

## Celebrating Reformation Day in Wittenberg

“There are only two days a year that Wittenberg is full,” tour operator Christian Eggert told me. “Luther’s wedding [in June] and today.”

“Today” was Oct. 31, Reformation Day, and the old town section of the Lutherstadt (Luther town) was packed with people. Estimates put the number of visitors to Wittenberg for the festival at some 25,000. They joined the local population for a day of festivities and activities, the most visible of which was a Renaissance fair with entertainment, handicrafts, food, and drink.

Did it really matter that the occasion was the anniversary of the Reformation, or was the day simply a good excuse for a good time?

Rev. Christian Utpatel, a pastor in Germany’s Independent Evangelical-Lutheran Church (SELK) and owner of Terra-Lu (“Luther Land”) Travel, noted that only about 15 percent of the people in the Wittenberg area are members of a church. “From that perspective, this is not a church gathering,” he said.

Utpatel added that celebrating Reformation Day does not have a long tradition in Germany. He acknowledged, though, that it is more closely tied to the church than the other big Wittenberg party, the celebration in June of Luther’s wedding.

The Reformation Day festival does include worship. Services at the old town’s two main churches—the Castle Church, where Martin Luther posted his 95 theses, and the Stadtkirche, where he often preached—drew an estimated 1,700 people that day.

Dr. Jean Godsall-Myers, co-director of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Wittenberg Center, said she sees three “levels” to the festival: The first level is “a lot of people in crazy dress, selling stuff.” The second is cultural, with events that include academic conferences and debates. The third relates to those who attend worship.



On Reformation Day, Oct. 31, Wittenberg was filled with people—some to celebrate the Reformation, but many for the medieval fair held here every year. This photo shows the back of the Castle Church, but the fair and visitors covered much of Wittenberg’s old-city area.

Many festival goers know little about the Reformation, she said, but those who attend worship must be open at least to learning about it “or they wouldn’t bother to come to the services.” With them in mind, she

said, “I get cautious about saying that it doesn’t have anything to do with faith.”

*Rev. David Mahsman,  
director, special assignments, Eurasia for  
LCMS World Mission.*

## LCC and Guatemalan church discuss education



President Robert Bugbee (right) welcomes Rev. Ignacio Chan, president of the Lutheran Church of Guatemala to the synod office in Winnipeg. Accompanied by Rev. Edmund Mielke (left) who, with his wife Frida acted as translators, the two presidents discussed the needs of theological education in Central America.

## Lutheran carries Olympic torch

**NANAIMO, B.C.** - Members of St. Paul's got a close-up look at an Olympic Torch. Joanne Phillips, a member of the congregation, brought the torch she carried along Vancouver Island November 2 to church.

"We at St. Paul's Lutheran Church at Nanaimo are proud that Joanne Phillips, a member of our church family, did carry the torch on Day 4 at Campbell River, B.C.," said Elaine Murphy, a fellow parishioner, in an email to The Canadian Lutheran.

The 100-day, 45,000-kilometre Olympic Torch Relay is well underway and is currently on Canada's East Coast. It will soon head west to Vancouver for the February 12 opening of the 2010 Winter Olympics.

Meantime, the mission executive for Lutheran Church-Canada's Alberta-British Columbia District is reminding people the relay is the perfect time to share the Gospel.

"Imagine how this event can be used by Christian churches to point people to Christ as the Light of the World," said Dr. Glenn E. Schaeffer. "The torch may have already passed through your community, but the torch is yet to pass through many more communities."

## Olympic opportunities

**VANCOUVER B.C.** - Members of area congregations have opened their homes and churches to house volunteers to help engage the thousands of athletes, families and visitors who will converge on the city February 12-28. "If you can get to Vancouver, we can find somewhere for you to stay and somewhere for you to work," said Deacon Don Hindle who heads up Trinity, Richmond's outreach. Volunteers are needed for everything from baking to keeping watch over the parking lot.

For more information go to [www.lccabc.ca/vancouver2010](http://www.lccabc.ca/vancouver2010)

## Music association awards include Lutherans



CREW member David Liefertz takes a break at the GMA's courtesy of Joel Haberstock, Gary Brucker and Paul Mercier.

**CALGARY**-Lutheran Church-Canada musicians were recognized by the Gospel Music Association Canada (GMA Canada) during recent events in Calgary, Alta.

Jennifer Jade Kerr, a singer-songwriter and youth worker at Kelowna, B.C.'s First Lutheran Church, was a top six performance finalist in the GMA Canada's Cross Canada Talent Search.

