

World seminaries conference discusses Lutheran identity

FORT WAYNE, IN - Some 65 seminary professors and representatives from 24 countries gathered on the campus of Concordia Theological Seminary (CTS), Fort Wayne, Indiana, June 3-6, 2010, as part of a world seminaries conference. Representing Lutheran Church-Canada were Dr. William Mundt and Dr. John Stephenson from Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, St. Catharines, Ont. and Dr. Edward Kettner and Professor Jonathan Kraemer from Concordia Lutheran Seminary, Edmonton.



Dr. John Stephenson (r) confers with Daniel Schmidt from Lutheran Theological Seminary, Oberursel, Germany between sessions.

The conference, sponsored by the International Lutheran Council (ILC), was meeting for the fourth time under the theme "Confessional Lutheran Identity in the Light of Changing Christian Demographics."

The keynote speaker, Dr. Philip Jenkins of Pennsylvania State University, who has written several books on the state and future of Christianity, including *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* and *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South*, set the scene by predicting trends in a global north to south shift in the center of gravity of Christianity. Dr. Jenkins sees this trend continuing to shape a very different picture of world Christianity from that which we currently recognize.

The second keynote speaker was Dr. Erní Seibert, a Lutheran pastor and theologian from Brazil, now serving as the director for Communications for the Brazil Bible Society. He spoke on the topic "Confessional Lutheran Identity in the Light of the Changing Christian Demographics."

Presenters from five continents addressed the topic from the perspective of their own continental experience. The aim of sharing this information was to help regions on each side of the demographic shift to prepare for, and to collaborate in, the training of pastors and church workers in light of their developing

situation. "This timely meeting brought together theological educators from all continents to start working together to propose strategies for meeting this great challenge," said Dr. Douglas L. Rutt, associate professor of

Pastoral Ministry and Missions at CTS, chairman of the seminary relations committee of the ILC and conference organizer.

In view of the interest in the topics being discussed at the ILC conference, two other groups asked to share in the keynote presentations and some of the subsequent discussions. The groups participating were the faculties of the two Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) seminaries and the theology departments of the Concordia University System, as well as a conference of church leaders from ILC and non-ILC countries who were meeting for consultations including preparations for celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation. Canadian representatives included President Robert Bugbee and Rev. Warren Hamp from LCC's Commission on Theology and Church Relations.

The seminary provided an ideal venue for this international meeting with its state-of-the-art facilities, pleasant surroundings and multilingual team providing simultaneous translation. In addition to participating in lively debate, delegates also had the opportunity

to worship together in the Saarinen-designed Kramer Chapel on the seminary campus and to attend in Sunday services in several of the LCMS churches in Fort Wayne.

The International Lutheran Council is a worldwide association of 34 established confessional Lutheran Churches united around the commitment to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ on the basis of an unconditional commitment to the Holy Scriptures as the inspired and infallible Word of God and to the Lutheran Confessions contained in the Book of Concord as the true and faithful exposition of the Word of God.

Lutheran Federation apologizes to Anabaptists

STUTTGART, Germany - At the eleventh assembly of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in August, delegates unanimously approved a statement asking forgiveness from Anabaptists (Mennonites) for "the harm that our forbears in the sixteenth century committed" in persecuting Anabaptists.

Since the Geneva-based LWF does not represent all Lutherans, the organization invited the International Lutheran Council (ILC) to participate in this action in late 2009, after the council had concluded its triennial meeting in Korea. The ILC comprises more than 30 Lutheran church bodies around the world, including Lutheran Church-Canada (LCC).

The ILC's executive committee has placed the invitation to participate in the apology on its agenda for review and discussion at its October 2011 meeting. "We are not dismissing this action out of hand," explained LCC president, Rev. Dr. Robert Bugbee who serves on the ILC committee. "We don't meet as a council again until 2012, and the executive will give careful consideration to this invitation before presenting it to our member churches."

