



Celebrations

*A publication of the Synod of Alberta and the Territories
Summer 2011*

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A special thanks to the **Canada Lutheran** editorial staff for any of their edits used in articles that also appeared in the ABT synod section of *Canada Lutheran*.

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.





Thoroughly Worldly

To become a place where all can encounter Christ, the church is subjected to all the weakness and suffering of the world.

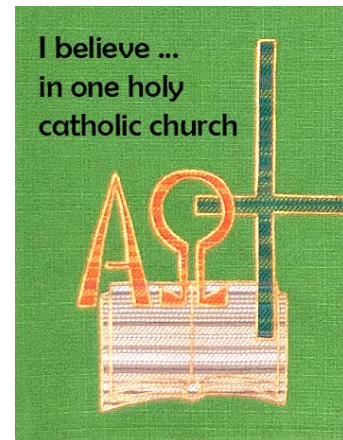
This summer we gathered as a church in convention. For me, and I expect for many, our thoughts would have naturally turned to what it means to be the church in general and what it means to be the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada particularly. As I was doing this thinking, I went back to the foundational material we find in the *Book of Concord (The Lutheran Confessions)*. I re-read the pertinent sections of the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession (1531)*, *The Smalcald Articles*, and Martin Luther's *Large Catechism*. Also I re-visited trusted Christian writers who have given me helpful instruction in the past. Right now I am working through *The Wisdom and Witness of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Fortress Press, 2000). It consists of quotations from Bonhoeffer accompanied by meditations prepared by Dr. Wayne Whitson Floyd, director of the Bonhoeffer Center at Lutheran Theological Seminary – Philadelphia.

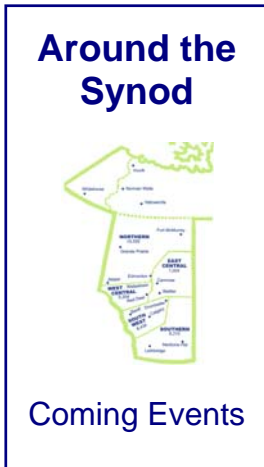
In a cited quotation, Bonhoeffer speaks of the incarnate worldliness of the church. He argues that the secularity of the church follows from the incarnation of Christ. He says the church, like Christ, has become the world. To take the concrete church as only a phantom or illusion is to discredit the real humanity of Jesus. The church is entirely world – it is subjected to all the world's weakness and suffering. The real sanctified-yet-sinful, justified-yet-fallen, church is the microcosm that illustrates the macrocosm (the world). Bonhoeffer believed that for the sake of real people, the church must be thoroughly worldly.

In his meditation on this text, Floyd notes that because God affirmed the world by choosing to become incarnate in Jesus, so also the church – totally a part of the world – can become the place where Christ can be encountered today. What does this mean? The church is privileged by its very secularity! But this does not result in a triumphal church; it guarantees instead a church of the cross – the church will suffer within the world the same fate that was Christ's. Yet in its weakness, suffering and vulnerability, the church will be a place where Christ's forgiving presence becomes known and experienced; that is, a compassionate church – suffering with and for the world. That's not our call; rather it is Christ's continuing call to his body.

Of course, I can't sign off without citing my favorite Luther quote on what it means to be church (*The Smalcald Articles*, Art 12: Concerning the Church): "God be praised, a seven-year-old child [who has learned the Children's Creed / Apostles' Creed] knows what the church is: holy believers and the sheep who hear the voice of their shepherd. This is why children pray in this way, 'I believe in one holy [catholic] church.' This holiness does not consist of surplices, tonsures, albs, or other ceremonies of theirs that they have invented over and above the Holy Scriptures. Its holiness exists in the Word of God and true faith."

By Bishop Ronald B. Mayan





Good Samaritan Society 2011 Spirituality and Wholeness Workshop

“Servant Leadership: Leading from the Inside Out” will be presented by Rebecca Nordeman of the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership. This workshop will explore seven key practices of Servant Leadership and identify ways to use your gifts, talents and passions to enrich the lives of others.

October 12 at Coast Lethbridge Hotel in Lethbridge, AB
 October 14 at Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Sherwood Park, AB

Early bird registration: \$75 by September 13.

Regular rate: \$95 by October 3

Seating is limited. Register online at <https://secure.gss.org/workshops/2011>.

