



# Spirit of Life Lutheran Church

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We spread the gospel through love, acceptance,  
and giving of ourselves for Jesus.



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<http://spiritoflifejacksonville.org/>



## A Spirit of Acceptance at Spirit of Life



At a recent Leadership Team meeting, we were congratulating ourselves a bit about being an accepting church. We were right to feel good about this. But then someone said, "What about autistic children? What have we done to make them feel welcome? If we are serious about accepting all of God's people, we will be looking for more and more people to make welcome."

And, that's right.

I was quiet for most of this discussion. The reason is that recently my family was working through an autism diagnosis for one of our grandchildren. When we visited with them, our grandson was not socializing at the level the other children were. As well, he was focusing on one kind of toy to the exclusion of all others. He wasn't talking and avoided our conversations with him. The sinking feeling that you get when you know a loved one might be in for a struggle became a shared emotion in our family.

So, low light and soft sounds became the norm in their house. We learned to make simple, positive statements instead of asking questions. Playtime was gentle and focused. Slowly, these accommodations began to seem normal and set up a workable

style of communication... and nurturing. We were finding ways to get through to our grandson and show him our love.

The Leadership Team asked me to do some research about this subject. A family at Spirit of Life who is well-acquainted with autism agreed to help. Here is some of what I learned.

In Parents' Magazine, an article by Dr. Rebecca Landa of the Kennedy Krieger Institute raises 10 helpful points. I'll summarize a few here.

Signs of autism are not clear or consistent. One in 68 children receive this diagnosis, and each one is unique. Autistic children may seem remote. Respond by knowing that most desire loving relationships and teach to their unique interests. Language is an obstacle, so be as "concrete" as possible. Humor, metaphors, and puns don't make an impression.

As well, autistic people can function well in church, at home, school, and later at work. Still, autistic children and adults may be very sensitive to sounds, sights, tastes, and textures. Their world is different than ours. So, anxiety, worry, and fear are their companions. Specially trained professionals (and caring, keenly aware family and friends) can help.

So, what about church? Kaylene Greene is an autistic adult who acknowledged her diagnosis as she raised her autistic child, one of five. She writes extensively in various publications and in her blog, [AutisticMama.com](http://AutisticMama.com), where her book can be ordered as well. Her insights seem applicable to most any church, including ours.

Greene says that the heart and soul of an autism friendly church are these three things: acknowledgment, understanding, and acceptance. That being said, there are some things churches can do to make a difference. Assign a buddy to an autistic child. This provides a sense of companionship and constancy in an otherwise confusing world. The buddy can watch for cues that their autistic friend is becoming overwhelmed and step in to help. This serves as a caring link between the autistic child and all other volunteers and church staff.

The days when children sit quietly in church are probably over forever. Autistic children have special difficulty with this. Turn old expectations about church behavior in children into gratitude that they are in the community of faith, worshiping in their way.

As well, we are all advised to ask parents of autistic children what we can do, and then follow through. Because bright lights and loud music are obstacles to those with autism, churches might consider having a more “contemplative” worship experience at regular intervals.

I’m thinking personally that the figurative language I use in children’s sermons might often give way to more “concrete” language, which would be easier to follow (maybe for all children!).

The bottom line is that if we are serious about being accepting of all God’s children (and I firmly believe that we are) then these insights will be welcome and these suggestions for action will sound do-able.

My grandson, by the way, was recently given a diagnosis different from autism. But he has other problems with communication and focus that have nothing to do with his intelligence or his wonderful, sunny heart. There are people in his life – parents, church, family, grandparents, friends – who are ready to do what it takes to make sure he knows he’s accepted, unique, and profoundly made in God’s image.

For that I give thanks. And I’m also thankful that I see those same things at Spirit of Life. How can we apply them to those with autism, and then to others as well?

Pastor Dow

## Leadership Team President's Corner

**Leadership Team Member: Al Speicher - [speial@comcast.net](mailto:speial@comcast.net) or (904-707-6702)**

Wow! Another major step in acquiring a pastor is upon us. The Synod begins its search for potential pastors to fit our Ministry Site Profile. The Call Committee is ready to act as resumes are presented to them.

