

Devotions, Bible Study Key Convention Components

Pastors from throughout Florida-Georgia led devotions and Bible study throughout the 29th Regular District Convention.

Daily devotions were led by Convention Chaplain, Rev. Ron Biel, pastor of Marco Lutheran-Marco Island, FL. Throughout the three days he emphasized different segments of the theme Bible verse: "For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light." (Ephesians 5:8)

"All of us are plagued by darkness," Biel said — but he emphasized that "we don't need to be there anymore because of Jesus' action. We can't defeat darkness by ourselves. The power to do so comes from on high."

To move from that darkness to living as children of light we must cede control to God, Biel said.

"We think our grip on life is so important and we want

to be in control," he said. "But more important is God's grip on us. He wants to stand beside us." "When we release all our sins and shortcomings to Him, we give up our control and "live as children of the light."

Ablaze in witness, education, stewardship, worship

Convention Bible studies were led by District pastors who explored different aspects of being Ablaze.

Appearing in costume as the Disciple John in his presentation on being Ablaze in witness, Rev. Dennis Glick of St. Paul-Boca Raton, FL, spoke as "one who had seen first-hand the Biblical events of Jesus' life ... I saw His outreach to people who didn't deserve it."

Glick asked, "If Jesus was sent to be killed, what are we sent to do? I began to understand when I watched Jesus on

the cross doing what none of us could do for ourselves — it was the greatest act of love ever in history.

"And now it's up to the church and its members turn to take their passion for the message to the world."

Rev. Adolfo Borges of Principe de Paz-Orlando, FL, led a Bible study on being Ablaze in Christian education.

Turning to the Apostle Paul's experiences in Ephesus, Borges noted that "new converts learned how to overcome darkness. Paul and his team taught the light of the Gospel to dispel the darkness of the devil."

Borges described Paul's two years in Ephesus as "the start of modern colleges. We are called to preach and teach," he continued. "The transformational power of Christian instruction is clear in Acts.

"Without the correct instruction, we are lost. It's an

ongoing teaching and learning process," he concluded.

"We're called to be imitators of Christ," Rev. Stephen Wiggins Sr. of Christ-East Point, GA, reminded the Convention in his Bible study on being Ablaze in stewardship.

"We are called to live a life that is holy and to love the way Christ loved us to that extent of giving our all to be a blessing," Wiggins said.

"To be ablaze in stewardship we must understand to be sacrificial," he continued. "Jesus gave Himself for us in a manner that gave glory to God. He didn't just cover our sins, He honored God by doing God's will with a sacrificial offering."

To follow that example, Wiggins said, "We are to love God so much that we're glad to give sacrificially ... until it's inconvenient to us."

Tithing, he noted, is commanded; we need to go "above and beyond that."

God "doesn't need our money," Wiggins concluded, "He needs our sacrificial offering. We need to be thankful in our giving all the time."

"We are Ablaze when we are gathered in worship and remember we are in divine service. God comes to us in worship," observed Rev. Tim Hartner of St. Paul-Weston, FL, in the Convention's final Bible study. His focus was being Ablaze in worship.

Hartner pointed out the importance of "the lyrics of music in worship" particularly as they refer to and connect worshipers to Jesus. Eucharist is another important element of worship, he said.

Crucial to worship is the message. "Nothing can replace the Word of God prepared and proclaimed well," Hartner concluded. "The emphasis is always on the Gospel — Christ and Him crucified." □



DAILY CONVENTION BIBLE STUDIES focused on four aspects of "Ablaze in the light of the Lord." Rev. Dennis Glick of St. Paul-Boca Raton, FL, (above, left) appeared in costume as the disciple John in his presentation on being Ablaze in witness. Rev. Stephen Wiggins, Sr., (above, center) of Christ-East Point, GA, shared insights on being Ablaze in stewardship. Rev. Adolfo Borges (above, right) of Principe de Paz-Orlando led a session on being Ablaze in Christian education, and Rev. Tim Hartner (below, left with District President Gerhard Michael) of St. Paul-Weston, FL, concluded the studies with a focus on being Ablaze in worship.



STEPHANIE PFOTENHAUER, Minister of Music at St. Paul-Boca Raton, FL, coordinated music for devotions and worship at the Convention.



CONVENTION CHAPLAIN Rev. Ron Biel of Marco Island Lutheran Church used a favorite golf club as a visual aid for his devotion as living as "children of the light." He explained, "We think our grip on life is so important — we want to be in control. But more important is God's grip on us. He wants to stand beside us." He urged listeners to "give all our sins and shortcomings to Him ... release them and He'll handle all of it. That's what it means to live as children of the light."