Enlivening Worship

Concordia’s Church Music Symposium, August 29, will focus on the involvement of music, drama, word and gesture within worship. Guest presenter, Andrew Donaldson, is an acclaimed composer, conductor and expert in global worship music. Registration fee is \$75.00 with presentations and workshops held between 9:00 am and 4:30 pm. All are welcome to the 7:00 evening hymn festival at the Tegler Centre, Concordia University College, Edmonton. Contact Dr. Joy Berg, joy.berg@concordia.ab.ca for information.

Valerie Wolski Memorial Award

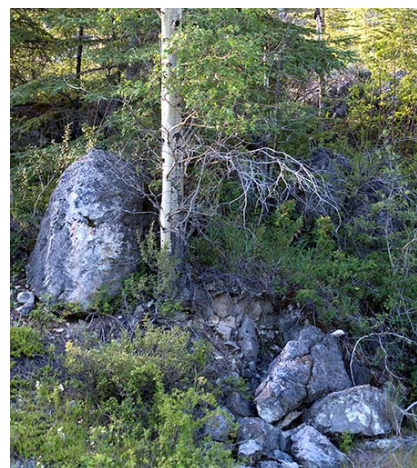
Valerie Kovacs Wolski, 1993 graduate of Augustana University College, Camrose, Alta. with a BA in psychology, was killed earlier this year while on the job for Canadian Mental Health in Camrose. A memorial fund in her honour has been set up to create a self sustaining endowment which will provide an annual award to an Augustana student majoring in psychology. Please visit www.valeriewolski.net/award/ if you wish to make a contribution.

8th Annual Retreat of our Own in Canmore – September 16 - 18, 2011

Join Rev. Dr. Gordon Jensen at this retreat for lay learners to explore how Luther viewed the relationship between scripture and the Word. Discover what Luther meant when he spoke of the Word as both audible and visible, and what that meant for Christian ethics and worship.

Dr. Jensen holds the William Hordern Chair of Theology and is Dean of Studies at the Lutheran Theological Seminary, Saskatoon. He is committed to an awareness of the Lutheran and ecumenical global community in his teaching, and is interested in exploring mission from a Lutheran perspective.

Gather on Friday, 7:30 pm, September 16 at the Best Western Poca Terra in Canmore. To register, or for more information, contact: Jon Stolee 780-672-5234 or Kristian Wold 780-672-3659.



Ecumenical Action

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity – January 18 - 25, 2012

Join with Christians around the world in praying for the unity of Christ's church. We are invited to put aside competition with one another and be embraced by Christ's victory, which joins us all together and calls us to the service of God and our neighbour. A wide variety of resources prepared by Christians from Poland, will be available by September 2011 at www.weekofprayer.ca.

You may also order a printed starter kit by downloading the form on the above website or by calling the Canadian Council of Churches in Toronto at 416-972-9494.

Please help mark this important event on the Canadian Council of Churches Church calendar, now in its 104th year.



Artwork by Sebastiano Stabile
for the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism

Two courses teach you a new way of seeing and being in the world!

Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry – September 19 – 21, 2011

Learn the appreciative way of: living with purpose and vision; discovering and growing what is life-giving; creating appreciative responses to problems using the three faces of compassion – “tenderness, fierceness, and mischievousness” to transform the world.

Appreciative Congregational Development – September 21 – 23, 2011

Apply appreciative inquiry to the task of congregational development. Plan and design an appreciative inquiry summit. Establish goals for congregational ministries. Move beyond development to transformation. Respond appreciatively to congregational resistance and conflict.

Presenter: Rev. Dr. Rob Voyle - international leader in the use of appreciative inquiry in church settings and director of the Clergy Leadership Institute in Hillsboro, Oregon.

Where: Providence Renewal Center, 30 Ave and 119 St, South Edmonton, Alberta.

When: September 19-21, 2011 and September 21-23, 2011

To register or for more information: www.clergyleadership.com/training/schedule.cfm

Questioning Answers & Answering Questions:

St. Stephen's College launches continuing education courses for “seekers”

Beginning September 28, two courses will be offered on six consecutive Wednesdays.

George Rodgers, master of theology (Chicago Theological Seminary) and doctor of ministry (St. Stephens), teaches “Christian Faith Revisited: What *Can* We Believe Today?”

