

The Lutheran Connector

The Official Publication of the Canadian Association of Lutheran Congregations (CALC)

The New Year Edition – December 31, 2011

CALC: STILL UNDER THE SAME MANAGEMENT AS ANTIOCH!



*CALC is a Community of Independent
Congregations Living Together*

*The Word of God Created Us
The Word of God Sustains Us
The Word of God Redeems Us*

*We are servants of one another
We share one another's burdens
As Jesus served us and bore our burdens*

As one we proclaim Jesus to the world

CALC WELCOMES PEACE LUTHERAN

It is with great joy that the Canadian Association of Lutheran Congregations welcomes the Peace Lutheran Church of Wainwright, AB into the fold.

Wainwright is a strong, vibrant community located in East Central Alberta near the beautiful Battle River valley and is the major service center for their region. Wainwright is progressive community of 5775 (plus 650 at CFB Wainwright).

This is the community where Peace Lutheran is located and serves within under the leadership of Pastors Ron & Elaine Hobden.

2011 had been an amazing and exciting year in CALC and we all pray and trust God for more as we seek to grow and spread the wonder of the glorious message of Jesus across our land.

May God continue to bless each of our congregations as we move onward and forward in 2012!

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THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

A Year in Review and Opportunities for New Year Ahead

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ .

As you read this message, we are at a turning point; 2011 is coming to a close and 2012 stands before us. This is a perfect time to look back at where we have been in 2011 and ahead to where God is taking us in 2012.

The year 2011 has been a challenging year for the world and the church. Global financial and stock markets have taken us on a gut wrenching ride. The near failure of Greece's economy and the increasing weakness of the Italian, Spanish and Portuguese economies have made us hold our collective breaths and caused the stock markets to plunge during the summer. The markets have struggled to move upward based on any good economic news that can be found. However, it seems that any such gains are lost and the markets slide ever downward when cold hard economic facts are disclosed.

The Body of Christ was shaken once more when the ELCIC, Canada's largest Lutheran denomination, turned its back on two thousand years of the Church's teaching, and voted to allow clergy to solemnize same gender marriages and ordain non-celibate homosexuals to the office of the Ministry of Word and Sacrament. People within the ELCIC are deeply divided. Many orthodox Lutherans within the ELCIC see themselves at a turning point. They wonder if they can remain in the ELCIC and be true to God and Scripture.

The global financial meltdown and the turmoil in the Church share a common cause. The Financial crisis was in part caused by financial institutions who played fast and loose with the rules and regulations which govern lending practices. As a result, credit was extended to those who did not qualify for the credit extended. Worldwide billions of dollars were lent to those who could not repay the debt. Banks and other financial institutions were, therefore, saddled with billions of dollars in bad debt when credit card holders refused to pay their debt. By stretching and breaking the rules that kept them safe and healthy, banks and other financial institutions placed our entire financial system in peril.

Following the lead of the United Church of Canada and the Anglican Church of Canada, the majority of the delegates to ELCIC's 2011 convention voted to interpret Scripture in a way that permitted ELCIC pastors to marry and ELCIC congregations to call and ordain candidates to the office of the ministry of Word and Sacrament that Scripture does not allow. As prohibited marriages and ordinations take place, they will place a great strain on the Body of Christ and place the ELCIC in peril. Furthermore, the media and public are increasingly painting all Lutherans with one brush, the same brush they use to paint the ELCIC. They believe all Lutherans should share the beliefs of the majority of the delegates to the ELCIC's 2011 national convention. They reason that equal opportunity in the church for gays and lesbians is, after all, democratic, egalitarian, liberating and simply "being Canadian." They can't believe that anyone would be opposed to granting gays and lesbians equal rights in the church to marriage and ordination.

God gave us the grace to respond to the liberal trends in the ELCIC. Specific responses to the ELCIC's new Social Statement on Marriage and Human Sexuality and the motions which permitted same gender marriage and the ordination of non-celibate gays and lesbians can be found on our website.¹ We also prepared a comprehensive manual which helps ELCIC congregations to chart their course out of the

¹ CALC's Statement on Marriage and Human Sexuality can be found at this address:

<http://www.calc.ca/Statement%20on%20Marriage%20and%20Human%20Sexuality.pdf>

CALC's response to the ELCIC's Social Statement and the specific resolutions passed by the delegates to ELCIC's 2011 Annual General Convention may be found at these addresses: http://www.calc.ca/calc_responds.htm and

http://www.calc.ca/A_Crisis_of_Faith_Booklet.pdf

ELCIC and onto a new path, which may include alignment with CALC. This document can be made available from our website through a link which can be forwarded to leaders of ELCIC congregations who have expressed an interest in CALC.

In 2011 we made presentations on CALC to ELCIC congregations in Ontario and Alberta, specifically, at Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd in Toronto, at the Nisku Inn in Edmonton and most recently at Trinity Lutheran in Brooks, Alberta.

In the period following the ELCIC's watershed convention in July of 2011, many ELCIC congregations have voted to sever ties with their denomination. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd in Toronto and All Saints Lutheran Church in Ottawa, Ontario, have severed their ties with the ELCIC. Ron Voss and I spoke at All Saints in Ottawa January of 2010. Both these congregations are seriously contemplating aligning with CALC. Trinity Brooks took their first vote to sever ties with the ELCIC on December 18, 2011. The motion to sever passed by the required majority. Please pray for these congregations as they turn to God for guidance and chart their course for the future.

CALC's mandate is to serve and empower congregations in their ministry, especially, in areas of ministry where individual congregations are most often not equipped to fulfill on their own. To this end we have:

- Established a comprehensive manual for voluntary use by member congregations of CALC. It outlines policies, practices and procedures for: the discernment of a candidate's call to pastoral ministry; training and education of a candidate; the call by a congregation and ordination of a candidate; the call and installation of replacement for, or ordained clergy by a congregation or to a special ministry; and the discipline of pastors.
- Been actively involved in establishing and enriching relationships with seminaries. CALC's vice president, Fred Schickedanz, continues to serve on the board of directors of the Institute of Lutheran Theology (ILT), an online orthodox Lutheran Seminary. CALC thus has a voice in the unfolding of the history of this new seminary. We have one student in the ILT's Master of Divinity program. We are in the process of working out a comprehensive agreement with Concordia Lutheran Seminary in Edmonton for the training of our men and women who experience a call to the pastoral ministry.
- Been actively involved in establishing relationships with those who can provide materials for Christian Education. Been actively negotiating an agreement with SOLA Publishing in the US, whereby, CALC would print and distribute SOLA's materials in Canada, thus avoiding Canadian duty and taxes. In this way we would become a resource in Canada for scripturally sound and confessional materials for adults, youth and children.
- Received denominational status for the purpose of facilitating the issuance of marriage licenses to our clergy in Alberta. In the next year we hope to achieve this status in British Columbia and begin the process in Ontario.

