

Canadian and US Lutherans discuss common challenges

ST. LOUIS, Mo.- Representatives of Lutheran Church–Canada (LCC) and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) met at the LCMS International Center in St. Louis on November 10 to share latest information from the two church bodies.

Among topics of general discussion were fiscal realities, theological and ecclesiastical issues, and seminary education challenges faced by both church bodies. Also discussed was work in Nicaragua, Guatemala, Cambodia, and Ukraine. LCMS representatives spoke of the Synod's efforts to provide order to varied efforts to assist Lutherans in Haiti. Both church bodies expressed appreciation for ongoing mutual efforts to cooperate and collaborate whenever possible.

The group also reviewed operating agreements recently developed in LCMS discussions with the American Association of Lutheran Churches (AALC) to facilitate partner church relations, and guidelines developed by the LCMS President's Church Relations Cabinet to provide a process for partner church calls for

LCMS seminary candidates. Discussion focused on their application to LCC–LCMS partner church relations.

Two other subjects received attention during the meeting. Response to recent actions taken by other Lutheran church bodies regarding human sexuality issues and the role of confessional Lutherans and the International Lutheran Council in today's world were discussed at length.

At the conclusion of the discussions, participants agreed with Dr. Samuel Nafzger, LCMS Director of Church Relations and Assistant to the President, that it had been "a good meeting." The commission plans to meet again September 14–15, 2010.



President Robert Bugbee and Dr. Leonardo Neitzel at the meeting of LCC/LCMS Commission on Fellowship in St. Louis, Mo.

Representing LCC were President Robert Bugbee, Ian Adnams, director of communications, and mission executive Leonardo Neitzel. In addition to Dr. Nafzger, representing the LCMS were President Gerald Kieschnick, First Vice-president William Diekelman, Secretary Raymond Hartwig, Commission on Theology and Church Relations Executive Director Joel Lehenbauer, and Chief Administrative Officer Ronald Schultz.

Seizing of Bibles sparks fear of persecution

MALAYSIA – Authorities seized more than 15,000 Bibles in recent months because the Bibles used an Arabic word for God.

Under Malaysian law, the word Allah is exclusive to Islam and may not be used by any other religion, including Christianity.

The Bibles used the word 'Allah' in reference to God.

So authorities began seizing Bibles imported from Indonesia, a country whose large Christian community—about 37 million—produces literature for Malaysian support.

This year's seizures began in March.

The Malaysian Home Affairs Ministry seized 5,100 Bibles, ordered

by the Bible Society, as well as CDs and Sunday school materials.

On September 11, the same ministry detained 5,000 Indonesia Testaments and 5,000 Indonesia/English bilingual Testaments.

The Bibles were sent by Gideons International.

Malaysian Christians fear the seizures are a sign of future discrimination and persecution.

Only nine per cent of the population is Christian. Sixty per cent is Muslim.

Malaysian Christians also fear the seizures will cut off their supply of Christian literature from Indonesia.

The seizures appear to be an ongoing problem.

In 2007, Malaysian authorities

suspended publication of *The Herald*, a Catholic publication, because it, too, used the term Allah.

The Herald has since faced ongoing court battles.

The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) is encouraging Canadian Christians to write the Hon. Lawrence Cannon, Canada's minister of foreign affairs, on the issue and pray for Malaysian authorities and Christian leaders.



Meetings in St. Louis enhance relationships with partner groups

ST. LOUIS, Mo. - A recent visit provided LCC with an opportunity to enhance existing partnerships as well as conduct research.

The St. Louis meetings are an annual event centring around a Lutheran Church-Canada/The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Commission on Fellowship (see report page 14). LCC president, Rev. Robert Bugbee, mission executive Pastor Leonardo Neitzel and director of communications Ian Adnams represented LCC on the commission. They also met with representatives of LCMS World Mission. "It was interesting to note that despite the vast difference in the size of our two church bodies, we are facing similar challenges," reported the president. Executives from the two church bodies discussed both domestic and international issues, looking for ways to cooperate and provide mutual support.

The visit to St. Louis also allowed President Bugbee to personally express the thanks of Lutheran Church-Canada to the Marvin M. Schwan Foundation for its funding

of the French hymnal *Cantiques et Liturgies Lutériens*. He presented an inscribed copy of the hymnal to the foundation's executive Rev. Keith



President Bugbee shows executives from the Marvin M. Schwan Foundation Eric Burgdorf and Rev. Keith Boheim, the acknowledgement the foundation received in the new French hymnal.

