

THE LUTHERAN CONNECTION



NEWS OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCHES OF THE TORONTO CONFERENCE

FEBRUARY 2011

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Please check the Toronto
Conference website for the
following items:

- Toronto Conference Prayer
Rotation
- Toronto Conference Choir
Music Library

[www.toronto.
easternsynod.org](http://www.toronto.easternsynod.org)

The Toronto Conference website
is now on the Synod website.

Epiphany



Our Pastors Comment

Rev. Martha Tatarnic St. David's, Orillia

Interestingly, Valentine's has its roots in the early witness of Christianity, with absolutely no reference to romantic love. Named not just for one saint, but possibly as many as three, each St. Valentine was a martyr – choosing death rather than renouncing their proclamation that Jesus was Lord. It was not until the high Middle Ages, and the obsession with courtly love, that somehow Valentine's and romance became linked. The stories of Valentine, (we actually know very little about any of the St. Valentines) were embellished and glossed to the point that Valentine became a romance-ally – a priest who secretly performed marriages of Roman soldiers who had been forced to be celibate by the emperor's belief that sexually-frustrated men were better in battle.

Jesus tells his friends on the night before his death, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:35). Accordingly, we are making a tradition here at St. David's that the Sunday closest to Valentine's Day will be celebrated by its original Christian premise – a marking of how we, as followers of Jesus, can bear witness to, and participate in, the compassionate, other-centred love at the heart of this Gospel command.

Rev. Alexander Mielke Martin Luther, Toronto

It's an amusing little story, and at first sight it may be surprising that this tiny bit of snuff could perform such a miracle. But let us understand it as an amiable hint. The thoughtfulness and helpfulness of one for another is the secret of a well developing congregation. It is so mundane and inconspicuous. Whenever we come together for worship, let us be thoughtful of others, be interested in their joys and

Conference Council Notes

- **The Spring Conference Meeting** will be held on Saturday, May 1, at St. Ansgar Lutheran Church, Toronto. This is our annual business meeting and will include Conference Council elections. More details will be available in our next newsletter.
- On September 25 the Toronto Conference will host a special service at Zion, Maple, to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Eastern Synod. Zion is the congregation where the Eastern Synod was established. More information will be provided as available.
- The January ministerial meeting produced some very lively and meaningful discussion. The issue was brought up that our pastors don't really have a forum or vehicle or meaningful discourse. It was decided that we would change the format of the monthly meetings and use them as a forum for discussion on topics or issues that we are all facing. February's meeting will start with the discussion of Brian McLaren's book *A New Kind of Christianity*.
- The offering from the Christmas/Epiphany concert held at Agricola on January 15 was \$581. The offering was given to Waterloo Lutheran Seminary.

sorrows. Let us greet those who are new and cordially welcome them. Let us share the good we have with others.

"Let all things be done for building up", Paul says in 1 Corinthians 14:26. Let us always consider what helps for building up the congregation, for building up others. Let us not only stick to our own ideas and wishes, but let us be open for others and serve the community.

Pastor Mark van House Peace, Pickering

The month of February continues the season, which totals eight Sundays this year, until we reach the beginning of Lent – Ash Wednesday, March 9. With this revelatory season in full swing the question remains. Personally and as the body of Christ, where is the Spirit leading us? Have you continued or now begun to do justice? Has kindness played a major role in your everyday dealings with others? Are you, are we, walking humbly with our God in regard to our calling as Christians? God invites us to be leavening agents in a world that is in desperate need of what we have to share. At times when society appears to be "half baked" this is self evident. However, all too often it's tempting for

us to sit back and rely on someone else to share the Gospel (in word and deed). God doesn't need me. Aren't there others who can serve the Lord? Through daily devotions, unceasing prayer, regular worship, etc., the Lord will give you strength for the days ahead. As a family of faith we are here to support you in your call. We're all in this together.

Pastor Roy Thakurdial Bethesda, Unionville

Winter Blah: The splendour of God's creation is on exhibition displaying its beauty for all to feast their eyes on. Against the white background, the many hues of brown of the bare limbs of the trees clamour for attention like a forgotten child. The occasional evergreen make their presence felt with their offerings of shades of green. It is a picture-perfect scene. I thought, "What a scandal to be a mere spectator to such beauty".

