

The Lutheran Connector

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

Easter Edition

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Pastors' Study Retreat 2015

Camp Nakamun, near Edmonton, AB



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President's Message

Easter Sermon

What If God Was One of Us?

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"If god had a name what would it be? If god had a face, what would it look like? And would you want to see? If seeing meant that you would have to believe? What if god was one of us?" These questions were asked by Eric Brazilian and Joan Osborne in their hit song, One of Us. During Easter, the Christian Church answers these questions.

We declare that God was indeed one of us. We say God had a name: Jesus, a Hebrew name that means God's salvation. We declare that God had a face—the face of a baby boy. A face that was adored, caressed and kissed by His mother. She saw His face and she had to believe.

Some nine months before, the angel Gabriel had come to Mary, and in God's name, asked her to become the mother of God's Son. The angel declared the child she would bear would not be conceived in the normal way, from relations between a man and a woman, but would be conceived in her by the power of the Holy Spirit. In this way the child would be truly human and truly God! All the angel had promised came true on the first Christmas Eve. Mary had to believe the child she bore was the Son of God.

Mary saw Jesus with her eyes. However, we see with more than our eyes. Who among us has not proclaimed: "I can see that" when we come to understand something new. Therefore, to "see" also means to understand. We can "see" with our minds. Therefore, when we read the Gospels and all the Holy Scriptures we can see Jesus, and we believe that in Him, God was one of us.

The words of Holy Scripture found in Genesis 3 help us to see and believe that in the beginning Adam and Eve wanted to be "like God, knowing good and evil." They were tempted and deceived by the Devil to see and believe they could achieve divinity by eating the forbidden fruit. The Devil promised them that they would not die (as God said), but instead their eyes would be opened and they would see as God does.

As we read Genesis 3, we see and believe that after Adam and Eve ate the fruit they did change. These words tell us that the couple lost their innocence. They saw they were naked, felt shame and sewed fig leaves together to cover their bodies. They could no longer bear to be in God's company. Instead of walking with God, they hid

from Him. Adam and Eve were tainted by this Fall from God's grace. They were banished from God's presence. God had to impose the death sentence He had decreed as punishment for the sin they had committed.

As we read on, we see and have to believe that this fallen state was passed on from generation to generation. As the earth was filled with humankind, we see and we have to believe that while we may know good—and may even want to do good—we mostly do what is evil in God's sight.

When we read the words of Holy Scripture, we see and have to believe that even in the beginning, in the edict of judgment sentencing Adam and Eve to a life of toil and pain and eventual death, God had a plan to rescue us from sin, death and the power of the Devil. This plan was to become one of us, and really live a human life.

When we read about the birth of the infant Jesus, we can see and have to believe that He was conceived and born in this miraculous way for a reason. King David declared that the curse of the fall taints us all: "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51:5 NIV). We can see and believe that by His immaculate conception and virgin birth, Jesus redeemed human conception and birth from the power of sin.

As we read the Gospels we see Jesus mature into manhood. When we see Him, we have to believe He was truly human and experienced all that it means to be one of us. He had to eat, drink and sleep like one of us. He worked, walked, got tired and slept like one of us. He experienced joy, love, anger, frustration, sorrow and grief like one of us.

However, His joy, love, anger, frustration, sorrow and grief were holy expressions of these emotions. His anger, sorrow and frustration were brought on by unholy human behavior and emotions, including pride, prejudice, intolerance, self-righteousness and cruelty; therefore, Jesus' emotional responses were pure, justified and holy.

When we see Jesus preach, teach and live in the words of Holy Scripture, we have to believe that He fulfilled the Ten Commandments and all of God's commandments written down in the Book of Genesis through the Book of Deuteronomy. We have to believe Jesus when He said: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Matthew 5:17 NIV). The Gospels permit us to see the Devil inflict all the temptations known to humankind on Jesus, and we see Jesus resist these temptations. This is what the author of Hebrews saw and believed: For we do not have a high priest [Jesus] who is unable to

empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. — Hebrews 4:15 (NIV) By His obedience to God's laws and His resistance of all temptation, Jesus redeemed human life from the power of sin and the wiles of the Devil.

The words of the Gospels make us see and believe that while Jesus' perfect life redeemed human life from the power of sin and the Devil, Jesus also became one of us in order to redeem us from our sin, our death and the power of the Devil over our lives.

While the Gospels let us see and believe that Jesus was just like one of us in many and various ways, their words also let us see and believe in Jesus' divinity. We see and have to believe that Jesus exercised authority over the wind and the waves, and fed thousands from five loaves and some fish. He cured diseases, drove out demons and raised the dead. Some disciples saw His divinity shine through when Jesus was transfigured before them.

In the pages of the Gospels we hear Jesus declare openly that He is the Son of God, and thereby has the authority to forgive and atone for sin. Jesus declared that He would atone for our sins by His innocent suffering and death on the cross. Jesus said He would rise from the dead on the third day following His death. Jesus declared that His death and resurrection were necessary for the reconciliation of God and humanity, and for eternal life with God.

In order for Jesus to die for our sins, He had to become a "scapegoat." We have all heard that term referring to a person who is forced to bear blame or take punishment for others. In Old Testament Scriptures the scapegoat was a real goat over which a priest confessed certain sins, then banished the goat to the wilderness. These sins were symbolically driven away with the goat, and when the scapegoat died these sins were atoned for.

The Gospels reveal that Jesus was arrested and accused of a crime. The Jewish authorities declared Jesus was a liar. They declared that despite all the supposed miracles, He could not possibly be the Son of God. Therefore, Jesus could not possibly forgive or atone for the sins of others. Jesus was thus found guilty of the crime of blasphemy, befouling God's name by declaring He was God's Son.

