



“Celebrations”

*A publication of the Synod of Alberta and the Territories
Fall 2009*

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Header photo of stained-glass courtesy of Faith Lutheran, Calgary. Window design by Geoff Jamieson. All photos in Celebrations by Colleen McGinnis, unless otherwise stated.

Wearing Knock-Offs?



Each Reformation season we are confronted by these words of Jesus in John’s Gospel: “If you continue in my word, you are truly

my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” This text comes before us at a time when a goodly number of North American Lutherans are questioning whether we and the Church continue to believe what our Article of Faith says we believe, continue to teach what we say we teach, and continue to confess what we say we confess.

Is the Gospel (in the narrow sense) still confessed as the revelation of God’s saving will and grace in Jesus Christ? Is the Gospel (in the broad sense, as the whole counsel of God) still confessed as the inspired Word of God, through which God still speaks, and the only source of the Church’s doctrine and the authoritative standard for the faith and life of the Church? These are not spurious questions born out of a vacuum. People are prepared to say:

“That’s what I believe, teach and confess,” but they are not nearly as confident in saying: “This is what we believe, teach and confess as the Evangelical Lutheran Church”. Without putting too fine a point on it, it’s the right moment for a bishop to echo the words of our Lord: “If you continue in my word ...” Jesus’ statement is conditional; because experience taught him that continuing in his word was not a foregone conclusion ... not something every would-be follower of his *would* or *could* do.

We have boldly sung that God’s Word is our great heritage. We have hung out our shingle: Word alone! Grace alone! Faith alone! Christ alone! Cross alone! We are a reformed and reforming church, a renewed and renewing church, a transformed and transforming church. That is our birthright and legacy – an identity to be claimed and tested by each succeeding generation – some generations more successfully than

others. Frankly, I have a great concern that in our passing on of the faith once delivered, succeeding generations take less of their identity with them, and leave more of it behind. At some point we become like a pair of knock-off designer jeans with the label as our only remaining claim to the name.



As Luther stood before bishops and princes to defend his beliefs at the Diet of Worms, he made this summary declaration: "Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason, (since I believe neither the Pope nor the Councils alone; it being evident that they have often erred and contradicted themselves) my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience would be neither right nor safe. God help me. Here I stand, I can do no other."

We want our consciences captive to the Word of God, too; and we want our consciences captive to the substance of our faith, to the creeds, Confessions and Reformation principles. We want to say with Luther: "Here we stand, too."

There was an article in *Christianity Today*, posted on the web a few years ago. It was an article about Confessional churches and David Neff, the editor, wrote that "creeds and confessions of faith are like seatbelts. They won't do you any good unless you use them...they establish boundaries for and around the Christian people". ("Ground Rules", David Neff – posted 10/22/03).

To continue in the Word has to do with discernment – especially discerning the Spirit of Truth from the *zeitgeist*, the spirit of the times. How ironic that we are short on the ability to discern, when discernment is most urgently required, and not just in things spiritual but in every aspect of human living. Of all that's true about any of us, Christ is the truth that ultimately counts. That's the truth, which is ours to speak, and thanks be to God for it!

+Ronald B. Mayan, Bishop

Around the Synod

Coming Events

New Synod Editor Begins



Photo by:
Leon Strembitsky

As of September 2009, Colleen McGinnis is the new insert editor for the Synod of Alberta and the Territories. Colleen is an artist by profession and, with her husband, Leon Strembitsky,

owns an art gallery and picture framing shop in Wetaskiwin. She is a member of St. John's Lutheran Church and enjoys art, writing, music, photography and growing sunflowers for the goldfinches.



**Conference Conventions:
Coming to a Location Near You in November!**

East Central – Nov. 21 at Peace Lutheran Church, Wainwright.

Southwestern – Nov. 28 at Lutheran Church of Our Saviour, Calgary.

Front cover – No Place Like Home Brochure



“No Place like Home” is produced by Evangelical Lutheran Women Inc.

No Place like Home

Homelessness is on the rise across Canada. This workshop series on understanding homelessness invites Christians, in an ecumenical forum, to explore what it means to have a home and the implications for those who don't. The first workshop was held October 24, 2009. Don't miss the next three on Saturday mornings from 8:30 to 11:45.

The Faces of Homelessness: Nov. 14, 2009

My Neighbourhood: January 23, 2010

Knowledge into Action: February 20, 2010

Contact: Hosanna Lutheran Church to register
There is no registration fee for these workshops.

Ph: (780) 484-3942

Address: 9009 - 163 Street, Edmonton.

Stir Up Our Hearts to Prepare The Way

This Advent Service of Worship, Song and Prayer will be held at Ascension Lutheran Church, Edmonton, AB (8405-83St.) on the First Sunday in Advent, November 29, at 7:00 pm.

