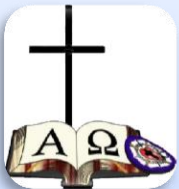


The Lutheran Connector

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



*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

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THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Are You Ready?

Happy New Year!! We made it to 2013! Many believed January 1, 2013 would not come. Yahoo News (an arm of the internet giant Yahoo) commissioned a world-wide survey on the topic. The survey found that one in ten people they interviewed agreed with this statement: *"The world was going to end in 2012."* This survey speaks volumes. It is a window into the hearts and minds of many people around our globe. Those surveyed have taken a particular side in a debate over the end of our world as we know it. The debate over the end of the world provides an amazing opportunity for Christians to speak into the fear and apathy which flow from this debate.

The debate over the end of the world, as we know it, is nothing new. This debate has gone on for thousands of years and has been fueled by the secular and the sacred sources. By way of example, many secular political scientists argue that during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, the world was the closest it has ever come to a nuclear war. Many feared that if American and Soviet nuclear missiles began to fly, the human and animal population of the world would be destroyed. They feared that millions would be killed by the blasts from the hundreds and even thousands of missiles fired. It was thought that radiation emitted from the blasts would kill even more. They feared that any survivors would be killed by the nuclear winter that would set in because of all debris the nuclear blasts would have catapulted into our atmosphere.

More recently, advocates of Global Warming (including a worldwide army of secular scientists) have predicted catastrophic effects of global warming on our global ecosystem. They warn that if we continue to burn fossil fuels, pump methane gas into the atmosphere, use chemical fertilizers in agriculture and deforest the earth, at our present rate, our earth will suffer. The climate will warm. The polar icecaps will melt. Animals in the polar areas will disappear as a result. The sea levels will rise. Storms will become worse. Waste plastic and fertilizer runoff that makes its way into our oceans will cause dead spots and harm sea life. Crops will fail and deserts will take over the globe. It is theorized that people and animals may be driven to extinction when the dead oceans stop producing fish and oxygen and the land cannot produce a crop.

Recent outbreaks of swine and avian flues have caused some to raise fears of a global pandemic, a global flu epidemic caused by a superbug that would decimate the world's population. If enough people died from the superbug, civilization as we know it could collapse. The debate on the end of the world based on scientific theories is a more recent development in human history. The debate on the end of the world based on the interpretation of sacred texts goes back thousands of years.

It seems that in every generation, self-appointed prophets claim they have read the Holy Bible and have received a revelation from God relating to the end of the world. God typically reveals the very date of the end of the world and the return of Jesus to them. The most recent example is the self-appointed prophet Harold Camping, who hails from California. He predicted that this world would end and Jesus would return May 21st and then October 21st of 2011. The fear that the world would end in 2012 was fueled by the interpretation of some other sacred texts of sorts.

For the past couple of years prophets pundits from all over the globe, and their books, videos, websites and blogs, predicted that the world was going to end December 21, 2012. The 12-21-12 doomsday prediction was based on a number of theories. Perhaps the most popular theory was linked to an ancient calendar. A calendar established by ancient Mayan astronomers and mathematicians stopped at December 21, 2012. No detailed explanation was given for their calendar's abrupt ending. How are we to interpret this state of affairs? To many the end of the calendar signaled the end of time as we know it and the destruction of the world as we know it. Another ancient text, the Egyptian Book of the Dead, predicted a cataclysmic end to the earth. Those studying this ancient text were inspired to predict the end of civilization as we know it, December 21, 2012, when the earth would be shook to its core by an unprecedented occurrence. In one scenario the earth would be hit by a mysterious planet. The impact of the mystery planet coming into contact with the earth would be to either reverse the earth's spin or change the angle of the earth's poles. In another

scenario, our sun would emit solar flares with a frequency and strength never experienced before. The solar flares would cause the molten core of the earth to reverse its rotation, which would in turn, cause havoc on the earth's outer crust. If any of these events occurred, the earth would be changed forever and most all of us would lose our lives.

Many of these doomsday websites warned people to get ready for the inevitable disaster. The website maintained by an amateur French astronomer, who was convinced the earth would be struck by a body from space, begged his countrymen to flee to the mountains before December 21st hits. It seems that some people are heeding the advice given on doomsday websites. Network television featured footage of elaborate homes under construction in the depths of the earth. These structures were guaranteed to shelter the rich and the famous in the coming cataclysm.

I have tried to follow the debate on the subject. I have read many internet articles or blogs on doomsday December 21, 2012. The authors of some of these blogs were absolutely convinced that the world was going to end on December 21st. They argued passionately for their beliefs, citing all the facts and circumstances they could muster. They pleaded with their audience to get ready for that fateful day. Others were absolutely convinced that world was not going to end. These blogs ridiculed the arguments put forward by the doomsday prophets and urged people to do nothing. Doomsday 2012, they argued, was based on dubious interpretations of ancient texts and very bad science. It was a mind-numbing experience. I shook my head and hoped for a good word. The good word came after I finished reading what I believed was a very well written internet article or blog that did a great job of debunking the December 21, 2012 doomsday predictions. Internet blogs or articles typically provide a space for readers to put their comments on the article. I scrolled down the Comments section which followed the subject article. A single sentence comment caught my eye. The comment: "The world ends for people every day – we die." Its author was absolutely right.

People have predicted, and will continue to predict, that the world as we know it will end, how it will happen, and urge action in response. Others will inevitably rise up and challenge these predictions and urge people to do nothing. This debate has a best before date. It is all over the day after the doomsday date. The seers and their followers are humiliated and forced to rationalize the failure of the earth to destruct. Those who opposed the prophets of doom say: *"I told you so! Why did you listen to these people? See—the world did not end—It's business as usual."* The author of that single line comment exposed the madness of this debate. We must expose the madness of the debate to those caught up in it.

Those who predict the precise date of end of the world write checks with their mouths that cannot be cashed. They try to play God and fail miserably. Those that ridicule the doomsday prophets and urge inaction are in denial of a profound truth: the world may go on, but they won't. Both the prophets of doom and their opponents need to face the inevitable, namely, the end of their world, a completely sure thing. Shouldn't they prepare for it? Of course they should get ready! Every sane person will attempt to get ready for an inevitable event. But how does one get ready for that day? Is there a bunker anywhere that is deep enough to escape the end of their world? No such bunker exists! What are they going to do about the coming end? It is at this point in the discussion that Christians can offer hope.