The authorities declared that Jesus deserved to die for presuming to be the Son of God, and for presuming to have the power to forgive and atone for the sins of others. Roman authorities begrudgingly agreed to find Jesus guilty, labeled Him as a threat to Roman rule in Jerusalem and sentenced Him to be crucified.

The Gospel according to St. Luke reveals that Jesus was crucified between two criminals who had been sentenced to the same punishment. Luke records the Jewish religious authorities and the crowd hurling insults at Jesus. They mocked Him and challenged Him to show His divinity by saving Himself by coming down off the cross. Even one of the criminals crucified with Jesus hurled the same insults at him.

However, the repentant criminal saw Jesus in a different light. He saw and he had to believe that, while he deserved to die that day, Jesus did not. Jesus' suffering was innocent. This criminal believed Jesus was a King and was going to establish a Kingdom that was not of this earth. Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43-43). The Gospels declare that Jesus died on the Good Friday and rose from the dead on the first Easter Sunday.

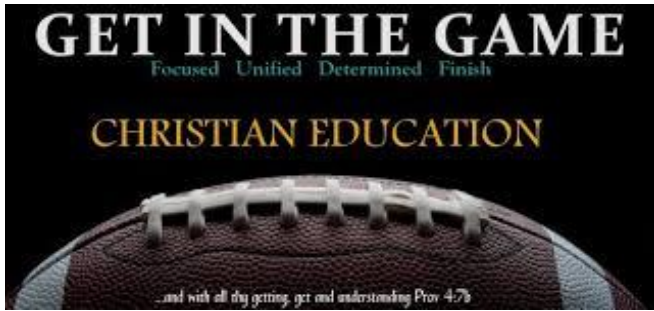
Jesus' most passionate desire is for you to see Him as one of us. To see Him hanging on the cross and dying. He wants you to see Him suffer and die with you and suffer and die for you. Jesus wants you to see Him the way the repentant criminal saw Him: as the King of a kingdom that was not of this earth, but an eternal kingdom that Jesus' death would bring in. The repentant criminal saw Jesus as the One who could grant citizenship in the new Kingdom. He knew that he could not presume to ask Jesus for citizenship, but had to rely upon Jesus' sovereign grace. He heard Jesus grant his request, and he had to believe.

Do you want to see Jesus and believe? Take a risk, go to a church near you on Good Friday and Easter Sunday. See and believe!

In Christ

Pastor Ed Skutshek, President CALC





Why Attend a Christian School?

Quite often I hear from those who have no experience with Christian schools, that placing children there does them a disadvantage. It tends to shelter them so that they cannot cope when they leave for public high school or university and must face the world.

This is the furthest thing from the truth. I can say this with confidence, having served as Headmaster of two separate Christian schools.

In the years that I have been privileged to work within a Christian school environment, my experience has been just the opposite. Those students who have gone on to public education at whatever level have not only survived, but thrived, and have had no problem integrating, coping and better yet, witnessing "to the hope that is within them". The stronger the foundation spiritually, emotionally and academically, the better chance at surviving the challenges that the world throws at them, and the better the opportunity for making a worthwhile contribution to society as a whole.

Christian schools not only work on growing faith and strengthening academics, but also on building self esteem. I have spoken with a variety of students and parents of students who have graduated to public high school or university and college, and in each case the students have done well. None whom I have spoken with felt that their education in a Christian school was a disadvantage. In all cases they saw it as a great advantage.

Jesus always made the distinction that we are 'in' the world but not 'of' the world. He also commended fellowship and community and mutual up-building and support. That is what happens in a Christian school. Why would you not want your children to be in a place where they are not only educated, but loved, and nurtured?

Christian schools do not shelter nor coddle their children. Whenever and wherever one gathers together a group of people, be they adults or children, you are by default dealing with real personalities, real challenges, real everyday issues which you cannot escape. By nature we are all, as the Bible says, "sinful and fall short of the

glory of God". Christian schools are not monasteries nor convents, where the world is shut out and personality conflicts are entirely absent. But they are family, dealing with real family stuff including both celebration and conflict. Also like family deeply committed to each other. They are privileged to focus upon laying a firm foundation, not only educating but loving the children in their care, praying over them as a team, training them for discipleship in the world.

At home we have a candle. (Actually we have many candles. Both my wife and I are unrepentant romantics, I guess.) One in particular is a bright yellow, round candle with a smiling happy face on the front. As a brand new candle, when you first light it, it sheds some light by virtue of its flame rising above the body of the candle. But after a few hours of burning, the wick grows shorter and the flame recedes further into the body of the candle. As a result, not only do you get light, but the whole candle itself glows. The happy face lights up and the candle glows from within.

Christian schools want children to not only be aware of the light of Jesus, they want children who glow from within! They want children who not only see the light, but who embrace it, such that it becomes their strength and their guide, empowering them to be all they can be, to be fully equipped to take on the world, to engage it with confidence, not with fear.

As Christian parents we not only want our children's lights to shine, we want our children to glow! Christian schools can do this.

In Christ's service

Pastor Doug Kranz



About the Author: Pastor Doug Kranz serves as Interim Pastor at All Saints Lutheran Church, Ottawa, ON. He has served as Head Master of two Christian Schools and is currently involved in developing a Christian School in Pembroke, ON. His educational credentials include a Master of Divinity degree from Waterloo Lutheran Seminary and a Bachelor of Arts degree from the Ontario Teacher Education College of the University of Toronto. He is married to Liz, they live in Pembroke, ON. They have five children.

"Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it."

Proverbs 22:6 (ESV)

Missions

Guest Speaker Rev. Tom Brook, CLWR Community Relations Director



Picture to Left: L to R: Rev. Goddy Hodanu, Pastor of Good Shepherd; Dennis Persaud,, author of this article and Chair of Good Shepherd, and Rev. Tom Brook of CLWR. **Picture to Right:** Rev. Brook receives an honorarium from Dennis Persaud.