The worship will feature two monologues: “Elizabeth the Mother of John the Baptist” and “The Innkeeper’s Wife Speaks Out,” the combined choirs of Glory Lutheran Church, Sherwood Park and Ascension Lutheran, Edmonton, Handbells, Congregational Song and Prayers.

An offering will be received for the Third World Development ministry of Canadian Lutheran World Relief.

Ample parking is available across from the church in the Bonnie Doon Parking Lot.

Join us as we celebrate the beginning of the new Church Year and as our hearts are stirred to prepare the way.

***Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols for
Advent and Christmas***
Winspear Centre - Monday, November 30 - 7:30 p.m.

U of A Mixed Chorus & Faculty of Education
Handbell Ringers, Robert de Frece, Director
Marnie Giesbrecht & Joachim Segger, Organists

All Seats: \$10 (plus service chg.)
at the Winspear Box Office (428-1414)

Sponsors: U of A Christian Chaplains, Mixed Chorus, and Department of Music

A Benefit for the U of A Campus Food Bank

Join in this enchanting, edifying night of Christmas readings and song. Thrill to the music of the U of A Mixed Chorus and Handbell Ringers. Sing carols along with the mighty Davis Concert Organ!

Close Encounters - No Te Olvide el Camino ... *Don't forget the way.*

"Don't forget the way," the maestro instructed us as we said our good-byes in front of the Hogar Llanero Brisas del Canada.

On March 26, 2009, 10 youth and 5 adults from Ascension Lutheran Church left Edmonton to begin our long awaited journey to Colombia, South America. For 12 days we enjoyed Colombian hospitality, service, culture, and landscape.



Photo by Hernan Ariza.

The Journey to Colombia group in front of the Lutheran Church in Sogamoso;
Back row, left to right - Erika Rodning, Tanner Chell, Isaiah Hoepner, Marina Hoepner, Pastor Larry Kochendorfer, Geoff Hoepner, Connor Dear, Andrew Chell, Cathy Kochendorfer, Anna Kochendorfer, Tricia Hoepner.
Front row - Brittany Low, Olivia Hoepner, Lisa Dolinsky, Joyce Hendrickson.

Our main priority for this journey was to build relationships with the students and staff of the Hogar Llanero Brisas del Canada (Home for Children of the Plains, With Breezes from Canada). We were awestruck when we first met the youth of the Hogar, students who our Ascension congregation has been supporting for 3 years. Here they were, alive and real, and as excited to meet us as we were to meet them.

The residents at the Hogar Llanero Brisas del Canada live at this “home” in order to complete their education in the town of Paz de Ariporo. Prior to this they have completed grade five in nearby villages. The participants of our journey were privileged to witness first hand the incredible difference this program is making in the lives of the youth of the llanos and their families.

Photo by Tricia Hoepfner



Over the days that we spent at the Hogar Llanero an amazing thing happened. The youth of Colombia and the youth of Canada became friends. Despite the limits of a language barrier, relationships flourished. It was incredible to watch the youth engage in communication by whatever means possible.

Our group spent one week in Paz de Ariporo, getting to know the students and staff at the

Hogar, participating in a multicultural program hosted by students from the Hogar, playing microfutbol with the youth of Colombia, enjoying a typical “llanero style” barbeque, worshipping with the congregation at Emmanuel Lutheran Church and attending their youth group meeting, and building a “Kiosco”, a gazebo which would be a multipurpose gathering place at the boy’s dorm. One day was spent travelling deep into the llanos to the town of Totumo where another student dormitory is located.

Our journey also involved time in Bogota, Colombia’s capital city. Here we were hosted by the Bishop of the IELCO (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia) who brought us to the suburb of Soacha, a very poor area of Bogota. We visited two social programs of the Lutheran Church – a senior’s day program, and a program for single mothers and their children. Our group was touched deeply by the individuals we met in this neighborhood and the struggles they shared with us. We were also touched by the hope that we witnessed, despite the obvious despair.



Photo by Joyce Hendrickson

We also visited Colegio CELCO (Colegio Evangelico Luterana de Colombia) in Sogamoso, a school founded by the first missionaries to Colombia who came from Alberta. The Synod of Alberta and the Territories is a supporter of this school. Our group



Photo by Tricia Hoepfner

was given a tour in which we were shown the ways the CELCO school has “stretched” the dollars provided by the AB&T synod to make necessary upgrades in order to maintain accreditation with the government. The upgrades included seven new water tanks, electrical work, painting the exterior, a separate room

for garbage, renovating the physics lab, addition of computers, new desks, and continuing education for the teachers.

Our group was struck by several contrasts as we traveled the Colombian countryside. We witnessed extreme poverty and exceptional wealth, great hope in the midst of despair, stronger faith in Jesus Christ, a stronger sense of community, and greater graciousness in hospitality to the stranger.

