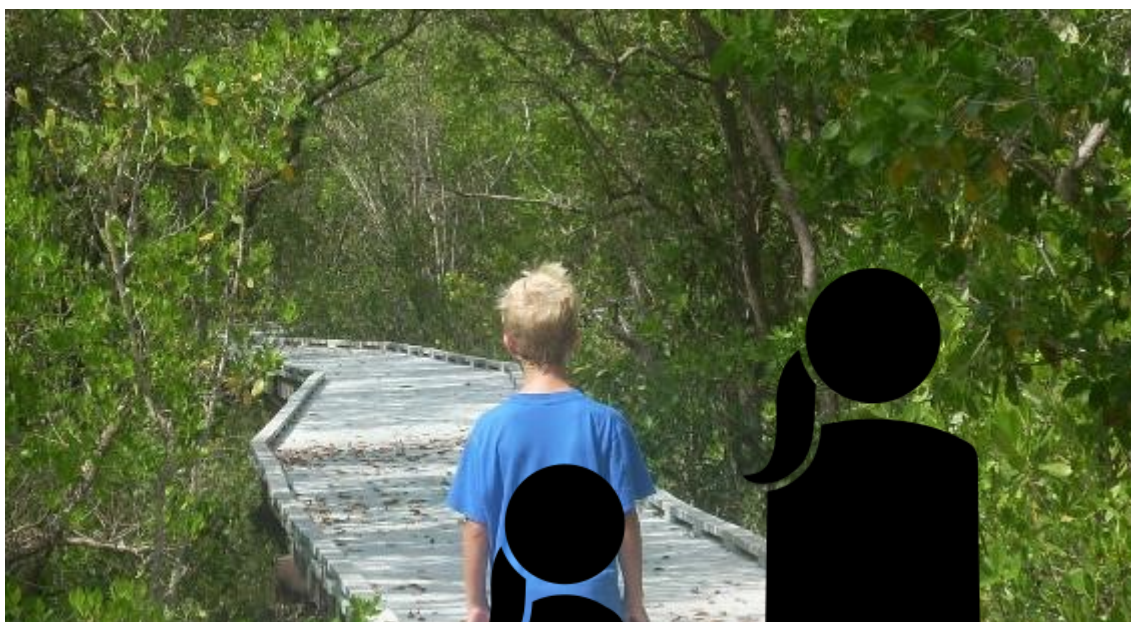


Growing in God's Grace in Florida-Georgia



Icon by Leremy (Freepik)

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Deaconess Liz Borth



Whenever I hear or read the statement “share your faith story”, I am uncomfortable because I don’t think I have an interesting story to share. This quarter, our *Evangel* editor proposed thoughtful questions for article topics. They reminded me how I struggle with sharing my story.

I considered writing how by God’s grace I traveled to Omaha without incident and arrived home safely, but that made for a short article that didn’t seem inspiring. I considered giving details of my Lutheran school education maturing my faith since my infant baptism and pre-teen confirmation. Again, not too unusual or exciting.

However, I do recall several periods when my trust in God increased because of the people He put in my life. Many years ago, I struggled with a period of loneliness and doubt. My self image was damaged and I looked for a place to belong; a place where I might do something worthwhile. I didn’t know that the Evening Guild church ladies who met for Bible study and conversation were mission minded LWML women. I only recall smiles, laughter, and acceptance.

Years later, when a heavy burden lay on my shoulders and my faith was tested, one of those women lifted me in prayer saying she didn’t need to know all the details, but she was sure God’s grace would sustain me through the trial. Those words were a beacon of light in a very dark place. God continually fills me with peace beyond understanding when finances are tight, or health is fragile, or friends and family lie and disappoint. My strength is in the Lord and by His grace, through faith in Christ I can do all things. It seems I do have a story to share .

Deaconess Liz

VP COMMUNICATIONS

Susan Hanes



When I have been unsure or insecure about a situation, when the trials of life have come at me from all directions, or when it seems like the ways of the world are winning once again: there was a season when I go to God second. I thought the opinions of others came first and often gave them precedence. But soon enough, the question began to nag me: how do *you* know what the answers to my situation are? You are only human, just like me. You can provide advice, but you cannot provide peace.

