

THE LUTHERAN CONNECTION



NEWS OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCHES OF THE TORONTO CONFERENCE

MAY 2011

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Please check the Toronto
Conference website for the
following items:

- Updated Toronto Conference Prayer Rotation
- Toronto Conference Choir Music Library

www.toronto.easternsynod.org

The Toronto Conference website is now on the Synod website.

Toronto Conference Spring Meeting Highlights

The Toronto Conference Spring meeting was held at St. Ansgar on May 7. Nineteen congregations were represented which included 19 clergy and 22 laypersons for a total of 41.

Bylaw Changes

A motion was passed to approve the second reading of bylaw clarifications suggested by Synod Council. We passed a motion giving first reading to an additional change to reflect the dissolution of the ELW and provide a broader scope.

Elections

Four persons were elected to Conference Council for two-year terms: Esther Au (Rhenish Church), Rev. Susan Climo (Peace, Mississauga), Rev. Roy Thakurdyal (Bethesda, Unionville), and Rev. David Tin (Rhenish Church).

Synod Report

Rev. Riitta Hepomaki, Assistant to the Bishop, presented the Synod report. (Copies of the report are being mailed to congregations not represented at the meeting.) She highlighted the following items in her presentation:

- She thanked the Toronto Conference for its financial support during the past year and encouraged the delegates to share the information with their congregations.
- She noted in particular that donations for *Eastern Synod Lutheran* were way down and encouraged congregations to remind their members to make donations to help cover the cost of the Synod newspaper. She also asked that congregations promote *Eastern Synod Lutheran* in their congregations.
- She asked everyone to encourage increased Benevolence offerings in their congregations. She noted that the Synod contribution to the National Church has been increased slightly and we are asked to increase our offerings as well.
- She mentioned two major items on the National Convention agenda this year: (1) Structural Renewal and (2) the Report on Human Sexuality. We are asked to pray for the convention.
- In discussion following Rev. Hepomaki's report, concern was expressed about declining membership and finances. She stated that communication is very important, and it is pastoral responsibility to highlight Synod actions to their congregations.

Other

We heard two presentations at the meeting. Pastor Herbert Harms described his work as chaplain at two of Toronto's ten long-term care homes. Pastor Eric Schultz, who serves at Redeemer, Toronto, is also beginning service as chaplain at Stronach Cancer Centre in Newmarket two days a week and talked about his developing role there.

Pastors Sebastian Meadows-Helmer and Carey Meadows-Helmer led the closing eucharist. Pastor Hepomaki installed members of Conference Council during the service.

We thank St. Ansgar for hosting the meeting and refreshments and food served. ♦

Our Pastors Comment

Rev. Martha Tatarnic St. David's, Orillia

FaithWorks is an Outreach umbrella that was formed by the Anglican Diocese of Toronto ('diocese' is the name for a geographical region of churches who govern, and are governed, together under the leadership of one bishop). Although it bears the name 'Anglican', the reality is that the ministry *FaithWorks* seeks to accomplish defies any denominational divide, working with partners both inside and outside the church. *FaithWorks* simply uses the relationship that already exists between Anglican churches in this area in order to accomplish a great amount of life-changing outreach to those most in need.

By appealing for money from, and promoting awareness of, local need to churches throughout our diocese, *FaithWorks* significantly funds 14 different high-impact community ministries. One of these ministries is Jubilee House, located in our own backyard and providing transitional living for vulnerable women and children. Other *FaithWorks* ministries include support to the homeless, shelter for victims of natural disasters and abuse, transitional help to people newly released from prison, help to teens and children living in poverty, and respite and support to those living with and dying from HIV/AIDS.

