

Lutheran pastor represents Christian Church at tsunami memorial

KAO LAK, Thailand - At the annual December 26 remembrance ceremony for the 2004 tsunami in Phang-nga province in southern Thailand, Pastor Suchart Srikikarn, president of Takuapa Sahatay Lutheran Church represented the Christian faith. He was invited by the provincial governor to attend “Five years in memory of the tsunami.” The event takes place at the site of a coast guard vessel swept a mile inland by the force of the tsunami and now serves as a memorial to the thousands who lost their lives. Jurin Laksanawisit, Thailand’s education minister presided over the ceremony. The pastor’s participation provides him the opportunity to proclaim the Gospel to the mostly Buddhist and Muslim audience. The invitation is recognition of the Christians who perished in the disaster and the church’s involvement in the relief efforts.

Following the tsunami, Pastor Srikakarn’s congregation, along with the Kok Loi congregation served by Lutheran Church–Canada’s missionary Pastor Suchart Chujit, organized relief efforts with funds provided by members of LCC congregations. Both churches grew as a result of the contacts made following the disaster. Through the Sahatay Church, LCC is still supporting the education of 12 orphans.

At the conclusion of the remembrance ceremony, participants released 2552 lit lanterns into the air in memory of those who died. A Christmas service in Takuapa prevented Pastor Srikikarn from attending the lantern ceremony.



Pastor Suchat Srikakarn, president of Sahatay Takuapa Lutheran Church, at the microphone during an event commemorating the 2004 tsunami in Thailand.

Wittenberg outreach plans taking shape

TAMPA, Fla. - Members of the board supervising a joint U.S.-German effort toward Gospel outreach in Wittenberg, Germany, received a warm welcome when they met in separate meetings in November with The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod’s Board of Directors, Council of Presidents, and Board for Mission Services.

The supervisory board of the International Lutheran Society of Wittenberg (ILSW) met November 18-19 in Tampa, Fla. It used the opportunity to meet with the three LCMS boards, who also were meeting in Tampa in advance of the Lutheran Church Extension Fund Fall Leadership Conference.

The ILSW was established by the Missouri Synod and its German sister church, the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church, known as the SELK, to work jointly in the city most associated with Martin Luther and the Reformation.

“I think we made a great deal of progress toward developing a ministry plan for Wittenberg,” said Rev. David Mahsman, an LCMS missionary who is serving as managing director of the ILSW. “And everyone on the board was very happy with the warm

reception they got from the Board of Directors, the COP, and the mission board.”

It was the ILSW board’s first meeting since Mahsman began working in Wittenberg in September. The board has three members from the Missouri Synod, three from the SELK, and one from Concordia Publishing House.

Mahsman said that most of the meeting was spent working through his first report, which dealt with building relationships for Gospel outreach in Wittenberg, looking at ways to share the Gospel with the hundreds of thousands of tourists who visit the Luther city every year, and exploring options for LCMS students and others to study there.

Only about 15 percent of the people of Wittenberg even profess to be Christian, Mahsman said. The hope is that the LCMS and SELK can help with Gospel outreach “in the very place God used 500 years ago to see to it that we have the Gospel today,” he added.

The ILSW board’s next meeting will be February 16 via video conference.



Development partner announces new funding for LCC projects

WINNIPEG – Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR) has announced \$36,500 in funding for two Lutheran Church–Canada (LCC) programs in Nicaragua this year.

The announcement was made as Iglesia Luterana Sinodo de Nicaragua (ILSN) prepared for its first biennial convention and includes new money for a medical and dental clinic and increases in school scholarships.

The medical clinic, which began operations in May 2009, is open every Thursday beginning at 8 a.m. and remains open until all patients have been seen.

The clinic is staffed by a doctor and a dentist, who see an average of 40-45 patients each week, and provides common medications because many patients are too poor to purchase them.

CLWR will continue to support the Christian Children's Education Program. The program, conducted in all 23 congregations of ILSN, provides an average of 25 scholarships in each community to the neediest children.