It was when I learned to spend time in God’s Word, take my cares to Him, and be still and wait on Him, that I became filled with the peace only He can provide. He knows everything about me. He created me. I can reach out to Him day or night and He is there to comfort my soul.

This realization has deepened my relationship with Him, allowing me to trust in His plans and purpose for my life, even when it may not make sense at the time. This is also what compels me to pray for others. God is not the enemy, as some so quickly have said or thought. He is the Prince of Peace. No matter how unpredictable life may be or what the situation is, God’s grace gives me strength, comfort, and joy.

VP MISSION SERVICE

Silvia Grasberger

For the longest time as a young Christian, I did not understand the true meaning of what God's grace meant for me. Was it a feeling I should have that made me happy and full of joy? Was it the material things God provided?

Moved by the Holy Spirit, I joined a small ladies' group at church that introduced me to the true meaning of God's grace. After a couple of gatherings, the light bulb went on.

So this is what grace is about! I do not need to do anything special to impress Him. In fact, even when I do not deserve His grace, He will give it with no strings attached.

By His grace, God has forgiven our sins and given us full rights as His children in Christ. How can you top that gift?

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen" (2 Peter 3:18 NIV).

Living under the grace of Jesus gives us an ability to grow spiritually stronger.

To really know Him, we must continue to grow in our understanding of what it means to live in relationship to Jesus as Lord and as Savior. Jesus is the one who is due glory both now and forever. Amen!



FINANCIAL SECRETARY

Sheryl Lutz



Hi! I'm the newest Financial Secretary! Chris Jennison's term was up, and Debi Coran, who was elected in September resigned due to illness. I took over in December, still catching up, so please bear with me a little longer. The

new form with my info is on our webpage.
<https://www.flgalwml.com/zones>

I grew up as an ELCA Lutheran attending Sunday School every week unless we were on vacation. I don't know when I became a believer but, somehow, I always knew God was there with me: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I didn't understand how they were One but individual, but They were there/here with me.

The biggest recent increase in my faith journey was joining the LWML in 2009. The prayers and the fellowship of these ladies help to reinforce my trust in God. Seeing their faith, devotion to others, and feeling their support is incredibly uplifting. I know I am not alone in my journey and that God's presence is around

me, giving me faith to take on bigger challenges in my day-to-day life.

Throughout the day, I try to remember my blessings and say, "Thank You!" to God.

I do have some items to report, and you are more than welcome to let me know if I've missed you!

In Memory of

- ✝ Paul Henric by Debra Merlano
- ✝ Joan Cibock by St. John, Ocala

In Celebration of

- ✝ Carol Alberts' 80th birthday by Debra Merlano

Rickenbacker Fund

- ✝ Bequest of Mary Lou Paddock

Contact Bunnie Koelsch, Treasurer, at

lwmlflgatreasurer@gmail.com

Contact Sheryl Lutz, Financial Secretary, at

sagelutz@tampabay.rr.com

COUNSELOR'S CORNER

SR. COUNSELOR— Rev. Dana Narring

Growing in God's Grace

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. (2 Peter 3:18).

As we look forward to the promise of a new heaven and a new earth, God's Word calls us to daily reflect on the kind of people we ought to be. In 2 Peter 3:18, we are encouraged to grow in grace and knowledge—an ongoing transformation that shapes our hearts and lives in Christ.

We know, *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23). And yet, through the precious blood of Jesus, we have been forgiven sinners and are made a new creation.

Dear friends, in a world filled with uncertainty, God's grace anchors us—reminding us that His love is steadfast and unchanging. This truth should humble us and also empower us to

extend the same grace to others, in all that we think, say, and do.

Through the Holy Spirit, we also grow in knowledge and wisdom—deepening our understanding of God's Word and of His will for our lives. This growth given by God equips us to continue to stand firm in the faith, resist temptation, and share the Gospel with confidence and joy.

So, what kind of people should we strive to be as we await God's eternal kingdom? We should be people who are growing in God's grace and His Word—reflecting Christ's love, forgiving as we have been forgiven, and living in a way that honors God.

May we embrace each day as we live in His love, and share His joy.