Sandy Prather, director of St. Albert's Star of the North Retreat Centre, columnist for the *Prairie Messenger*, and adjunct lecturer at Newman Theological College, will teach “Revitalizing Spiritual Community: Exploring Alternative Approaches & Possibilities.”

To learn more about the program, please contact: St. Stephen's College, 8810 – 112 St., Edmonton. Phone: 780-439-7311 or email st.stephens@ualberta.ca.

Home to Stay

After years of meeting in an elementary school, a funeral chapel, and two local hotels, Glory Lutheran takes up permanent residence.

Photos by Doug Sime



Glory Lutheran, Sherwood Park, Alta., has always been mindful of the notion that the church is not a building or steeple. Beginning in July of 2004, worship services for the new congregation were led by retired pastors Rev. Holger Madsen and Rev. Mel Kornfeld, and were hosted in such places as the Robin Hood Learning Centre, Connelly-McKinley Funeral Chapel, and the Best Western Motel. Rev. Phil Hink, then assistant to the bishop, helped identify Rev. Marvin Krebs who began serving the congregation the following September. About the same time, a rental agreement was entered into with Franklin's Inn in Sherwood Park. Members went to work making a lower concourse location as attractive as possible. In April of 2005, the congregation put out a call for a permanent pastor, and in January of the following year Pastor Tom Peterson started his ministry at Glory.



Left to right: Elizabeth Wood, Rev. Phil Hink, and Pastor Tom Peterson at the dedication service.

The circumstances under which Glory gathered at Franklin's Inn were accommodating. The management was extremely generous in allowing the community to extend the

rental agreement on a monthly basis. Everyone understood that the worship and office space at Franklin's was a temporary place for a group of people eager to evolve and move forward. When a vote was taken for the purchase of 45 acres of land, the decision was unanimous – 133 in favour. Unity of spirit and purpose is a marvel and allows wonderful things to happen!



Glory Lutheran chancel area

An indication that both the motel and the congregation were ready for change took place around Easter, 2010. On the morning of April 2, the motel officially opened the newly remodeled bar and lounge, corresponding in time with Glory's Good Friday worship service. From then on, increased motel traffic reduced the availability of parking. Shortly after Easter, Glory held the groundbreaking ceremony on the congregation's purchased property. More than 100 people brought their shovels to the event to ensure that they could indeed move some dirt!

A dedicated membership relied on Glory's lay leadership to forge the way. It was a faith-led leadership committed to realizing this project through the investment of expertise and countless hours of conversation – internal debates and discussions with ELCIC personnel and Strathcona County officials. Beyond what was constructed through Johnston Builders (St. Albert, Alta.), skilled craftsmen from the congregation undertook projects to enhance the look and functionality of the sanctuary and kitchen. The three-tiered altar/chancel area, which features space on either side for choir members and musicians, is a remarkable 100 feet in width.

Six and a half years after the congregation's inception, Glory transitioned to the new 13,000 square-foot facility. The first worship service was held January 2, 2011 and a service of dedication celebrated on Sunday, April 10 with 386 people in attendance. It was a thrilling moment in the congregation's history.

With the building complete, Glory's circumstances are clearly different. The members are inspired by their facility and imaginatively considering new possibilities for ministry and outreach. An exciting new chapter in the life of this faith community is about to unfold, and they want to live out words spoken to Abraham: *I will bless you...so that you will be a blessing.* (Genesis 12:2).

While the congregation purchased 45 acres it will retain and use 18 acres, eager to be good stewards of the building and land. Current membership is 346. There is lots of room for more people. Visit us on the southeast corner at the intersection of highways 21 and 16. Detailed directions can be found at www.glorylutheran.ca To God be the glory.

By Pastor Thomas O. Peterson, Glory Lutheran

Serving up Hospitality at Augustana Campus, Camrose

Robyn Simpson-Mohr works as assistant for chaplaincy on the Augustana Campus in Camrose, Alberta, a university owned by the ELCIC until 2004 when Augustana became a faculty of the University of Alberta (U of A). Together, the U of A and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada worked on a new structure to enable the continuance of chaplaincy within a public university. Pastor Craig Wentland, who holds a call from the Synod of Alberta and the Territories, serves as campus chaplain. Pastor Wentland and Simpson-Mohr work together with student chaplains of many denominational backgrounds to program activities around learning, social justice, outreach, and hospitality. Simpson-Mohr, also a Companion of the Worship Arts, believes her work to be a calling. She writes:

“The students give me energy and life and challenges. Although I am expected to provide them with guidance and supervision and wisdom, they are often my teachers, directing my attention to community projects and exchanges they’ve participated in, experiences and knowledge they’ve assimilated in classes, and the urgency of environmental and social justice concerns.