CLWR executive director Robert Granke greets school children in Nicaragua.

The scholarships include the required school uniforms, shoes, backpacks and school supplies.

Each child is also enrolled in the tutoring and Christian-education class held five days a week when

children are not in school (Children attend school in the morning or in the afternoon.)

These classes, held in the churches and led by teachers and deaconesses, provide tutoring and homework support for the children in math, Spanish and other subjects. A portion of the time is also set aside for Christian education and cultural activities.

More than 750 children are enrolled in the program. CLWR has provided support for about 250 children.

Since 1999, CLWR has partnered with LCC to support community development projects.

Robert Granke, executive director of CLWR, visited congregations of the ILSN in November. You can read more about his visit at www.lccontheroad.ca, *The Canadian Lutheran* (December 2009) or in the forthcoming issue of CLWR's *Partnership* newsletter due out in early February.

(With files from the CLWR and LCC news.)

Event sends Advent across the ocean to Ukraine

WINNIPEG - More than 280 members of Red River Circuit congregations filled the pews and aisles at Saint James Lutheran Church, Sunday, December 6, to celebrate Advent with music and to support LCC's foreign mission student fund. Five choirs and two soloists brought the message of Christ's coming.

Lutheran Church–Canada President Robert Bugbee preached on Isaiah 52:7 which talks about the beautiful feet of those who preach Good News. He noted how God is using LCC to enable the spread of the Gospel, especially in Ukraine. "From this service we are sending Advent over the ocean," he said, referring to how the offering will support preparing future leaders of the Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Ukraine (SELCU).

The service included choirs from Immanuel; Good Shepherd; Saint James; and a joint choir from Beautiful Savior and Lutheran Church of the Redeemer.

For many the highlight of the evening came when members of the East African Oromo community sang two songs, swaying to the rhythm of the music. The previously quiet congregation broke into applause following the first song, expressing appreciation for this unique contribution. The leader of the Oromo group is currently enrolled in LCC's Pastors with Alternate Training program. His instructor, Pastor Richard Beinert, adjunct professor of Concordia Lutheran Seminary, Edmonton, is also pastor of Immanuel in Winnipeg.

A committee from the circuit organized the event, the second in

2009. In May, a similar gathering at Peace Lutheran Church focused on funding the final construction stages of a seminary building for which Concordia Lutheran Mission Society (CLSM) was gathering funds. That event raised almost \$20,000. Envelopes distributed to congregation members throughout the city continued arriving at CLMS so that by the end of the summer both CLMS Ukraine projects, including the seminary construction, were fully funded.

A similar mission-oriented event is planned for the Vancouver and Fraser Valley circuits on Sunday, February 21 at Trinity, Abbotsford.

To support LCC's Foreign Mission Student Aid fund, go to www.lutheranchurch.ca/donate and click on "Support one of our featured funds today...."

New hymnal a Christmas gift for francophones

MONTREAL – French-speaking Lutherans around the world are singing previously unavailable francophone hymns this Christmas thanks to a new publication.

In November, Lutheran Church–Canada published *Liturgies et cantiques luthériens (LCL)* – a hymnal that brings Francophone Christmas hymns, like *Il est né, le divin Enfant*, into common usage.

“Just as the English-speaking world would never think of Christmas without Silent Night, francophones feel the same way about *Il est né, le divin Enfant*,” said Rev. David Somers, an LCC pastor in Montreal who headed the hymnal project. “The previous hymnal, published some 35 years ago didn’t include it.”

In addition to Christmas hymns, LCL contains several never-before-published material from Lutheran sources in the Alsace-Lorraine region of France.

More than 2,500 copies of the hymnal are now in circulation and are used in Africa, Europe and Haiti.

Somers and Dr. David Saar spent three years on the LCL project, basing

the hymnal on the 2006 Lutheran Service Book (LSB). The LCL, however, is not a direct translation of the LSB.

