



“Celebrations”

*A publication of the Synod of Alberta and the Territories
Summer 2010*

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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.

A Shrinking Horizon



Resources are diminishing, pews are emptying, churches are breaking apart, and increasingly we are witnessing the

phenomenon of unbelief outside faith communities as well as inside of them. Passing on the faith requires open minds and hearts. But minds and hearts, educated and socialized in our western culture, are closing to the faith premise that Jesus Christ is the Son of the Living God and Savior of the world. Our collective ability to believe in God is diminished and further diminishing. The well-worn argument that today’s faith struggles have their real roots in the social changes of the 1960’s is too simplistic. Again, the baby boomers give themselves too much credit. Go back to the Renaissance if you want to sleuth out the origin of this struggle.

Father Ron Rolheiser is a Roman Catholic priest and member of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, and president of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas. He is a community-builder, lecturer and writer. He has

been thinking about the deeper reasons underlying our struggles to believe in God in Western culture and wrote an article entitled “A Shrinking Horizon”. The shrinking horizon of which Fr. Rolheiser writes is not the decline of the missional effort and effect in Western culture. Rather, Fr. Rolheiser argues that the shrinking horizon has to do with the closing of the Western mind – our growing inability to experience an interior life or life with God. The majority today has locked on to one zone of consciousness that is devoid of everything that is not recognizable with the senses – what can be seen, felt, touched and sensed empirically. Only the things they consider real or fact can be verified in this way. Hence there is a propensity to reject supernatural and religious realities as unreal and fictional. But failing to exercise our more contemplative faculties leaves us no longer able to apprehend the dimensions of reality that are beyond the here and now.

Author George Orwell tells of a cruel trick he once played on a wasp. As the insect sucked jam from Orwell's plate, Orwell cut him in half. The wasp paid no attention and merely went on with his meal. Only when he tried to fly away did he grasp the dreadful thing that had happened to him. Orwell concludes that it is the same with modern man. The thing that has been cut away is his soul and there was a period during which he did



not notice it. Among us, a religious and ascetic culture is giving way to an analytic culture of release and pleasure. The imperative mood is being replaced by the therapeutic mood. As long as we are sucking jam all is well.

So we ask the Lutheran question: What does this mean? Since we don't have the luxury of choosing the era in which we live our lives, we have to bloom where we're planted. Christ's missional call is upon us. As ever, we

disciples of Christ proclaim him – in season and out of season. How we proclaim him in a culture predominated by unhearing hearers and unseeing seers, is the question. What is manifestly clear is that our usual ways of being *in mission for others* are grossly missing the mark. A simple readjustment of our old methods and band-aids isn't going to work – not even if we put our old missiology on the Internet.

How do we “un-shrink” the horizon? How will we move the men and women we know, even our own kids, above, beyond, and past the jam? That will take a veritable Pentecost, but ... stranger things have happened.

By Bishop Ronald B. Mayan

Read Fr. Rolheiser's article on his website: www.ronrolheiser.com

Click on “Articles and Lectures”.

Farewell and Thank You, Pastor Phil


After serving three bishops and spending 25 years immersing himself in the work of the Synod of Alberta and the Territories, Pastor Phil Hink is retiring. He will help in the transition and mentoring of the new Assistant to the Bishop, Pastor Larry Kochendorfer, but after that, there's a fishing rod in his cabin at Lac La Biche, and lots of perch and pike to be caught. He'll golf in the summer, curl in the winter and read, read, read.

Pastor Phil sums up his career with these words. “It's been a demanding role, but one of the things I have liked best is that there is no predictability. I never knew from one day to the next what was going to happen and that's part of the excitement. It has truly been a privilege to serve.”



Reverend Phil Hink

Around the Synod



Coming Events

“Healthy Rural Communities” – A Course for Rural Pastors



Photo by Leon Strembitsky

The College of Emmanuel St. Chad, in partnership with CiRCLe M (Centre for Rural Community Leadership and Ministry) and the Saskatoon Theological Union are hosting a course for audit or graduate credit Nov 22 - Nov 26 in Camrose. Open to clergy or by special permission of instructor, Rev. Dr. Dittmar Mundel, this course will examine the ecological, economic, political, social, and spiritual health of rural communities.

Lutherans register with Susan Avant at Lutheran Theological Seminary, 306-966-7856 or via email to susan.avant@usask.ca. Visit www.circle-m.ca for more information.

