



# The Spirit of Southern

*Web Edition – January/February, 2010*

## *Our Dependence on God*

*The devil said to him (Jesus), "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." (Luke 4:3)*

Lent is a season for self-examination, for purification, for facing the truth about those temptations that we have allowed to prevail in our lives. Temptations come upon us subtly. They sneak up when we are tired and have let our guard down, and they attempt to take something that may be harmless or even good in itself and pervert it to the wrong use.

There is nothing evil in a desire for food. To suggest a way to satisfy your hunger when you have been without food for an extended period of time would appear to be helpful. In Luke's Gospel reading for today Jesus had been without food for 40 days. He was hungry and in a weakened physical condition. To a person confined to the logic of this world, his fasting could seem extreme and unreasonable.

Satan, the author of temptations, had stalked Jesus and taunted him during his fast but had waited for Jesus' weakest moment for a frontal attack. "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." Obviously Jesus was capable of turning a stone into bread, but that was not the issue. Luke tells us that he

was specifically being led by the Spirit. He was under the moment-by-moment direction of his Father. Would he continue to trust his Father even when things seemed so difficult? Satan would be whispering in his ear, "Is this any way to treat a son? Perhaps he doesn't really care for you. Perhaps this is some trick. Maybe there is no good purpose in all this. Maybe you've gone too far in this 'being led by the Spirit' business. Let me suggest a better, more spectacular way."

Are we willing to listen to the Word of God when we are having difficult times, when the circumstances of life seem unfriendly, when our feelings are beginning to hassle us rather than support us? Will we continue to trust God when the "voices" come that harass us and try to convince us that God doesn't really care? For Jesus it wasn't a matter of food, it was a matter of trust. Would Jesus continue to trust his Father or would he take matters into his own hands?

The great temptation for us is to prove that we are strong, that we can handle things, that we can take care of ourselves and meet our own needs. If we are tempted to leave the more difficult path that the Spirit seems to be leading us along at the moment, we may be listening to the wrong person. This is the exact moment for us to continue to trust in the goodness and love of our Heavenly Father and his gift of restoring grace in Jesus.

*Dear Father, during this Lent deepen our trust in your goodness, and maintain that inner assurance that your way is always best and that even in the most difficult times your grace will be sufficient for all our needs. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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



### *BeREAL Program Dedicated*

In 1881, it was the "German Evangelical Lutheran Bethlehem Orphan Asylum" of New Orleans. Many years and young residents later, it became "Bethlehem Children's Center," a nurturing home for troubled children and wards of the State, operated by Lutheran Social Services from 1994 until the facility became a casualty of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Today, with cottages and buildings razed, only the Bethlehem gymnasium still stands. In the physical and emotional wreckage left by Katrina, there is still a great need for youth services in the area.

Bethlehem Transition Services, in collaboration with Lutheran Social Services, Louisiana Department of Social Services/Office of Community Services (OCS), Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA New Orleans), and other community agencies, together identified that a serious gap existed – particularly for

the youth who had aged (or were soon to age) out of Louisiana's foster care system. The new pilot program BeREAL [Ready Educated Accomplished Leaders] was created to fill that gap.

BeREAL provides transition services for foster (or former foster) youth ages 13-25 through training, support, and mentoring programs housed in the old Bethlehem gym, which is now a restored facility for Lutheran Social Services programs.

On January 12, 2010, a Grand Opening Celebration and Dedication of BeREAL was held in the Bethlehem gymnasium, with refreshments and tours, and music by the Schaumburg Elementary Choir. The dedication included a welcome by Dr. Kurt Senske (CEO, Lutheran Social Services), remarks by Celeste Skinner (Child Welfare Specialist, LA Dept. of Social Services/OCS), youth representative Akiaba Sims, the Honorable Cedric Richmond (LA House of Representatives), and New Orleans City Council representative Clarence Bickham. Pastor Leon Philpot of Grace Lutheran Church led the audience in the Rite of Dedication. Pictured is Dr. Senske with some of



the young people participating in the dedication.

"We planned this event to bring awareness to the program and the needs of the youth who were left with fewer services following Katrina," said Christie Kieschnick, Director of Education & Career Development for the BeREAL program. "With the support of the community, we are confident we can help more teens find their paths to hopeful, productive futures."

