

# The Spirit of Southern

Web Edition – January/February, 2016



## 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 Lenten season, 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

## Around Our District

### Southern District Office Support Staff – Farewell and Welcome

If you've called the district office this year expecting the familiar voice and unequalled knowledge and experience of **Marion Kennedy**, you may have been surprised to find that Marion has "left the building."



For almost 29 years Marion Kennedy has been a fixture in the President's office of the Southern District. She served three presidents: Reverends Richard Meyer 1987-88; Orv Mueller 1988-2003; Kurtis Schultz 2003-2015. But this year Marion begins a new phase of her life as a retiree. She is pictured at a retirement party in her honor with (l-r) Pastors Schultz, Meyer, and Mueller.

When Marion was asked what stood out during her long tenure she first noted: "those laity she met through the years whose commitment to the health of their congregation was so evident."

Secondly, "Gospel driven pastors," Marion went on to say. "They motivated me to assess my faith; and, I drew insight and strength from theirs."

She said she will most remember the eight conferences offered by the Commission for Women during their thirteen year existence. "They were extremely meaningful to me as presenters such as Dr. Marva Dawn and Dr. Mary Todd were on their agendas."

"Of course the many staff with which I worked became my family of friends. I treasure them."

Marion's plans for retirement include mostly those of a creative nature such as writing, joining a book club, and attending art classes. She hopes to learn yoga and travel more frequently.

**Mrs. Daisy L. Olmstead**, administrative assistant to President Schultz, is the newest member of the Southern District office staff. She has seen God at work in the process of bringing her to this position. Daisy is thankful for the blessing of joining this phenomenal team ministry with the staff and all ministry partners throughout the Southern District.

As you get to know Daisy, here is a bit of biographical information about her:

Daisy was born and raised in Shawano, Wisconsin. Her home congregation is St. James Lutheran Church, where she also attended school from kindergarten through eighth grade. After high school Daisy attended Concordia University Wisconsin, majoring in Lutheran secondary education. Daisy took theology and Lutheran worship classes in addition to her education coursework. Her time at Concordia reinforced two of her passions—teaching and active involvement in the church. While a student at Concordia, she was a member of the worship committee, participated in a couple of mission trips to Mexico, and studied abroad in Spain.

Since college, Daisy has enjoyed pursuing both of her passions. Upon completion of her studies, she received a Call to teach at Lutheran High School in Metairie. She accepted the call and moved to Metairie in January 2006. She became a member of Atonement Lutheran Church in August 2006. In June 2011, Daisy began working at Atonement full time as the church secretary, while still teaching part time at Lutheran High, enabling her to pursue both of her passions. In 2013, she transitioned solely to serving as Atonement's church secretary. Her time in these places of ministry have provided countless opportunities for impacting lives through Christ.

Along the way, Daisy met Robert E. Olmstead III whom she married on June 23, 2010. Rob is an alumnus of Lutheran High and, also, a member of Atonement. He works in film production and editing. The event which brought them together was a production of the LHS theatre department. The performances were being held at Atonement, and Daisy needed Rob's audio-visual expertise to make the show a success. Daisy and Rob have learned over



the years that they make a wonderful team; they have enjoyed many times of working together on projects for Lutheran High and Atonement.

In her free time, Daisy enjoys reading, listening to music, going for walks, and engaging in church activities. She looks forward to serving Christ's people alongside of you.

We also give thanks for district support staff members **Muriel Budzeyko** and **Sabine Laird** – President's Office Assistants; **Janice Howard** and **Ronnie Giaise** – Business & Finance; and **Danny Kennedy** – Buildings and Grounds. These faithful stewards are here to serve our district staff and congregations. Contact information for all district staff can be found on the last page of this issue. Please keep it for future reference.

## District Constitutions Committee

As of January 2016, congregations wishing to have their constitutions reviewed by the Constitutions Committee and recommended to the Board of Directors are directed to send their documents to Rev. Robert Belknap at his New Orleans email address, [rbobbelknap@gmail.com](mailto:rbobbelknap@gmail.com). All previous constitutions yet to be completed in this process will be forwarded to Rev. Belknap and all correspondence is to be directed to him.

Complete information for submitting constitutions for review can be found on the district website, [www.southernlcms.org](http://www.southernlcms.org), under the heading "Churches" – Support Services. Thanks for the opportunity to serve.

