

THE LUTHERAN CONNECTION



NEWS OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCHES OF THE TORONTO CONFERENCE

JANUARY 2009

Inside

Our Pastors Comment

- 2 -

Our Congregations
at Work

- 3 -

Our Congregations
at Work

- 3 -

Help Wanted

- 5 -

Lutheran Campus Ministry

- 5 -

Ecumenical News

- 5 -

Community Events
and Service

- 5 -

Meet Deborah McCracken

- 5 -

Bethesda Sharecropper
Program

- 6 -

Calendar of Events

- 6 -



**Toronto Conference
Lutherans
Invite You
to
Celebrate Our
Multi-Cultural Diversity**

**Third Annual
Christmas/Epiphany
Concert**

*Featuring the Chinese Children's Choir,
Combined Choir, Swedish Choir,
Handbell Music, Soloists,
Hymn/Carol Singing*

*Saturday, January 31, 2009, 4:00 p.m.
Agricola Finnish Lutheran Church
25 Old York Mills Road
(Yonge Street and York Mills)*

Refreshments will follow the Concert

*A freewill offering will go to
Daily Bread Food Bank*

elcic-torontoconference.ca

The ELCIC Eastern Synod
Toronto Conference web site is
now on Google. Search for:
**ELCIC Eastern Synod Toronto
Conference**

Please remember to forward your congregation's \$50 contribution for support of the Toronto Conference in 2009 by the end of March. A return form is included with this newsletter. We thank the congregations who have already responded.

Our Pastors Comment

Pastor Mark Van House Peace, Pickering

The season of Epiphany is indeed a time of revelation, an occasion for comprehension of who the Christ is and what the Messiah brings to all. While New Year's resolutions are made, frequently with idle promises, there is the opportunity for us to renew our discipleship. In her televised Christmas address to the Commonwealth, the Queen made reference to those who serve others. That is our reference point as servants of God. In answer to the written words of the prophet Micah, in response to his query we can answer yes, Amen. That is the path to set upon in 2009. Our journey does not end at the manger. The trail of justice, kindness and love lies ahead. Let's take those steps, one by one, in the footsteps of our Lord. A New Year's resolution worth keeping every year.

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

That is our calling, too, the one put to us by the same Lord. To be those who hear his invitation and who are ready to jump into the "boat" with him; to take our place in the extraordinary opportunity that Jesus has entrusted to us. That is to do all we can so that those for whom faith in Christ and trust in God remains a foreign concept can become aware of what it is that holds us together, that binds us one to another, and gives direction for our lives. We are fishers, and as real fishers understand how important it is to work as part of a team, to listen to the One who gives directions, and who steers the boat. The One who speaks to us is none other than God, as both father and mother, who tend to our needs; the Spirit that inspires us, literally; the Son in whom we see the human face of God.

Pastor Christian Schweter First Lutheran, Toronto

Yes, sometimes I think there are things that happen which are absolutely impossible for us, but that God can manage: that people can be free of the burden of

their guilt and can find a new lease on life, that enemies can shake hands, that people can be freed of addictions, that people can be happy and be consoled, that hardened hearts can become soft again, that people have hope in difficult situations and that people have faith.

Perhaps this is all not so sensational, but it is a way in which God is active in this world. Often he does this in a quiet manner, gently and quietly but with incredible impact.

Pastor Dennis Becker Faith, Oshawa

Who knows what lies ahead. We make plans, dream dreams, and set agendas. But we never really know what will come of things. And that is exciting. Each day is a new and fresh opportunity to walk with Jesus through life, to see people through his eyes, to touch them with his hands, to love them with his heart. And when we react with people in this way, when we see through his eyes, touch with his hands, love with his heart, we are led down paths, to places and people that were not written in our agendas, our little red books. They are new places, exciting people, both opportunities to meet, share and serve God through serving others.

As we enter 2009, let us put our hands firmly in Jesus' hands, and walk forward with confidence and faith, knowing that though we might not know the way, Jesus does. And it will be another exciting year.

Pastor Doug Kramer St. Philip's, Toronto

Think about it. Zechariah and Elizabeth didn't expect to have a baby in their old age. Mary didn't expect to become an unwed mother and carry the Son of God. Herod didn't expect to have his throne challenged by an infant. The shepherds didn't expect to see angels in the field. The Magi didn't expect to find the Saviour in a poor country village like Bethlehem. The whole story is full of the unexpected. God surprised everyone.