Boheim (executive director) and Eric Burgdorf.

The president made a similar presentation to Concordia Publishing House (CPH) president, Bruce Kintz. CPH staff provided administrative assistance and guidance with copyright and production issues and is now the official distributor.

Time spent with the executive of the International Lutheran Laymen's League allowed LCC's mission executive, Pastor Leonardo Neitzel to re-acquaint himself with

the auxiliary. As guest preacher at the Thursday chapel service, Dr. Neitzel told how students of the league's Bible correspondence courses formed the backbone of his mission congregation in northeast Brazil. One of those students became his wife, Maria.

As the current task force on cultural properties and archives is investigating how LCC could best preserve its records and artifacts, Ian Adnams, director of communications and staff person assigned to the task force, met with representatives from Concordia Historical Institute. Acting Interim Director Rev. Marvin Huggins and president of

the Board of Directors, Larry Lumpe provided an historical perspective on the organization and insight into its operations. Dr. Adnams will report his findings to LCC's task force during a conference call meeting in December.

"We pack a lot of activity into three-and-a-half days," observed President Bugbee. "But we come away treasuring the relationships we have and knowing that the work of the Lord is more productive for us having met."

Chaplain completes gruelling parachute course

VALCARTIER, Que. - Harold Ristau has taken his military chaplaincy work to a new high.

The 37-year-old LCC army captain qualified as a parachutist this November after completing one of the toughest and most gruelling courses the Canadian Forces offers.



The accomplishment also earned Ristau a rare honour—a set of jump

wings—and put the husband and father in a position to minister to Canada's toughest soldiers: its paratroopers.

The three-week course ran in Trenton, Ont. and saw Ristau train with classmates, many of whom were at least a decade younger than he, for 12 hours a day.

For the first two weeks, they learned drills on harnesses in a gymnasium.

After passing a series of exams, the class boarded a Hercules aircraft. Carrying about 45 kilograms of

equipment—a rifle, rucksack, snow shoes, parachute and reserve parachute—the soldiers completed six jumps from an altitude of 375 metres.

Before entering the Canadian Forces four years ago, Ristau served as a civilian pastor in Montreal.

He is now attached to 3rd Battalion, Royal 22nd Regiment and a tactical helicopter squadron. He is also in charge of the Protestant chapel at the Valcartier Garrison.

Ristau will return to Afghanistan for his second rotation in 2010.

Directions can help guide LCC at all levels

WINNIPEG - During a two-day Planning Conference in early November, men and women elected to serve leadership roles in Lutheran Church-Canada reviewed LCC's 2006 Strategic Plan and recommended updates and changes.

Before beginning any discussions, the group heard the results of surveys conducted at district conventions, LWMLC convention and on line, plus a survey aimed at young adults. It also received the most recent statistical information which indicated that communicant membership had dropped by more than 1900 members in 2008. Against this new information the conference compared the plan adopted in 2006. As a result, the conference reaffirmed and modified the seven current directions and added an eighth focusing on youth and young adults.



Rev. Dr. Dieter Kays, president and CEO of FaithLife Financial facilitated the discussions.

Eight directions were created to provide a planning focus for congregations, schools, districts, institutions and the national office. "These directions are based on what the people in the pew and our church workers told us was important," explained LCC

President Robert Bugbee. "Our hope is that congregations will find these useful as they seek to be the church in their communities."

In addition to writing the directions, the conference also gave them a priority listing based on how each will support God's mission in LCC. (See pages 22-23)

The president believes that LCC's top priority has to be warm, loving,

healthy congregations. "If people are hearing God's Word, receiving His Sacraments and have a genuine care and concern for each other, visitors will find this attractive and they will want to be part of that congregation."

The addition of a direction on youth came from a Board of Director's discussion following the conference. As the strategic plan is a board document, the members believed they should address the rising concerns brought forward in both surveys with regard to youth and young adults.

The Winnipeg event, mandated by LCC's Handbook, included the Board of Directors, district presidents, the seminary and university college presidents, the chairman of LCC Worker Benefit Plans Board of Managers, the presidents of Lutheran Women's Missionary League Canada and Concordia Lutheran Mission Society, representatives from Lutheran Foundation Canada and Lutheran Laymen's League of Canada and synod staff.

Treasurer reports decline in funding the work we do together

WINNIPEG - With less than three months left in the financial year, Lutheran Church-Canada faces a potential three-figure deficit even though the spending level is currently below budget. The news, delivered to the Board of Directors by treasurer Dwayne Cleave at its November meeting, will cause the board and synod staff to think about expense reductions for the next fiscal year.