In the past year we have added three new congregations as full members of CALC. Resurrection Lutheran of Pembroke, Ontario; Martin Luther Congregation of Vancouver, BC ; and Peace Lutheran Church of Wainwright, Alberta. Our roster of Pastors has grown as well. We added Pastor Nick Hopman who began ministry at Marin Luther in Vancouver on December 11, 2011. We added Pastor Ana Beck, who serves Resurrection Lutheran Church in Pembroke and Pastor Harry Huff who serves Faith Lutheran in North York, Ontario. We also added Pastors Elaine and Ron Hobden, who serve Peace Lutheran in Wainwright, AB.

Early in the new year Ron Voss and I will be traveling to Vancouver, BC . On the 14th of January we hope to meet with representatives of three Lutheran congregations in Vancouver. On Sunday the 15th I will install Nick Hopman as the pastor of Martin Luther.

God willing, on Saturday February 18th I fly from my home in Kelowna to Edmonton, Alberta. Ron Voss will meet me there. Together we will make our way to the town of Viking, Alberta, to make a presentation on CALC at Golden Valley Lutheran. Pastor Alvin Sorenson and the good people of Golden Valley, will invite the people from Lutheran churches in the surrounding communities of Tofield, Round Hill & Kingman to the presentation. Sunday February 19, 2012 I will install Pastors Elaine and Ron Hobden at Peace Lutheran, our newest member congregation, in neighbouring Wainwright, Alberta. Monday February 20th I will fly north from Edmonton to Grande Prairie, Alberta. I will rent a car at the airport and drive to Dawson Creek, British Columbia (about an hour and a half west). On the way, I hope to stop in Valhalla Centre and meet the pastor of Valhalla Lutheran church. I will give a presentation at Dawson Creek on the implications of the ELCIC's policies with respect to same gender marriage, the ordination of non-celibate homosexuals and CALC. I should, God willing be back home in Kelowna on Tuesday the 21st.

CALC's national council covets your prayers. Three times a year we fly or drive from our homes in BC, Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario to Calgary, Alberta. We meet for the day and fly home. Fred Schickedanz flies to the US to meet with his fellow board members of the Institute of Lutheran Theology. Ron Voss and I will travel extensively to make CALC known. Please pray for us as we travel on the Lord's business. ELCIC Congregations that find themselves at a crossroads also covet your prayers. Pray that they hear God's voice and follow God's lead. Please pray that God gives each member of our national council the faith, love, passion, wisdom, faithfulness, fortitude, strength, health, and compassion necessary to hear the Father, Son and Holy Spirit speak to us and follow the path our Triune God has laid out for us.



In Christ's service

Pastor Edward P. Skutshek, President.

2011 GENERAL CONVENTION HIGHLIGHTS



CALC's 2011 General Convention, the 20th annual convention of the Association, was hosted by St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Cochrane, November 4-6, 2011. Our convention theme based upon John 21:6 brought to mind boldly trying something new in faithfulness to God and His Word and guided by the Holy Spirit.

Those who were in attendance were treated to a wonderful uplifting event. The Convention began with the Friday evening worship service, which was punctuated by vibrant singing of inspirational hymns sung both by St. Peter's choir and those attending the service.



A highlight on Saturday morning was the reception of three new full member congregations into

the CALC family: Martin Luther, Vancouver, BC; Resurrection Lutheran, Pembroke, ON; and Peace Lutheran, Wainwright, AB. Another highlight was the presence of several of CALC's pioneers and their words of greeting and encouragement. In attendance were Bill Anhorn, CALC's first Treasurer (1992-1995); Olive Kieler, CALC's first Secretary (1992-1999); and Rev. Vern Roste CALC's first President (1992-1995) who together with Edmonton lawyer Phil Brose traveled to Ottawa where they guided the



Charter Bill for the Association through Parliament. Also in attendance and addressing those present were Harold Stedel, one of the five petitioners (which included Dr. Garth Wagner, George Cooper, Olive Kieler and Rev. Vern Roste) for the act to incorporate CALC as well as having served as a member of the Board of Elders (1992-1995) and Rev. Ken Wilsdon, who chaired the committee that drafted CALC's Constitution. CALC's President, Pastor Ed Skutshek, read an informative and encouraging letter from Edmonton lawyer Phil Brose, who was unable to attend. Issue No. 10, Autumn 1995, of *The Lutheran Connector*, reporting on the 1995 General Convention, concluded with the following, "God grant that the vision of the church body founders be remembered in years to come". We are delighted that these pioneers were able to join us for CALC's 20th annual convention. We are now living in the legacy of their early work and we thank them for it.



In the Saturday afternoon session we heard greetings from various invited guests, including Rev. Dr. Paul Spaulding, representing Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC), Rev. Dr. Dennis Bielfeldt, representing the Institute of Lutheran Theology (ILT), and Rev. Tom

Walker, representing Sola Publishing. Later in the day, Rev. Alvin Sorenson (Golden Valley, Viking, AB) as a former member of the Board of Directors brought



greetings on behalf of the Canadian Lutheran Bible Institute (CLBI) in Camrose. CLBI President Rev. Harold Rust attended the Friday evening worship service but was unable to attend on Saturday because of other commitments. The Institute of Lutheran Theology (ILT), Sola Publishing, and the Canadian Lutheran Bible Institute (CLBI), Camrose all had display tables at the Convention. Warm greetings were read from



Rev. Dr. Robert Bugbee, President of Lutheran Church-Canada and from Rev. Randy Freund and Rev. Mark Richardson, District Chair and Service Coordinator, respectively, for the Augustana District of Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ.



The Saturday afternoon session concluded with our invited speaker Rev. Dr. Douglas Schoelles (Resurrection Church, Keller, Texas) speaking passionately on the topic of *Equipping Parents to be the Spiritual Leaders in Their Homes*.

Following a busy day of business, education and edification, on Saturday evening we were treated to an exciting banquet organized by the people of our host congregation. The banquet was a time for discussion of the day's events and building relationships in Christ as

we dined and mingled before and during dinner. Lutherans are known to like good food and delicious food was served up both for Saturday's lunch and banquet by Pat's Palate Pleasers, a catering business run by Pat Parker, a member of St. Peter's.



Those attending the Saturday banquet were beneficiaries of a special treat as they witnessed an exciting inaugural performance of the Rocky Mountain College Children and Youth Choir directed by Erica Phare-Bergh. Upon conclusion of their performance, those in attendance gave the choir a standing ovation.

Our weekend convention concluded Sunday morning (All Saints Day) with a service of Holy Communion and Rev. Ed Skutshek, President of CALC, preaching on Psalm 116:15 (*Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints*). Faith Lutheran, Toronto has graciously offered to host next year's General Convention.