I shrug on a coat and step out onto the porch. The cold air rush to hug me in its icy embrace. Taking a deep breath I walk into the falling snow. The snow on the ground make a crunching sound to my every step. It sounded like music. With snowflakes dancing all around me in gleeful celebration, my spirit join in

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Our Pastors Write

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the dance. I hunch my shoulder against the cold and was soon swallowed by the swirling snow. I feel one with the beauty around me. Truly, the creation is showing forth the glory of the Lord.

Whoever coined the phrase “winter blah” has done an injustice to a beautiful thing. Look again. See the beauty and wisdom of God’s handiwork in the winter season. Winter blah? Nah. Ah! yes, winter beauty.

Pastor Christian Schweter First Lutheran, Toronto

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever” is what is written in Psalm 23. The writer had found a home with God. The house of God became his home. In this case though the house is not just the building but also describes our relationship to God: We are allowed to come into his presence, just like we are, without disguising ourselves. God wants to have a relationship with us. He doesn’t want a relationship with a faked better us. He makes us feel welcome in every corner of this world. Nobody is too good and nobody is too bad. He invites us all to come into his community and to feel at home with him.

And while God is welcoming us just as we come, let us welcome everyone as he comes in our midst.

Pastor Linda Douglas Zion, Maple

We need to find a way to help people see that God is not threatened by science. If creation is the handiwork of God and science helps us see the exquisite and marvellous workings of creation, how can that do anything but magnify God for people of faith? Scientists act as God’s teachers. They help us understand God’s handiwork. They add to the majesty and glory of creation that leaves believers with a greater sense of awe about the Creator of all things.

When some Christians add up the ages represented by genealogies and then tell us that the earth is less than 10,000 years old, why can’t they appreciate that the biblical stories of creation were written in the form of Hebrew poetry? They were not written as God’s way of giving ancient people a lesson in cosmology or biology or physics. They were written to say that behind all of the magnificent beauty of creation, there is One who created, gave form, shape, established laws and patterns.

Pastor Karen Jenkins Christ, Peterborough

God’s prescription for what ails us includes exercising our up-reach, in-reach, and out-reach muscles, along with a weekly dose of bread and wine. You may get the reference to partaking of the Eucharist every Sunday to maintain a diet rich in fruit and fibre, the body and blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ, but you may not be familiar with the set of exercises we need to do to increase our spiritual muscle tone and maximize our religious performance.

Up-reach exercises include those activities we engage in every Sunday at worship to praise the Lord. They consist of head-bowing, foot-tapping and body-swaying as we sing, pray, share the peace and eat together at the Lord’s Table.

In-reach exercises are those things we do to foster relationships in the church. They may include raising a cup at Coffee Hour, playing musical chairs at an Open House, or singing along to the Peterborough Singers at their upcoming concert on Saturday, February 12. They also include caring, listening and responding activities that may involve handshakes and hugs, because our community’s health is directly related to the relationships we form with each other in response to God’s love.

Lastly, we follow up with out-reach exercises. These are those activities we engage in to take God’s love out to the world. They have included slicing, dicing, peeling and bagging but also serving.

Pastor Susan Climo Peace, Mississauga

Much of what people do to mark this day of love centers on stuff: cards, flowers, candy, dinners out, gifts. Apparently, about 190 million Valentine’s Day cards are given each year, and retailers in the US make over \$14 billion in sales related to the holiday. While all that stuff is very nice (and it is important to the livelihoods of our neighbours, the retailers at Square One), it does not truly demonstrate real, deep lasting love. Grand symbolic gestures are lovely, but they are not nearly as meaningful as all the small, seemingly ordinary acts of everyday love we can do for one another. Taking on extra little chores and errands to help you, sharing smiles and laughter, offering words of affirmation and encouragement; these simple little things we do every day reveal far more about our love than any clever, fancy things we might try to do on just one day of the year.

