

THE CONNECTION

Weekly Newsletter

May 3, 2026



Our Savior Lutheran Church Vacation Bible School in 1983



MAY

SUN. 5/3

8:00 a.m. & 10:30 a.m. Worship Services

Bible Study—9:15 a.m. | Kids Connect—10:30 a.m.

Board of Lay Ministry Meeting—12 p.m.

TEACHER APPRECIATION WEEK

MON. 5/4–TUES. 5/5

Schedule open

WED. 5/6

Discussion Group—10 a.m.

Handbells Practice—6:30 p.m.

THURS. 5/7

Schedule open

FRI. 5/8

Church office closed

SAT. 5/9

Properties Work Day—9 a.m.

MOTHER'S DAY SUN. 5/10

8:00 a.m. & 10:30 a.m. Worship Services

Bible Study—9:15 a.m. | Kids Connect—10:30 a.m.

MON. 5/11

FLGA District Banquet—4:30 to 6:30 p.m.

TUES. 5/12

Schedule open

WED. 5/13

Discussion Group—10 a.m.

Handbells Practice—6:30 p.m.

THURS. 5/14

Schedule open

FRI. 5/15–SAT. 5/16

Church office closed



Prayers for the following OSL church members:

Haroldo Camacho, Carol Chaddock, Marianne DeMinck, Roger Detwiler, Claire Edwards, Howard Fischer, Sue Franjione, Gerry Gruenbaum, Betty Hea, Bob Johnson, Prentis Johnson, Robert Latimer, James Leone, Les Mellott, Mary Ann O'Keefe, Carol Ross, Malcolm Sears, Jennifer Sird-De La Horra, Robert Spencer, Linda Verdi, Jodi Waldron, John Wheeler, and Jan Withers.

Members & Family in the Armed Services:

Dustin Douglas (son-in-law of Les and Juli Mellott) at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Tacoma, WA; **Scott Tucek** (son of Carol Tucek) at Yokota Air Base in Japan.

Rehabilitation Home: Ron Holub

*If you have prayer requests, please let us know by filling out a **Connect Card** or **colored prayer card** found in the pews. Our Prayer Team (Debi Bauer, Norma Miller, Robert Spencer, and John and Jodi Waldron) will gather the cards and pray for those needs. For personal prayers and/or additional spiritual guidance, please contact Pastor Tony at (954) 473-6888.*

I thank everyone for the beautiful cards, messages and texts I have been receiving during my beginning journey with Leukemia. Your prayers bring me such comfort as I am awaiting the day I can again hug and greet you.

I love you all!!

Jan



Celebrating 5 Generations at Our Savior Lutheran

by Lerryn Latimer

Our family has been part of Our Savior for five generations. My grandparents, Walter and Doris Wilkins, came from Michigan and joined the church approximately 1975. We would come down to attend a Tupperware convention in August every year and visit my grandparents. We loved it so much that we made the move ourselves in 1980. That was the same time Pastor Volz became the new pastor.

At the time, our children, Jamie and Suzie, were 10 and 8 years old. Jamie was confirmed by Pastor Volz in 1983, and Suzie in 1985. My parents, Donald and Renee Wilkins, decided they liked it and moved down in 1983. My grandfather died in 1984, and his funeral was here at Our Savior. My parents decided to move back to Michigan in 1986.

Our son, Jamie, was married here by Pastor Volz in 1994, and Suzie following in 1995. Our granddaughter, Kayla, was baptized here in 1998, then our grandson, Craig, was baptized here in 2002 by Pastor Nicklas. Craig was confirmed here in 2017, but Kayla when to a church closer to their home to be confirmed due to date conflicts with the classes. Jamie's boys were baptized at a church in Boynton Beach.

To God be the glory—for the past 65 years, and for all the years to come.

August 1978
Florida Vacation

—Page 3—



Rob Lerryn, Grandma Doris Wilkins
Grandpa Wallace Wilkins
Suzie & Jamie

Jamie & Patti's Wedding (1994)

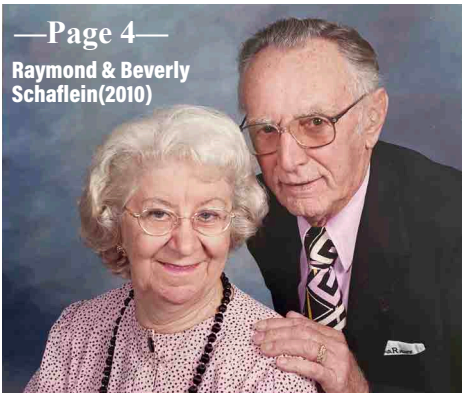


Baby Kayla's Baptism (Nov. 1998)

Pictured from left to right: Jamie & Patti, baby Kayla, Suzie, Pastor Volz, and Doug.