REPORT ON THE LCMC CONVENTION

October 2-5, 2011 Des Moines, Iowa USA – Polk County Convention Complex

Convention Theme: Growing in Christ: *I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.* (1 Corinthians 3:6-7)

Sunday October 2 marked the first day of LCMC's 11th Annual Gathering. The event, took place at the Polk County Convention Complex (The Plex) in downtown Des Moines, Iowa. It wrapped up at noon on Wednesday October 5th. I missed Wednesday as my flight left early in the morning. Registration began at 4:00 PM on Sunday followed by dinner at The Plex for about





1,000. All our common meals were plated meals served to us by an army of servers. They were amazingly efficient and the meals were very good. Over 1,100 registered for the convention, over 600 voting delegates (of which I was one, 350 visitors from LCMC congregations and about 150 non-affiliated visitors, vendors, guests and speakers.

Sunday evening continued with an opening worship service. Opening worship was attended by over 1,100 people. Reverend Bill Bohline of Hosanna Lutheran Church, of Lakeville, Minnesota (a mega church) preached. His sermon began to unpack the theme of the convention, Growing in Christ. Like all the other speakers he referred

to Christ's Great Commission found in Matthew 28:18-20, to go into the world baptize and make disciples. He reminded us that the Great Commission is based on Jesus authority over the whole world. The Great Commission thus has to begin with the authority that Jesus has over each Christian. His challenge to us was: "How is Jesus using you in the unfolding of the Great Commission? Over 1,100 received Holy Communion by Intinction. Those in need of prayer were directed to prayer teams. I had the privilege of being on a prayer team with Mark Vander Tuig, the Service Coordinator of LCMC. The worship was contemporary. Music included praise songs and traditional hymns set to more modern tunes. The evening concluded with desserts and fellowship time at The Plex.

Every day began with singing. The musicians and vocalists who led singing came from LCMC churches in and around Des Moines. These praise bands were amazing. The majority of members of each band were in their 40s and 50s together with some young people. They were mostly led by women. Many of the leaders were women who played acoustic guitar (Look like a praise band we know?).

Monday morning's Bible Study leader, Reverend Elisa Ashley of Redeemer in Mission for Christ, in Charlotte, North Carolina, challenged those present, with some distressing statistics. Based on surveys done by respected Christian pollsters, such as the Barna Group, in the US, the trend among all Christian groups is a decline in membership and participation in church life. The growth in churches due to conversion of the un-churched is tiny. Her response, God must not be blessing the manner in which we are sowing and watering. We don't have to change the seeds or the water, we have to change the way we are sowing. The rest of the speakers really unpacked this theme.

We heard two main keynote speakers on church growth, Pastors TJ Anderson and Pastor Greg Ogden. These men were great speakers. Each emphasized the decline in membership and participation in church life in America. The percentage of the US population which had no affiliation with any religion grew from 25% in 1991 to 37% in 2011. Each speaker emphasized, quoting George Orwell: "Sometimes the first duty of intelligent men and women is the restatement of the obvious. Each felt compelled to state the obvious about church growth.

They noted that since the 1950's the model for church growth in the USA was based on these principles: People will flock to a congregation if: (a) they built a large modern facility with plenty of parking; (b) provided good preaching, (c) provided good music and (d) provided a good program for children and youth. The net result over the past five decades is that the mega-churches have drawn families from the small churches. This is called pew shifting. The young people leaving the church outnumbered the un-churched which were brought into the church during this period. The net effect has been an overall decline in membership. We have witnessed this in our own Canadian context.

The speakers noted that we in the church have made assumptions about why the un-churched have not been attracted to the church and our young people are leaving in droves: (1) they are afraid of the commitment they perceived necessary to be a Christian; and (2) they don't want to change their lifestyle.

Surveys taken of the un-churched and those who have left the church have revealed that the follow reasons for leaving or failing to be attracted to church: (1) Never experienced a need to consider or thought about following Jesus; (2) Not interested in "spiritual things"; and (3) Felt repelled by Christians.

The surveys revealed that the un-churched and those who left believed that Christians for the most part are:

- **Uptight:** We are over-concerned with proper behavior within the church building.
- **Judgmental:** The message of the church is that the world is going to Hell and all must join the church to avoid hell.
- **Self Righteous:** We know the truth and the rest of the world is completely ignorant.
- **Hypocrites:** We talk about Christian values and then do the opposite. They point to high profile Christian leaders who are caught engaging in activities they call sin and have preach against.
- **Closed Minded:** Jesus is the way, truth and life and there is no other way.
- **Homophobic:** We are obsessed with persecuting gay people.

The solution:

- **Lament:** that people perceive us as uptight, judgmental, self-righteous, hypocritical, closed minded and homophobic.
- **Confess:** that evangelism has been fixated on salvation, believing that the church's primary function is to make believers, that is, believe that Jesus is Lord in order to avoid Hell and not making disciples of all nations (teaching believers to follow Jesus and obey his teachings).
- **Believe:** that God is going to use the church, the body of Christ on earth, to change the world.
- **Profess:** that (a) Jesus is the way, life and truth and the only way to God the Father, because God has revealed to us that Jesus is His unique Son, who was incarnate as a human being, who lived, suffered and died for the forgiveness of our sins and was raised from the dead so that all who believe in Jesus will have eternal life; (b) our faith and belief in Jesus Christ is not something that we have acquired or a part of our own mental efforts but represents the power of God working in us; (c) we can be transformed by God's power and live lives in accordance with His will; and (d) we are not obsessed with persecuting gays; rather, with proclaiming God's desire that all people live in loving, lifelong, monogamous partnerships between one man and one woman within the covenant of marriage.
- **Strive:** toward the goal of becoming Disciple of Jesus, that is, fully committed followers of Jesus Christ who worship regularly, diligently study God's Word and put Jesus' teachings into action in daily life (including sacrificial giving).
- **Discover:** the spiritual gift that God has given each Christian and use that gift in the life of the Church.
- **Pass on:** the faith that God has planted in you to others.

The quest for the last 50 years has been to find new ways of evangelizing. We were told ***to think outside the box***. The message today is to ***think inside the Book, the Bible***. The Church must once more be seen as a place that Disciples are taught obedience to Jesus' teachings and released into the world to pass on their faith to others through proclamation of the Word and service to others. Jesus calls us to enter into caring relationships with others so that the way is opened to hearing the Gospel. "People do not care how much you know until they know how much you care." People want to know that you care about them and then will want to know what you believe. We have to be able to give an account. This requires spiritual growth and getting out of our comfort zone. It means getting into the Bible and then into the world.

Another keynote speaker was the Rev. Dr. Wakseyoum Idosa, the President of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) It is a national Church in Ethiopia.. The EECMY is the largest Lutheran Church in Africa with some five million members. It was started by European and American missionaries. In 1957 it became an independent church with a membership of about 230,000 members. They have a deep concern, not only for the spiritual needs of a person, but also for his/her physical needs. Their motto is "Serving the Whole Person", better known as, Wholistic Ministry. Their mission to "go" out to His people to proclaim Christ as Lord and Savior of all human kind. The EECMY has survived persecution by political regimes, including, communists and socialists. They are currently being persecuted by Muslims. Churches have been burned and confiscated and their people killed. The church has grown in leaps and bounds and continues to grow because each members is challenged and encouraged to pass on their faith to at least one other person each year.

