

Mission festival informs and inspires

MIDDLE LAKE, Sask. - Faith Lutheran Church hosted more than 75 visitors—including LCC president Rev. Robert Bugbee and new mission executive Rev. Dr. Leonardo Neitzel—November 21 at the Northland Circuit Mission Festival.

The idea for a mission festival developed after Faith member Arlene Kish attended the Central District convention last April. Hearing reports about shortfalls in financial support, Kish became determined to alert local congregations about missionaries spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as well as more tangible social ministries such as those providing food or medical care.

President Bugbee travelled from Winnipeg to make a presentation, along with mission and social ministry executive Dr. Neitzel. The synod supports fledgling Lutheran church organizations in Ukraine, Thailand, Cambodia and Central America, not only with funding but also with volunteers who train nationals to be missionaries, pastors and teachers among their own people.

Concordia Lutheran Seminary in Edmonton is one of LCC's two seminaries preparing future pastors. Director of development Rev. Daniel Deyell explained that the seminary also hopes to make learning more accessible to any church member via part-time classes, distance education and special-interest seminars.

Rev. Wayne Olson and parish worker Melissa McNeil described the challenges facing La Ronge Lutheran Fellowship. They gear many programs and activities to youth and children, and future goals include buying a ministry bus and building a multi-purpose centre for community outreach.

Rev. Sye Van Maanen from the Central District office in Regina outlined more mission opportunities "in our own backyard." Besides supporting the La Ronge fellowship, district congregations help fund Street Reach Ministries in Thunder Bay, a ministry to the

deaf community in Winnipeg, and a revamped educational program for church members. Immigrant communities served by various congregations include a large Oromo (African) population in Winnipeg, a Central American group in Brandon, and Germans and Russians in the Steinbach area. Establishing a street ministry in Regina is under consideration.

During free time, festival participants could play a "fish for missions" game, shop at the Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR) Four Corners store, fold bandages for medical missions and scan displays from CLWR, Concordia Lutheran Mission Society, Lutheran Women's Missionary League-Canada, Bethany Pioneer Village, and FaithLife Financial (who helped sponsor the event).

Faith Lutheran women provided the noon meal and refreshments, and Faith's Rev. Ken Keller led opening and closing worship, with piano accompaniment by Dori Cooke. Children from the congregation also took part, singing a traditional



LCC mission executive, Dr. Leonardo Neitzel, (left) and President Robert Bugbee: "You can have confidence in the work LCC is doing."

West African welcoming song and a harvest thanksgiving song.

Organizers hope this will become an annual event hosted by various circuit congregations. The widespread Northland Circuit comprises churches in Chociceland, Hudson Bay, Humboldt, La Ronge, Melfort, Middle Lake, Mistatim, Nipawin and Prince Albert. Pastors and members of Saskatoon Circuit churches also attended.



Rev. Daniel Deyell, Concordia Lutheran Seminary, Edmonton, speaks to participants.



Deacon Melissa McNeil and Rev. Wayne Olson of La Ronge, Sask.

Coming events

February 13 - Saskatoon Circuit Mission Festival, Faith (Saskatoon)

March 20 - Equipping to Share workshop, Faith (Saskatoon)

April 9-10 - LLL Central District Convention, Zion (Yorkton)

Seeing the love of Christ in Haiti

WINNIPEG - A group of 10 Christians travelled from western Canada to Haiti October 14-21 to help out in an eyeglass clinic coordinated by MOST Ministries, an organization (associated with The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod) that facilitates short-term mission trips. The team's goal was to find opportunities to share their faith and minister to hurt people—for the lost to see Jesus through these vision clinics.

The team travelled by air from Winnipeg to Miami, arriving in Port-au-Prince to join another team of 10 from the United States. The city seemed huge, hot and humid, with garbage everywhere along with gun-toting soldiers. The next day the combined group headed over mountainous terrain to Jacmel on the Caribbean coast.

The first half-day eyeglass/medical clinic opened up at First Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jacmel. A dental team arrived the following day. Clinics also set up shop at a school in a town half an hour away. People attending the clinics were often visibly moved by



Haiti mission team (l-r): Linda Kullman (Peace, Winnipeg), Charlene Rogers (St. John's, Warman, Sask.), Gerald Otto (Saint James, Winnipeg), Judith Sedo (Good Shepherd, Winnipeg), Alex Richards (Holy Cross, Winnipeg), Wilma Keating, Agnes and Fred Luciw (Saint James, Winnipeg), Marilyn Swain (Peace, Winnipeg) and Rosemary Langner.



Marilyn Swain serving at the eyeglass clinic.

the love shown them. Team members witnessed the joy in the face of one man with very poor eyesight after they were able to fit him with a pair of glasses and a simple white cane, to assist him as well as to make others aware of his difficulty.