Look for additional information on the Lutheran Social Services website: [www.lsss.org](http://www.lsss.org), or contact Christie Kieschnick at [christie.kieschnick@lsss.org](mailto:christie.kieschnick@lsss.org) or 504-931-3408.

### *Parish Services - Stewardship in Support of Mission*

Value is given that in stewardship 4 T's (Time, Talent, Treasure, and Testimony) are in support of mission. The privilege is ours to be in the mission of making disciples. Jesus, by virtue of our Baptism, has commissioned each of us to be about His work as we go. A recent survey of Southern District congregations yielded a response that 70% have a focused mission statement and/or mission plan in place. Let's encourage each other to be focused in the mission of disciple-making and to look to the Spirit's guiding and leading.

Congregations voluntarily join as a member of the Synod. The work of the Synod in this region (defined boundaries) is carried out through the Southern District. The LCMS mission statement, "In grateful response to God's grace and empowered by the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacraments, the mission of the LCMS is vigorously to make known the love of Christ by word and deed within our churches, communities and the world." Do you sense the energy and commitment in this statement? As members of the LCMS, we walk together in partnership to support the planting of new congregations and ministries, revitalizing existing congregations, supporting the training of future professional church workers, and offering encouragement to professional church workers in their ongoing work.

Stewardship is more than finances! However, we know financial support is important as part of the partnership and the work we do together at the LCMS. Congregations support the work of District and Synod through a pledge or partnership. The District/Synod mission giving goal by congregations in 2010 is \$1,100,000. With a communicant membership of about 24,500, it figures that congregations strive to give at least \$45 per communicant member during 2010 for support of district/synod missions. About 25% of district congregations in 2009 exceeded giving \$50 per communicant. It is our prayer that members and congregations continue to grow in their giving in response to the God's grace and blessing. The Southern District remits more than \$120,000 to the Synod for their ongoing work at the national/international level. The Southern District encourages each congregation to commit a tithe of giving receipts to mission beyond the local congregation.

We thank God for the 137 congregations that in 2009 remitted \$1,040,000 for the support of work at the District/Synod level. Together, we have an important work and mission! We encourage advocates at the local/congregation level to be earnest in the work that we do together in being about His mission.

*Gene Menzel, Executive Assistant for Parish Services*

## Parish Ministries – Joyful Leadership

"As iron sharpens iron so one man sharpens another." Proverbs 27:17

If you are reading this article there is a good chance that you are a leader in your congregation. Maybe you are the pastor, a Sunday School teacher, elder, member of the council; or, without any title, you are a person of influence in your congregation and beyond. First let me say, "Thank you for your service. I pray that you find joy in serving Him who served us completely at Calvary's cross."

Unfortunately not all of our leaders would describe themselves as joy filled. Some might say they are tired, frazzled, overworked, or just plain burning out. I am praying for you. Please pray for those who are experiencing the same lack of joy. Joy returns when we spend time in His word and are reminded that He loves us with an unending love. Joy is also a bi-product of time spent with fellow believers and fellow leaders planning, praying, working, playing together for the advancement of the Kingdom.

When I think about you leaders, I praise God for each of you. I also pray that you and I will grow in our ability to identify, raise up, love, and equip new leaders. Too often a leader is waiting for the end of their elected or appointed term, and they are not really focused on the future other than being freed of a duty or a responsibility. I wonder what would happen if we started calling duties and responsibilities "privileges"?

I know what would happen if we really believed they were privileges. We would have more joy. Joy is very useful in attracting more folks to leadership roles so they

too can experience more joy. If you are a leader waiting for the end of your term, may I suggest an *active* waiting that asks 2 questions. Who do I see in our congregation that has the gifts not only to do the job I am currently doing, but might well find joy in doing it? And, when my time is up for this particular office, how can I find new ways to use my gifts to build up the body of Christ and to be an instrument of advancing His Kingdom?

Here are some words we can't hear too often in our congregations: "You know, I think you are a very gifted young man, have you ever thought about being a pastor?" or "Wow, you really have a way with young people and a passion for Jesus. Have you every considered being a DCE?" or "You know I think you are a natural leader. Would you consider coming to some of our council meetings and learning from the current council? Then, if you desire, we would like you to run for office as president, or treasurer, or elder or some other office."

