

GREETINGS

Dr. Viktor Gräfenstein, Bishop The Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches of Ukraine

Dear delegates, President Mayan, honoured guests, brothers and sisters in Christ:

It's a great joy and honour for me to take part in the 8th Convention of the Lutheran Church—Canada representing our Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Ukraine (SELCU). This is the first time our church is among the international guests, and so I would like to introduce you briefly to our work in Ukraine.

Our Synod was founded January 5, 1996. It began with 40 participants. This group was organized by our Odessa congregation. To be sure, things didn't all happen in a day. After four years I terminated my earlier work as District President of the "German Evangelical Lutheran Church in Ukraine" (DELKU) by resigning from office. I took this action because I opposed the ordination of women as well as general ecumenical direction of this church. As a result, DELKU was unwilling even to entrust me with a pastorate, and so we decided to found a new congregation. This congregation sought to be a spiritual home for everyone, quite regardless of ethnic origin. Thus, a significant contingent left the German Lutheran congregation in Odessa, since they didn't feel at home there. Most of those who ended up organizing our Odessa congregation were not German.

We saw ourselves as a mission congregation from the very start. Since that time, through the spread of the Gospel, 13 congregations have been founded in southern Ukraine in a period of 12 years. Calls for help and requests for spiritual support came also from other communities, but we were often unable to assist, primarily due to a shortage of pastors.

Without the help of brothers and sisters our work would not have gotten off the ground. The Lord was gracious, and we received assistance from a number of places. The *Nordisk Ostmission*, based in Sweden, was strongly supportive and made it possible for us to distribute humanitarian aid of many kinds to needy people. Various groups from Germany assisted us in the spread of the Gospel. Most of all, we are thankful to LCC.

In Proverbs 22:6, Solomon declares, "*Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.*" LCC's help means as much to us as a mother's concern for her child. We are still being trained in many areas, but always with the goal of growing and becoming self-sufficient.

One sign of this relationship is the education of one of our young theologians, Oleg Schewtschenko. LCC has made it possible for him to continue his studies at Concordia Seminary in St. Catharines with the goal that he one day will work in the training of our future pastors. It is a special honour for me to introduce this brother to your convention. I should like to name three specific areas in which we benefit from your help:

1. Pastoral Training

Through the involvement of the Edmonton Seminary and particularly its emeritus professor, Dr. Norman Threinen, we were able to establish theological training in our country. This helped us to reach a three-fold objective:

- A. A common theological direction, consciously rooted in Holy Scripture and the Lutheran confessional writings;
- B. 13 pastors, who are now active in various parts of our church

- following the completion of their studies;
- C. The ability to retain our autonomy even though we learned a great deal and even re-thought many previous ideas.

2. Seminary Building

Primarily through the help of LCC we were able to realize a long-held dream, the construction of a new seminary at Usatovo, a suburb of Odessa. Since our church was formally recognized by the government of Ukraine as a registered religious organization in November 2007, we are now able to apply for official recognition of our theological training program. This is a vital step for the further development of our church.

In connection with this I should point out that the seminary building will be used for various phases of our church's work. The basement level includes storage facilities for humanitarian aid distributed not only to individuals, but also to hospitals and orphanages. A Mission Centre and office space for our synodical administration will find a permanent home here, too.

Another project is our work with the disabled. We seek to offer them a means to become more independent. Among other things, we hope to offer computer training free of charge for the disabled so that they can one day earn a living independently.

3. Programs for Children and Youth

We also thank LCC for the funding it provided to enable us to conduct summer camps for children from our congregations.

Young people came each year as volunteers from Canada who devoted themselves to children in their own localities. Through this effort hundreds of children heard of Jesus Christ, and some former unbelievers came to faith in Him. In more recent times we benefited a great deal from the work of two Canadian young adults, Mr. James Triskle of Medicine Hat, Alberta, and Miss Claire Ansell, of London, Ontario.