*Rev. Thomas R. Noon*

### Mission and Ministry - Something Exciting is Happening in Mission in The Southern District!

Our Mission and Ministry Facilitator, Eric Johnson, has been out in our district presenting a workshop on simple, practical, and doable outreach. 8 congregations to date have participated, with new workshops being offered in February throughout the Dist. with more to come. The feedback from these workshops indicate that this is a topic, and a workshop, that congregations need and are responding to.

Pastor Eric draws upon his 12 years experience of church planting, where they saw 125 adults and 167 children come to faith, baptism, and discipleship in the local mission congregation over a three year period. You can learn from his experiences to help make an outreach plan for your particular congregation in your particular community and context.

Outreach Workshops are scheduled on the following dates from 9am till 1pm with a working lunch.

- Feb. 13, Good Shepherd, Gardendale, AL.
- Feb. 20, Jehovah, Pensacola, FL

Workshop cost is \$5 per person for lunch. The workshop and all other materials are provided free of

charge. Get your outreach/evangelism team together, and RSVP with Eric Johnson @ [e.johnson@southernlcms.org](mailto:e.johnson@southernlcms.org)

You are welcome to join us for any dates near you, or you are encouraged to contact Eric Johnson to schedule to host a free outreach workshop at your congregation or circuit.

What Others Are Saying ...

- "Everything we need to refocus to reach out more."
- "Exceeded my expectations. I felt the excitement throughout the entire body in the workshop. I believe we will take the ball and run with it."
- "Super interesting, appropriately entertaining, and full of great ideas. Salient points in the workshop and handout."
- "I found the personal stories of outreach/real life examples encouraging."
- "One of the best outreach training's I've been to. I feel we can build on this introduction and start reaching people in the harvest and see our church grow with new people coming to faith in Jesus."

### Lutheran Ministries of Alabama – Grant Opportunity for Alabama Congregations

If your congregation has intentions to provide mission outreach mentoring in a summer educational program for youth, you might qualify for an ENRICH grant from Lutheran Ministries of Alabama. Please make your intentions known by March 15th. You may contact Mel Brackman at [brackmanme@aol.com](mailto:brackmanme@aol.com) or Heather Turney at [TurneyHL-SVLC@att.net](mailto:TurneyHL-SVLC@att.net).

Once intentions are known, you will be sent a copy of the grant policies as the next step in order to submit a proposal. Proposals are to be submitted no later than April 15th for consideration. Notification of acceptance will depend on monies available and the scope of the project submitted.

*Lutheran Ministries of Alabama*

### LCMS Youth Gathering – “In Christ Alone” – July 16-20 – New Orleans, LA

The Southern District has a special District Gathering Event planned during the LCMS National Youth Gathering in New Orleans. The event is Monday, July 18, 2016: 5:45 pm-7:45 pm at the Joy Theater, New Orleans.

The Southern District covers a substantial geographic area that includes four states. The intent of the district event at the Gathering is to emphasize our identity In Christ Alone, while building a sense of community through fellowship by purposefully interacting with each other through games in this large theater while enjoying delicious New Orleans food. The Joy theater is an easy walk to the Superdome for the Mass Event.

Registration is open and payment for the District Event (\$43 per person) is online at the Southern District's website ([www.southernlcms.org](http://www.southernlcms.org)).

The 2016 LCMS National Youth Gathering (July 16-20) has detailed registration information available online @ [www.lcmsgathering.com/Attend](http://www.lcmsgathering.com/Attend).

Please note these important Gathering dates:

- Early Spring 2016 - Gathering hotel information assignments
- March 4, 2016 - Registration Fee Increases (\$375)
- Early April 2016 - Hotel deposit is due
- May 3, 2016 - Southern District Gathering Event Registration closes.
- May 4, 2016 - Full Registration Fee is due for express on-site Gathering registration
- July 16-20, 2016 Youth Gathering.

*Curtis Wiese, DCE, NYG Southern District Coordinator*

## Foundation/Schools - 2015 Educators of the Year

The Southern District combined with the Mid-South District this year for our annual Teachers' Conference. The conferences were combined to increase the number of attendees. This allowed us to increase the number of breakout sectionals we could offer and, with increased registration revenue, be able to afford to schedule nationally known speakers.

The conference was a great success, providing us with what we had hoped for in breakout sessions and keynote speakers. There was an atmosphere of comradery as the teachers from our two districts interacted with each other and new friendships were formed.

The Southern District had a special presentation at the conference as we honored three educators of the year. The honorees were as follows: (pictured left to right): Early Childhood: Laurie McConnell; St. Paul - New Orleans, LA, Principal - Gordon Schamber, Baton Rouge Lutheran School - Baton Rouge, LA; Elementary - Kelli Gremillion, Atonement - Metairie, LA.