Members of the Leadership Team and Call Committee met with Pastor Rob Carlson (Assistant to the Bishop) on Saturday, July 28<sup>th</sup>, for a brief 'get to know SOL', workshop. We all enjoyed the informal exchange of ideas on how to grow SOL. Ideas included but, not limited to are: Centering Prayer, Congregational Prayer for realizing SOL's vision for our church (like expanding our facility) and upgrading to an electronic church sign by the road.

The results of the "Church Use Survey" conducted on Sunday July 1<sup>st</sup> and July 9<sup>th</sup>, show overwhelming congregational support for the expansion of our church. We received great feedback on potential uses and some will be considered for inclusion in grant requests to support this effort. Thank you for your time to provide this information.

Our next steps will include a preliminary building site location with a general contractor. Debby and I will be continuing our work with the vendor for used buildings. Pastor and Steve will continue to work on preparing documents for potential grant monies.

The search for a Nursery Attendant continues. We have received several inquiries and potential employee names. The Leadership Team will be setting up interviews. Please continue to keep praying for a Nursery Attendant and forwarding names to church office.

The church has several events for this fall. We really need volunteers to help the leadership make these events the best ever. Several people can make a big impact on our church events and community. Please don't miss a chance to serve your church and community.

Comments and questions please send to me at, [speial@comcast.net](mailto:speial@comcast.net).

***Jump on-board and Hang on !....***

God Bless  
Al Speicher

# Youth Gathering 2018



After two years of planning, countless fundraisers, and months of digging deeper into topics that were expected to be a part of the Gathering's Mass Gatherings, Interactive Learning, and Service Learning Days, 6 of our youth and 2 adults attended the 2018 ELCA National Youth Gathering in Houston, Texas, from June 25th to July 2nd. We learned about the intentional work we need to do within our own lives and community so that we can know how to be a community in the world. We studied how, as Lutherans, we belong to an ever-reforming church, living into our daily lives as Christ has commanded us. We learned that in order to love others, we need to love ourselves, and that God's love for each of us is a foundational component to building community and building on social justice. We took a deep look into issues of social justice and advocating for those whose voices can't or won't be heard, not only in our local community, but in our world. We understand that God calls us to speak out and that as members of an ELCA church, justice work is a priority. It is even in our baptismal covenant: "strive for justice and peace in all the earth."

Our journey started at 11:00 p.m. when we joined with 7 other churches from the First Coast Conference to start our two-bus caravan journey to Houston. We arrived late in the afternoon and spent the rest of the evening exploring the nearby shopping Galleria. Wednesday saw us having our only leisurely morning where we were later able to spend the early afternoon exploring the area around Rice University. Later that day we had our first glimpse of NRG Park and were able to spend a few hours playing some fun games in the Community Life arena. Our first Mass Gathering at NRG Stadium was later that night where we were welcomed to Houston with music from The Gathering House Band and the first of many speakers, beginning with ELCA Presiding Bishop, Elizabeth Eaton.

Thursday found us participating in our Synod Day with everyone from the Florida Bahamas Synod, and a special worship/interactive learning event led by Florida Bahamas Synod Bishop Pedro Suarez.

Our Service Learning Day was Friday. We joined with about 40 other kids on a bus, and it was only then that we learned what we would be doing. We would be traveling just beyond the city limits to provide help to a small church that was founded many years ago in an area of Texas that was first home to freed slaves. Unfortunately, due to a miscommunication, our bus was given the wrong address and we spent about half of our Service Learning Day taking an unexpected tour of Houston. Our kids were troopers though, and once we safely arrived at our location, we helped to make one of God's houses of worship presentable again by scraping and repainting posts, eaves, and fences. The interior of the building also got a top to bottom cleaning.

