group also offered free haircuts, live music, food and clothing. We can’t wait for them to return.”

Founded in 1999 to help answer the physical, mental, and emotional needs that many immigrant families face, Amigos Center’s outreach has branched out to offer legal immigration services. What started with three part-time employees and one location has grown to span two counties, with offices in Naples, Bonita Springs, Fort Myers and Immokalee. ■

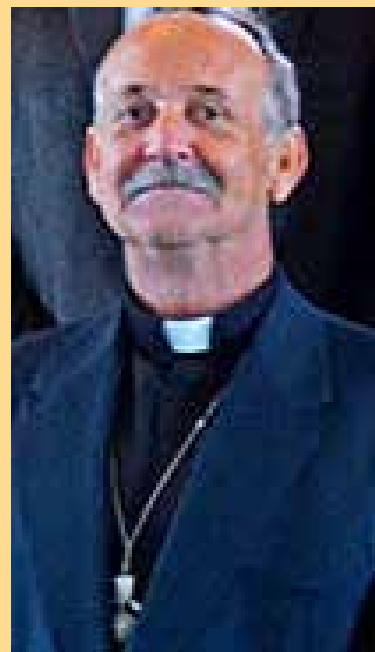


REGION 4 CONNECTIONS

Vice President: Rev. James Guelzow | Messiah/Tampa
 Laity Board Member: Mr. Jeff Richards | Hope/Brandenton
 Laity Board Member: Ms. Beverly Nyce | Marco/Marco Island
 Commissioned Minister Board Member: Mr. Robert Ziegler | St. Michael/Fort Myers
 Suncoast Circuit Visitor: Rev. David Brockhoff | Holy Trinity/Masaryktown
 St. Petersburg Circuit Visitor: Rev. Arnold Piering | Emeritus/New Port Richey
 Tampa Circuit Visitor: Rev. Kevin Yoakum | Christ the King/Riverview
 Sarasota Circuit Visitor: Rev. Rossetter Leavitt | Beautiful Savior/Sarasota
 SW Circuit Visitor: Rev. Jon Zehnder | St. Michael/Fort Myers



Grace / St. Petersburg ramped up its Beacon at the Crossroads capital campaign with a barbecue picnic on Sunday, March 15. More than \$700,000 was pledged to support the Ministry Renewal Project, which includes the renovation of the sanctuary and the building of a gymnasium. The project is scheduled to get under way in June with a projected completion date of August 2016. Shown here are Grace Lutheran teachers Amy Ryan and Renee McLay with her son, Cale, a Grace VPK student. ■



ANTHONY ARIAS was one of eight Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) students of Concordia Seminary / St. Louis to receive a vicarage assignment in March. He will be serving at **Grace / Arcadia**. The SMP program is a four-year distance-education program in which men receive academic training in the setting where they will continue to serve following ordination. Local pastor-mentors work with SMP students to provide day-to-day guidance, encouragement and prayer. ■



SOCKS, SOCKS AND MORE SOCKS – Members of **Christ Lutheran / Brooksville** showed their love and care for the less fortunate in the community by generously responding to the need for socks at “Sock it to Me Sunday” earlier this year. Socks of all sizes, shapes and colors overflowed the boxes and tables in the front of the church. ■



BETHEL / CLEARWATER members Gene and Carole Fletcher are the driving forces behind an ongoing congregational bike drive to benefit refugee clients of **Lutheran Services Florida**. Bethel donated more than 50 bikes over the last year. Shown here with the Fletchers (center) are Greg Musselman (left) of LSF’s Tampa Bay Region Refugee Resettlement Program and Mohamed Dullow (right) of the Tampa Bay Region Employment Program. ■



Bethlehem / Fort Myers welcome 19 new members during morning worship on March 1. After the morning post-service food and fellowship time, the adult Bible study provided an opportunity for new and established members to become acquainted.

March 2014 through March 2015 “has been an amazing time of growth for Bethlehem Church,” said Pastor Darrell Stuehrenberg. “We have welcomed just shy of 50 new full-time and associate winter new members into the Bethlehem family.”

New members welcomed recently at Bethlehem / Fort Myers (front, l-r) Cyndi Hebert, Patricia Duckwitz, Sandra Lohr, Barbara Drew, (row 2, l-r) Mark Hebert, Rollin Duckwitz, Gary Lohr, Dennis Dahlke, (row 3, l-r) Sue Hartmann, Danice Faulkner, Karen Keiper, Sandra Grage, (row 4, l-r) Pastor Darrell Stuehrenberg, Dennis Hartmann, Pam and Paul Rugenstein, James Keiper, Douglas Grage. New members not pictured are Nancy Dahlke and Alan Taylor. ■



The weekend Rummage Sale hosted by the LWML Parish Guild of **Lutheran Church of the Cross / Port Charlotte** earlier this year raised \$3,366.20. An additional \$610 was raised by the Thrivent Financial supported bake sale.