Raymond & Beverly
Schaflein (2010)



Celebrating 65 Years—And Our Place in the Story

by Juli Mellott

My family's connection to Our Savior Lutheran Church began in 1982, when my parents, Raymond and Beverly Schaflein, moved to North Lauderdale and started building their home. As they settled into the area, they began visiting the church because it was the only LCMS congregation in western Broward County at the time.

When they came to the church office to transfer their membership, they were surprised and delighted to discover a familiar face. Dolores Bethmann, the church secretary,

had gone to grade school with my mom at Bethlehem and later attended Bowen High School with her in Chicago. It felt like an immediate connection and confirmation that this church would become home.

My mom became actively involved, serving on the Altar Guild and delivering for Meals on Wheels. My dad also found his place, especially enjoying serving as an usher—his favorite service being the 11:00 p.m. Christmas Eve service. Over the years, he also dedicated much of his time to the Properties Board.

I moved here and joined the church in 1984. The following year, in August 1985, Les and I were married here by Pastor Walter Volz, beginning our own family's journey within this church community.

Our daughters both received the blessings of baptism here. Jenna was baptized on Christmas Day in 1991, and Jessica in July 1996, both by Pastor Volz. They also grew up in the church's school, attending from preschool through fifth grade.



Les & Juli's
Wedding (1986)



Raymond Schaflein's sign made from
the old sanctuary wall (pictured left).

(Juli's 65th Anniversary Testimonial Cont.)

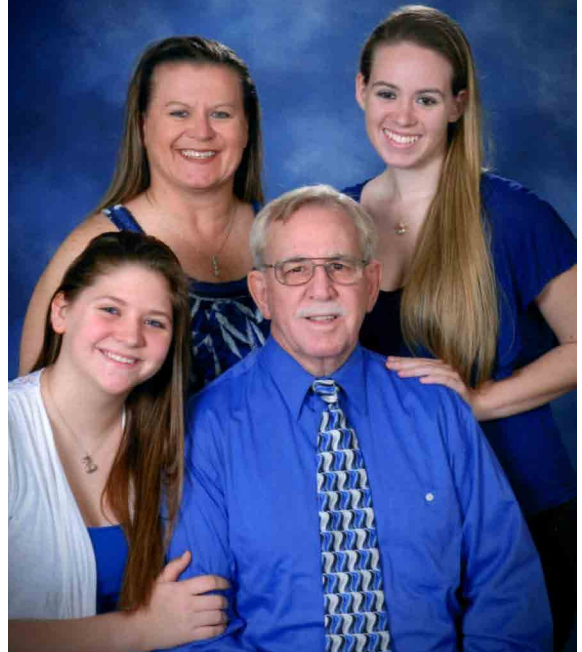
Jenna was part of Mrs. Jan Wither's final preschool class before she decided to work in the church office, something we still laugh and joke about today. Both girls continued their faith journeys here, with Jenna being confirmed in April 2006 and Jessica in May 2010 by Pastor Ed Niklas.

My dad also left a lasting physical mark on the church. As a bricklayer by trade, he built the stone sign out front using materials from the remodeling of the sanctuary wall. It was a meaningful way for him to contribute his skills to a place he loved.

The church has also been a place of comfort in times of loss. Funeral services for both of my parents were held here in 2007 and 2011, officiated by Pastor Nicklas. He and my dad shared a special bond, as Pastor Niklas's father was also a bricklayer. That shared connection made their relationship even more meaningful.