“One of the best things chaplaincy does at Augustana is our Tuesday evening soup supper. This began a number of years ago when an interim chaplain started a small soup and discussion group. These days we set up 10 large, eight-foot tables, surrounded by lots of chairs. We fill baskets with loaves of fresh, broken bread and cheese. (Students love cheese!) We fill six large slow cookers with delicious soup provided by the food bank, which in turn was supplied by a local hotel that serves a daily buffet. During Advent and Epiphany and Lent, we begin in the Chapel with Holden Evening prayer or a Taizé service of song and prayer. After worship we spill out into the Faith and Life Lounge to join those patiently waiting. We make a big circle, share announcements, hold hands and give thanks for this gift of food. Then we sit with one another, sharing good food and conversation.

“Some come because they’re hungry and this is the most complete meal they’ll eat all week. Some come because they’re lonely and want to eat in community. Some are grabbing a quick meal before an evening class. But whatever their reason for coming, on Tuesday evenings we sit down for dinner with 75 to 90 people – students who would never think of entering the chapel for worship, and those who come faithfully. All are welcome. This is hospitality at its best!”

By Robyn Simpson-Mohr, Augustana University College



Students enjoy a Tuesday soup supper.



Photos supplied by Augustana Student Chaplains

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. Here, Dale Nowochin of St. Peter’s Ecumenical, Slave Lake, tells how fire changed the life of a town.

Dale Nowochin:

Fire! Slave Lake – A Story of Loss and Life

May 14, 2011: A forest fire starts on the southwest end of Mitsue Lake, just north of the #2 Highway. The prevailing winds are from the S.E., with low humidity – a perfect recipe for trouble. I don’t find out how much trouble until I get home a few hours later.

My friend Bud and his wife Jane are first in line. They lose their home, motor home, pickup, quad and all their personal belongings. On the next yard, about 200 feet away, Bud’s brother Lyle and wife Marion lose everything except the house, which only gets a little damage. Then the fire jumps the West Mitsue road and heads toward the Poplar Estates subdivision. On the way it takes out thirteen homes, numerous outbuildings and equipment.

My wife (Janice), daughter (Danica) and I are in town getting groceries. We know the risk but we need supplies. A lady tells us there’s a second fire east of town. I go outside to look, see the smoke rising and decide to go home. I want to know exactly where the fire is. We are supposed to go out to a dance recital in the evening, but we change our minds. Instead I load my old tank truck with water and Danica helps me pump up the tires. We move equipment and vehicles to the middle of the yard – away from the shop and other outbuildings. We worry all night.

May 15, 2011, Black Sunday: After breakfast, we head to town for church – confirmation day for our friend’s kids. Big day. On the way, I hear on the radio that at 1:00 p.m. there will be a meeting at the College for the Poplar Estates evacuees. After church I decide to go. Maybe there’s something I can do.

Emotions run high. People are upset from loss and displacement. Some are too distraught to stay, and storm out of the meeting. The officials say the fire is contained and there is no risk to the town at this point, but after the meeting we hear the fire southwest of town is heading toward the South Shore where there is 15 to 20 miles of acreage area. This doesn’t look good. We head home about 2:30.

At the intersection of highways 2 and 88 north, the road is blocked. We have to detour and the drive home is now 125 km longer. We arrive at about 4:30 p.m. and at 5:30 the phone rings. It’s my son, Josh. “We’re leaving – now!” he says. The smoke alarms are ringing and their home is already burning.



Dale Nowochin, Slave Lake

Outside, the wind is gusting up to 100 km/h and the air is hot and dry. I start my water truck, and get my gloves and the rest of my gear. I've worked a fire line before. When Josh and his wife, Randi, arrive I give him a set of my work boots and a jacket. They had no time to pack anything. We grab the water and food Janice set out for us and head for town. There's a roadblock at the corner of our place but the R.C.M.P. wave us on.

The corner of East Mitsue and Hwy 2 is a mess – another roadblock and traffic coming from the west in a solid line. The police are here too. I stop and an officer comes to the window. "You can't go that way," he says. I don't want to cause trouble, but we need to get to town. "You never saw us," I say and drive through the block. Josh laughs. It's not usually the "dad" who rebels.