Your President Emeritus, Dr. Edwin Lehman, should be recognized for opening the door to a relationship between our SELCU and LCC. This relationship really sprang to life through your missionaries, Pastors Roland Syens and Keith Haberstock, and these ties have endured to this day.

Others also gave so much of themselves for our sake, men like Dr. Leonard Harms and Pastor Albert Schmidt. In addition, contributions were made to our theological training and other areas by President Ralph Mayan, Dr. Edward Kettner, Pastor Bugbee, as well as by others.

For all of this and so much more we thank the Lord ... and you ... for the close connections between our synod and LCC. I personally view this visit to Canada as a special blessing, as well as an opportunity to consult with your synodical leadership and to learn how our ties can become even deeper in the future. We also look forward to the day when we also may make some contribution to our treasured brothers and sisters in the Lutheran Church—Canada. Thank you.

**Pastor Claudio Rivas Ballestero, Vice-president
Iglesia Luterana Synod of Nicaragua**

The blessing of God Almighty: Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you all.

First I would like to express my immense gratitude to our gracious and loving God, and to all of you who are members of our

sister Church, Lutheran Church—Canada. On behalf of the Lutheran Church Synod of Nicaragua and its President Pastor Luis Diaz Turcios I want to thank you for the many and countless blessings we have received

and for your generosity and love shown to your brothers and sisters in Nicaragua.

After receiving an invitation from a group of people of the city of Chinandega, Lutheran Church-Canada sent to Nicaragua a missionary to proclaim the Gospel of salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our brother, Rev. Sándor Argüello through the Christian Mission in Nicaragua began his work in a small community called Sta. Patricia. Ten years later this fruitful LCC mission, with the help of God and the guidance of Holy Spirit has greatly developed to allow us to create our own church body, the Lutheran Church Synod of Nicaragua.

The LCC Christian Mission in Nicaragua played a major task for the growth and strengthening of this new church. Through the mission and with the participation of Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary (CLTS) we had the opportunity to train twenty one men for the Pastoral Ministry and thirty two Deaconesses who are serving our twenty three congregations, three mission stations inside the country and two international missions located one in Costa Rica and the other in Honduras. We give thanks to our God for CLTS and all those teachers who have come from Canada to share their love and wisdom with all our theological students in Nicaragua.

To our mother Lutheran Church-Canada we ask to continue assisting us through its Christian Mission in Nicaragua that we may continue united for the sake of the proclamation of the Gospel. We have been taught very well to walk in the Truth. For this we are more than thankful. We hope and pray that you will continue assisting us and keeping us with care and love as you have done it during these years. As we grow and take our own tasks we ask you to be close to us to nurture us as a mother loves and takes care of her children even when they are growing into maturity.

On this historical day, a day joy on earth as it is in heaven; to God we give honor and glory. Today LC-C and ILSN are establishing a formal fellowship between our two church bodies. We acknowledge with gratitude that this fraternity has its root and is based mainly upon our common belief in Holy Scriptures and our Lutheran Confessions. This common foundation provides us a strong union both in faith and doctrine as we confess together and accept the Old and New Testaments, the three ecumenical creeds (Apostles, Nicene and Athanasian) and all the Confessional books of our Lutheran Church contained in the Book of Concord.

We appreciate greatly the leadership of President Ralph Mayan, with love and wisdom he has led us during these years of mission and especially we thank him for putting so much effort during the process of formation of our new synod.

We thank our brother Dr. Leonard Harms, with his love and encouragement he gave us the strength to fulfill many of our dreams. We thank Reverend Sandor Arguello for all these years of hard mission work, and the great support he gave us in our time of need. We give thanks to all our brothers and sisters from the different auxiliary organizations that have assisted us during this long walk. We reaffirm our commitment before God and before you my friends to continue faithfully proclaiming the true Gospel with love, discipline and dedication. We commit ourselves to always keep in our midst our sound Christian Doctrines as we have received them from the Lutheran Church-Canada.