Saturday brought us to NRG center for our Interactive Learning Day. Through a variety of over 66 mediums, we were able to engage in learning opportunities that supported the mission of the Gathering and lifted up partner organizations and groups. As part of the interactive learning, several of our youth were able to participate in Sunday morning's Mass Gathering by adding their names to what would become the Altar at the Mass Gathering (see picture).

Each night we gathered with the other 32,000 people for Mass Gatherings at NRG Stadium, where we heard from over 20 inspirational speakers and many musical artists, in addition to the House Band.

Our group began each morning meeting for our "First 15" where we would learn a Bible lesson corresponding with the theme and the speakers for the day. After we returned from the Mass

Gatherings each night, our evenings concluded with our “Final 15” where we discussed the events of the day and ask the same questions.

The Gathering concluded on Sunday morning, where we were able to participate in sharing the body and blood of Christ with all 32,000 participants. An experience that in and of itself is incredible and very moving.

On Sunday, July 29th, some of the kids that attended the Gathering led worship here at Spirit of Life using the liturgy from the Mass Gathering. During the sermon, as part of their “Final 15” for the 2018 Gathering, they shared their comments about where they saw God at the Gathering, how they understand how God’s call, God’s love, God’s grace, and God’s hope changes everything in a different way because of the Gathering, and how they are changed because of the Gathering.

Heidi Carlson shared that there was a time during the Gathering where she didn’t see God. She said that it was about 105 degrees, and we were standing outside in the hot sun on the hot pavement, with several thousand other people waiting to enter into the stadium for the evening’s Mass Gathering. We had already been waiting for 45 minutes and had about another hour to go. Heidi was running out of water and found a vendor that was selling water...for \$5.00 a bottle! Defeated, she came back to wait with the group, when all of a sudden, she felt cold water splashing on her. Through the crowd of people, she saw a church that had brought with them a small, tacky, inflatable pool. The church had filled this pool with ice, and was sharing this ice with anyone who needed to be cooled off. It was in that small act of kindness, where Heidi saw God.

Serena Del La Rosa was changed by the Gathering because she was able to see that there are many kids throughout our country that feel the way she does about God and worships God in the same way as we do. She was able to more fully understand how we fit in with the larger church. She also felt uplifted by the music we experienced each night and the excitement that it brought to all of us.

Winnie Carlson indicated that one of the things that really affected her was when a speaker would engage the audience by asking questions to the participants such as, who has ever felt like this, that, or the other thing. And when it was something that had affected someone, that person would raise their flashlight from the cell phone into the air. Soon, there were thousands of lights shining in the stadium. It was then that Winnie realized that we are not alone in our struggles and because of God’s love for each of us, we can support and lift each other up.

Matthew Messick was affected by all of the speakers as a whole. Many of the speakers talked about the struggles that they went through in their lives. Struggles ranging from the stress of serving as chaplain at Ground Zero, to losing one’s vision, fighting drug addiction, depression and mental health issues, and even being a teenager living with a terminal condition. Each of these speakers discussed how even in these darkest times of their lives, God was working in them. And He is working in our lives too.

God’s love through Jesus changes everything. Living in that love and sharing that image of a loving God will allow us to take the Gathering beyond Houston and into the world we are living in.

The next Gathering will be June 29 through July 3, 2021 in Minneapolis, Minnesota and will be open to those kids entering 6<sup>th</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup> grade this Fall.



## Call Committee

The mission site profile has been revised and sent to the synod and has been accepted. A copy of the site profile is available in the narthex for review. From here, we will now start working on our interview questions at our next meeting.