State of the Association: Service Coordinator Mark Vander Tuig reported that: the total number of LCMC congregations is **724** made up of: (1) **656** US Congregations distributed over 42 states and two territories; the

remaining 68 congregations are located in 9 other countries. These countries and the number of congregations in each are as follows: Canada (7), Mexico (3), Belarus (4), Vietnam (29), Cambodia (8), Nicaragua (12), Democratic Republic of Congo (3), Russia (1) and Haiti (1). About 57% of LCMC congregations have attendance of less than 100 per week; another 20% have attendance of less than 200 per week; and 23% have weekly attendance of over 200.

Convention Business: (a) **Financial statements** for 2010 were approved (Revenue of \$759,602.00 less expenses of \$696,646.00 for a surplus of \$62,956.00); (b) budget for 2012 of \$835,000 was approved. The seven (7) members of LCMC's Board of Trustees are elected by seven (7) geographic Areas. An attempt is made to have an equal number of congregations in each of the seven Areas. The seven (7) Canadian congregations are a part of Area 2. Rev. Becky Lee (current chair of the Board and representing Area 2) and Rev. Martha Nelson (representing Area 4) were both re-elected to the LCMC Board of Trustees for another three year term. A motion was passed that gave congregations the authority to enter into ecumenical relationships and partnerships with other church bodies. A motion was passed to establish a strategic partnership of prayer and mutual edification with Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY). In response to this resolution, individual LCMC congregations were given the opportunity to get in contact with and partner with the EECMY through a form distributed to congregational representatives at the gathering.

Augustana District. LCMC's constitution allows congregations in LCMC to band together into Districts. Districts should not be confused with Areas. Areas are established by LCMC as an organization for the purpose of electing Trustees to LCMC's Board of Trustees. Districts are set up by member congregations. They unite LCMC congregations from a particular area of the US or congregations that share an interest and are located throughout the US. Some Districts are formal (have formal governing documents) and some are informal. Most LCMC congregations don't belong to a District. The Augustana District is a non-geographic District made up of 40 LCMC congregations from several states. The Augustana District is a formal district with its own constitution. It emphasizes sticking to our Confessional roots and voluntary standards for pastors which exceed LCMC's minimum standards. It also supports the Institute of Lutheran Theology (ILT) and Sola Publishing. Each District gathers for a meeting on the Monday night of the gathering. I attended the Augustana District gathering. CALC has entered into a memorandum of understanding with the Augustana District. I was asked to bring greetings from CALC at the Augustan gathering. My greeting was well received.

International Partners. On Tuesday morning LCMC's international partners were given an opportunity to greet the delegates and visitors. I was given an opportunity to give a brief greeting to the delegates on behalf of CALC. My greeting was well received.

The evening concluded with dinner and dessert at the Plex followed by dramatic portrayal of the story of the Gospel by AWAKEN Ministries. The Gospel from the birth to the Resurrection was presented by a team of mimes. The story was set to music. It was well received by all.

Next year's convention is set for the beginning of October 2012 in Denver, Colorado. The convention will take place in a large hotel with its own convention center.

I was challenged, energized and inspired by this year's convention and look forward to next year's convention.

In Christ's service.

Pastor Ed Skutshek, Convention Delegate and President of CALC

CONGREGATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

(Martin Luther-Vancouver, Grace Lutheran-Kelowna, St. Andrew's-Kamloops, Christ Lutheran-Sexsmith/Journeys-Grand Prairie, St. Peter's-Cochrane, Christ Lutheran-Morden, Faith Lutheran-North York, Resurrection Lutheran-Pembroke)

Martin Luther – Vancouver



Just to let you know that our new pastor, Pastor Nicholas Hopman with his wife, Mary, and their 2 little girls, Solveig and Inga, arrived here on Tuesday, December 6, 2011. The girls look like sweet, little angels. They all drove from Michigan with Mary's brother, Anders, driving the U-Haul truck and Pastor Hopman in the car. Anders flew back to Michigan this morning, Thursday, December 8, 2011. The family is now getting settled in the little house next to the Education Building which is across from our church.

Pastor Hopman will preach in a combined service, German and English, this Sunday, December 11, 2011. The congregation can't wait to meet the family. Pastor Hopman preached in our church in August 2011. We are so very excited to have a new pastor and his lovely family. It is just too good to be true.

Wishing you All a Blessed Christmas and a Healthy New Year!
Martin Luther Evangelical Lutheran Church,
Vancouver, BC

Grace Lutheran – Kelowna



TO ALL THE WONDERFUL PEOPLE AT GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

THANK YOU

TODAYS PERFORMANCE WAS AMAZING
ALL OF US THOROUGHLY ENJOYED OURSELVES
YOU MADE US FEEL LOVED AND APPRECIATED
YOU BROUGHT CHRIST AND CHRISTMAS TO US

THANK YOU

FROM THE RESIDENTS AND STAFF AT PINE ACRES HOME

These comments came in one of the emails we received after our 2011 Christmas Joy Concert – and brought us great joy because we met our goal: to bring Christmas and Christ's Love to our community, and in particular, to the seniors from the five residences which our pastors minister to throughout the year. This was the second year we organized Christmas Joy – a completely free event packed with musicians of all ages, from within our church family and we also had invited community musicians – all of who were praising God through familiar carols, instrumental duets and solos, and short readings, all culminating in a candlelight rendition of Silent Night – first in German, then in English – with words on the screen so all could participate. After the concert, our fellowship hall was packed with people, able-footed and in wheelchairs, enjoying a fully loaded table of elder-friendly home-baked goodies and the company of many in our church family. Members of our council greeted our guests when they arrived, helped with positioning wheelchairs, and offered to hang up coats. Best of all, one could just feel the Holy Spirit at work as we all came together to make this event happen, with hands in the kitchen, hands

that baked, hands that played instruments and voices that sang and spoke – all to the Glory of God and in grateful praise of His Love and His Son!

On December 11, our Sunday school and Praise Band led the entire Sunday morning service in music and worship. Older Sunday school students told the Christmas story through scripture, interspersed with familiar Christmas carols, several of which were incorporated into contemporary praise songs, and throughout the readings and music, a live nativity took place. The children thoroughly enjoyed 'owning' this service and we now have several competent young readers willing to serve in the months ahead! We look forward to seeing what our Sunday school comes up with in December 2012!

One of the ways we reach out to the community at large is through our 'paper sermons', which appear in our local newspaper on the first and third Thursday of each month. Our primary focus is to put God's Word out in our community and let the Spirit work God's will, and a secondary benefit is getting our name out as a church that holds true to His Word. We would like to share two December articles/ads in the hopes that they may be of interest or benefit to our brothers and sisters in Christ through CALC. Please feel free to use the content in the future, if it is useful to you, personalizing it for your own church family and community.