Yet isn't that just like God?...full of surprises? The meek shall inherit the earth ...surprise! The first shall be last and the last first...surprise! Jesus is risen from the dead...surprise!

Sebastian Helmer, Intern St. Philip's, Toronto

One such candle I have seen is "Sanctuary", a downtown community ministry in Toronto. I have been able to participate most Tuesdays in their Street Outreach walks, checking in on Sanctuary members on the streets, offering them socks, hats and other items. At first, I thought that I would be able to help and to give of my talents and skills to others. What I soon realized was that it was the other way around. I have been learning about downtown Toronto issues from the knowledgeable staff, and more importantly, I have stopped thinking about my "helping the street people", but rather about meeting and visiting friends: Randy, Linda, Christopher and others.

The expression "it is more blessed to give than to receive" really was transformed for me through Sanctuary. I believed that I was giving but ended up receiving more than I ever thought. When we go beyond our comfort zones to reach out to the marginalized, the sick, and lonely, blessings are multiplied, and not only are the intended recipients blessed, but we are as well.

Pastor Linda Douglas Zion, Maple

The inherent flaw found in all of us is that we are not born with a relationship with God. Just as we need to get to know our parents, siblings, grandparents, and friends, so must we go through the process of becoming friends with God. Is it any wonder that we lowly humans find it frightening to think in terms of friendship with the awesome God who flung the stars into place? Even more daunting, this friendship-seeking God already knows

Continued on Page 3

Our Congregations at Work

■ Members of **Peace, Pickering**, were invited to have a Pint with the Pastor on January 12. Their conversations can relate to matters of faith, life, church and the like in the spirit of Martin Luther's table talks.

■ A joint confirmation class with students from **Peace, Pickering, Christ the King, Whitby, and Faith, Oshawa**, will be held on January 18.

■ Joanne Jehu from FaithLife will give a presentation on Financial Planning at **Peace, Pickering**, on January 25.

■ **Peace, Pickering**, hosted a Stress Seminar on November 23.

■ Deborah McCracken will speak at **Peace, Pickering**, on March 1. This will be the official start of their 2009 support drive for "Raising the Walls of Zion".

■ The Ladies Auxiliary at **St. Andrew's Latvian, Toronto**, will serve a pancake breakfast on January 25.

■ **St. Andrew's Latvian, Toronto**, is fundraising for its new grand piano. Members are asked to purchase a "key" of their choice.

■ On December 21, the choir of **St. Andrew's Latvian, Toronto**, led a musical worship in Latvian.

■ Members of **St. Andrew's Latvian, Toronto**, designated its Christmas Eve offering to those in material need in Latvia.



■ **St. Philip's, Toronto**, welcomes its new Parish Nurse, Marisa Jefkins.

■ On January 18 members of **St. Philip's, Toronto**, will hold a sequel to their first "In Mission for Others" event. During their discussion, they will

talk about the specific context of the congregation, define their guiding principles and focus on some key strategic directions God is calling them to do.

■ Pastor Doug Kramer, **St. Philip's, Toronto**, will escort a tour of Italy and Switzerland in June 2010. The tour will include a performance of the Oberammergau Passion Play.

■ **St. Philip's, Toronto**, holds monthly Euchre games the first Thursday afternoon each month.

■ Members of **First Lutheran, Toronto**, raised \$805 at their turkey fundraiser.

■ **Pastor Martti and Seija Hyhko** plan to lead a trip to Guyana in August 2009.

■ **Zion, Maple**, raised \$8,794.25 for the Olive Branch at its 2008 concert. FaithLife matched funds of \$1,500 making the total from this concert \$10,294.25.

■ The ELWs of **Christ the King, Whitby, and Faith, Oshawa**, met together on December 27 that included a program on "Light" and carol singing.

■ The Bible Study group at **Faith, Oshawa**, is beginning a study of the book of James.

■ Members of **Faith, Oshawa**, will hold a "Pint with the Pastor" evening on January 22.

■ Members of **Faith, Oshawa**, will hold a Court Whist Night on January 24.

■ Bishop Michael Pryse will be guest preacher at **Bethesda, Unionville**, on January 18.

■ The men at **Bethesda, Unionville**, are planning to organize a Men's Fellowship. This will provide an avenue for the men of the church to engage God's mission, provide opportunity for men to nurture faith, and a space to meet and socialize.

■ The Toronto Conference Council will meet at **Bethesda, Unionville**, on January 28. ♦

Our Pastors Write

Continued from Page 2

all about our sinful nature that we may have successfully hidden from everyone else.