It’s like that with sharing God’s love and light, too. The best way to shine God’s light is not through grand gestures one day a year (like huge celebrations on Christmas or Easter), or through clever words written down on a flyer or a church sign or bulletin board. The simple little things we do every day – the kindness and hospitality and service and generosity we exhibit in our homes, in our workplaces, in our neighbourhoods – reveal far more of the light and love of God shining in and through us.

Pastor Lowell Nussey Christ the King, Whitby

You may be wondering, where is the pastor going with this line of thought? I’m going two places. First I want to remind you that one of the important things our Christian faith is about is the fact that God has established a clear means of communication with us through Jesus. Jesus is sometimes referred to as the “Word of God”. As we listen to Jesus we can grow in our understanding of the mystery of God’s

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Our Pastors Write

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nature and God's will for our lives. Through Christ, God speaks to us. Through prayer we have the ability to communicate and talk to God.

The second reason I have raised the issue of communication is to alert you to the fact that our congregation's website is now operational. This means that we now have the power to communicate with not only our members, but a whole new audience of people who are comfortable with the modern tools of technology to communicate (www.christthekinglutheranwhitby.ca).

Pastor Brian Wilker-Frey St. Ansgar, Toronto

In our society for as long as we can remember, faith has been all about what we believe. That is, faith has been about what we choose to give intellectual assent. For us, faith is not only about that which is not seen, it is also about that which, in any other circumstance because of our modern scientific knowledge, would otherwise be un-believable.

But for most of the history of Christianity faith has had little to do with intellectual assent or believing unbelievable things. Instead it was a religion of practice, much like that as described by Mother Teresa's business card: silence, prayer, love, service and peace. What might your Christian practice be? Regardless of what you believe, what can you do right now?

Can't think of anything to do right this minute? Ok, put down this newsletter for just five minutes...

Pastor Dennis Becker Faith, Oshawa

This is the season that Jesus, the Light of the World is revealed, the season during which we celebrate the True Light under whom we live.

How is Jesus' light revealed in the world today? It seems to many that it isn't. It seems that the evil of this world has put out the Light of Truth. And who can argue? Suicide bombers wreck havoc on lives and buildings across the

world. Earthquakes, mudslides, tidal waves obliterate everything in their paths. Soldiers die in the field, police officers in the streets. The homeless sleep in the bitter cold, and the list of diseases which maim and kill is almost endless. Oh, the light of Jesus is shining in so many places today. Through simple, loving actions, with words or no words at all, men and women of God are letting their lights shine and through them Jesus is revealed.

Don't be fooled and don't be down-hearted. The evil of the world will never be able to overcome the Light. It tried on Good Friday and that didn't work; Easter dawned. It continues to try but with every good deed, every good word, Easter dawns anew.

So up, let your light shine; for God's glory has shone on us.

Pastor Ann Krueger Westside, Barrie

We live in the in-between-time, the time between Jesus' ascension into heaven and his final return. During this time, a task has been given to all of us who follow Jesus as our Lord – to be kind as he was kind, compassionate and loving as he was. When we read through the final

chapters of Matthew, Jesus is very direct: this isn't a wish list, but commandments. There are consequences if we choose to look after only ourselves. Jesus would not be in favour of the "Me Generation".

Being cold in Simcoe County isn't just a minor inconvenience. So let's spread the word about these programs, and let's do everything else we can to help those in need: share warm clothes, food and some of our pay cheques. For remember, when we serve "the least of these", we serve Jesus himself.

Pastor Nadine Nicholds Augsburg, Brampton

The time after Epiphany is the church's time to invite us to come and see who Jesus will be and to discover what that might mean for us and the world. Epiphany is the season of light.

Therefore, it is also the time when things are revealed. The light shines on Jesus and the various manifestations that Jesus presents to us, and mysterious things are made known. All these reminders help us to keep in the forefront of our mind that Jesus is a saving light for us and for all people. ♦

Congregational Life Story

Sharecropper Project 2010

Congratulations Bethesda. This project has raised a total of \$31,170.36 for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. Just imagine our Bethesda congregation, with the matching CIDA grant, has raised \$150,000 to provide food assistance and food security programs to those in need around the world. However, we cannot take all of the credit. We appreciate the help of St. John's United Church in Oakville (\$8,000), FaithLife Financial for their matching grant of \$1,500 and of course the work and support of Galten Farms and the Schickedanz family for the 50 acre field of soya beans.