We know what to do about our end. We are always getting ready. We are always getting prepared! We do not ignore or deny our end. We do not try to play God and predict the day of our end. We turn to God and to God's word. God's word reveals that God has been busy getting ready for the end of world that each of us must face alone - the day we die. Jesus, the Son of God, became human and touched every aspect of human life. The Son of God, present at the creation of the universe (John 1:1-5), became one of the created. Jesus was just like you and me in so very many ways. However, his divinity shone through his preaching, teaching and miracles. Jesus spoke about the end of things and being prepared for the end.

Jesus did speak about the end of the world and judgment. He declared the end of the world was coming and God's judgment on all humankind. However, Jesus assured all who would listen that end was and still is in God the Father's hands and in God's time. *"But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."* (Matthew 24:36) See also Mark 13:32. Jesus was much more concerned about a more immanent end.

Jesus' most important message to his disciples was that *his world was going to end*, in Jerusalem and on the cross. "From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life." (Matthew 16:21) Jesus declared that this world, and all the people in it, were a mess. He declared that someone had to pay for all the human carnage, the hurt we have and continue to inflict on creation and one another. Someone had to pay for the horrific consequences of human beings trying to play God or denying God's existence. Jesus promised that he would pay for our sin by his death on the cross. He promised that from his death would come, his resurrection to eternal life. He promised forgiveness of sin, resurrection and eternal life to all who believed he was the Son of God who died for their sins and was raised to new life. (John 11:25-26)

The disciples' response to Jesus' revelation that he would die and be raised to new life? "Peter took him [Jesus] aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" Peter was in denial. He could not believe that Jesus' world would end. On the other hand, the Jewish religious authorities saw Jesus as a colossal threat to their power, privilege and very existence. They wanted to bring about the end to Jesus' world soon as they possibly could and prayed for the right moment to come along so that they could strike him down (John 11:53). Jesus' world ended on the first Good Friday and he was resurrected on the first Easter Sunday. Jesus promised to be present among those who gather to worship him (see Matthew 18:20 and 28:20).

The response of many a non-believer to the Good News of Jesus is as follows: "I would love to believe...but I can't...I just can't seem to grasp it or really believe it." Our response should be you are right. You can't just make up your mind to believe. Here too God has been busy preparing the way for us. The Apostle Paul declared: "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ." (Romans 10: 13-15, 17) Faith is a gift from God. It is formed by God through the power of God's living word over our minds, bodies and soul. God uses His word and the Word made Flesh (Jesus) to change, shape, and mold our minds. In order to get ready people must be immersed in God's word and be open to God's work on them. We must always be inviting people to experience the presence and power of Jesus in corporate worship. We must invite them to church.

The year 2013 may well be a banner year for Christ's Church. Perhaps as many as one out of every ten people you encounter this year may have believed that the world was going to end on December 21, 2012. We must approach these folks with great care and gentleness. They will no doubt feel a sense of shame for having believed in that doomsday prediction. They may well want to shy away from any belief system that is based on interpretations of an ancient text, including the Holy Bible. However, they will continue to wonder about the end of the world and when and how it will happen. They will continue to need answers to their questions. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the answer to all their questions. However, for all this to happen we all must be ready. They must be ready to hear God's word. Therefore, we must pray fervently that God will give them restless hearts that continue to seek answers to their questions about the end of the world and prepare the way for the Gospel to be received by them. We should also pray that God would lead these dear people to our churches. We must therefore be ready for them. We should pray that God give us the courage and the words necessary to bring the light of the Gospel into the darkness of their lives. We should also pray that God give us eyes to see them and a caring and loving attitude towards them. We may know many things and may have good news for them; however, "no one cares how much you know, until they know how much you care." Pray they experience our congregations as a caring communities.



We can all look forward to 2013 and all the opportunities, joys and challenges it will bring because God will be with us on our journey. "You are my refuge and my shield; I have put my **hope** in your word." Psalm 119:114.

May God bless you and keep you. May God make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May God look upon you with favor and give you peace.

In Christ, Pastor Ed Skutshek, President

CALC GENERAL CONVENTION: *Shepherding The Faith*
Good Shepherd Lutheran and Faith Lutheran Churches - Toronto, Ontario



CALC's 2012 General Convention, a celebration of many "firsts", held from November 2-4, 2012, was co-hosted by Faith Lutheran and Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd Congregations, Toronto, Ontario. A summary of highlights can be downloaded from CALC's web site: <http://www.calc.ca/pdf/CALC-2012-convention-hilites.pdf>

PRESIDENT'S REPORT of 2012 ANNUAL GATHERING
Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC)
October 7-10, 2012

It was my privilege to attend LCMC's 12th Annual Gathering as President of CALC and as a delegate representing Grace Lutheran Church of West Kelowna, BC (CALC & LCMC). The gathering was held at the Crown Plaza Hotel Convention Center in Aurora, Colorado. (Aurora is a suburb of Denver). There are 9 LCMC congregations in Colorado. They vary in size from 19 to 1074 Baptized members. These congregations worked together with LCMC's leadership to plan this gathering. This is the second time in LCMC's history that the Annual Gathering was not held in a church building of a member congregation. The number of delegates, members and visitors now exceed the capacity of LCMC's member congregations. Those present and registered included: 481 voting delegates (representing 297 LCMC congregations); 300 non-delegate members of LCMC and 179 visitors for a grand total of 960 souls. The gathering was truly international. LCMC has 797 congregations located in 11 nations.

County	Congregations	Country	Congregations
Belarus	4	Mexico	3
Cambodia	8	Nicaragua	12
Canada	7	Russia	1
Congo Dem.	3	Vietnam	29
Haiti	25	USA	696*
India	10		

* Spread over 42 States and 2 Territories.

Delegates, visitors and mission partners came from India, Mexico, Canada, Belarus, Estonia, Myanmar, Vietnam, Congo and Haiti.

We met under the theme "Ambassadors for Christ" based on 2 Corinthians 5:16-21.

¹⁶ So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! ¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. ²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

The word "ambassador" is defined as: an accredited diplomat sent by a country to a foreign country. It is based on the Latin term "ambactus" which means servant. In these verses the Apostle Paul declares that each and every Christian is

an ambassador for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Each speaker helped us to unpack what it means for a Christian to be an ambassador.