**GETTING TO KNOW OUR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

Name: Silvia Grasberger

Title: Vice President Mission Service

Home Church: Grace Lutheran, Church and School, St. Petersburg

First LWML Event: 35th Biennial Convention, 2016, PGA Resort and Spa, Palm Beach Gardens, Florida.

Day Job: Administrative Assistant

Born in State: New York

Confirmed in State: New York

Reason for Moving to FL-GA District: My mother suffered from asthma all her life. The warm humid weather here helped her to cope better and relieved her attacks.

Favorite Bible Verse: *Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.* (1 John 3:18 NIV)

Favorite LWML Memory: Attending the 38th Biennial Convention, 2019. I volunteered to be a scheduler on the host committee, not realizing all the work involved over a two year period. Most of the workers were housed in a small space we called the War Room. It was so much work yet so much fun working side by side with the other ladies. I made some long-time friends from that experience and would do it all over again.

VP Responsibilities: chair the Mission Service committee; alert members to opportunities for mission service in the church, community and world; plan and coordinate "Gifts from the Heart" at district conventions and retreats; plan servant events at district conventions.



VP MISSION GRANTS

Cheryl Briggs

Growing in God's Grace – My true growth in my faith didn't begin until I was in my 30s, even though I was baptized at one month old, and confirmed at 13. I had returned to attending church after my mom insisted, stating that my son and daughter needed their Christian education, Confirmation classes. A year later I was teaching Sunday School. My whole life changed, my outlook on life, my relationship with my children, husband, and family. I always believed in Jesus, prayed every day, and taught my children to pray, but no real relationship with God. This was the beginning of my journey when I truly began to grow in God's grace.

Grace & peace to you, Cheri

*And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.
(Galatians 6:9)*

Mission Grant update:

Partial payments have been made to Grant #1 Facilitating Futures and Grant #10 Missionary Couple.

Full payment has been made to Grant #11 Trinity Lutheran Academy Security Locks.

**NEXT EVANGEL DEADLINE**

May 5, 2025

Send articles & photos to:

evangel.flga@gmail.com

Write in **Word** with pics as attachments.

Exec Board: 250 words

Zone Articles: one paragraph plus pics

PLEASE list everyone in all photos

VP SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Linda Meseke



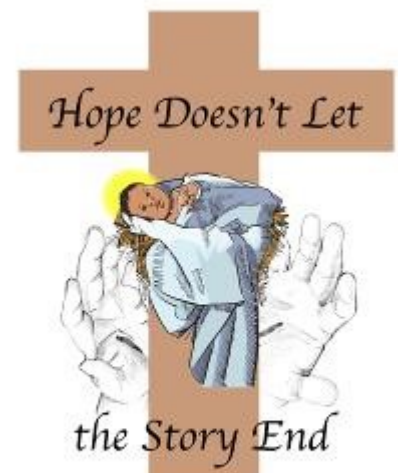
Years ago, when my husband decided to continue his education to become a Pastor, I thought how will I ever "measure up" to being a Pastor's wife? Through the years I have grown by leaps and bounds in my faith life. I have made many mistakes, for sure, but I have grown in God's grace. I read an article one time that explained grace as God erasing the evidence. That is how He gets the glory every day in all we do.

Does it change your day knowing He is giving you free, unmerited favor (GRACE) as you walk through every day? That truth allows me to be at peace throughout my week! Between forgiveness and grace,

I am confident in my walk of faith.

The District Retreat this year has the theme "Hope Doesn't Let the Story End", based on Simeon presenting Jesus at the temple. As I continue to work on planning for this gathering in September, I know there are many needs. *The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few* (Matthew 9:37) seems to apply. I need willing, enthusiastic ladies to serve on a Retreat Committee to help facilitate activities and/or resource store. Are you willing to serve? Reach out and let's talk: plmeseke@tampabay.rr.com

Go forward today in God's grace!!



SCHOLARSHIP CHAIRMAN Lois Ford



*And He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers, **to equip the saints for the work of ministry**, for building up the body of Christ.* (Ephesians 4: 11-12).

The Office of the Ministry and the men who hold it are Christ's gifts to the church. They are commissioned with the task of proclaiming the Word.

Proclaim to whom? You! and Me!