Over the past nine years that we have been sponsoring our Sharecropper Project our Bethesda congregation has sent a total of \$155,000 to the Canadian Foodgrains Bank in Winnipeg. With the CIDA matching grant we can proudly say our small congregation has contributed over \$750,000 in aid to help children, women and men around the world who are in need of food stability.

We hope you will consider the Sharecropper 2011 as one of your high priority charitable donations.

Bethesda Lutheran Church invites other congregations within the Toronto Conference to participate in this very worthwhile project in 2011.

*Lorne Smith
Bethesda, Unionville*

Our Congregations at Work

■ **St. David's, Orillia**, asks for our prayers for two-year old Grayson who is in Sick Children's Hospital, Toronto, with a serious heart problem.

■ On February 13, **St. David's, Orillia**, welcomed members of Simcoe County Alliance to end Homelessness who showed a newly-created documentary about homelessness in the Orillia area. St. David's also hosted a breakfast that morning.

■ **St. David's, Orillia**, is starting a Youth Band.

■ On February 6, fourteen members of the Silver Band joined **St. David's, Orillia**, for a musical offering.

■ **Martin Luther, Toronto**, has started a Children and Youth Choir under the leadership of Stephen Harmelink.

■ On February 13, **Martin Luther, Toronto**, held a German Family Service.

■ The Gospel Choir from Mannheim, Germany, will give a concert at **Martin Luther, Toronto**, on April 23.

■ German pastors in the Toronto Conference will exchange pulpits on February 20: Pastor Peter Mikelic of **Epiphany, Toronto**, will preach at Martin Luther; Pastor Mielke of Martin Luther, Toronto, will conduct services in **Christ the King/Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Thornhill**, and Pastor Christian Schweter of First Lutheran, Toronto, will conduct the services at **Epiphany, Toronto**.

■ Members of **Martin Luther, Toronto**, have been invited to First Lutheran, Toronto, for a German World Day of Prayer service on March 4.

■ On Palm Sunday, the male choir *Harfentoene* will sing at **Martin Luther, Toronto**.

■ **Faith, Oshawa's** Council is hosting an appreciation banquet on February 27 to say thank you to everyone for the work they have done for Faith Lutheran Ministries.

■ In March, members of **Peace, Pickering**, will study Paul as a Joyful Jailbird in his epistle to the Philippians.

■ **Peace, Pickering**, is making plans to hold its Vacation Bible School July 18-22.

■ **Peace, Pickering**, will hold a Shrove Tuesday pancake supper on March 8.

■ **Peace, Pickering**, is starting a "Loose Change Makes a Change" drive this year and will collect it on Easter Sunday.

■ **Bethesda, Unionville**, has re-started a quilting program to make quilts for third-world countries.

■ **Bethesda, Unionville**, has purchased Bibles for its pews from donated monies.

■ **Christ, Peterborough**, will hold a Blood Pressure Clinic on February 20.

■ **Christ, Peterborough**, hosts "Robbie Burns meets St. Patrick" on March 17. They will be treated to haggis, Irish stew and a good time.

■ **First Lutheran, Toronto**, will hold a Mardi Gras Event on March 5.

■ Members of **Peace, Mississauga**, have begun monthly adult discussion group with the theme "Making Sense of the Christian Faith".

■ **Peace, Mississauga**, will hold a Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper on March 8.

■ **Westside, Barrie**, as donated to the David Busby Centre, Grocery Assistance Program, Barrie Out of the Cold and Habitat for Humanity from their Local Charities monies.

■ **Epiphany, Toronto**, hosted a Chocolatefest on February 12 which

featured homemade chocolate baking with ice cream and beverage.

■ Pastor Peter Mikelic is resigning from **Epiphany, Toronto**, as of April 30.

