



# The Spirit of Southern

**Web Edition – November/December, 2015**



*Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with a child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.” Isaiah 7:14*

Prophesying over 700 years before the birth of Christ, Isaiah spoke to King Ahaz of Judah about the deliverance that God would provide that besieged kingdom. This prophecy has provided the world with one of the clearest declarations of the Christmas miracle. God would come in the flesh to dwell among us. He would enter our world through the womb of a virgin. What a wonderful sign God gives to us to behold and believe.

It may be difficult to identify with King Ahaz of Judah. As reflected in 2 Kings 16:2-4, he was a young, arrogant king of “detestable” ways. In spite of this the prophet Isaiah went to Ahaz to offer him spiritual strength in a time of national crisis. Because of his godless ways, Ahaz did not merit a sign or a faithful prophet. Yet despite these evil ways and his phony spirituality, a covenant-keeping God gave Ahaz a clear sign of what he would do, not only for Ahaz but for our sin-darkened world through the Immanuel prophecy. What can we learn from God’s actions?

We learn the character of God. He is a God of tremendous mercy and tenderness. In the midst of the dilemmas that were entirely of Ahaz’s doing, God came to deliver the king and his kingdom. We should never underestimate the depth of God’s love for any of us. None of us is worthy, and still God comes. He comes into our lives with signs that are clear and understandable to us. He is not a God who would stay hidden and unnamed from a people he loves. At Christmas we are presented with a star, a manger, a virgin, shepherds, and kings, signs which point to his tangible fleshly proof of Jesus, who is indeed among us, to be known by us, in a personal way. As we worship him, he extends to us himself fully, in word, in water, in wine and bread.

At Christmas, through signs and the messages, God continues to seek after us. Will we be onlookers with casual interest? Or will we embrace with the gift of faith that a loving heavenly Father is here to cut through our fears, and to draw us to himself? Ahaz, you, me; God still desires that we believe and be saved. Christmas is a gift for such as us. It’s just what we needed.

*Dear God, you know of no hopeless ones in this world. Enable us to believe. Hear our prayer that all will realize that you are truly there for us and receive the Christmas gifts of faith and life in Jesus. Amen.*

Rev. Kurtis Schultz, President, Southern District, Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

# District & Synod News

## *Southern District Lutheran Foundation*

The Southern District Lutheran Foundation (SDLF) is now offering Estate Planning Seminars to members of the Southern District. These seminars include topics such as Wills and Bequests, Congregational Endowment Funds, Charitable Trusts, and Charitable Gift Annuities.

Charitable Gift Annuities are very popular with our church members because they allow ordinary people to give substantial gifts to their church or favorite Lutheran ministry. It is very difficult for the average church member to write a check for \$10,000 to his church. However, it is very easy for that same church member to acquire a \$10,000 gift annuity. A gift annuity will

allow the member to receive an income for life at a higher percentage than he could get at the bank in a CD or savings account. A gift annuity can pay out for one lifetime or two. When the church member is called home to heaven, the money remaining in the gift annuity will go to his church or favorite Lutheran ministry. A gift annuity is a win/win for the donor and his church.

Please contact Glenn Gerber at the Southern District Office (985-218-0335) for more details and for more information about Estate Planning Seminars for your church. Glenn's e-mail is [g.gerber@southernlcms.org](mailto:g.gerber@southernlcms.org).

*Glenn Gerber, Executive Director for Foundation/Schools.*

## *Southern District Stewardship Committee*

Meet your new stewardship committee members: Glenn Gerber, Gary Grubb (Chair), Don Hennings, Rev. Paul McComack, Rev. Louis Boldt, and Don Panzenhagen. Visit the district website for a photo and brief profile of each. They have answered the call to serve you and each other regarding the Christian's total stewardship life including use of time, talents, treasure, and testimony for Christ. Concerning stewardship of testimony, consider *"But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect."* (1 Peter 3:15)

While December marks the start of a new liturgical year for the church, we are also involved in closing out the 2015 fiscal year ending December 31 in good and proper order. With that in mind, we ask you to conclude your 2015 partnership commitment to the Southern District

for work in the district, synod and beyond!