What If?

What if November 6 was marked on our calendars? We'd be curious, and looking forward to a day of conversation from 9:30 to 4:00 at Lutheran Church of our Saviour in Calgary. We'd be imagining what shape mission and renewal might take in our churches. Guest speakers are Cam Roxburgh and Anthony Brown of Forge Canada, an organization which equips leaders to help churches become missional, to multiply and to change neighbourhoods. Register online at whatif2010.ca/ or by calling 403-253-1453. The cost is \$20.00 (includes lunch) and can be paid at the door.

7th Annual Retreat of Our Own – a theological reflection retreat for lay learners

Dynamic speaker, the Rev. Dr. Barbara Rossing, is coming back for her third presentation at the Retreat of Our Own. Her topic *“Ecology, The Bible and our Future: Are We Living at the End of the World?”* is a theme that is close to her heart. Plan to attend this lay retreat at St. Michael's Anglican Church in Canmore on September 24 – 26.

The registration fee of \$199.00 includes the program, Friday night reception, and all meals and coffee breaks through Sunday lunch. \$50.00 by August 15 will reserve your spot, with the remainder due by September 15. To register, or for more information, contact Jon Stolee at (780) 672-5234, Kristian Wold at (780) 672-3659 or email info@retreatofourown.ca.

Conference Conventions

- October 1 & 2: Northern Conference; St. John's Lutheran Church, Barrhead.
- October 16: West Central Conference; Faith Lutheran Church, Sundre.
- November 6: Southern Conference; Zion Lutheran Church, Bow Island.
- November 20: East Central Conference; Edberg Lutheran Church, Edberg.

**Northern Conference Women
are invited to celebrate the
Ministry of the ELW
September 25, 2010**

**Worship 10:00 a.m. Augustana, Edmonton
followed by lunch and entertainment.
Bring your women's ministry memorabilia.
A small fee will be levied to cover costs.**

**For Information Contact: 780-485-1660
Sharlene Millang-Borst Isborst@shaw.ca**

Our Hands are Not Enough

Photo by: Stellanie Criebardis Hyer



Preston Pouteaux, Director of Discipleship Ministry,
Lutheran Church of Our Saviour, Calgary

I heard a term recently used to describe a group of people found in most churches: The Sunshine Squad. Most churches have a cherished group who help keep the peace. They are the eternal optimists, quick to offer a smile. But, what happens when a storm approaches?

Optimism vs. Hope:

Optimism is a tempting way to approach threatening storm clouds

in our lives and in the church. Positive thinking encourages us to close our eyes and think our way into a new future. Happiness is just around the corner if we push out negative thinking and thinkers to create space for uniform positivity. Optimism, in this sense, places the future in our hands. But our hands are not enough.

As followers of Jesus, we have a better way, a hope-filled way. Through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, we have a new kind of confidence that puts threatening storm clouds in a new light. The dark skies, rather than washing us out, fuel the Great Hope we have. Romans 5 says: "We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts..." So, in a sense, the storm clouds we face are not a distraction to the work of God. God works through challenging times that we might become people of true perseverance, character, and hope.

Dreams: I'm a grade 'A' dreamer. Since I was a boy I would lay awake in bed, conjuring up stories of space ships and bold rescues, stealth ninjas and salty pirates. In the blink of an eye my backyard or basement could become any new world I wanted it to be. Today, at twenty-nine, I've long since traded in my Lego and sandbox for a new kind of dreaming. I dream about the future of the church and what God would have us do in our communities. I dream about how we could start new churches, do new overseas ministry, and help people walk with Jesus. I wonder what our church would look like if we did things differently. As a church, we don't innovate out of our own sunny enthusiasm and we don't dream apart from stormy challenges. It's only because of our hope in Christ that we can dream and innovate. It's because he holds and shapes us that we can envision a New Day in the ministry we share.

What if? On November 6, 2010, hopeful dreamers are coming together at Lutheran Church of Our Saviour in Calgary for a one-day conversation about renewal and mission. The goal of this event is to generate new and creative approaches to ministry and dream of innovations that will empower churches to bless their communities in the name of Jesus. This unique and creative conversation is open to everyone with a heart for the future mission and renewal of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. God is moving in our midst. Hope is rising.