In a nutshell there is more joy in leadership if we are actively praying and seeking new leaders to work with us to advance the Kingdom so that those who do not yet know Jesus will not only come to know Him but also be instruments of leading others to Him.

Thank you again for your leadership. I am praying you find much joy in it.

Joy in Him,  
Rev. Gary Faith, Executive Assistant for Parish Ministries

## Haitian Relief Update

Following the recent earthquake that devastated portions of Haiti, District President Kurtis Schultz issued the following statement: "The people of the Southern District are no strangers to disasters. We also know the comfort that comes from the hand of God through the gifts of his people. Our experience has taught us that the quickest and most effective assistance happens by getting resources into the hands of those who have established ministry presences in the affected areas.'

'In response to the devastation in Haiti we encourage the people of the Southern District to pray for God's healing mercy in Jesus for those in need and to give directly to those who have established avenues of care.'

'100% percent of gifts marked 'Haiti Relief' sent to the Southern District Office will go to agencies directly working in Haitian Relief work.'

For current information concerning agencies working directly with Haitian relief, please go to the LCMS website, [www.LCMS.org](http://www.LCMS.org); Southern District website, [www.southernlcms.org](http://www.southernlcms.org), or call the District Office at 504-282-2632.

## National Lutheran Schools Week

National Lutheran Schools Week is being celebrated March 7-13, 2010. The theme of this year's celebration is "Securing Each Child's Future – For a Life of Service" based on 1 Corinthians 12:5. Lutheran school ministries daily share the Word and the love of Jesus. Lutheran schools continue to be a network and a connecting place with families in the community. We know that school ministries today are facing challenges as tuition and fees are not sufficient to cover all of the associated costs. Also, we know that not each congregation can offer a Lutheran school ministry. However, there are special opportunities for each congregation to be part of supporting a Lutheran school in your circuit/area. Think of the networks that can be built as together congregations across the district join in support of Lutheran schools.

If you need a connection, contact Gene Menzel at 504-282-2632 or by sending an e-mail to [gene.menzel@southernlcms.org](mailto:gene.menzel@southernlcms.org). Above all, we ask for your prayers as remember the teachers, administrators/directors, and the students/families served through Lutheran schools.

## *Concordia Seminary Chorus Schedules District Concerts*

The Seminary Chorus of Concordia Seminary – St. Louis, MO, under the direction of Rev. Henry V. Gerike, will visit Lutheran churches in Missouri, Indiana, Ohio, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, and Illinois during its 2010 Spring Tour. The Chorus will provide sacred concerts in the form of choral Evening Prayer that includes prayer, Scripture readings, and congregational singing.

**Sunday, February 28, 10:30 a.m.**—Christ the King, Enterprise, Alabama (334-347-6716)

**Sunday, February 28, 7:00 p.m.**—Grace, Mobile, Alabama (251-433-2749)

**Monday, March 1, 7:00 p.m.**—Immanuel, Bossier City, Louisiana (318-746-2215)

The Concordia Seminary Chorus, which includes the Spring Tour Group, numbers about 60 seminarians, who commit to balancing full course loads with weekly rehearsals and special tour rehearsals.

The concert schedule for the Southern District is listed below.

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## *District Members Participate In Mission Trips*

Mission trips sponsored by Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM) have taken workers from the Southern District to share physical and spiritual help with LHM mission teams.

### *Bangkok, Thailand*

Last summer, the members of St. Mark's. Elberta, AL, sent Pastor Keith and Diana Ringers on a two week mission trip to Thailand. During their time in Bangkok, Pastor Keith and Diana worked with six other pastors and wives as leaders in a three day seminar sponsored by Lutheran Hour Ministries of Thailand. The seminar was designed to strengthen both men and women in their theology and equip them with practical skills as they proclaim the gospel in a country that is predominantly Buddhist. They also spent time in southern Thailand supporting and strengthening small Lutheran churches as they minister to the Thai people and tsunami victims.



*Diana Ringers*

### *Leon, Nicaragua*

On Tuesday, November 3, a team of eight led by Pastor Raymond Scheer of Slidell, LA, left on a mission trip to Leon, Nicaragua sponsored by Lutheran Hour Ministries. The team worked in El Pastal, a small village 10 miles outside of Leon. While there, they helped to build a "rancho"(a small mission church). LHM in Nicaragua shares words of comfort and hope in Christ with people who have been battered by natural disasters. Hurricane Ida came ashore while the team was there.