We turn onto Main Street. Smoke and flames are on both sides and ahead of us. The temperature in the cab of the truck goes up 15 degrees almost instantly. I tell Josh to close the window and be ready for anything. On the east side, the Yamaha dealership is on fire. So is the Ford truck line, the Century 21 building, the small community church and the apartment behind it. On the west, the Town Hall is completely engulfed in flames. The street is deserted. All we say to each other is, "Unbelievable!" Then I feel the presence of an "extra passenger" as we drive into the heavy smoke. I feel secure and confident and I know God is with us.

We head straight for the fire hall and the chief dispatches us on one of the trucks right away. The fire hydrants have lost pressure and we haul water from the creek to the burn area. As we work, the evening turns to night and night to morning. My son and I share alternating feelings of dread, fear, care, pride, confidence, uncertainty and worry. We think about our neighbours, friends and family, and pets left behind. We think about all the "things" that will be lost, but we know we are blessed because in the end, not one life is lost.

*By Dale Nowochin,
St. Peter's Ecumenical, Slave Lake*

A Tough Spring for the Prairies

Donations continue to
be accepted for:

"2011 Alberta Wildfires"

**"2011 Manitoba
Flooding"**

**"2011 Saskatchewan
Flooding"**

ELCIC members are
asked to donate to the
appeals by making a
designated offering
donation through their
congregation.

Janice Nowochin works for Slave Lake Housing, and she's very busy right now. It's her job to help coordinate placement of people returning to Slave Lake and within a two week time period, her caseload went from 144 to more than 500 families.

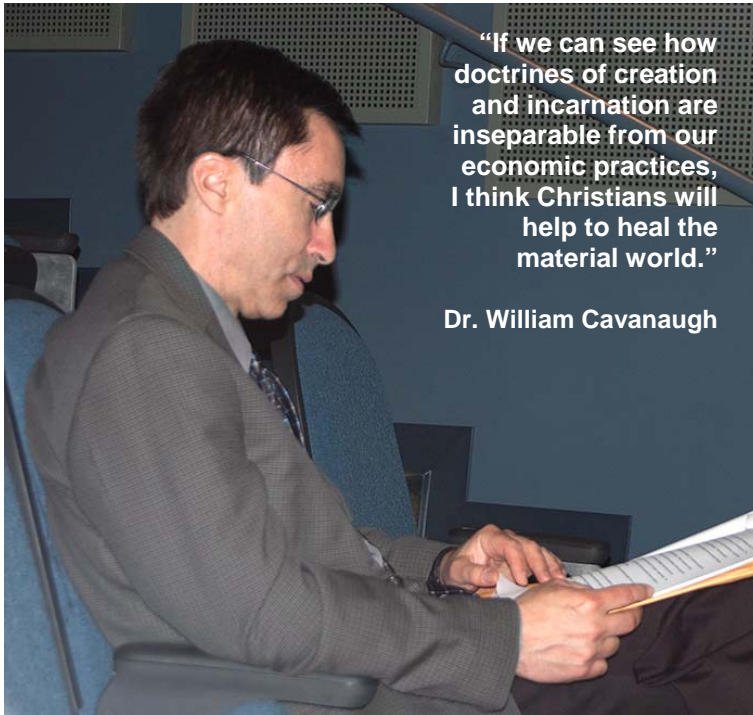
"The shock seems to be over," says Janice, "but I don't think reality has completely set in. Everyone works through their grief in a different way."

No homes are being built yet – they are still dealing with demolition, rubble, burnt out cars and insurance claims. But mobile homes are being moved in and the population of Slave Lake and surrounding area is increasing day by day.

Population on the Nowochin yard, 13 km east of Slave Lake will soon be increasing as well. Two more residences, one for their son and daughter-in-law, and another for a family that just happened to cross their path, will bring the number from three people to eight. Janice will be able to cross two more files off her list.

The Crash Explained *Do Theology and Economics Mix?*

In his keynote address at the May 13, 2011 Social Justice Institute in Edmonton, Alberta, Dr. William Cavanaugh, author and professor of Catholic Studies at the Centre for World Catholicism and Intercultural Theology at DePaul University in Chicago, began by saying, “We are reluctant to talk about economics from a theological point of view.” Why? Because on one hand, Christians tend to think that economics is beyond our expertise. On the other, we are told that economics concerns mundane material matters that have nothing to do with the soul or spirituality.