LCMS elects new president

HOUSTON, TX - Delegates to the 64th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS) elected Rev. Matthew Harrison the church body's thirteenth president. Rev. Harrison succeeds Rev. Dr. Gerald Kieschnick who was standing for election to his fourth term.

The 48-year-old president-elect currently serves as executive director

of LCMS World Relief and Human Care at the LCMS International Center in St. Louis. In the early '80s, before his ordination in 1991, he served as a missionary to Canada's First Nations people in northern Ontario with Lutheran Association of Missionaries and Pilots.

In his response to the election, Rev. Harrison pledged to "work for unity around the clear and compelling Word of God and nothing else." He thanked President Kieschnick for his focus on evangelism and mission.

"Rev. Harrison will really need our prayers as he takes on his new responsibilities," noted LCC President Robert Bugbee who is at the Houston convention. "We're

also deeply grateful to God for the support and friendship our Canadian church has enjoyed from President Kieschnick over the years, and pray

God's continued blessing upon his ministry in whatever shape it takes in the future."

Rev. Herbert Mueller, Jr. will serve as the Synod's first vice-president, which is a full-time position in the LCMS. Rev. Mueller, 57,

currently serves as district president of Southern Illinois District.

Vice-presidents two through five include Canadian Rev. Dr. Scott Murray who serves Memorial Lutheran Church and School in Houston. Dr. Murray was born in Kitchener and grew up at Redeemer Lutheran Church, Waterloo, Ontario. He will serve as fifth vice-president.

Other vice-presidents are Rev. John Wohlrabe, Jr (2nd); Rev. Dr. Paul Maier, re-elected (3rd); and Rev. Daniel Preus (4th).

The installation of the new president, vice-presidents and elected members of boards and commissions is scheduled for September 11 in St. Louis.



LCC President Robert Bugbee and LCMS President-elect Matthew Harrison

St. John's bones?

BULGARIA - Various news reports claim the bones of John the Baptist have been found on an island in the Black Sea in Bulgaria. Archeologists discovered a stone urn under the altar of a ruined monastery inscribed with a reference to June 24, the festival day of John the Baptist. Inside they found parts of a skull, bones from a jaw and an arm, and some teeth. A Bulgarian government official at the site is certain these are the last remains of John the Baptist who was beheaded by Herod.

Dr. Paul L. Maier, professor of Ancient History at Western Michigan University and LCMS pastor isn't convinced of the find. "I always greet such claims with maximum scepticism," he told *LCC InfoDigest*. "In the case of John the Baptist, there are at least twelve claims to his head and body parts being in different locations." He said the baptizer's head is supposed to be in a chapel at the main mosque in Damascus.

Others interested in the bones are asking for carbon dating before considering the find genuine.

John the Baptist was the son of the Virgin Mary's sister, Elizabeth, making him the cousin of Jesus. He is known as the one who prepared the way for the Messiah (Jesus) and for his call for repentance and baptism. He was arrested and beheaded by Herod, the Roman tetrarch. The Bible records John's disciples burying the body.

New LCMS structure emphasizes congregations

HOUSTON - The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod streamlined its structure at its 64th Convention held in Houston, July 10-17. The restructuring comes at a time when the LCMS is facing what Vice-president Finance/treasurer Dr. Thomas Kuchta called a "financial crisis."

The major change came in a resolution which dissolved current elected boards and created two new boards to give direction and oversight to national and international

mission. Delegates adopted this by a slim majority. However, the resolution set the stage for all future resolutions dealing with governance and structure.

Other changes adopted by the delegates will allow congregations and pastors to vote for Synod President by electronic ballot before a convention. The president will then nominate five candidates from a list of 20 to serve with him as first vice-president, a full-time position.

The new structure also creates regions within LCMS for the purpose of balanced representation on the Board of Directors. Currently, LCMS English and SELC districts have congregations in Canada. By amendment, all Canadian congregations of the LCMS will be placed in a single adjacent US region.

Lutheran Church–Canada which was established on a revised LCMS structure in 1988, restructured in 2002.