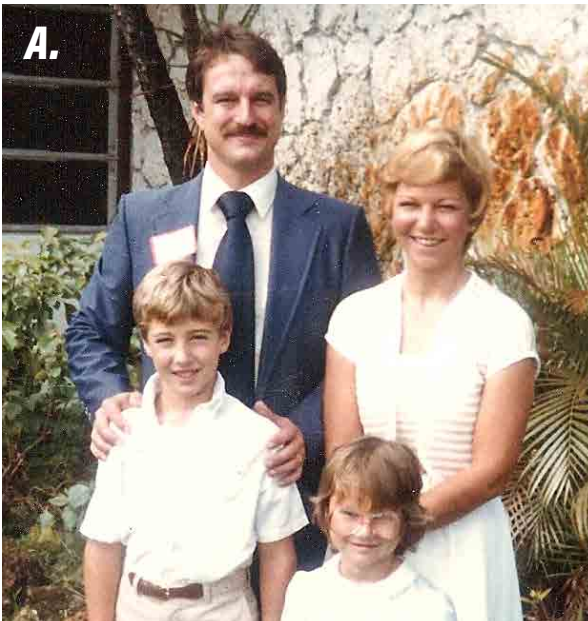
Our Savior Lutheran Church has been woven into every chapter of my family's life—through beginnings, milestones, service, and remembrance. It is more than a church to us; it is home.

Mellott Family (2010)



Can You Guess These Members?

(Answers on [p. 16!](#))



OSL 65th Anniversary Reception

Colony West Golf Course | Sunday, April 19, 2026

From left to right: Judy Watson, Daniel and Heather Bleier with their children (Wade and Stacy), Pastor Tony, John Strang



Julio Sarmiento with James and Pamela Leone



From left to right: Pam Mills, Thomas Boatwright, Pam King, John Strang, Andy Clark



Our Savior Lutheran Church Marks 65 Years of God's Grace & Blessings: Highlights from the Anniversary Celebration

by David Volz

Longtime members of Our Savior Lutheran Church, Plantation, and those who have joined more recently, came together on April 19 to celebrate 65 wonderful years of God's blessings, worship, and friendships.

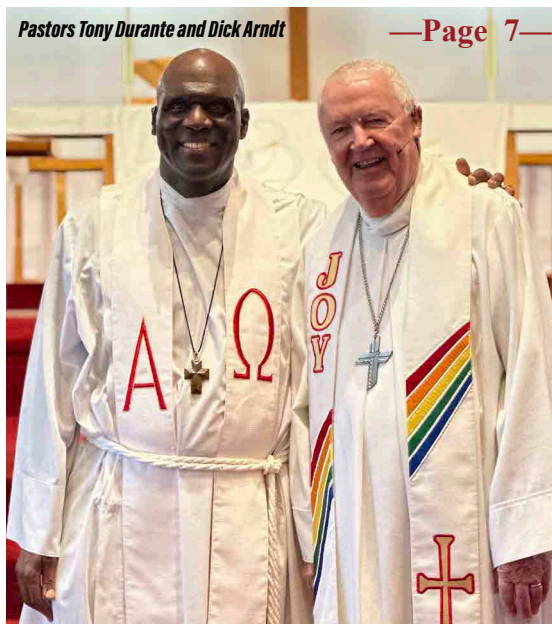
Some former members traveled long distances to attend a special celebratory service. Pastor Richard Arndt was the liturgist, and current Pastor Tony Durante preached. Greetings from District President James Rockey were shared at both morning services.

After the service, people gathered at Colony West Golf Club in Tamarac for dinner and shared stories. Former pastors and church leaders shared memories and experiences from their time at Our Savior. Nancy Volz, the emcee, called it "The Good, the Bad and the Funny."

Pastor Richard Arndt, the church's third pastor, described the church's early history. He told the audience about the congregation's first meeting at Peter's Elementary School in 1961, and how the first church was built in less than a year by 1962 for \$125,000 and was fully air-conditioned. Lutheran Hour speaker, Dr. Oswald Hoffman, was the dedication preacher.

Longtime member Howard Fischer spoke of his late wife, Barbara, who was the Early Childhood Director for the church's preschool for 28 years.

Two members, Juli Mellott and Lerryn Latimer, described how their families had been blessed by Our Savior for four and five generations respectively, a rarity for a South Florida church.



Kristin Volz Iannarone, daughter of the late Pastor Walter Volz who served at OSL for 21 years, spoke on behalf of her mother, Gloria, and shared memories of growing up at the church along with two building programs.

Jane Nicklas, wife of the late Pastor Edwin Nicklas, traveled from Virginia and shared some of their experiences. Pastor Nicklas' first day in the church office was 9/11. The school's golf tournament was also begun during his ministry, as Jane served as the school's principal.