Sunday morning the group

worshipped with the congregation at the Jacmel church, serenaded by a choir of young women blessing them with a traditional "sending" song. This service, as well as another on Sunday evening, lasted about two hours.

Life is not easy in the poorest country in the western hemisphere—many

go hungry and most eat only two meals a day, yet Haitians welcomed the team with generous hospitality and large smiles. One team member noted, "I have been given so much and it's my duty to give back...the people of Haiti helped me to see that more clearly. I will never forget those smiling faces against the backdrop of horrible living conditions."

In total the clinics distributed 446 pairs of eyeglasses and 75 or more pairs of sunglasses. Gifts of money raised back home went to the pastor for ongoing care of his congregation and to an orphanage for care of its children. LWMLC teddy bears, as well as many other items the team transported all the way from Canada, found new homes in Haiti.

Marilyn Swain

Christmas comes to Street Reach



Enjoying the food that streamed in from donors.

THUNDER BAY, Ont. - With the Christmas tree lit and an atmosphere of love and friendship in the air, December 10 saw Christmas start early at Street Reach Ministries.

Thunder Bay's Lappe Lutheran church choir filled the room with carols, and musicians on guitars belted out gospel, blues and old-time favourites. Rev. Neil Otko joined in on the spoons.

Spreading a bit of God's love through music, fellowship, food and sharing made for a memorable evening—a joyous way of celebrating the birth of the One who came for us all.

Mary-Anne Barton

Play shows different side of visual impairment

THUNDER BAY, Ont.

- Mixing humour and heart, the cast of *Sight Unseen* showed Thunder Bay a different side of visual impairment. Based on personal stories, the play featured actors—including an LCC pastor—who are themselves visually impaired.

Rev. Clark Wilkie (pastor emeritus, Thunder Bay) is both a client of CNIB (formerly known as the Canadian National Institute for the Blind) and a volunteer speaker for the organization. Though no stranger to speaking before groups, he said acting was quite a different experience.

Four years ago he lost his central vision but retains some peripheral vision. Twenty years ago, when told he would eventually become legally and functionally blind, the thought was worse than when it actually happened, he reports. “Life



Rev. Clark Wilkie (right) rehearses the opening scene for *Sight Unseen*.

is the same,” says Wilkie today. “I have peripheral vision—I can sense someone is there, but I can make you disappear just by looking at you. I find life is no different than it was before, except that I can’t drive. I can’t read yet...but I’m learning Braille.”

Wilkie said he finds a lack of knowledge in the general public about visual impairment, partly because people are so afraid of even

the thought of losing their sight. People who have not experienced vision loss, he says, think of it as complete darkness, but that is not accurate. “If you take our cast, for example, there is an amazing difference between them. Two people are classed as totally blind, but one of them can sense the difference between light and dark.”

Eleanor Albanese, director and facilitator, said the cast was made

up of brave and joyous people who had a message and delivered it with enthusiasm. Writing workshops helped them develop the script and add some of the cast’s personal stories to the mix.

The play ran at the Bora Laskin Theatre November 26-28, funded by the Ontario Arts Council.

*with files from Jeff Labine
tbnewswatch.com*

Children lead journey to Bethlehem

THUNDER BAY, Ont. - Lappe Lutheran Church children’s ministries presented their perception of the first Christmas December 13.

The angel Gabriel, large as life, visited a young woman in her home. An angel appeared to Joseph in a dream instructing him what to do. Multitudes of angels startled awake a band of shepherds, tired and cold in the middle of the night.

The scene unfolded on a mountain of fresh green hay surrounded by stuffed animals. Lucas, 6, brought five dogs which played with the live “sheep” actors (Lucas himself, Benjamin, 1, and Lorelei, 3). Congregation and family members in the audience enjoyed each moment, finding themselves transported to Bethlehem to



Angels appear to the shepherds.

witness the birth of *Immanuel*—God with us.

By faith the children received this Bible story, simply believed it and,

in turn, told it to the congregation in their own way—acting as the church’s youngest missionaries.

Mary-Anne Barton

Saskatchewan Lutherans prominent at pro-life conference

SASKATOON - The National Pro-Life Conference, October 29-31, drew some 250 people and strengthened connections between different sectors of the pro-life movement. "Protecting life from fertilization to natural death is the pro-life movement's goal," said Muriel Nielsen, president of the Saskatchewan Pro-Life Association, welcoming Canadian delegates as well as international speakers to *Building Bridges: Making Choices for Life*.

