

60TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

District Board Establishes “Servants for the Future” Endowment Fund

At its meeting in November, the Florida-Georgia Board of Directors voted to establish *Servants for the Future*, an Endowment Fund to provide financial resources to more fully fund District efforts to raise up leaders for the church.

Servants for the Future has the goal of generating \$1,000,000 in new dollars by the time of the District’s 60th anniversary celebration February 17, 2008, with an eventual goal of \$10 million.

Servants for the Future is designed to provide more adequate scholarships for those studying for professional church work careers, to provide support for the Concordia House of Studies and to strengthen campus ministry in the District.

Benefitting from additional scholarship support would be those studying to become pastors, teachers, directors of Christian education, of Christian outreach, parish music, deaconesses, family life ministers and certified lay ministers.

Typical costs at a Concordia University System school run in excess of \$25,000 a year, without including transportation, clothing and incidental costs. Seminary tuition at our two seminaries amounts to approximately \$20,000 a year, to which room, board, books and transportation must be added.

Support for future church workers is expected from the students themselves, their families, home congregations, Districts and the schools. *Servants for the Future* will enable the District to contribute more than just a token.

Given the salaries church workers traditionally receive, District President Gerhard Michael emphasized that “it is important for us to assist our students in completing their

education without overwhelming student debts.”

In addition to traditional students attending LCMS Concordias, the District has been training a significant number of students through distance education programs offered through the seminaries. “These programs enable us to reach out to Hispanics, Sudanese, Ethiopians, Eritreians, Hmong, deaf, Muslims and the like, as well as Anglos,” Michael noted. These programs run approximately \$5,000 a student a year for four years.

By taking those ten courses plus another six, students can also qualify for the Certified Lay Minister roster position.

The third beneficiary of *Servants for the Future* is campus ministry. The District is seeking in the next ten years to at least double the number of campuses where congregations are doing intentional ministry with college students.

“We believe that campus ministries play a vital role in equipping laity for leadership roles in business, government, education and the church,” the

been established to solicit funds for this important undertaking.

Interested donors are encouraged to contact President Michael, Dr. Wayne Wilke, CHS Director or Richard Neubauer at

the Lutheran Ministries Center, 7207 Monetary Drive, Orlando, Florida 32809-5753; by calling 407-857-5556; or via Email through the District website: www.flga-lcms.org. □

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The Concordia House of Studies (CHS) will be a second beneficiary of *Servants for the Future*. To this point, the CHS has been funded entirely by the District’s capital campaign, *Forward Together-Servants in His Mission*. As funding from that campaign declines, *Servants for the Future* is designed to provide new revenue for this innovative program of church work preparation.

According to Michael, currently we have approximately 40 students taking courses from CHS to meet the basic religion courses required for commissioned ministers (all categories mentioned above except for pastors) in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. CHS also equips students for the seminary’s prerequisite entrance examinations, as well as provide for the first ten courses in the Distance Education Leading To Ordination (DELTO) program.

President said. “By having an informed laity, they can bring a Christian perspective to their roles in society. Also, campus ministries are a prime place to recruit students to study for church work careers.”

Currently the District has approximately \$444,000 in a variety of scholarship funds, according to Richard Neubauer, executive director of finance and administration for the District. “By increasing these dollars significantly, we desire not only to increase the rate of return we are receiving on these endowed funds, but also the amount of dollars we can allocate to these vital ministries,” he said.

In establishing *Servants for the Future*, the Board of Directors is seeking “over and above” donations that will enable the District over time to fund this critical aspect of work from invested dollars. A committee has

Florida-Georgia to Celebrate 60 Years in Ministry

Congregations, schools, missions and ministries throughout Florida-Georgia will celebrate the District’s 60th anniversary next year. Launching the milestone observance will be a District-wide Sunday celebration on February 17, 2008.

“The Gospel for that day is John 3:1-17, according to the new lectionary published in our new worship book,” noted District President Gerhard Michael Jr. “Since that text is the foundation for our District’s values statement, we felt it would be a natural Sunday to choose.”