Pastor Susan Climo Peace, Mississauga

That second element of the trip (Waterloo Lutheran Seminary study trip to Germany entitled "From Wittenberg to Waterloo: Discovering our Reformation Roots") is really important because without it we can all too easily fall into the trap of thinking reformation is all about the past, that it's all ancient history. That history is vital, because it tells us a great deal about who we are, about our roots. But God's world is not still the world of the 16th century Europe, and God's people are not still

Conference Council Notes

■ Anniversary Booklet

Congregations are asked to prepare a one-page history of their congregations to be included in a Conference booklet. Please forward your submissions to Judy Baribeau by June 30. One congregation has already responded. We're waiting for the 30+ remaining congregations to forward their stories. Photographs will be used to make a cover collage.

■ 150th Anniversary

On September 25 the Toronto Conference will host a special service at Zion, Maple, at 3:00 p.m. to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Eastern Synod. Bishop Pryse will participate in the service. Zion is the congregation where the Eastern Synod was established. More information will be available later.

■ **The Fall Conference meeting** will be held on October 1 at St. Philip's, Toronto, with the theme "Health Fair". A number of groups will be represented including alternative therapies. Please contact Pastor Susan Climo (Peace, Mississauga) if you are involved in any of these areas, or have contacts in these areas and would like to participate in the presentations.

■ 2012 Lutheran Cultural Event

We are beginning to make plans to hold a cultural event in the spring of 2012 that recognizes the cultural diversity in our Conference using food, art and entertainment. This event will replace the concerts we've held for the past five years. As plans continue, more details will be available.

living 16th century lives, and God's church is not still the church of Luther and Melancthon, Zwingli, and Calvin. God's church isn't even the church of the 20th century anymore – the church you and I grew up in, the only church we really know well and are comfortable with. God continues to be at work in the world, continues to create, continues to bring about new life, new action, new ways of being God's people together. Luther himself knew that – he recognized and acknowledged that the church is reformed and forever reforming.

Pastor Lowell Nussey Christ the King, Whitby

Do you know what our church's mission is? What is the reason for the existence of Christ the King Lutheran Church? This is an important question that I believe we need to address in the coming weeks and months. It is a question that I am purposefully not going to answer here because I want you to wrestle with it.

There are a variety of ways you can answer this question, and very few of them will be wrong answers; so don't worry about wrong answers. There are, however, some answers that are better than others. There are some ways of describing the mission of our congregation that are truer to our calling as Christ's disciples.

The season of Easter is a good time in which to reflect on the question of why you are a Christian and what it means to be part of the earthly body of Christ, which is the church.

Pastor Roy Thakurdial Bethesda, Unionville

On Sunday, April 24, Christians celebrated Easter. Easter is a celebration of LIFE as Christ burst forth from the tomb. The Resurrection is God's victory over all life's negating forces that array themselves against God's people, the creation and God himself. "He is Risen" is God's victory shout in His battle against sin, death and Satan. "He is

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Our Pastors Write

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Risen” is our victory shout of hope. Our hope is in the resurrection life. This is grounded in forgiveness of sin, reconciliation with God and redemption to live in the freedom of God’s love as God’s people. He is risen assures that beyond suffering, the cross and the tomb there is Resurrection.

Pastor Dennis Becker Faith, Oshawa

When I see the “undesirables” that live around Faith Place, I can’t help but think that somewhere there is a baby picture of them, bouncy, smiley, cute as a button. And I am convinced that that is what God sees when God looks at them. They are not undesirable at all. They are the apple of God’s eye.

And then I recall the famous words of Jesus, “Whenever you do or do it not to the least of these, you do it or do it not to me.”

Easter is about new life. One of the ways that new life is evident in our lives is in how we love others—all others. I pray that God would give me a heart like Father Dowling, that I can love all people no matter who there are, what they do or have done. And I pray that for you, too.

Pastor Ann Krueger Westside, Barrie

So what does it mean to live as an Easter person? How do we translate these lofty ideas into our everyday lives? For let’s be honest, life doesn’t always feel victorious: we don’t always begin our days humming alleluias.

For me, to be an Easter person is to live with hope – a hope grounded and centered in Jesus Christ – a hope centered on an empty cross and an empty tomb – for He is not there – He is risen! And that is something worth sharing for there are so many living their lives without hope.