The congregation of Grace Lutheran Church, West Kelowna, BC wishes all our CALC friends a very Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year. May we all grow in faith and fellowship as we look to the Light and Love of Christ and reflect that Love and Light in our thoughts, words, and actions to all of our brothers and sisters in Christ – and to those who seek that Light in dark places.

Submitted by Karen Emmond
On behalf of Grace Congregation

St. Andrew's Lutheran – Kamloops



Blessed Christmas Greetings to all. May the joy of celebrating our Savior's birth be with each of you.

Our congregation on December 4th celebrated the first year of Ministry with Pastor David and Cathy Schumacher. We have been truly blessed by their presence and give thanks to God for answering our prayers by sending them to Kamloops.

St. Andrew's continues to be a busy place with growth in all programs and events which include the praise and worship team, Sunday morning Bible study, Tuesday afternoon Bible study, Men's Wednesday Prayer breakfast, Ladies Wednesday morning Bible study, an active and growing Alter Guild, the return of a Sunday School program, a special fall study program, (The Truth Project) and a growing membership.

December 11th was a very special day for St. Andrew's, a double whammy of sorts, or should I say a Double Blessing! The morning service included a special ceremony with the induction of 19 new members to the congregation. Praise the Lord! This New Members induction set the tone for the rest of the day with some 100 people enjoying a turkey dinner immediately following the service. The dinner was sort of a mini "Lutheran pot luck". The main meal (turkey, ham and all the trimmings) was planned, cooked and provided by members of the church council and their spouses with salads and homemade Christmas tarts brought by the congregation. A wonderful after dinner Christmas music program and sing-a-long was provided by praise and worship team. A day of Worship, Blessings, Love and Fellowship.

This summer saw a unique program for our Church. The Ladies Wednesday morning Bible Study usually cancels their program for the summer months. This year they decided to move the program outdoors with a slight change. A "Prayer Walk" was instigated to replace the Bible Study. Each Wednesday the group would spend a good hour of walking the several km trail of beautiful McArthur Island Park, pausing frequently to observe the wonders of God's many creations and offering up Prayers of praise and thanksgiving. What a wonderful way to be with Him.

The Truth Project is an "In Depth Christian World View Experience", a 13 week study program that was led by Pastor David and Cathy in their home this fall. The group consisted of 5 couples who met every Sunday evening for a video presentation followed by discussion on the topic of the day. The 12 lesson series is designed to direct the participants thinking with regard to four fundamental issues; Truth, God, Man and the Social Order. The study material is produced by Focus on the Family with the video presentation provided by Dr. Del Tackett and is set on the question, "Do you really believe what you believe in is really real?" The program will be offered to other members of the congregation with couples attending this fall's study hosting small groups in their homes.

2012 is going to be special year for St. Andrews' as it reaches their 50th Anniversary in the city. The cornerstone for the existing building was laid on Sept. 23, 1962 so an anniversary planning committee has set September 15 & 16 as a time of celebration and thanks to God for His many blessings bestowed on the congregation over the years. A banquet and special program is planned for Saturday evening with an anniversary service followed by a light lunch on Sunday. We hope to have former Pastors and members attend to help us celebrate.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank St. Peter's in Cochrane for the superb hosting of the 2011 CALC Convention in November. A special thanks to the CALC executive for their continued dedication and work in the development of our association. Pastor David, Cathy, Elaine and I were privileged and blessed to be able to participate. God Bless You All !

Submitted by Dennis Kujat, President.

Journeys – Grande Prairie/Christ Lutheran – Sexsmith Parish



Greetings in the name of Emmanuel – "God with us";

The past year has been a roller coaster ride for me. Mary and I have completed our first full year in Grande Prairie, watching the drastic changes between sunlight and darkness, along with snow on June 2 and a Chinook of plus 10 degrees on November 28. Mary volunteers at the hospital and care homes, while I work with these two churches and other service organizations. We have an active ecumenical ministerial and I am the liaison/editor between them and our local newspaper for the weekly article submissions. We work closely with the Grande Prairie Salvation Army (Christmas Hampers, kettles and Supper) and the Christmas Hampers committee in Sexsmith. I am also involved with Rising Above Ministries, mentoring a fifty year old recovering addict. In March, I assumed responsibility as chair of the Peace Lutheran Bible Camp located near Woking. Both Journeys and Christ are members on the board, along with the local ELCIC congregations. I have been in dialogue with the pastor of the LCC-MS church whom are interested in our camp.

Christ Lutheran Church continues to gathers for worship every Sunday at 9:00 am. Christ is a small church with a BIG heart and a desire to serve our Lord in the community. Their benevolence giving this

year has far exceeded my expectations as they continue to find ways to give away their money to help others. Besides helping students at Peace River Bible Institute in Sexsmith and supporting a World Vision Child, they also contribute to local programs like the Sexsmith Christmas Hampers. This past summer the church hosted Rising Above Ministries at the Sexsmith Community Center for an Information and Dessert Evening and in October we held a barbeque on Main Street and gave away free lunch to passer-bys. We continue to look for ways to be active and visible in the community and help wherever there is a need. When I first arrived in 2010, we had six active worshippers. God has doubled our attendance since that time. This year, I am praying God will fill the church for our candlelight Christmas Eve service.

Journeys Lutheran Church was established in 2006 as a mission congregation to Grande Prairie. We consider ourselves to be on a journey of faith with our Lord Jesus Christ. We presently gather in a private home, with our focus on praise and worship, prayer and the study of God's Word at different times on Sunday morning. This summer, we were about to move out into a corporate setting when we lost core members (job relocation) which required us to take a step back and look at rebuilding our core membership. We are praying for new members and for a new fresh vision for Journeys as I continue to look for ways to make people living in Grande Prairie aware of the presence of a third Lutheran church, inviting people to join us on the journey of discovery with our God.

I enjoy roller coasters and always place my trust in God whenever I ride them. This is also the case with the churches entrusted to me by our Shepherd. They are His and God will guide them. So far, I have been abundantly blessed by God through them.

Peace, Love and Joy of Christ

Rev Marc Lapointe

Peace Lutheran – Wainwright



Greetings from Peace Lutheran Church, Wainwright, Alberta.

Thank you for the privilege of sharing our past year and plans for our ministry in 2012.

FIRST - Peace went through the traumatic decision of the ELCIC Conference this past summer, yet through the pain and prayer, we grew in faith and determination to be a witness to our community. THEN, the joy of becoming a part of the CALC Family. The process will be complete with our official Induction officiated by our CALC president on February 19th, 2012.

Our council is challenged in its ministry planning to provide a church home to meet not only the needs of a traditional membership but also several senior residences, retirement homes and a large military base. We envision a 'two-fold' emphasis in 2012: a) Affirming the wisdom of "the family that prays together stays together. b) the congregation that 'plays together', grows together in Christian love and strength.