As a delegate from Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Toronto to CALC's 2014 Convention in Kelowna, BC, I visited the exhibit section of the convention. This exhibition was invaluable in that it enhanced an organization's visibility, showcased its programs and services and created an intimate atmosphere which fostered communication between the exhibitors and the attendees. During my discourse with the representative at the CLWR exhibit, I inquired if it was possible to have one of their representatives as a guest speaker in our congregation. To my surprise, this request became a reality following correspondence from Tom Brook, Community Relations Director of CLWR.

Our congregation has been and continues to be an ardent, financial supporter of CLWR among other missions. Hence, it was worthwhile for our congregants to learn first-hand about their modus operandi. We were pleased to have Tom Brook attend our congregation on January 18, 2015 and he delivered a very impressive presentation. We learned that CLWR is a registered charitable organization headquartered in Winnipeg, Manitoba. They receive funding from Canadian Lutheran congregations, Canadians and other levels of government. In his power-point and video combo presentation, he gave a general overview of CLWR's mission, vision, values and donor accountability.

He added that CLWR carried out a wide array of programs to bring about improvement to health, nutrition, agriculture, education, environmental protection and so on for people in need. He cited 5 main program areas, namely:-Community development, emergency relief, refugee resettlement, International volunteer service and collection of essential paraphernalia (quilts, personal hygiene items, school

supplies, and medical equipment) from Canadian donors for distribution to people in need overseas.

Thanks to members of our sister and neighboring congregation of Faith Lutheran Church and their officiating pastor, Rev Sheilah Fletch who accepted our invitation and attended as guests.

At the conclusion of Rev Brook's presentation, it was the talk of all attendees that it was undoubtedly, a worthwhile and very impressive presentation. As a tangible expression of appreciation, a spontaneous on-the-spot financial contribution was made to CLWR. Dennis Persaud, Chairperson of the host Good Shepherd Congregation moved a vote of thanks after which he presented an honorarium to Rev Brook on behalf of his congregation. This honorarium was later donated to CLWR.

Yours in the Master's Service, *Dennis N. Persaud*



Photo above: Rev. Brook speaks to those assembled at Good Shepherd, Toronto, ON, for his presentation.

About the Author: Dennis Persaud (see pictures in the column to the left) is a public health inspector with Environmental Health of the Region of Peel, ON. He is active in the Ontario Branch of the Canadian Institute Public Health Inspectors, having served as Membership Chair. He is married and has two daughters.

Cuba at a Critical Crossroad

Early in 2015 my wife Carol and I led a group of 22 on a tour of Cuba. The USA embargo is still very much in force, although some changes will no doubt be coming, but probably only very slowly, incrementally. This trip would perhaps be our last chance to experience "Castro's Cuba".



Photo: Centre Square of Trinidad, Cuba

The primary objective of our tour was to experience the life, culture, and passion of the people in Cuba. After

spending our first three days in Havana, we spent the remainder of our fifteen days visiting the countryside and smaller cities in Western and central Cuba.

Foreign travel for Cubans is still severely restricted. Much of Cuba still remains an economically "Third World Country". The shortage of many everyday items is a constant reality.



Top Left Photo: Oxen with farmers gathering tobacco in fields in Vinales Valley. **Middle Left Photo:** Horse drawn working/passenger cart. **Bottom Left Photo:** American vehicle from the 1950's. **Top Right Photo:** Statue of Che Guevara. **Bottom Right Photo:** Stilt entertainers in Old Havana.

"Socialism" is firmly entrenched in the hearts and lives of many Cubans. Large billboards proclaim "Socialism or death" and "Revolution" and "Chavez is our best friend".

Cuba is probably the most genuinely socialistic of socialist nations. Virtually everyone works for the government, at least until very recently. Everyone receives essentially the same wages, about \$ 20-25 US a month. All education is free, including post-secondary education. In terms of literacy, Cuba ranks near the top among all nations. The government provides housing. Medical care is free. Everyday items and food are rationed so that everyone may share alike. These may be purchased relatively cheaply with local Cuban currency at special ration stores.

Everyone shares alike. Everyone also experiences shortages alike. \$ 20-25 US a month is not enough. For many Cubans the rations and money run out by mid-month. Cubans then have to try to supplement their income in order to make purchases elsewhere at a much higher cost with "tourist" currency in order to make ends

meet. Doctors, lawyers, teachers, electricians etc. all have to look for additional sources of income.

Relatively few Cubans can afford cars. Every car owner has to be his own mechanic. Everyone else – men, women, teenagers, uniformed school children – relies on walking, bicycles, the few buses, horse drawn vehicles and mostly on hitch hiking. The few who own cars or other vehicles who have space are obligated by law to pick up hitch hikers. The hitch hiking police ensures their compliance.

Cubans are a very resilient people. They have had to learn to make do.

Many of the goals of socialism such as the equality of opportunity for all are admirable. But they cannot be sustained by Cuba's economic and social structure. For a time, with the huge former Soviet subsidy prior to its collapse in 1991 it may have appeared that it could be, but no longer now. Most of the sugar mills have been closed. Most of Cuba's food now has to be imported. The burgeoning government controlled tourist industry and a few permissible private enterprises such as home restaurants may have granted Cuba a temporary reprieve.

The recent negotiations between Cuba and the USA are indeed difficult ones. The alternatives, capitalism or socialism, political parties or a single party, free speech or government censorship are opposites. Cuba and the USA will inevitably find themselves on a collision course. Whether those conversations will lead to meaningful changes for the majority of Cuba's population who live in the countryside remains to be seen.

