

CLWR aid to Nicaragua

WINNIPEG — Nearly 12,000 blankets, baby bundles, care kits and toys are on their way to Nicaragua thanks to Lutheran volunteers across Canada.

Patrick Stewart, a donations coordinator with Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR), an inter-Lutheran development agency, said his organization packed a 12-metre container with 3,386 quilts and blankets, 1,084 baby bundles, 5,830 care kits and 1,350 toys at its Winnipeg warehouse March 26. The shipment is destined for Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua and Lutheran Church–Canada’s mission centre in Chinandega.

“Our shipment also included many useful pieces of medical and dental equipment, including hospital beds, x-ray machines, wheelchairs, bandages, pneumonia vests and a dentist’s chair. In total we were able to ship 27,505 lbs. of goods,” he added. The equipment will help the ongoing work of the mission’s medical and dental clinic.

The container was shipped to Halifax and was expected to arrive in Nicaragua in May.

Stewart thanked International HOPE Canada Inc. – a non-profit group that redistributes surplus medical supplies – for the equipment, and CLWR’s transportation partners for bringing the goods to Winnipeg.

He also thanked volunteers for making quilts, assembling kits, raising money and awareness and donating time.

The donation shouldn’t be surprising. LCC has been conducting mission work in the Central American country since 1997 and CLWR’s executive director, Robert Granke visited Nicaragua last November and saw first-hand the scope of the work and need.

In 2009, LCC established an official partnership with Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua (ILSN) the church body which grew out of the Canadian church body’s work in the Central American country.

Lutheran church in Cambodia moves forward

SIHANOUKVILLE, Cambodia

– The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cambodia (ELCC) ordained its first bishop during a service in the town of Sihanoukville, Friday, May 14.

Dr. Leonard Harms, LCC volunteer missionary representing Rev. Robert Bugbee, president of Lutheran Church–Canada, ordained Rev. Vanarith Chhin during a service in this small coastal town, located halfway between Thailand and Vietnam.

Following his ordination, Chhin celebrated Holy Communion with pastors and students who are members of the Luther Seminary–Cambodia (LSC).

During a second service, the Luther Institute Southeast Asia (LISA) and the ELCC granted diplomas to seminary students.

The new bishop of ELCC then conducted the service of Commissioning of the Pastoral Candidates and Deaconess Candidate into the Service of the Gospel in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cambodia. More than 25 pastoral and deaconess candidates were commissioned into the church.



Dr. Leonard Harms ordains Vanarith Chhin

Friends and members of other churches attended the services which marked the first graduation and commission for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cambodia.

A letter from the new bishop is on page 38.

Haiti relief brings the Gospel

GONAIVES, Haiti — About 3,000 more Haitians who are recovering from a January 12 earthquake have clothes, shoes and sleeping mats thanks to a recent shipment from the Haiti Lutheran Mission Society (HLMS).

Rev. Revenel Benoit, president of Lutheran Church of Haiti (LCH), said a 12-metre-long container full of donated goods has arrived in Haiti. The container, sent by the HLMS, based out of St. Catharines, Ont., was the group’s most recent relief effort.

Almost four months after the magnitude 7.0 earthquake hit—killing between 250,000 and 300,000 people—relief efforts continue.

Benoit said his church, the LCH, has provided relief supplies to 31,000 people and medical care to about 7,000 people, and has transported

relief supplies to Lutherans and non-Lutherans in Port-au-Prince, Leogane, Cabaret, Gonaives, Poto, and Passereine.

Much of this work was subsidized by the HLMS, which has raised and contributed more than \$80,000 in relief aid to Haiti.

Benoit said LCH has also spent time ministering to the spiritual needs of Haitians – especially those who practice voodoo, a religion that mixes West African beliefs with elements of Roman Catholicism.

“This is a new opportunity for Christianity in Haiti,” said Benoit. “There is a spiritual hunger; the Haitian people are tired of voodoo.”

He said most congregations are evangelizing in the streets, and thousands of Haitians are turning to Christianity.

Truck consecration draws crowd in Germany

BERLIN — Members of a Lutheran congregation in Berlin, Germany raised the profile of their congregation and its food bank, recently, by consecrating a new truck.

