



“Celebrations”

A publication of the Synod of Alberta and the Territories
Summer 2008

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(Header photo of stained-glass courtesy of Faith Lutheran Church, Calgary. Window design by Geoff Jamieson.)

Submit Your Stories!

Is there a special ministry project going on in your congregation that makes you smile? Did some church event touch you in a deep spiritual way? Why do you attend your home congregation? What is so special that keeps bringing you back? You don’t have to be a writer. Just get your story down in whatever form and email it to lisa.rude@telus.net with your **name, congregation, city/town, email and phone number**. Please include a photo or two if possible. Don’t forget to indicate **who took the photo**. Submissions for the fall issue of *Celebrations* must be received by **September 30th**.

Sabbath Keeping



As you read this article I hope and intend, by God’s grace, to be at a place called Lazy Lake. It’s nestled in the Purcell Mountains of the

southeastern interior of beautiful British Columbia, right next door to my home and native bountiful Alberta. Friends of ours have a rustic cabin that they kindly make available to us, if we can find the time to go there and make the time to relax. Relaxing is not one of my spiritual gifts. Relaxing is the thing I do worst in my life. I am quite accomplished at work. And I am very good at sitting and stewing. But relaxing? – I confess that is the real challenge of my life. Many church-workers it seems are prone to this same malady. So, too, are many of the laity. “Busy doing” is more highly valued in our society than “simply being”. One of these has to do with lived-out works righteousness. The other has to do with living by grace.

Writing about the Sabbath way of life, Lutheran theologian and teacher **Marva Dawn** sees Sabbath as God’s gift. The Sabbath, Dawn says, reclaims us because it enfolds us in the grace of not doing work, of not needing to accomplish anything, of not having to be in control, of living by God’s values instead of society’s. Sabbath revitalizes us, with the offer to be open and waiting for God’s new life to fill us. [See *The Sense of the Call*, Marva Dawn, Eerdmans, 2006, page 35ff.]

She goes on to say that Christian leaders struggle most with their pet

temptation: the acquisition of the stuff of accomplishments. **Henri Nouwen** called it the adulation and applause of the crowds. (Some people have the ability to perform surgery with their written words; this cuts pretty close to home.)

A few more words from Marva: “To give up the busyness that characterizes our quick-fix, techno-speedy, exorbitantly efficient, oppressively overworked society, we begin by recognizing ourselves as God’s saints, called to an alternative life, dwelling in grace and responding with non-frenzied ease” [page 123]. Responding with non-frenzied ease. Living confidently in the primacy of grace. Those concepts appeal and repel at the same time. These are goals I dearly wish to attain in my life. But how will I get past, around and over myself to get there?

My past record of Sabbath keeping is, frankly, an embarrassment. But the closest I have come to a Sabbath rest for the weary is that time I have been graced to spend beneath the undulating tamaracks, between snow-capped mountains, and surrounded by the music of wind and waterfalls. Yes, I will likely have my computer with me – but no internet connection. And I left my old Tappert edition of *The Book of Concord* at the cabin, for light reading on a rainy day. I’ll tense up as I drive the last ten kilometers, knowing that for the next two weeks my business will be “no business”. But that feeling of anxiety will pass. And in short order I’ll be at peace. My Sabbath keeping will be fine this month – just fine!

+Ronald B. Mayan, Bishop

Around the Synod

Synod Convention Coverage

If you are looking for information about the ABT Synod Convention at the beginning of June, you can read the issues of **Convention Moments** on the synod website at www.albertasynod.ca. Follow the link from the homepage. There is also coverage coming to you in the July/August issue of **Canada Lutheran**. If you don’t already receive your own copy of Canada Lutheran, go to www.elcic.ca/clweb/subinfo.html for more information or call Barb Wiebe toll free at 1888.786.6707 (ext. 177) to find out how you can subscribe.

The Bible and Qur’an: Competing or Cooperating Revelations?



Dr. Volker Griefenhaugen.
Photo courtesy of Dr. Griefenhaugen.

St. Michael's Anglican Church at 709-7 St. in Canmore will be the place to be from October 3 to 5th for this year's "Retreat of Our Own". Our speaker is **Dr. Volker Griefenhaugen**, a Professor at Luther College in Regina. He is an ordained Lutheran pastor and an expert on Christian-Muslim relations. Most of us have many questions about Islam and Christianity. What is the Koran(Qur'an)? How do Muslims understand Christianity? How can Christians understand Islam? This retreat will explore such questions under the leadership of someone who has devoted much of his career to the study of Islam and Christianity. Dr. Griefenhaugen has also worked with many lay groups on these topics. This

is an event not to be missed! For more information, contact Tom and Dianne Kieren (780.434.0081 or tkieren@telusplanet.net) or Dave and Gail Stolee (780.672.9442 or dgstolee@telusplanet.net).