The District Stewardship Committee is truly grateful for all the churches that have generously supported this ministry that we share. We are also thankful for all that the Lord allows your congregation to give in the future. Stewardship Southern Style focuses on making disciples for Jesus. Walking together with the LCMS, we have defined stewardship in this manner: "Christian stewardship is the free and joyous activity of the child of God and God's family, the church, in managing all of life and life's resources for God's purposes." We in the Southern District like to emphasize that love for Christ, generated by the Gospel, is the motivating factor for true Christian giving. For this reason we add the statement . . . "In response to the Gospel, stewardship is part of discipleship."

*Gary Grubb*

## **OUR STEWARDSHIP OF HIS RESOURCES – 2015**

**Total Budget:** \$900,000    **Budgeted Income through 10/31:** \$750,000    **Actual Income through 10/31:** \$734,888

## *District Office Staff Transition*

Daisy Olmstead, former administrative assistant at Atonement - Metairie, LA, will join the President's team on January 4th. Marion Kennedy retires December 31st but will continue for three months, once a week, for training purposes. We wish God's blessings to Marion in her retirement and look forward to working with Daisy who has some very large shoes to fill! Watch for more information about the transition in our January/February edition and on our website, [www.SouthernLCMS.org](http://www.SouthernLCMS.org).

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## *Camp Restore --- Thrivent Choice*

Are you a Thrivent member? If so, are you familiar with Thrivent Choice?

Since 2010, Thrivent Financial members in the Southern District and beyond have directed more than \$11,000 in Thrivent Choice funds to Camp Restore! Perhaps you're in that number - if so, thank you!

If you're a Thrivent member but are unfamiliar with Thrivent Choice, the good news is it's a super-fast and easy way to have Thrivent make donations to the nonprofits and Lutheran schools of your choice! Just visit [www.thrivent.com/thriventchoice](http://www.thrivent.com/thriventchoice) to find out more!

We're looking forward to another great volunteer season just ahead! Follow along at [www.camprestore.org](http://www.camprestore.org) and find us on social media @CampRestore!

Thank you once again, and have a blessed Christmas!



*Kurt Jostes*

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## *LWML Gulf States District*

The LWML Ladies of the Magnolia Zone will be hosting the 36th Biennial LWML Gulf States District Convention on April 29, 30 & May 1, 2016 at the Courtyard by Marriott, Gulfport, MS. The theme is "Direct my footsteps according to your Word." Psalm 119:133

Ginny Hermetz of Gulfport (pictured) is serving as Convention Chairman, with Canaan Herkamp as Registrar, and Ellen Garnett as Treasurer.



The Keynote Mission Speaker is Rev. Rudy Schaser, who spent many years as a pastor in the Southern District and is now the director of "With God's Little Ones." Jan Struck, Humorous Interrupter, with "Struck with Laughter" will be a part of the program, and also the entertainment for the Saturday evening banquet.

The Gifts from the Heart ingathering will be items collected for the Harrison County Youth Court Child Emergency Shelter.

*Bea Daily*

## *Pastoral Leadership Institute*

A new learning community begins in the Southern District with a first of its kind partnership between an LCMS district and PLI ([PLIinstitute.org](http://PLIinstitute.org)). I'm thrilled that the Southern District was chosen to be the first of the districts to partner with PLI for their completely renovated program of leadership development.

Our goal of having 12 church leader couples participate in the Leadership Essentials learning community was exceeded by nearly 50%. We have 17 couples participating from the District, plus many others coming here from all over the U.S. for the first of five semi-annual meetings over the course of the next two years.

*Pastor John Karle*

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## *2016 LCMS National Youth Gathering -- In Christ Alone - July 16-20, 2016*

2016 will come more quickly than any of us realize! Be watching for important information regarding this opportunity for the Southern District Youth to come together with others as a community of God's people! Details can be found on the district website [www.SouthernLCMS.org](http://www.SouthernLCMS.org).

## Concordia College – Alabama --- Students Serve as Mentors

A group of Concordia honor students partnered this fall with the foster care agency, Christian Services for Children, to serve as mentors for young males in the agency. During the mentorship, the Concordia students will act as "big brother" types to the children, and strive to bring a positive influence into their lives.

"We really try to pair our young men at the agency with individuals they can look up to and who can serve as role models to them," said Susanne Wilkerson of Christian Services for Children. "The group from Concordia seems like a really great group of guys to fill that role."

As mentors, they will spend time with the young men once a week and enjoy activities such as trips to the YMCA and playing sports, while helping to guide the children along the right path.