The CREW, a contemporary folky-pop, 'acapolka' band, earned a Covenant Award nomination for its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary album, *Sans Doigts*.

"The whole deal was a blast," said Kerr. "I had been struggling over the last year or so to figure out what God wanted me to do with my musical talent. But the whole GMA Canada conference, and especially the talent search, confirmed that God still has work for me to do and that He has gifted me to get out there and do it."

Founded in 1974, the GMA Canada promotes Canadian Christian music.

Every year, it hands out Covenant Awards, national awards for the Canadian gospel music industry and runs the Cross Canada Talent Search.

Both events ran during GMA Canada Week in Calgary October 20 to October 23.

Gary Brucker, a CREW band member, said gospel music is a great way to get out God's word.

"Well, Gospel music is about all kinds of music that presents the message of God and His love for all people - hymns, southern Gospel, hip hop, rap, country, a cappella, pop, folk, rock, and others," said Brucker. "Lutherans in general, like all Christian everywhere, might do well to be open to speaking and singing

about the good news of God in Christ Jesus using a variety of methods and styles so that more may know."

Kerr and The Crew are now looking to the future.

The Crew is planning on recording its first Christmas CD in 2010, singing at the 2010 Winter Olympics and touring in Ohio. Kerr said she will now continue on the musical path God has chosen for her.

To learn more about The Crew and Jennifer Jade Kerr, visit [www.thecrewguys.com](http://www.thecrewguys.com) and [www.jenniferjadekerr.com](http://www.jenniferjadekerr.com)



Jennifer Jade Kerr

## Committee discusses music and influenza

**WINNIPEG** - During its meeting October 2, LCC's Committee on Worship and Music reviewed proofs of the new 864-page French-language hymnal which is spreading excitement in Lutheran Francophone communities worldwide. *Liturgies et cantiques luthériens* includes 434 hymns, three settings of the Divine Service, Matins, Vespers, and Compline, Holy Baptism, marriage, and funeral services.

The committee reviewed its current content on LCC's website, and decided to update links and information.

Members also drafted a statement on the H1N1 virus and worship practices for LCC's Council of Presidents (COP) to review before sending it to congregations.

The October meeting was the committee's first face-to-face meeting



Rev. Dr. David Saar, Allison Wonnick, President Robert Bugbee and Rev. Jan Pastucha review the final proofs of LCC's French-language hymnal.

in recent years. To reduce costs it has met through conference calls and over the Internet.

The committee includes Allison Wonnick, chair, Rev. David Saar (who has served for more than six years and asked to be replaced) and Rev. Jan Pastucha. President Robert Bugbee serves as an advisor.

## Task force wrapping up first phase

**WINNIPEG** - The task force looking into how Lutheran Church-Canada maintains its records for future generations is finishing its assessment of the church body's four archive collections. Members arranged visits to review the archive operations and interview staff in Edmonton, Regina, and St. Catharines.

In addition, the task force is looking at how other archives are maintained by the Lutheran Church of Australia, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and similar-sized church bodies in Canada. The task force members met for their third conference call November 2 to report their findings.

The 2008 convention asked for a task force to "assess the current state of all LCC archival holdings, processes and facilities, and recommend ways to provide coordination, ongoing adequate funding and staffing, including any changes in the organization and governance of existing entities that need to be undertaken."

## Servant leader called home

**ST. CATHARINES, Ont.** - Dorothea Korcok, (nee Chovan), 79, died on Saturday, October 24 at St. Catharines General Hospital of complications from cancer. She was a member of Lutheran Church-Canada's Board of Directors and former president of Lutheran Women's Missionary League-Canada.

Almost 200 people attended the funeral service Thursday, October 29 at Grace Lutheran Church, St. Catharines led by Pastor Larry Ritter, Dorothea's pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church, Niagara-on-the-Lake. The preacher was Rev. Dr. Albin Stanfel, former East District president and long-time friend of the Korcok family.

Born in Garfield, New Jersey,



Dorothea was baptized, confirmed and educated at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church and School in Garfield. In 1952, she married Rev. Dr. John Korcok (received into glory in 1994) and their marriage was blessed with four sons. They served congregations in Timmins, Germanicus, Eganville, Ottawa, Kitchener and Niagara-on-the-Lake.

During these years, Dorothea was an active member in the congregations and the Lutheran Women's Missionary League. She served as president of the Laurentian District LWML, the Ontario District LWML and LWML-Canada.

Her work in Lutheran Church-Canada included serving on the nominating and constitution committees as well as the Board of Directors. She was also president of

the Haiti Lutheran Mission Society.