The congregation, part of the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (Selbständige Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche – SELK), a partner church of Lutheran Church–Canada, was forced to buy the Isuzu after arsonists torched an older vehicle used in a popular food distribution program last fall.

On April 10, four pastors in full vestments accompanied by brass choir led a procession of 150-175 people through the streets of Marzahn, a borough of East Berlin, to the consecration service in a small square.

“For the ‘consecration’ of a truck, there is no liturgical [rite],” said Pastor Wilhelm Torgerson, formerly of Medicine Hat, Alta., in an e-mail to *The Canadian Lutheran*. “But we wanted to cause a stir on Saturday morning in that part of town.”

A stir is what the congregation caused.

Residents in the community’s large housing projects opened their windows to watch the procession, and of its participants two thirds were not SELK members or members of any other church, said Torgerson.

Media provided “excellent” coverage, he added, and even a federal politician ran coverage of the event on her website.



Four pastors accompanied by brass choir led a procession of 150-175 people through the streets of an East Berlin borough, to the consecration service.

Torgerson said the incident also raised the profile of the food bank, and during the following weeks even more people showed up for groceries.

For the past 10 years, SELK has performed missionary work in Marzahn, a community that Torgerson said is grappling with high unemployment, divorce, dysfunctional families and alcoholism. He said few know the Christian message or are baptized.

SELK also distributes food to the area’s needy through a program called Laib und Seele (LUS), or loaf and soul.

Every Wednesday it distributes food to the needy. Last year, it served about 8,000 families.

In October 2009, however, arsonists destroyed the program’s old truck. The insurance company paid

€22,000, but SELK members, local residents and federal politicians had to pick up the rest of the tab. In the meantime, LUS was forced to rent trucks to continue the program.

“The few months without the use of a truck were most difficult,” said Torgerson. “We had to rent pickups to get groceries from the stores, ask individuals with cars to go to some supermarkets and pick them up, and none of them could cool or refrigerate.

“I did not know that God was in the truck-sales business, but this truck was God’s gift to us, and since Lutherans insist that God works through means, the many donors and supporters were the means by which God blessed this ministry.”

Torgerson said the new truck cost €71,000 and bears the name of the congregation and its address.



Residents of several local apartment buildings joined in the service.



A brass ensemble accompanied hymns and drew attention to the event.

Directors adopt budget and discuss task force reports

WINNIPEG – With a wide-ranging agenda, Lutheran Church–Canada’s Board of Directors met March 25-26. The 12-member board adopted a \$1.7 million budget for 2010-11.

The Synod finished the previous fiscal year with a \$1,452 deficit variance compared to the budget. This figure was significantly less than treasurer Dwayne Cleave had reported to the board at its November meeting. At that time, the treasurer had predicted a \$60,000 shortfall variance. In the final two months of the fiscal year a significant bequest, a major gift and increased mission offerings in the East District reduced the deficit significantly. Approximately one-third of Synod’s annual budget supports church worker education; one-third core overseas mission activity; and one-third Synod services, the president’s office, and communication which includes *The Canadian Lutheran* and online activities.

Task force reports

Since a significant portion of the budget is dedicated to church worker education, the board was interested in hearing from Rev. Nolan Astley, chairman of the Task Force on Efficient and Sustainable Seminary Education. The chairman outlined the activities of the task force and asked the board to present responses to a series of questions that will help clarify the expectations of Synod for its seminaries. Rev. Astley told the board “there are no easy solutions, but as a Synod we can’t continually go through asking ourselves what we should do.” The members of the task force will meet for two days in London, Ontario at the end of April to assess all of its findings and begin formulating recommendations.

Two other task forces reported to the BOD. The group looking into

LCC’s vicarage program is currently preparing recommendations to take to the 2011 Synodical convention as is the Task Force on Cultural Properties and Archives.

Benefit Plans status

The board also heard from LCC’s other challenging area, Worker Benefit Plans. On behalf of the plans’ Board of Managers (BOM), Dwayne Cleave reported that the pension plan is slowly rebounding from its significant loss in 2008-09 due to the recession. He also noted that, based on its strategic plan, the BOM has begun looking at long-term plan sustainability and is conducting focus groups across the

country that will allow members and employers to assess and respond to various options from the BOM. Based on the response, and guided by the strategic plan, the BOM hopes to present some recommendations for changes to the plan by June. The Board of Directors must give final approval before implementation.