Peace is one church in a two-point parish, our companion congregation's initial vote to sever from the ELCIC was 100%. They look forward to President Ed's presentation in February.

As we move forward under CALC's banner in the coming year. May we sense and be directed by the Hand of our Gracious Lord. May the peace of the Babe of Bethlehem, the joy of the Resurrected Lord and the Hope of the coming King fill each heart and home.

Pastors Ron & Elaine Hobden

Christ Lutheran – Morden



It is hard to believe that the Advent Season is near the end already. It just doesn't really feel like it is that time of the year here in Manitoba ... we don't have any snow yet and it is December 15th!!

This past September 5 children had been baptized in an afternoon service held on a Sunday afternoon. We thank God for these new friendships that had been established with these new families and trust Him for more opportunities to spread the love of Jesus in our community and area.

This Advent Season we look forward to times of fellowship at events such as, our Annual Church Christmas Banquet that our Christ Lutheran Ladies put on for us. We also look forward to a our yearly Christmas Eve Candle Light Service with music and fellowship to share with each other. This year Christmas is on a Sunday and we decided that on Christmas morning we would get together and share breakfast rather than hold a formal service. It's all new and should be fun ... fun in church ... that's the way it should be.



The New Year is right around the corner now and we thank God for each of you and for the ongoing friendship that we have with you through CALC. May God bless the ministries that he has given you as you strive to serve and honor Him in the cities and towns which you come from. *'The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace. Amen.*

Resurrection Lutheran – Pembroke



Greetings from Resurrection Lutheran in Pembroke Ontario!

As the "new year" began in September, our council felt the need to clarify our focus. We got excited about how we viewed what God was doing, and decided that "we will push forward into the promised land with passionate faith and confidence". We have identified several scriptural texts as a direct word from God, and our personal history has shown us that our gift to the community is to be a congregation that can help people to grow in the application of their faith to their real-life circumstances.

We continue to offer courses, the latest of which was "Christian Ethics", digging deep into various issues that can cause confusion or may seem too simplistic. There is nothing like sharing and hearing the viewpoints of those whose experiences are different than your own. Being stretched in mind and spirit is certainly one of the benefits of entering that promised land. We pray each week for CALC and its future. Many Blessings to all our congregations as we *advent-ure* into the season of Christ's Coming.

Faith Lutheran – North York



This is my first year back at Faith (yes, I am a 'recycled pastor', having served here, full-time from 1985-1991). I rejoined the church in the spring, part-time (21/2 days/wk., 3 out of 4 weeks of every month). One of the great joys for me, has been seeing people still here after 20 years away. The baptized infants from that time sure look a lot different now. The couples I married, still being together, also a great joy.

The congregation has changed a lot, with the makeup of the community having changed.

Many of our members come from the South American country of Guyana, where North American missionaries went and shared the gospel. One, whom I know personally, from the Georgian Bay area of Ontario, was Pastor Barry Lang, now retired but still actively ministering in Papua New Guinea and Australia.

A real blessing at our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service, was a 10-year old member, playing the drums, to the song the 'Little Drummer Boy'. He had just joined our church the previous Sunday.

Our congregation asked and was granted the privilege of hosting the CALC national convention, in November 2012. This will be the first time it has been held east of Manitoba (which only the Canadian Football League considers eastern Canada). We are already starting the planning, with accommodations secured, and brainstorming things for all of you to do in your spare time here.

Pastor Xuan Zhu, a long-time Chinese Lutheran pastor has asked to share in a ministry to students at York University, which is only a few blocks from our church. Our church has accepted, and we will start in the new year, by first reaching out to the many Chinese students there.

Please pray for a couple of new ventures, which we will begin in 2012: alternating months to have Mens' and Women's breakfasts, Jan. 14th and Feb. 11th respectively. Then, in March, we will have our first council retreat, on a Saturday, with Pastor Doug Kranz as the facilitator.

These are a few news' items to pray about, as you remember us.

Pastor Harry Huff

NATIONAL COUNCIL UPDATE



Since the last (September 2011) edition of *The Lutheran Connector*, CALC's National Council has met once, in person in Calgary, on September 10th. At this meeting:

- Pastor Ed indicated that he plans to officially install all the pastors, previous as well as new pastors, in CALC, as soon as possible.
- It was decided for the upcoming 2011 General Convention, that as well as presenting the financial statement for the year ending Dec. 31, 2010, the current year's financial statement up to October 31, 2011 be presented as this is current and relevant information.
- National Council approved that the document "Charting Your Course to Greener Pastures" be provided to congregations expressing an interest in joining CALC.
- Marriage registration is proceeding in B.C. and the National Council decided to begin the marriage registration process in Ontario and that \$1,500 be allocated for this purpose in the 2012 budget.
- It was decided that CALC archival material be gathered together, inspected and placed in a safe place.
- It was reported that the Lutheran Church-Canada seminary in Edmonton is open to CALC's use and that an agreement will be developed to formalize this opportunity.

Next meeting (in-person) of the National Council is to be held in Calgary on Saturday, February 25th, 2012.

INSTITUTE OF LUTHERAN THEOLOGY



Where The Reformation Lives ...

What does ILT stand for?

by, Dr. Dennis Bielfeldt, Vice President of Academic Affairs



Most people know that the Institute of Lutheran Theology makes use of the latest internet technology to offer rigorous theological degrees. Some know that our design is a network of Designated Teaching Centers (DTCs) functioning as the ILT campus. (If your congregation is interested in becoming a DTC, please contact us!) Some also know that ILT has been blessed to have a number of established, Lutheran theologians teaching with it since its inception.

But the question can legitimately be asked as to what the Institute of Lutheran Theology stands for *theologically*. What is it about the Institute that separates it theologically from other Lutheran alternatives? It claims to be "confessionally-grounded" and "Biblically-based," but what exactly does that mean? What is it precisely to adopt the "Biblical hermeneutic of the Lutheran Reformation," something about which ILT has claimed to be concerned since its initial conception in April of 2005?

ILT is steadfastly committed to the centrality of Jesus the Christ in salvation history, of course. It claims that justification does indeed come by the grace of God on account of Christ and appropriated by faith. It shares traditional Lutheran concerns about Law and Gospel, about the Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms, about the infinite being available in the finite, and about the *simul* of sinner and saint in every Christian. It regards the Lutheran Confessions, particularly the unaltered Augsburg Confession to be normative, and it is deeply committed to all the *solae*, including *sola scriptura*.

But beyond this, one can still ask, in what way is this so? What Lutheran seminary would deny the centrality of Law and Gospel, or the *simul*, or the authority of Scripture?