Dorothea was deeply involved with Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary in St. Catharines, working as Seminary Guild president; housing students; providing room and board for visiting professors; and supplying guidance and support for many wives of seminarians. For her countless hours of service to the seminary and church, the seminary awarded her the Delta Chi in June 2009.

The Niagara community also benefitted from her lively assistance through her service on the Shaw (Festival) Guild and the Board of Directors of Meals on Wheels.

Dorothea is survived by her brother, John Chovan, sons John (Marisa), David (Patricia), and Rev. Dr. Thomas Korcok (Doreen), along with six grandchildren. Son, Daniel was called into glory in 1979.

## Statistical ups and downs

**WINNIPEG** - The trend toward declining membership in Lutheran Church-Canada congregations continued according to the 2008 statistical reports submitted by 70 percent of LCC's congregations. Baptized membership is just above 70,000 and confirmed membership stands at 52,836 in 315 congregations. Confirmed membership has dropped more than one percent per year over the past ten years. "You can look at the numbers and throw up your hands in dismay or you can take them as a challenge to reach out into your community and find new ways to proclaim the great good news of the Gospel," noted LCC President Robert Bugbee.

However, the statistical report noted an increase in average attendance. The highest average attendance is in the East District, with 95 per week. ABC congregations average 94 and Central 66. East District congregations saw an increase of 18 per congregation over 2007. The other districts recorded declines. Although junior and adult confirmations were down from 2007, infant baptisms increased by more than 100.

"Across our synod our congregations touch lives in so many ways," said the president. "We need to find ways to keep those people engaged in the life of the church so they can hear God's Word."

Despite the declines noted in existing congregations, mission outreach continues in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario where many people are hearing the Gospel for the first time.

On the financial side, the average confirmed member gives \$552 per year (up by \$5 over 2007) to support the local congregational work and \$94 (up by \$3) per year for the work synod does on behalf of all members.

Detailed reports are available at [www.lutheranchurch.ca](http://www.lutheranchurch.ca) under the "What is LCC" tab. Click on Statistical data.

## Public worship and the H1N1 flu challenge

**WINNIPEG** - President Robert Bugbee, with input from the Committee on Music and Worship and encouraged by the church's Council of Presidents, issued the following pastoral message on the H1N1 flu challenge which is causing unrest in various countries and churches, including our own.

### Treasured pastors and people:

God be merciful to you, and strengthen your faith.

The news is filled with daily stories of the threat from the H1N1 flu virus, and concerns are being sounded in our member congregations also. Many focus specifically on the celebration of Holy Communion at this critical time, as well as other issues that arise in the regular worship gatherings of God's people.

The world around us will see these matters purely in medical and natural terms, as though our lives – and even our worship practices – are only subject to natural forces. As Christ's people, rooted in God's Word, we confess that He is our ultimate Helper and Protector. With regard to Holy Communion services, and especially the use of the common cup, it is vital to remember that this is not natural, but supernatural eating and drinking where the Lord Christ comes to us in His crucified and risen flesh for the forgiveness of sins. We eat and drink His body and blood, hidden beneath the forms of bread and wine. We eat and drink at His invitation, and with the promise that He will benefit and bless us. For this reason, I do not warn God's people to discontinue their use of the common cup as though the Lord would withdraw help and

blessing from His table because of the presence of influenza in our land.

To be sure, congregations need to exercise wisdom in dealing with the H1N1 flu threat. They may wish to offer hand sanitizers throughout the church building for members and visitors to use. They may discourage worshippers from extensive physical contact, especially during the "sharing of the peace." Pastors who exhibit the symptoms of cold and flu will do well to take time away from services until they have recovered. Communicants who feel ill may choose to receive the sacrament



from individual cups so as not to upset others nearby. Ushers and greeters ought to practice good hygiene, and if one feels the need to cough or sneeze, it is helpful to do it into a tissue or one's upper sleeve, rather than into the hands. Altar guilds are encouraged to take proper care

of elements and vessels after the celebration of Holy Communion, washing the vessels thoroughly in hot, soapy water, and then fully towel drying them before putting them in a secure and clean place of storage.

I encourage all pastors and people to take comfort in the way the Risen Lord keeps coming to us with forgiveness, life and help, both as His Good News is sounded in our services and as He feeds us at His sacred table. Made strong by His constant love, we do well to pray continually for our neighbours now struggling with the H1N1 flu, and to ask God's blessing on public health leaders and workers labouring to protect the people of Canada. I commend this need to your regular public and private prayers.

*President Robert Bugbee*