

The Invitation



APPLE TALK

Rev. Bruce Lieske
Founding Executive
Director
Lutherans in
Jewish Evangelism

Engraved on the Statue of Liberty is Emma Lazarus' well-known poem:

**Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!**

Emma Lazarus (1849-1887), a Sephardic (Spanish) Jew, was an American literary luminary who helped to raise money to build the Statue of Liberty. She was also a tireless opponent of Russian anti-Semitism which was rampant in the 19th century and was much later recognized in the popular play "Fiddler on the Roof."

As we contemplate Lazarus' words of invitation, we remember not only our immigrant heritage as a nation, but the compelling words of another Jew, Jesus, who said: *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and*

you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. (Mt 11:28-30)

How graciously do we welcome the visitor to the worship services of our congregation? Hurting, confused people often visit our churches. They may project self-composure and confidence on the outside, but

inside they are weary and burdened. We are the smiles, the arms, the outstretched hand of welcome of Jesus! And Jesus is our living statue of liberty. He is the lamp, the light of the world, that opens up the golden door of heaven. Do you know any Jewish people that you can invite? Failure to invite Jewish people into the open arms of Jesus, the Messiah, is the worst act of anti-Semitism.

We rejoice in an important milestone of Jewish missions here in our Florida-Georgia District. On Sunday afternoon, April 3, Ed Gross was ordained into the pastoral ministry of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod at Trinity Lutheran Church-Delray Beach, FL. He was also installed at the same time by President Gerhard Michael, Jr. as a Missionary-Pastor at Trinity, working in seniors ministry and Jewish evangelism. Earlier this year Rev. Gross completed six years of study in the DELTO (Distance Education

Leading to Ordination) program — a way to become a Lutheran pastor without full-time attendance at one of our seminaries.

Some of you in South Florida may have heard Rev. Gross as the moderator on the Jewish evangelism program, "The Burning Bush," on WINZ AM on

Sunday mornings from 7:30-8:00 a.m. We invite your prayers and your support for this important media Gospel outreach to the Jewish community of Florida. If you would like to help, please contact Rev. Gross at 561-278-1737. □



Shown at the April 3rd ordination service for Rev. Ed Gross are (left to right) Bruce Lieske, Scott Gress, Mark Wessling, Timothy Hartner, Ed Gross, Dennis Glick, John Johnson, Gerhard Michael, Jr.

Lutherans to Build Habitat Home in Jacksonville

Lutherans living in Florida's Duval, St. John's and Nassau Counties will join Thrivent Financial for Lutherans and Habitat for Humanity International in an unprecedented alliance called "Thrivent Builds with Habitat for Humanity" to build a three-bedroom house in McNair Park.

"This alliance will put the faith of Lutherans and communities into action to help a family achieve greater economic independence," said John Burke, Jacksonville First-Coast Financial for Lutherans Chapter Specialist.

"Each of the participating Lutheran churches will have an individual whose title will be 'Thrivent Builds Congregational Champion,'" continued Burke. "Financial contributions are currently being accepted since all required funds must be raised prior to beginning the project."

Lutherans living in Duval, St. John's or Nassau Counties who would like to participate in this project — either in the actual building and/or to make a financial contribution — should contact their Congregational Champion or Burke, who may be reached at 904-879-0399 or c/o Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, 5401 Dunn Ave., Jacksonville, FL 32218.

Thrivent Financial is also joining Habitat in nine other Florida cities to build a home; 310 will be built throughout the United States in 2006. □

LSF Honors Congregations for Refugee Work

The Lutheran Services Florida Refugee Resettlement Program recently hosted a special event — "Joyful Celebration" — to honor and recognize congregations that have sponsored refugees and partnered with LSF by helping newcomers build new lives in freedom.

Hosting the March 30 evening celebration was Our Saviour Lutheran Church-Tampa.

The event featured honored guests Rev. Dr. Gerhard C. Michael, Jr., President of the Florida-Georgia District, and Bishop Edward R. Benoway, Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's Florida/Bahamas Synod.

The new "Welcoming the Stranger Training Program" for congregations was introduced at the event. This program

will provide guidance and assistance to congregations that want to partner with the LSF Refugee Resettlement Program by sponsoring refugees.

For nearly 25 years, the LSF Refugee Resettlement Program has helped hundreds of thousands of refugees by providing them with a safe place to live, helping them find jobs, learn English, become accustomed to their new community, and ultimately become self-sufficient.

Lutheran Services Florida is a statewide, social services, nonprofit organization dedicated to helping all people in need throughout Florida regardless of religious affiliation, age, or national origin. More than 750,000 people in need have received assistance from Lutheran Services Florida. □

LCEF

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