May our gracious and merciful God bless us through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, as we walk and work together for the sake of His Holy Gospel.

**Dr. Gerald Kieschnick, President
Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod**

President Mayan, President Emeritus Lehman, President-elect Bugbee, dear friends in Christ, it is my privilege to bring you greetings today on behalf of the 2.4 million members of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. We are thankful for the partnership we share in the Gospel and for the Confessional unity that unites us as Lutheran brothers and sisters in Christ.

President Mayan, I bring a special word of appreciation for you today, not only for the faithful guidance you have provided the Lutheran Church-Canada as its president these past 12 years, but also for your eight year tenure as chairman of the International Lutheran Council. We are grateful for your leadership among Confessional Lutherans worldwide. Your dedication and churchmanship have impacted many. Among those whose lives have been affected are the ones who heard the Gospel of Christ Jesus because of your Spirit-guided influence and who will now spend eternity with their Father in heaven. Thank you, President Mayan, for being a faithful ambassador of reconciliation for Jesus Christ! And thank you, Linda, for your patience, love, and faithful partnership with Ralph during your many years of service together to our Lord and to His church. My wife, Terry, sends her love and personal greetings to you, our dear sister in Christ.

While my time with you is brief, I believe it is important to share with you some of what's happening in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. We continue to focus on our Synod's vision of One Mission—to reach lost people for Christ; One Message—that Jesus alone is Savior of the world; and One People—forgiven and united by God's love in Christ. The *Ablaze!* endeavor to reach with the Gospel 50 million people in the U.S. and 50 million people in other parts of the world by the 500th anniversary of the

Reformation in 2017 continues to develop as the long-term movement it is designed to be.

Specific objectives and strategies include starting 2,000 new LCMS missions in the U.S., revitalizing 2,000 existing LCMS congregations, increasing by 50% the number of career missionaries in foreign countries, and increasing support for our 30 partner churches throughout the world.

Our 10 colleges and universities and 2 seminaries continue to work diligently, in some cases with significant financial challenges, in helping prepare ordained, commissioned, and lay leaders for our congregations who are faithful, humble, bold, and courageous. Our Synod faces the challenge of shifting its focus from that of primarily being an orthodox, confessional, evangelical, Lutheran Christian church body defining itself over against heterodox Christian church bodies to that of being an orthodox, confessional, evangelical, Lutheran Christian church body determining how best to reach people who are indifferent or even hostile to the Christian faith in a post-Christian era in a country that in many ways is in danger of losing its moral compass. We must continue to speak and work to preserve and strengthen the values we hold near and dear, the values espoused by our grandfathers and grandmothers, especially the sanctity of life, the blessing of marriage between one man and one woman, and the God-designed creation of and distinction between male and female. We must speak and work, in a godly manner, against abortion, unscriptural divorce, homosexual behavior, and any other denigration of God's holy and perfect will for mankind.

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is of one mind on these and on the overwhelming majority of other matters of faith and of life. While continuing to work on areas of

disagreement that remain in our midst, our Synod is blessed with a remarkable degree of theological and doctrinal unity. We simply are not arguing about matters that divide greatly other parts of the Body of Christ. We are of one accord with important matters such as the inspiration and inerrancy of Holy Scripture, the doctrines of creation and redemption, justification and sanctification, the miracles, deity, virgin birth, atoning sacrifice, and resurrection of Christ, and other basic, fundamental doctrines of the church.

We continue to address our differences on such matters as admission to the Lord's Supper, the role of women in the church, faithful expressions of Christian worship, and inter-Christian relationships. Nevertheless, we thank God for the oneness in Christ and the theological solidarity that, with very few exceptions, we enjoy in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

President-elect Bugbee, we in the LCMS look forward to working with you in the future as we continue in our God-given mission of seeking the lost for Christ. It is our sincere prayer that we will mutually encourage one another to continue to proclaim the truth of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ our Lord and to do the good works our Lord has prepared for us to do for the sake of His kingdom. May the Holy Spirit bless your leadership as president so that many will "be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" as the pure Gospel is proclaimed and the Sacraments are administered rightly to the glory of God.