Last night, our first visioning group met. We talked about how God has a dream for the world, a dream centered

in Jesus. We looked through the book of Acts and completed this sentence:

*“I am on a mission to _____ [bless, save, love, redeem, heal, etc. all people] _____ .
Love, God”*

Pastor Linda Douglas Zion, Maple

Many questions about homosexuality are yet to be answered. But one of the things we need to remember about Jesus and his life example is that he consistently put people before rules. He had a heart for people whom others deemed sinful. He went out of his way to teach those who were unclean, and in him they found hope and love. The Pharisees were incensed that Jesus met and ate with “sinners and tax collectors”. Even the disciples were surprised by some of the people Jesus associated with. For Jesus, however, people came before rules.

Not all Christians see the issue of homosexuality in the same way. The church is divided on this issue. But even in a divided church, we can agree that we wish to be the kind of church in which men and women who are gay find the warmth and welcome and love of Jesus Christ. Christians get it wrong when they speak in ways that bring harm and alienation to God’s gay children; we get it right when even in our uncertainty, we express the love and welcome of the one who offered living water to the woman at the well.

Pastor Ilze Kuplens-Ewart St. Andrew’s Latvian, Toronto

“Don’t be afraid!” said the angel: the world may have seemed to have turned upside down, and so it has. The ones who can strike fear into those who are powerless fall senseless to the ground.

Injustice, cruelty, insensibility may seem to have the upper hand, but it is the women, who represent the marginalized, the powerless to whom the reality of the resurrection becomes known.

It was they who are the first witnesses of God’s victory over the powers of darkness on that early morning of the

first day of the week. The women. Just ordinary people.

You don’t have to be special.

You don’t have to be anything at all.

Look, and you will find.

Listen, and you will hear.

Touch, and you will know.

Christ is risen, and greets us today.

Just look, listen, and touch.

Pastor Christian Schweter First Lutheran, Toronto

In contrast, the stories about the resurrection in the Gospels should be read as historical reports. They actually call witnesses by name, who claim to have seen the resurrected Jesus. Above all, the first witnesses they name are women who in antiquity were not allowed to act as witnesses before a court. This points to the fact that this actually happened. Paul uses the language of argumentation used by those courts when he names witnesses who have seen the resurrected Jesus (I Corinthians 15). Biblical writings are an unending witness to us about how God encountered man/woman. They are the source of our beliefs. God speaks to us through the words in the Bible even today. To understand these words properly we need to pay attention to what text we have before us and what indications we find as to how they are to be understood: verbatim, historically and allegorically.

Pastor Mark van House Peace, Pickering

Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!

For centuries this has been the paschal greeting between the faithful. Its significance is not reserved only for Easter morning. These words are not a snappy catch phrase to be bandied about on Easter and then shelved until next year. These are, in a sense, words to live by. These are words by which we believers live our lives not only within the Easter season but all days. We stake our lives on it. This message is Good News not solely for the justified. On the contrary, it belongs to everyone. These

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Our Pastors Write

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words are meant to be shared, through both words and deeds. To live these words is to show the world the same forgiveness, the same mercy and grace, as our Lord has shown us. It is to demonstrate what God has gifted to us: love and hope; peace and justice. We are to communicate the Gospel, that God so loved and still loves the world wherein Jesus gave his all so all may live.

Pastor Karen Jenkins Christ, Peterborough

The problem with making ‘everything’ we talk about and do in the church about money is that we become insulated and insular. We become a community unto ourselves instead of unto God. Pastor Mark is coming to help us get back on track and rediscover why we, as Christ Lutheran, are here in the first place, which is to count ourselves among the disciples of Christ, proclaimers of God’s word and workers in the Kingdom, rather than accountants and bankers. In other words, it is time for us to focus on being a church and, specifically, a church with a mission engaging in God’s word in our congregation, in our community and the world.