*Anne Scheer*

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## *District Recruitment And Scholarship Committee Accepting Applications for 2010-2011*

The Southern District Recruitment and Scholarship Committee administers the scholarship (grant-in-aid) program for those students enrolled at a Concordia Seminary or a Concordia University/College, preparing for an approved LCMS church work profession. Financial aid applications must be filed on an annual basis. The Recruitment and Scholarship information is posted on the Southern District website at [www.southernlcms.org](http://www.southernlcms.org). Click on the Ministries tab and scroll down to click on Recruitment & Scholarship. Gene Menzel is the contact person at the Southern District Office (504-282-2632).

Congregations are encouraged to support the training of future church workers through making an annual contribution to the Church Worker Student Endowment Fund (CWSEF). Congregations are encouraged to set a goal to remit \$1/member each year. The gifts remitted are invested and continue to provide interest for grant-in-aid to students.



**WE BELIEVE** is the theme of the upcoming 2010 National LCMS Youth Gathering that is being hosted in New Orleans July 17-21. It is our hope that your congregation is registered and that the plans are being finalized for the Gathering. This involves raising dollars and having the group work as a team as together the youth and adults join in worship, Bible study, fellowship, service work, and stewardship. There is still time to register as spaces are still available!

The Southern District will host a district event as part of the Gathering and will also have a booth at the Gathering. Please continue to use the Synod's website at [www.lcmsgathering.com](http://www.lcmsgathering.com) to learn about all of the associated details. There will be a need for many volunteers to help host the Gathering. The District co-coordinators are Rochell Kurucar and Judy Roth. Their e-mails are: [rochellkurucar@yahoo.com](mailto:rochellkurucar@yahoo.com) and [judyroth@ymail.com](mailto:judyroth@ymail.com). The local arrangements coordinator is Kathy Wendling and her e-mail is [krlw33@hotmail.com](mailto:krlw33@hotmail.com). The other option is to get in touch with Gene Menzel at the Southern District Office by calling at 504-282-2632.

## Congregation And School News

### *Bethany, Slidell, LA*

Wheat Ridge Ministries recently approved eight grants totaling \$251,800 to assist new ministries of health and hope throughout the world. A \$20,000 grant was approved for a Southern District congregation project.

Bethany, Slidell, LA, in collaboration with the Lutheran Church of Liberia and Salem Lutheran Church in Chicago, Illinois, plans to address some of the major health

challenges the Kuwaa people face in the Gbapolu District of Liberia, West Africa. The project will accomplish this by digging wells, providing pumps and filtration systems, and building medical clinics thereby providing safe drinking water and opportunities for residents to be treated for common illnesses like malaria, cholera and other tropical diseases.

### *Holy Cross, Tuscaloosa, AL*

Following worship on December 27th, a special service of Thanksgiving to God was held at Holy Cross, Tuscaloosa, AL, to commemorate the fulfillment of a financial obligation toward the Activity Building of the church. Pictured are some of the participants in the service. Dedicated in June 2002, the congregation recently set a goal to have the building paid for by the end of 2009 and met the goal by the dedication and generosity of its members and friends.

Following the Mortgage Burning Service, a reception for all was held in the Activity Building.

Holy Cross Lutheran is located on 1401 University Blvd. East in Tuscaloosa.

*Rev. Thomas Noon, Interim Pastor*

*(l-r): Ron Jacobs, Doris Stumpf, Karen Jones, Walter Stumpf, Rev. Thomas Noon, Aileen Foster, Hollis Duncan, Sarah Jones, Jon Kramer, Marilyn Jacobs, Nick Armstrong, Muriel Barksdale, Hilde Bentley and Randy Booth.*



### *Lutheran High School, Metairie, LA*

Lutheran High School's Gryphon Gala XXXIII will be held on Saturday, March 27, 2010 at Atonement Lutheran Church and School in Metairie, LA.

"Shaken Not Stirred" is the theme of the event which includes a silent auction and hospitality hour beginning at 5pm, followed by dinner at 6pm, and the verbal auction at 7:30pm. The attire is coat and tie.