The Lutheran church is seeing dramatic growth in French-speaking Africa especially in Madagascar. Many members of Somers’ Montreal congregation are Malagasy and have established roots in Quebec.

Lutheranism is not new to the province.

For his doctoral thesis, Somers researched the denomination and discovered many early immigrants from France were Lutheran, escaping the War of Religions that pitted Protestants against Roman Catholics.

Eventually, the Roman church in New France, now Quebec, made it difficult for Protestants to own land or earn a living, so the number of Lutherans and Protestants declined.

“Lutheran worship forms (liturgy) are based on those of the Catholic Church,” said Somers. “The new hymnal reflects that tradition so it has a familiarity with those who come from a Catholic tradition.”

Seminary education still a “lively concern”

WINNIPEG – Stakeholders in the deliberations and findings of LCC’s Task Force on Cost-efficient, Sustainable, Seminary Education can avoid an adversarial process by participating in “regular, candid discussions,” says the group’s chairman.

“Even if the final recommendations of the task force do not meet with universal acclaim, it is important that the various parties to the discussion are given every opportunity to have their concerns heard and considered,” said Pastor Nolan Astley, task force chairman.

The task force met during the fall and held several conference calls. It has also received and considered responses from three district conventions, as well as the seminaries. The deadline for other submissions has passed.

A face-to-face meeting in February planned to focus on what Lutheran Church–Canada (LCC) expects and requires from its seminaries.

The task force chairman thanked all those who have taken time to prepare submissions. “It is obvious that seminary education remains a lively concern within the synod,” he said.

Long-time staff member retires

WINNIPEG - Following two months of leave for health reasons, Worker Benefit Plans director, Inge Schroeder retired in December. She is the longest serving member of Lutheran Church–Canada’s staff, joining the new church in 1989 as administrative support. She soon focused her talents on assisting in the Worker Benefit Plans office, under the supervision of Ken Werschler. In 1997 when Mr. Werschler suffered a stroke, Inge became assistant administrator of the plans, assuming the directorship in 2002.

“We thank God for people like Inge who have such a dedication to serving God’s people,” said LCC

President Robert Bugbee. “We pray that God will continue to bless her as she enters into this new phase in her life.”



During her service with Worker Benefit Plans Mrs. Schroeder shepherded through major changes in the health benefits which allowed members the flexibility to choose coverage which better suited their specific situation. She also worked with the Board of Managers to address the 2008 stock market drop which affected pensions around the world.

LCC treasurer, Dwayne Cleave is providing interim leadership to the Worker Benefit Plans.

Life hotline now available in Canada

REGINA - Lutherans for Life-Canada and Word of Hope, a life ministry affiliated with The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod have established a partnership to provide a ‘hot-line’ service for women contemplating abortion.

The US-based agency’s toll-free number is now linked with Canada and counsellors can refer Canadian callers to Canadian Christian crisis pregnancy centres or LCC contacts.

The toll-free number for Word of Hope is 1-888-217-8679. For more information go to www.word-of-hope.org or www.lutheransforlife-canada.ca

Focus on education at December meetings

WINNIPEG - Two recent meetings centred around Lutheran Church–Canada’s higher education institutions and programs.

President Robert Bugbee convened a meeting of the higher education Advisory Council Wednesday, December 9. The council includes the presidents of LCC’s seminaries and university college: Rev. Dr. Thomas Winger (CLTS, St. Catharines); Rev. Dr. Manfred Zeuch (CLS, Edmonton) and Rev. Dr. Gerald Krispin (CUCA, Edmonton). Rev. Nolan Astley, chairman of the Task Force on Cost Efficient Seminary Education, attended part of the meeting by conference call.

The first part of the agenda asked each of the participants to provide a report on their institution’s current activity and challenges. Following this, Rev. Astley joined the meeting to present the latest information from the task force and follow-up on its recommendations presented to the seminaries in June which included an Advisory Council meeting before year-end.