The Mutual Ministry Committee sees this as a wonderful opportunity to begin to address our future in a proactive and constructive way so that we have a say in and take charge of what happens to our congregation. So, please plan to come out on Sunday, October 16, and give a warm welcome to Pastor Mark who is coming with his expertise and compassion to help us envision a future with God at the centre of our being and Christ at the helm of our boat. With his help, hopefully, we will be able to identify and pursue goals for continuing our congregation’s ministry, all the while bearing in mind that we are called to meet the needs of those we are summoned to serve, whether we find them on our doorstep or half-way around the world.

Pastor Sebastian Meadows-Helmer; Christ the King-Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Thornhill

There are other ways to measure church growth than to count the people in the pews. Growth happens primarily when an organization is willing to grow, learn and change. As with individuals, churches only stop learning when they die. When a church is willing to take risks, to expand their horizons and to see where God is leading them in the future, then that church is experiencing growth. However, most churches that settle into a maintenance and preservation mode rarely escape an inevitable death.

I have a lot of hope for our church. You have taken on some significant risks and change recently, and have grown all the more for it: calling a Canadian ordinand, purchasing a new piano, increasing bilingual communion service frequency, and modifying worship service times. A church that

shows an openness to change, learning and guidance by the Holy Spirit, is growing. Let’s not be fixated on the numbers.

Pastor Nadine Nicholds Augsburg, Brampton

There is something very biblical and spiritual about gardening. I suppose I think this because of all the gardening and farming references in the scriptures. It all starts in Genesis 1 when God says “fill the earth and subdue it.” Have you ever left for garden for a week or two? It’s downright chaos when you get back to it – filled with weeds and out of control plants. Subduing nature is something that I’m not sure I’m up to.

Jesus also has a few tips for gardening. Look at Matthew 13:3-9; Jesus has some great tips on plant location. He also has some particularly harsh recommendations as to when to remove a problem plant (Matt. 21:18-19). ♦

150th Anniversary Booklet

Please remember to forward your one-page congregation’s story – with a photo – to include in the Toronto Conference history book. Our objective is to include EVERY congregation, so don’t let your congregation be left out. The cover will be a composite of the church photographs. A copy will be given to each congregation and additional copies can be ordered for purchase.

But... we can’t prepare the booklet without your stories, so please provide your information by June 30. Please send it to

Judy Baribeau

judybaribeau@rogers.com

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. ♦

Our Congregations at Work

■ Members of **St. David's, Orillia**, held a Greek dinner on May 14.

■ The men at **Agricola, Toronto**, treated all the moms and grandmothers to a traditional Mother's Day song, and after worship served all the ladies coffee and cakes.

■ On May 14, members of **Agricola, Toronto**, held their spring event which included a bazaar, bake sale, barbecue, flea market and tree planting.

■ On May 15, **Agricola, Toronto**, celebrated Seniors and Veterans Sunday.

■ The Health Cabinet at **Christ the King, Whitby**, is sponsoring the Annual Retirees Tea on May 18.

■ The Lutheran Ladies of **Christ the King, Whitby**, held a Prayer Walk on May 15 after the service.

■ **Christ the King, Whitby**, will hold a yard sale on May 28.

■ The Lutheran Ladies group at **Christ the King, Whitby**, will hold its Strawberry Tea on June 19.

■ **Christ the King, Whitby**, held a successful Silent Auction and raised \$1,224 plus a grant from FaithLife for a total of \$1,724.

■ **St. Philip's, Toronto**, held a Lunch 'N Learn session on May 15. Pastor Claudine Carlson spoke about her experience as a pastor to a hospice in Montreal.

■ At its luncheon meeting on May 19, The Fifty Plus group at **St. Philip's, Toronto**, will feature Jewish cuisine followed by an informative talk on Judaism 101.

■ The Hospitality Committee at **Bethesda, Unionville**, will hold its annual spring barbecue on June 12.

■ **Christ the King-Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Thornhill**, held its annual Springfest on May 14.

