

A Sikh experience

ETOBICOKE, Ont. - At the East District Intercultural Conference on June 20 at Our Saviour Lutheran Church, missionary Joseph Singh helped immerse visitors into the strange-to-us world of the Sikhs. For the occasion he had grown his beard and wore a traditional Sikh turban, and fit the role perfectly. Joseph, together with missionaries Javed Khan from Windsor and James Luke from Brampton, gave conference participants a well-rounded presentation about the Sikh religion and how we might best share the Gospel with them.

The Sikh religion started three centuries ago, in 1699, in a region spanning India and Pakistan known as the Punjab. Today, with about 26 million Sikhs in the world, Canada is home to more than 300,000, making up about one percent of Canada's population. Sikh families are mostly concentrated in the greater Toronto and Vancouver areas.

In the afternoon participants paid a visit to a *gurdwara*, a local Sikh temple. It was nothing fancy: a spacious unit in a commercial strip. On the outside, the only distinguishing features were small triangular yellow and orange flags on the rooftop. At the entrance we removed our shoes and received scarves to cover our heads. Then Joseph led us into the main carpeted hall, empty except for a raised platform with a canopy—the *takht* (throne) upon which sat the Sikh holy book, the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Before the throne stood a large offering chest; beside it sat a woman offering visitors a sweet dessert.

Next we entered a small adjoining room with a bed in it. Every night when the *gurdwara* prepares to close for the day, the holy book is ceremoniously brought into this room and “put to sleep” on the bed. Sikhs treat their scriptures like royalty. It made me think how carelessly we sometimes treat our own Scriptures, which are not just the writings of some special men, but the very Word



A wedding service at a Sikh temple or *gurdwara*.

of God—the Word which was also made flesh in Christ.

Leaders then showed us to an adjoining hall and invited us to sit in a row on a long carpet set with trays, where we ate a simple, spicy but tasty curry meal. Whenever the *gurdwara* is open, the kitchen is also open—to freely serve anyone who comes in. I think it would be a great idea to bring some of my church members for a visit to gain a greater appreciation of the Biblical concept of “practicing hospitality.”

Missionary Javed Khan described the wonderful opportunity we have to share our faith with Sikhs. It was evident Sikhs are generally open and not hostile to people of other religions. In spite of their

outwardly distinctive dress (most men wear turbans and full beards) no prohibitions or customs prevent them from interacting with Christians. Thoughtful Sikhs must be painfully aware of the rather recent origin of their religion and the limitations of its man-made character. The god they worship is more like a divine principle meant to teach them how to live. I suspect many Sikhs have a hunger for a more meaningful relationship with the personal God who loves them in Christ.

If you have a Sikh friend, pray for him or her; ask about their beliefs and share Jesus. An excellent resource is *The Story of Jesus for Children* DVD available at www.tobiascom.com/lcc, which includes a Punjabi (the main Sikh language) voiceover. If you see a Sikh on the street, don't be intimidated by his turban or beard! Greet him and you may be surprised at his friendliness and hospitality.

If you live in a major urban area try to find a local *gurdwara* and ask about visiting there with some friends from your church. You may find God giving you a wonderful opportunity to widen your horizons of the mission field among us and to share Christ's love with those who have not yet heard.

From a report by Rev. Gerhard Wilch, Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Toronto

LWMLC continues shining like stars

OSHAWA, Ont. - At its Fall Rally at Grace Lutheran Church on October 4, the Toronto Zone celebrated 60 years as members of LWMLC's Ontario District. Guest speaker Ann Carson, a member of Grace, spoke about her mission trip to Nicaragua. The rally theme, *Shine Like Stars* (carried on from July's national convention in Ottawa) came through graphically on a banner, on which each star



held the name of one of the zone's departed sisters in Christ.

Carolyn McLeod, LWMLC Ontario District, Toronto Zone

Pastor serves as intercultural missionary

MISSISSAUGA, Ont. - Lutheran Church-Canada ordained its first pastor of Pakistani descent, and the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) received a new missionary for intercultural ministry, with the ordination and installation of Rev. James Luke at Christ Our King Lutheran Church on Saturday, September 12. With a Saturday chosen to encourage greater community participation, more than 200 attended from a multitude of faiths and walks of life. Sixteen Lutheran pastors also participated in the service.

Rev. Luke earned his MDiv from Faith Theological Seminary in Pakistan in 1992. After immigrating to Canada he worked for Bombardier Aerospace as an aeronautical engineer, but also proclaimed the Word of God in local churches. In 2005 he joined POBLO (People of the Book Lutheran Outreach) as a missionary and worked among Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs in the Toronto area. In January 2007 he joined the colloquy program at Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, St. Catharines.