### Call Committee

Betty Jones  
 Brenda Higginbitham  
 Casey Carlson  
 Dawn Martin  
 Gary Strysick  
 Kelli Hood

## Financial Corner

Leadership Team Member: Brian Vance - [bavance54@gmail.com](mailto:bavance54@gmail.com)

### Attendance

	9 am	10:30 am	Nursery/Sunday School
7/1	27	24	15
7/8	37	31	10
7/15	30	27	5
7/22	41	29	10
7/29	37	31	7

FINANCIAL CORNER ----- JULY 2018			
Envelope Offering	\$	11,426.20	
CFCU xfer for Youth Gathering (YG)	\$	193.90	
VBS Children Heritage Donation	\$	115.00	
Church bldg usage	\$	400.00	
Campus Ministry Donations	\$	55.00	
JULY interest income	\$	6.52	
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	\$	<b>12,190.10</b>	<b>EXPENSES \$ 14,216.61</b>
Food Pantry Donations	\$	6.00	
Food Pantry Expenses	\$	327.02	
<b>Food Pantry Balance</b>	\$	<b>5,510.83</b>	

## Fellowship and Outreach Teams

### Fellowship

August 11th we will be having a Movie/Dessert event at church. The time is 3:00 and the movie is "I Can Only Imagine." We will be having desserts after the movie. I hope all will join us and enjoy the movie and the fellowship.

In September we will be doing a dinner for the campus ministry at FSCJ.

We are also planning a biscuit and gravy breakfast at church in the future.

If anyone has any suggestions or ideas for other events, please feel free to see me or any member of the fellowship team.

Yours in Christ,  
JoAnn Strysick

## Education / Youth

Leadership Team Member: Anita Vance – [anitalvance@gmail.com](mailto:anitalvance@gmail.com) 814-932-0203

The VBS final donation to Children's Hunger Fund came in at an amazing \$115.00! That provided 460 meals just by sharing our coins! Thank you again for the physical, financial and spiritual help given by this Parish Family!



With VBS behind us, our focus is now on Sunday School and maintaining continuity in the program and its execution. Our numbers are growing, and we are happy to offer a program that involves interactive discussions and guided discovery of our Loving God, His Son and the Spirit! We are blessed with a congregation that steps in as needed, and our children are getting the benefits of a Church Family example and its additional support.

We are beginning to recognize Goodness and Kindness in the world around us, by remembering Pastor's sermon and finding examples within our

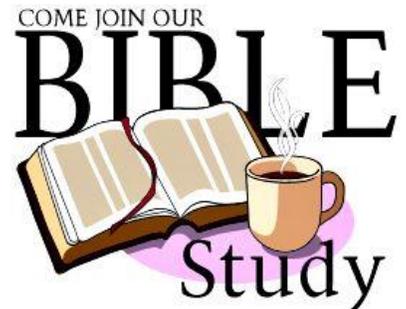
universe. We celebrate the Loving Father and look for Jesus in everyone we meet. We have retold the story of Jarius daughter, remembered our brothers and sisters in God's Family and reviewed thankful prayers in games and crafts. We are Blessed.

## Bible Study

Gary Strysick - jstrysick@yahoo.com

*"For where two or three are gathered in my name,  
I am there among them ....." (Matthew 18:20)*

Bible classes will still be on Wednesday mornings at 10 am.



## Emergency Food Pantry

Steve Carlson - steveandcasey@yahoo.com (904)654-6462

Matthew 25:35. "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me"

We usually slow down a little during the heat of the summer, but 2018 continues to surprise us in many ways. Our weekly numbers continue to increase and there seems to be no end in sight.

One project that we are looking at is starting a Community Garden. We are meeting with Nathan, the Man in Overalls, who is a Urban Farmer. He is meeting us at the church to discuss the feasibility of starting such a garden here at Spirit of Life. Stay tuned for more into.

On Sept 10, we will be hosting another Hambingo Fundraiser at Hamburger Mary's. This is a great opportunity to have fun, get to know people in our network, and raise funds for the Food Pantry. Everyone is welcome.

Coming up this fall with be our annual Thanksgiving Food Giveaway, date to be determined.

