



LUTHERAN LIFE

Ab blaze
Igniting the World with Christ's Love

VOL. 30, NO. 8 • OCTOBER 2007

Forward Together - Finish Strong!

District Capital Campaign Tops \$6 Million

Hailed as a "bold action that sows seeds for the harvest," the Florida-Georgia District capital campaign approved by the 2000 Convention is drawing to a close.

The \$10-million campaign — *Forward Together - Servants in His Mission* — was launched to support mission starts and strengthen existing congregations; to establish and support the innovative Concordia House

of Studies; and to strengthen Lutheran Services Florida and Lutheran Services of Georgia.

While response to the campaign has been consistently positive, two years of devastating hurricane activity in the District impacted the progress of *Forward Together* and resulted its extension beyond the original five-year time frame.

"As of September 1, about \$6,300,000 had been given to *Forward Together*," reported Rev. Bob Besalski, campaign coordinator. "We are striving to achieve our original \$10 million goal in 2008."

According to Besalski, major donors have played a big role in the campaign, and those solicitations continue.

He continued, "It is interesting to note that almost

\$1.8 million has come from congregations who did every-member visits, but \$635,000 of that came from the six 'pilot' congregations.

"Approximately \$2 million has come from 'Covenant' congregations who pledged a specific amount. We are heavily counting on a number of these congregations to finish strong by fulfilling their covenant as more than \$1 million is still to be given by these parishes."

Besalski added, "Another 21 congregations gave one-time 'gifts' that have totaled more than \$112,500. We are presently appealing to these congregations to make additional gifts to help us finish strong."

He added that it is "noteworthy that a number of the congregations dramatically

affected by hurricanes have continued to support the *Forward Together* Campaign.

"Redeemer-Englewood, FL, recently completed their \$51,168 pledge; Lutheran Church of the Cross-Port Charlotte recently undertook a congregational EMV; Lake Wales Lutheran Church began a five year program of \$10,000 per year; and the list goes on," Besalski enthused.

Tangible campaign results

Gifts to the *Forward Together* campaign have produced very visible results in the Florida-Georgia District, including:

- The establishment and support of the Concordia House of Studies. Approved at the same 2000 District convention as the capital campaign, CHS provides coursework for professional church workers in a setting adjacent to local college or university campuses. The state university provides the general

or specialized secular education needed by the student for the baccalaureate degree.

- Expanded mission starts.
- Assistance for established congregations in need of some help to overcome challenges and regain health and vitality.
- Support of social ministry programs of Lutheran Services Florida and Lutheran Services Georgia to help immigrants, the aged, children, families in crisis and others in need.

"Gifts to our *Forward Together* campaign have already sown seeds for the harvest that have produced rich fruits for our mission together in Christ," Besalski concluded. "We still have work to accomplish — and together we will do so as we finish strong."

For more information on *Forward Together - Servants in His Mission*, please contact Pastor Bob Besalski at rbesalski@yahoo.com or phone 352-359-4569. □

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Messiah-Tampa Celebrates Anniversary



Messiah's current sanctuary was dedicated in October of 1995.

On September 26, 1982, Robert and Carolyn Wagner opened their home to host 23 visionary men and women for the first worship service of Messiah Lutheran Church-Tampa.

Members, friends and guests of Messiah celebrated that milestone on September 30 with a 10 a.m. communion service. Preaching was Trinity-Toldeo, OH, Pastor Nathan Guelzow, the son of Messiah's Pastor James and Lynn Guelzow.

A dinner and program highlighting Messiah's 25-year history followed the service.

Those anniversary events were hosted on Messiah's campus — 9.5 acres at Hutchinson and Ehrlich Roads in the Carrollwood area of Tampa. This site was purchased by the Florida-Georgia District in April of 1983, just two months before the arrival of the Guelzow family (Pastor Jim and Lynn with children Nathan, then 8, and Heidi, then 3).

For most of its first five years, Messiah Lutheran used Carrollwood LaPetite Academy as its worship facility. That changed on February 15, 1987, with the dedication of its sanctuary.

In September of 1987, the Messiah Preschool Program opened, and in December the Migrant Ministry Outreach began.

The congregation grew, and a new Sanctuary was dedicated on October 22, 1995. The original sanctuary became the Christian Life Center, a hub for education and activities.

Messiah's ministry team expanded in August 2003 with the addition of Rev. Scott Burmeister along with his wife Denise and their infant daughter Elise.

Now with almost 800 members, Messiah has nourished its "Growing To Touch Lives" campaign and anticipates breaking ground for a new Ministry Center in January of 2008. □

District Marks 60 Years of Ministry

The Florida-Georgia District will celebrate a milestone next year: 60 years of ministry. Giving focus to our celebration will be the theme, "Following in Faith," the very theme that Rev. Wyatt Kimberly used to lead the opening worship at the first District convention. He drew on Luke 5:1-11 for his message, where Jesus overwhelmed the disciples with the great catch of fish, so that Peter cried out, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man." Jesus responded, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." The paragraph concludes, "When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him."

As the first disciples followed in faith, so too do we.

More information on the anniversary celebration is included in President Michael's column on page 2 of this issue. Upcoming issues of *Lutheran LIFE* will provide anniversary updates. □

Surrounded by witnesses . . .
Run with perseverance . . .

FOLLOWING IN FAITH

60
FLORIDA-GEORGIA DISTRICT LCMS
1948-2008

. . . Looking to Jesus,
Pioneer and perfecter of faith!
Hebrews 12:1-2

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