GTA's Intercultural Ministry receives sponsorship both from



Sixteen Lutheran pastors participated in the service.

LCC's East District and the LCMS English District, along with local parishes of both synods. Their vision is to spread the Gospel by building relationships and developing new intercultural congregations. Rev. Luke has the gigantic task of motivating and equipping our own Lutheran people, with the help of local Lutheran churches, for evangelism to their neighbours of any colour or creed.

Rev. Luke and his wife, Rehana, have three married sons: Solomon



Following the service of installation, those gathered joined for fellowship and food.

in California, Zohur in Texas, and Zemran in Brampton. Rehana and James are the proud grandparents of five.

Rev. Larry Flohr, Christ Our King, Mississauga

Lutherans honour Canada's fallen

PORT ROWAN, Ont. - A federal cabinet minister joined Lutheran Church-Canada ministers for a pre-Remembrance Day service inside a local community centre November 8.

Diane Finley, federal minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and Padre Jason Kouri, 12e Régiment blindé du Canada, were among the 350-plus people who attended the solemn worship service and wreath laying.

Kouri, who is a captain in the Canadian Forces, spoke about the comfort Christ brings.

Delivering the liturgy was Rev. Lawrence Labatt, chaplain of Royal Canadian Legion Branch 279 and pastor emeritus of Christ the King Lutheran Church, Port Rowan.



Front l-r: Diane Finley, federal minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Padre Jason Kouri, 12e Régiment blindé du Canada, and Bombardier Routley, Gunner Giesbrecht and Sgt. Jenereaux, all of the 56th Field Artillery Regiment. Back: Rev. Lawrence Labatt, chaplain Royal Canadian Legion Branch 279, Roy Dinner, past president Branch 279, and George Gatesof, president Branch 279.

Praise His name forever—a 75th celebration

WATERLOO, Ont. - With the theme chosen, dates set, speakers booked and menus planned, Redeemer Lutheran Church invites all to attend as they “Praise His Name Forever” and give thanks for the blessings God has shown over the past 75 years.

Throughout 2010, the third Sunday of each month will focus on the anniversary theme of giving thanks. Guest preachers will be former pastors or sons of the congregation. Highlights include Family Day in February, Confirmation Reunion in May, and

a banquet with guest speaker Rev. Robert Bugbee, LCC’s president, in November.

Special outreach activities—an antique-car show in June and a children’s carnival in July—will open Redeemer’s doors to its neighbours.

In January, 12 Redeemer members go to León, Nicaragua, with a special mission project fund, so that even those staying at home can participate in sharing God’s promises in a foreign land.

A note to friends of the congregation and former members:

If you’re unable to attend in person, the organizers would be thrilled to hear some of your memories of life at Redeemer. Jot them down and send to jane059@primus.ca. They will be printed in the monthly newsletter, and the church is considering publishing a memory booklet.

Check www.redeemer-church.ca for details as they become available, or phone the church office at 519-745-5027.

Jane Ryan,
75th Anniversary Committee,
Redeemer, Waterloo



From the President

How does one approach Bethlehem?

How does one approach Bethlehem? Most people approach it from the north, as Mary and

Joseph did that first Christmas, since Bethlehem is about six miles south of Jerusalem. One could also approach it from the south or from the west, or perhaps from the east—as the Wise Men did.

How does one approach Bethlehem? Tradition tells us Mary approached it riding on a donkey. Christian Arabs, even today, find camels helpful in approaching the town. For centuries pilgrims approached it on foot. Today many people approach it riding in a Mercedes-Benz bus.

How does one approach Bethlehem? Mary and Joseph approached it slowly, because Mary was very pregnant. Pilgrims throughout the ages have approached it cautiously, for local inhabitants have always seen in pilgrims the opportunity to make money.

Once again we ask, “*How does one approach Bethlehem?*” Each of us needs to answer this question. What approach will *you* use to approach Bethlehem and celebrate Christmas this year?

Perhaps some of us will emphasize the family approach. Christmas can be a celebration of family. It feels good to be all together, and coming to church at Christmas maintains an important family tradition.

Although there are several ways to approach Bethlehem, really only one correct approach exists to the celebration of the Lord’s birth. This approach was demonstrated by a visitor to the cave in Bethlehem where our Lord was born. She quietly walked to the silver star marking the spot of Jesus’ birth, dropped

to her knees, and kissed it as an act of adoration and worship. Yes, to properly approach Bethlehem and Christmas, we must be willing to humble ourselves at the manger, to forget our pride, and to let the love of God reach down from heaven and touch us.

