

2021 *Spiritus Christi Award*

Dr. Judith (DeCoste) Duda BS '59

Dr. Judith “Judy” (DeCoste) Duda BS '59 was born in Chicago, IL but has lived in Central Florida since January 1958.

Duda was sent by Concordia Teachers College as a “Supply Teacher” to St. Luke’s Lutheran School in Oviedo, FL teaching 39 children in grades 1-3. That “temporary position” evolved into a lifetime of service. With additional education at Rollins College, Duda held several teaching and music director positions in private schools from 1958 - 1979 while raising her family and serving as organist and choir director for St. Luke’s for many years.



Her interests in education, music and the arts and social ministry are reflected in Duda’s volunteer leadership roles. To name just a few, Duda she has served on the President’s Council at Concordia-Chicago and Board of Regents of Concordia-Nebraska; as Chair of the Dean’s Executive Council: College of Arts & Humanities at the University of Central Florida (UCF) and Trustee of Lutheran Summer Music; Vice-President for Christian Service Center in Orlando and Lutheran Services Florida as well as President for Lutheran Counseling Services, Central Florida.

Founder of the St. Luke’s Concert Series in 1993, Duda served as its Executive Director for 25 years. The series has offered complimentary admission for all public performances with annual attendance exceeding 10,000. Duda also served as St. Luke’s Archivist for many years compiling a digital collection of almost 2,000 images accessible on UCF’s STARS website. She co-authored, with two UCF professors, *Like a Mustard Seed: A Century of Faith* in 2016, a book that encompasses 100+ years of local history.

In 2015, Duda served as contributor and narrator for a TV documentary about her grandfather-in-law Andrew Duda Sr., and the Slovak diaspora in Central Florida which aired numerous times on “national TV” in Europe. Her historical research and archival collections have influenced the production of several videos, large permanent wall displays at St. Luke’s and presentations to local historical societies.

In recognition of her effective service and leadership, Duda received the Seminole County Hearts for the Arts Award (2008), a Lifetime Service Award from Concordia-Nebraska (2016) and an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree from UCF (2019) when she also served as Commencement Speaker.

The highest priority and greatest gift in Duda’s life, however, is family. She celebrated 40 years of marriage to Walter Duda before his death in 1999. Duda married again in 2015 to Col. Bud Weber, but lost him to Covid-19 in early 2021. She is blessed with the love and support of her two sons, two daughters, their beloved spouses, nine “perfect” grandchildren and two extraordinary great-grandchildren!