Thrivent provided \$248.20 for LC of the Cross volunteers to buy baking supplies, pizza for workers and miscellaneous supplies under its Action Team Program. Meals On Wheels, the outreach charity for the Rummage Sale, received a \$200 check from the congregation’s LWML Parish Guild. Rummage Sale items were provided to the various local charities.

The LWML Parish Guild’s restroom renovations project received the bake sale’s \$610 proceeds as well as \$2476.20 of the Rummage proceeds, for a total of \$3086.20 for upcoming restroom remodeling.

The LWML Parish Guild will use the remaining \$690 for annual operational needs. ■



IMMANUEL / Tavernier hosted the Tropical Zone Lutheran Women's Missionary League Spring Rally on March 7, under the theme "Connecting People to Jesus." Upper right — Guest speaker was Rev. Greg Seltz of "The Lutheran Hour." Seltz was also the preacher at Immanuel's worship that weekend. ■

REGION 5 CONNECTIONS

Vice President: Rev. Steve Wipperman | Our Savior/Lake Worth
 Laity Board Member: Ms. Karen Smith | Peace/Okeechobee
 Laity Board Member: Ms. Nancy Volz/Our Savior-Plantation
 Heartland Circuit Visitor: Rev. Richard Norris | Trinity/Lake Placid
 Treasure Coast Circuit Visitor: Rev. Kenneth Larson | Emeritus/Lake Worth
 S Palm Beach Circuit Visitor: Rev. James Weist | Epiphany/Lake Worth
 Gold Coast Circuit Visitor: Rev. Walter Volz | Emeritus/Plantation
 Monroe-Miami-Dade Circuit Visitor: Rev. Alan Sielk | St. Paul/Miami



Cheapskate Ball Generates Funds for Youth



"There were three men and three women chosen from the group who we knew spent little or no money on their outfits, then the crowd voted." Pastor James Weist won the cheapskate award for the men's group, and Terri Lawson won for the women's group. Paul Sohlden won the dance contest and was awarded a trophy as well. ■

Above left — Pastor James Weist and Terri Lawson won the cheapskate awards for the evening. Above right — Colleen & Sean Cannon, Cheapskate Ball Queen and King. Below — Youth group members worked as wait staff, photographers and photo booth managers.



ST PAUL / Boca Raton students (l-r) Alexa McKnight, Theresa Scolaro, Aiden O'Day and Eli Marshall join Principal Dr. Jeffrey Krempler (left) in presenting an oversized check to Jason Brasse (second from left) of the Wounded Warrior Project, a charity and veterans service organization that offers a variety of programs, service and events for wounded veterans of military actions following the events of September 11, 2001. St. Paul students raised almost \$4,554 for the WWP during this year's National Lutheran Schools Week. ■

REV. GEORGE E. POULOS, Jr., (center) was installed as senior pastor of **GLORIA DEI / Davie** on March 15. Preaching at the morning worship was Rev. Marcus Zill (left), director of LCMS Campus Ministry. Rev. Scott Gress (right) of Transforming Churches Network presided at the installation. ■



"The Red Carpet" was the theme of the Second Annual Cheapskate Ball hosted by **Epiphany / Lake Worth** earlier this year.

Designed as a fundraiser for EPIC – Epiphany's youth group – the event was hosted by Youth Leaders Sean and Colleen Cannon, who were crowned King and Queen of the Ball. EPIC members worked as wait staff, photographers and photo booth managers. A DJ provided the music.

"The idea was not to spend money, but to raise money," said Debbie Einsteder of Epiphany's Board of Fellowship. "Everyone was encouraged to look deep in their closets for prom dresses, wedding dresses, leisure suits, etc. Or head over to Goodwill or Salvation Army."





Faith, Church Family Help Our Savior/ Plantation Family Recover from Fire

When a fire destroyed their home last November 15, Neville and Dorothy Morrison and their children — Emily, 16; Steven, 17; and Lauren, 24 — were left homeless. All family members were safe, as were the two family dogs; unfortunately the two Morrison cats did not survive.

The night of the fire the family found shelter at a neighbor's home. The next morning, a Sunday, Neville and Emily drove to their church — Our Savior / Plantation — to let members and staff know why they had not been at the 8am service as usual. Their absence was noted: Neville is often a communion assistant, both he and Dorothy are involved with the youth group and Steven plays bass for the Praise Team.

Neville and Emily were surrounded by church members as retired Pastor Edwin Nicklas led a prayer.

“By midafternoon we had several people stop by and drop stuff off. Notebooks and pens for the kids, clothes, food, and money,” said Dorothy. “It was just unbelievable.”