■ On June 11, **Christ the King-Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Thornhill**, will hold a Piano Fundraising Recital performed by Mark Kieswetter, Paul Helmer, Anton Streisslberger, Sebastian Meadows-Helmer and friends.

■ On May 15, **Faith, Oshawa**, held a Welcome to Holy Communion session to introduce and prepare children in grade 2 or up to receive the sacrament of Communion.

■ **Faith, Oshawa**, will hold its 9th Annual Loonie Sale and Luncheon on June 5. The proceeds will go towards the cost of their two World Vision Sponsor children.

■ **Peace, Pickering**, will hold a yard sale on June 4.

■ **Peace, Pickering**, held a healing service on May 15.

■ On June 26, the Congregational Life Committee at **Peace, Pickering**, will host a Rootbeer Float Sunday.

■ **Peace, Pickering**, will hold its Vacation Bible School July 18-22.

■ **Westside, Barrie**, held its annual congregational sale on May 14.

■ The ELW at **Epiphany, Toronto**, held a Strawberry Social and Spring Art Sale on May 14.

■ The ELW at **Epiphany, Toronto**, featured a presentation on Yoga at its May 11 meeting.

■ **Christ, Peterborough**, held a Volunteer Appreciation lunch on May 3.

■ **Christ, Peterborough**, held a rummage sale on May 7.

■ **Christ, Peterborough**, held a blood pressure clinic on May 15.

■ **Augsburg, Brampton**, is making plans to celebrate its 50th anniversary this fall.

■ **Meadowvale, Mississauga**, held its final service on Easter, April 24. ♦



Toronto Conference HEALTH FAIR


Saturday, October 1, 2011
9:00 AM - 2:00 PM

St. Philip's Lutheran Church
61 West Deane Park Drive
Toronto

Join us to ...

- Get information on important health issues
- Meet health professionals
- Discover alternative therapies
- Learn about living a more balanced, healthier life

More details soon...for now:
Save the Date
Tell Your Friends



Jason Hildebrand & Tom Carson
present


fish eyes

A play by Ted Swartz and Lee Eshleman with
Jason Hildebrand *as Andrew* and Don Tjart *as Peter*

Monday, May 30 at 7:30pm
St. Ansgar Lutheran Church
1498 Avenue Road, Toronto

Tickets: \$15 Adult, \$12 Youth (up to 17)
Call St. Ansgar: 416-783-3570
On-line: www.fisheyes.ca www.eventbrite.com

Miracles, Faith and
Fishermen
POWERED BY
the arts
ENGINE



Ecumenical Events

- **St. Ansgar, Toronto**, participated in the Neighbourhood Interfaith Group's 25th Anniversary activities on May 11. Events included a memorial service and unveiling of a memorial stone followed by a reception and dinner in the evening.
- Members of **Faith, Oshawa**, were invited to participate in Gate 3:16's 11th Annual Walk-a-Thon on May 14.
- Members of **Christ the King-Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Thornhill**, celebrated the 10th anniversary of full communion with the Anglican Church at a joint service with Holy Trinity Anglican on May 15. Pastor Meadows-Helmer presided and Father Finlay preached. The two choirs joined in providing special music. ♦

Community Events and Service

- Members of **Bethesda, Unionville**, will participate in the annual Unionville Festival and Parade on June 4. The congregation will have a float in the parade.
- The Outreach Committee at **Peace, Pickering**, is collecting men's summer clothing during May for residents of the Cornerstone Community Association homeless shelter and community residential facility in Oshawa. ♦

Youth

- Youth at **Faith, Oshawa**, are going to explore the Warsaw Caves on May 29.
- The youth at **Peace, Pickering**, hosted a Chili lunch on May 15.
- Youth at **Westside, Barrie**, prepared a barbecue lunch at the congregation's annual yard sale on May 14. ♦

Toronto Conference Contacts

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

Judy Baribeau
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West Hill, Ontario M1E 1E8
or email
judybaribeau@rogers.com

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