



The Beacon Online

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The Beacon Online is the communication source for the SELC District.

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Deaconess Interns Welcomed to Lutheran Haven

On March 24th Sophie Deogrades and Marilou Dispo were welcomed as Deaconess Interns at Lutheran Haven. Sophie and Marilou have been members of St. Luke's in Oviedo for 7 years and have been working at Lutheran Haven for 6 years. They were installed as interns by Rev. John Elliott and will be attending to their studies at the St. Louis seminary within the Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (EIIT) program. Throughout their studies they will be mentored by Deaconess Emily McLean of St. Luke's in Oviedo. Join us in welcoming them into service within the Church.

Pictured on the right are Deaconess Intern Sophie Deogrades and Deaconess Intern Marilou Dispo.



Pictured below from left to right are Pastor John Elliott, Deaconess Intern Rachel Burnham, Deaconess Intern Sophie Deogrades, Deaconess Intern Marilou Dispo, and Deaconess Emily McLean.



English as a Second Language Classes will begin this Fall

We received word last week that the St. Louis Hispanic Mission was been awarded a \$10,000 grant from the Lutheran Foundation of St. Louis to begin classes to teach English as a second language at St Lucas, St. Louis. Under the leadership of Pastor Miguel Torneire, our Hispanic Missionary, this class will serve as a great opportunity to build relationships with newcomers to the area and give opportunity to share the love of Christ. We thank the Lutheran Foundation for this generous gift—and a special word of commendation to Laura Worman, SELC District grant writer, for her assistance. We pray that God will bless this ministry to advance His Kingdom.





Happy 100th Birthday to Tracy Gerken!

First thing Tuesday morning you will find 100-year-old Tracy Gerken in her ball cap riding her 3 – wheeled bike (with a surrey on top) delivering brilliantly colored floral arrangements to several areas at Lutheran Haven. Tracy brings her lovely creations to the most visited buildings on our campus to simply give people a smile. She delivers to the Administration building, the Landings, the Marketing building and the Bee Well Clinic. Because these beautiful flowers are still fresh and vibrant following the close of worship services at St. Luke's Church, they graciously give them to our "flower ladies" who rearrange them into beautiful, new creations! With a sparkle in her eyes, Tracy says, "What a shame if they were just thrown away when they can bring so much joy to so many people!"



Those of us working in the Administration building have the privilege of seeing Tracy on her delivery days riding her bike filled with flowers, and she always arrives with a huge smile and a vibrant bouquet. When asked about her longevity, she attributes it all "to the Lord" but admits she occasionally asks Him why. "The Lord has blessed me with good health, and I love riding my bike, attending exercise classes and regularly swim in the pool!" She admits, "I never thought I'd be this old!"

As a long-time woman of faith and a Pastor's wife, Tracy re-defines what she calls "old." She brings such delight to all of us and loves it when her family comes over to swim, followed by dinner at the Landing restaurant.

Tracy grew up in a faith-filled family, attended parochial school and met her husband while in high school. He was in his first year in college at the time and it was his brother who was the Assistant Pastor at Tracy's church. "He's the one who played "cupid" for the couple. Tracy and her husband, Rev. Oscar Gerken, were married more than 40 years and have 4 beautiful children before he went home to be with the Lord. As a Pastor's wife, Tracy says she "doesn't think she accomplished anything special" (which is highly doubtful) and she says "I just wanted to be one of the congregants. It was wonderful that they were so kind to me and didn't make me feel different." Tracy and her beloved husband served churches in the Midwest and Florida and brought God's word to so many for decades! "God has been so wonderful to me. He has taken such good care of me my whole life and thoroughly blessed me!"

Thank you, Tracy, you have truly blessed all of us at Lutheran Haven by your sweet smile, your faith and the joy of your service to others which never gets old – even at

100! Ralph Waldo Emerson famously said, "The world laughs in flowers" but perhaps the better truth is the Lord laughs in flowers, and he uses an angel in a ballcap to deliver them! Happy 100th birthday Tracy!