■ **Augsburg, Brampton**, has a prayer partner program where partners anonymously pray for the partner and send greetings during the year. On February 6 this year the partners revealed their identities and a new year starts.

■ Members of **Christ the King, Whitby**, enjoyed a chili lunch following their service on February 13.

■ **Christ the King, Whitby**, is holding a Gardening Evening with Norm Mills on March 22.

■ The Ladies of **Christ the King, Whitby**, will meet on April 3 to cut diapers and put together layette kits to send to Haiti.

■ Members of **Christ the King, Whitby**, are being asked to observe National Sweater Day on February 17 by turning down their thermostats two degrees and to wear fun and funky sweaters to symbolize their commitment to the environment.

■ **Christ the King, Whitby**, is holding a Talent Show on February 26.

■ The Young at Heart group at **St. Ansgar, Toronto**, are holding a St. Patrick's Day Party and Singalong on March 9.

■ Pamela Kormano, a second year seminary student at Waterloo, is doing a placement at **St. Ansgar, Toronto**. ♦

Add Laypersons to our Email List

We would like to add laypersons to our email list to receive *The Lutheran Connection*. Please advertise this in your congregations and ask anyone who would like to receive the newsletter by email to send me an email request (judybaribeau@rogers.com). That way I will have the correct address to send the newsletter. The newsletter is also posted on the Toronto Conference website.

As new issues are available, I can send a notice to download the new issue or send it by email. Email and web copies are in pdf format. Web/email access saves printing and postage costs for the Conference.

Everyone will also receive special notices sent between newsletters. ♦

Ecumenical Events

- Members of **Peace, Pickering**, will attend the World Day of Prayer service at George's Anglican Church.
- Members of **Bethesda, Unionville**, will participate in Ecumenical Lenten services hosted by the Markham Ministerial. Bethesda will host the first service on March 13.
- Members of **Christ, Peterborough**, are invited to "Anglican Day" in Cobourg on March 5. This year's theme is "The Bread of Life".
- Members of **First Lutheran, Toronto**, are invited to attend the English World Day of Prayer service at St. Paul's Basilica.
- Members of **Christ the King, Whitby**, are participating in the World Day of Prayer service at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church.
- **St. Ansgar, Toronto**, is hosting a World Day of Prayer service this year.
- **Faith, Oshawa**, is participating in ecumenical services and lunches during Lent in their area. ♦

Toronto Conference Calendar of Events

The following dates have been set for Toronto Conference events. Setting these dates should help congregations in their planning to avoid date conflicts.

- **Conference Council Meeting** – Monday, March 7, 7:30 p.m. at Zion Lutheran Church, Maple
- **Spring Conference Meeting** – Saturday, May 1, at St. Ansgar Lutheran Church, Toronto
- **Fall Conference Meeting** – Saturday, October 1. Location and program to be announced.

Toronto Conference Website Updates

Please check that your congregational listings on the Toronto Conference website are current. Please forward any updates to me.

Also, if your congregation has its own website, please forward the link information so we can include it on our website. Please link your congregational websites to the Toronto Conference website

(www.toronto.easternsynod.org)

Please check our Conference website frequently as updates are added between newsletters when required.

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The Toronto Conference website is at a new location on the Eastern Synod website. Come and visit us at toronto.easternsynod.org

with the same content but a new design. Most of the other Eastern Synod Conferences now have sites that share the new design and a similar easternsynod.org address.

Does your congregation's website have a link to us? Please add a link to the new website. If your congregation's website or facebook pages have links to the old Toronto Conference website, please edit them to use the new site.

www.toronto.easternsynod.org

Please remember to forward your congregational donations of \$60 to support the work of the Toronto Conference in 2011. The notice was included with your November newsletter.

Community Events and Service

- On Tuesdays, Members of **Christ, Peterborough**, help bag snacks for Kawartha Heights Nutrition Program. They also help out by baking, freezing and bagging muffins at home, or donating muffin mix for someone else to make. ♦



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Please indicate any items you particularly would like to have covered in the newsletter.

If you have any questions, please call me at 416-264-4527 or email to judybaribeau@rogers.com