Peace and Love be with You.  
Your's in Christ,  
Steve Carlson

## Ruth Circle

Women of the ELCA (WELCA)

Dawn Martin—(904)518-6903

Our next meeting will be September 7<sup>th</sup>. Have a blessed summer,  
Dawn Martin

## Call To Care (Prayer List)

**Our Members are highlighted**

**Our Shut in: Robin Blackburn**

Randy Barron, The **Elwood family** during their recent death of Mary's mother: Isabel Gil, Sue Patterson, Nia Travis, Tim Twisdale, Leo Williams (Mary Williams son)

**Our Military members:** Antrone Jones, Jeff & Trey

**Chronic Prayers:** Carol Ann Bartholomew (Vicki Haugen sister), Amanda Bennett (Betty Mallard daughter), Jackie Corderio (Maggie Spruill sister), Ellen & George Cross, Dan Fisher (Michele Hoyle father, Bob's F-I-L), Iliana, Linda Hill, Kevin Hubbard, Alan, Larry and Terri Joiner, **Barbara Kirkwood, Kelly Matthews**, Tracey McGammon, Mildred Moody, John Murray (food pantry client), Paul Ruen, and Mary Ellen Sanders (Brenda Murray Mom, Hood family grandmother & great)

<b><u>BIRTHDAYS</u></b>		<b><u>ANNIVERSARY LIST</u></b>	
4	Brennan Hood	2	Herbert & Julie Roziers
5	Kelly Hood	8	Silas & Betty Jones
9	C'ana Bilbro	9	Mike & Maggie Spruill
12	Robert Williams	13	Brian & Anita Vance
16	Betty Jones	27	Terry & Vicky Haugen
19	Brittany Hoyle		
21	Brenda Higginbotham		
23	Curtis Haugen		
23	Pat Phelps		
24	Kelly Matthews		
27	Brandon Higginbotham		
31	Theresa Rademacher		

*Happy Anniversary*

## Synod Dates to Note

**July 30-Aug 1** - Transition Ministry Training (Luther Springs)

**Aug. 11** - New Facilities Dedication, Luther Springs

**Sept. 27-30** - Practice Discipleship Retreat for Youth Workers (Luther Springs)

## Antrone's Address

If anyone would like to drop a note to Antrone Jones, below is his mailing address. As of this writing, he is still in bootcamp and would love to hear from his congregation.

SR JONES, ANTRONE, E.  
SHIP II DIV 353  
RECRUIT TRAINING COMMAND  
3503 SAILOR DRIVE  
GREAT LAKES, IL 60088



Duval County Public School students return August 13<sup>th</sup>.

## August 2018

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 10:00 AM Food Pantry	2	3 Clothes Giveaway - 9 am to 6 PM	4 Clothes Giveaway - 9 am to 6 PM SOL Clothing Giveaway
5 9:00 AM Contemporary Service 10:30 AM Traditional Service 2:00 PM Liberty Apostolic Church Service	6	7 10:00 AM Food Pantry	8 10:00 AM Food Pantry	9 6:30 PM Praise Band Rehearsal	10	11 3:00 PM "I Can Only Imagine" movie at Church
12 9:00 AM Contemporary Service 10:30 AM Traditional Service 2:00 PM Liberty Apostolic Church Service	13	14 10:00 AM Food Pantry	15 10:00 AM Food Pantry	16 6:30 PM Praise Band Rehearsal	17	18
19 9:00 AM Contemporary Service 10:30 AM Traditional Service 2:00 PM Liberty Apostolic Church Service	20 6:00 PM Leadership Team Meeting	21 10:00 AM Food Pantry	22 10:00 AM Food Pantry	23 6:30 PM Praise Band Rehearsal	24	25
26 9:00 AM Contemporary Service 10:30 AM Traditional Service 2:00 PM Liberty Apostolic Church Service	27	28 Primary Election - SOL a Polling Location 10:00 AM Food Pantry	29 10:00 AM Food Pantry	30 6:30 PM Praise Band Rehearsal	31	

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*Community, Faith and Service*

**Spirit of Life  
Lutheran Church**

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*Community, Faith and Service*



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**This is Christ's Church.  
There is a place for you here.  
We are the church that shares a  
living, daring confidence in God's grace.  
Liberated by our faith, we embrace  
you as a whole person—  
questions, complexities and all.  
Join us as we do God's work in Christ's  
name for the life of the World!**