"I can do my best to guide the young men in the right direction but it is more effective when they see their mentor making positive choices," said Wilkerson.

The program begun in October, will continue throughout the fall semester.

*Abby Campbell*

## Congregation & School News

### *Holy Cross – Camden, AL*

The 2015 Rosebud Memorial Celebration honoring the inspiring and amazing Dr. Rosa J. Young was held on Sunday, September 27 in Rosebud, AL with over 215 people in attendance!

In conjunction with the Rosebud Memorial Celebration, Holy Cross - Camden, AL, hosted a community viewing of the LCMS movie, "The First Rosa," on Saturday, September 26. Holy Cross is located in Wilcox County, the home of Christ Lutheran Church & School, founded by Dr. Young. "The First Rosa," based on Dr. Young's book, "Light in the Dark Belt," tells the story of Rosa's tenacity, struggle and success in missionary outreach in the "Black Belt" of Alabama.

Holy Cross' viewing party was attended by more than forty individuals during the two showing at the church. Included were members of the congregation, members of Dr. Young's family, her former students, a



wealth of friends and community members. The movie was used as part of Holy Cross' community outreach initiative within it's county. All who attended were grateful for the opportunity to see Dr. Young portrayed on the large screen.

*Rev. Meredith B. Jackson*

### *Holy Cross – Hattiesburg, MS*



The Charter Service of Holy Cross - Hattiesburg, Ms was held on September 12, 2015 with 31 in attendance. Southern District President Kurtis Schultz presided over the Rite of Charter with the signing of the Charter Documents and the reading of the Scriptures as well as assisting with Holy Communion. Holy Cross' pastor, Rev. Rick Sawyer, presided over the sermon message and Holy Communion.

Pictured are members of the congregation's leadership with Pastors Sawyer and Schultz. L – R: President Chuck Eberling, Treasurer Virginia Killingbeck, Rev. Rick Sawyer, Rev. Kurtis Schultz, Elder Joe Spradley, and Secretary John Mills.

A reception of a light supper with cake was served after the service.

*Virginia Killingbeck*



### *St. Paul (Marigny) – New Orleans, LA*

St. Paul in the Marigny in New Orleans hosted their last 175th anniversary celebratory event the first weekend in November. St. Paul honored their relationship with Arts & Community with a block party on Saturday and a community potluck and worship service in the courtyard on Sunday. On Saturday, the Mardi Gras Indians, led by Big Chief Baptiste, got the crowd moving as they closed out the neighborhood event. On Sunday, Pastor Kieschnick led the outdoor worship service in the courtyard which included a joyous second-line around the neighborhood led by a brass band!

Love is Alive @ 175 on the corner of Port & Burgundy!

*Sally Hoffman*

### *Faith – Madison, AL*

As the fall season begins, so do the many activities that proceed the holidays. At Faith – Madison, AL we kick off fall with our annual Church Picnic and Homecoming on the third Saturday of September. This year’s theme was “A Day at the Beach” and as the picture shows, we sure had fun playing with beach balls, flying kites, building sand castles, having a water blaster war and, of course, holding our traditional pie eating contest.



Faith has a senior group called the “OWLS” which stands for Older Wiser Lutherans. We met this fall to decorate grapevine wreaths, decorating them with flowers and ribbon. We also enjoyed snacks that were served.

A trip to the pumpkin patch and a truck-or- treat event complete our October fun and then we begin with Angel trees and Hats for the Homeless during the cold winter months.

God’s blessings to all and a very Merry Christmas.

*Sherrie Callahan, Iris Grimm*

### *Grace – Pensacola, FL*

For 15+ years, Grace – Pensacola, FL (GLC) has been an active proponent of Manna Food Pantries of Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties. Supervisor Chris Fisher has 3 drives/year: one in February called Souper Bowl of Caring held on Super Bowl Sunday, one in August called SOS as this is a time of year when donations are traditionally lower, and one in November for Thanksgiving where baskets are put together for families in need.

2,318 pounds of food and an average of \$900 in cash donations each year. Another program that helps with donations to the pantry is the sale of hand knitted scarves and hand made cutting boards made by the Fisher family. In 2014, they donated \$3622 to Manna Food Pantries from the sale of these items.

Donations are given in the form of cash and groceries from individual members of the congregation. Thrivent Action Teams have also donated groceries for the pantry. GLC averages

The mission of Manna Food Pantry is to offer emergency food assistance, service the food-related needs of vulnerable populations, and engage the entire community in the fight against hunger.