Lutheran Foundation reports increased gifts so far this year

WINNIPEG - Meeting May 28-29, the Board of Directors of Lutheran Foundation Canada (LFC) learned that in the first four months of 2010, the foundation established 13 deferred gifts totalling \$2,912,935—a figure well beyond 2009’s annual total of \$2,302,245. Congregations form the largest recipient category, with \$1,004,360 designated for them in 2010, as opposed to \$635,645 in 2009. In addition, the foundation paid beneficiaries almost \$85,000 from endowment earnings in 2009.

LFC works with Lutheran Church–Canada’s congregations, districts, auxiliary organizations and some institutions to facilitate planned gifts.

To help focus the work of the organization, the board named Allen Schellenberg (Trinity, Richmond, B.C.) new executive director. He will continue with his primary responsibilities—marketing and gift-coordinating—while also shouldering responsibility for maintaining communications with LFC’s stakeholder organizations. Mr. Schellenberg takes over from Dwayne Cleave, treasurer of Synod who was recently named director of Worker Benefits Plans. In his capacity as treasurer of synod, Mr. Cleave will continue serving LFC

as chief financial officer.

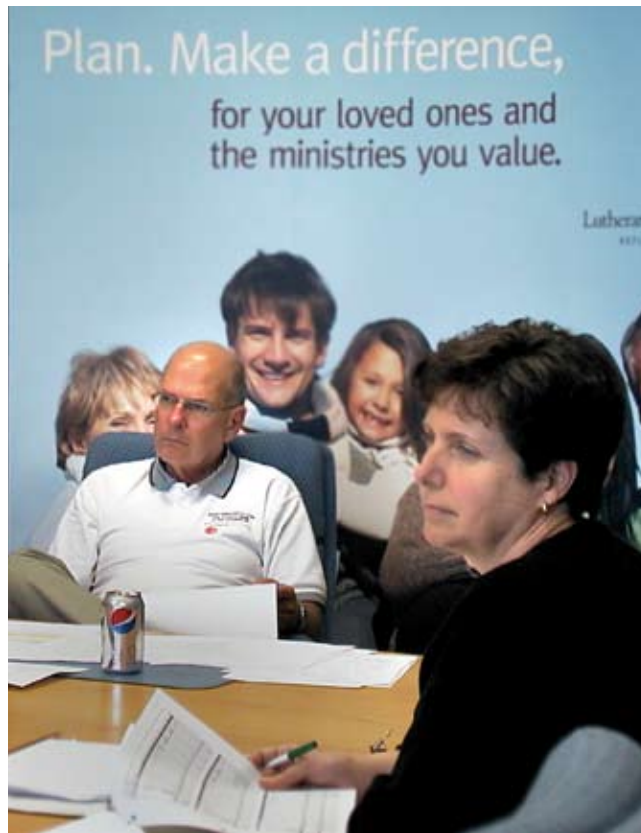
Speaking to LFC supporting organizations Mr. Cleave noted that “in the near future a larger and growing percentage of all budgets (LCC, districts, congregational) will be dependent on estate and asset gifts.” He stressed the importance of members remaining financially committed to supporting the work of LFC.

In 2009, LFC representatives conducted 24 congregational seminars on Christian estate and will planning, with 13 held so far in 2010.

Three vacant positions now exist on the LFC board, with Glenn Stresman (East), Anna Fierling (LCC) and Cameron Nicholson

(Central) finishing their terms. With the assistance of LFC staff, members will begin the process of nominating replacements.

For more information about Lutheran Foundation Canada go to www.lutheranfoundation.ca



Alan Schmitt, LCCFM chairman and board member Anna Fierling listen to a report from Allen Schellenberg.

International Lutheran Laymen’s League hosts Spirit-driven event

OMAHA, Neb. - “Spirit Driven” (2 Tim. 1:7) was the theme embraced by the 93rd International Convention of the International Lutheran Laymen’s League (Int’l LLL) which attracted more than 1000 attendees from the US and Canada.