Praying for your Kids and Grandkids

Discover heartfelt petitions that address traits like courage, humility, and respect. Scripture reinforces each prayer, and space is available for personal reflection.

[FREE PDF DOWNLOAD](#)



PROJECT CONNECT



Hello From Oviedo, FL!

My name is Mickey (Mikayla) Curl, and I am the DCE Intern here working with high school and college students. Recently, we had the opportunity to travel down to New Orleans for the National Youth Gathering. It was such an incredible experience for our group of 50+ adults and students.

One of the things that stuck out to me most about this trip was how bonded our group became as a result of the time spent together. Our trip leader, Pastor Sam, mentioned before we left that our whole trip group would become like family. While families sometimes don't get along or disagree with each other, they also love each other and have fun together - and that's exactly what happened for our NYG family! As a new intern I am SO blessed to have gotten the opportunity to bond with our students together on NYG. I loved getting to see how the students grew in their relationships. Multiple times, I noticed a student who had started out the trip without interacting much with others and ended the trip joking and laughing with new friends.

Many of our students got the opportunity to explore a variety of experiences in the exhibit hall. Some of our group's favorite exhibits were the karaoke booth and the Concordia systems booths. They enjoyed getting to hear about what the different colleges offer and taking breaks singing together - that was really bonding for them! Many of our students came back expressing an increased interest in Concordia Universities and Church work Vocations.

The students also got a lot out of the Christian content being offered at the Gathering. Many of our students took notebooks with them to the different sessions, prepared to take notes and engage with what was being presented. Furthermore, our students LOVED the large group sessions. Worshiping with such a big group of other people their age, much less people with the same beliefs, is something our students continually

cited as being one of their highlights. Another highlight for our group was our time spent out in NOLA - not only did we get beignets from Cafe Du Monde, but we also got to tour around Bourbon Street!

Below are some pictures of us at the Gathering and a testimony from one of our youth, Connor!

My experience at the National Youth Gathering in New Orleans was really eye-opening. I learned so much more about my faith than I ever thought was possible in such a short time. I got to make better connections with my fellow youth group members and overall enjoyed the trip immensely.

Thank you!

Sincerely,
Connor Mueller
YG & YLT Member



Pictured above and on the left are the youth at the Gathering. Pictured above on the right are members of the group at a vendor exhibit.

Pictured below on the left are a group cleaning the graffiti from the streets and below right is the group with one of the emcees of the Gathering.



**The next National Youth Gathering
will be held July 3 - 7, 2028
in San Antonio, Texas**



2025 Treasurer Manual Available

The Synod has issued the 2025 Treasurer Manual. They have not provided a downloadable link for the manual. If you would like the District to email you a file with the manual or send it to you on a flash drive, please contact the District Office at selc.lcms@gmail.com.



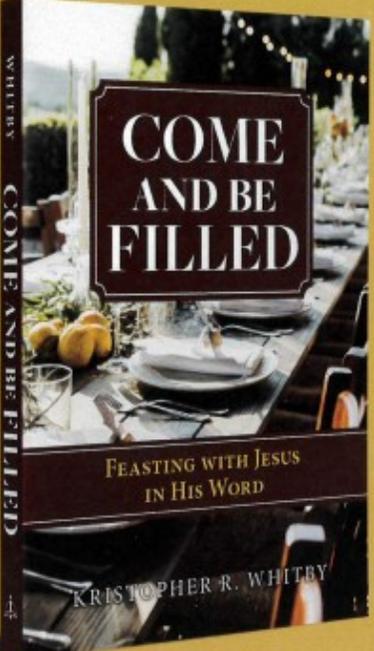
LWML-SELC Events

- The monthly zoom Bible studies have a new link! These are held on the third Thursday of each month at 10:30 AM Eastern. The new link is below.

**[https://us04web.zoom.us/j/72432487731?
pwd=icwzj2020cUyBV1e2Uj4e8t0Onf4b2.1](https://us04web.zoom.us/j/72432487731?pwd=icwzj2020cUyBV1e2Uj4e8t0Onf4b2.1)**

Meeting ID: 724 3248 7731
Passcode: 587538

- Save the date for the LWML SELC **Central Zone** fall rally at Christ the King Lutheran Church in Lodi, Ohio on September 27th. More details will follow.
- Save the date for the LWML SELC **Eastern Zone** fall rally on Saturday September 27, at Redeemer Lutheran Church, Manchester, NJ. See the flyer on the right for more information.