Finally, not Fidel Castro or his brother, Raul, but the person and memory of Che Guevara has become the focus of Cuban adulation. Cuban children from kindergarten on begin each day with a hand salute to Che and the words "I want to be like Che". According to our guide Che was the most perfect human being who ever lived. If he had any flaw at all, she told us, it was leaving his family to try to instigate similar revolutions in Africa and in South America.

Traditional religion plays a very minor part in the lives of ordinary Cubans. Christmas was reintroduced as an official public holiday following the visit of Pope John Paul II in 1969. Some have turned to the religion of Santeria which combines Roman Catholic and African traditions and practices. After more than 50 years the notion of "socialism" seems to be firmly entrenched as a national "religion" and many Cubans have come to revere Che Guevara as their very own "saint".

Yours in Christ's service.

Peeter and Carol Vanker



About the Author: Pastor Peeter Vanker is a member of our National Council (NC). He serves on the NC's Board of Elders. He is retired from the Pastoral Ministry. However, he is on CALC's roster as a *Pastor Emeritus* and provides occasional pulpit supply at Faith Lutheran, Toronto and Goodwood Mission in Uxbridge. He served as a Pastor in the ELCIC for many years. Pastor Peeter and his wife Carol love to travel. They have led tours to the Holy Land, Greece, Turkey, and Germany. They live in Markham, Ontario. They have two adult children and four grandchildren.

Missions

Advent Messengers Ministries, India Pastor John S. Tataputi



Faith Lutheran Church, in Toronto, is cultivating a working relationship with Advent Messengers, a Christian Ministry with Lutheran roots located in the Telangana State of India.

Telangana State is situated on the Deccan Plateau of the eastern seaboard of the Indian Peninsula. It covers 114,800 square kilometers (44,300 sq. mi). The region is drained by two major rivers, the Godavari River catchment area and the Krishna River catchment area, but most of the land is arid. Telangana is a semi-arid area with a hot and dry climate. Summers start in March, and peak in May with average high temperatures in the 42 °C (108 °F) range. The monsoons arrive in June and last until September leaving about 755 mm (29.7 inches) of precipitation. A dry, mild winter starts in late November and lasts until early February with little humidity and average temperatures in the 22–23 °C (72–73 °F) range.

Advent Messengers is a voluntary, non-profit Christian Organization, organized in 1997 by Pastor John under the laws of India.

Pastor John grew up in Pastor's home. His parents were ministers in the Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church of India. As a child and youth he was actively involved in the Sunday School and Youth Ministry. At the age of 22 he received a call to ministry and dedicated his life to the Lord's work. He trained for the ministry at Andhra Christian Theological College. Following graduation he took a position with Every Home Crusade (EHC) organization of India. He served EHC for 27 years. He held various positions and was posted to various locations throughout India.

After his resignation from EHC, God inspired Pastor John to evangelize and work with abandoned children and widows in rural villages in India. He was invited by two pastors to come and see the village of Jhansilingapur in Medak District in the State of Telangana. Jhansilingapur is a main village surrounded by many small tribal villages. In 2006 the Indian government named Medak one of the country's 250 most backward districts (out of a total of 640). Most all of the people living in this area are Hindus. Hindus worship idols. The caste (class) system is alive and well in the rural areas. People of a higher caste will not be in the same room as a person from a lower caste. The bulk of the population around Jhansilingapur are day laborers working in the fields (much like in Jesus' day). Much of the population is illiterate.



There were no churches in Jhansilingapur village and the surrounding area. The people that live in Jhansilingapur and surrounding district had not heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ. God inspired Pastor John to establish a ministry at Jhansilingapur. He built a church in the village. The church is named "Advent Gospel Church (AGC)." He named it Advent Gospel Church because he is readying his flock for Jesus' second advent. About 60 attend weekly services.



Picture Above – Outside of Advent Gospel Church.
Picture to left – the Congregation of Advent Gospel Church.

Village Ministries:

- AGC works with the children of single mothers who must work in the fields each day. Pastor John and volunteers feed these children with rice and dahl (lentils) and the word of God. It costs him \$10.00 per month per child for the food.
- AGC also cares for ten widows. For \$15.00 per month per person, he provides the widows with food, medication and basic shelter.
- AGC reaches out to all the children of the village through Sunday School, VBS, children's retreats. Gifts are given to children at Christmas.
- AGC has a youth group that meets weekly.
- AGC hosts educational seminars for local lay pastors.
- Gospel meetings are organized with help from outside Christian organizations.



Widows supported by Advent Messengers

Tribal Village Ministries: Pastor John established preaching points or assemblies in ten tribal villages surrounding Jhansilingapur village. He tries to get to these village assemblies on a weekly basis. He holds outdoor prayer meetings in the evening. He uses a bicycle to get to and from the villages. He usually is accompanied by one or two youth or an adult believer. The prayer groups meet in the open air. This allows the Dalit people (formerly known as the "Untouchables") to attend services. Upper caste members couldn't meet with them in closed rooms. During the rainy season they meet under tents with open sides. Pastor John wants to replace tents with permanent gazebos.

Dreams for Advent Messengers Ministry:

- Pastor John wants to establish sewing centers (a sewing machine in the village square), so the women can learn sewing and perhaps enrich their lives and develop a skill that allows them to earn extra income.
- Pastor John would love to purchase a van which would allow him greater access to the villages.

Bicycle rides at late hours through the bush can be dangerous.

Pastor John and his family and friends have been supporting Advent Messengers. He is looking for support. You can access information on this ministry at this address: www.adventmessengers.com. Pastor John's email address is: admessengers@yahoo.com.



Pastor John Tataputi is married to Nirmala Kumari. She is very involved in his ministry. They have three adult married children (a son and two daughters), two grandsons and a granddaughter.