Youth Leaders' Workshop

October 17-18, volunteer and paid staff who relate to youth are invited to a day of information and networking. Bring your ideas, or come to find new ones. For more information, check out the synod website – www.albertasynod.ca or call the synod office at 439.2636 in Edmonton or toll free at 1.866.430.2636.

Churches Providing Affordable Housing

It began with a challenge.

In early 2007, **Dermot Baldwin** from **Calgary's Drop In Center** confronted the attendees at the **KAIROS** Calgary weekend about what churches were doing about homelessness. He praised the churches for their support of **Inn From the Cold**, the **Mustard Seed Street Ministry** and the **Calgary Drop In Center**. But he knows, as we all know, that these



Photo by Mike Flynn. Courtesy of Calgary Drop-In & Rehab Centre.

are only Band-Aids. They won't cure the problem. His challenge – do something more. Find, as a unified religious community, more effective permanent ways to contribute.

Thus was born the **KAIROS Calgary Homelessness and Affordable Housing Work Group**. Representatives from the Roman Catholic, United, Presbyterian, Baptist, Anglican, Mennonite and Lutheran churches met to discuss the challenge and kept meeting. Within a couple of meetings, one of the members presented a rough draft proposal on “Churches Providing Affordable Housing”. A sub-group met to refine the idea. Much of the Work Group's progress has been through this sub-group.

Less than one year after the Work Group's first meeting, at the 2008 Calgary KAIROS weekend, the proposal was presented and well received. **Wayne Stewart** of **Calgary's Homeless Foundation** and contributor to “**Calgary's Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness**” endorsed the concept, noting that it dove-tailed with several of the recommendations in the report.

The Work Group has further polished the idea, has prepared an application to **Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation** for a seed grant to prepare a business plan and establish a steering committee for the project. The **Mennonite Central Committee** is financial adviser for the application.

Basically, the proposal is for Calgary churches, working together, to purchase an existing thirty or forty unit apartment building, renovate and upgrade with loan money available for such projects and then use the apartments to provide homeless or low-income families with a chance. Give them a place of their own from which to build. Create a supportive community. Allow them a place to belong. The cost is about four and a half million dollars. The first million would need to be raised by the churches. It has almost been guaranteed that when the churches have raised the initial million, that the other money will be available in low-interest loans and grants. Several concepts for how the churches would raise the initial funds have been made. This will be decided upon later once the business plan and steering committee are in place. Since the announcement at the KAIROS weekend, there has been good response, news coverage in local papers and a flood of contacts with groups involved in projects to provide low-income housing. Many of these contacts have come through the



Photo by Mike Flynn. Courtesy of Calgary Drop-In & Rehab Centre.

efforts of Alberta **Bishop Ron Mayan** who has been wonderful in his support. He responded immediately to an email from the Work Group, distributed the information through the Synod's email system and has talked enthusiastically with the Bishops of other denominations and any one interested in homelessness and the affordable housing situation.

How do individual congregations fit in? Right now they are being kept informed of what the Work Group is doing. There are bulletin inserts that have been prepared through the Baptist church which are adaptable for each denomination's or individual congregation's situation. As the plan progresses, each denomination and each congregation will decide how it wants to contribute. And, with three founding member regulars on the Work Group being from Lutheran congregations, with the support of Bishop Mayan and increased interest and participation from other congregations, this is something that you will hear more about.

The "Churches Provide Affordable Housing" project is strong. It is moving forward. It is a vital, necessary ministry. And, it is doable.

"Is this not the fast I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal

thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out into thy house? When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?" (Isaiah 58 : 6,7 KJV).

Submitted by Ron Bennett (Lutheran Church of Our Savior, Calgary)

Blessing of the Seeds & Soils

On Sunday, May 25, 2008, a "surprise" was in store for the worshippers at Mount Zion Lutheran Church, 11533 - 135 Street in Edmonton. The "surprise" had been well advertised weeks in advance. People had been requested to bring plants, seeds, and soils to church for a special blessing. They were nevertheless surprised when they entered the sanctuary. Sounds of running, falling, gurgling, splashing water and chirping birds greeted them.



Photo by Ed Jobs.

The space in front of the altar was taken up by a beautiful display of green plants, flowers, and gardening tools.

Mount Zion celebrated Rogation Sunday in a very special way. For those not familiar with Rogation Sunday, the special bulletin contained an insert with an explanation written by **The Rev. Charles E. Bennison, Jr.** of St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Upland, California.

"Throughout the ages people have offered humble thanks to God the Creator for the priceless gifts of air, soil, water, and sunshine which makes all living things possible.