The convention began on Sunday evening with a dinner served to over 900 guests. Dinner was followed by opening worship. Pastor Phillip Reimer preached. He declared that all Baptized Christians are Ambassadors for Christ. Jesus calls us to use every interaction we have with others as an opportunity to share Jesus and thus act as God's ambassadors to the world. Over 1,100 people attended opening worship. Holy Communion was administered by intinction. Each morning and afternoon session began with a ½ hour of singing and a Bible Study (led by an LCMC pastor). We heard a Keynote speaker each morning. On Monday morning we heard Gemechis Buba, mission developer for the North American Lutheran Church (NALC). Tuesday morning we heard Pastor Reggie McNeil, a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, in California. Wednesday morning we heard Pastor Mike Breen, a British pastor, who is a church growth consultant. The convention business session took place on Monday afternoon. The delegates approved certain amendments to LCMC's bylaws which were aimed at refining the process by which LCMC can assist congregations and pastors in the process of training, certification, mentorship and conflict resolution. A budget of just over a million dollars was passed. LCMC's Service Coordinator gave his report. A vision was cast for the planting of 1,000 new congregations in the next ten years. To this end a new position "New Church Development Coordinator" has been created and approved by the LCMC Board of Trustees. The person called to this position will: (1) Work with existing churches in an effort to plant new congregations (2) Connect congregations together so they can learn from one another and help one another grow. (3) Look for materials to train, educate and equip leaders for new ministries. 1/7th of LCMC congregations are new ministries and church plants, the coordinator will work with the existing new plants and ministries. LCMC's treasurer, Kirk Dean, had served his maximum 6-year term. Three individuals were nominated for the position of Treasurer. Laurel Swanson was elected treasurer. Following the business session, we attended a one-hour Breakout Session. I attended a session hosted by Crown Life Financial, a ministry which is aimed at helping people get out of the bondage of financial debt using Biblical principles. Monday night I attended the District Dinner at the Convention Center. About 600 were served dinner. CALC has a memorandum of understanding with the Augustana District of LCMC. I attended their post dinner gathering (about 60 attended) and was invited to bring greetings from CALC. Tuesday afternoon we concluded the business session and participated in two one-hour breakout sessions. The breakout sessions I attended covered the topic of revitalization of the church and thriving as a small congregation. On Tuesday evening about 600 were inspired and entertained by Christian comedian Ken Davis. Two new members were elected to LCMC's Board of Trustees. For the first time in LCMC's history a member of an international congregation was elected to the Board of Trustees, Pastor Enrique of Mexico. The convention also approved new areas for the 2013 elections. Members of LCMC's Board of Trustees are elected by Areas (groups of congregations in geographic areas). There are a total of 7 areas. There are over 100 congregations in each area. While a member of the Board of Trustees is elected by an Area, the trustee does not represent the Area, but the whole association. Canadian LCMC congregations are part of Area 2. The worship style for the opening worship and each Bible Study session was contemporary. A praise band provided musical leadership. Closing worship was however traditional. Holy Communion was administered. A special offering of seminary books was taken on Tuesday for new Lutheran Seminaries in Ethiopia. International partners, including myself as President of CALC were introduced Tuesday before noon. Financial offerings from the opening and closing service were dedicated to shipping the books to Ethiopia.

We learned the following about Ambassadors:

1. **Ambassadors must be appointed and accredited:** Ambassadors are accredited by and serve at the pleasure of their King. The Apostle Peter declared that each and every Christian is a member of a royal priesthood whose duty is to offer spiritual sacrifices to God. We are also servants and slaves purchased by the innocent suffering and death of Jesus Christ on the cross. We have been marked, sealed and infused by the Holy Spirit and are empowered and compelled by the Holy Spirit to preach the Gospel. We have been given the Great Commission to go out into the world and make disciples and baptize.
2. **Ambassadors must be committed to their King's purpose in the mission to the foreign culture.** The purpose of God's diplomatic mission is reconciliation, to convert members of the foreign culture to royal priests and accredited ambassadors of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

3. **Ambassadors must have a solid understanding of their King's foreign policy and conduct their private and public life in a manner that brings honor to the King.** Ambassadors for Jesus Christ must be grounded in the faith. They must be Disciples. They must be thoroughly familiar with God's word and the Gospel of Jesus Christ in particular. They must not only hear and intellectually understand God's Word they must apply the Gospel to their lives. Ambassadors for Christ must thus constantly be in touch with the source of life, Jesus Christ; we must constantly confess our sins and seek Spiritual renewal. We must, as the Apostle Peter admonishes us, set Christ apart in our hearts and always be ready to provide an answer to anyone who asks us why we have hope. We are also to live such good lives around the pagan people that they glorify God as a result. Ambassadors for Christ also understand that if we wish to be effective in reaching out with the Gospel of reconciliation, we must be reconciled with one another. We must have absolute trust in the truth and power of God's word. Jesus responded to Satan's temptations with: "It is written....."
4. **Ambassadors communicate their King's foreign policy. They never make foreign policy.** Christ's ambassadors communicate the Gospel in its purity. They understand that neither they or their hearers can come to Christ or believe in him unless called by the Holy Spirit though the proclamation of the Gospel and sanctified by Him. They do not demythologize or re-contextualize Holy Scripture. They do not try to breathe new life into scripture using the historical critical method of Biblical exegesis.
5. **Ambassadors are committed to knowing the culture of the foreign land to which the King has sent them and the message they must communicate to that culture.** The Apostle Paul knew the culture that his Corinthian congregation was a part of. Corinth was an important city for international trade and finance. The city boasted great wealth. They practiced religious tolerance. Temples to many gods were erected. A Jewish synagogue flourished. Sexual promiscuity was encouraged. The city hosted a mega-brothel with hundreds of both male and female prostitutes. Paul's message to Jew and Gentile was the same. The people had to repent. People only repent if they are confronted by the Law. He preached Jesus Christ as the Suffering Servant, who suffered and died as a sin offering, described in Isaiah 52:12-53:13. Those confronted by the Law are comforted by the Gospel of Jesus. The Holy Spirit works a miracle in the hearer, faith. The transformative power of the Holy Spirit makes the people a new creation. When Paul looked at his congregation he saw people who had tried to work out their salvation by obedience to the law, that, they could not keep. They saw people who used to engage in pornography, idolatry, adultery, drunkenness, male prostitution and homosexuality. They had been transformed and were no longer enslaved by their vices.
6. **Ambassadors function as a blessing to the foreign nation they are sent to.** Christ's Ambassadors are called, like Abraham, to bless the world. We bless the world through sacrificial service. Christians originally did this through rescuing and raising babies that were abandoned (part of Pagan culture) and tending the sick. We are called to serve our communities in the same way. We can pray for authority figures in our towns. We can help children learn to read (a child who does not read well by the 4th Grade will not do well in school or life).
7. **Ambassadors must be ready for pushback.** Christ's Ambassadors must expect and be ready for pushback from the members of the culture they have been sent to. We must remain loyal to Jesus. We must communicate the message clearly. We will be persecuted and vilified.
8. **Ambassadors are called to follow protocol in bringing people into the Kingdom.** Jesus would invite and challenge his disciples to grow in faith. He invited them to follow him. After they had followed him for a certain time (roughly 3.5 years) he challenged them to go into the world and make disciples. The disciples followed Jesus' example. They called and invited people into relationship and then challenged them to change their lives. In this process they are touched by Jesus and made part of the family. They continue to grow in faith. When Jesus fed the 5000, he invited his disciples to have empathy with their hunger and want to feed them. He then challenged them to feed the people. They found five loaves and two fishes. Jesus blessed the little they had and fed more than 5,000 people with the meager lunch. In this way the disciples came to see that when they admitted their inability to rise to the challenge and admitted they had nothing in their hands, Jesus would give them a little which he would bless and do miraculous things with.