Pastor Tony Durante, the sixth pastor who celebrated his eighth year at OSL on April 15, wrapped up the afternoon by sharing some Covid experiences as well as the church's recovery and growth.

Our Savior has been richly blessed by God's grace. Soli Deo Gloria!



Jane Nicklas, former OSL pastor's wife (2001-2013) and OSLS principal (2002-2014).



From left to right: Carol Tucek (member since 1980), Andy Clark (member since 2002), Brad Heine (member since 1987), Howard Fischer (member since 1970), John Strang (member since 1980), Juli Mellott (member since 1984)

Special Thank You's From Nancy Volz

To all who participated in OSL's 65th Anniversary Celebration, We last celebrated our congregation's anniversary 15 years ago. Since then, we have welcomed new members and friends, making now a perfect time to share our story. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

To all who participated in the Celebration Service: Pastor Tony, who served as Preacher; Pastor Dick Arndt, who was Liturgist; Juli Mellott, who shared her family testimony; John Waldron, who provided beautiful flowers; Carisa Meier and Glen Walters, who performed special music; the Praise Team and Tech Team, who enhanced the worship experience; Stanley Leonard, who contributed an original handbell composition; and the Handbell Choir, who performed this music for us.



Nancy Volz, emcee at the 65th Anniversary Reception (2026)



Nancy's New Member Reception (1993)

To those who made the dinner special: Committee members who coordinated the event; Debi Bauer, Ellen Clark, Agnes Karabetsos, Kim Marshall, Juli Mellott, Nancy Volz, and Jan Withers, who managed key tasks; Linda Root, who provided assistance; Andy Clark, who handled technical support; Juli Mellott, who designed the logo and merchandise; Jan Withers, who provided photos; Ellen Clark, who supplied the cake; the Fellowship Committee, who created the ornaments; and our speakers—Pastor Dick Arndt, Howard Fischer, Lerryn Latimer, Kristin Volz Iannarone, Jane Nicklas, and Pastor Tony Durante—who shared meaningful words.



Handbell Festival 2020

And to all who attended the service and dinner, your presence made it a grand celebration! Thank you for making the vision a reality!

Nancy Volz

Celebrating 65 Years of Faith: A Letter from Our District President

FLGA District, LCMS
5850 T. G. Lee Blvd, Suite 500
Orlando, FL 32822-4410

(407) 857-5556
(407) 857-5665 fax
(877) 457-5556 toll free
<http://flgadistrict.org>



James H. Rockey
President

Eric Sahlberg
Mission and Outreach

Jennifer M. Tanner
School & Youth Ministries

Jay P. Wendland
Lutheran Church Extension Fund

Laura Zirbel
Finance & Administration

April 16, 2026

Our Savior Lutheran Church
8001 NW 5th Street
Plantation, FL 33324

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Christ is Risen! Greetings of joy as we continue to celebrate our Lord's victory over Satan, Sin and Death through the cross and empty grave. Alleluia! Indeed, this is a time where we remember not only our need but that our neighbors have the same need and the Lord desires to provide for them the very same gift of grace and life. This is especially important as you celebrate 65 amazing years of laboring in the Lord's Harvest fields!

I wish I could be with you to celebrate, yet I give thanks for all the seeds that have been planted and the harvest that has resulted through the ministries and saints of Our Savior!

Please know that you will be in my prayers as you celebrate. Although this is a wonderful opportunity to consider the work and fruit over the past 65 years, I pray that this is also a time of renewed commitment to living as Christ's Church, His "Called-Out ones". Our Savior, like most congregations, may have had challenges at times, but the Lord has blessed and equipped you to live as His witnesses and share the wonderful message of God's grace through Christ alone!

May the Lord bless you as you look forward to the future with anticipation and hope. Jesus is at work among you as you continue to grow in His Word and Sacrament and personally reach into your community with the transformational message of peace and hope through ours and the world's only true Savior!

On behalf of your brothers and sisters in Christ across the Florida Georgia District, Happy 65th Anniversary!