"Just like the church workers of the past, (they) carry on that rich tradition of Lutheran Education and Lutheran Doctrine that is centered in Christ!" (Pastor Kappel)

Our job as we continue to 'Grow in God's Grace' through the Word and encouragement from all church workers, is to be on the lookout for **future church workers** in your spiritual community! We need more pastors! More teachers! More deaconesses! More DCEs!

God's grace through the Gospel matters. It's the most important news in the world.

All students, no matter what age or grade ,need PRAYERS and encouragement!

You support the scholarship fund by gifts to the MITE collection or the Love Gift account.

Check out the current Portals of Prayer. The January devotions were written by Rev. Joshua LeBoriorous from Georgia and a past scholarship recipient, now serving in Eastvale, California. His father Peter also received a scholarship from LWML.

Seminary Call Day is at the end of April!

This is an important day for those graduating or heading to a vicarage. That is the day they find out where their journey takes them next.

Be strong and courageous.... for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go (Joshua 1:9).

MISSION TRIP COORDINATOR Scarlet Holcombe



We have added a mission trip this year. We will be going back to Kenya and working with the students at Point of Grace Academy in Kisumu.

Estimated costs:

Airfare - \$1400 to \$1900

Ground Fees (food, hotel, laundry, ground transportation, travel insurance) - \$1200 to \$1500

Optional safari and sight seeing in Nairobi - \$400 to \$500

Travel dates:

July 20 - August 1, 2025

All you need is your passport. We will handle the details of the trip.



For more information contact:

Scarlet Holcombe

Mission Trip Coordinator

[404-323-1323](tel:404-323-1323) or
scarlet2@mindspring.com

Girls with their dresses

Around the Zones...

GREATER ORLANDO ZONE – FL

Carol Lynn Scheer - President

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Orlando hosted the LWML Fall Rally opening with a continental breakfast followed with a worship service with Holy Communion. Host Pastor Ken Green gave the sermon around the Rally theme “The Kingdom of God” Luke 17:21. Some of the attendees were part of Prince of Peace’s sister church, Principe de Paz. There were elements, especially in the various worship songs that included Spanish lyrics and spoken responses. The morning continued with our Bible study based on the Rally theme.

Business meeting included information that Mission Trip Coordinator, Scarlet Holcomb is working on the next district mission trip tentative for August 2026 to Kenya, Africa. She’s also working toward a summer mission trip for 2025 or 2026 to the North Dakota Boys Ranch. New LWML District President, Liz Borth spoke to the attendees and shared some of her goals for the next four years.

Ann Dobbs, our Gifts from the Heart Speaker, spoke about the work and ministry of Mission: Haiti. The situation is dire and the greatest need right now is meals for the families. Mission: Haiti works directly with a field director to obtain and distribute food for Haitian families. A monetary cash ingathering of \$600 was given to them.

The Rally closed with the installation of officers: Carol Lynn Scheer, President, and Laura Behl, Secretary; and devotion by Zone Counselor Pastor Scheer.

Spring rally theme: **Prayers of Faith** The healing power of God in your life. James 5:13-15

2025 ZONE RALLY DATES

ATLANTA

Prince of Peace, Douglasville

April 26, 2025

EAST CENTRAL GEORGIA

Trinity, Savannah

October 18, 2025

GREATER ORLANDO

Faith, Eustis

April 5, 2025

HEARTLAND

Peace Lutheran, Okochobee

March 1, 2025

NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA

Trinity, Summerfield

May 3, 2025

SOUTH PALM BEACH

See Treasure Coast

SOUTHWEST

Peace Lutheran, Naples

March 15, 2025

SUNCOAST

Christ Lutheran, Brooksville

March 9, 2025

TREASURE COAST/SPB

Church of the Redeemer, Vero Beach

March 15, 2025

WINTER HAVEN

Our Savior, Zephyrhills

March 1, 2025

Around the Zones...



EAST CENTRAL GEORGIA ZONE

Lonna McEwen - President

Devine Design with Sharla Fritz,
January 24-25, 2025

The Savannah airport opened three hours before Sharla Fritz's flight arrived from Chicago. A definite God wink! On Friday evening, ladies from Jacksonville, FL, Atlanta, Warner Robins, Richmond Hill and Savannah braved the cold, ice, and snow to welcome Sharla to Trinity Lutheran Church. It was a great evening of fellowship, laughter and sharing.