9. **Ambassadors for Christ are to be servants.** On Maundy Thursday, after Jesus had instituted Holy Communion, Jesus declared that his ambassadors were to be servant leaders. ²⁴*A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest.* ²⁵*Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors.* ²⁶*But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves.* ²⁷*For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.* ²⁸*You are those who have stood by me in my trials.* ²⁹*And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me,* ³⁰*so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* (Luke 22:24-30) Jesus made a covenant promise to his disciples: Jesus will inherit a kingdom from God, by serving and not by lording over. They will also inherit the kingdom with Jesus and sit on the throne with Jesus and will judge God's people with Jesus. However, Jesus told them for them to inherit the Kingdom they must serve God and the people the way that Jesus did and not the way secular authorities rule over people. A servant has an empty hand and waits for his master to fill it. Jesus is the head of the church and will provide for the church.
10. **Summary:** As I reviewed the notes I had taken of the convention, the following contemporary proverb came to mind: "Nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care." Jesus has called us to be his Ambassadors in the world, to fulfill the Great Commission. John 3:16 says that God so loved the world that He gave us Jesus. Jesus wants his disciples to love the world and their neighbors so much that we will want to share Jesus with them. Jesus came to serve and not be served. His disciples go out to serve and not be served.

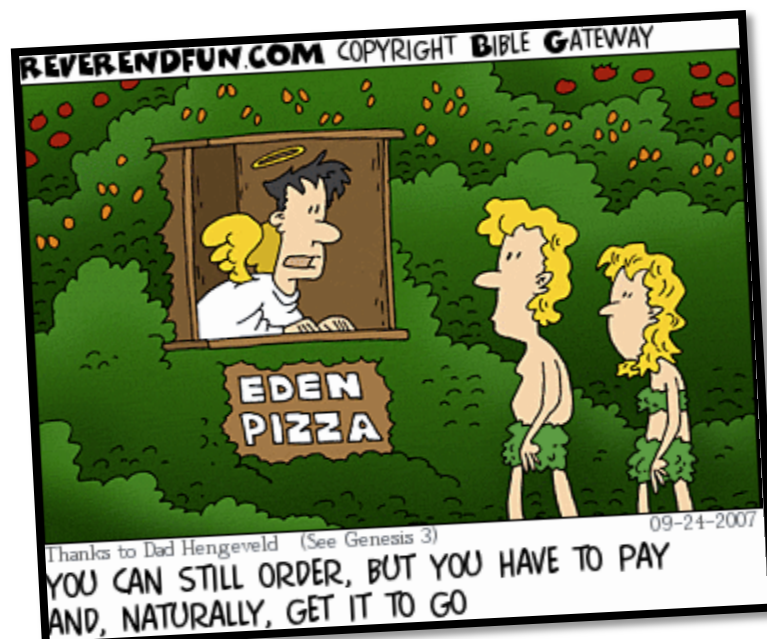
PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2012 – IDENTITY, MISSION, VISION AND GOALS



As a supplement to his written, statistical President's Report, our president, Pastor Ed Skutshek, gave an oral presentation accompanied by slides covering four topics:

- Identity (Who are we?),
- Mission (Why are we here?),
- Vision (Where are we going?), and
- Goals (How die we get there?)

A DVD of Pastor Ed's presentation has been produced and will be distributed to each CALC congregation. Congregational members are encouraged to watch the video individually or in groups. Feedback to CALC's National Council is encouraged as we work together to forge our future.



CALC CONGREGATIONAL HI-LITES

Martin Luther Evangelical Lutheran Church – Vancouver



In early November we hosted our annual Craft Fair. The ladies of the church sold pastries, crafts, and their famous Sauer Kraut. If I'm remembering correctly they sold over 50 bottles of Kraut (it was gone before the first hour ended). The best part of the fair is lunch: Frankfurters, Sauer Kraut, German Potato Salad.

We celebrated Christmas in several ways. Der deutsche Frauenkreis (the German Ladies' Circle) had a nice Christmas program in which poems and stories were read and we sang German carols. At our December Sing-along people came from many different churches around the area to sing German carols. Many former members who have moved to the suburbs and those who grew up in this congregation returned for Christmas Eve services. And we ended the year with Sylvester Abend Gottesdienst.

I used several ideas from Martin Luther's Christmas Book for my sermons during the Christmas season (8 sermons in 8 days). For anyone interested in reading Luther's writing, the Christmas Book is a very manageable (my version is 72 pages) and accessible volume. It has been printed several times. Augsburg Fortress' (Minneapolis 1997) version includes beautiful sixteenth century woodcuts telling the Christmas Story.

Grace Lutheran – Kelowna



Greetings from Canada's four season playground; the Okanagan Valley of BC's Interior.

Our Advent-Christmas season was busy, joyous and Spirit-filled. It began with a Christmas luncheon on December 4th which was open to our members and our community. The lunch was catered by Shepherd's Reach, a local Christian Ministry. Over 100 participants filled our fellowship hall (nearly a third had never been to our church before). They were treated to Christmas carols performed by SOLACE (an a cappella group featuring four of the ladies of our congregation), a sing-along featuring favorite Christmas carols, a devotion from Pastor Ed and Christmas games. Following our second service on Sunday the 16th, our congregation was treated to a delicious lunch served by our ladies and a play entitled "All I Want for Christmas," performed by adults and children from our congregation. This delightful little play was about "Holly Berry", a shop owner who displayed a crèche in her store each year but did not believe in God or know the story of the Nativity. Her neighbors and the characters of the nativity set introduce her to Jesus, the Reason for the season. On December 20th, we hosted our third annual Christmas Joy Concert. We invited residents of five local care homes to our Church. The audience of 135 was treated to Advent and Christmas music performed by our Grace Choir, soloists, a new ensemble of voices in our midst named "Full of Grace" and two of our youth on the piano. The afternoon also included Christmas readings and a devotional by Pastor Ed on the meaning of the Advent Wreath. On Christmas Eve, we celebrated the Nativity of our Lord with two candlelight services. There is nothing like a sanctuary lit by the light of candles held by a host of worshipers singing the words of "Silent Night"! Our celebration continued on Christmas Day with a service of Holy Communion.

