

## **CALLED TO SERVE GLORIA DEI LUTHERAN CHURCH PASTOR LEADS GROWING CONGREGATION WITH EVANGELICAL FERVOR**

By Kenneth D. MacHarg

Darrell Stuehrenberg describes his twenty-five year tenure as the pastor of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Davie as “a good marriage.”

Explaining that a 25-year pastorate is unusual, Stuehrenberg said of his relationship with the church, “This place connected and I connected.”

“Twenty-five years is unusual, it happens somewhat rarely,” he acknowledged. “If you had asked me back then where I would spend the next 25 years, I would have said probably in a number of places.”

Instead, the pastor took a small, fledgling congregation of around 35 members and led it through growth and service to an active church of 1,200 members today.

“When I came, the church was poised and positioned to be involved in a number of things,” Stuehrenberg said. “It has been an exciting time together as we have explored and tackled a variety of ministry challenges.”

Stuehrenberg listed several highlights of his long ministry as important.

“The church’s involvement with a parochial school has been meaningful,” he reflected. “There was a school here when I arrived, but it closed in the late 80’s. We purchased the property and now have 400 students in classes from pre-school through 8<sup>th</sup> grade.”

While he does not hold an administrative role with the Gloria Dei Lutheran Academy, Stuehrenberg said that he is involved in a pastoral oversight role.

Another significant area has been his involvement in evangelism efforts both at the church and through his denomination, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. “I have helped to plan five evangelism conferences for our district and the Florida-Georgia Synod,” he explained.

“Darrell is innovative in sharing the gospel,” said Rev. Dennis Bartels, pastor of Holy Cross Lutheran Church in North Miami. “He has spearheaded the Great Commission Convocations for our district which attract between 500 and 600 people. He is very good about getting people excited about sharing the love of Jesus Christ with others.”

It is in the areas of evangelism and outreach that Rev. Stuehrenberg earns high marks from those who know him. “Outgoing and nurturing,” is the way that Gloria Dei elder Craig Chaddock describes him. “He is not judgmental of people,” said Chaddock, who lives in Plantation. “He accepts people for who they are, where they are and brings them in,” he added.

“He is very open to people,” said long-time friend, Rev. Dave Haun, the retired pastor of First Christian Church in Fort Lauderdale. “He listens to people and is able to deal with people in their discouragement and frustrations.”

Twenty-five years of service have brought benefits to the church. “Consistency is not common in south Florida,” said Helen Roenfeldt of Davie, a member of the church who has worked as Stuehrenberg’s administrative assistant for the past three years. “This is a transient community and it takes a long time to understand the dynamics of the area.”

Roefeldt said that the pastor “understands the community and participates in it. His consistency here is wonderful.”

Keeping up with Stuehrenberg is not easy. “Working for him falls somewhere between being a secretary and a lion tamer,” Roefeldt joked. Stuehrenberg agreed, “She manages my life,” he said.

Much of Roefeldt’s work involves organizing her boss’s frequent mission trips to Haiti.

“I have led 14 trips there,” Stuehrenberg explained. “Through our mission work with the emerging Evangelical Lutheran Church in Haiti we help to train 150-200 teachers a year. Much of the country’s education takes place in Christian schools, but the teachers have very little experience or education. We are trying to help that.”

A little surprised that he has served one church for 25 years, Stuehrenberg said he doesn’t know if he will be here for another 25. “God only knows, but he would have to make it very clear if he would want me to leave,” he said.

For now, Stuehrenberg is content to serve the Lord here. “One of the key roles of evangelism is not to create needs, but to find the people’s needs and meet them,” he said. “One of my goals is to be in a place where I can reach out to a wide range of needs and help to build a New Testament church.”

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FERVOR, *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*, July 12, 2002**