By Preston Pouteaux

Rooted in Christ; Clothed with Joy **2010 Alberta Synod Convention Highlights**



When we've had enough of wandering, we say we've put down roots. But when an idea takes root, the opposite occurs. We are inspired to grow, search, and discover — to try something new.

During the June 3 opening worship service of the 2010 ABT Synod Convention, National Bishop Susan Johnson used the word “multi-purpose” to describe the convention theme: **Rooted in Christ; Clothed With Joy**. She explained that God is calling the ELCIC to a deeper and more rooted relationship with Christ. We are called back to the basics—a kind of discipleship boot camp—to share his love with a world that needs it very much.



National Bishop Susan Johnson

It was a timely Christian message that more than 250 convention attendees at Augustana University Campus in Camrose, Alta., took to heart. National Bishop Johnson went on to speak of the need to take seriously our relationship with Aboriginal Peoples in Canada and to explore how we, as a church and as Canadians, are treating others. She spoke of creating effective partnerships with other churches and church-related agencies. An important step has already been taken in looking at the possibility of a shared joint national office in Ottawa between Lutherans and Anglicans.

A member of the Structural Renewal Task Force also addressed convention delegates. In 2009, the task force began reviewing church structure, including our stewardship of finances, time, and personnel. The task force will look at all possible solutions for making the church more financially viable, including amalgamating synods, changing the size and role of the National Office, renewing the mandate of conferences, and making convention attendance more affordable, just to name a few. To offer your feedback on structural renewal, visit www.elcic.ca/structural-renewal/ or call 204-984- 9173 for a survey.



Presiding is Bishop Ronald B. Mayan, assisted by the 2010 Companion for Worship and the Arts, Robyn Simpson-Mohr.

Other convention highlights:

- Bishop Ronald Mayan was re-elected for a second term.
- Martin Luther House, a resident Christian community for post-secondary students in Edmonton, is going to get a new room! Through a grant to Lutheran Campus Ministry, the synod is funding (up to a maximum of \$50,000) construction of a secondary suite in the basement.
- A survey sent to a random selection of pastors' spouses identified some key issues that can lead to stress, burnout, family breakdown, and addiction among pastoral leaders. Session leaders identified retreat and counseling services and encouraged open discussion. The spouses offered this to-do list for congregation members to consider:
 1. Get more involved in parish life.
 2. Avoid calling the pastor after hours unless it's an emergency.
 3. Say thank you. Expressions of appreciation are important.

4. Care for the pastor by caring for his or her spouse.
5. Provide for time away for relaxation and spiritual renewal.
6. Pray for the pastor and his or her family, and let them know you are providing this support.

- Because water shortages are a real concern, we will be sending a letter to the Alberta government expressing our collective concerns, as well as sending a pastoral letter to congregations encouraging their input into the process of water allocation in Alberta.

- The youth delegation delivered these heartfelt words to the assembly: "We want to participate in worship and in the life of the church. Sometimes we feel we are not respected and that our thoughts don't count. They do. People say we are the generation for change. Let us try. Young people are often spoken of as the 'future' of the church. The future hasn't happened yet. We are the present and are prepared to make change right now with your help. Together, we can all work as the body of Christ."



Dorina Brown, introducing the Youth Delegation

- For sticking their necks out and taking on new initiatives, St. Albert Lutheran, St. Albert, Alta., received the Turtle Award. Since 2004, the congregation has acted as the hands and feet of Christ with its ministry of food and pastoral care for homeless people and sex-trade workers in the Edmonton area.



Rev. Hink

- Retiring assistant to the bishop Rev. Phil Hink was honoured with a gift and photo presentation of his accomplishments. The newly appointed assistant to the bishop is Rev. Larry Kochendorfer.

It was a convention full of promise. In National Bishop Johnson's words, "This is God's church, a normal church, a normal family. We may not know for sure how things are going to turn out, but we know that with God, it will be good."

A little bit more from the convention ...



Above: Several rostered church leaders were recognized. Here, Rev. Telmor Sartison honours Rev. Fred Zinck for 60 years of service.



Judy Gusdal works on the group discussion questions

Personal Thoughts on Structural Renewal

There is joy in that structural renewal is based on growth in spirituality and on the desire to walk more closely as followers of Jesus.

There is some regret that we may have to sacrifice some "local flavour" while there is a merging of resources, facilities and personnel. My prayer is that the spiritual health of the whole people of God will be enhanced.

