

THE LUTHERAN CONNECTION



NEWS OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCHES OF THE TORONTO CONFERENCE

JANUARY 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

The Toronto Conference website is now on the Synod website.



Our Pastors Comment

Rev. Martha Tatarnic St. David's, Orillia

Every week in our Sunday worship, there are four readings that are selected for us to hear: one reading from the Old Testament, one from the Psalms, one from the New Testament letters, and one from the Gospel accounts of Jesus' life. I do not select these readings; they are part of what is known as The Lectionary. Since around the 4th century, the church has established a regular three-year rotation of readings to be used when we join together every week to celebrate the Resurrection. Although this Scriptural cycle has been tweaked and re-worked over the course of centuries in order to reflect changes and new understandings in the church's life, worship has, across the board, remained consistently grounded in these premises:

- that throughout the course of three years of attending church, large parts of the Bible, including most of the four Gospels, will be heard in communal worship
- that the stories and teachings of these readings should in some way be matched with the experience of the changing seasons – both in the church and in nature.

Pastor Lowell Nussey Christ the King, Whitby

Jesus came to John asking to be baptized, and John refused. John knew who Jesus was. He didn't need to be baptized. Yet, when Jesus explained that this was God's will, John changed his mind and did as Jesus asked.

As we begin this new year of 2011, I want to encourage you to be as obedient as John to the voice of our Lord...even if it means you have to change your mind.

Being obedient is harder for some of us than it is for others. Some of us like to think we are always right. Some of us like to think we are always smart. Some of us like to think we are always wise. Some of us want to always be in control. Whatever the reason may be, it is not easy for us to be obedient.

Christmas/Epiphany Concert

The Toronto Conference hosted the fifth annual Christmas/Epiphany concert on January 15 at Agricola Lutheran Church. The cover of this newsletter shows those who presented in the concert: Clockwise are Wen Lai, The Toronto Chinese Children's Community Choir, Katelyn Myrskog, the Rhenish Lutheran Church Praise Team with Isaiah (6 years old on the bongo), Juha Tikkanen, Nobis Singers, accompanists for Praise Team, Lili Ahopelto, Rev. Martti Hyhko, and Rev. Linda Douglas, Toronto Conference Dean, who welcomed everyone and gave the opening prayer. A freewill offering was taken in support of Waterloo Lutheran Seminary's 100th anniversary appeal. We thank everyone who participated and came to hear the wonderful music.

And yet, this is what faith is about – having enough trust in the loving intentions of our Lord to be obedient to his word, even when we think we are smarter or wiser or fear losing control. Even when it means we have to change our minds.

Pastor Roy Thakurdial Bethesda, Unionville

Finitude is a feature of human life. Mortality measures our days. Death ends our physical life. Of all living things only humans live with the consciousness of their mortality. For many this awareness is a distressing source of despair. Life, it seems, is meaningless and purposeless if its sum total is toil, struggle and death. There are world views and outlooks on life which see human beings as simply higher evolved animals whose end is the same as lesser creatures – death. Despite flashes of enlightenment, moments of glory and glimpses of hope, humans are doomed to an existence that is no more than a “chasing after the wind”. Vanity. Its end is death. This gives rise to pessimism and even fatalistic resignation.

The outlook that views life and death in the light of faith in God is the one that can face both with hope. Our mortality deepens our appetite for life in its fullest and richest experiences. For the Christ-centred life, reflections on the brevity and uncertainty of life, do not lead to despair, angst, fear. With the Psalmist,

Christians know that it is in “numbering our days” we get a heart of wisdom. Our mortality helps us to understand that the meaning and purpose of our life is experienced and fulfilled as we love, live with and for God; live, live with and for our neighbour.

Pastor Mark van House Peace, Pickering

January brings us a transition in church seasons. The 12 days of Christmas quickly end while we move into Epiphany. The season of Epiphany extends from January 6 until Ash Wednesday. Marking the lintels of doorways is an old European practice to begin Epiphany. The symbol +C+B+M+ with two numbers before and two numbers after (for example, 20+C+B+M+11) is sometimes seen written in chalk above the doorway of Christian homes. The letters abbreviate the Latin phrase *Christus mansionem benedicat*, “May Christ bless the house”. The beginning and ending numbers are the year, 2011 in the example above. The crosses represent Christ. How has your household been blessed since last Epiphany? This church season represents the arrival of the wise men who visit and bring the gifts to the Christ child. By so doing they “reveal” Jesus as the Christ – the revelatory manifestation of the divine nature of Jesus to the Gentiles as represented by the Magi.

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Our Pastors Write*Continued from Page 2***Pastor Linda Douglas
Zion, Maple**

If you want to develop yourself personally, the first thing you need to do is see if there is any unsundered area of your life. If there is an area of your life that you are holding back from God, there will be no growth in your personal life – no personal development. You cannot have victory and freedom in your life if you are holding some things back from God's control. You cannot resist God and then expect his blessing in your life. It isn't going to happen. If you are saying, "I will obey God in everything except this," you are blocking God's work in your life. This is not so much personal development as it is allowing God to do a work in you.

You cannot develop yourself – this is the reason that our resolutions usually fail. This is the work of God. Paul realized this when he wrote: "So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" But then he answers his own question when he says, "Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Romans 7:21-25). It is through Christ that we are delivered from our own anguish – not our own effort.

**Pastor Peter Mikelic
Epiphany, Toronto**

But like every new year, for 2011, we need to allow ourselves to be drawn into sacred space – a space where we allow God's Spirit to transform us from "business as usual," to seeing the same old landscapes and people from new and different lenses and with loving and forgiving eyes. When the New Year becomes a new threshold, then we can leave the old year and old world behind.