Proceeds will benefit Lutheran High School. For ticket information and reservations, contact Nicole Alleman at 504-628-7819 or Rhonda Mailhos at 504-939-5517. If you have items you would like to donate or for more information regarding the auction, please contact Lutheran High School at 504-455-4062.

*Ashley Magee*

### *Redeemer, Fairhope, AL*

Rev. William Parsons, Senior Pastor and Rev. Ross Johnson, Associate Pastor of Redeemer, Fairhope, AL, have entered the U.S. Army Reserve as Chaplains.

"It is important to not simply use our wealth and resources to minister to our own people, but to give it also, so others we may never meet in this life can also hear Jesus Christ's Good News," as quoted by Pastor Parsons in the January newsletter at Redeemer.

In each battalion they will serve as chaplains, the pastors will reach approximately 1,000 soldiers each. Lutheran Chaplains are considered missionaries and are under the direction of the LCMS Board of Missions.

Pastor Parsons' training will include Chaplain Initial Military Training and the Chaplain Basic Officer Leadership Course at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. Pastor Parsons will gain experience and receive classes in crisis counseling, suicide prevention, marriage, depression, personnel management and people skills. Pastor Johnson has already completed his Initial and Basic training.

Both pastors will continue their training through drills two days a month and through active training, which is an additional 14 days each year. They will continue to serve Redeemer, and will be assigned battalions in Mobile, AL for their Reserve duties.

*George Miller*

## Shepherd Of The Bay, Lillian, AL

On Sunday Nov. 29, Shepherd of the Bay, Lillian, AL, installed Rev. Paul Leigeber as their new pastor.

Pastor Paul was born in Cullman, AL. He attended Concordia University, Austin, TX and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, graduating in 1987 with a Master of Divinity degree. Following graduation, he was ordained and installed as Pastor of Zion, Waldenburg, AR, where he served as pastor until 2003. From 2003 until 2009 Pastor Paul served many different churches part-time as vacancy pastor and providing pulpit supply while also working full time as a home remodeler. Before accepting the call to Shepherd of the Bay, he served as the full-time vacancy pastor of The Lutheran Church of Vestavia Hills in Birmingham, AL.

In June of 2004, he was joined in marriage to Kara Keeshan. Together they have 5 children.

Charlotte Bailey



Front row, l-r: Pastors "Jack" Jackson, Paul Leigeber, Kurtis Schultz, Seminarian Joshua Leigeber, Pastors Daniel Theis, Keith Ringers and William Parsons. Back row: Pastors Harold Hoeferkamp, David Tilney, Paul Wargo, Robert Rupp, Deral Rollings

## Grace, Destin, FL

The senior members of Grace, Destin, FL, have a ministry of members over 55 known as the Simeon & Anna Society. One of our projects is to send "care" packages to our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. We recently sent Christmas trees and decorations to 8 of our members presently deployed over there. Pictures sent back indicated how joyfully the trees were received.

Judy Peckham

## Immanuel, Bossier City, LA

A gathering of 376 worshippers was present at Immanuel, Bossier City, LA, on December 13th to dedicate a beautiful 8,000 square foot sanctuary surrounded by a sacristy, vestry, music room, cry room, bride room, classrooms, mechanical rooms and storage areas.



The opening service included the dedication, a wonderful sermon and beautiful music from the choir, bell choir, children's choir, organ, piano and a brass ensemble.

The building contains nearly 11,000 square feet. Available seating is double the old facility. The communion rail has space for 30 people. Pews, communion rail, baptismal font, altar, lectern and pulpit are made of solid red oak. The ceiling reaches a height of 44 feet at the center. Stained glass windows, designed by a parishioner, integrate with a 25 foot tall oak and brass cross at the rear of the altar. The altar glass depicts the sacraments. Stained glass at the rear of the sanctuary depicts the seven "I am" statements of Christ. A new grand piano and new organ speakers as well as new audio and video equipment greatly enhance the worship experience.

The remainder of the project included turning the old sanctuary into a large narthex with a new entrance and connections to the remainder of the campus. A large covered entrance, additional parking and a 40 foot prayer and carillon tower grace the front.

We give all praise to our Lord for making this project a reality. Travelers are most welcome to worship with us.