By Judy Gusdal, Wetaskiwin

From the Pew

We are accustomed to messages and stories being delivered from the pulpit. In this section of “Celebrations” you will read words belonging to people who sit in the pews. Over time, stories will be collected from churches throughout our Synod. They may tell of personal faith journeys or memorable experiences from the present or past – something uplifting, something funny or something sad. This third offering comes from Grace Lutheran in Wetaskiwin.

***Dale Woitt:
Confessions of a Gear Head***

The freedom of the open road, the excitement, the speed and the sights along the way is what I love about motorcycling. I like a machine that tears out from under me like a spirited horse. Speed keeps all of my senses focused in the moment. I manage and control the horsepower of my bike with a twist of my wrist, watching life in fast-forward. It's exhilarating! I'm a “Gear Head”. It's one of many things that fills up my tank and puts a smile on my face.

I'm also a Christian and involved in my church. While our minister was on holiday, I volunteered to do the sermon as a layperson. My sermon was about love, validation and acceptance. To illustrate the point I was going to make, I dressed up in my leather bike gear and stood at the pulpit.



Oddly enough I felt a little out of place. I didn't fit in. There was no dress code in church, but “Come as you are” into God's presence for we are all children of God, was shaky for me at that moment. Yet, we are created in his image and more precious and loved than any other thing on earth. The church is our sanctuary. We don't come to church to hide from the world. We come from a sinful existence looking for God's gift of salvation. So, I shouldn't have felt out of place that day.

My biker gear was unquestionably appropriate in August in Sturgis, South Dakota. Two friends and I rode our bikes down through Montana, Wyoming and South Dakota to be a part of the biggest bike rally in the world. About half a million bikers come together for one week. We fit right in at the rally.

My experience in the small town of Sturgis and surrounding area was a kind, open embrace of who I am. For example, the seniors homes in the area hosted pancake breakfasts or biscuits and gravy. At the door, two senior ladies dressed in leather vests



greeted us with a hug. Not only on the way in, but on the way out, with wishes for a great day and a safe ride. Seniors had served us our breakfast. Others prepared food in the kitchen. Bikers and seniors don't have much in common, do they? But they didn't hide and lock their doors for the rally. They came out and embraced the bikers in many ways – validation from an unlikely group of people.

Nearby, in the beautiful Black Hills of South Dakota, validation took a different path. Chief Standing Bear, back in 1939 chose to have the image of Crazy Horse, a warrior chief, carved into the rock face of a mountain. He asked a white man, Korczak Ziolkowski, who was an apprentice working on Mount Rushmore at the time, to create the image. They came up with an image of Crazy Horse mounted on his horse with one arm outstretched, pointing across the Black Hills, land and home of the Lakota, where many still live and where many lost lives when the white man took over. An unlikely choice, but the native people embraced Korczak, a white man, to sculpt a hero, a warrior, Crazy Horse. They validated his ability to sculpt and affirmed him to do this special task.

My personal experience with validation and affirmation came from another source. I was upset about comments a co-worker had made to me. What really hurt was that I thought we were friends, going out for lunch, sharing food, talking about life and praying together. Had our friendship been a hoax all along? Stepping back, not knowing why or

where this was coming from, I carried it around for a couple of weeks. I knew that harbouring bad feelings toward someone sickens our perception and pretty soon that person becomes a hideous monster that can't be dealt with. So, praying to God finally, I said, "I don't understand and I don't know how to make it better."

About the only time God gets me to listen is in the early morning when I'm half conscious, when it's quiet and there are no distractions. As I lay in bed God spoke to me, and left two words with me. Validate. Affirm.

God knew I was hurting and confused. He reassured me that it was just words from an angry person. No one died. No one's life was threatened. He embraced me with love and assurance. That love that surpasses our understanding, that grace that forgives all, allows us to be God's greatest joy.

People affirming each other, even people on opposite sides can come together to validate and care. This leads to acceptance and love. Validation + affirmation = caring = love.

I realized I am here to love! It's as simple as that. We are all here to love. That's what life is about. Love our families. Love our friends and when we run out of friends love strangers and then our enemies. If we think ourselves to be caring, loving people, we should work on the people we don't like. Everyone is created in Gods image and He doesn't make junk.