In his greeting to the convention, LCC president Rev. Dr. Robert Bugbee reminded everyone that “God did not merely ordain for you the total number of days and years you should have. He also ordained which days we should get. He decided that your days and mine should be now ... not 100 or 60 years ago, not 25 years into the future, but now.

“...[Jesus] shows you the way to go,” he said. “Even more than that, Jesus Christ gives you the energy and the enthusiasm to want to go the way He leads.”

The convention re-elected Mick Onnen to second two-year term as president and approved a major overhaul of the organization’s structure, set for implementation in 2012 when Saskatoon will host the international convention.

Thirty-five Canadians, led by 2012 convention committee chairman and Int’l LLL treasurer, Ed Tiefenbach (Good Shepherd, Regina), gave a special invitation to Saskatchewan.

Pastor Ken Klaus, Speaker of *The Lutheran Hour*, shared many powerful messages during the three-day event. Convention attendees also took time to recognize Pastor Klaus, who will retire from the speakership at the end of 2010.

The International Lutheran Laymen’s League is an auxiliary organization of Lutheran Church–Canada and The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod. Members support Lutheran Hour Ministries which produces *The Lutheran Hour* which is heard on 77 stations in Canada and on XM Satellite Radio 170 at 1 p.m. (ET) on Sunday.

LCC numbers for 2009 continue troubling trend

WINNIPEG - Like every annual report, the 2009 statistics for Lutheran Church–Canada show gains and losses, and offer good news and bad.

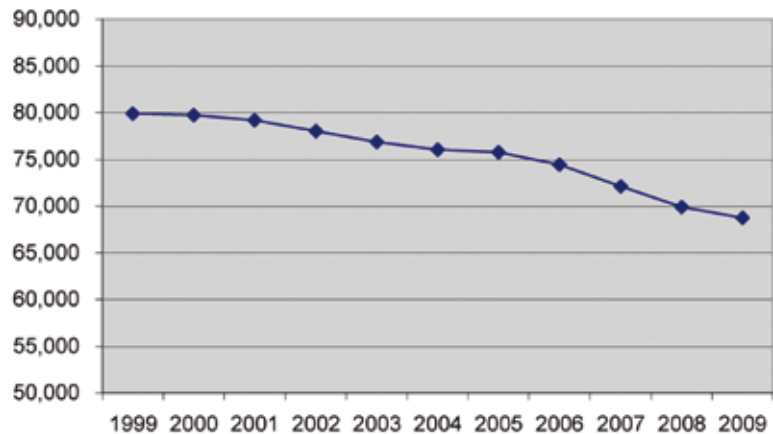
Continuing a multi-year trend, baptized membership (all people on a congregation's membership list) in LCC congregations declined 1.7 percent in 2009 to 68,735. The largest decline was in the ABC District at 2.3 percent. The same district showed the highest decline—3.6 percent—in confirmed membership (usually those over 13 years old). The smallest decline in adults was in the East District at .3 percent. Overall, confirmed membership in LCC declined 1.9 percent in 2009 to 51,650.

The Central District showed the highest increase in the number of adults confirmed, 17 more than in 2008 for a total of 65. ABC recorded the greatest number of adult confirmations at 94, however that was 90 less than 2008.

Enrolment in Adult Bible studies was up for the third consecutive year to more than 5,500, however the number of children in Sunday school continues declining.

The percentage of baptized members attending services remains relatively constant at 38 percent or an average of 76 in LCC's 319 congregations and 11 preaching

Baptized membership trend 1999-2009



stations. LCC's largest congregations are in the East District with an average baptized membership of 248.

"It is a matter of grave concern when people absent themselves from the heartbeat God brings to them in His Word and the Sacraments," remarked LCC president, Rev. Dr. Robert Bugbee. "Primary effort and work will need to go into the business of bringing people into contact with the Means of Grace, and of holding them there."