"The custom of setting aside special days - Rogation Days - for this purpose began more than 1500 years ago in the neighbourhood of Vienne, France. Bad weather and earthquakes had brought widespread hunger and crop failures. The Bishop of Vienne called for prayer and penance on the three days preceding Ascension Day. The people responded and implored God for help in their suffering and deprivation.

"Word of what happened in Vienne spread throughout France - and then to other countries. The supplication filled a need in the hearts and minds of people, and as the years went by, Rogation Days were widely observed as an annual custom. By the end of the eighth century, the church formally adopted the custom. Now, the world over, people on Rogation Days beg the mercy of God and ask the people be spared the evils of body and soul - and that the plants be given a good increase."



Photo by Ed Jobs.

And so it was that Mount Zion celebrated life and thanksgiving in

the blessing of seeds and soil. St. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 9:10-11: “And God who supplies seed for the sower and bread to eat, will also supply you with all the seed you need and will make it grow and produce a rich harvest from your generosity. He will always make you rich enough to be generous at all times, so that many will thank God for your gifts which they receive from us.”



Participants in “A Farmer’s Life” dialogue (left to right) – Paul Anderson, Deanie Anderson, Denise Harmon, Mike Harmon, and Shauna Lee Carlson. Henry Wascherol missing in photo.
Photo by Ed Jobs.

The Bible readings included personal reflections by the readers. **Joyce Jarvis** read a lesson from Genesis, while **Shauna Carlson** reflected on her joy of having a garden plot. **Denise Harmon** gave thanks for the many birds who share her garden. **Deanie Anderson** shared how her childhood home has gone nature’s full circle. A dialogue entitled “A Farmer’s Life” took the place of the sermon. **Paul Anderson** and **Mike Harmon** reflected on the plight of farmers in today’s world. The hymns sung included: “All Creatures of Our God and King”, “For the Beauty of the Earth”, “All

Praise to You, O God of All Creation”, “God of the Farmlands, Hear Our Prayer”, and “We Plow the Fields and Scatter”.

At the heart of the service was praise for God’s creation and blessings upon the seeds, soil, and the hands that tend them. At the end of this special service all went in peace, praising God from whom all blessings flow. Thanks be to God.

by Ed Jobs

Singing with Brushstrokes

For many gifted people, art is a hobby. For others it is a career, or a vehicle of expression. But for some artists, paintbrushes, pastels, and canvases are a means of spreading the good news of the Gospel. Christian artists from across Alberta have come together into a likeminded group called **Emmaus** to worship through their masterpieces.

Sharon Graham Sargent is one of those people. Sargent has been president of Emmaus for the past three years. Sargent worked in the oil patch for seven years



“Look up! For Your Redemption is Near.” Painting by Sharon Graham Sargent. Photo by Jenna McMurray.

before she discovered her true calling to speak to others through visuals.

Sargent explains, "I just couldn't stay away from art; it's been on my heart for many years to create art that brings people to Christ."

Fellow group member **Susan Saunders** was inspired to get involved with Emmaus two years ago. She now also helps lead **Blueprints**, an urban ministry which teaches young graffiti artists about traditional art skills.

"When I paint, God sheds light on his word," said Saunders. "It is the time that I spend with Him, learning about the scriptures. In fact, my paintings always have scripture written on the back of them."

Though many people associate the word 'worship' with music or prayer, Saunders said she's thrilled that the term is now becoming recognized and accepted in a different way.

The Calgary chapter of Emmaus meets regularly at their headquarters called **The House**, an artsy café in Kensington.

"It's a community of artists working together, sharing expertise and creating a safe place to show our work," said Saunders. "I love having other people like myself to learn and share with."

The artwork is beginning to touch more and more people, as several Calgary churches have caught onto the initiative and are currently displaying Emmaus pieces in their sanctuaries.

"It's pretty exciting stuff that churches want to get involved," said Saunders. "I've already had the chance to see people's emotional reaction to my work and know God is speaking to them so I hope art can continue to touch people's lives."



Susan McKibbon at work. Photo by Jenna McMurray.

Emmaus artist **Susan McKibbon** is proud to have her artwork on display at First Lutheran Church in southwest Calgary. One of her best-known pieces made its way onto a canvas after Susan brought her camera to church one Sunday morning to show her friends photos from her recent trip to Australia. As she was heading out, she noticed a little boy named Liam Carriere

sleeping peacefully on the shoulder of his father, Ken. McKibbon had struggled for some time, brainstorming a way to illustrate God as a Father. Suddenly, it occurred to her that

this could be what she was waiting for. Equipped with her camera, she snapped a photo to capture the moment and from there everything seemed to take off.

Remembering Ken works as a police officer, she decided the authority aspect should be incorporated into the piece. After a trip down to the police station to photograph an authentic police hat so she could recreate the image on the canvas, McKibbon was ready to begin. Her mission was to create the image of God, first as a father and friend holding his child, and second, she wanted to impress God as the authority – symbolized by the police hat.