Advent was a bitter sweet time for Grace Lutheran. All of the activity made Advent sweet; however, the departure of a member of our ministry team caused much sadness. Pastor Karen Seifert, our assistant pastor with an emphasis in youth and families, accepted a call to Aurdal Lutheran Church in Portland, North Dakota. December 16, 2012 was her last Sunday with us. She has served us faithfully for over three years. During that time, we watched God work on her and she blossomed in so many ways. Her sermons were inspiring and challenging. She led worship with confidence and skill. Over the years, she has stepped in when members of the congregation have experienced crises and shepherded them through those challenging times. Her work with our Confirmands was exemplary. She has really challenged them and

they have come through. She and her husband Mike took our VBS and raised the bar. The larger than life puppets Mike designed have set Grace Lutheran's VBS apart from all the others on the Westside. Peachland's Canada Day and Westbank's Westside Days parades have been enriched by the presence of our puppets. She has led our youth with distinction. Her organizational skills were most evident in the events she has planned for our youth. This last summer's youth camp was an amazing experience for our youth. The teachers and students of our Sunday School will miss Pastor Karen's leadership, guidance and teaching skills.

Aurdal Lutheran Church needs Pastor Karen. LCMC's records indicate that their Baptized membership is at about 410 souls. They were a part of a five church multi-point parish. This multi-point parish was without a pastor for over two years. All the churches in their multi-point parish belonged to the ELCA (the US sister church to the ELCIC). Aurdal Lutheran Church was the only church in that area that took the bold step of leaving the ELCA for the very same reasons we left the ELCIC. They joined LCMC August 8th of this year. They have bucked the trend for their area. They have stepped out in faith and trust in God above and have called Pastor Karen to serve them. God will graft Pastor Karen, Mike and their son Tommy (Mr. "T") into God's vineyard located at 300 Broadway Ave, in Portland, North Dakota 58274. God will use the Seifert family and their gifts and talents so that the Aurdal vineyard will be even more fruitful.

Congregational life resumes. Confirmands meet on Tuesdays. On Wednesdays, we continue to read and comment on Martin Luther's Lectures on Genesis 1, 2 and 3. Thursday is Choir night. Our youth also meet from time to time on Thursdays. Friday afternoon our Praise Band practices. Ladies meet for Bible Study and planning during each month. Our women and men gather for breakfast on the first and second Saturday, respectively, each month. Sunday we gather for worship for a contemporary and a traditional service and Sunday School.

On Saturday February 2nd from 11:00 AM to 1:30 PM, we will meet together under the theme "A 1st Century Church for the 21st Century." We will listen to portions of a taped presentation made by Pastor Mike Breen at LCMC's 2012 convention, have some lunch and discuss the main points of the presentation. On Saturday April 20, we hope to meet under the same theme again. This time we will watch parts of the videotaped presentation given by Pastor Jaynan Clark at our 2012 CALC Convention. Pastor Clark's presentation helps us to use secular media as a way of communicating the Gospel to a world that is hungry for an experience with God.

Lent begins mid-February. We look forward to our Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper on February 12th. Ash Wednesday begins our Lenten journey. On the five Wednesdays that follow, Pastor Ed will unpack the meaning of Psalm 51 in a series of Lenten worship services. Holy Week will include a Christian Seder followed by a Maundy Thursday service, and a Good Friday Service. We look forward to Easter Sunday celebrated with a contemporary and Traditional Service.

We thank God for all He has accomplished in and through us and look forward to the seasons of Lent and Easter. It is our prayer that God will use our Lenten worship and meditation to prepare us for the joy of the Easter season. It is our prayer that God will bless the worship, study and service of all of our brothers and sisters in CALC.

St. Andrew's Lutheran – Kamloops



New Year Greetings to all from St. Andrew's Lutheran in Kamloops. We trust that you had a most blessed and memorable Christmas and pray that 2013 will be rewarded with His peace.

The highlight of our past year was the celebration of St. Andrew's 50TH anniversary in September. We were blessed by the return of over 40 former members joining us for the event, coming from Saskatchewan, Alberta, B.C. and Arizona. A sold out banquet hall on Saturday evening and a packed church the following morning were certainly a tribute to the 50 years of service by the congregation and pastors.

The banquet program started with greetings and congratulations from CALC President Ed Skutshek. The gathering was then entertained by former pastors with memorable and humorous stories of their time at St. Andrew's. Irwin Dixel from Richmond BC, Vern and Sonja Roste from Strathmore, Alberta and Terry and Brenda Sauder from Maple Creek Sask. were able to join and bless us with their presence. Mel Kornfeld and Steven Herbert from Alberta were unable to attend but sent congrats and were certainly remembered in the many discussions during the 2 days. The first Pastor Leonard McFarlane has passed to heaven; his wife Charlotte now living in Kamloops was able to join us. Musical presentations by various St. Andrew's groups complimented the evening.

The Sunday Service had the visiting Pastors assisting Pastor David Schumacher by serving Holy Communion which was very special to those in the congregation whose lives they had previously touched. The service was followed by a farewell luncheon at the church that went on long into the afternoon.

" BLESSED MEMORIES, HOW THEY LINGER "

Our Church Library has grown. A Children's Corner featuring a special table, shelves and books for youth was added by librarian Rhona Senum. This new addition will certainly compliment the educational material provided to our growing congregation and their families.

Two new programs were added to the study sessions this past fall. A book review study of "The Purpose Driven Life" is being led by Susann Borth on Wednesday afternoons. A four disc video study was hosted by Pastor and Cathy at their home; "How Great is Our God" with Louis Giglio was truly an outstanding study of creation and faith.

The time of preparation for the celebration of our Savior's birthday is always very special. Our annual Christmas Dinner was preceded by the membership service and joining of 19 new people from 9 families to St. Andrew's congregation. What a wonderful gift ! The men's Prayer Breakfast celebrated the last session before Christmas by bringing their wives along for a most blessed meal and time together with 27 people. The 3 day celebration of Christmas with the Last Sunday in Advent, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services in succession was truly a wondrous time !