I believe that the Institute's existence is tied to a theological direction. ILT realizes that what is at stake in Lutheran theology and practice is not, at the end of the day, the protection of certain ways of speaking, but rather certain claims about the world. One can say "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself" and mean a whole host of distinctively different things. While ILT does not seek to fix a canonical meaning to all theological phrases, it is extremely interested in pointing out that the real work in proclaiming Christian truth is not in *syntax* – the physical words and phrases uttered – but in *semantics* – the events and states of affairs claimed. Accordingly, it is interested in what are called the "truth conditions" of theology. What are those states of affairs that must obtain for theological language to be *true*? ILT believes that what "makes true" the Lutheran confessional theological claims is the real existence of God who actually acts in the world, a God who is as present in Nature as He is in Value, a God whose Love is manifestly proclaimed on the pages of Scripture and tradition.

ILT exists *to the glory of God*, and to help Lutherans again think clearly about what phrases, such as these, best mean. *Ad gloariam dei!!*

ILT Word at Work - Spring 2012 Course Offerings



Institute of
Lutheran
Theology

The ILT's Word at Work Series provides individuals and congregations with live courses over the Internet, featuring expert speakers and timely topics.

- ***Discipleship Delivered: Disguised and Daring***: Mondays, Jan. 30 – Mar. 5
- ***Cults, Sects, and New Religious Movements***: Tuesdays, Jan. 31 – Mar. 6
- ***Paul's Epistles: 1 Thessalonians***: Mondays, Mar. 12 – Apr. 23
- ***In Pursuit of the Paranormal***: Tuesdays, Mar. 13 – Apr. 10
- ***Genesis: Abraham's Continuing Journey***: Thursdays, Mar. 15 – Apr. 26
- ***Equipping Parents to be Spiritual Leaders in the Home***: Wednesdays, Apr. 11 – May 30

The cost of each course is \$50 for individuals and \$250 for congregations. (Free for members of congregations that have partnered with the ILT as "Designated Teaching Centers".) For more information and to register online:

<http://www.ilt.org/index.php/course-registration/word-at-work/spring-2012-registration.html>

SIN, SEX AND SALVATION

We are all born spiritually broken and deserving death. Our soul's natural state is one that is cut off from God. We neither have the desire to seek Him nor follow Him. In this state of sin, with a broken relationship with our creator, He seeks us, taking the initiative to heal the broken connection yet at the same time understanding that our natural, inborn inclination is to tug at that connection.

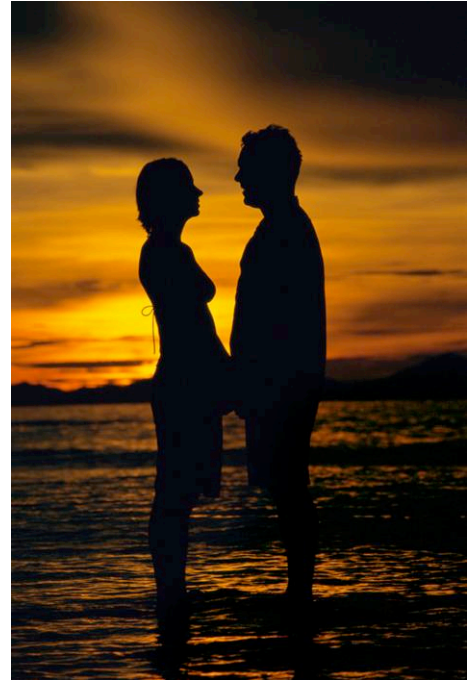
In baptism He draws us back into His family as our sinful state is drowned, washed away, and our souls are once more connected to our heavenly Father. Our works have nothing to do with this. It is a gift, fashioned by God through the actions of His son, Jesus who lived the sinless life that is impossible for us, took our ultimate punishment—death—upon himself paying for our sins, yet conquering the finality of the grave in His glorious resurrection. We are therefore saved from the punishment of sin and live with the promise of eternal life with God when we die.

But life still goes on. As Luther so perceptively noted, we are at the same time saint, a redeemed member of God's family, and sinner, one still struggling to overcome our natural rebellious nature. Paul wrote about the ongoing battle between doing what he knew was wrong and at the same time wanting to do what was right. He writes about the sin that is still part of him and that he hates. The fact we still sin does not change the relationship with God; it means we must however flee to Him constantly for forgiveness and mercy.

The Ten Commandments set down the ideal

Each person sins, engaging in actions, attitudes and behaviour that fail to meet God's standards. To understand sin is to appreciate God's grace. He doesn't kick us out of the family because we sin. He gently and persistently calls us back to Himself, offering forgiveness. He knows how we are; He made us! The apostle John puts it so well...and here I paraphrase: if we say we don't sin, we are crazy or blinded or both because the truth is that we do and always will! But Paul also cautions us about ongoing sin and refusing to turn away from it. He tells us that God's grace is so amazing He will always forgive us. Then he says we shouldn't continue in sin just because we know God forgives. We should allow God's Spirit to work repentance in our hearts.

But who defines sin? Our society doesn't like or really understand the word. As a Sunday school child I learned sin is doing what we know to be wrong and not doing what we know to be right. How do we know? The benchmark is God's words found in the Bible. The Ten Commandments set down the ideal. And Jesus reminds about the law of love—that we should love our neighbour as ourselves. There is no way we can keep the Ten Commandments therefore we are always falling short of God's ideal.



We currently live the aluminum foil standard

We live in a self-centred culture—another hallmark of our broken relationship with God. The mantra “if it feels good, do it” extends to every part of life, including sex. God’s ideal is that sexual expression is reserved for the holy estate of marriage between one man and one woman for life. That is the gold standard. Unfortunately, we currently live the aluminum foil standard—flexible, shiny on one side and once used, disposable.

If something doesn’t reach God’s standard, the ideal, it is sin. Neither sex before marriage, sex in a common-law relationship or same gender sexual activity are God’s ideal. (There was a time when unmarried couples living together was called “living in sin!”)

Do these things happen, even among Christians? Yes.

So how does God feel about this failure to meet His standard? First, He knows it happens. His Word says that everyone sins and falls short of His standard.

Does He like it? No.

Does He hate you because of it? No.

Is He willing to forgive you? Yes.

Does He expect you to keep doing the same thing? No.

Some Christians are uncomfortable about sin, repentance and forgiveness when it comes to sex. They often cite the story of Jesus and the woman caught in adultery, recalling how He “accepted” her and stood up to those who condemned her. But they don’t recall the part where He told her to “go and leave your sin behind.” In other words, stop messing around with men who aren’t your husband. It’s a two-part equation. God forgives; now stop what you’re doing. And those are very hard words for some to hear.

Following Jesus means giving up anything that comes between us and God.

Natural appetites, including our sexual drive, can be relentless, even controlling, whether it is a heterosexual or homosexual attraction. But God asks that we strive to live His ideal, not give in to temptation and sinful actions. He also knows it’s something we can’t do ourselves. So He gives us His Sacraments: confession and absolution; His body and blood in the Lord’s Supper to strengthen our faith and help us understand just how much He loves us. Then, through His Word, the Holy Spirit builds our understanding of God’s standards, our natural failure to keep them, and then tells of His wondrous love and forgiveness—His gifts to us despite our sinfulness.