“As an officer, Ken has to be very tough when dealing with violence, crime and legal problems and yet there is this whole other side to him when he is at home and in his place of worship where he is simply ‘Dad,’” said McKibbon. “I hoped that I could illustrate the love and the bond Ken has with his son and that people would see the similarities between him and the bond we have with our Heavenly Father.”

God’s timing and opportunity for McKibbon wasn’t the end of this amazing story though. The shirt little Liam was wearing the day the photo was taken was striped. But when Susan went to draw the photo, she felt she should leave the stripes out of the portrait because they would distract the viewer from the focal point of Ken and Liam’s faces.



“Beloved” by Susan McKibbon. Photo by Jenna McMurray.

For some reason - and Susan can’t explain why - the stripes kept showing up as she drew, no matter how many layers of pastel she coated overtop.

“I kept trying to get rid of them but they just kept coming back,” she said. “But as frustrating as it was, I didn’t think of it as significant until the day of the hanging (in the church).”

When Susan brought the portrait to First Lutheran for display, she noticed a Calgary pastor by the name of Brad Huebert had brought his own piece – a picture of him and his son on a fishing trip from years ago. In the piece, the son is wearing the exact same shirt as Liam is in McKibbon’s drawing. After comparing notes and write-ups, McKibbon and Huebert discovered some of their inspirations overlapped. Suddenly, the inexplicable reason that the stripes kept reappearing in McKibbon’s piece made a whole

lot of sense. To be able to connect with someone to whom God had spoken similar ideas was an amazing experience for her.

“To me, it meant God was speaking to us both with an image and a concept,” said Susan. “It was reassuring to me that someone else more experienced in matters concerning God would have a similar vision. I must be on the right track.”

For artists like McKibbon and Saunders, the purpose of their art is twofold.

“For me, this has always been about my faith,” said Saunders. “Many Christian artists have a hard time expressing their faith and having a safe place to do it, but this is the way I witness. It is my offering.”

Though personal reasons play a major role in the artists’ sense of purpose, the effect their work has on fellow believers and the way it speaks to non-believers is an incredible motivator.

“We don’t want to limit who experiences these pieces or who becomes involved,” said Saunders. “We want to be open to people who don’t know the Lord yet. We’re a very open group and it’s a wonderful, wonderful opportunity.”

To arrange a showing in your congregation or to connect with Emmaus as a fellow artist, contact Sharon Graham Sargent at ladygraham@shaw.ca.

By Jenna McMurray (First Lutheran, Calgary)

Students Make a Difference

When planning a Student Ministry service event, why not have some fun? It all started with an old beater that didn’t run anymore. Before donating it to the **Kidney Foundation**, our students cooked up a plan to turn the old car into a service project with a twist.

On the first Saturday of the month everyone showed up with a can of paint, some old clothes and a paint brush. We named the event “Car Wars” and it didn’t take long to cover up any signs of the old white beater. Throughout the month of May we have collected



Photo by Stephanie McDonald.

donations for the **Animal Rescue Foundation (ARF)** which will soon be used to help needy dogs and cats found on the outskirts of Calgary. Donations of kennels, food and many towels and blankets have poured in and our car is almost full to the roof.

Soon our car will be emptied and the donations will be sent away. It will be sad to see our beautiful work of art towed away; but we students will be pleased to know the car will be used to support the Kidney Foundation, another worthwhile cause.

Submitted by Stephanie McDonald (Lutheran Church of Our Savior, Calgary)

Beginning Ministry with Vacation Bible School



Photo courtesy of St. Joseph's Lutheran Church, Armena

Newly ordained **Pastor Jim Appleby** answered the call to Armena Parish, Alberta. Pastor Jim, Angie, Brenna and Julianne moved to the parsonage in late June and his installation service was held at Scandia church, Armena on June 29. Pastor Jim's first services were July 6. Little did he know that his first sermon would be from Mrs. Shutter's house in God's big backyard! The St. Joseph congregation in Hay Lakes holds Vacation Bible School for approximately 50 to 60 children during the first week of July every year. For two Sundays the energetic adults and teens that provide this fun week for area children transform the church and grounds into the year's theme.

Submitted by Barb Bolton

"Celebrations" IS A PUBLICATION
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ITS PURPOSE is...

- ...to connect the people and congregations of our synod.
- ...to provide a forum for celebrating the people, places and mission of the congregations in our synod.
- ...to help us learn from each other and encourage each other in our work for Jesus Christ.

SUBMIT articles and photos about the life, work and mission of the congregations of our synod to the *"Celebrations"* editor, Lisa Rude at:

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