Elaine and I were blessed by being able to represent St. Andrew's at the Annual CALC Convention in Toronto. A special "Thanks" to Pastors' Harry and Goddy who along with their committee did a fantastic job of planning and hosting the annual meeting. The speakers, business sessions and social events were certainly a 10! The highlight of the convention was the report of the growth of CALC over the past year and the support shown to the National Council by the member churches. We pray that this growth and support will continue in the future.

God Bless!
Dennis Kujat, President

Christ Lutheran – Sexsmith / Journeys – Grande Prairie



"I have called you by name, you are mine" (Isaiah 43:1). There is a great deal of comfort, joy, assurance and especially hope expressed by the Lord God through the prophet Isaiah to a people living in the Babylonian captivity of Israel. But, even when things appear bleak, God has promised to be with us; because *"you are precious in my sight"* (43:4) says the Lord, *"I love you"* (43:4) and *"everyone who is called by my Name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made"* (43: 7) are sons and daughters of the Father.

The first church council meeting of 2013 began with this reading and a discussion on the future of God's church in Sexsmith and Grande Prairie. Five years ago, members considered closing Christ church. A small community of people who love Jesus kept it

alive and together (since my coming over 2 years ago) we have grown into a close family, drawing new people slowly into our membership. Isaiah reminds us today of the great hope we have in God, because God has created us, God sustains and provides daily for us and God is our Saviour and will take care of all our tomorrows. It's with this in mind and our love of Jesus and God's word that we continue to move forward and to do His work in the community.

The year 2012 came to a rousing and glorious end with the 75th anniversary celebration of our church (Oct 31, 1937) on Sunday October 28 followed by record attendance (since my arrival) at our Traditional Christmas Eve candlelight Service. Journeys has been regularly worshipping with Christ and this has helped to liven our music and bring young blood back into an aging community. We are planning our Lenten services, with midweek study of God's word, traditional Easter breakfast and the one hundredth anniversary of the organization of Christ Lutheran Church, Sexsmith. As we look forward to whatever God has planned for our churches, we continue to pray and look for our Father's leading, in our worship, study, fellowship, and service in Jesus' name, through whom we receive comfort, joy, love and hope for tomorrow.

Rev Marc Lapointe

St. John Lutheran – Preeceville



Greetings in Christ's name:

We are one of the congregations who have just recently joined with CALC and we are excited to join with you, and be a part of this growing body of believers. We are probably the smallest congregation in CALC but we believe God has a plan here for us in Preeceville to proclaim the Good News to a lost world. We are currently without a pastor and have been now for a year; so we have been having lay people lead worship services, and also have had some help from retired Pastor Dan Haugen and other visiting pastors to do some pulpit supply for us. We have entered the call process and

hope to soon have a pastor.

Also we are excited about a Mexico Mission trip we are planning for in February. There will be 9 members from our congregation; part of a team of 15 in total that will be building a home for a needy family. We are working with the Erma Fennell Foundation ministry in the Baja. All our team members will be paying for their own transportation and other costs but our group, with the help of our congregation, has raised the needed funds to pay for the house materials. Please remember us in prayer; we will be leaving on Feb. 23 for a week there.

Also this fall we had many volunteers from our church working together to give our parsonage a complete makeover. New shingles, new flooring, bathroom redone, new windows, and new kitchen cupboards, light fixtures and various other things were all done to welcome our new pastor, whenever that happens. It was great to see so many people donate their time and talents to this project.

In writing this little report I realize we have much to give thanks for. I will close with the words of the Psalmist....."Praise the Lord! O give thanks to the Lord for He is good – for His steadfast love endures forever!"

Congregation chairman,
Lynnel Person

Christ Lutheran – Morden



A brand New Year has arrived! On behalf of Christ Lutheran in Morden, we wish you God's best and His richest blessing as you minister in His name throughout 2013.

We began the Advent Season with a Church Family potluck. It was great to be together with some of the new (but familiar) faces that have been attending from within the community and area. The Christ Lutheran Women hosted our annual Christmas Dinner which was a fun and wonderful evening of good food and celebration.

As a congregation, we had the privilege of compiling a Christmas Hamper for a family in need within our community. This was done through the Angels' Anonymous community initiative. We do not know the family, but there is something special in reaching out in this way. You hope that someone is blessed through something like this and we believe that they were. These initiatives also are good because they are powerful reminders of Christ's mission on earth and this is was one way in which we join Him in that mission.

Christmas Eve was another wonderful evening by candle light. Great music, fun sketches, great refreshments and fellowship. Celebrating Jesus' birth and being reminded that He is reason for the season ... and we are the reason He came to dwell among us ... how could this not be the greatest story ever told?

God bless you and keep you,
Christ Lutheran - Morden

Faith Lutheran – North York



We are still remembering the wonderful privilege we had in co-hosting the 2012 national CALC convention, with Good Shepherd Lutheran Church. Many of the delegates and visitors have been responding to our questionnaire which will help the Lutherans in Stony Plain, Alberta (the site of the 2013 convention) plan our next national event. Never before have so many voices, from so many places, worshipped the Lord in our church. It will be a memory we will cherish for a long, long time.

Life carries on however. We have helped Lutherans in the Stouffville/Uxbridge area(some 50 km. northeast of us) begin holding bi-monthly services. Pastor Peeter Vanker and Arthur Schickedanz, have been 2 of the driving forces.

'My Hope' with Billy Graham, is planning to blitz North America, in November, for which I plan to be an organizer in the GTA(Greater Toronto area). Training sessions are to get underway in January and February. If you have not heard about it yet, check in with MyHopewithBillyGraham.ca.

Please remember our annual meeting, Sunday, Feb. 10th, in your prayers. Our city has the privilege of hosting the LAMP(Lutheran Assoc. of Missionaries & Pilots) boards- U.S. and Canadian of which I am a member, April 5-7th, with the AGM(annual general mtg.) and banquet taking place at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church. For this I ask for your prayers as well. Colin Adams, the vice-chairperson of our church council, has decided to register with ILT(Institute of Lutheran Theology), with the intent to become a Lutheran minister. He asks for your prayers.

Wishing you all a healthy and Spirit-filled winter.
Pastor Harry Huff

St. Matthew's Lutheran – Cornwall



The Lord be with you!
And happy new year as well.

For St. Matthew's (Cornwall), the ministry highlight of 2012 would have to be our transition to becoming a CALC congregation. In particular, both David Nieman (our delegate to the CALC National Convention in Toronto) and myself were wonderfully blessed to participate in a church convention without foundational issues in question. A refreshing and delightful experience.

For 2013, St. Matthew's is looking forward to celebrating its 50th anniversary as a congregation. We are having a celebration service on April 28 with our previous pastor, Rev. Steven Olson, as guest preacher. In the summer we will be holding an outreach event in our neighbourhood - we are the only church facility in west-end Cornwall. The details for this outreach are still in the works.