Consecration to Diaconal Ministry

Candidate: Stanley Ng

Vancouver Chinese Lutheran Church

The evening of Sunday December 7th, 2014, Stanley Ng (pronounced *eng*), was consecrated as a Diaconal Minister at Vancouver Chinese Lutheran Church (VCLC). Our President preached and presided at Mr. Ng's consecration. Deacon Ng is in the center of the picture below. He is wearing the red stole draped over his left shoulder and brought together on his right hip. The early church directed that the deacon wear his stole over his left shoulder and caught up on the right hip, because "the right side he must have free, in order that he may without hindrance, do his service"



Deacon Ng, Clergy and Assistants: (Left to Right) Mark Hung, son of VCLC Pastor Richard Hung; Dr Ekman Tam of the Christian Contemplative Spirituality Institute; Rev Sek Wai Lo, founding pastor of VCLC; Bishop Stephen Leung, Anglican Network of Canada; Deacon Stanly Ng, VCLC; Rev. Dr. Eddie Kwok, co-pastor VCLC; Pastor Ed Skutshek, President CALC; Pastor Richard Hung, co-pastor VCLC; Bianca Chan; and Evan Kwong.

The title "*Deacon*" comes from the Greek word "*diakonos*" which means servant or waiter. St. Paul described those qualified for the diaconate this way: *In the same way, deacons are to be worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.* (1 Timothy 3:8-10)

In addition to his Deacon's stole, Deacon Ng received a silver wash basin as a token of remembrance of the occasion of his consecration. The basin declares that, just as Jesus washed His disciples' feet on the first Maundy Thursday, Jesus has called Stanley to humbly serve the members of Vancouver Chinese Lutheran Church.

A deacon's spiritual gifts are confirmed by his/her congregation. They offer servant leadership in particular areas of congregational life, according to the gifts and skills God has given them. Deacons complement the work of the pastors and other leaders of a congregation. They serve their congregation by assisting and leading their fellow members with a goal of strengthening and equipping them for ministry to one another, their community and beyond.

Mr. Ng was *consecrated* to the office of deacon. Consecration is a ceremony or rite that sets people aside or apart for a holy purpose. Deacon Ng was called by VCLC to support and strengthen marriages at VCLC, visitation and proclamation. He is specifically called to provide: crisis marital counseling; preventative and educational workshops; visitation and pastoral care; preaching once a month; and other responsibilities agreed to by Deacon Ng, VCLC's pastors and council.

Deacon Ng is married to Vonnie. They have two sons Joshua and Caleb. Joshua is married to Jessica. The Ng's have three granddaughters Abigail, Sophie, Thalia and a fourth one is due October of this year. Stanley is employed in the Financial Planning Services industry. Since 2001 Stanley has served a leadership role in and worked with couples through the CFFC (Chinese Families for Christ).

Marriage and family are a blessing from God. Let us pray that God will continue to bless Deacon Ng in his ministry at VCLC so that husbands and wives, parents and children are enriched by God's grace, their faith is strengthened, they are more supportive of one another and are empowered to reach out to the less fortunate.

Installation: Pastor Bart Eriksson

St. Peter's Lutheran, Cochrane, AB



On Sunday February 1st, Pastor Bart Eriksson was installed as the pastor of St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Cochrane, Alberta. Our President Pastor Ed Skutshek preached and presided at the installation.

Pastor Bart was born and raised in Camrose, Alberta. He was baptized, as an infant, and confirmed at Bethel Lutheran in Camrose. His father was a Lutheran pastor and a history professor at Camrose Lutheran College (now Augustana University College). Following graduation from High School, Pastor Bart attended Camrose Lutheran College, for a year and a half before earning a BAH degree in Economics (1993) from Queen's University of Kingston, Ontario, where Bart helped with the Lutheran Campus Ministry group. During this time as well Pastor Bart worked as a counsellor at two Lutheran Camps and had a variety of summer jobs, including in the construction industry.

In response to God's call, Pastor Bart attended Waterloo Lutheran Seminary (ELCIC) at Wilfred Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario. He earned a Master of Divinity Degree in 1997. In 1998 Pastor Bart entered into ThM degree in New Testament program at Wycliffe College at the University of Toronto. From 1998 to 2000, while studying for the THM, he worked as an assistant to the campus chaplain at University of Toronto, and served as parish worker at Agricola Finnish Lutheran in Toronto. He eventually finished his thesis and graduated in 2004 (after he had entered his first parish in Wainwright and Irma in 2001).

From June 2001 to December 2006 Pastor Bart served the two point parish of Peace Lutheran of Wainwright and Sharon Lutheran of Irma, Alberta. (These congregations were part of the ELCIC are now a part of CALC). From May 2007 to July 2008 he served Unity Lutheran Church (ELCIC) in Medicine Hat, Alberta, as an interim pastor. From August 2009 to December 2014 he served All Saints Lutheran Church (ELCIC), in Calgary, Alberta. In the latter months of 2014 Pastor Bart received and accepted a call to St. Peter's in Cochrane. He began serving St. Peter's January of this year.

Pastor Bart is married to Darinka, (sister of a Lutheran pastor in Slovakia). They married at Wilhelmina Lutheran Church near Hay Lakes in July of 2013. They are proud parents of their daughter Miia-Margaret.

Pastor Bart has also recently been accepted into the PHD program in the Department of Theology of the University of Pretoria, in Pretoria, South Africa. He will complete the degree by distance learning.

Please keep St. Peter's congregation and Pastor Bart in your prayers. Pray that God would continue to inspire Pastor Bart to preach God's word diligently and for the people of St. Peter's to receive that word willingly.