During the afternoon session, members of the council discussed admissions policies, harmonization of seminary schedules, curriculum, fund-raising and development work, and communication with the church-at-large.

Thursday, December 10 saw a special meeting of LCC’s Council of Presidents, the seminary presidents and Rev. Dr. William Mundt (professor at CLTS, St. Catharines) and Rev. Dr. Glenn Schaeffer (adjunct professor at CLS, Edmonton) who currently administer the Pastors with Alternate Training (PAT) program in their area. The goal of the meeting was to clarify the national framework for the course of study.

The PAT program was established by the 2002 synodical convention to allow the church to prepare pastors to serve specific congregations



Rev. Dr. Thomas Winger (r), acting president of Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, St. Catharines confers with Rev. Dr. Manfred Zeuch, president of Concordia Lutheran Seminary, Edmonton during recent meetings in Winnipeg.

which have special needs. These may include language, culture or geographic isolation.

After hearing how the PAT program is currently delivered and the various needs throughout LCC for pastors to serve unique congregations, the presidents decided to place responsibility for the program with synod’s executive assistant to the president for Mission and Social Ministry Services, Rev. Dr. Leonardo Neitzel. The change will take place July 1. Pastor Neitzel’s doctorate is in missiology, a subject he also taught at the seminary in Brazil.

“These were very constructive and encouraging meetings,” said President Bugbee. “The Lord is placing before us tremendous opportunities and challenges and at the same time He is providing wise and creative counsel to address them.”

Called to Glory

Florence Heinemann, wife of former Board of Directors chairman, Walter Heinemann was called home by her Lord, Wednesday, December 30. A Praise and Celebration of Life Service was held Wednesday, January 6 at Grace Lutheran Church, Regina. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Walter and Florence Heinemann Endowment Fund through Lutheran Foundation Canada.

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Planning workshop sets course for LCC benefit plans

WINNIPEG - For the first time in its more than twenty-year history, Lutheran Church–Canada’s Worker Benefit Plans (WBP) conducted a strategic planning workshop to define its role and mission in an ever-changing employee health and benefits environment. Joining the plan’s Board of Managers and staff members, January 19 and 20 in Winnipeg, were twelve participants representing WBP’s constituencies: members, congregations, schools and higher education institutions.

“This process came at an important time,” remarked Board of Managers chair Lois Griffin. “Meeting with representatives of all our constituents not only gave the board immediate feedback, but began establishing relationships that are important to our future.”

Facilitated by Rev. Dr. Dieter Kays, president and CEO of FaithLife Financial, the workshop goal was “to establish the strategic framework that

will provide guidance to develop a plan design and funding strategy that will ensure a sustainable future.”

Presentations from LCC treasurer, Dwayne Cleave and consultants Mark Dahlman and Nancy Swerhun provided information on the current state of LCC finances and demographics; health benefit plans and pension plans. Group discussions and feedback produced vision and mission statements, defined six values and identified five strategic directions.

The group decided that the mission of Worker Benefit Plans is “to serve members and employers by ensuring the provision of sustainable benefits” summarized in its current slogan “Serving those who serve.”

To guide decisions by the Board of Managers, the vision statement says that “we will develop an efficient, innovative and sustainable benefit plan with shared responsibility among engaged stakeholders.”

An organization such as WBP also requires values by which it conducts its business. Participants identified integrity; transparency; stewardship; consultation; shared responsibility; and excellence as the most important values for the department.

To achieve its stated vision and mission, LCC’s Worker Benefit Plans intends to focus on five primary areas:

1. Ensure sustainability and stability of the plan
2. Ensure an educated and knowledgeable employer and member base
3. Cultivate meaningful involvement from stakeholders with shared responsibility
4. Promote health and wellness of stakeholders
5. Enhance and strengthen the governance process

The Board of Managers’ next scheduled meeting is March 9 and 10 in Edmonton. It is planning focus group discussions across LCC in April.