The Morrisons stayed in a hotel a few nights courtesy of the American Red Cross before a family member who is a realtor expedited their move into a fully-furnished rental house in the same neighborhood.

Assistance continued to pour in from Our Savior members, including more than \$13,000 in donations. Nancy Volz, the

congregation's director of finance, contacted Thrivent Financial and told them about situation while Jan Withers, the church's administrative assistant, pulled together a Thrivent action team to help the family.

On January 11, the Morrisons received a \$2,500 check from Thrivent Financial.

As part of the action team project, the church hosted a luncheon in honor of the Morrisons on Sunday, February 8, offering

the family the opportunity to share their thanks for all the help and support. “You have truly proven that we are one body in Christ,” said Neville. “It is a blessing to have you all as part of our family.”

“God has been listening and acting upon your prayers,” added Dorothy.

The Morrison house is being rebuilt – and assistance continues. ■

Below — the Thrivent action team; The Morrison family with Pastor Ed Nicklas



Retired church workers or their surviving spouses

Veterans of the Cross “Make a Joyful Noise” in Leesberg

In early March, 180 Veterans of the Cross assembled at the Life Enrichment Center / Leesberg under the theme “Make a Joyful Noise.”

Participants came from as far away as North Dakota, Minnesota and Texas. **Rev. Robert Steinke** and **Rev. Richard Koehneke** were the main presenters of sessions exploring the theme. **Rev. Donald Hinchey**, **Rev. Dr. Gerald Schultz** and **Rev. David Bernthal** led a variety of worship opportunities. **Dr. Mark Heckler**, president of Valparaiso University, was the higher education representative.

“A highlight of the retreat is always the presentation of the Behnken Medallion to recipients for their work in various aspects of church work,” said Chris Rau of St. Petersburg, a member of the VOC Planning Committee

The 2015 Medallions recipients were:

✓ **Rev. David Bernthal, Pastor.** During his years in the pastoral ministry, Bernthal served at Grace / Winter Haven; Trinity / Athens; Lutheran Church of the Redeemer / Columbus; and Concordia / Miami.

✓ **Ralph Bickel, Teacher** – Bickel was the first principal of Trinity Lutheran School / Delray Beach and a long-time principal at Advent Lutheran School / Boca Raton.

✓ **Ed Wright, Layman** – Active in his home congregation of Forest Oaks / Spring Hill, Wright's dedication and service to Lutheran Hour Ministries has earned him recognition as an LHM Ambassador.

✓ **Rev. Bob Greene, Church at Large** – Greene's ministry career includes service as the President of Lutheran Social Services of the South in Austin, TX.



Joining Rau and his wife Maggie on the 2015 Planning Committee were:

Rev. Dick (Chairman) and Pam Arndt, New Port Richey; Rev. Ed and Carol Trinklein, Lakeland; Arlin and Bonnie Arbeiter, Winter Haven; Rev. Bob and Elaine Besalski, Gainesville; Rev. Richard and Cyndy Pieplow, Valdosta; Dorothy Smith, Fort Myers; Jo Lidbom, Perry; Marge Freeman, Oviedo; and advisory members Rev. Greg Walton, President of the Florida-Georgia District, and Kathy Keene, District President Administrative Assistant.

Retiring from the Planning Committee after this year are Rev. Bob and Ann Jacobs along with Omar and Gladys Dittmer. New members for 2016 are Rev. Bruce and Barbara Lieske, Winter Springs; Rev. David and Judy Mennicke, Merritt Island; and Rev. Earl and Kathy Steffens, Tifton.

The Veterans of the Cross will again assemble in 2016 on March 7 -9. ■

Above left — Rev. Walter Votz (left) pastor emeritus of Our Savior / Plantation, was the winner of the Apple iPad Mini given away by the Florida-Georgia District LCEF at the 2015 Veterans of the Cross Retreat. “The amazing part of the contest was that Mrs. Gloria Volz won last year,” said Daniel J. Reichard, LCEF District Vice President (right). “She is happy to get hers back now from her husband.”

Above — Behnken Medallion recipient in the teacher category Ralph Bickel with wife Nancy and children Martha Thrasher, MaryBeth Brink and Mark Bickel.

Lower photo — Behnken Medallion recipient in the pastor category Rev. David Bernthal surrounded by family members.