Most of synod's funding budget supports seminaries, church work programs, overseas missions and the associated costs of communication, international church relations, theological and program supervision, and associated implementation. The funds come from congregations through districts for this work the church does together. If congregational "mission support" declines, there is less money for districts and eventually synod.

The treasurer explained to the Board of Directors that rather than a set amount designated to synod work, the East District sends a set percentage to Winnipeg. As mission offerings from congregations decline, the amount available for national and international work also declines. "We had expected a shortfall of about \$20,000 based on the previous year's commitments from congregations" said Mr. Cleave. "Unfortunately that amount has ballooned to \$60,000." The treasurer believes this is the result of the economic situation in Ontario. In addition, the impact of the stock market downturn last year and the resulting increase in pension contributions has raised personnel expenses for synod. Currently, LCC employs four executives (president, treasurer, mission executive and communications director) and two support staff.

"The financial reality increases the importance of the seminary task force and we will also have to make some decisions that will reduce some services and what we are doing overseas," the treasurer explained. He expressed the hope that as the economy continues improving, congregations can fulfill their mission commitments to districts.

He noted that representatives of Lutheran Foundation Canada are working with members of LCC congregations who want to leave gifts to the church as part of their estate which will have a positive impact sometime in the future.

Before the Board of Directors meets to approve the 2010-11 budget, the staff and the board's finance committee will work to assess spending cuts and apportion funding to areas of highest priority.

Busy fall meeting for LCC's Board of Directors

WINNIPEG - During a series of early-November meetings, which included a planning conference, Lutheran Church-Canada's Board of Directors assessed issues facing the church and conducted the church business assigned to it.

Decisions taken include:

- adopting eight strategic directions to assist all members of synod to further the mission of the church (See pages 22-23)

- appointing Arnold Drung (Holy Cross, Kitchener) to the Board of Directors to complete the remaining term left vacant by the death of Dorothea Korcok



Arnold Drung

- appointing Harold Bosche (Trinity, Richmond, B.C.) to Lutheran Church-Canada Financial Ministries Board of Directors

- tasked the Committee for Communication and Technology to review the practice of designated Sundays and report back to the board

- approving the appointment of a Concordia University College of Alberta representative to the Worker Benefit Plans Board of Managers

- appointing Rev. Kurt Reinhardt (Trinity, Kurtzville, Ont.) to Committee on Worship and Music, replacing Rev. Dr. David Saar

- located the 2011 Synodical convention in the Hamilton/Burlington area of Ontario

Friday morning's opening devotions, led by Second Vice-president Robert Krestick, included the installation of Rev. Thomas Kruesel (Bethany, Campbell River, B.C.) whom the board selected to serve as third vice-president, filling the vacancy left when Rev. Nolan Astley accepted a call to the East District.

The board also welcomed Rev. Dr. Leonardo Neitzel, synod's recently-installed mission executive to his first meeting. Rev. Dr. Karl Keller,



Newly installed Third Vice-president Tom Kruesel (Bethany, Campbell River, B.C.) receives God's blessing from President Robert Bugbee.

chairman of the board's mission and social ministries committee reported that a second missionary in Costa Rica is already making an impact in his area and is hoping to begin another mission congregation. He also noted that when volunteer missionary Rev. Dr. Ralph Mayan fulfils his commitment in Nicaragua next spring, the board should be prepared to call a missionary pastor who can serve in Chinandega.

The board's agenda also included reports from task forces currently working on cost-efficient seminary education, LCC's vicarage program and synod's archives and cultural properties program.

Throughout the meeting directors discussed concerns about declining attendance, reduced funding of the work congregations, pastors and deacons do together and how the decision by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America impacts Lutherans in Canada.

The board will meet again in March 2010 or by conference call should the need arise.

Conference postponed

WINNIPEG - In light of current financial struggles by congregations, districts and synod, Lutheran Church-Canada's Board of Directors voted to postpone the 2010 Pastors and Deacons Conference until 2013. "While we appreciate the value of such a gathering," explained President Robert Bugbee, "to mount such an undertaking at this time would not be good stewardship."

Following the positive response to the national conference in 2004, delegates to LCC's 2005 convention adopted a resolution calling for a similar gathering every six years. The conference brings together church workers from across Canada to meet each other and build an understanding of the national church.

Each district holds similar conferences in the fall for district workers. The national conference replaces those events. During the three-year postponement the board and staff will work to find alternate funding and formats to achieve the goals of the national conference.