Installation: Pastor James Bredeson Victory Lutheran, Medicine Hat, AB



Participating in the Service: (L to R) Lila de Waal, Diaconal Minister (serving VLC); Pastor Lucretia van Ommeren-Tabbert, Emmaus Lutheran, Edmonton, (Jim's former associate at Immanuel Lutheran); John-Mark Bredeson, Trinity Lutheran, Leader, SK (Jim's son); Pastor Ed Skutshek, CALC President; Pastor James (Jim) Bredson, installed at Victory Lutheran Church and Jim's grandson Judah.

On Sunday March 15th Pastor Jim Bredeson was installed as the fulltime pastor of Victory Lutheran Church (VLC) in Medicine Hat, Alberta. Our President Pastor Ed Skutshek preached and presided at the installation.

Prior to accepting his call to VLC, Pastor Jim served Immanuel Lutheran Church of Rosenthal, near Stony Plain, Alberta (2003-2015) as well as several churches in the U.S., the last being in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Jim has been in the Pastoral Ministry for over 30 years. He earned a bachelors degree in 1978 from Concordia College in Ann Arbor, Michigan. He earned a Master of Divinity degree from Concordia Seminary St. Louis, Missouri in 1982.

He has worked in renewal circles in the Lutheran Church for 26 years. He is the director of Lutheran Renewal Canada and has represented Canada at the International Lutheran Renewal Leaders conference in Saldus, Latvia.

Lutheran Renewal Canada (LRC) is building a network of pastors and others seeking spiritual life and encouragement within the Canadian context and with a Lutheran perspective. LRC is Apostolic, Evangelical, Sacramental, Charismatic and Liturgical. Its purpose is to sponsor activities and programs which foster the spiritual renewal and strengthening of personal faith, within the context of our Lutheran heritage. This is accomplished through activities such as: seminars, conferences, retreats, workshops, or other Christian or

educational programs; research projects, education, counseling services, church, or church related programs; creating or distributing appropriate literature or educational materials; and fostering supportive relations between and among pastors and congregations committed to spiritual renewal.

Pastor Jim is married to Sue. They have two married sons John-Mark (Cassy) and Chris (Emily) and four grandchildren. Pastor Jim and Sue love spending time with their grandchildren.

Pastor Jim's interest's include genealogy, tracing his Norwegian ancestors back before 1200 AD and his German ancestors back into the 1700s and travel. He has been to over 30 countries on 5 continents with a special interest in northern Europe, Scandinavia and Israel.

Let's keep the people of Victory Lutheran Congregation and Pastor Jim in our prayers. Pray that God would continue to bless and inspire Pastor Jim to nourish them with the Word and Holy Sacraments, and lead them by example in faithful service and holy living.

10-Year Strategic Plan Cluster Meeting Update

The delegates to our 2014 Annual General Convention approved a series Cluster Meetings designed to provide feedback for our 10-year Strategic Plan. Seven cluster meetings were scheduled. Three cluster meetings were completed and four cluster meetings are scheduled for April and May.

Our President was directed to produce a one page Executive Summary of the areas which must be discussed in order to achieve our 10-year plan. He also prepared an Addendum to the Executive Summary which unpacked the major points of the plan and developed a questionnaire for use in the cluster meetings. The survey results will be tabulated following the last cluster meeting and the results published.

Completed Cluster meetings.

Jan 31	St Peter's Cochrane, AB
Feb 14	All Saints Lutheran, Ottawa, ON
Feb 28	Faith Lutheran, Toronto, ON

Ten souls braved the stormy weather and attended the Cochrane Cluster meeting on January 31st. Participants handed in 10 surveys. Thank you to the people of St. Peter's for making the space available for the meeting and for catering our lunch and coffee breaks.

About 30 participants representing our three CALC congregations in and around Ottawa, Ontario came out

to the February 14th Cluster Meeting. It was hosted by All Saints Lutheran, Ottawa. Representatives from Resurrection Lutheran, Pembroke, ON; St. Matthew's Lutheran, Cornwall, ON braved the cold and snow and traveled into Ottawa. Participants handed in 21 surveys. We are so grateful for the use of the meeting space and the delicious lunch and Valentine's Day treats.

Around 30 participants representing our four CALC congregations in and around Toronto, Ontario came out to the February 28th Cluster Meeting. It was hosted by Faith Lutheran, Toronto. Representatives from St. Peter's Lutheran, Sullivan, Good Shepherd Lutheran, Toronto, and Goodwood Lutheran, Uxbridge, came out to the meeting. Participants filled out and turned in 7 surveys. We want to thank Faith Lutheran Congregation for their gracious hospitality. The delicious luncheon dishes had a truly international flair.

The following represents a summary of the priorities for our Association which emerged from the discussions at our cluster meetings:

- National Council continue to work toward making our Annual General Convention (AGC): vibrant; with many opportunities for prayer, praise and worship; and full of opportunities for Christian Education that equips, empowers and encourages us to fulfill Christ's Great Commission through the effective sharing and defending of our faith.
- National Council continue to explore the benefits and challenges of holding our Pastors' Study Retreat as a part of our AGC.
- National Council continue to refine our Shepherd's Pathway – including the process by which the call of a candidate for pastoral ministry is discerned and how the candidate is educated and equipped for pastoral ministry.
- National Council continue to provide guidance to congregations in the call process, including:
 - materials to be used in developing a congregational vision in expectation of the call;
 - materials to be used in assessing a congregation's pastoral needs in expectation of the call;
 - options for advertising pastoral vacancies;
 - materials to be used in and assistance in interviewing candidates;
 - model letters of call (with the letters of call reflecting the expectations of the pastor and the congregation); and,

- voluntary salary, holiday and Sabbatical guidelines for pastors.

