

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

## Thoughts After Our Convention



## LIFE LINES

Gerhard C. Michael, Jr.  
District President

equitable representation from congregations and circuits, the debate was respectful, different viewpoints were presented without animosity, and delegates listened to one another. Such a spirit provides a positive setting for working creatively together on the Lord's business.

This convention also revealed how richly blessed our District is. Our chaplain, Ron Biel, and our four presenters — Dennis Glick, Adolfo Borges, Steve Wiggins, Sr., and Tim Hartner — provided quality fare to feed us with the Word of life. We saw a variety of styles in presentation, yet each one communicated effectively, a reminder to each of us to be ourselves; we don't have to imitate someone else's style! An email I received suggested that some of our men should be on the *Lutheran Hour*! We thank God for these gifts and many others like them whom God has given to lead us into his Word that we may go confidently into the future.

Wasn't it delightful to see the three Servant of Christ award recipients? All three of them — Pastor Bob Besalski, Teacher Lois Lohman, and Laywoman Marge Kemp — model for us an indomitable spirit, deep

As I look back over the past three years, which in many ways the convention summarized for us, my heart wells up with gratitude for the effective dedicated leaders we have had serve on our Board of Directors and as Circuit Counselors. I think especially of several of our laity on the Board: Lynn Andersen, Neal Engwall, and Ray Roths who completed three terms of service at this convention, as well as Pastor Erich Heintzen who completed five terms on

tasked with caring for our pastors, leading them to work and study together in the circuit pastors' meetings, and sparking the initiative to start new churches and strengthen existing ones. They are my right hand men, together with the vice presidents.



At our Convention probably my most difficult duty was reporting on the Board's

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the Board — three as secretary and two as representative from Region III, to say nothing of all the other folks who continue on the Board or are leaving for one reason or another after fewer terms in office.

I would be remiss not to mention both the executive and support staff for their faithful service in the day-to-day ministry of the District but especially for their extra service in the planning and implementation of a convention that was edifying, educational, and well run. The people with whom one works makes ministry enjoyable.

Looking to the future, we welcome new members to the Board, and give thanks for those who will continue their service. I am thankful that Dennis Glick was elected First Vice President (Florida), moving to that position from Region IV pastoral representative; Jim Guelzow, outgoing First Vice President was elected as Region III pastoral representative; Pat O'Brien was returned as Secretary and Greg Walton as our Second Vice President (Georgia). These are good men with whom to work on the Presidium as together we strive to provide spiritual support for the workers of our District.

We have a number of new circuit counselors who have been elected to assist me in the care of our workers and congregations. I will be meeting with the counselors in late July and early August in three cluster sessions to organize our activities to strengthen our common ministry. In September we will be attending "Strengthen the Spirit," a national circuit counselors gathering in Milwaukee. Through such training sessions and mutual support we seek to foster the missionary spirit we believe should characterize our District.

Please pray for our circuit counselors, for they fill a critical role in our District. They are

decision to close the Woodlands Lutheran Ministries, for that decision was not reached lightly. Saying "farewell" to a ministry that touched many lives in the past but now appeared to have lost its effectiveness was hard. Now that the decision has been made, however, I am confident and hopeful that our stewardship of its eventual resources will enable us to advance the ministry of the Florida-Georgia District to a new level.

For that reason I am pleased with the "Futures Committee" which is in place to help us determine how we should move into the future, bearing in mind the legacy of the Woodlands, as

Serving as laity on the committee are Lynn Andersen, active in Christian education and outreach at St. Paul-Lakeland and outgoing member of the District Board; Jim Ingersoll, our District treasurer, who is committed to "making a difference" for the Lord; and Leslie Schnake, volunteer coordinator and director of activities at St. Paul-Boca Raton.

This newly formed committee will seek to approach their task from a broad-based perspective that we might strengthen our common mission. Let's undergird their efforts with our prayers and input when that opportunity comes.

Beyond the special opportunity we face through the decision to close the Woodlands, I see a number of challenges before us, as I spelled out in my article last month and emphasized in my President's Report at the convention. In addition to what I said there, let me conclude this article by simply lifting up several hopes I have as we enter a new triennium.



I sincerely hope that the appearance of the new *Lutheran Service Book* will encourage us to re-examine our worship practice and renew our worship life; that Concordia Publishing House's new Sunday School curriculum will trigger a renewed commitment to Christian education, for our children, youth and adults; that the impending

**I am deeply appreciative of the spirit of cooperation which pervaded our gathering. A number of folks ... commented how enjoyable it was to see the camaraderie of the delegates, the atmosphere of trust and collegiality that was present.**

had experience with other Districts' gatherings commented how enjoyable it was to see the camaraderie of the delegates, the atmosphere of trust and collegiality that was present.

Personally, I would second these observations. In the Sunday morning session when we were discussing the matter of

dedication to the mission of the Lord and a "can do" attitude that won't quit when the going gets difficult. We praise God for them and find in their examples inspiration for our service.



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District President  
Rev. Dr. Gerhard Michael Jr.

Florida-Georgia District Office:  
Lutheran Ministries Center  
7207 Monetary Drive  
Orlando, Florida 32809-5724  
Telephone: (407) 857-5556  
FAX: (407) 857-5665  
www.flga-lcms.org

Lutheran Life  
Editorial & Publishing Office:  
75 SE Third Street  
Boca Raton, Florida 33432  
Telephone: (561) 417-5605  
FAX: (561) 417-5606  
e-mail: LutheranLife@aol.com

Publisher, Executive Editor and  
District Public Relations Director  
John List

Editor-in-Chief  
Eileen Bishop

Art Director & Layout Coordinator  
Chris Utech

*Serving,  
Assisting,  
Encouraging  
Congregations in Ministry*

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we seek the Lord's will for the expansion and improvement of our ministry. The committee reflects, in my view, an able cross-section of the District's constituency.

Heading the committee will be Pastor John Roth, a man known for his ability to vision, teach and organize. Serving with him will be pastors Dan Schepmann, one of our younger pastors with enthusiasm for ministry, currently enrolled in the Pastoral Leadership Institute, and Jim Guelzow, our outgoing first vice president, who embodies the corporate history of the Florida-Georgia District. Representing the commissioned ministers' contingent of our workers will be Peter LeBorious, Director of Christian Education at Christ the King-Largo, known for his commitment to ministry to youth and their families with a gift of organization.

retirement of many of our workers will encourage us to recruit talented and qualified men and women not simply to replace them but to lead us into the future; and that we will strengthen our resolve to practice biblical stewardship that is generous and sacrificial.

As we work together as the Lord's people, inspired by his grace and instructed by his Word, I am confident that in three years, we can have an even better convention than we had June 9-11, 2006! Let's make it happen, by God's blessing!

*-gcm*