Friendship with God is made possible by our coming to know the Son. Jesus is much more approachable than the misguided notion some of us have about God – angry, vengeful, waiting to punish us. We tend to think of God as the secret eye in the sky highway patrol helicopter camera, taking pictures of all our violations.

Pastor Roy Thakurdyal Bethesda, Unionville

The New Year is with us, pregnant with promises, possibilities and potential for experiencing the fullness of life. This year can be a KAIROS moment for those who see it. The Bible reveals to us a God who is always opening new

opportunities before his people. God is the God of new beginnings, second chances and starting over.

The Exodus, the return from exile and the cross speak of God acting to open new opportunities in unexpected and surprising ways for His people. These are radical life transforming opportunities. God is still at work unfolding KAIROS moments that when discerned and seized have the power to transform lives in unbelievable ways.

New beginnings and opportunities nurture hope. Invariably a new year is approached with hope stirring, rekindled or burning brightly in peoples' hearts. As the year unfolds, life will bring us many experiences; joyful and sorrowful, shocking and surprising; satisfying and disappointing whatever the experiences that await in this year, where hope fills the heart strength courage and peace will come to keep it company. ♦

O Little Town of Bethlehem

Bethlehem: in my imagination you were a small village, where once a baby was born in a stable. On your hillsides shepherds guarded their flocks, and above you shone the brightest star in the sky. All my life I sang about you at this time of year; of your peace, your gentleness, of your love. You have warmed my heart since I was a small child.

How still we see thee lie

Yet, Bethlehem, you are quite different today. A wall surrounds you. Tourists, 'Wise Men', make their way to you from all over the world to worship you, but you are drowning in sorrow. Hatred surrounds you, despite the plastic reindeer and Santa Claus figures that decorate your dusty streets.

Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by

Tonight, thousands of tourists will gather in Bethlehem to mark the birth of the Christ child. They will do so filled with a sense of holiness, while today's children of Bethlehem sleep in poverty. And when it's all over, the visitors will stand for hours at the Israeli army's checkpoints to return to west Jerusalem, only some 10 km distant, but it could be the other side of the world.

Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light

It pains the heart to see that the place where our Saviour was born hasn't been saved. That the experience in which the clearest love and faith was created has become crippled by hatred and the anger brought about by mistrust. What do love, truth and belonging mean, and what is the value of loving love to the extent that it makes you blind to the truth, leaving the impression that you are its sole possessor?

But the game isn't over yet. There are scars, but there is also hope. There is a sense that, gradually, anger is waning in strength, that it is simpler to live in peace, than continue to fight mercilessly. And, perhaps, we, too, will one day be able to look at one another with the same, warm smile with which we look upon the sleeping baby, gently resting in his loving mother's arms.

The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight

Amen... greetings from Israel, and may this be a time of peace and love for you all.

*Pauls Miklasevics
St. Andrew's Latvian, Toronto*



Start the year with a smile

You might be a Lutheran if...
...it takes 10 minutes to say good-bye.
...you hear something really funny and smile as loud as you can.
...you freeze the leftover coffee for fellowship hour next week.

*Peace
Pickering*

Printer Available



St. Paul's, Richmond Hill, has a Risograph TR 1510 electronic duplicator that they are no longer using. It appears to be in good working order. If you are interested, please contact Wayne Dawe at wayne@wdawe.com. ♦

Congregational Life Stories

We would like to include more items written by laypersons in *The Lutheran Connection*. If your congregation has a special program or event, please encourage a lay member to write a paragraph or two and submit it for the newsletter. Photographs are also welcome. If photographs are of people, please confirm their permission to publish them.

jb

Help Wanted

St. Ansgar Lutheran church in North Toronto seeks a Vacation Bible School coordinator for Summer 2009 program. Job includes planning, organizing and executing a one week half day program. Please send your resume by March 15, 2009.

(416) 783-1751 fax or admin@stansgar.ca.

See our website for the detailed job description.

www.stansgar.ca.

Ecumenical News

■ **Bethesda, Unionville**, is planning a pulpit exchange with St. Philip's on the Hill Anglican Church. Rev. Philip Bristow of St. Philip's will preach at Bethesda on January 25 and Rev. Thakurdial will preach at St. Philip's on February 8. ♦

Community Events and Service

■ **St. Andrew's Latvian, Toronto**, prepared food for the Out of the Cold program and provided sock gifts for those in need on January 3.

■ Members of **St. Philip's, Toronto**, provided Christmas hampers to six families during the Christmas season.