On Saturday, the ladies delved into God's Word as Sharla led us in four sessions of Divine Design; a make-over God's **'STYLE'** for our lives. **See** the need for change, **Toss** out the old, **Yearn** for something more, **Learn** God's style, **Embrace** the new. So we **'OBEY'**: **Offer** my heart, **Burn** my desires, **Everything** I give to Him, **Your** will O Lord.

The warmth of God's love for us was evident as we studied and shared in discussions.

All enjoyed their choice of a homemade soup and delicious homemade pound cake with strawberries.



Lonna McEwen, Sharla Fritz and Betty Morell



Nancy Bransom, from Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church, Warner Robins, received the Janis Bernd collector porcelain doll

To subscribe to *Evangel*:
www.flgalwml.com Go to
"Join Mailing List" at bottom
left, and type your name and
email address.

Around the Zones...

NORTHEAST GEORGIA ZONE

Kitty Anderson - President

On Sunday, November 10, 2024, Oak Road Lutheran Church LWML in Lilburn GA, sponsored a bake sale to honor the service of former Comfort Dog, Luke, and his owner Judy Adams. Proceeds went to support The Direct Homeless Ministry at Trinity Lutheran in Savannah, where Lizzie the Comfort Dog is active, and a second ministry, Disaster Response of Lutheran Church Charities. Lizzie, and handler, Cindy Baldwin, were able to attend that day at Oak Road Lutheran, giving joy and comfort to the children during the Sunday School hour, and the congregation during the Divine Service.



Margaret Boles and Judy Adams with Lizzie the Comfort Dog, Dorothy Eppinga in background

NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA ZONE

Cinara Navarro - President

Our Fall Rally was held at First, Inverness, with a theme of Who's on First? I AM the Alpha and Omega, the First, Last, and Beginning from Rev. 22:13. Everything was based on the baseball theme and was a lot of fun! (Even our favors were little balls and bats!). Our new District President, Deaconess Liz Borth attended as well. We elected new officers: Sheryl Lutz - President; Ada Jarmosevich - Treasurer; and Cinara Navarro - VP Spiritual Growth.

Our Prayer Service was at Peace, Dunnellon, with 15 ladies and two gentlemen with Pastor Terry McKee, our new Pastoral Counselor leading us. Everyone loved the service, "Blessed are They", from the LWML website!

WINTER HAVEN ZONE – FL

Cheri Briggs - President

Our Fall Rally was held at Grace, Winter Haven, on November 9th. Our guest speaker was Jerry Stevens who performs skywriting as his ministry. If you see a smiley face or Jesus loves you in the sky, it could be Jerry. A new maternity home, Hope House, in Bartow, Florida was our Gifts from the Heart recipient.

We are excited about our upcoming Spring Rally at Our Savior, Zephyrhills on March 1st. Our guest speaker will be from Phil's Friends. Plus, our Gifts from the Heart and our Servant Project will also be for Phil's Friends. We will make about 35 tied fleece blankets. All of our donations will be used here in Florida.

We want news about YOUR zone!

Send a **paragraph** (50-250 words) and **pictures** to be included in an upcoming issue!

Please identify everyone

Around the Zones...

SOUTHWEST ZONE - FL

Vicky Manietta - President

Peace Lutheran Church in Naples announced that our Gifts of the Heart for the upcoming March 15 rally will be going to the Immokalee Pregnancy Center. Hearing this news made me reflect that, against the pro-abortion rhetoric, there is deep care for all life. There are so many organizations supported by LWML providing services to families in need at all stages of life from the expectant and new moms with their babies, to families in crisis, to the homeless and disadvantaged.

The verse before our convention theme verse tells us why we need to grow in the grace and knowledge: *be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men.* (2 Peter 3:17 AMP) The

pro-choice movement has distorted the truth of what it takes to truly care for pregnant women. It hides the truth that many women who have had abortions suffer loss and shame.