The directors appointed Mr. Cleave to serve as executive director of LCC’s Worker Benefit Plans, a position he held on an interim basis following the retirement of Inge Schroeder in December 2009.

President’s report

In his report, President Robert Bugbee noted that 59 congregations are currently without a pastor. Of that total, 23 are calling a pastor, two are calling a second pastor and the balance are not calling a pastor.

He expressed concern about the “wide areas where the people do not have the benefit of Word and Sacrament ministry.” The president also noted ongoing discussions regarding Concordia High School in Edmonton and new developments with the emerging Lutheran church body in Cambodia.

Taking into account responses from a field survey about the tradition of designated Sundays for various synod-affiliated groups, the Committee for Communication and Technology recommended that Synod designate monthly themes during which Auxiliaries and Listed Service Organizations can make information available to congregations. The director of communications, Dr. Ian Adnams will coordinate the plan which will begin in 2011.

Personnel

The board welcomed Arnold Drung (Holy Cross, Kitchener) who will serve the balance of the term of the late Dorothea Korcok. President Bugbee installed Mr. Drung during the board’s opening devotion. The chairman, Randy Stefan, announced the resignation of board member Larry Lutz and the board decided not to fill that vacancy.

Upon the recommendation of the Committee for Mission and Social Ministry Services, Rev. Gerson Flor was appointed as a military chaplain, stationed at the

armed forces base in Trenton, Ontario and the volunteer missionary position in Nicaragua currently served by Rev. Dr. Ralph Mayan was extended to December 2010.

The board also appointed Richard Currie, VP Finance of Concordia University College to the Worker Benefit Plans Board of Managers.



Rev. Nolan Astley, chairman of the seminary task force, responds to a question



President Bugbee installs Arnold Drung as a member of LCC’s Board of Directors.

Overseas work support

WINNIPEG — The Lutheran Women's Missionary League–Canada (LWMLC) has developed a strategy with the potential to streamline operations at the zone level so the organization can better focus on mission goals and involve more women.

Currently, many LWMLC members serve in leadership positions on several levels, and the LWMLC zones, the second smallest unit of the organization, struggle to maintain leaders, purpose and communication.

Under proposed changes, societies in a zone may replace officers with a planning committee made up of representatives from those societies.

The committee would replace the current twice-a-year “rallies or renewals” which usually include business meetings, with programs and events relating to the daily lives and spiritual growth of the women in LCC congregations in the zone.

“Fewer officers in the overall structure...will allow better stewardship of time and talents, less confusion of responsibilities and improve communication,” said Judy Grande, president of LWMLC.

Running half-day or full-day events with inspirational talks, digging into the Word and carrying out mission and service activities will allow more Lutheran Church–Canada (LCC) women to be partners with women of LWMLC in their activities, she added. “According to a recent League survey, women of LCC are eager and willing to participate in Christian growth and service activities, but are generally not interested in business meetings and planning,” said President Judy.

While the two smallest LWMLC District's have adopted the proposal, the final decision of adoption is left to each zone and district.

LWMLC's mission is to equip, motivate and encourage women to grow in God's Word, serve God's people and share God's Son.

Mission discussions affirm partnership



(Back l-r) Dr. Daniel Mattson, LCMS mission executive for Theological Education; Kurt Buchholz, LCMS World Mission chief operations officer; Rev. David Birner, LCMS World Mission associate director for International Areas. (Front l-r) Dr. Leonardo Neitzel, LCC Mission executive; Rev. Robert Bugbee, LCC President; Dr. Thomas Zehnder, executive director of LCMS World Mission.

WINNIPEG - Representatives from Lutheran Church–Canada and The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod met May 4-6 to discuss overseas missions. The agenda included areas of mutual interest and concern such as Central America and Southeast Asia.

LCC President Robert Bugbee and mission executive Rev. Dr. Leonardo Neitzel met with Rev. Dr. Thomas R. Zehnder, director of LCMS World Mission, Rev. David Birner, international mission; Kurt Buchholz, planning and administration; Rev. Jotham Johann Jhang, US missions; and Rev. Dr. Daniel Mattson, missional education.