Rev. Dr. Ed Lehman
President Emeritus of Lutheran Church-Canada

President Mayan, brothers and sisters in Christ

Thank you for this opportunity, which is both a privilege and an honor, to bring a word of greeting from one who (to

This is all in accord with the Word of God and in harmony with your convention theme, "Give Jesus Glory." Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians: "*We know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence. All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.*" 2 Corinthians 4:13-15 (NIV)

May the grace of God flow and even overflow freely and abundantly across all of North America as the Holy Spirit empowers a bold Gospel witness throughout the land and employs the resources of the LCC and the LCMS to storm the gates of hell with the life-changing and life-saving message of Jesus Christ. Embracing the prayer Jesus prayed for us, "*Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory,*" (John 17:24, NIV), we desire to stand and to strive side-by-side with you for the faith of the Gospel so that the world will be set ablaze with the Gospel and so that many will see the glory of Jesus.

To that end, may the Lord Jesus, who was glorified by the Father and who is worthy of all glory, honor and praise, be with you, granting His grace to you and to those with whom you share the hope of Christ.

Thank you for this time to address you today. The peace of the Lord be with you all.

paraphrase scripture) "being old, yet speaketh."

Several times since we arrived here yesterday, we have been reminded that this is an historic convention in which we not

only mark 20 years since our founding, but also mark the election of our synod's third president. In his president's report this morning, Dr. Mayan expressed that sense of history far more eloquently and passionately than I could ever have done, so I will not attempt to remind you of all the ways in which God has both challenged and blessed us in the intervening years.

I would, however, want to remind you, Dr. Mayan, that when you were first elected, you were the "wrong" president. No, God did not make a mistake, but you did. When you were nominated, you had assured your family that there was no chance you would be elected. And when you returned home to your family, your son Jonathan immediately confronted you with, "Dad, you said there was no chance you would be elected. How could you have been so wrong?" So, you see, you were the "wrong" president.

But, of course, you were the right president. God used the gifts he had already nurtured within you, and allowed new gifts to flourish. You have served our synod with unrelenting zeal, faithfulness to our confession, and a missional view of how God's kingdom comes to this world and to each one of us.

Twenty years after it all began, Lutheran Church-Canada has trained most of its own pastors (in fact, a majority of clergy delegates at this convention are graduates of our two seminaries.) It has been presented with doors of opportunity that continue to surprise and amaze us, all the while remaining faithful in confessing and proclaiming God's truth.

In the early years of our existence, I was often asked the question, "how are things going in Lutheran Church-Canada?" My usual answer was, "not as well as they should be but better than we deserve." That

answer often evoked a chuckle, as though I was giving a flippant response. But it's an accurate description of our lives as God's people. We are never as good as we should be, but we are blessed far beyond anything that we deserve. Too often, we see the church's deficiencies – and they are real. But we are God's people, and He both calls and equips us for His service. And that is why, in spite of our deficiencies, we can give Jesus the Glory.

I heartily congratulate president-elect Pastor Bob Bugbee . You may well think that you have big shoes to fill, but you needn't worry about that, for God has already fitted you with your own, and He will train them to take the steps that He will set out for you. And if some people by mistake call you, "Mayan," don't let it bother you. Take it as a compliment. If they call you "Lehman," take their pulse!

At the time of Lutheran Church-Canada's founding, at the installation of President Mayan, when we sent out our first overseas missionaries, and on many other occasions between and since, we often used a prayer which I believe is appropriate once again. It goes like this: "*Lord, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Grant us grace to go forth with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us, and your love supporting us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*"

That is my prayer for you, Dr. Mayan as you await God's new directions for your life, for you Pastor Bugbee as you prepare to take up the mantle that is passed on to you, and for our dear synod, as it enters a new chapter – a new chapter of HIS story, which God has already planned and written.

God bless you all! Thank you!