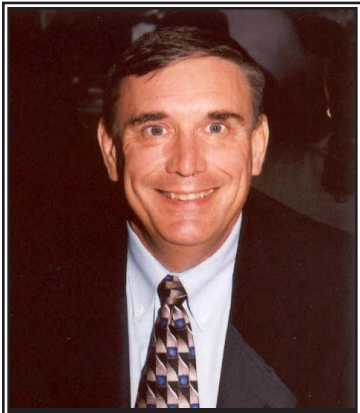


# DCE Ministry Offers Challenge, Reward



## HIGHER EDUCATION NETWORK

Wayne Wilke  
Concordia House  
of Studies

Over the past years, I have highlighted the stories of some of the church workers in the Florida-Georgia District. These stories illustrate the different ways that God calls workers into His church.

David Weidner, Director of Congregational Services for the Florida-Georgia District, has been recognized as the Master Director of Christian Education for 2007 by the Lutheran Education Association. I asked Dave to share the story of how he became a DCE and what the ministry means for him. Here is his story.

The casual suggestion of my uncle to consider applying to work as a camp counselor at a Lutheran camp in the summer of 1970 turned my life in a direction that I had never

considered as a 19-year-old college student. With no other exciting work options for that summer I decided to head to the shores of Lake Erie and become a camp counselor at Camp Pioneer near Buffalo, NY.

Once there, I experienced the incredible joy of living and working in a closely knit Christian community. I met a score of young adults who were planning to become full-time church workers upon completing their education at colleges called Concordia and seminaries in St. Louis and Springfield. I also encountered a host of visiting pastors, missionaries and teachers who challenged me to grow in my faith. The Holy Spirit worked on my heart throughout that long summer, and I came away wanting to experience more of this Christian community.

I returned to Camp Pioneer each summer as soon as my last class at the state college I was attending in Maryland was over. When I graduated with a degree in Mathematics and Economics in 1973, Camp Director Elton Rengstorf offered me a full-time position as his assistant, and thus began my career as a full-time church worker. I didn't realize it at the time, but God was using that experience as well as all of the others that were to follow as a way to mold me into His faithful servant. Thirty-four years later He is still molding me and using

me to touch the lives of those I encounter with the joy of His love in Jesus Christ.

While working at Camp I met my wife, Cathy, who had graduated from Concordia River Forest and was working in the Eastern District office as assistant to the Missions Executive. We married within the year and through the gentle persuasion of our good friend Rev. Dr. Arnie Kromphardt I accepted a position as Director of Youth Ministry at St. Paul Lutheran Church & School-North Tonawanda, NY. I was young and inexperienced, but the excellent mentoring of other youth pastors, Directors of Christian Education and Lutheran School principals in the area helped shape me into a more effective worker.

From New York we moved to Southern California where I served two different congregations as Director of Christian Education. During those years I felt compelled to become certified as a DCE and completed my Colloquy program at Concordia University-Irvine. My ministry as a parish-based DCE was a very rich and rewarding experience that prepared me for the next challenge from the Lord.

I next was privileged to serve as Director of the National LCMS Youth Gathering. Working with hotels, convention centers, event contractors and the host of volunteers who help with this incredible event in the life of our church offered me countless opportunities to be an effective witness of the Gospel and to build caring, Christ-centered relationships that have endured over the years.

Now as the Director of Congregational Services for the Florida-Georgia District, it is my privilege to serve congregations in a variety of ways as well as mentor and support other youth pastors, Directors of Christian Education, Deaconesses, Music Ministers and Lay Ministers who serve in our District. In addition, God has also afforded me new opportunities for growth, learning and service in the world of Human Care Ministry and Disaster Response.

My journey as a full-time worker in the Lord's church has been full of variety, challenge,



Dave Weidner

growth and joy. I think back to that day I headed to Camp Pioneer and wonder how differently my life would have turned out had I not heeded that urge to go and see what this camp counselor thing was all about."

My blind trust of that day has been shaped and matured by God's Spirit through the interaction with thousands of brothers and sisters in Christ who have served with me along the way into a confident knowledge that He is leading me along the path He has planned for me. I thank God for

His presence in my life and the many blessings and exciting opportunities He has granted to me in this journey!

The thing that I have appreciated most about being a Director of Christian Education is the incredible flexibility and the wide range of service opportunities that exist within this role. One gets to work with virtually every age group in the church from young children to the elderly. The variety is endless: teaching confirmation class, assisting in worship leadership, planning and leading youth ministry activities; training ministry leaders, developing and opening a preschool, serving as parish administrator, facilitating Adult Bible classes, participating in district and Synod events and efforts, encouraging fellow DCEs and Youth Ministers, engaging in professional growth opportunities, caring for people in need and more.

There's never been a dull moment, and God has a way of sending you new challenges and stretching you just when you think you've got it all figured out. If you are considering a future as a Director of Christian Education and you enjoy variety and challenge this is the career for you!

If you have any questions about how the Concordia House of Studies can assist you in your educational plans for the DCE ministry, or for any church vocation, please feel free to contact Dr. Wilke in Orlando locally at 407-857-5556, ext. 113; toll free at 877-457-5556, ext. 113; or via e-mail at [wwilke@flga-lcms.org](mailto:wwilke@flga-lcms.org) □



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## LSF Fall Service Retreat This Month

Region 12 of Lutheran Student Fellowship will have its Fall Service Retreat at Grace Lutheran-Jacksonville, FL, September 21-23.

All college students throughout Florida and

Georgia and all of Region 12 are welcome to participate.

"We will be working in the city of Jacksonville on various service projects," reported Pastor Greg Michael of Christus Victor Lutheran Church and Student Center. "It is a great

opportunity for college students to come together for Christian fellowship and service."

Cost is \$25. For more information and registration forms, contact Michael at [pastor@christusvictor.net](mailto:pastor@christusvictor.net). □

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