Serving our Lord and His people with joy,

Rev. James H. Rockey
President, Florida-Georgia District LCMS\

A Historical Summary of the Last 65 Years at Our Savior Lutheran Church

Pastors and Installation Dates

Robert Grunow April 30, 1961 (2 ½ years)
Arthur Machinske September 15, 1963 (5 years)
Richard Arndt September 8, 1968 (86, wife-Pam, 84, sons Jeff and Paul)
 Larry Raudenbaugh Interim
Walter Volz September 7, 1980 (21 years)

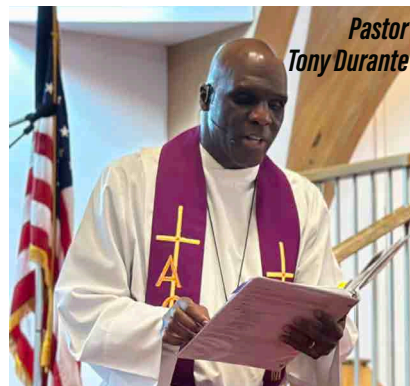
Retired Pastoral Assistants include:

George Loose, Martin Dienst, Eugene Krug, David Schmid and Luther Anderson, along with nine vicars

Dan Czaplewski Assistant Pastor and Principal (Fall 1990)
Edwin Nicklas September 9, 2001 (13 years)

Retired Pastoral Assistants include: Elmer Medley, Jay Rader

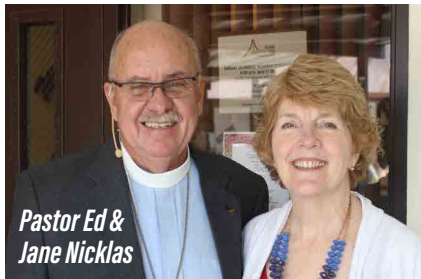
Al Kirk Intentional Interim
 Mark Abrams 8 months
 Jeff Moore Intentional Interim
Tony Durante April 15, 2018 (8 years and counting!)



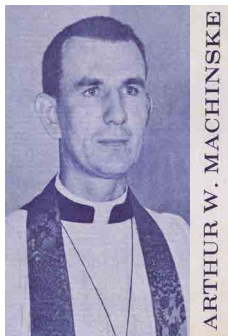
Pastor Tony Durante



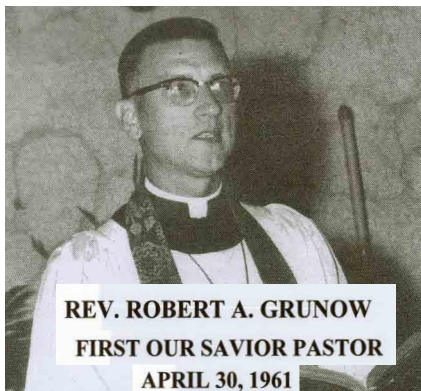
Pastor Arndt



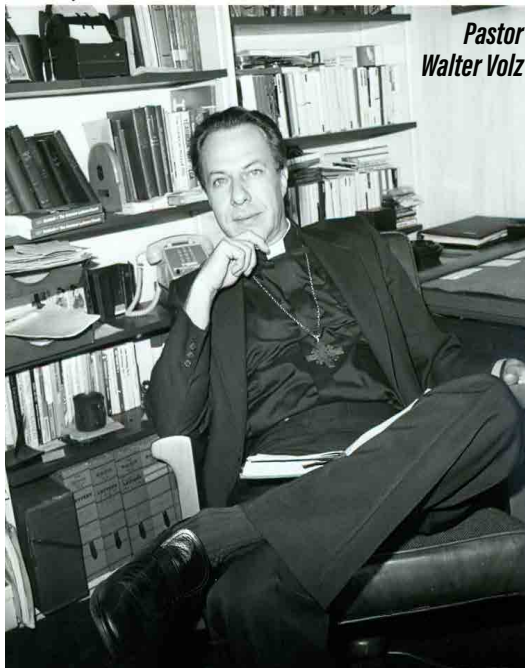
Pastor Ed & Jane Nicklas



ARTHUR W. MACHINSKE



REV. ROBERT A. GRUNOW
FIRST OUR SAVIOR PASTOR
APRIL 30, 1961



Pastor Walter Volz

1960s

The idea of mission outreach to Plantation was first discussed in 1960. At that time, the Florida-Georgia District had already purchased land and was in the process of calling a pastor to serve the new mission.

The first worship service was held on April 9, 1961, in the cafeteria of Peters Elementary School, with 90 people in attendance. Robert Grunow was installed as the congregation's first pastor on April 30, 1961.

Within one year, a church building was completed and dedicated on April 8, 1962. The dedication featured Oswald Hoffman as guest speaker. The original church, built at a cost of \$125,000, seated 300 people and was fully air-conditioned.