**LUTHERAN CHURCH–CANADA
WORKER BENEFIT PLANS**

Christmas Eve webcast a first for Lutheran Church–Canada

STONY PLAIN, ALTA. – More than 75 viewers watched a live, webcast of the Christmas Eve service from St. Matthew Lutheran Church.

An additional 67 viewers watched a recorded version of the service online.

The webcast was part of a new move by the Lutheran Church–Canada (LCC) to provide live online coverage of church events.

“For some, this was their Christmas Eve service,” said Ian Adnams, director of communications for LCC. “We are grateful to the congregation, Pastors Bill Ney and Jim Fritsche and technician Paul Ney for making this possible.”



During 2009, LCC webcasts included three district conventions, the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League–Canada (LWML–C) national convention, seminary graduations, as well as seminars and workshops.

Churches with high-speed internet access can webcast their services, too.

“We learn something new with each webcast,” said Adnams. “Although we still encounter some

technical wrinkles, we are approaching each project with a number of backup plans.”

Webcasts are available for further viewing at www.lutheranchurch.ca/videonet

New decade brings communication changes for Lutherans

WINNIPEG – With the new year comes new developments in Lutheran Church–Canada’s communication strategy. The goal is to provide regular, ongoing information online while still providing hands-on communication.

To keep readers up-to-date, news stories, both national and international, along with event reports and news from congregations, districts, and educational institutions will soon begin appearing online only days after the events they report are finished. The current site www.lccinfodigest.ca will handle all news stories. The twice-monthly InfoDigest will continue as an e-mail compilation of news and information.

Dr. Ian Adnams, LCC’s director of communications, noted that the key to keeping the news current is making sure the news reports and photos from congregations get to the district editors as soon as possible.

In addition, an online version of *The Canadian Lutheran*, www.canadianlutheran.ca with more features, columnists and news will launch by September. The hardcopy edition of the magazine will publish six times per year. “The Internet allows us to provide timely news and information and the printed version gives readers something to take home from church and spend time with,” explained Adnams. The magazine will also develop a Facebook presence and continue using Twitter for story alerts.

Plans for the news service include posting short video clips from events. “You can record a video with a cell phone these days, so there’s no reason why that can’t be part of a report, along with a high quality digital photo,” said the director. The site will also have an area for classified ads, coming events and blogs.

The printed version of the magazine is expanded to include more district news and draw stories from the website. “Between the regular magazine, the online version



and ongoing news postings, we hope to engage the broadest possible audience,” said Adnams.

The January/February edition of *The Canadian Lutheran* is already using an web-based system to provide readers with more information on published stories. Dr. Adnams pointed out that as an interim step “we have introduced www.canluthextra.ca which provides readers with follow-up information on stories and articles.” The site also allows readers to comment and engage in discussion with the authors.

Although reducing the number of paper editions of *The Canadian Lutheran* was partially driven by budget concerns, the Board of Directors’ Committee for Communication and Technology which provided advice for the changes believes the new approach is a positive direction. LCC’s research shows many members of congregations are online almost every day.

“The Lord is providing us with new ways to communicate,” observed Dr. Adnams. “Our goal is to build the best media mix using all the tools at our disposal.”

LCC president wraps up the year on *The Lutheran Hour*

ST. LOUIS, Mo. - Rev. Robert Bugbee, president of Lutheran Church–Canada, was guest speaker on *The Lutheran Hour*, Sunday December 27, 2009. This program, *In Christ, A Glad New Year*, was broadcast across Canada and the United States

“When you see Jesus, you’re looking at God’s rescue, love and help,” said President Bugbee in his message based on Luke 2:25-32.

For a list of radio stations that carry *The Lutheran Hour* call Lutheran Laymen’s League of Canada at 1-800-555-6236 or go to www.lutheranhour.ca where you can also listen to the message online or by podcast.

The program’s regular speaker, Rev. Ken Klaus announced he will retire from the post in January 2011. The International Lutheran Laymen’s League which produces the broadcast is now taking applications and nominations for a new speaker. See Page 49.