- National Council continue to study social issues confronting us, including: the sanctity of life; the erosion of the rights of Christians in the public life; marriage, family and the Godly expression of our human sexuality; the onslaught of secular humanism and atheism; and creations vs evolution.

Upcoming Cluster Meetings for April and May

Apr 18	Immanuel Lutheran, Stony Plain, AB
Apr 25	St. John's Lutheran, Viscount, SK*
May 2	Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church, Mission, BC
May 16	Christ Lutheran, Morden, MB

* St. John's Lutheran, located outside Saskatoon, a central point for our three Saskatchewan congregations, has permitted us to use their space for our meeting.

Our National Council urges all members of CALC who can, to attend a cluster meeting near you.

2015 National Convention Update

Emmaus Lutheran Church of Edmonton, Alberta, will host CALC's 2015 Annual General Convention. The convention will be held the weekend of October 16th, 17th and 18th.

Theme: 1 Peter 3:15-16. *"But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander."*

Our constitution states that the emphases of our Association are evangelism, missions, prayer, the study of the Holy Scriptures, and the application of these to daily living within congregations and caring ministries. 1 Peter 3:15-16, speaks about everyday evangelism, being able to share your faith with people who ask you to. Evangelism also takes place when our faith is challenged by those around us. Their challenge provides an opportunity for us to defend what we believe.

Sharing and defending our faith can be daunting. Where do I start? What do I say? How can I handle the thorny questions that arise? Our convention's keynote speaker the Reverend Doctor Joseph Boot, of Toronto, Ontario, one of Canada's leading Christian Apologists, defined as a defenders of the faith, will address us at our Friday morning learning event and Saturday afternoon as our convention Keynote Speaker.

Rev. Dr. Joseph Boot (M.A., Ph.D.) is a cultural theologian, leading Christian apologist, founding pastor of Westminster Chapel in Toronto and founder of the Ezra Institute for Contemporary Christianity (EICC). Originally from Great Britain, he served with Ravi Zacharias International Ministries for seven years as an apologist based in Oxford England and Toronto Canada. Joe has spoken all over the world in 25 countries at numerous



universities, seminaries, churches, colleges, and conferences from Eton College and Oxford University, to Forman University in Lahore, Pakistan. He regularly addresses pastors and Christian leaders as well as

medical, legal, and business professionals in North America, Britain, and the Middle East and has publicly debated leading atheistic thinkers and philosophers in Canada and the United States.

Joe did his undergraduate studies in Theology (Birmingham Christian College, U.K), earned his Master's degree in Mission Theology (University of Manchester U.K), and holds a Ph.D. in Christian Intellectual Thought (WTS, Florida USA). A contributing author to Thomas Nelson's major Christian apologetics volume, *Beyond Opinion*, Joe's other apologetic works include *Searching for Truth* (Crossway), *Why I Still Believe* (Baker), and *How Then Shall We Answer* (New Wine) which have been published in Europe and North America. His most recent book, *The Mission of God* (Freedom Press) is a systematic work of cultural theology exploring the biblical worldview as it relates the Christian's mission in the world. Joe serves as Senior Fellow for the cultural and apologetics think-tank *truthXchange* in Southern California; is Senior Fellow of cultural philosophy for the California based Centre for Cultural Leadership and serves as faculty for both the Wilberforce Academy in Cambridge U.K and The Alliance Defending Freedom's Blackstone Legal Academy in Phoenix Arizona. In 2011 Joe was recognized by Toronto's Centre for Mentorship and Theological Reflection as 'Best Preacher Apologist' for his contribution to apologetic and expository preaching. Joe is general editor of the Ezra Institute's Journal, Jubilee, serves as chancellor for Westminster Classical Christian Academy, and is regularly heard on Toronto radio or seen on Sun News Network's The Arena. Joe lives in Toronto, Canada with his wife, Jenny, and their three children: Naomi, Hannah, and Isaac.

We look forward Rev. Dr. Boot's contribution to our 2015 AGC. Our AGC is not only for CALC's executive and our congregational delegates. The worship, preaching,

teaching and fellowship are meant to inspire everyone. Watch for more details in upcoming issues of the Connector.

Pastor's Study Retreat 2015

Dates: This year we will hold our Pastor's Study Retreat on **October 14th and 15th**, the **two days before our convention** in Edmonton.

Venue: The retreat will be held at Camp Nakamun, a Christian camp located on the shores of Lake Nakamun. The camp is near Busby, Alberta, about an hour drive west and north of Edmonton.

Itinerary: The retreat will begin about noon on Wednesday the 14th. (Morning flights from the Eastern Canada, get into Edmonton, before noon). It will conclude Thursday evening. Pastors will stay at the camp Wednesday and Thursday night. Friday morning we will travel to Emmaus Lutheran, in Edmonton, our convention site. The specific agenda for the retreat will be worked out with our presenter. There will be time for study, refectation and recreation.

Costs: If attendance is round 30 our budget for the retreat for 2015 should cover the costs of the retreat. As in the past, the costs of travel to and from the retreat are covered by each congregation sending a pastor(s).

Keynote Speaker: This year's keynote speaker is Pastor Rick Bergh, M-Div. CT. Pastor Rick has served in the pastoral ministry for many years, most recently for about ten years at St. Peter's Lutheran Church, CALC, in Cochrane, AB. More information on Pastor Rick's teaching at the retreat will be made available in the June edition of the Connector.

Pastor Rick is designated as Certified in Thanatology (CT) by the Association for Death Education and Counseling (ADEC). After 30 years of experience as a palliative care-giver, pastor and grief counselor, Pastor Rick authored several books so that others could benefit from all this experience. These three books will be released soon. He describes them as follows:



Finding Anchors: *How to bring Stability to your life following a cancer diagnosis.* Discover 17 anchors that will help you and your family move out into uncharted waters following a cancer diagnosis. This is practical and useful information that works. I've used it in my own life following the cancer diagnosis of my wife Pam and with clients for years. Don't start a cancer journey without considering this great resource and tool kit.