Materials are being developed that can be used throughout the District for that celebration.

The celebration will continue with 60th Anniversary Circuit Convocations, planned for the post-Easter season next year.

“By dividing the District staff into three teams of two each, and by planning the convocations on both Saturdays

component as we seek to build circuit unity and cooperation — for mission planting, for training of laity and for celebrating ministries together.”

The President’s Convocation is planned for the fall of 2008, followed by Outreach Summits

“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

-John 3:16

and Sundays, we will be able to have staff present at all 22 convocations during a five-six week time frame,” Michael said.

“These convocations will include both a District and a local

in the 2009 Epiphany season. The anniversary celebration will culminate with the District convention in June of 2009. □

We’re Aging

by Rev. Ron Biel

Aging? Yes, we are! Many of our District’s congregations are doing just that. And we all do so, even the youngest among us. Pastors are, too. Many start considering retirement when they reach the years around 60 or so. Guess how old our District will be in February of 2008? You guessed it — 60! But the Church doesn’t “retire.” We are growing, maturing, as together we reach out. But we have a real need!

We need **servants for our future**.

Our District Board of Directors has decided to establish an **Endowment Fund** to assist in this need to encourage full-time church workers, especially pastors for congregations. Nationally, there is a shortage already, and the next few years will witness a larger number of pastoral retirements as many are pushing “60” from both directions.

This new Endowment Fund will be three-pronged in nature. Scholarships for church workers at our universities and seminaries is a huge need. It costs a great deal to enter, much more so than in prior years. Secondly, our own Concordia House of Studies needs financial assistance to offer its programs at a reasonable cost. Finally, campus ministries at universities around our District need support. These are often prime recruiting grounds for church workers.

At last summer’s District Convention, President Michael in his report presented some alarming statistics. We have tremendous growth taking place in Florida and Georgia. From 1990 to 2005, Florida’s population grew from 12.9 million to 17.8; in the same period, Georgia increased from 6.5 million to 9.1 million.

There are people all around us, but we have not been keeping pace. In the past five years, our two states grew by 11.1%, while the District declined by 2.4%. “The harvests are plentiful.” We have plans to become “a powerful mission force.”

The “harvest is plentiful... but the laborers are few.” Here is another problem which **Servants for the Future** is

attempting to address. We already have a severe shortage of pastors. In the next few years, we need many more. Look at the ages of current active pastors (in 10-year increments) as of May, 2006:

26-35 = 16 pastors
36-45 = 33 pastors
46-55 = 68 pastors
56-65 = 69 pastors
66+ = 12 pastors

Notice the trend. Baby-boomers are coming down south. Baby-boom pastors are approaching retirement years. I’m one of them.

It has become increasingly difficult for young men to even consider entering the seminary. The costs have sky-rocketed! For so many, it cannot even be a consideration. But the Lord “gifts” people for harvesting. We have a very small scholarship fund. We need much, much more. Interest from a sufficient Endowment Fund could allow this not to become the obstacle that it now is.

Think of what might be done if we could gather \$10 million in this Fund by next February, our “60th Anniversary” as a District! That’s a lot of money. Some of us pastors want to step forward, saying, “Personally, I believe we need to demonstrate to everybody just how important this is. I am therefore going to contribute \$100 to *Servants for the Future*. Other can step forward by committing \$1000 of whatever amount.

Soon each pastor and each retired pastor in our District will be asked to consider making such a commitment to this endeavor. It is our fervent prayer that you see what this means to us, and what it can mean for our District. Oh, yes, we’re aging, but growing, maturing into what Christ wants us to become.

You will hear more about this, but anyone, anyone, may now send in a donation to the Florida-Georgia District, LCMS, 7207 Monetary Drive, Orlando FL 32809-5753 or through your congregation. Simply label it *Servants for the Future*. And pray, even as our Lord did.

NOTE: Rev. Ron Biel, pastor of Marco Island Lutheran-Marco Island, FL, is chairman of the *Servants for the Future* endowment fund committee. □