“I want to make an argument that we need to talk about it from a theological point of view because it’s inherently theological. Christianity is grounded in material reality, and more so than what passes for economics in our current situation,” said Dr. Cavanaugh.

He explained that we tend to think of an economic crisis in terms of greed and materialism, but it is the separation of the economy from the material; where above all else we strive to be free from the scarcity, risk and dependence on a life that is materially based.

The root cause of the current situation in the United States is simply that in the late 1990’s and early 2000’s, banks lent money to people who couldn’t pay it back. Historically low interest rates and aggressive lending habits created a buying frenzy for houses. High-risk people were loaned money to buy homes, the idea being that the homes would pay for themselves by rising in value. The problem was that the rise in value was based not on financial reality, but fuelled by the loans themselves.

Then the banks, in order to lessen their risk, repackaged those loans and offered them for sale as “investments” to pension funds and hedge funds with the idea that over the long term, the good loans would outweigh the losses. In turn, these debt obligations were listed as assets by those who purchased them, and then used as collateral for borrowing more money. So, money was being made on borrowed money, and the money was being borrowed by using debt as collateral.

Another step into financial trouble was with the use of credit default swaps. They work like this. Al loans money to Bob and then makes a contract with Carol who agrees to repay the loan if Bob defaults. If Bob repays the loan, Al pays Carol a fee for taking the risk. A little like gambling, isn’t it? Unfortunately, it doesn’t end there. Dave sees an opportunity to make money on this deal as well and calls Ed. In exchange for Ed giving



Dr. William Cavanaugh

Dave some money, Dave will pay Ed a larger sum of money if Bob defaults on the loan he got from Al. Al, Bob, and Carol don't even know there are more players. A lot like gambling? You bet. And to top it all off, there were no government regulations for these swaps so they were limited only by the extent of both parties willingness to wager.

"Estimates of the amount in outstanding credit default swaps vary, but in September of 2009, Fortune Magazine estimated that the number was 54.6 trillion dollars, which is greater than the world's total annual economic output," said Cavanaugh. The problem was that much more money was wagered than anyone actually had. As people began to go bankrupt, a "domino effect" occurred and the whole system began to unravel. When the government stepped in to stabilize the situation by bailing out the most reckless players, where did they get the money? They borrowed it.

So, how does a theological viewpoint come into all of this? It can best be understood as an attempt at creation out of nothing, which is the traditional Christian understanding of how God creates. The prevailing economic situation can be seen as a kind of spirituality where the idea is not just to "make money", but to leave behind the physical restraints that are created by being mortal.

The first limit we try to overcome is scarcity, which is based on unlimited desires facing limited resources. The economic tragedy in this is that there is never enough to satisfy all human wants. When the material world runs up against its limit, attempts are made to make wealth multiply without increasing real material production, which creates profit but not value in the financial sector. The need for economic growth at all costs becomes a material aspiration as well as a spiritual one. It is an attempt to get beyond our servitude to material reality and overcome our human vulnerability and limitations.

The second limit is risk. This financial crisis was built by trying to pass risk on to someone else –short-term profit and the quick passing off of loans to others before the true risk became apparent. The system is based on the fantasy that people can be free of vulnerability, that profit can be made risk free and that we can live on value borrowed from the future. In theological terms we want to "cheat death".

The third limit is trust. The notion that loans depend on a relationship of trust built over time is gone. Money can be made much more quickly if trust is eliminated. Guaranteeing loans between mutually suspicious parties is profitable. In the swaps market, money can also be made from other people's failures. "From a spiritual point of view," said Cavanaugh, "what we see in this is an aspiration to freedom, understood negatively as freedom from obligation to others." The necessity of community, of relying on one another, is seen as an outmoded remnant of society.

In talking about the theology of creation, Cavanaugh stated that the material reality is good, and secondly that the material reality is limited.

He explained that creation relies on God for its existence, so If God is good, then God's creation is also good. But precisely *because* it's created, it's limited – it is not God.

Creator and creation are not on a continuum. “To be a creature of a good God is a condition to rejoice in and not rebel against,” he said. The creation of something besides God is the beginning of the love story between Creator and creature – not just human beings, but all material reality. The Old Testament shows us that God is involved in all aspects of creation. There is no distinction between material concerns and spiritual concerns, as all of creation is to be brought into conformity with God’s will. Christians should not think that we have overcome materiality, because the unity of God with material creation is confirmed in Jesus Christ who was made human flesh.