*Susan McFarland*

### *Trinity – Auburn, AL*

Trinity - Auburn, AL completed a Lutheran World Relief (LWR) Project that involved preparing and filling School Kits. Public school is usually free, but in the places where LWR works, even a few required supplies, like pens and paper, may be more than many families can afford. The church’s Quilting Group prepared cloth backpacks and challenged the congregation to fill the backpacks with spiral notebooks, pencils, crayons, pens, and other material. Over 100 backpacks were filled and transported to Shades Valley Lutheran Church, the drop off site for Lutheran World Relief.



*Lowell Frobish*



### *Redeemer – Pensacola, FL*

Last year at Redeemer Lutheran School's annual Gala, a fund was begun to purchase new playground equipment for the Kindergarten play area. This fund was called the "Miss Debbie" fund in memory of Debbie Bleeke. Debbie passed away last year after a brief illness. She had been the K4/K5 teacher's aide for many years and the children loved her so very much. She had a special love for all the children she taught.

So far, we have purchased some equipment from monies given by many generous donors. We continue to receive donations. We know that Miss Debbie would be pleased with the purchases and how happy the children are during play time. We all continue to miss "Miss Debbie" and will always have that special place in our hearts remembering how she loved and cared for so many children at Redeemer.

*Lois Paul*

### *St. Paul's – Foley, AL*

St. Paul's – Foley, AL held a Thrivent Action Project on October, 6, 2015. The weekly sewing group and 8 additional volunteers (both men and women) met at St. Paul's for a fun "quilting bee". The group met to tie quilts (baby & lap quilts) to donate to a local nursing home and to the pregnancy resource center to help meet their need to keep clients warm. We were also able to tie a queen size quilt

that will be donated to the St. Paul's annual bazaar to raise money for their LWML projects. Pictured is Laura Johnson with a table full of finished quilts.

As a 100 year old congregation, St. Paul's is one of eight historic churches in Foley, spanning 85 to 110 years. As part of Foley's Centennial Year Celebration, community members were invited to visit the eight historic churches. Pastor Ryan Cramer led the tour of St. Paul's discussing the church's history, its stained glass windows, and Lutheranism with the visitors.

*Laura J. Johnson, Jewel Hamburg*



### *Redeemer – Mandeville, LA*

On October 4, 2015, the dedication service was held for the new church building of Redeemer - Mandeville, LA. Over 140 members and friends celebrated the dedication, followed by a reception.

In the service, Rev. Brad Drew of Mt. Olive – Metairie, LA (the mother congregation of Redeemer) served as liturgist, Rev. Al Keller (member of Redeemer and vacancy pastor of Christ – Chalmette, LA) served as lector, and Rev. Aaron Stinnett (Redeemer) was the preacher. Esther Stinnett was the organist, accompanied by Jon Goetsch on trumpet.

Redeemer's first service was held on Aug. 26, 2001, with Rev. Louis E. Nelsen, Jr. serving as the founding pastor. Since its founding, Redeemer had been meeting in rented space. The people of Redeemer are thankful for how the Lord has cared for them and brought them to this day, and are thankful to be blessed with a new church home, which is located at 22531 Highway 1088 in Mandeville. For more information, see Redeemer's web site at [www.redeemerla.net](http://www.redeemerla.net).



*Pastor Aaron Stinnett*



### *Holy Cross – Tuscaloosa, AL*

On September 20th, Holy Cross Lutheran Church had the great joy of welcoming eight new members. The congregation had a special reception to welcome the new members after the worship service. Holy Cross thanks God for the blessing of these new members as they serve Christ in Tuscaloosa.

## *Trinity – Baton Rouge, LA*

Members of Trinity – Baton Rouge, LA, two dozen teenagers (part of a 100 Black Men mentorship program), Friends of City Park, Greater St. James Baptist Church, South Baton Rouge Civic Association, the Foundation for Historical Louisiana and some neighborhood residents joined together to clean up the historic Lutheran Cemetery between Brooks Park and City Park in “old” South Baton Rouge.

The overgrown 8-acre cemetery, shaded in spots by giant oak trees, includes about 7,000 known graves, some dating to the late 1800s, and numerous unmarked ones — possibly slave graves. The land was purchased in 1899 by the Lutheran Benevolent Society, a group founded in 1872 in New Orleans.