Next year the Southern District Teachers will attend the national Lutheran Education Association Conference in Grand Rapids, MI. This is a very special conference held every three years that will bring together over three thousand Lutheran School Teachers and Administrators.

*Glenn Gerber, Executive Director for Foundation/Schools*



## Concordia College - Alabama, Selma, AL



Concordia College-Alabama recently helped spread Christmas cheer when they donated Christmas gift baskets and toiletry items to the elderly residents at Epworth House assisted living facility.

Concordia's Academic Affairs department was able to purchase the items with a grant received from the Christian organization, Thrivent Financial, whose goal is to help others live generously. With an important part of CCA's mission being to teach students to serve their communities, this was the perfect opportunity to carry out that mission and spread

generosity. Concordia students and faculty members joined forces for this project to bring a little holiday joy to the elderly.

"It was a very rewarding experience to be able to give back and see how happy it made the residents [of Epworth House]," said Angela Sullivan, Social and Behavioral Sciences department head.

The Academic Affairs department plans to use its Thrivent grant for more service projects such as this one in the future.

*Abby Campbell*

## Camp Dixie - Summer 2016 Program and Traveling VBS

Camp Dixie, located on Perdido Bay in southern Alabama, is a great place to spend your summer! Campers joining us at Camp Dixie will experience not only the joy of living in a Christian community but we will learn ways to "Let Your Light Shine" each and every day in our Bible Study sessions.

We will also experience all the traditional camp activities such as sand volleyball, canoeing, arts and crafts, archery, and so much more. Each of our activities is led by our staff of fully trained counselors who lead our programs with a focus on safety, having a great time and of course the love of our savior Jesus Christ.



Also offered is a five day VBS Style program that Camp Dixie can bring to your congregation! The mission of Traveling VBS is to partner with congregations to lead a congregation-based Vacation Bible School program for children, enabling participants to experience God's Grace, Love, and Guidance. This is done through hands-on Bible Study, devotions, interaction with energetic camp staff, skits, games, and other camp related activities.

For information about the 2016 Summer Program and Traveling VBS, please visit our website [www.campdixieministries.org](http://www.campdixieministries.org) and click the desired link.

*Michael R. Stapleton, DCE*

## Camp Restore



At Camp Restore we're looking forward to exploring and sharing new possibilities and projects across New Orleans in 2016. Here are some photos from our first volunteer groups of the year as they got to work with us and some of our partner nonprofits. We anticipate a great year ahead!

Thank you for your prayers and support for our continuing mission of restoring faith, home and community in the Name of Jesus!

*Kurt Jostes*

## Congregation & School News

### Grace – Pensacola, FL

With the wealth in this country, no one should have to go hungry, especially small children. That thought is what brought the development of the Backpack Weekend Food Program to Escambia County School Department. Low income children are fed at school during the week, but on the weekend sometimes do not have sufficient nutrition.

Several churches in the county pack bags with enough food for the child to have 3 meals a day plus snacks over the weekend. The meals are single serving, kid friendly foods that the child is able to prepare. Grace – Pensacola, FL shops for and packs 30 bags each week for children in K-5th grade. Bags are delivered to the school assigned to our church where the guidance counselor chooses the children and the names are kept confidential. The cost of the program is \$100/child for the 30 weeks of the school year.

*Susan McFarland*

### Lutheran High School

Lutheran High School's Gyphon Gala XXXIX will be held on Saturday, March 19, 2016 at Atonement Lutheran Church and School – Metairie, LA.

"A Gryphon Homecoming" 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 dressy casual.

Proceeds will benefit Lutheran High School. For ticket information and reservations, contact Nicole Alleman at 504-628-7819. 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 Reso*

## Christ – Albertville, AL

The “Sisters in Christ” ladies group at Christ - Albertville, AL, completed a Christmas project with the help of Thrivent. The ladies purchased bright colored Christmas fabric in September and sewed Christmas pillowcases to be delivered to the local nursing homes. Pictured with their pillowcases are: front from (l-r)—Lana Pratt, Janice Gohn, Carolyn Walshus, and, back row —Sandy Sellnow, Rosella Dahl, Judy Stietzel, Jane Haldeman, and Lyn Dorsch.



Seventy pillowcases were delivered to Merrill Gardens in Albertville and 130 to the Albertville Nursing Home. As the pillowcases were stacked on a table, the gathering recipients lit up with anticipation. Everyone selected their pillowcase and began communicating with us about their many life accomplishments. This was a fun and gratifying experience watching these people’s faces light up with joy with something as simple as a pillowcase.