In dealing with the limitations of our material reality, we need to remember that as humans, we are *not* God’s image, but are *made* in God’s image. Bearing the image of God means being in right relationship with God and the rest of creation. Humans are meant to protect and preserve the land, and to learn from it.

Our Christian hope and assurance is that death will not have the final word, and a share in eternal life will be ours. But salvation in Christ is not simply overcoming the limits of human existence. The limit we overcome is the limit that divides us from our fellow human beings.

Cavanaugh concluded by saying we can speak positively about limits, scarcity, mutual dependence, shared risk and trust. Jesus came that we may have life abundantly, and abundant life means accepting the Shepherd’s love and living in a nurturing relationship with all of creation.

If we are to practice an economy that embraces both the goodness and the limits of creation, then we have to be grounded. In order to create a grounded economy, we must have a direct involvement in discerning what is necessary for the health of our communities. We need to acknowledge dependence on one another and share risk. We need to be attentive to local forms of knowledge and people and land, and to re-establish direct face-to-face relationships between producers and consumers. Churches are taking leading roles in fostering these kinds of grounded economies, supporting local development projects, fair trade arrangements, credit unions, community supported agricultural products and others. In this way we can re-connect with the material world and not simply be passive consumers.

Our task in economics is to cultivate a finite desire for finite things, and an infinite desire for the infinite, which is God. If we see ourselves as made from God’s breath and the dust of the ground, we will see both ourselves, and material creation as invested with cosmic significance. It will be a way of blessing the creation of which God has made us part.

By Colleen McGinnis

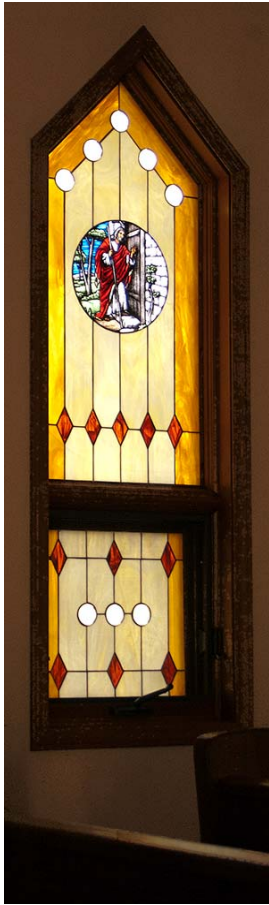
Update on Brenda Auge’s story: Stepping Stones ... Connections

In the spring issue of *Celebrations* (page 13) Brenda told about taking her “coin jar” with her when she moved to B.C. from Yellowknife, Alberta. People in her new church family in Grand Forks adopted the tradition and began filling their own jars.

She says: “I wanted to let you know that our congregation raised \$300 in their coin jars over the Lenten season. We sent it to Oloirien Secondary School in Arusha, Tanzania where Joachim Mdongwe works and they allotted the funds to cover lunch fees for seven students for the entire year of 2011. They sent details on the seven students and our congregation was pleased to know that they had impacted the lives of these young people.”

Back to Church Sunday

Window in Faith Lutheran. Sundre. Alberta



It seems like a simple concept. Ask someone you know these nine simple words: “Would you like to come to church with me?” As the group gathered May 3 at Trinity in Edmonton to listen to presenter Michael J. Harvey, we quickly saw that the concept was simple, but maybe it wasn’t going to easy.

Back to Church Sunday is based on the very simple concept of each member of a congregation inviting one other person to church. There is no gimmick or special way of asking, just an honest invitation. The hard work is making the congregation ready. It requires honesty to look at the ways in which we are welcoming and unwelcoming to visitors, and to prepare to follow through on an invitation, such as giving the invitee a ride, introducing them to friends at church, helping them through the service and asking them to come again. Michael reminded those in attendance of one important distinction - it is not about how many times your hear “yes” but how many invitations are made. If you aren’t hearing “no”, then enough invitations aren’t being made.

In the end, Back to Church Sunday is reminder of our calling to mission. The story that we have to share with the world is a simple one, Christ has died - Christ is risen - Christ will come again. Actually telling it, actually risking our relationships with friends and family to invite them into this strange thing called “Church” is hard. But it’s also worth it.