We can then live and love in the present, forgive the past and hope for the future.

After all, the present is the only space in which God wants us to live. Only the present is transformational. All spiritual transformation takes place in the present and nowhere else. Here in the present, the old world, old behaviours and old reactions are left behind. The present existential space is where we need to get to and stay as long as we can, by whatever means possible. Only the present space is where God can best get at us, without interference from the past, its traditions and customs, however wonderful they may be.

**Pastor Dennis Becker
Faith, Oshawa**

So what will be the legacy we write in 2011? Eyes are watching what we do,

ears listening to what we say. Will we write a legacy of faith and righteousness? Will the stories we record in 2011 reflect that we are men and women of God? Will they clearly reflect the faith we have in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Will they display the hope we have in God's promises? Will they exhibit the steadfast love of God, the faithfulness of our God who stands by us through thick and thin?

I am always thankful as I reflect on a New Year, that I do not walk the road alone. I am thankful for family and friends who walk with me. I am especially thankful that God through the Holy Spirit walks before me, beside me, behind me, above me, and below me. I am, we are surrounded by God's presence, God's grace, God's love. Hallelujah!



*Please join us in celebrating our
80th Anniversary in 2011*

February 12 Valentine's Day Concert, 3 p.m.

Agricola Lutheran Church, 25 Old York Mills Road (Yonge & York Mills)

Refreshments following concert. Free will offering. All welcome.

March 26	Anniversary Concert, 3:00 p.m. Anniversary Dinner, 5:00 p.m.
March 27	Bilingual Anniversary Celebration, 10:00 a.m. Worship Coffee and program following the service
April 24	Easter Sunday Baptismal Reunion & Worship, 11:30 a.m. Rev. Tuula Van Gaasbeek
September 24	Seminar, Dr. Martin Saarinen, 3:00 p.m. Confirmation Reunion & Dinner, 5:00 p.m.
September 25	Bilingual Festival Worship Service, 10:00 a.m. Bishop M. Pryse, Rev. R. Hepomäki, Rev. J. Saarela Coffee and greetings following the service

Our Congregations at Work

■ **St. David's, Orillia**, will hold its annual Strawberry Take-out on January 26.

■ On February 2, **St. David's, Orillia**, will hold its second Annual Candlemas Celebration and Candlelight Procession. Members bring the candles they use in their households to have them blessed for the year to come, and then join in a visual witness to their faith as they walk through the church neighbourhood by candlelight.

■ **St. David's, Orillia**, will hold a Valentine's Dinner on February 12 featuring French cuisine.

■ On February 13, **St. David's, Orillia**, will focus on poverty and homelessness in Orillia. In addition to their community breakfast, they will welcome guests from Simcoe County Alliance to End Homelessness along with some of their local politicians.

■ On January 30, at 3:00 p.m., The Rev. Ilze Kuplens-Ewart, **St. Andrew's Latvian, Toronto**, will be installed as Dean of the Canada Section of the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church Abroad. Participating in the service will be Archbishop Colin Johnson of the Anglican Church of Canada, Rev. Dr. Mark Harris and other local Lutheran and Anglican Clergy. Preacher will be Rev. Lauma Zusevica, President of the Latvian Lutheran Church in America and Vice President of the Latvian Lutheran Church Abroad.

■ On January 23, **St. Andrew's Latvian, Toronto**, will hold a pancake breakfast prepared by the Ladies Auxiliary.

■ **Christ the King, Whitby**, will hold a Chili Lunch on February 13.

■ **Christ the King, Whitby**, has a number of recent additions to their instrumental department. They now have trumpet, saxophones, bass saxophone, guitar and piano to add a wonderful dimension to their music program.

■ **Bethesda, Unionville**, raised \$31,170.36 in 2010 for The Canadian Foodgrains Bank under their Sharecropper Program,

■ **Peace, Pickering**, held a healing service on January 16.

■ On February 6, Deborah McCracken will visit **Peace, Pickering**, to give an update on the Olive Branch. A dinner will follow the service.

■ **Christ, Peterborough's**, Health Cabinet hosted a guest speaker on Dementia on January 16.

■ On January 23, **Christ, Peterborough**, held a healing service.

■ On January 11, **Christ, Peterborough**, restarted its Nutrition School Snack Program for Kids.

■ Deborah McCracken visited **Zion, Maple**, on January 9 and updated members on her work at the Olive Branch. A

Globe & Mail article on "Small Charities, Outsized Results" on December 24 featured Deborah and her work.

■ **Epiphany, Toronto**, held its Renewal Sunday on January 16. Sister Elizabeth from the Sisterhood of St. John the Divine led a 90-minute workshop *Lectio Divina* which is a prayerful approach to engaging with scripture.

■ The ELW of **Epiphany, Toronto**, is making plans for this year's events which include a *Schlachtfest* in February, Springtime Strawberry Social, Summerfest, Falltime Applefest and the Advent Bazaar.

■ **Faith, Oshawa**, is continuing its Morning Bible Studies looking into II Thessalonians.

■ Faith, Oshawa, is resuming its "Pint with the Pastor" on January 27. ♦

Community Events and Service

■ **Faith, Oshawa**, provided 31 boxes of food and toys to Simcoe Hall Settlement House at Christmas time.

Youth News

■ Youth at **Bethesda, Unionville**, recently met to plan their activities through April including a spring barbecue, participation in the Unionville Festival and the Unionville Christmas parade.

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.

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Please send your parish newsletters, articles and other announcements you would like included in *The Lutheran Connection* to:

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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
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