Our next stop was the Shepherd’s Cove Hospice. Twenty pillowcases were given to the coordinator for use in their ten bed facility. The fourteen remaining pillowcases were divided between the two Marshall Medical Centers for use when pediatric patients were admitted to the hospital during the month of December.

The “Sisters in Christ” ladies group found this project most rewarding and believe they received the greatest blessing.

*Lana Pratt*

## Faith – Madison, AL

We hope everyone had a beautiful and joyous Christmas season. Faith – Madison, AL kicked theirs off with our traditional Christmas caroling in the neighborhood. This is not your average, walk around the neighborhood caroling, but rather a tractor pulling a lighted trailer full of carolers handing out baggies of candy to the little children that come running out to greet us.

We had our traditional Christmas program with the children showing us the story of the birth of the Christ child. It is always so much fun and touching to see that little baby being born in Bethlehem, and we sure get a kick out of the little children that decide they want to be the animals in those costumes as well!!!



Sherrie Callahan

## St. Matthew – Gulfport, MS

On December 19, 2015, ten members of St. Matthew - Gulfport, MS packed Christmas baskets for 14 families in need. During the year, members of St. Matthew donate non-perishable food items each month. In August, members donate money for perishable items.

This year, a Thrivent Action Team was formed. The team used the money from Thrivent to assist in purchasing the perishable food. In each basket, the team placed Portals of Prayer, bookmarks from Thrivent, and information concerning services and Bible studies at St. Matthew. Several families picked up the baskets at the church and members of the team delivered baskets.

*Cynthia Chatham*

## Redeemer – DeRidder, LA

The week between Christmas and New Year was a busy time at Redeemer – DeRidder, LA. We had a Christmas VBS from Dec. 28-31. This was a first for Redeemer and the theme was “God Made Me & Loves Me!

We had eight children who enjoyed four mornings of Bible stories, crafts, Veggie Tale Movies, outdoor play, snacks and lunch. The last craft was a “My Little Bible” with each day’s Bible verse in it. Pizza and ice cream were the last day’s lunch and treat.

Redeemer sponsors a Prayer Shawl Ministry, which meets every Thursday morning. While working on shawls the ladies enjoy fellowship along with coffee and homemade goodies. To date the ladies have made and donated over 700 shawls. Some have been donated locally, some nationally and some internationally. The ministry was begun by Evelyn Huehn in 2009 when she saw a need to be filled and with God’s help she filled it.

*Pastor Stewart Marshall*

## Christ – Tuscaloosa, AL

Christ - Tuscaloosa, AL held its Annual Christmas Bazaar on Saturday, Dec. 5, 2015. This year’s event was a success. It included crafts, foods and horse carriage rides. The event was organized by the ladies of Christ Lutheran led by Ms. Amaya White, Mrs. Sparkle Flemming, Ms. Patrice Burden, and Ms. Alexis Grant.



*Rev. Anthony Robinson*

## Our Savior – Mobile, AL

On December 10-12, 2015, Our Savior – Mobile, AL hosted their third annual walking tour of the “Little Town of Bethlehem” on the church property.

Visitors were guided through the streets of Bethlehem, registered for the Roman census, looked through the stalls in the marketplace and were told about the types of items that the people of Jesus’ time would purchase. They then went to the Inn where there “was no room” and stood at the manger where Mary and Joseph sheltered the baby Jesus. After the Bethlehem walk, guests were treated to refreshments and Christmas music.



The entire congregation helped build and furnish the town of Bethlehem, and served as actors and tour guides. The Rev. David Witt, pastor of Our Savior, welcomed visitors in the sanctuary of the church where they gathered for the tour and talked about the birth of the Savior.

*Pat Hartman*

## Concordia – Montrose, AL

Pastor Benjamin Stallworth of Concordia – Montrose, AL is pictured with members as they enjoy the bake sale held by the Ladies of Concordia with the help of Thrivent. Truly God has been good to us! Funding was a huge success and we thank God for this.

Needless to say we have put plans in motion for a spring Bake Sale in 2016. God’s blessings to all this 2016.

*C. Wilson*



## Shepherd of the Bay – Lillian, AL

The first Outreach program of the year at Shepherd of the Bay – Lillian, AL will be providing several different types of care kits to Lutheran World Relief. We have already completed 12 school kits and 7 no-sew fleece blankets. Our goal for 2016 is completing 60 personal care kits. This year we will also add a fabric kit.