Early childhood education began with a kindergarten program led by Addie Baurer. In 1962, the Lutheran School Association was formed in partnership with OSL, Grace, Peace, and Trinity. Orlyn Schlie served as the first principal of Lutheran Central, located at Trinity.

1970s

During the 1970s, the church experienced significant growth in both membership and spiritual life. In 1972, an education building was constructed, featuring 12 classrooms, a kitchen, and a large open space for events.

The early childhood program expanded to include 3- and 4-year-olds. Joan Brumbaum served as director, followed by Barbara Fischer in 1978.

Also in 1972, the first Vacation Bible School (VBS) was held over two weeks, with 200 children from the church and surrounding community attending.

Music and fellowship ministries flourished under choir director Gerry Gruenbaum. New groups included the Couples Club, a senior group known as the "Keenagers," and youth ministries—OSLY (high school) and JOSLY (junior high).

In 1973, voting rights within the congregation were expanded to include 18-year-old males and all women of the church.

1980s

In the 1980s, Pastor Volz established a vicarage program, through which nine vicars eventually served the congregation.

In 1982, the Lutheran School Association determined that OSL should begin the Lutheran Central West Campus. Groundbreaking for a new education building took place in January 1984, and the building was dedicated just seven months later in time for the 1984–1985 school year.

Children's choir and handbell choir programs were also established during this decade. Marvin Oestmann became principal of Lutheran Central and served as the church organist.

By the late 1980s, OSL's early childhood program and Lutheran Central West Campus were unified as Our Savior Lutheran School. Dolores Bethmann began serving as church secretary in 1986.

1990s

The congregation stepped forward boldly in faith during the 1990s, expanding the sanctuary and adding Luther Hall as part of a major building program. During construction, Sunday services were held in the education building.

The new sanctuary was dedicated on December 12, 1993. Several meaningful elements from the original church were incorporated, including the marble altar top and the Risen Jesus figure placed on the cross. Furnishings and woodwork were handcrafted in the Bahamas by John Mitchell.

A two-story classroom and office addition was also completed. Dan Czaplewski was called as the first Assistant Pastor and School Principal.

The school received its first National Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA) in 1993. A Worship and Praise service was introduced in 1995.



Barbara Fischer was honored as OSL's first Educator of the Year in 1991. Outreach efforts included support for the Cooperative Feeding Program, Project Angel Tree, the Lippman Shelter, and Seafarers' House at Port Everglades.

Jan Withers became church secretary in 1997.

2000s

Pastor Volz retired in August 2001. After a brief interim period with Elmer Medley, Ed Nicklas was installed as pastor.

The Praise Service evolved into a contemporary worship service with communion, known as Shout for Joy. The Crossways two-year Bible study was offered multiple times, each with new insights and learning opportunities.

A Visioning Day was held in November 2003. Nancy Volz joined the staff as Finance Director in 2000. Heather Bleier was called as Director of Christian Education (DCE) in 2006 after completing her internship in 2005.

Members who entered pastoral ministry included Michael Wentzel (2002), Lisa Barry (2002), Roy Olsen (2005), and Shane McCoy (2013).



Dorothy Schawk reorganized the Church Properties Board, introducing a system for members to sponsor care zones around the church. The congregation received Plantation's P.L.A.N.T. Award and developed a church logo.

Jane Nicklas became principal in 2002. The Swing for Scholars Golf Tournament was established in 2003.

Donna Swift (2004) and Linda Root (2009) were named Educator of the Year. The school expanded with a 2-year-old program (2005) and middle school (2006), with its first eighth-grade graduation in 2007. The School Annual Fund was established in 2006.

In 2009, participation in the Transforming Churches Network (TCN) led to the adoption of the vision statement: Serving Christ – Serving Others – Changing Lives.

The church became an active mentoring partner with Mirror Lake Elementary School and supported organizations such as LifeNet4Families, Mission: Haiti, and Food for the Poor. Music groups regularly served in the community through singing and handbell performances.

2010s

In 2010, OSL received the Exemplary Congregation Award from the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), with Ed Nicklas addressing the national convention.

The 50th Anniversary was celebrated in 2011 with three major events held in January, March, and May.

Our Savior Lutheran Church Historical Summary (Cont.)

Pastor Walter D Volz celebrated 50 years of ordained ministry. In his honor, the Reverend Walter D. Volz Servant of Christ Award was established, with Libby Martino as its first recipient. To date, 15 individuals have received this recognition.