Join Kristopher R. Whitby to explore eleven meals throughout Scripture and the lessons God teaches there around His table.

Your Lord invites you to come and be filled with His good gifts. Experience the joy of gathering around the table with His people, sharing together in the blessings of Christ. Through Jesus, your meals will mean more.



Vocatio: Retreat set for Oct. 5–7, 2025 Prospective Students Explore Path to Ministry

Registration Closes on September 15th

College students and second-career adults who are considering future service as a pastor, deaconess, missionary or chaplain are invited to Vocatio: Retreat Oct. 5–7, 2025, at **Concordia Seminary, St. Louis**.

The three-day retreat offers an introduction to life as a seminarian. Participants will worship in the Chapel of St. Timothy and St. Titus, spend time in God's Word, engage in conversations with Seminary faculty and students, and explore the Seminary campus. The schedule includes chapel services, class visits, panel discussions on academic programs and ministry paths, an introduction to campus ministries, and presentations from Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) missionary and military chaplain recruiters. The retreat also provides opportunities to connect with others who are discerning a similar call.

"The Lord of the harvest invites us to pray earnestly for more laborers to be sent into His harvest fields," said Rev. Jesse Kueker, director of Enrollment. "The fields are ripe, and for those discerning the possibility of serving the church as a pastor, deaconess, chaplain or missionary, Vocatio: Retreat offers the perfect opportunity to come, pray and get your questions answered. Please come! We cannot wait to welcome you, receive the Lord's gifts alongside you, and pray for you throughout all the steps ahead."

Registration is free and affordable lodging options are available, but space is limited.

The registration deadline is Monday, Sept. 15. Learn more and register at [csl.edu/admissions/visit/vocatio-retreat/](https://www.csl.edu/admissions/visit/vocatio-retreat/).

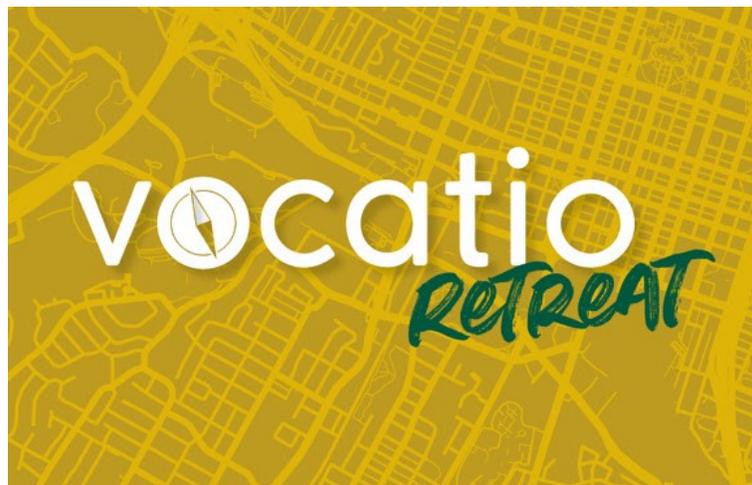
If you've wondered whether God is calling you to be a pastor, deaconess, missionary or chaplain, Vocatio: Retreat offers time away to explore that call in community. From Oct. 5–7, you'll worship, study Scripture, talk with Seminary professors and students, and experience life on campus — all while connecting with others on similar journeys. Space is limited. Register by Sept. 15.



[Learn more](#)

[Click here](#) to watch a video about Vocatio.

Register by Sept. 15 at www.csl.edu/vocatio-retreat, by scanning the QR code or by Googling "Vocatio: Retreat Concordia Seminary."



The First Notes of the Season St. Luke's Concert Series St. Luke's Lutheran Church, Oviedo, FL

Join the Brass Band of Central Florida for an unforgettable evening as they bring the spirit of the Celtic nations of Scotland, Ireland, & Wales to life! Experience the power and passion of music that has echoed through the ages.