The agenda included discussion of inter-church relations in Haiti, Guatemala, Thailand and Cambodia and how the two North American church bodies can cooperate in the proclamation of the Gospel both in word and deed.

“These were good discussions,” noted LCC's mission executive Rev. Dr. Leonardo Neitzel. “Although we approach overseas mission with

differing philosophies, we can still work together.” Outreach in Honduras is an example of cooperation between LCC and the LCMS.

Participants received a full briefing on current overseas mission activities by both church bodies and identified areas for further consultation.

The Winnipeg meeting was called following a visit to St. Louis by the president and Dr. Neitzel in November 2009. Although they met with LCMS World Mission representatives, both groups realized the need for a longer consultation based on a more comprehensive agenda. This was the first visit of the LCMS missions leadership team to LCC's office.

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Benefit Plans focus groups heard and heeded

WINNIPEG- After holding sixteen focus groups in seven cities in four weeks attended by almost 200 people, the Worker Benefit Plans' "2010 Listening Tour" ended in Winnipeg, Tuesday, May 18 with two final meetings. Both Winnipeg groups included members and employers participating on line.

During the focus groups, Dwayne Cleave, executive director of Worker Benefit Plans (WBP) and Lutheran Church-Canada's treasurer presented a report on the current state of the plans. Pension and benefits specialist Nancy Swerhun introduced proposals to make LCC's pension plan, post-retirement benefits and permanent part-time benefits sustainable for both members and employers. LCC's director of communications, Dr. Ian Adnams facilitated the discussions. The trio listened to members and employers in separate sessions in Waterloo and St. Catharines, Ont; Regina; Edmonton; Kelowna and Surrey, B.C. Each group attracted participants from the surrounding areas.

"This is the first full review of the pension plan since it began in 1989," noted Mr. Cleave. "Based on what we have heard from members and employers, everyone is willing to work together to meet our current challenges."

The financial meltdown in 2008 put the pension plan in a negative funding position which meant increased premiums for employers. During his presentation, Mr. Cleave reported that of 700 major pension plans surveyed by Mercer, a Calgary-based consulting group, 92 percent were in a similar under-funded position.

To help balance the funding of LCC's pension plan, proposed plan designs presented to the focus groups included members making contributions in addition to those made by employers, as well as discontinuing the employer match on the Defined Contribution plan. The other alternative being considered is switching from a Defined Benefit

to a Defined Contribution plan. Any change to the plan would not affect pensions earned-to-date by employees or those being paid to retirees.

Of more pressing concern was post-retirement benefits as the fund from which current retirees receive benefits is depleted and must receive support from all LCC employers.

The focus group presentation noted that few churches or universities offer post-retirement medical and dental plans without contributions from the retirees. The proposals also suggested that current retirees and those who retire within the next two years continue receiving retiree benefits regardless of the changes that are made.

Prior to conducting the focus groups, the WBP Board of Managers conducted a survey of members and employers in November 2009 to gauge response to plan concepts such as cost sharing and premium levels. In January, the BOM brought together representatives of the plan to develop a strategy for future

direction in plan design. On the basis of both the survey and the strategic planning session, Ms. Swerhun and WBP consultants Towers-Watson developed new pension and post-retirement benefit plan proposals.

"The goal of the focus groups was to present alternatives and listen to what members and employers had to say about them and contribute ideas," explained

Mr. Cleave. "We weren't looking for consensus and we didn't take any votes, but we heard some very helpful responses that will come into the discussion by the BOM when it has to make its recommendations to the Board of Directors."

When the Board of Managers meets in June it will hear a report about the focus groups and consider what changes to the proposals best reflect a balance between the needs of members and the congregations, schools, institutions and organizations who employ them. The plan changes will come before LCC's Board of Directors for final approval.



Pension and benefits specialist Nancy Swerhun

Honorary doctorate for LCC President

FORT WAYNE, Ind. — Rev. Robert Bugbee, president of Lutheran Church-Canada received a Doctor of Divinity degree-*honoris causa* from Concordia Theological Seminary (CTS), Fort Wayne, Indiana, at its Commencement Exercises, May 21, 2010. President Bugbee also delivered the commencement address.