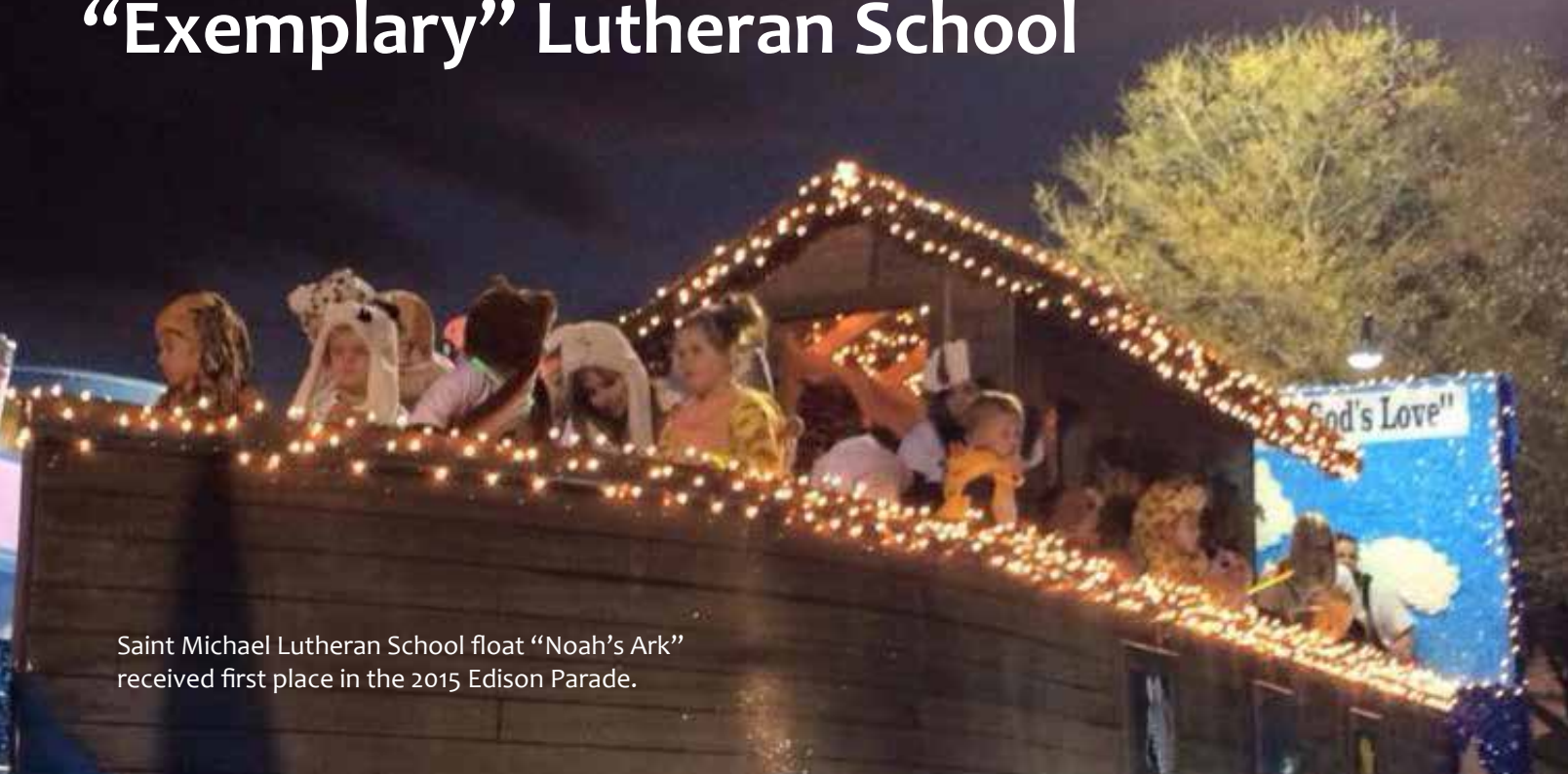


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The BACKPAGE

Saint Michael Honored as “Exemplary” Lutheran School



Saint Michael Lutheran School float “Noah’s Ark” received first place in the 2015 Edison Parade.

Saint Michael / Fort Myers was one of five outstanding Lutheran schools in the United States selected by the National Lutheran Accreditation Commission for special recognition as exemplary accredited schools.

These schools demonstrated compliance with accreditation criteria that exceeded expectations as well as innovative leadership through the implementation of best practices related to the academic quality and spiritual development of the students.

Leaders of the honored schools will now be required to intentionally share their “Best Practices” with other Lutheran schools during the 2015-16 school year, providing opportunities and ideas that have the potential to improve all schools.

Founded in 1956, Saint Michael serves students from pre-kindergarten through eighth grade. Saint Michael has been designated a National Blue Ribbon School, an honor bestowed by the United States Secretary of Education on America’s outstanding public and private schools.

This latest honor caps Principal Bob Ziegler’s service at Saint Michael; he is leaving in June to join the LCMS’ Nebraska District as its education executive. He has been active at the Synodical and District levels, including recent service on the Florida-Georgia Board of Directors as a Commissioned Minister Representative. Ziegler was honored as Lutheran Educator Association’s 2006 Distinguished Lutheran Elementary Administrator. ■