We must focus our affirmation on who they are, not what we want them to be or do. It only takes a minute to wreck a relationship with nasty words. But it also only takes a minute to turn a heart with sincere affirmation and validation. Deal with situations as they come. Don't wait for the other to make the first move. Don't carry feelings around until that person becomes unlovable.

So the onus is on me to validate and care for that person who hurt me, and to let words and opinions go. I can choose to ignore or even run away from people who hurt me. But the question is, "Am I a caring person?" I know what God would do and I know what I should do. So, I'll do it – with God's help!

*By Dale Woitt
Grace Lutheran Church, Wetaskiwin AB*



Pastor Sean Bell's "Holy Hardware" Collection Nears Completion



In January of 2010, Pastor Sean Bell (left) of Grace Lutheran Church in Edson, put a wheel in motion. A student first at CLBI, he later graduated from the Seminary in Saskatoon and was ordained and installed in Edson on June 7, 2009. His grandma, Harriet Jacobson, made him a beautiful Advent stole.

Since liturgical vestments are something all seminary students need at a time when funds are often tight, Sean put out a call, and *Operation: Clergy Vestment Roundup* was born. People brought their unused items to the Pastor's Study Conference and to the Camp Display at Convention. Wherever Sean went, a trail of people followed with their offerings. All collected stoles, albs, chasubles, shirts and assorted other "holy hardware" will be delivered to the Seminary on Sean's next trip to Saskatoon.

A Story of Vision, Relationships and Transformation

Photo by Leon Strembitsky



It began with someone standing up and telling a story. It was a story about the struggle of growing up in a family with uncertain work and finances, and then of a life working with unions so that others wouldn't have the same struggle. Then the story changed as the teller spoke about a vision of making a bigger difference. Soon others pored up and began telling each other about their own struggles, the pressures that they and their families face and the hopes that brought them there that night. It may seem like a strange way to take on such huge issues as homelessness or urban sprawl, but this is what community organizing looks like.

Have you ever wondered how a church could transform an entire city? Or have you ever wondered how we could go past band-aid solutions and address some of the root causes of poverty in our midst? In Calgary, this is the journey we have

begun. Advent Lutheran, along with Lutheran Church of Our Saviour, Prince of Faith and a host of other faith communities, unions and community organizations have decided to come together to build relationship with each other. We are telling stories, developing leaders and building our capacity to transform Calgary through a process called community organizing. The form it is taking is called MAC-G (Metro Alliance for the Common Good).

Community organizing is a process of building power through relationships. It has already brought about huge changes in Edmonton (Greater Edmonton Alliance - GEA) along with many other cities. I was first introduced to community organizing in Boston with Greater Boston Interfaith Organizing. While I was there, I was amazed to watch how people coming together literally transformed the lack of affordable housing in Boston. Likewise, from a distance, I have been filled with joy as GEA has begun to transform Edmonton.

In Calgary we are just beginning. We are building our relationships, getting the word out, developing our first leaders and building commitment. Our gatherings are often still small, but momentum is building. The reality is that we can see the vision; we can see how it will transform both Calgary and our church. We can see how in this work we are living the Gospel that we have been called to by our baptism.

If you would like to learn more about community organizing contact me at PastorRyan@adventlutheran.ca

By Pastor Ryan Andersen, Advent Lutheran Church, Calgary

Jesus of Edmonton – *What might he look like today?*

Ellen Fredrick, of Holy Spirit Lutheran Church in Edmonton sees him this way:

Jesus of Edmonton is an early 30's kid with low-slung blue jeans and a hoodie, sneakers, a ruddy complexion with a day's growth of beard. He lives in the Boyle-McCauley neighbourhood and walks with prostitutes, the homeless and the addicts. Sometimes at night he walks Whyte Avenue to speak to the young people who gather there. He can be found picketing at City Hall to bring Omar Kadhr home or at the legislative building protesting unfair changes to our health care system. The children at the Stollery know and love him, as do the patients at the Cross Cancer Institute. He is a carpenter who works for Habitat for Humanity and volunteers at the Food Bank.

His message is the same today as in days of old: love one another, do justice, look after the orphans, widows and strangers and obey the Ten Commandments. He worships in a different place each week, depending on where he is welcome.

And as in days of old his message is rejected, and he is reviled and scorned. His followers, probably only considered groupies, would end up disenchanted when he would be taken to a mental institution for observation and possible admission.



*Reprinted with special thanks to Ellen Fredrick
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***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, Colleen McGinnis at:

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