Cheryl Carroll

## Village Church Lutheran, Lacombe, LA



Some members from the Village Church Lutheran, Lacombe, LA, made a stand for LIFE along with various churches participating in "The St. Tammany Stand For Life" on a stormy Oct 4th afternoon in 2009.

Shirley Kastner

L to R: Emma Bents, Katie Bents, Betty Buras, Pat Barnes, Briana Burkett, Teresa May, Kayla Manalla, Tatum Burkett, Helena May, Cheramie Manalla, Mya Manalla, Patricia Johnson, Shirley Kastner, Christy Keiser and Lee Kastner Ducote.

## *Good Shepherd Lutheran School, Elberta, AL*

Students at Good Shepherd Lutheran School, Elberta, AL, did not exchange gifts with each other this year. Instead, they brought in gifts for "Toys for Tots". Some of the school's students are pictured with their donated gifts.

It was their choice to share their blessings and gifts with others, just as God had taught us to do. During the month of December they talked about giving to others as God gave us His Son, Jesus, on that very first Christmas. Jesus came as an infant, small, born in poverty, wrapped in swaddling clothes, laid in a manger. God's Son, born on Christmas, let the students of Good Shepherd know, as well as all of us, of God's saving love for us. He brings life and salvation, and in Him we find the true meaning of Christmas.

*Charlotte Bailey*



## *Around the District*

*Congratulations and God's blessings* to Rev. Dr. Tilahun Menedo, formerly serving Faith, Mobile, AL, who was installed as the new president of Concordia College – Selma, AL, on January 14th.

*Farewell* to Rev. Scott Schmieding who has accepted a call to Immanuel Lutheran Church – St. Charles, MO, as Senior Pastor.

*Welcome to the following pastors and vicars:*

**Rev. Arthur Porter** has accepted a call to St. Paul – Birmingham, AL

**Rev. Jason Scheler** (DELTO Program) was called to serve South Walton Hope Lutheran Church, Santa Rosa, FL.

**Vicar David Hartung** (SMP Program) is serving Faith, Greenville, MS.

**Vicar James Richardson** (SMP Program) is serving St. Paul, Montgomery, AL.



## *Update*

### *2010 Recovery Assistance, Inc. (RAI) Ministries Outlook*

*"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms."* 1 Peter 4:10 (NIV)

As part of their ongoing stewardship of our mission, RAI (Recovery Assistance, Inc.) Ministries' Board of Directors is strategically planning with the goal of taking RAI to the next level in making life-changing events possible for those we serve, in the Gulf Coast communities around us, and for the church at large.

Looking forward to 2010, we look to God to lead us as we eagerly anticipate the following:

-Welcoming thousands of new and returning volunteers to Camp

Biloxi and Camp Restore who, in combination with our caseworkers, will work to return over 1,000 families to their homes in 2010.

-Expanding our volunteer partnerships to include over 50 other ministries and nonprofit service organizations and projects in New Orleans and Biloxi, helping restore and heal the fabric of our communities.

-Working with the 30,000-plus participants coming to New Orleans for the 2010 LCMS

National Youth Gathering in July as they share what they believe and know – the peace and joy that comes from living in Christ.

-Sharing our progress and new opportunities at the LCMS Convention this summer, proclaiming what God has done through the Church in the past five years on the Gulf Coast.

Since Hurricane Katrina in 2005, we at RAI Ministries have had a front-row view of the tremendous outpouring of love, kindness and caring that hundreds of thousands of

volunteers and supporters have shared with those in need on the Gulf Coast. We thank God for everyone who has played a part!

We are humbled by the continued outpouring of support, and ask God to help us make the best use of the blessings we've received:

-The prayers of thousands of supporters from across the country.

-The opportunity to continue welcoming, housing and equipping volunteers in their ministry of restoring faith, home and community on the Gulf Coast.

-Donations and financial support from individuals, churches and organizations – making our volunteers' work possible.

-Grants supporting our caseworkers in Mississippi and Louisiana that

continue to connect families with the resources to return home.

Thanks to all who have given of their time, talents and treasure to support our mission. I encourage your continued prayerful involvement in 2010 and beyond.