The Rev. Dave Buss, pastor of Trinity, was pleased with the coordination of his church, the Friends of City Park and the 100 Black Men. “We’re doing this because we all love the community,” Pastor Buss said.

*Lisa Miller*



## *Grace – Huntsville, AL*

In the fall, Grace Lutheran School – Huntsville, AL began offering a blended learning program for 9th and 10th grades. This is a mix of traditional instruction while also using online instruction under the guidance of a teacher/facilitator. Our Child Development Center for ages 6 wks. – 4 yrs., a much-needed community outreach ministry, currently has approximately 50 families enrolled.

October was a very busy month with our Youth Yard Sale and our German luncheon. It

was the 25th anniversary of the luncheon, so a special German Festival was held with both food and games. On each Monday in October, our Ladies of Grace Circles prepared and delivered 75 lunches to the Aquarius Club, a community organization that serves the mentally handicapped. Our congregation has been involved in doing this for over 50 years.

Our youth have worked with other area youth in a variety of service projects including a Christmas Workshop where they

wrapped Christmas gifts for needy children, made crafts for seniors, and made Christmas cards. They also decorated and packed Thanksgiving meals, then delivered them to needy families. Our annual Christmas dinner, sponsored and served by the youth, was held on December 12th. This is always a most enjoyable holiday celebration closed with singing “Silent Night” by candlelight. A glorious evening!

*Rosemary Sweet*

## *Shepherd of the Bay – Lillian, AL*



The ladies of Shepherd of Bay – Lillian, AL celebrated Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML) Sunday on October 18, 2015. In the worship service, the ladies participated as greeters, ushers, candle lighters and Fellowship Hour servers.

The mission of LWML is to assist each woman of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod in affirming her relationship with the Triune God so that she is enabled to use her

gifts in ministry to the people of the world. We have a three-fold purpose: nurturing faith in Christ, making our mission meaningful, and sharing encouragement. We aim to help every woman find personal opportunities to discover her unique gifts, aid in making a difference in the lives of hurting and helpless people at home and in the world, and offer to help women strive as they grow in faith and relationships as sisters in Christ.

The ladies celebrated LWML Sunday with a special cake for fellowship after the Divine Service.

The LWML is taking advantage of the \$250 Action Team funding they received from Thrivent Financial. The group purchased school supplies and backpacks for children that live in poverty overseas. They recently met to assemble the school kits that will be sent to Lutheran World Relief, who in turn will distribute the kits to countries with greatest need as an expression of God's love and grace.

Pictured are Thrivent Action Team Members: Sally Smith, Marie Anderson, Ronna Young, Arlene McLaughlin, and Judy Wargo

*Marie Anderson, Sally Smith*



### *Christ – Pascagoula, MS*

"On November 1, as the members of Christ – Pascagoula, MS commemorated All Saints' Day, we also dedicated a new banner for use in worship for this observance. It was made by Christ member Susan Linn (pictured), and is dedicated in memory of Pastor Walter and Nancy McCrillis.

Pastor McCrillis served the congregation from 1987 to 1995, and again as interim pastor 1996 to 1998. His wife, Nancy, also served the congregation as organist and choir director. They both passed away in 2014, Nancy on July 24 and Walter on October 30."

*Pastor Derek Waffel*

### *Ascension - Huntsville, AL*

Ascension – Huntsville, AL celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a dinner and special services. Micah Glenn, former vicar, spoke at the Saturday evening dinner and Ken Holdorf, founding pastor, was the guest pastor for the Sunday services.

Ascension is beginning its second 50 years in receiving 28 new members, adults and children as shown in the photo.

*Mary Engel*



### *Share Your News*

The deadline for the January/February edition of the *Spirit of Southern* is January 15, 2015. Materials received after that date will be included in the web edition.

The preferred means for receiving material, text and pictures, is e-mail to "sosstuff@yahoo.com." Please send photos as a separate JPEG file. Material can also be mailed to the district office: The Spirit of Southern – Southern District LCMS – 100 Mission Drive, Slidell, LA 70460-5221. Please allow two additional weeks for mailing.

**District web site: [www.southernlcms.org](http://www.southernlcms.org)**  
**District office phone number: 504-282-2632**  
**District Office Hours: Monday-Thursday, 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.**