"We must build bridges to other groups so we can be more effective in the work we do," said Nicole Pyle, the conference committee's Saskatoon chair. The three-day event included several speakers, panel discussions, prayer services, and a Friday evening banquet.

Opening the sessions, Dr. James Lamb, executive director of U.S. Lutherans for Life, spoke about scriptural and faith imperatives to imitate Christ and "cherish the children," because each one is precious to God. "Our starting point for cherishing the children is knowing how much we are cherished by God," said Lamb. "Scripturally, a child is anyone who is vulnerable and in need, who needs to be loved, who needs to be protected," Lamb said, adding that as the "hands and feet" of Christ, Christians have Jesus himself to offer to those who are despised, suffering and downtrodden.

"We are for life because God is for life," Lamb said, adding that the struggle for life is taking place within the victory that Christ has already won. "We need more of our fellow Christians to wake up, step out and make a difference as shining lights in the world." He also spoke to nine local LCC pastors and vicars at a breakfast meeting, preached at St.



Cliff Pyle, president of Lutherans for Life-Canada and a member of Grace (Saskatoon), thanks Dr. James Lamb for his presentation.

Paul's Lutheran and led a Bible study there Sunday morning.

Keynote speaker Andrea Mrozek, founding director of ProWomanProLife, described her efforts to deliver the message that abortion harms women. She expressed frustration at how many well-meaning people unquestioningly accept abortion as a woman's right, crucial to freedom and equality, when in reality abortion is a grave injustice, which in addition to taking the lives of unborn children harms all women.

Jim Hughes of Campaign Life Coalition related how a woman came into his office to say that seeing the signs displayed at a Life Chain demonstration changed her mind about having an abortion—as a result, her five-year-old daughter is alive today. "It is all worth it," he said.

Other speakers included Winnipeg-South MP Rod Bruinooge, a member of the multi-party pro-life caucus; author and lawyer Ezra Levant, who is calling for an investigation into the work of the Canadian Human Rights Commission; Winnipeg's Dr. Larry Reynolds, an internationally recognized medical professor and researcher; Samantha Singson of the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute, who has worked as

a pro-life lobbyist at the United Nations; Fr. Louis DiRocco, a priest of the Archdiocese of Kingston who also worked full time for a number of years as a pro-life U.N. lobbyist; John-Henry Westen, co-founder of LifeSite News; and Alex Schadenberg of the Euthanasia Prevention coalition.

Dr. Delores Sparagna Doherty, president of LifeCanada/VieCanada, noted the high number of young people registered and reminded conference

goers that gatherings such as these help inspire and encourage individuals in their often challenging work. A student panel (with Leah Hallman from the University of Calgary, Dax Rumsey of the University of Saskatchewan and Renee Schmitz, assistant western director of the National Campus Life network) discussed challenges in bringing the pro-life message to university campuses.

"No one pro-life organization has it all," said Nicole Pyle. "We must help each other reach our vital goals to save babies, to help women make informed decisions, to make sure those hurting because of an abortion know God loves them and is ready to heal their silent pain... Now [we have] a new goal, to tell our seniors and our parents that we love them, and we want them to live until our Creator takes them."

*with files from:
Cliff Pyle, Lutherans for Life-Canada
Kipley Lukan Yaworski,
The Prairie Messenger*

Clarification:

Water with the Word: A Baptism Q&A is available as a free PDF from www.bythefont.com/downloads or as an inexpensive paperback (to order, e-mail kellyklages@mts.net).

Live Nativity delights passersby

THUNDER BAY, Ont. - On the nights of December 19 and 20, real animals chewed hay as people passing by Trinity Lutheran Church came upon a stable, a manger and a living cast of wise men, shepherds and angel surrounding the Holy Family, silently but vividly proclaiming the Word of God and the fulfilment of His prophecy to send a Saviour.

More than 150 people took in the sights and sounds of that first Christmas night, as a



Snow fell gently on the sheep and donkey as they helped tell the story of our Saviour's birth.

speaker system played carols and broadcast the voice of 13-year-old Tyra Laws telling the Christmas story. On one occasion one of the sheep drew right up to the manger and nuzzled the baby's cheek, to the delight of children watching from the city sidewalk.

In the church basement hall, hot chocolate, tea and coffee helped everyone warm up. This unique opportunity to experience the Christmas story touched many hearts.



Ponderings from the president

It's not fair!

Life often doesn't seem fair. The person who pulls into the lot just behind you beats you to the last parking spot. You had your

heart set on triple-fudge chocolate-mint ice cream, but the store doesn't have any today—even though you saw it there yesterday. Your favourite football team is ahead for the entire game—then, with no time left on the clock, they take a penalty for having too many men on the field. The opposing team takes advantage and wins the game and championship.