Hope this helps.

Blessings,

Peter

NATIONAL COUNCIL UPDATE



Since the last (September 2012) edition of *The Lutheran Connector*, CALC's National Council has met once, in person in Calgary on September 8, 2012. At this meeting:

- The application by Immanuel Lutheran Church of Rosenthal, Stony Plain, AB was accepted.
- Report received that registration with the province of Alberta has been completed B.C. marriage registration is in progress.
- CALC's Board of Elders recommended that over the next year a review be undertaken of CALC's *Shepherd's Pathway to Pastoral Ministry*, particularly the

Pastoral Ministry Certificate (PMC), and the results of such a study, including some information around the subject of "ordination", be distributed to the delegates at the 2013 General Convention.

- Work needs to be done to firm up an agreement with Concordia Lutheran Seminary, Edmonton for the training of CALC pastors.
- Support of the Institute of Lutheran Theology by CALC congregations is encouraged.
- The Board of Trustees entertained the idea of CALC retaining a financial adviser who would be available to provide assistance to CALC's pastors.
- Arrangements for CALC's 2012 General Convention in Toronto (Nov. 2 to Nov. 4) were discussed. Council approved "Rules of Order" to be presented for adoption at the 2012 General Convention. A CALC banner, also to be used for subsequent General Conventions, will be produced.
- Discussion took place re a Lutheran Free Conference involving representatives of CALC, LC-C, AFLC-Canada, CLB-Canada and NALC-Canada to be held in Calgary on October 30th.

Next meeting (in-person) of the National Council is to be held in Calgary on March 23, 2013.

AMENDMENTS TO CALC'S CONSTITUTION & BYLAWS

The delegates to CALC's 2012 Convention approved certain proposed amendments to our Constitution and Bylaws. A total of eight amendments were approved. Two of the eight amendments are substantive, clearing up ambiguities in the exiting language of our Constitution related to the size of the Board of Elders and the Board of Trustees. Six of the amendments are clerical in nature. One amendment adds or removes words for the sake of grammar. One amendment adds "Pastor Emeritus" to the class of pastors who can be on CALC's Roster of Pastors without being under a call to a CALC congregation. Three of the amendments change the masculine "Chairman" to the neutral "Chairperson" in order to reflect the possibility that a woman could serve in the described offices. One amendment changes the numbering sequence within an article of our constitution.

To become effective these proposed amendments must be approved by 75% of the congregational ballots cast in response to this notice. Only Member congregations of CALC can vote on the amendments. Associate Member Congregations and Individual Associate Members **cannot vote** to approve these proposed amendments to CALC's constitution and bylaws. If simple majority (fifty percent plus one) of the voting members at a duly-called congregational meeting vote in favor of the proposed amendments, said congregation have voted in favor the proposed amendments. The delegates to CALC's 2012 Annual General Convention voted on these amendments as a whole or block, accordingly, congregations will vote on the proposed amendments as a whole or block.

CALC congregations that are eligible to vote on the proposed amendments must do so at a duly-called meeting of the congregation, specifically, either an annual general meeting or a special meeting of the members. In December a Disclosure Statement as well as a Ballot were mailed to each CALC Member Congregation in December by CALC's President, Pastor Ed Skutshek, in hopes that a vote on the proposed amendments may be placed on the Agenda of the Annual General Congregational Meetings for 2013. Following the congregational vote on said resolution, the attached ballot should be filled out by the congregation's Secretary, signed by the Chairperson and Secretary of the congregation, placed in a sealed envelope, and sent to the Secretary of the Canadian Association of Lutheran Congregations.

To be counted, congregational ballots must be received by CALC's Secretary on or before Friday, April 5, 2013.

INSTITUTE OF LUTHERAN THEOLOGY



Institute of
Lutheran
Theology

Where The Reformation Lives ...

Word at Work - Spring 2013 Course Offerings

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

- **Sermon On The Mount (Steve Dunkel)**
- **Theology of Law and Government (John Eidsmoe)**
- **1 Corinthians (Kyle Fever)**
- **Ante-Nicene Fathers (Thomas Jacobson)**

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".) More information and to register online registration is available at the ILT web site (www.ilt.org). Note that each class is recorded and that you will receive a link for the recorded version from ILT after each class, thus allowing you to watch sessions that you are not able to attend live.

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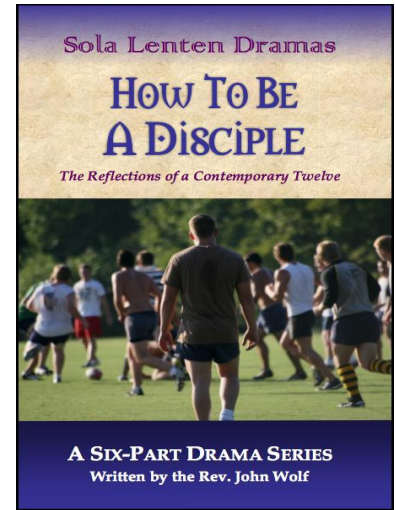


How to Be a Disciple

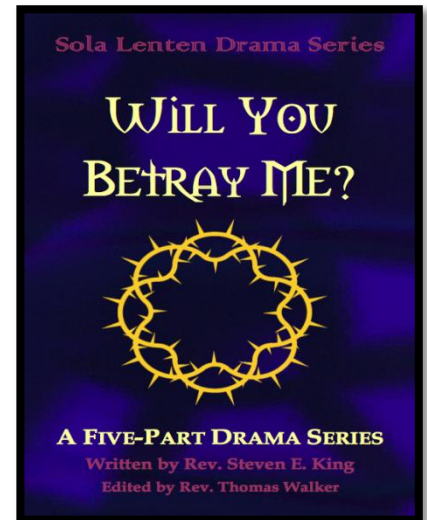
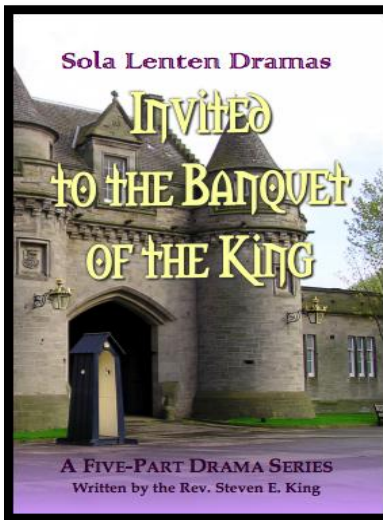
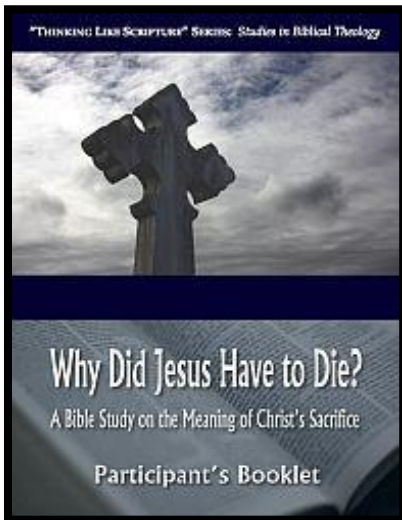
Six-Part Lenten Drama Series