The mission of Lutheran World Relief is affirming God’s love for all

people by working to end poverty, injustice and human suffering. We at

Shepherd of the Bay share that vision and are doing what we can by providing items to those in need. In this way we

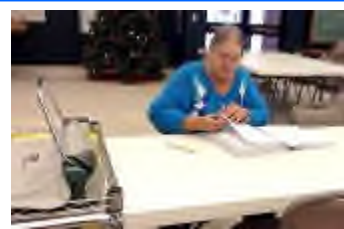


are working to assist LWR in meeting their goals all around the world.

Another Shepherd of the Bay project is assisting the needy with groceries. We are pleased to report that we ended the year 2015 by giving out approximately 720 bags of groceries in and around the Lillian area.

*Marie Anderson, Claudette Bobleter*

## Immanuel – Pensacola, FL



Lutheran Braille Workers meet at Immanuel - Pensacola on Wednesdays. There are volunteers from Resurrection Lutheran, Redeemer Lutheran, St. Paul Lutheran - Foley, AL, Immanuel Lutheran, Olive Baptist, First Baptist, Trinity Lutheran and First Christian (DOC).

The books are assembled and mailed all over the world. Books of the Bible are printed in three different languages. The project combines fellowship with help for those who cannot see. Three of the members are deaf or severely hard of hearing. One of the members uses sign language to communicate with those needing assistance.

*Lois Paul*

## Unity – Birmingham, AL

Unity – Birmingham, AL celebrated the summer and fall of 2015 with joyful events.

In August, the church did a two-fold celebration recognizing the pastor, Perry McCullam, for thirteen years of service, and the musician, Mrs. Lillian Parker, for her years of service. Many friends and family shared in this celebration.

The celebration continued in August with the church honoring two years of merger between Prince of Peace and Pilgrim congregations. The event included worship, reflections and tasty food.

In November we celebrated a special time of giving. The LWML, with help from the congregation, collected household items for two transitional homes for homeless veterans and presented them on Veterans' Day.

Our celebration concluded for the year as we gave lovely Christmas bags to each of the homeless veterans. There was such an expression

of joy on the face of each one. It was a perfect example of spreading joy and goodwill as the true meaning of Christmas unfolded and became real.

We give thanks for these blessings.

Elois Ramsey

## Bethlehem – Prattville, AL

Members of the Davis family have been stalwart members of Bethlehem in Autauga County since the first church was founded in Holy Ark in 1922 through Rosa Young's ministry in the Black Belt. Today they continue serving the church. Dorothy Davis Henderson serves as president of the congregation and her son, Michael is Sunday School Superintendent. Dorothy's brother, Rev. Warren Davis, pastor emeritus at Jehovah – Pensacola, recently served as guest preacher at Bethlehem.

The newest family member, Chrishayla Henderson, 8 months, recently joined the church family as a baptized child of God. Chrishayla, held by Tamara Henderson, is pictured with Pastors LaVaughn Wiggins and Jeff Hesterman, Michael Henderson and Dorothy Henderson.



Christine Weerts



## Prince of Peace – Corinth, MS

After the tornado at Holly Springs, MS - Prince of Peace - Corinth, MS brought enough food, clothing and cleaning supplies to the FEMA distribution center to fill this one table. The people working there were very appreciative of what we brought. At the same time, the church brought a small cash donation to deposit in the town's disaster fund.

Pastor Michael Dixon

## Share Your News

The deadline for the March/April edition of the *Spirit of Southern* is March 15, 2016. 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.

## Southern District Contact Information

Please clip and save this information. The district office staff can be reached through the main office number: **504-282-2632**. You will access a directory and be instructed on how to reach each staff member. The following are direct lines and e-mail addresses:

<b>President Schultz</b>	985-796-7577	president@southernlcms.org
<b>Mrs. Daisy Olmstead</b>	985-635-4382	d.olmstead@southernlcms.org
<b>Mrs. Muriel Budzeyko</b>	985-326-7855	m.budzeyko@southernlcms.org
<b>Mrs. Sabine Laird</b>	985-635-4382	s.laird@southernlcms.org
<b>Rev. Eric Johnson</b>	985-796-7175	e.johnson@southernlcms.org
<b>Mr. Glenn Gerber</b>	985-218-0335	g.gerber@southernlcms.org
<b>Mrs. Janice Howard</b>	985-605-5403	j.howard@southernlcms.org
<b>Ms. Ronnie Giaise</b>	985-605-5404	r.giaise@southernlcms.org

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

**District Office Hours: Monday – Thursday, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.**

**Southern District Church Extension Fund: 888-493-5962 or 504-282-2633**