At its last meeting, the Council of Presidents reported 59 congregations currently without a pastor. Twenty-three were in the process of calling a pastor, two were calling a second pastor, and 34 were vacant and not calling a pastor.

Despite a decline in overall membership, annual giving increased. Confirmed members of congregations who submitted reports gave an annual average of \$640 (about \$12.30/week) to their congregations.

Giving to the work LCC undertakes on behalf of the entire church was down by almost \$60,000 to \$3.89 million or \$97 a year per confirmed member. This amount funds regional congregational support services, church worker preparation, overseas missions, theological supervision and communication in LCC's national office and three district offices.

More than one-third of LCC's congregations did not submit an annual statistical report.

Pension and benefit plan changes

Lutheran Church–Canada's Board of Directors approved changes to some parts of the Worker Benefit Plans (WBP) based on recommendations from the WBP Board of Managers (BOM). The BOM, which gives direction and oversight to LCC's Worker Benefit Plans, made these recommendations after two days of careful deliberation at its meeting June 23-24 and after extensive consultation with stakeholders.

The plan design changes are intended to assist in the sustainability

of the benefits program. They were made considering the least impact to members and to save the most benefits. Both plan members and employees received notice of the changes earlier this month.

The changes impact the pension plan, post-retirement benefits, long-term disability and permanent part-time employees. The BOM also provided for interim cost-sharing for health and dental benefits to help relieve budgetary pressure of some employers. Detailed information is online at www.lccinfodigest.ca.

"While no plan sponsor wants to reduce benefits, the changes undertaken are necessary in the current environment" explained WBP executive director Dwayne Cleave. "While the decisions were not easy, I think we have managed to strike a balance that will help lay the foundation for long-term stability for the plans."

Members and employers will receive further detailed information on the changes prior to the changes coming into effect.

Current budgets cause concern for seminary task force

WINNIPEG - "We're at the point where recommendations are becoming clearer," reported Rev. Nolan Astley to Lutheran Church-Canada's Board of Directors. Rev. Astley is chairman of the Task Force on Cost-Efficient and Sustainable Seminary Education. His report summarized the most recent meetings of the task force in April and June.

In its interim report, the task force presented the Board of Directors with two recommendations. Since the financial state of both seminaries is of concern to the task force, it recommended LCC's Board of Directors ask the seminaries' Boards of Regents to produce and adopt realistic budgets that avoid any further deficits and to clear from their books any accumulated debt before June 2011.

Other the past years, Concordia Lutheran Seminary, Edmonton has balanced its budgets from reserve funds, which are now depleted. In St. Catharines, Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary has an accumulated debt of more than \$738,000 upon which it is only paying interest. Rev. Astley explained

that "any new proposals for seminary education in Canada need to begin with a clean financial slate."

While retiring an operating debt is not easy, the task force believes the Lord will move His people to provide the funds.

The task force also recommended that Synod review Chapter 6 of the LCC Handbook which deals with colleges and seminaries. It believes there needs to be clarification of the relationship between the LCC's Board of Directors and the institutions' Boards of Regents.

Pastor Astley concluded his report by stating that "our seminaries remain integral to the mission of the Synod and the task force looks



Members of the seminary task force (back l-r) Rev. Arron Gust; Second Vice-president Robert Krestick; Howard Famme. (front) Rev. Nolan Astley (chair); Rev. Colin Liske (secretary). Absent: Todd Sands

forward to tabling proposals that will enhance this work and lead to the development of a renewed vision for confessional Lutheran seminary education in Canada."

The task force will meet in Winnipeg August 31-September 1 with the goal of presenting proposals to the Board of Directors at its November meeting.

Partner church leaders seeks greater communication with LCC

WINNIPEG - During a two-day visit to Winnipeg July 8 and 9, Rev. Dr. Michael Semmler, president of Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) stressed the importance and special nature of the relationship the Australian church shares with Lutheran Church-Canada. LCC is the only other Lutheran Church body with which LCA has a Memorandum of Understanding, signed in 1993, which provides for pulpit and altar fellowship.