Taking Notice: *How a cancer Journey can magnify what's important in life.* A shared cancer journey brings unexpected clarity to all who are involved. Look deeper and find the gold nuggets just below the surface. This is a book that will help you to see the truly important things in life and re-evaluate your choices. The author takes you on his personal journey traveling with his wife who has cancer and their four children. What he finds will surprise you as his life takes on a different perspective, coming to a realization that his life was being changed one notice at time.

Looking Ahead: *Why your dying might be the most significant event in your life.* Dying is not just about you because it impacts greatly those closest to you deeply. Through his own personal story, the author takes you on a journey as his children, friends and extend family prepare to say goodbye to a special person. What they did not expect were the gifts that came out of suffering and dying...teachings, mystery and intimacy experienced at a new level. Take time to Look Ahead and ask how you want your dying to impact those who remain and what could be the gifts and legacy left behind.

We look forward to Pastor Bergh's presentation.

Highlights

National Council Meeting

March 7, 2015

Presidents Report:

New Members: The application for full membership in CALC submitted by *Victory Lutheran Church*, Medicine Hat, Alberta, was approved. The application from Pastor *Zakaria Mander* for associate membership in CALC was approved. These actions will be ratified at our 2015 convention.

Calls Accepted: Pastor Manfred Schmidt accepted a fulltime call to Martin Luther Evangelical Lutheran Church of Vancouver, BC. The installation service is scheduled for May 3rd 2015.

Installations: Pastor Bart Eriksson as fulltime pastor of St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Cochrane, Alberta, on February 1st, 2015. Pastor James Bredeson to be installed as fulltime pastor of Victory Lutheran Church, Medicine Hat, Alberta, March 15, 2015.

Ordinations/Consecrations: Stanley Ng, was consecrated as a Diaconal Minister of Vancouver Chinese Lutheran Church, Burnaby, BC, December 6, 2014.

Congregations in Call Process: The following congregations are in the call process: Immanuel Lutheran Church of Rosenthal, Stony Plain, AB; Basel

Hakka Lutheran Church, Vancouver, BC; St. John's Lutheran Church, Preeceville, SK; and All Saints Lutheran Church, Ottawa, ON. Progress in the call process for each congregation was shared.

Our President has been dealing with Industry Canada regarding federal registration of our Association. We were initially informed that CALC had to file a Certificate of Continuance under the new Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act before October 17, 2015. We filed. Subsequently we were told the filing was not necessary. CALC was registered with Industry Canada in 2012 as a Special Act corporation. As such we were properly exempted, that is, we are 'grandfathered' in. We are up to date with Industry Canada. CALC's compliance certificate can be viewed on line at the Industry Canada Website.

10-Year Plan: The Executive Summary, Addendum and questionnaire used for cluster meetings was discussed. Preliminary feedback from three cluster meetings in Cochrane, Toronto and Ottawa was shared. See article on page 10 above.

Board of Elders (Elders) breakout session.

- The Elders (*Elders*) reviewed the files of six CALC students enrolled at the Institute of Lutheran Theology (*ILT*), Brookings, South Dakota. It was noted that substantial work has to be done in supervising our seminary students, including agreements in place between the student, home or internship congregation and CALC.
- The Elders took up the question of additional educational requirements for Pastors who are called to CALC congregations who do not have a Lutheran background and/or received training in a non-Lutheran seminary in response to specific questions from two of our congregations.
- The National Council approved a motion which authorized the Elders to plan a Pastors' Study Retreat as part of the 2015 CALC Annual Convention at Emmaus Lutheran Church in Edmonton, AB. Pastor Rick Bergh will be asked to make a presentation.

Board of Trustees (Trustees) breakout session.

- Institute of Lutheran Theology (ILT) –Trustees to work on a marketing plan aimed at informing our members of ILT's identity, structure, mission and vision and raising their interest in ILT.
- Trustees need to work to make membership more aware of CALC's Designated Funds

- Trustees to work toward recruiting a CALC congregational representative in each congregation in order to tell the congregation what is new in CALC and solicit support of our programing.
- Trustees to look at how do we encourage people to enter the pastoral ministry.

Requests for Financial Assistance: National Council approved financial assistance (books and incidentals) for a CALC student enrolled with ILT and assistance with airfare for a pastor providing oversight and supervision for a CALC student in a yearlong internship.

Next Meeting: Saturday May 30, 2015, 9:00 AM, Delta Calgary Airport Hotel.

Church Staffing Vacancies

ONTARIO:



All Saints Lutheran Church Ottawa, ON

Is seeking a full-time Pastor & part-time Youth Worker
For more information call us at (613) 828-9284 or email us at:
secretary@allsaintslutheran.ca

All Saint's is currently served by Pastor Doug Kranz as interim pastor.

SASKATCHEWAN



St. Johns Lutheran Church Preeceville, SK Seeking Pastor

Contact: Rev. Ed Skutshek
(250) 801-3860
President@calc.ca

BRITISH COLUMBIA:



Basel-Hakka Lutheran Church Vancouver, BC Seeking English Pastor

Fulltime Position
Knowledge of Chinese dialects an asset but not a requirement.
Apply by October 15th to:
pastorsearch@bhlc.ca

ALBERTA:



Immanuel Lutheran Church of Rosenthal Stony Plain, AB

Is seeking a full-time Pastor
For more information call us at (780) 963-4048 or email us at:
doug7nichols@hotmail.com

THE LUTHERAN CONNECTOR

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