Those of us that support the whole life of every individual can be afraid to speak up against these loud, unprincipled voices. I pray these few words will encourage and give you an apologetic:

- ✝ Next time you see an online post hating on the Pro-Life supporters go ahead and gracefully share your knowledge.
- ✝ Pick any one of the myriad organizations that do provide post-womb care and tell its story, to the glory of Christ Jesus.



TALLAHASSEE ZONE – FL

Cyndy Pieplow - President

[Written Feb. 5]

We are happy to announce our Spring Rally will be held February 8th at Peace, Tifton, Georgia. We have 23 who are planning to attend, and the weather should be good for the drive. We have had difficulty scheduling a date that works for all five active groups. The zone has not had a rally since the fall of 2023. Unfortunately, we have had to cancel some events due to weather and other issues.

The Vicar who is serving Peace will lead the worship and will be assisted by our zone counselor. Vicar Rowell will share with us how he came to be part of Synod's Special Ministries Program and how the program works. The Gifts from the Heart will be a donation to this special program.

We will also have a presentation by an LWML member from Valdosta on the Lutheran Early Response Team with pictures showing some of the wonderful work this group offered to our region following the recent hurricanes.

Our groups continue to "Grow in God's Grace" as we serve our communities in a variety of ways. University, Tallahassee and Epiphany, Tallahassee together

built and delivered 30 beds to the needy through the program "Sleep in Heavenly Peace." They were on Tallahassee's WCTV evening news feature, "Something Good".

2024-2026 MISSION GRANTS AS OF 2/1/2025
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GRANT RECIPIENT	GRANT	DISBURSED	BALANCE
#1 Facilitating Futures: Forward Paths for Young Men and Women Aging Out of Foster	10,000.00	2,500.00	7,500.00
#2 Reaching College Students So They Thrive	9,000.00	0.00	9,000.00
#3 Wheels of Plenty	10,000.00	0.00	10,000.00
#4 Center for Seafarer Mental health	8,750.00	0.00	8,750.00
#5 Proclaiming Jesus to the Visually Impaired	10,000.00	0.00	10,000.00
#6 Christian Care and Early Childhood Educa-	10,000.00	0.00	10,000.00
#7 Surgical Sterilizer	10,000.00	0.00	10,000.00
#8 Feeding Haitian Children Through Gospel	10,000.00	0.00	10,000.00
#9 Who Is My Neighbor? Bible Books for Non	8,500.00	0.00	8,500.00
#10 Missionary Couple for Christian Outreach to International Communities in the Florida-	10,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00
#11 Trinity Lutheran Academy Security Locks	10,0.00	10,000.00	0.00
#12 Buma Village Project (partial)	487.83	0.00	487.83
TOTALS	106,737.83	17,500.00	89,237.83

*As you did it to one of the least of
these my brothers, you did it to me*
(Matthew 25:40)

LWML FL-GA DISTRICT**DISTRICT PRESIDENT**

Deaconess Liz Borth

VP COMMUNICATIONS

Susan Hanes

VP MISSION GRANTS

Cheryl Briggs

VP MISSION SERVICE

Silvia Grasberger

VP SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Linda Meseke

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Lois Ford

SOCIAL MEDIA

Colleen Umphrey

STRUCTURE

Pat Powell

WEBMASTER

Stephanie Edgar

YOUNG WOMAN DEVELOPER

Lydia Landes & Ashley Pridgeon

LWML National News — www.lwml.org

- ✚ LWML National Convention will be in Omaha, Nebraska on **June 26-29, 2025.**
- ✚ Fellowship, mission impact luncheons, service opportunities, 'Mites in Action' reports and worship are open to all.
- ✚ Delegates will select national mission grants and new officers.
- ✚ Treat yourself to a tour before or after the convention: chocolate, glassblowing, quilts, lavender and others.

Online Registration opens
March 1, 2025.

<https://www.lwml.org/convention>
Late Registration May 1—June 1.

- ✚ **ALL** persons attending are required to complete the **online** registration form. Hotel reservation link will be emailed (DO NOT contact hotels directly). Hotel group rates are valid until **May 15.**

**MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of the LWML FL-GA District is to share the love of Christ with women of all ages and diversities and to foster a recognition that the mission field exists both at home and abroad.