President Semmler was the first LCA pastor to serve in Canada under the agreement. He served Mount Olive in Regina for six months in the mid-'90s while Pastor Irwin Pudrycki served Pastor Semmler's parish in Australia.

The Australian president met



Photo by Chris Bruer

Rev. Dr. Mike Semmler, president of the Lutheran Church of Australia speaks to LCC's youth gathering in Edmonton

with LCC President Robert Bugbee and executive staff noting the need for ongoing communication. "We have a lot to learn from each other," he said.

Discussions in Winnipeg included communications and mission work

in Southeast Asia. "There are many areas in which we share common interests and concerns," observed President Bugbee. "I am looking forward to developing our relationship even further to the benefit of both our churches."

President Semmler and his wife, Christine, were visiting major Lutheran events in North America and Europe. The president spoke to LCC's National Youth Gathering; travelled to Houston, Texas to attend The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod's convention and finally to Stuttgart, Germany for the World Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation.

LCA holds associate membership in both the International Lutheran Council and Lutheran World Federation.

June conference focuses on intercultural congregations

WINNIPEG - In 2008, Canada welcomed almost 250,000 immigrants with almost 80 percent arriving from Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Pacific regions, and Central and South America. At the same time, Canada's First Nations population increased at more than eight times the non-aboriginal rate and has the youngest population in the country.

With its roots in immigration from Europe in the late 19th and early- and mid-20th centuries, Lutheran Church-Canada is beginning to reflect and engage the diversity of cultures in Canada.

From June 3-5 representatives of various Lutheran congregations representing at least seven cultural groups met in Winnipeg to talk about building relationships with various cultural groups; identifying and sharing resources and learning what it means to be an intercultural church in 21st century Canada.

"I know what it is like to be from a different country and trying to understand a new culture," explained Brazilian immigrant (and recent Canadian citizen) Rev. Dr. Leonardo Neitzel, LCC's mission executive. "The church has such an important role to play in helping people adapt to Canada and to build special bonds with each other and with fellow believers."

The conference, organized by Rev. Dr. Glenn Schaeffer (ABC District mission executive; Rev. Richard Beinert (pastor, Immanuel, Winnipeg) and Rev. Dr. Leonardo Neitzel (LCC mission executive),



Lanto Rajoeliso (Montreal, Malagasy), Manitra Andriaharifara (Montreal, Malagasy), and Tsegaye Angassa (Calgary, Oromo) rehearse a song for the intercultural conference's Divine Service

included new Canadians from Africa, China, Korea as well as representatives of First Nations and Hispanic congregations and ministries and those who work within the various Islamic cultural groups.

One of the challenges LCC faces is providing trained leadership with both the language and cultural skills to serve growing congregations. In 2002 the church body approved a course of pastoral study for men who could serve their cultural group as a pastor. Currently, ten men are studying through the Pastors with Alternate Training (PAT) program. Through distance education, local classes, and mentoring programs with experienced pastors, these men will eventually provide pastoral ministry to their congregations. (See page 42.)

Assefa Aredo (PAT student) and his mentor, Rev. Richard Beinert, discuss their teacher/student relationship for the benefit of others at the conference

"PAT is similar to the way we have approached pastoral preparation overseas," noted Dr. Neitzel who provides oversight for the program. "Rather than four years of seminary, which is impossible for someone supporting a family on a minimum income, we provide the same type of course work over a longer period of time."

LCC First Vice-president Daryl Solie provided an introduction to the church's history and structure as a step toward welcoming the various groups into Synod.

"The heart, core and ultimate goal of the conference was expressed in the words of Psalm 67: 'that your ways [Lord God] may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations. May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you'" said Dr. Neitzel. He believes the conference "helped us to grow in God's Word as well as in our intercultural Gospel-proclamation skills."

The conference reflects a strategic direction identified by LCC in its 2009 Strategic Plan: "Developing innovative missions and promoting intercultural congregations."