The concert will be held on **September 12, 2025** at 7 PM at St. Luke's in Oviedo, Florida or streamed on their YouTube channel which can be found at this link -



<https://slcs.us10.list-manage.com/track/click?u=e3b9d569770ed17fd5d765b86&id=73673977b9&e=93541bdeb2>



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Resource of the Week from Concordia Center for the Family

Resource of the Week: Now is the time to pre-order a great tool for daily family discipleship in every home, Rev. Dr. Todd Biermann's book, *Everyday Word: A Two-Year Bible Journal*. It's coming out from CPH in early October as the result of a joint venture with CCF.

[Read about it and reserve your copy here.](#)



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Prayer Requests

Please pray for all the congregations in the Southern Circuit of the SELC District.

Rev. Brian Roberts, Orlando, FL. Please pray for him as he is gaining weight and strength.

Rev. John Telloni, St. John in Massillon, OH as he is working and continuing to regain his strength as he has returned to work.

Rev. Tom Soltis, Parma, OH for God's loving care.

Rev. and Mrs. Kenneth Ballas, Parma, OH. Please keep the Ballas' in your prayers for their health challenges.

Rev. Alan Mercer in Galloway, NJ for his ongoing health struggles.

Rev. Kevin Duff, Hilton Head, SC, who will be having another surgery in the next few weeks. Please keep him and his family in your prayers as they prepare for the surgery.

Rev. Edward Kucera, and his wife Irene, who have moved to St. Louis, MO.

Bev Cahill, wife of Rev. Chris Cahill. Lodi, OH, finished her chemotherapy. She is now recuperating from chemotherapy and awaiting testing and a doctor's appointment in early September to determine next steps. The Cahills are posting updates on "Caring Bridge" at <https://tinyurl.com/Bridge4Bev>.

Anna Bocklage, Bel Air, MD, wife of Rev. Steve Bocklage, who is recovering from her second knee replacement and is participating in physical therapy.

Megan Skelton in Oviedo, FL Please continue to pray for her and her doctors to find pain relief solutions for her jaw pain and severe headaches.

Laura Bergmann, Munster, IN, please pray for her to continue to build strength in her injured knee.

Nita Huffines, St. Louis, MO, wife of Rev. Warren Huffines, let's praise God for bringing stage four cancer under control; then ask for more grace during a maintenance phase of treatments, that the Lord complete the healing while increasing Nita's energy and joy for each day.

Daniel McLean, Oviedo, FL, who has stage 4 cancer and is receiving treatment. Please keep him, his wife Emily, Deaconess at St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Oviedo, and their children in your prayers.

If you have people you would like to be included in the prayer list, please send the information to selc.lcms@gmail.com or call the District Office at 610-965-3265 and press 6.



Closing Thoughts

Celebrating 65 years of Marriage

Rev. Ken Ballas, EM

Next to one's relationship with the Lord, a key to most any lasting relationship including God's institution of marriage, is that two people learn to trust one another on a daily basis and not only on special occasions.

Meeting this sweet twin nurse on a blind date on Friday, November 13, 1959 in St. Louis, by the grace of the grace of God, my sweet Lois and I quietly observed the 65th anniversary of Christian marriage this past Wednesday, as we were wed on September 3, 1960 in the rural town of Withee, Wisconsin.

As she just wrote in a shared note, it really does seem like we've known each other "forever." During our many years together, she regularly, and uncomplainingly, bore the heavier part of the joyous role of loving wife, mother of Michael and Kirsten and their dear families, homemaker, pastor's wife, confidante and loyal friend.

Being part of a Christian marriage included on relatively rare occasions quietly saying and meaning "Please forgive me!" and simply intentionally paying attention to tiny acts of kindness like spending a few minutes helping with the dish washing or leaving countless little "love notes" in unexpected places like the bottom of a loaded laundry basket. Thank you, darling Lois! Thank You, Lord!



SELC District - A District Without Borders

***Showing Everyone Life in Christ, by Showing
Everyone Love in Christ***

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