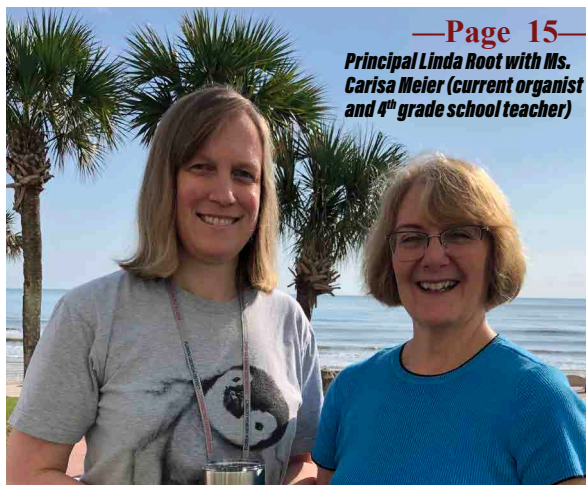
Ed Nicklas retired in 2013, followed by Jane Nicklas in 2014. Linda Root became School Principal in 2014.

Tony Durante was called to serve as shepherd in 2018.

2020s

The decade began with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, followed by a period of recovery and restoration for both the church and school.

And the rest... is history!





GUESS WHO? (P.5)

ANSWERS:

A) Brad Heine with his late wife Sandra, son Nick, & daughter Kimberly.

B) Mary & Dolor Ginchereau



BIRTHDAYS

APR 26

Beth Ahrens

MAY 1

Cathy Koontz

Kiara Westby

MAY 3

Prentis Johnson

MAY 4

Kelly Srot

MAY 5

Carol Chaddock

Anthony Colburn

Rolf Fischer

Robert Latimer

MAY 9

Ian Johnson

Jan Withers

MAY 10

Mary Ginchereau

MAY 11

Noah Chang

MAY 12

Kim Schuh

MAY 13

Harriette Leslie

MAY 16

James Hurst

MAY 17

Pam Mills

MAY 20

Les Mellott

MAY 24

Christina Flahive

John Wheeler

MAY 26

James Leone

MAY 31

Heston Curry

If you are a member and have not seen your birthday or anniversary listed in our newsletter, kindly contact [Mika](#) at, (954) 473-6888. Not sure if you're a member? Contact us. We'd love to help you find out!

WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

MAY 4

Rob Losier & Wendi Miller (31)

MAY 5

Jerry & Alejandra Starner (29)

Joseph & Kristin Iannarone (2)

MAY 7

Edward & Linda Stannard (21)

MAY 16

Michael & Tammy Weidner (34)

MAY 18

Michael & Donna McLeod (10)

MAY 19

Timothy & Caroline Brangan (14)

MAY 19

Greg & Karen Goth (36)

MAY 24

Robert & Lerryn Latimer (58)

MAY 24

John & Glenda Strang (52)

Nicole and Tony Linley, Bill and Chris (not pictured) Presson, and Thomas Boatwright at the 65th Anniversary Reception (April 19, 2026).



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Our Savior Lutheran Church & School

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SCHOOL

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www.oslplantation.school

Linda Root, Principal

lroot@oursaviorplantation.org

Danielle Durham, Assistant Principal

ddurham@oursaviorplantation.org



ALTAR FLOWER DONATIONS



If you would like to direct your contribution toward our **general flower fund**, please write "Flower Fund" on the memo line or envelope. For **personal orders**, kindly fill out the **Chancel Flower Sign-Up** slip and include it with your payment. These are found below or in the pews. We currently only accept checks, cash, or VANCO payments. Please notify the church office when giving through the VANCO app or website.



CHANCEL FLOWERS SIGN-UP



If you would like to have flowers on the altar on a given Sunday in honor of someone, in memory of a loved one, or to commemorate a birthday, etc., all you need to do is fill out this form and put it in the offering plate. The cost is \$25.00 per order; two pieces would cost \$50.00. Call the church office if you have any questions, (954) 473-6888.

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Date you would like flowers: _____

In Honor, Memory, Celebration, or Thanksgiving of _____

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\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Paid ____ / ____ / ____

*Check this box if you would like to collect your flowers after the 10:30 a.m. service.
Any unclaimed flowers will be donated to a local nursing home. Thank you.*