In Christ,  
Pastor Dave Buss

## *Executive Director Buss Announces Plans to Step Down; Board Begins Search for Successor*

*January 21, 2010*

After almost five years of working in and leading the Hurricane Katrina and Rita recovery effort in the Southern District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Recovery Assistance, Inc. (RAI) Ministries' Executive Director Rev. Dave Buss has announced his resignation, effective upon the hiring of his successor or August 29, 2010 (The fifth anniversary of Katrina making landfall).

"I was placed in an incredible place at an incredible time in U.S. history," reflected Buss. "What a blessing it has been to be part of this powerful ministry - which continues to witness to the hope that we have in Jesus Christ in the aftermath of our country's most destructive storms. I thank God for this opportunity and I thank the people of God for their response!"

Pastor Buss plans to return to parish ministry after his replacement is found.

In August of 2005, Buss helped lead the Trinity Lutheran-Baton Rouge response before being asked to coordinate the volunteer effort for the Southern District and then for Lutheran Disaster Response until March of 2006. In August of 2006, Buss took over as head of the Southern District LCMS Disaster Team from Rev. Dave Lewis and from it, founded RAI Ministries, a legally separate corporation to continue the long term response. Buss' achievements:

- ✘ Organized early volunteer camps and the centralized reservation system for managing tens of thousands of "muck-out" and construction volunteers.
- ✘ Founded and incorporated RAI Ministries as an ongoing mission serving those in need on the Gulf Coast.

✘ Directed the effort to:

Repair and restore over 6,000 homes of families who survived Katrina,

Rebuild four Lutheran church buildings (a fifth is in progress).

Assist 40 affected LCMS congregations (and many non Lutheran congregations) in their recovery efforts.

Equip tens of thousands of volunteers from all over the nation and world to share the hope of Jesus Christ.

✘ Positioned RAI to be awarded multiple FEMA case-management grants providing case management and recovery plan assistance to thousands of families living in FEMA-assisted housing.

"On behalf of the Board, we thank Dave for his tireless service to the cause for over four years," commented Woody Keim, RAI Ministries Board Chairman. "His work has been a true blessing to thousands and he will be sorely missed."

A nationwide search to fill the position will begin immediately. The RAI board plans to hire a CEO with the intention of expanding RAI's impact on recovery efforts and ministry in the Gulf Coast for years to come. A job description and instructions for inquiries and nominations will be posted on the RAI Ministries website by the 25th of January.

RAI Ministries is an independent 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization incorporated in the State of Louisiana. RAI's mission is "To restore faith, home and community in the name of Jesus to the survivors of Hurricane Katrina."

**Recovery Assistance, Inc. (RAI) Ministries of New Orleans, Louisiana invites nominations and applications for the position of Executive Director. A successful, experienced professional is sought to lead the ministry of this dynamic disaster-response organization. RAI was formed by the Southern District LCMS after Hurricane Katrina and runs two volunteer camps – Camp Biloxi in Mississippi and Camp Restore in Louisiana - and houses volunteers year-round. RAI's mission is restoring faith, home, and community in the name of Jesus to the survivors of Hurricane Katrina. Full job posting and contact information available online at [www.raiministries.org/execdiretor.pdf](http://www.raiministries.org/execdiretor.pdf).**

## *Share Your News*

**The deadline** for the March/April edition of *The Spirit of Southern* is March 15, 2010. Materials received after that date will be considered for a future issue.

**The preferred means** for receiving material, text and pictures, is e-mail to "sosstuff@yahoo.com." Material can also be mailed to the District Office: The Spirit of Southern – Southern District LCMS – 68446 Tammany Trace Suite 5 – Mandeville, LA 70471.

**Photos:** Please keep in mind that we cannot improve the quality of your photo. A dark background or grainy print will look darker or grainier in the publication, if it can be used at all. If you are using a digital camera, please set to the highest resolution. This is necessary for a quality photo to be produced on a press. If you are sending a print, use a high quality photo paper or photo lab printing. Scanned pictures, Polaroids and photocopies cannot be used, and prints are not returned.

**The Spirit of Southern Web Edition:** Each issue of *The Spirit of Southern* is added to the Southern District web site. Go to [www.southernlcms.org](http://www.southernlcms.org) and click "publications." As space is not limited, additional material and photos are often included.

**District web site: [www.southernlcms.org](http://www.southernlcms.org)**