The commencement program noted that the award recognizes his

"longtime service as a parish pastor and his current service as president of Lutheran Church-Canada."

"I am humbled by this honour," said President Bugbee. "I thank God daily for the opportunities He gives me to serve His Church and His people."

Elected LCC President of in June 2008, Dr. Bugbee also serves on the executive committee of the

International Lutheran Council as the representative for North America.



LCC youth and leaders set to invade Edmonton

EDMONTON - For more than 350 Lutheran youth, the summer of 2010 could have a major influence on their Christian faith. That's the goal of the organizers of Lutheran Church–Canada's triennial National Youth Gathering scheduled for Edmonton, July 2-6. With the theme *belong&believe > > believe&belong* the five-day event will focus on "how we belong in God's family, in the church, in our families and among our friends," explained Michael Gillingham, who is heading up the event. "We wanted to say clearly to the youth, 'You belong to God!'"

The Gathering will develop the theme in plenary sessions, worship, music, breakout workshops, and by giving the youth and their leaders the opportunity to make an impact on the Edmonton community through serving events. As the theme develops, speakers address the reality of belief, doubt and feeling isolated, along with the joy that comes from being part of a Christian community.



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Volunteer organizing committee: (top) Rev. Mark Danielson, (Fisherville, Ont.); Deacon Michelle Galliazzo (Burnaby, B.C.); Deacon Michael Gillingham-chairman (Sherwood Park, Alta.); (bottom) Tony Marchand, (Kitchener, Ont.); Deacon Nicole Otterman (Stony Plain, Alta.); Bill Wardekker (Winnipeg, Man.);

Read more about the development of the youth gathering theme at www.canluthextra.ca

Mr. Gillingham, who serves Bethel Lutheran Church in Sherwood Park, Alberta as director of Youth Ministry, explained that "many youth are surrounded by confusing spiritual messages. We felt it would be important to point the youth to a specific expression of the Biblical and historic Christian faith" in this case, the Lutheran confession.

Volunteers from across Canada plan the event and meet by phone for updates every few weeks and face-to-face four or five times during the two-year planning process.

The Edmonton gathering is centred on the campus of the University of Alberta, but will also use the facilities of Edmonton's Concordia University College of Alberta, a post-secondary institution established by Lutheran Church–Canada and founded in 1921.

For more than a year the youth and their leaders have held fund-raising events in their congregations to help pay their way to Edmonton.

Synod chooses dates and place for 2011 national convention

WINNIPEG - Meetings preparing for the ninth convention of Lutheran Church–Canada are already under way. Scheduled for the southern Ontario city of Hamilton, the convention will run from June 3-6, 2011.

In early May, the convention's Nominations Committee met by conference call to begin its work of identifying potential candidates for nomination to various elected positions. District conventions elected the members of the committee in 2009. Walter Heinemann (Central District) was chosen to chair the committee. Other members include Rev. Harold Borhardt (Central), secretary; Rev. Marvin Bublitz (East); Anna Fierling



(East); Rev. Cliff Haberstock (ABC); Karen Nerbas (ABC); and Rev. Dennis Putzman, (LCC secretary). (See page 4)

The nominations committee is seeking names of persons who will consider nomination for election to a synod board or commission.

To contain costs, convention organizers have shortened the event by one day. It will begin with an orientation session on Friday afternoon followed by Opening Worship and continue with business sessions on Saturday until Monday noon. "We hope this change will open the door to a broader range of delegates because they do not have to take so much time away from

work," noted convention manager Ian Adnams.

The new schedule allows about the same amount time for business, elections and fellowship as previous conventions. "We are aware of the cost to congregations of holding conventions, and we had to make adjustments," Dr. Adnams said. The convention will use the Hamilton Convention Centre along with the Sheraton Hotel.

Delegates to the convention will hear from and act upon reports from the Task Force on Cost Efficient and Sustainable Seminary Education; the Task Force on Cultural Properties and Archives; and the Vicarage Program task force. They will also cast ballots for president, vice-presidents, Board of Directors, Boards of Regents, Commission on Theology and Church Relations and Commission on Adjudication and Reconciliation.