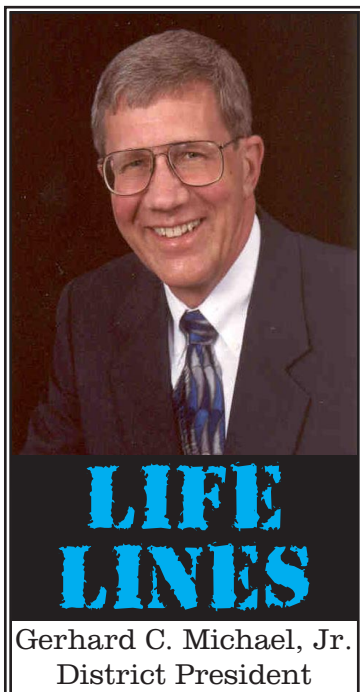


## FROM THE PRESIDENT

# The District's 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary: A Diamond Opportunity



Gerhard C. Michael, Jr.  
District President

In February, 2008 the Florida-Georgia District will turn 60! It's time for a celebration!

Since God has richly blessed us since February 6, 1948 — when delegates from 22 congregations first met at Trinity Lutheran Church in Orlando

people bowled together in the 1950s, today people prefer to bowl alone. Club memberships, eating out with family and friends, engaging in political activity, participating in civic and religious affairs and the like have all seen a significant decline in the numbers.

At the same time that community involvement has declined, what has happened to the crime rate in our society? Instead of communities building in support and accountability through reciprocal relationships, we counter crime by locking up the lawbreakers.

While a variety of causes undoubtedly contributes to the decline of community in America, the root cause surely remains our sinfulness, whereby we turn away from others and in on ourselves. In view of this, what is important, to my way of thinking, is to deal with our self-centeredness by God's grace and work to re-establish community. God has designed us for community, even as he said

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to hold the District's inaugural convention — we see the anniversary as a diamond opportunity to make a statement about what is important to us.

The context in our society makes such a celebration most fitting. According to Robert D. Putnam's bestselling book, *Bowling Alone*, our society has seen a marked decrease in community involvement. While

about Adam in the Garden, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper fit for him." Thus, when individuals get wrapped up in themselves and congregations withdraw from others, it's time for us to counter this self-centered approach to life. An anniversary celebration can help us do that!

The District's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary is a way of saying that we are not locked into the here and now. We're interested in our history. We are going to take some time to remember our past. What our ancestors did counts. We are also concerned about the future. We remember the past that we might learn from its lessons, seek to build on them, and move into the future in a way that honors the past.

Additionally, our celebration reaches beyond our own family and congregation. We join hands with the other congregations in our District, recognizing that God's grace has been evident in their lives too. Our anniversary can help us fight self-centeredness.

Most importantly, our celebration is a diamond opportunity to give thanks to God for his faithfulness to us throughout the past, to be refreshed by the reliability of his promises, and to respond to his goodness with our own commitments as we face the future.

Giving focus to our celebration will be the theme, "Following in Faith," the very theme that the 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

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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.

The "Following in Faith" theme will be highlighted when we ask all congregations to observe the anniversary Sunday, February 17, 2008. The Gospel

including the mini-biographies for the missionary heroes, the listing of donors to Servants for the Future Endowment Fund, and the listing of those currently

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for that day, John 3:1-17, calls us to faith, "And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life." The familiar John 3:16 is the foundational text for the District's values statement.

The Circuit Convocations will be held on the Saturdays (April 5 through May 3) and Sundays (April 6 through May 4) in the post-Easter season. With an emphasis on missionary heroes from our District, in the spirit of Hebrews 11, we will be called to "look to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith," that we might run our race with perseverance, fulfilling the mission Christ has given to us.

Another key component of the Convocations will be the opportunity for each circuit to design activities that will strengthen members for their part in the mission. The diamond opportunity in each convocation will be to share their circuit's mission blueprint,

preparing for careers of service within the church.

At the beginning of the Anniversary celebration, the Advisory Council on Church Worker Recruitment and Student Aid is designating Sunday, January 27, for an emphasis on church worker recruitment. In that day's Gospel Jesus calls Peter and Andrew, James and John from their nets to follow him. Given the largeness of the harvest and the number of workers nearing retirement, this emphasis couldn't be more timely!

As you have been reading in *Lutheran Life*, The District has embarked on raising \$1,000,000 by the anniversary to establish the Servants for the Future Endowment Fund. Its purpose will be to more fully fund church worker scholarships, the Concordia House of Studies, and campus ministry, that we might raise up more leaders for the Lord's mission. Wouldn't it be great to be able to cap our celebration by reaching this goal?

Should you wish more information on "Servants for the Future" and how you might assist, feel free to contact us here at the District office, and we will be happy to respond.

May the plans we lay for "Following in Faith" serve to help our District stay connected with one another, with our past, and most importantly, with the Lord. He is the One who makes following in faith worthwhile.

-gcm



Every congregation is a church in mission, and every member is a missionary; with all of us working together under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, empowered by His Gospel to share His love.

Lutheran LIFE is the official newspaper of the Florida-Georgia District/Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Lutheran LIFE is designed to inform LCMS church and school members of the activities, the personalities and resources offered by the Synod and the District. Lutheran LIFE may also provide a forum for Lutherans to express their views and ideas on a wide range of topics. We welcome and encourage editorials, emphasizing that the views and opinions expressed are not necessarily shared by the editors or District or Synod personnel. Lutheran LIFE is published monthly, with occasional combined bimonthly issues. Editorials, press releases and photos are encouraged and must be received at Lutheran LIFE publication offices no later than the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month prior to the publication date. While we make every attempt to use submitted information in the next issue of LIFE, space considerations prevent us from guaranteeing that stories will be used immediately. Advertising is welcome; information is available from our production office. Changes of address or new subscriber information should be directed to our production office as well.

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*Serving,  
Assisting,  
Encouraging  
Congregations in Ministry*

## LCEF shares \$3.3 million with LCMS

Reporting record loan approvals and earnings, the Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) has given The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod \$3.3 million as a distribution of its earnings.

"LCEF was blessed with a great year of ministry and financial operations," said LCEF President Merle Freitag. "We reached a new level in loan approvals totaling \$331 million and achieved a record bottom line.

"We thank God for these blessings and appreciate

the opportunity to share them with our Synod and district partners."

The LCEF earnings distribution for the 2006-07 fiscal year, which ended June 30, was more than double the typical LCEF distribution of \$1.4 million. Freitag attributed the increase to higher loan approvals, more gifts and bequests, the selling of real estate, and investments in equities and fixed-income assets.

Of the total \$3.3 million gift, \$300,000 will benefit the Synod

as unrestricted funds and \$2.7 million will be divided among the LCEF's 28 member districts. Distributions to districts are based on the size and activity of each district's LCEF program and range from \$43,000 to \$231,000.

The remaining \$300,000 will go toward LCMS World Mission's "Mission Planting Fund" to support the North American *Ablaze!* goals of starting 2,000 missions and "revitalizing" 2,000 existing congregations. □