Sexuality is entwined with who we are. But the truth is that our natural self remains at odds with God. Our natural inclinations are not His ideal. This truth gives a deeper meaning to Jesus’ injunction to deny ourselves (with all our natural anti-God attitudes and actions); take up our cross (sacrifice them to God’s mercy and love); and follow Him. Following Jesus means giving up anything that comes between us and God.

Is it easy? No.

Are we left to our own resources to make it happen? No!

Does God still accept me as His child when I goof up? Yes...you are His child because He says so. He called you into His family through baptism.

Does Jesus condemn you? No...He came into the world to save the world, not condemn it.

Now...go and leave your sin behind.

by Ian Adnams
Lutheran Church Canada
Communications

THE CRISIS OF CHRISTMAS *By Jaynan Clark*

Recently one of my friends posted to my Facebook a rather revealing and cutting Christmas message that she knew I would enjoy. I don't know the original source but it was to be addressed to the "liberals and the conservatives." While I did not change the original quote I am addressing it differently.

To those conformed to this world:

Please accept with no obligation, implied or implicit, my best wishes for an environmentally conscious, socially responsible, low-stress, non-addictive, gender-neutral celebration of the winter solstice holiday, practiced within the most enjoyable traditions of the religious persuasion of your choice, or secular practices of your choice, with respect for the religious/secular persuasion and/or traditions of others, or their choice not to practice religious or secular traditions at all. I also wish you a fiscally successful, personally fulfilling and medically uncomplicated recognition of the onset of the generally accepted calendar year 2011 but not without due respect for the calendars of choice of other cultures whose contributions to society have helped make America great. Not to imply that America is necessarily greater than any other country nor the only America in the Western Hemisphere. Also, this wish is made without regard to the race, creed, color, age, physical ability, religious faith or sexual preference of the wishee.

To those being transformed by Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit:

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

Christmas is the problem because Jesus is the problem and He always has been (and always will be until time ends). Whichever account of the Christmas story you turn to, you hear how the setting and characters and acceptance and recognition of Christmas has not changed in 2000 years. God's intention was to humble the proud, raise up the lowly, feed the hungry and turn away the rich empty. This Mary knew before Jesus was born. The government officials were forcing folks to travel in order to register-so numbers and taxes and, of course, buying and selling of wares was involved. There were crowds and stress and no vacancy signs; travelers away from home without accommodations, wandering, restless and without peace; animals doing their business in the straw and into this God is born in Jesus a vulnerable, cold, little baby. He was (and still is) coming into this wretched, stressed world ill-timed and unrecognized with only the dirty, stinky shepherds divinely ushered to the front row seats. Herod, the

rich and powerful one, was already planning open season on Him and the prophets have spoken of His rejection, suffering and death. Happy Birthday Jesus!

How is that picture of Christmas any different than today? Sure we have those trying to get rid of the word Christmas but really the problem is "Christ." They are today's Herods joined by today's Pharisees, church leaders and everyday sinners unwilling to bow their knee to anyone who claims authority over them. Certainly this one is to be rejected because He comes from a lowly birth and certainly even today's finest "Christian" theologians think anyone who still believes Mary to have been a "virgin" is a hillbilly theologian at best. They obviously prefer that Jesus was born illegitimate rather than consider the possibility of the impossible in God's hands not their own. How then do they confess the Apostle's Creed among the cloud of witnesses? The hypocrisy and deceit of Herod lives on but so does the angel choir and the shepherds' stories. Join me this Christmas in turning away from the preaching, teaching and confessing of all those who by their words reject the One Word of God who still comes today into the worst of conditions, to the lowest of sinners, in the most disgustingly common of ways---a Word preached, a loaf broken, a sip from the vine. For the Prince of Peace is the only peace, yet He dwells in unrest, confusion, rejection and darkness as the only light. He does not save you from this world but He dwells with you in it and your salvation resides in Him-the only "inn" with room.

So to all those who continue to conform to this world within and outside of so called churches. . . know that Jesus is not "the church". . . He is not "religion". . . He is not "organized and institutional". . . He is not politically correct or acceptable. . . He is broken and scarred and raised from the dead so that His continued rejection and dismissal by His "own world that knows Him not", only makes the continued setting of Christmas as relevant and timely today as in Bethlehem long ago.

Merry Christmas!--indeed it has such a contemporary ring to it!



Pastor Jaynan Clark
'The Disciple Ship'



<http://www.tdship.org/>

SOLA PUBLISHING



Sola Publishing is an educational ministry serving the needs of congregations of: NALC, LCMC, CALC, Lutheran Core, and other orthodox Christians looking for teaching resources that are trustworthy and useful, at a reasonable price. Our materials are grounded in the authority of Scripture, with a distinctively confessional Lutheran focus, centering in the gospel message of Jesus Christ. We strive to be practical and functional, with curricula written by people serving in local congregations.

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THE MEANS AND MEANING OF CONVERSION



The Augustana District of LCMC and the Institute of Lutheran Theology are together offering this theological conference for pastors and have secured the teaching services of two of the highest-regarded theologians of the day: Dr. Hans Hillerbrand of Duke University, and Dr. Steven Paulson of Luther Seminary. They are joined by ILT's vice president of academic affairs, Dr. Dennis Bielfeldt, and ILT's president, Dr. Fred Baltz, as well as two parish pastors (Dave Christensen and Kelly Wasberg) of one of the fastest growing mission start-ups in LCMC – Living Word Lutheran Church in Marshall, MN. It will be held February 5 - 7, 2012 at the Hyatt Place in Bloomington, Minnesota.

Going Global for Christ

The Augustana District's Board of World Missions is sponsoring two Missions Festivals under the theme, "Going Global for Christ". One will be held in Sartell, MN (near St. Cloud) on January 21, and another in Watertown, SD, on February 4. These festivals are for anyone and everyone, lay and clergy alike, who have hearts for world missions. The keynote speaker Dr. Paul Martinson, will inspire those in attendance about the "why" of world missions. A long-time Professor of World Missions at Luther Seminary, Dr. Martinson is also the co-founder of China Service Ventures, and has spent much of his life doing mission work in China. Additionally, exciting developments between LCMC, NALC, and the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) will be shared, as well as general discussion about how we choose missions endeavors to support. There is no pre-registration for these events, and no fee to attend.

Brochures about each of these events can be downloaded:
[http://www.calc.ca/Theological Brochure_Feb 2012.pdf](http://www.calc.ca/Theological%20Brochure_Feb%202012.pdf) and
[http://www.calc.ca/Augustana Missions Fest_2012.pdf](http://www.calc.ca/Augustana%20Missions%20Fest_2012.pdf)



THE LUTHERAN CONNECTOR

The Official Publication of the Canadian Association of Lutheran Congregations (CALC) www.calc.ca

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