

DISTRICT UPDATE

Woodlands Camp to Close

Financial woes lead to difficult decision

Editor's note: Florida-Georgia District President Gerhard Michael Jr. announced at the recent President's Convocation that the decision had been made to close Woodlands Lutheran Ministries in Montverde, FL. The following is taken from materials distributed at the Convocation and from a subsequent letter from President Michael.

After prayerful consideration, the Board of Directors of the Florida-Georgia District has given direction to close the

extensive review of the viability of the ministry as it presently exists.

The process that led to the difficult decision began with the Spring 2004 appointment by District President Rev. Dr. Gerhard Michael Jr., of a special task force to review camp operations, programming, staffing and the deteriorating financial condition of the ministry. The Woodlands Camp Board of Directors was asked to move from its operational function to preparing for a policy-based

\$250,000 loan to cover budget shortfalls and to provide funding for facility repairs that demanded immediate attention. All financial operations were moved to the District's accounting office for consolidation and analysis.

reach into the millions of dollars, without the ability to recover those costs under normal operations. Among other considerations, the District Board of Directors concluded that it could not continue to sustain these losses without

be held in November for those winter residents not yet here. At this time, the goal is to close the retreat and youth facilities by December 31, 2005, and the campground by April 15, 2006.

A separate task force will be appointed by President Michael to consider the future directions in ministry, "that the legacy of the Woodlands can be honored and upheld," he said.

The District's commitment to the Woodlands was reflected in the fact that it had been a recipient of funds from the *Forward Together-Servants in His Mission* capital campaign. Funds disbursed to the Woodlands from this endeavor have gone for expenses for the infrastructure at the camp, necessary for future expansion. Now, with the closing of the Woodlands ministry, a decision will need to be made regarding the unexpended funds of the campaign earmarked for the Woodlands.

The Board of Directors encourages all members of the District to give thanks to God for the incredible blessing of this outdoor ministry and those who have served and supported it over the years. Many, many lives have been touched through the ministry of the Woodlands. Please pray for the Lord's wisdom and guidance as we bring closure to this ministry and seek to shape new ministries within the Florida-Georgia District that also serve His purposes and bring glory to His name. □

"I want to thank you, the members of the District, for your steady support through the years and assure you of our sincere commitment to work through the issues that lie ahead of us as we seek to implement the decision which the Board of Directors has reached. May our gracious God guide us, that in all the actions we take, people may be touched with the Lord's love and empowered to live as His servants."

- Florida-Georgia District President Gerhard Michael, Jr., in a communication discussing the closing of Woodlands Lutheran Ministry.

A bleak reality was subsequently uncovered: at the current operating expense rate, the shortfalls against revenue exceeded \$40,000 a month with an anticipated loss of nearly one-half million dollars by the end of this fiscal year. It was projected that this situation would worsen in the years ahead. Declining use of the retreat/conference facilities, changes in the law which have affected staffing for summer youth camps and vacancies in the campground all contribute to the bleak picture.

In addition, repairs that are necessary for normal operations

putting the viability of the District at risk. The decision was made to close the Woodlands ministry at its present site.

A consultant has been retained by the District to manage the closing of the camp's operations over the next several months and the disposition of assets. Although many details remain to be worked out, a meeting has been held with the employees and arrangements are being worked out to assist them in this time of transition. And initial meeting has been held with residents of the campground and a second one will



Woodlands Lutheran Ministry. Woodlands Lutheran Church — a separate entity — is not included in this action.

The decision to close the Woodlands was preceded by

governance function while the operational issues were being reviewed by the task force.

Until a complete understanding of the issues was known, the District secured a

Serving Lutherans for more than 50 years!

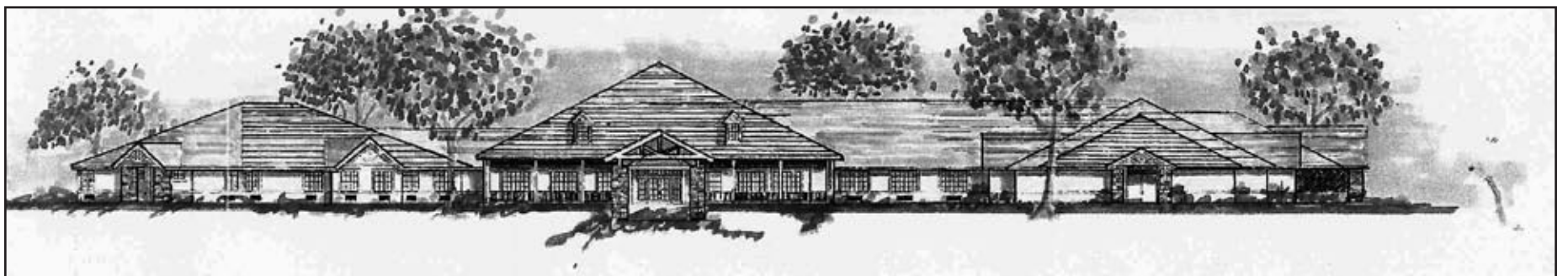
Discover Lutheran Haven

Where more than half the residents hail from Florida-Georgia District Congregations. You might meet some old friends there, and for sure, will make some new ones.

- Independent Living
- Assisted Living
- Nursing Home Care
- Respite Care



Affiliated with the SELC District of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, **Lutheran Haven** has been a provider of retirement services for more than 50 years.



Lutheran Haven, a ministry of the SELC District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, broke ground for its new nursing home and assisted living facility on Sunday, January 23. The new facility, which will be almost double the size of its current facility, will be completed in 13 months at a cost of \$8.9 million.



For more information, please call or write:
Mrs. P.J. Summersgill • Lutheran Haven
2041 West State Road 426 • Oviedo, FL 32765
(407) 365-2224 Toll Free (800) 272-5676