"By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples." (John 15:8)

How to be a Disciple is a six-part series of dramas featuring the first Twelve disciples, each exploring a piece of the discipleship puzzle. The disciples are placed in a light-hearted contemporary setting, helping listeners to get a sense for the down-to-earth interplay between personalities. The progression of the series is meant to provide worshippers with the larger picture of discipleship means.



Other Lenten Resources

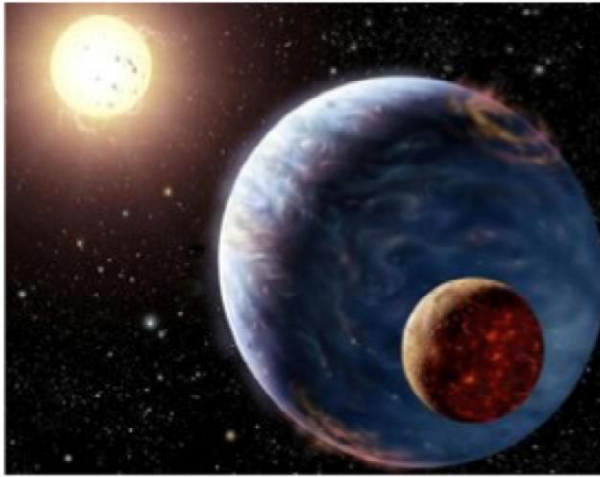


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A QUESTION OF ORIGINS: CREATION OR EVOLUTION

- *What did Martin Luther believe on this matter?*



Where did we come from and how did life begin? Does it matter what we believe? What do you believe? Why do you believe what you believe? What are your children being taught? Is evolution a fact?

From the start of 2012 Ron Voss embarked on a journey of intensive research to understand the two opposing views for our and the earth's origin, Creation or Evolution, and to get answers some of the questions surrounding this controversial topic as raised above.

Ron is willing to share his findings with interested CALC congregations through a seminar presentation which would include:

- Why is it important?
- What is meant by Darwinian biological evolution?
- The difference between operational (experimental) science and origin (historical) science.
- Where did the idea of millions of years come from?
- What's "uniformitarianism" and why was this concept introduced by geologists in the late 18th and early 19th centuries?
- Two views of the age of the earth.
- What's a worldview?
- Is the battle related to our origin a case of science versus religion?
- Are scientists, especially those who are evolutionists, objective pursuers of the truth?
- Where did you get the idea of millions of years?
- An examination of the theory of evolution along two 'tracks' – the biblical track and the scientific track. Are they incompatible?
- What are the theological implications of what we believe?
- What did Martin Luther believe on this matter?
- How have some within the church compromised the Bible in order to incorporate millions of years?
- Which authority should guide our thinking?
- What is the consequence of a belief in an evolutionary account of origins?

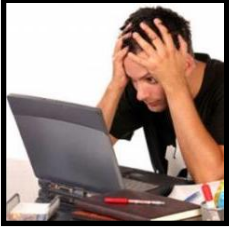
Congregations interested in hosting a seminar on this topic are invited to contact Ron:

Email: rvoss@telus.net; Telephone: 403-932-1892.

All Ron would require from the congregation is coverage of his travel costs.

PORN EPIDEMIC

Statistics indicate that 77% of Americans view pornography at least once a month. That's not just a frightening number.



That's an epidemic of pornography.

Jason King, chair of the theology department at Saint Vincent's, a Catholic College in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, wrote about the accessibility and damage of pornography in his latest piece at Catholic Moral Theology: <http://catholicmoraltheology.com/porn/>

Referring to a recent Wall Street Journal essay as an important commentary on the reality of contemporary life, King highlights findings from the book, *Pornified-How Pornography Is Damaging Our Lives, Our Relationships, and Our Families* by Pamela Paul:

- Overuse, pornography, infidelity, and risky behaviors are among the most frequently treated Internet-related problems by mental health professionals.
- Over half of all spending on the Internet is estimated to be related to sex.
- The best estimates indicate that 77% of Americans view pornography at least once a month
- 75-77% of males have downloaded porn in their lives
- 20% of males consciously abstain from viewing pornography
- 70% of 18-24 year-old males visit porn site monthly
- 47% of women believe pornography harms relationships while 33% of men said the same
- 33% of all Americans believe that pornography will not harm a relationship
- During a six-week experiment the statement, "marriage is an important institution," was affirmed by 60% of men who viewed no pornography during that period, but only 39% of those exposed to heavy viewing of pornography during the same period affirmed the same statement
- 58% of women believe that pornography is demeaning to women while only 37% of men agree
- Both men and women who were exposed to pornography were significantly less likely to want to raise a daughter than those who had not viewed pornography.

According to King, a good friend of his summarized the situation best, "**You used to have to exert an effort to view pornography. Now you have to exert an effort to NOT view it.**"

King concludes his article with a theological argument for abstaining from pornography: "God made us such that in our hearts we desire much more than what pornography offers; we desire to love and to be loved. This is the heart of the Church's sexual teaching: that sex should always be life-giving, not destructive, dominating, violent, or commercialized. This is why the metaphor Jesus frequently uses for Heaven is the wedding banquet, friends and family singing, dancing, and eating in the celebration of love. Pornography cannot ultimately compete with this joy for which God made us."

HELP WANTED



FINANCIAL ADVISOR

- As reported in the *National Council News*, CALC's Board of Trustees is exploring the idea of CALC retaining a financial advisor who would be available to provide assistance to CALC's pastors with respect to various financial matters, such as retirement investment, benefits, insurance, etc. CALC is preferably seeking a Christian who has experience as a financial advisor but has since retired so that not involved in selling financial products and services. We are seeking the help of CALC's congregations in

locating possible candidates who could fill such a position.

THE LUTHERAN CONNECTOR

- The Lutheran Connector is CALC's official publication and we would welcome the addition of more people who would like to contribute to developing and improving our publication.