



LUTHERAN

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Hurricane Wilma Wallops Florida

NOTE: Members of the Florida-Georgia District executive staff contacted pastors in the areas affected by Hurricane Wilma immediately after the storm passed. When the absence of power and phone service made it impossible to connect with many of the pastors, the District team broke into

teams and visited the storm areas days after Wilma's October 24 landfall. The following is adapted from a report on that tour by David Weidner, Executive Director of Congregational Services.

was the case last year, caravans of crews from the north arrived to assist Florida workers in restoring power to homes and businesses.

Southwest Florida

Breaking 150 years of recorded history, Wilma, the eighth hurricane to hit Florida during a 15-month span, slammed the southwest coast of Florida on

In a phone call placed as storm winds were subsiding, Circuit Counselor Rev. Jon Zehnder of St. Michael's Lutheran Church & School-Fort Myers told David

Concordia University-St. Paul to spare her the danger of facing a hurricane. Reetz said that streets were flooded, many trees were down, but it appeared that structural damage was limited.

Marco Island lies just south of Naples and was totally evacuated prior to the storm's arrival. Rev. Ron Biel of Marco Lutheran Church evacuated with the rest of the community. News reports showed extensive damage on the island including air conditioning units being lifted off roofs. Marco Lutheran's building, however, suffered no major damage.

to contact other members of his church who had remained behind. In conversations with them prior to the storm he noted that all of them had stored up provisions and were prepared to face the hurricane with the stoicism typical of islanders affectionately referred to as "Conchs."

The church lost some windows in its steeple area so water had come into the church. The school had flooding on the first floor classrooms and members would begin the cleanup process as soon as possible.

Central Florida and North

Wilma moved across South Florida with a fury and speed equal to Hurricane Charley. In Port Charlotte, where Hurricane Charley had done extensive damaged just a year ago, Rev.

Florida Keys

The first Florida community to feel the effects of Wilma was Key West, the southernmost point of the continental United States. Most islanders evacuated in anticipation of severe winds and an overwhelming storm surge. Wilma hit the island with 125 mph winds and a nine-foot storm surge which flooded a good portion of the island. Rev. Mike Heidle and his family huddled behind the newly installed hurricane shutters on the parsonage, hoping for the best. The storm surge brought six inches of water into their home as the storm hit and once again as the backside of the storm reached the island.

Heidle, in a late night phone call to Weidner, said that his family was safe and that they would begin ripping wet carpets out on Tuesday. He was beginning

Ken Redmann opened the doors of the new family life center at Lutheran Church of the Cross to serve as a shelter for several members of the church and community. This year, most of

(continued on page 6)



Our Savior - Lake Worth, FL

October 24 as a category three hurricane, packing winds of 125 mph and greater. Landfall was just south of Naples where the Florida-Georgia District has several congregations clustered in the Southwest Circuit. The storm exited the State on the other coast, wrecking considerable damage and havoc for Martin, St. Lucie, Palm Beach, Broward and Miami-Dade Counties.

Weidner, Executive Director of Congregational Services and Coordinator of Disaster Response for the Florida-Georgia District, that the power was out and many trees were down in the area. The school and church had suffered minor damages, but the impact in Fort Myers was much less than what had occurred further south.

Florida-Georgia members sustained considerable damage and loss — most notably Our Savior Lutheran Church & School-Lake Worth, where the sanctuary collapsed.

Rev. Peter Reetz of Grace Lutheran Church-Naples had just returned to his home from a local hurricane shelter when Weidner caught him by phone. Reetz said that most of his congregation had evacuated north including one family that returned to their summer home in Michigan. The family took with them the newly placed DCE Intern Kami Jo Kuesel from

More than six million Floridians were left without power, a condition that lasted more than two weeks for some people, and phone service was sporadic. As



Trinity - Fort Lauderdale, FL

Inside this Issue

District President Gerhard Michael reflects on comfort and joy for Christmas

- Page 2

Florida-Georgia Congregations mark milestones

- Page 4

LCMS Auxiliaries focus on online resources

- Page 7

Rev. Bruce Lieske reflects on Christmas as an important "light" festival

- Page 8

Registration opens for CHS spring classes

- Page 9

District Board members affirm Woodlands decision at recent meeting

- Page 12

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Registration Opens for Outreach Summits

Florida-Georgia District congregations and members are invited to register for one of three Outreach Summits planned for February 2006.

Hosting the Outreach Summits are St. John-Ocala, FL, from February 2-4; St. Paul-Boca Raton, FL, from February 9-11; and Faith-Marietta, GA, from February 23-25.

The three-day events — themed "Partnering in Christ" — will offer Bible study, worship, fellowship a variety of workshops and the opportunity to develop work plans. Rev. Charles Mueller will serve as the keynote speaker for each of the events, with District President Rev. Gerhard Michael Jr. serving as Bible study leader.

Workshops will focus on partnering and outreach issues, including:

- connecting your congregation with the community;
- enhancing pastor-people partnership;
- creating an outreach vision for your congregation;
- igniting the youth in the congregation and community;
- partnering in prayer;
- reaching families in today's fragmented society;

- partnering with God for mission;
- reaching today's seniors;
- using Lutheran schools for effective outreach;
- reaching across cultural lines;
- marketing our congregations;
- using technology in effective outreach;
- equipping leaders in outreach; and
- becoming visitor friendly.

Individual registration is \$60 per person. Group rates, available when five or more people from a congregation register, are \$50 per person for groups of five to nine; \$40 each for groups of 10-19; and \$30 per person for groups of 20 or more. Congregations which worship fewer than 100 people per Sunday who send five to 19 participants will be charged \$40 per person.

Registration costs cover all sessions and two meals on Friday. Hotel information and site maps are available on line.

Registration packets are being sent to all Florida-Georgia congregations. Complete registration information is also available online at www.flga-icms.org. □