■ Members of **St. Philip's, Toronto**, will provide and serve a meal for the Out of the Cold program on January 23 at All Saints Anglican. ♦

Lutheran Campus Ministry

Open House - with Pizza and Music!
The friends and team at lutheransconnect.com
invite you to our Open House, hosted by
St. George's Evangelical Lutheran Church
410 College Street, near Bathurst, 416-921-2687

Wednesday, January 14th at 7:00 p.m.
Join us and in the meantime, check us out online!
www.lutheransconnect.com



Fighting a Long and Lonely War Face to Face with AIDS

Come and join Deborah McCracken, 28 year old, Greater Toronto Area resident, founder and Tanzanian head of The Olive Branch for Children in Tanzania, Eastern Africa at The Empire Restaurant on Thursday, February 12, 2009, between 7:00 p.m. and 9:30 p.m.

Deborah will highlight the charity's goals and talk about the major undertakings and successes of The Olive Branch in the Mbeya region of Tanzania. She will describe:

- "Malaika" ['Angel' in Swahili] – the new fashion line that The Olive Branch has launched to help assist the self-sustainability of some students
- The impact of The Olive Branch's permanent medical clinic and its hosting monthly medical clinics in remote villages – the growth and success of these clinics in these areas and what this means to the local residents
- Volunteers from Canada and the tremendous impact they have had on the development of The Olive Branch
- The positive reality of the 80 children living at The Olive Branch and the children living with HIV at The Olive Branch's Zion Home for HIV+ children

Come and meet Deborah at the Empire Restaurant, 50 Cumberland Street, Toronto

February 12, 2009, from 7:00 to 9:30 p.m.

\$50 per person: appetizers and two alcoholic beverages will be served.



Bethesda Evangelical Lutheran Church

20 Union Street
Unionville, Ontario L3R 2H5
(905) 477-1731

Bethesda's Sharecropper Project Raises \$30,000 for Canadian Foodgrains Bank

For the last seven years Bethesda has undertaken a 'Sharecropper Project' with the Schickedanz Galten farms. This project is to raise funds for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. In this project members of the congregation make donations to cover half of the input costs for the crop and one half of the profits go to the CFGB. This year Galten Farms planted fifty acres of corn as our project. We put up a road sign with our name for everyone to see. For the last two years we have had a co-sponsor in St. John's United Church in Oakville. During each of the last two years they have put in \$10,000. In addition FaithLife Financial makes a matching grant of \$1,500.

This year we had outstanding success. The project raised an amazing \$30,000 for CFGB. With the CIDA four-to-one matching grant, this represents a total of \$150,000 in food aid for hungry people around the world. Over the past seven years the Sharecropper project has contributed over \$95,000 to CFGB for a total matching funding of almost one half million dollars. All of these funds are credited to CLWR through the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. This has been Bethesda's "In Mission for Others" project.

Lorne R. Smith

Martin Luther – Dates of Interest

- On January 4, 1519, Luther began his conversation with papal intermediary Carl von Miltitz. It was his job to keep Luther quiet until the papal authorities could figure out what to do with him. The plan didn't work.
- On January 3, 1521, Pope Leo X excommunicated Martin Luther for challenging abuses within the Church.

Peace, Pickering



Thought for the Day

I've learned that you can tell a lot about a person by the way he/she handles four things: a rainy day; the elderly; lost luggage; tangled Christmas tree lights.

*Author unknown
Faith, Oshawa*

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 Concert** – January 31, 2009. Future concerts will be the third Saturday in January.
- **Spring Conference Meeting** – May 9, 2009. Future meetings will be the first Saturday in May.
- **Fall Conference Meeting** – October 3, 2009. Future meetings will be the first Saturday in October.

Congregational Contacts Needed

Congregations are asked to provide names and email addresses of administrative staff within their congregations to receive *The Lutheran Connection* and other information distributed by the Toronto Conference. Please send the information to Judy Baribeau at gandjbaribeau@rogers.com. ♦

Toronto Conference Contacts

Dean: The Rev. David Tin
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Secretary: Judy Baribeau
416-264-4527 gandjbaribeau@rogers.com
Treasurer: Loreen Dharamlall 416 742 1265
loreen00@sympatico.ca

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 (elcic-toronto-conference.ca)

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

jb

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

Judy Baribeau
23 Toynbee Trail
West Hill, Ontario M1E 1E8
or email
gandjbaribeau@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 gandjbaribeau@rogers.com.