Scripture tells us so beautifully: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given” (Isaiah 9:6). In Jesus, God is saying to each of us, “I love you. I forgive you of your sins!” Because of the manger, the cross and the empty tomb, all believers in Jesus as their Lord and Saviour from sin can join a pilgrimage that will end at the heavenly Jerusalem. For unto us is given salvation freely, fully, completely.

How do you plan to approach Bethlehem this year? How do you plan to celebrate Christmas? I suggest each of us spend a few minutes on our knees, humbling ourselves before the Lord as the shepherds once did. The Wise Men, even though they were kings, fell on their knees when they came to Jesus. All the saints found God more approachable from their knees. A visitor to Bethlehem, unconcerned about others’ stares, only recognized one thing: that she stood at the place where once lay the Son of God. Therefore, she positioned herself appropriately for worship.

From your knees: Spend a portion of this Christmas thanking God for His gracious gift!

From your knees: Confess your sins!

From your knees: Invite the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit to deepen your faith!

From your knees: Celebrate Christmas!

Rev. Paul Zabel

Five Reformation services in five Maritime locations

And as they were scattered, they went about preaching the Word (Acts 8:4).

ATLANTIC CANADA - On Reformation weekend, worshippers attended divine services at three new Maritime locations. Besides regularly scheduled services at Good Shepherd (Moncton, N.B.) and Faith (Dartmouth, N.S.), the sites included:

- Charlottetown, P.E.I., with Rev. David Milette on Saturday.
- Wolfville, N.S. (Acadia University Chapel), with Rev. Paul Williams on Friday evening.
- Halifax with Rev. Williams on Saturday.

The last three services drew more than 30 people. Along the way, pastors refreshed old contacts and made new ones, and more people



A few of the scattered families gathered for Reformation service in Atlantic Canada.

expressed the desire to come to church, even if not this time—a great reminder that the Church is always more than we can see!

Good Shepherd's designated Regional Missions fund covered costs for the Charlottetown service; Faith's designated Outreach fund covered the Nova Scotia trips. Visit www.goodshepherd.nb.ca/pei and www.goodshepherd.nb.ca/ns to learn more about the Atlantic Canada outreach efforts.

*Rev. David Milette,
Good Shepherd, Moncton*

Trinity opens doors to community

NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE, Ont. - Two Open Door events at Trinity Lutheran during September and October brought the community in to visit. First came an organ concert by Doreen Korcok on September 13, heralded by an article in the local paper by Pastor Larry Ritter describing Trinity's eight-rank pipe organ.

"It was gratifying to see the visitors," said Rev. Ritter afterward, "as well as Trinity members and members of other Niagara circuit churches. And Doreen did a fine job." Following the concert, all were invited to stay for coffee and refreshments.

On October 18, Oktoberfest at Trinity literally gathered the community under a big tent. A

local caterer provided roast pig and sauerkraut; a roaming accordion player and a German dance troupe (from Club Heidelberg in St. Catharines) entertained. Even the town hall became involved by declaring Trinity's Oktoberfest a community event.

This was the biggest Open House event Trinity had ever organized, and no one knew exactly what to expect, but the evening exceeded everyone's expectations. Attendance came in at more than 200, and people genuinely seemed to enjoy themselves. Rev. Ritter tried to shake as many hands as possible, and many people told him: "Pastor, you have to do this again next year!" A few even expressed interest in visiting Trinity on a Sunday morning!

As Rev. Ritter wrote in the congregational newsletter: "Obviously, these Open House events are *not* the reason we exist as a congregation. We exist as a congregation in order to gather faithfully around Word and Sacrament each week in order to have our sins forgiven and our faith in Christ renewed. However,

these Open House events do serve a valuable purpose. They give us the opportunity to make friends with our neighbours in the name of Christ. And who knows where those friendships might lead? As we befriend others in the name of Christ, we never know when, by God's grace, we may just be making a friend for all eternity!"

*From a report by Rev. Larry Ritter, Trinity,
Niagara-on-the-Lake*

Visit the East District website at
www.lceastdistrict.ca

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

Ilene Fortin, district editor
East District Office
275 Lawrence Avenue,
Kitchener, Ontario N2M 1Y3
E-mail:
ilene@lceastdistrict.ca
Fax: 519-578-3369

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German dance group at Oktoberfest