We learned much from our brothers and sisters in Christ in Colombia. We learned that when you have little, you can still give from your heart. The youth of the Hogar gave our youth gifts – treasured belongings such as bracelets, necklaces, rings, and literally the shirt off one’s back. We also learned that you do not have to be related, to be treated like family. Colombian hospitality is like no other. Everywhere we visited we received an incredibly loving welcome. When we would say “gracias” the response we would receive would be “para servirle” or “a su servicio” which means, “I am at your service”. We were served with a graciousness that goes beyond words.

Many of the Colombians we spoke with asked us to tell our fellow Canadians that Colombia is not how the media portrays it. They are saddened by the poor reputation Colombia has. We are privileged to bring back this good news, as the Colombia we encountered is a country with people who are rich in hope, faith, love, and grace. The beauty of Colombia is not only in the landscape, but in the people who touched our hearts deeply.

We will not forget the way. We will never “olvide el camino.”

By Tricia Hoepfner, Ascension Lutheran Church, Edmonton, AB

That's Amazing!

This fall was exceptional in so many ways. That was reinforced in an email from Messiah Lutheran Church, Camrose, which stated, "What an amazing September we have had!" Following are a few examples of what not only Messiah, but others in our Synod found amazing.



Photos by Marlys Sorenson

"Praise Him from whom all blessings flow."
Jumping for joy during Messiah's Miquelon Lake
Campout, September 11 and 12, 2009

Messiah Lutheran Church in Camrose Camps Out

Our 2nd "annual" (judging by its popularity) campout at Miquelon Lake was an amazing success! We had ten camping units (RV's and tents), about 25 overnight in a group camping site, and more for the Friday potluck supper. The event wasn't structured, so activities happened when and as people suggested them. We took sunset walks along the lake, played games, worked on craft projects, went swimming, sat around the ever-present campfire visiting, singing, or praying the popcorn prayer. This is where anyone "pops" in to pray a word or a sentence whenever they want, and as often as they want.



Some members of Messiah Lutheran Church in Camrose, together with the Colombian family they sponsored.

The group was varied, and included an exchange student from Mexico, as well as the Rios family from Colombia, who have been with us in Canada for about a year. We celebrated a birthday for one of their girls, complete with birthday cake.

Bev Swanson, a mom with young children, commented that it was “nice to be with a multigenerational group – a fun family feeling.” Lynn Thygesen said she particularly enjoyed the laid back setting and being able to get to know some of the older people from the church. Rhonda Thygesen, age 11, liked the campfire, roasting marshmallows, singing songs and being with all her friends.

It was so relaxing to gather with church families and be totally unstructured for a night and a day. We had beautiful weather – so beautiful in fact, that one person slept under the stars. The Messiah Miquelon Lake Campout is a keeper for sure!

Submitted by Marlys Sorenson, Messiah Lutheran Church, Camrose



**Ascension Lutheran,
Edmonton
Welcome Back BBQ**

If it's September, and you find the streets near Pastor Larry and Cathy Kochendorfer's home jammed with traffic, it's because they are holding their annual Welcome Back BBQ for College and Careers young adults.

With September beginning and students searching for a church home, the BBQ is a great opportunity for connecting young adults with each other. This year

many gathered for the *FREE* food, conversation, group building, devotions, prayer and games. In addition to young adults who are currently working, students who attended the BBQ are enrolled at Augustana in Camrose, Concordia University College, U of A, Faculty St. Jean and Kings University College in Edmonton.



Photos and story submitted by Pastor Larry Kochendorfer

Photo by Mike Kakowchyk of Calgary, Alberta



Theodore and Nakkita (Brown) Foureyes on their wedding day

Traditional Garb for Wedding at Grace Lutheran, Wetaskiwin

Early in 2008, a young First Nations couple began attending worship at Grace Lutheran Church. The bride-to-be was baptized, becoming a member at Grace in March of 2009; the groom-to-be was accepted by Affirmation of Baptism in May. The wedding date was set for August of 2009.

Their wedding day was wonderful. The bride was beautiful in her full-length doeskin dress as she walked up the aisle in bare feet – a First Nations tradition. The groom wore a matching doeskin shirt. A friend of the couple began the service by leading in the sweet-grass ceremony by burning sage, and praying for them in his native Ojibway language.

This was a first time event for us – an amazing day in the life of Grace Lutheran.

By Pastor Rita Roste, Grace, Wetaskiwin

Room for One More in the Chapel at Hastings Lake Bible Camp

Music spilled through the open doors and people just kept coming in till the chapel at Hastings Lake, north of Camrose, seemed to bulge at the seams.