This recognition of the unfairness of life began when I was a child. If my helping of ice cream was slightly bigger than my younger brother's, loud words of disappointment filled the room. If *he* got to sit in the front seat on a car trip when I thought it was really *my* turn, cries of frustration ensued. The inequality of life reached its height when we were disciplined. My brother would punch, poke or generally harass me. I'd get angry and respond in kind, usually with a little something extra. Of course, my mother never saw the original offence, but it seems as if I was always caught and punished when I tried to get even. In hockey, it's known as the "retaliation penalty."

On a more serious note, you save your money for many years, only to see those savings earn little as interest rates plummet. You work hard, giving your heart to a company for many years, only to be let go with little more than a thank-you when the company

downsizes or closes. Two people commit murder in virtually similar circumstances. One is sentenced to many years in prison, while the other receives a light sentence or is even exonerated of any wrongdoing. Life just doesn't seem fair.

In many ways, we are thankful our God is *not* fair with us. If He treated us fairly, we would no doubt experience many more bad days than good. If God treated us in fairness as we deserved, we would experience only His just judgment, wrath and condemnation. The reason He doesn't is simple: we sin daily and do not come close to meeting His demand for perfection.

Many times we experience the ultimate in unfairness when we have to suffer punishment for something someone else did. Jesus experienced that when He bore our sins on the cross, paying for them in full with His perfect life and innocent suffering and death.

While our God is just and fair, thankfully, He is truly merciful! Because of Jesus, He deals with us on His terms of love and mercy. As He feeds and strengthens us through His Word and sacraments, we bear the unfair situations of life with the confidence that He will bring about some good from it (Romans 8:28). When we face unfairness we are not bitter, but instead we speak of Christ's love and mercy (1 Peter 3:15-17). When we suffer unfairly for someone else's sin, we bear it patiently, not seeking revenge (Matthew 5:39).

God's love in Christ: that's more than fair!

Rev. Thomas Prachar

Students boost number of lifesavers in community

WINNIPEG - Beautiful Savior Lutheran School, one of 26 schools across Manitoba chosen to participate in a pilot CPR program, devoted November to teaching the lifesaving skill. The "Tree of Life" program showed students from Grades 5 to 8 how they can help make their community safer by learning basic cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

Each student received a kit, *CPR Anytime™*, with a DVD and book detailing CPR basics, along with a personal inflatable CPR mannequin (known as Mini Annie) to practice on. From Friends of the Heart and Stroke Foundation, the program teaches non-professional rescuers of all ages how to perform CPR in approximately 25 minutes. Organizers encouraged each student to use the kit and train a minimum of five other people in CPR.

Students then created a "Tree of Life" in the school, each of its

heart-shaped leaves labelled with the name of someone who completed the training. It's a graphic display of how many more lifesavers their

community now has, thanks to a month of learning and passing along the simple skill of CPR.

Leslie Kolmel



"Tree of Life" bears a leaf for every community member trained in CPR.

District board faces difficult decisions

LUMSDEN, Sask. - LCC Central District's board of directors, in an attempt to be good stewards, gathered November 23-24 for its quarterly meeting at St. Michael's Retreat Centre, just north of Regina.

Members reviewed the district strategic plan's mission and vision statements, looked at governance issues and discussed the role of vice-presidents and circuit counsellors.

The board appointed Eileen Turner (Christ, Neepawa, Man.) as lay representative to the board for the Winnipeg region. She replaces Claudia Edel whose husband, Rev. Ken Edel, took a position as military chaplain in Edmonton. The board also appointed Rev. James Wood to the Central District Reconciliation Committee.

The district president reported that five parishes are calling a pastor, while 18 are not calling at present. Melissa McNeil was placed as a deacon (DPS) at La Ronge Lutheran Fellowship, Saskatchewan. Rev.

Alex Klages (Trinity, Winkler/Zion, Morden) became new circuit counsellor for the Portage circuit.

In financial matters, board members learned that the district might not achieve the \$850,000 congregation mission goals by the end of the fiscal year. By estimation, budget reserve funds will only last about another three years.

At a previous meeting, the board considered undertaking mission work on Aboriginal reserves near Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan. After further discussion the board investigated plans to begin a street ministry in Regina. To start and maintain such a ministry, current funds would need to be reallocated, but would be sufficient for only three to four years of operation. The board continues to wrestle with these possibilities.

With the district office in Regina needing major renovations, the staff has investigated various options to

build, buy or lease office space in the city. At the board's further request, a feasibility study will look into incorporating the district office with the synodical office in Winnipeg. The study will be presented to the board at its May meeting.

Visit the Central District website at www.lcccentral.ca

Send news, photos, articles and announcements six weeks prior to publication month.

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