

# Former Lutheran Services of

"We first met Rev. John Moeller when he was hired to be the executive director for Lutheran Services of Georgia," The Rev. Dr. Victor Belton begins. "Although the organization had a great reputation in Georgia for immigration and foster care services in Atlanta and Savannah, it had fallen into disrepute for a number of reasons among members of our LCMS tribe.

"We were not sure of its direction, and it seemed to be less and less about proclamation of the Gospel and more about chasing government dollars to stay current and afloat. This happens in many of our institutions as denominational support dwindles and yet those to be served



continually increase and multiply.

"I recently attended my first board meeting of this re-branded Lutheran Services of Georgia, now known as Inspiritus, and it seems good to me and the Holy Spirit that we take another look."

The organization, under Rev. John Moeller, has risen from the ashes and has been graciously preserved. It has morphed into an organization that has grown in sense of mission, areas geographically served and initiatives undertaken. Moeller became the executive of Lutheran Services of Georgia in 2017.

"It was apparent right from the start," Belton continues, "that restructuring and revitalization would be necessary. The board has been reconstituted with a number of new members who bring capacity and connections in government, banking, finance, development, organizational structure, and human resources. The church connections have been expanded to include Presbyterians, United Methodists, and the United Church of Christ — as well as Lutherans. The Lutheran clergy on the board raise questions consistently regarding how our activities will promote the Gospel of Jesus Christ as well as help people."

The reconstitution, and the

merger with Lutheran Services in Tennessee in 2019, is what constituted the change in the name and branding to Inspiritus.

"Note the three words in the name In-Spirit-Us! That is, 'Lord Jesus, fill us with your Holy Spirit, inspire and strengthen us, grant us courage and joy in your labor so that we can serve others in the overflow of your love and mercy.'

According to Belton, that ultimately led to the development of some additional program areas in addition

to foster care, disability services, adoption, and refugee and immigrant services.

"Those additional areas include disaster response and the Nashville project. It is hoped that the Nashville project, beyond helping women and children in a neighborhood of need, will be able to use space provided by the ELCA for offices, programs, and

**Inspiritus guides individuals and families on a path from surviving to thriving. They empower those whose lives have been disrupted to discover their strengths and resilience, accompanying them as they grow into vibrant contributors to their community.**

even affordable housing dedicated to empowering the poor."

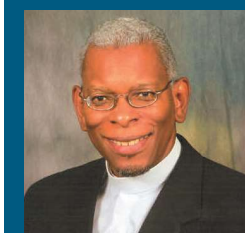
Mick Nelson, CEO of Nelson Community Partners, introduced the Inspiritus board and Nashville leadership group to the idea of developing what the property would look like with a mission focus.

"This project began in Fall, 2020 and we are hopeful that by Spring, 2025 the project will be complete. A \$2.5 million Barnes Housing Trust Fund grant has been attained to develop the property into low and affordable housing for 80+ vulnerable households in the Nashville area.

"Moeller shared that Inspiritus is committed to building what is needed in the community. We will listen and discover how to be great community partners," Belton maintains. "This will be a wonderful opportunity to serve the

elderly and disabled in the Nashville community. Low-income tax credits from the federal government will help keep the rental rates very low. People with housing choice vouchers can pay no more than 30% of their income on housing."

Board Chair Marc Bussone and CEO John Moeller affirm that the most important thing Inspiritus does is guide



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individuals on a path from surviving to thriving. To that end, Inspiritus is also striving to begin a microenterprise program offering small business loans to new immigrants to the United States, particularly to refugees seeking refuge from wars overseas. This will help these fathers and mothers to establish credit and increase their credit score so that they can afford

to purchase automobiles and housing. Adequate credit is essential for people to thrive in this country's economic system. Inspiritus' Refugee Services Director, Aimee Zangandou, is herself a refugee whose family sought refuge in Atlanta following the Rwandan genocide. Zangandou, a Georgia Tech graduate, now leads the refugee services at Inspiritus. She shared her great hope for each of the small businesses the newly arriving refugees will be able to build to support their families — because of the new microenterprise program.

"There are a number of opportunities to volunteer," Belton concludes. "Friends can open their homes to young people for foster care and adoption. There are Afghan and Ukrainian refugees who are fleeing repressive regimes and war. Volunteers are also needed for the disaster response and recovery opportunities that are long term and ongoing.

"There are a number of additional ways to volunteer — we must be generous with our time, our energy and our dollars to support the excellent work that continues to be done by the former Lutheran Services of Georgia, now Inspiritus." ▲



# Georgia Morphs Into Inspiritus



## What we do —

Inspiritus delivers programs and services to help individuals and families progress in four measurable markers of a thriving life: basic needs, stability/safety, community integration and self-sufficiency/self-determination.



## Who We Serve —

Inspiritus empowers those who face challenges and disruptions: children who have been abused or neglected, people with developmental disabilities, refugees and immigrants, individuals affected by natural disaster, and people in low-income communities.



## How You Can Help —

Inspiritus relies on our supporters, volunteers, and community and corporate partners. You are invited you to join with Inspiritus to help increase our impact in the communities in which we serve. Contact The Rev. Dr. Victor Belton at [vjbelton@gmail.com](mailto:vjbelton@gmail.com) or

Inspiritus is a nonprofit social service agency that guides individuals and families whose lives have been disrupted on a path from surviving to thriving. In 2019, Lutheran Services in Tennessee and Lutheran Services of Georgia joined forces and became known as Inspiritus. The name “Inspiritus” derives from the Latin term “inspirit,” which means “to fill with strength or courage.” To “inspirit” is what Inspiritus does. Inspiritus helps individuals and families discover their inner strength and resilience, leading to a more fulfilling life. To learn more or to donate, contact Rev. John Moeller, president & CEO, at [john.moeller@weinspirit.org](mailto:john.moeller@weinspirit.org) or Rev. Dr. Victor Belton at [vjbelton@gmail.com](mailto:vjbelton@gmail.com).

Nashville, TN “Phoenix” created from scraps found by some of the children in the neighborhood.