It was the last weekend in September. People had gathered at the camp for fall clean-up on Saturday, and again on Sunday for Thanksgiving service and then a turkey supper orchestrated by the Bergquist and Heise families of Camrose.

Members of the choir from Glory Lutheran Church in Sherwood Park provided the beautiful music that called people in. Pastor Gunner Christianson



Photo by Marlys Sorenson

Past, present and future at Hastings Lake: Kara Sorenson (Servant in Training), Jon Skriver, and Jake Kopperud (former counsellors), Jesselyn Alexander and Michele Stoyko (current leaders for 2009)

of Edmonton was the speaker. Darcy Albers, camp program director, led the service and then invited people to share their memories and how the camp impacted their lives.

Hastings Lake is a spot loved by many people, as is evidenced by the number of camp supporters, former campers and camp staff who gather each year on this weekend to enjoy each others company.



Marlys Sorenson and daughter, Kara, near the chapel.



Kara Sorensen, Camrose, and Jesselyn Alexander, Medicine Hat

Submitted by Marlys Sorenson, Messiah Lutheran Church, Camrose

Quilts Become a Metaphor for Life at Ascension Lutheran in Edmonton

Old and new, some finely crafted, some just a little disorderly, quilts covered the walls, draped over the altar and flowed over every available surface in the sanctuary of Ascension Lutheran Church. Independent of the warm and welcoming aspect of quilts, their presence brought home an important point. People, like these quilts, come in all shapes and sizes, and in varying stages of wear and tear. What makes them precious are the stories woven into their fabric.

Darla Wildfang tells of a little shawl-like crazy quilt that was draped over the piano. In a quilt show, it may not have merited a second glance, but this little quilt was sewn together by the hands of a woman with Alzheimer's disease. No longer able to articulate her thoughts, her awareness was such that she was able to communicate her love for her daughter in the making and gifting of this quilt. In matters of the heart, it's a clear winner. It's stories like this one that bring us all closer in the telling.



Photo by Darla Wildfang

Quilts, quilts, and more quilts! When the call for quilts was put out, they hoped for thirty. They got seventy!

Celebrating Two Ordinations

Eric Parker, (center back in photo below) was ordained on July 4 at his home church of Calvary Lutheran in Edmonton. He accepted a call at St. John Lutheran Church of Golden Spike in Spruce Grove, Alberta.




Photo by Serenity Wellman, 10 year old daughter of Pastor Mike Wellman. This was her first ordination and she recorded the event with her dad's camera.



Judy Jarvis was ordained July 31, accepting a call to Special Service, Interim Ministry at Messiah Lutheran Church in Camrose. Her name is currently out for regular call.

Photo from Messiah Lutheran Church website



Lutheran Hospital Ministries
SOUTHERN ALBERTA

Bringing Healing is the message of Lutheran Hospital Ministries-Southern Alberta (LHMSA) encapsulated in the wave draped over the cross in their new logo.

A registered charity, jointly operated by ELCIC and LCC, Lutheran Hospital Ministries provides a volunteer visiting service to anyone who has a connection to the Lutheran faith. They currently serve the three Calgary acute care hospitals and an increasing number of care facilities in the Calgary area.

Grace Lutheran in Hinton Celebrates 50th Anniversary

On October 25, 2009, Grace Lutheran Church, Hinton celebrated 50 years as an organized congregation.

Joining in the Reformation Sunday celebration service were sister congregations Grace Lutheran, Edson and Jasper Lutheran, Jasper.

A fantastic potluck dinner followed the service, where memories and stories were also shared. Rev. John Ekstedt told tales of traveling to the three parishes, and of his preliminary work in Grande Cache. Marie Rowley spoke about the foundation that was laid for Grace Lutheran in the mid 1950's, as her parents were instrumental in establishing the church in Hinton. Willie Lep, president of the ELW, shared memories of the actual building of the church.

Worship was held in various meeting places until 1958, when a gift of money from the Alberta-British Columbia Lutheran Women's League allowed them to purchase land and plan for the future. The church's first "permanent" home was a bunkhouse, which was converted for worship use. It served Grace Lutheran well until the current church was built in 1967-1968. Pastor Doug Heine was called to serve Grace Lutheran in 2007.

Submitted by Chara Carré, Grace Lutheran, Hinton



Photo by Gail Gow

L to R: Rev. John Ekstedt, Jasper; Rev. Doug Heine, Grace, Hinton and Rev. Sean Bell, Grace, Edson.

***Celebrations* IS A PUBLICATION
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COMMITTEE
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TERRITORIES.**

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, Colleen McGinnis at:

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780-352-3519

Please include name, phone number and email or address with all submissions. All submissions will also be considered for the ABT Synod section in *Canada Lutheran*.

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Photo by Gail Gow



Reverends Heine, Bell, and Ekstedt in front of Grace, Hinton