By Rev. Erik Parker, St. John Lutheran Church of Golden Spike

Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times

Conflict is a reality of any group of people – marriages, families, co-workers, classmates, and of course, congregations. May 17-19, Rev. Dr. Peter Steinke helped about 70 church leaders from a variety of denominations begin the process of sorting through and understanding the ways in which anxious groups can fall into conflict.

During the three-day course at Providence Center in Edmonton, we learned many of the ins and outs of systems theory. We discovered how our anxious brains can be managed. That is to say, how to understand when we are responding with fight, flight or freeze modes. Anxiety in congregations is brought on by many different stress factors, but usually lead to the same kind of responses: conflict, disunity, frustration, blaming and an inability to solve problems.

Once we had an understanding of the systems at play in congregations and other families, we then turned to the underlying causes of stress and anxiety. Rev. Dr. Steinke pointed us back to mission. Congregations that consistently keep in the forefront their purpose for existing are much better able to manage conflict and anxiety. As we were told, “The Church does not have a mission, God’s mission has a church”.

By Rev. Erik Parker, St. John Lutheran Church of Golden Spike

A Double Date at Mulhurst Camp



1946 was a good year! Mulhurst Lutheran Camp was carved out of the bush at Pigeon Lake in the spring, and Walter Pohl and Frieda Rausch fell in love that first summer at camp. This year in June, the camp and the Pohls celebrated their 65th anniversaries. Above left: Frieda leans on Walter as she regales the crowd with memories of camp. Above right: Pastor Tim Way (right) picks Nancy Baron (the shy girl) out of the crowd for a skit and soon has everyone laughing. His able assistant is David Patterson (left).

Holy Trinity, Father's Day & House Blessing: Grace, Hinton



June 19, Bishop Ron and Dianne Mayan attended Grace Lutheran Church in Hinton to help us celebrate both Holy Trinity Sunday and Father's Day.

Above Left: The Grace Lutheran Church Ladies, Mardell Lischewski, Elaine Koch, and Lynda Jonson hosted the Father's day BBQ. We honoured all men whether they were biologically fathers or not, as they have mentored other people throughout their lives.

Above Right: After the BBQ, Donna Heine, Pastor Doug Heine, Pastor Bill Bulger and Bishop Ron Mayan performed a house blessing at the Heine's new home. Bishop Ron blessed the dwelling and all who passed through the doorway. Verses were read and a gong was resounded as we journeyed into each room driving out evil spirits. A burning candle brought in the light of Christ.

100 Years – A Story for Nazareth

Gordon Vickruck, M.Div. wrote this story in honour of the 100th anniversary (1911 to 2011) of Nazareth Lutheran Church in Standard, Alberta. He says, “I was pastor of this congregation from 1987 to 1992 and retain fond memories of their strength of faith and character.” The celebration took place on June 4, 2011

On a still October night, turning off the Trans-Canada highway into the consuming darkness of a country road, I was aware of entering a sacred and age-old drama being enacted. Barely visible save for the single beamed headlights piercing the dust laden darkness, three combines pushed forward, marching against the tyranny of time, attempting to assuage the unrelenting demands of the harvest.

What compelled these farmers, caretakers of the land, to give their heart and soul to this unrelenting, seemingly thankless lifestyle? All the year through they would drive up and down the dirt roads along their fields, marking and measuring the depth of the snow, the moisture in the soil, the sprouting of the crops, one eye fixed on the earth, the other to the heavens for moisture. It was not an occupation; it was an obsession.



The years that we lived in that small community were marked by the continuation of a drought that lasted a decade. Each spring after heart and hope was seeded in the soil, anxiety would mount as the horizon was obsessively scanned for signs of moisture. In town the intensity of the conversations would mirror the stresses of the crop year.

“Lars got half an inch up on the ridge last week.”

“Yeah, while nothing has come my way for months.”

“How much longer do you think we have before we write this year off?”

“It is certainly getting to that point. Haven't seen a sprout yet.”

It was early June, 1989. It had been a dry winter with virtually no moisture at all in the spring. The despair and desperation ran as deep as the furrows

in the parched fields. A dust storm kicked up for a few days and there was close to half an inch of topsoil on the inside of our windowsills. If not for the advancement in tilling practices, the loss of soil would have been worse than in the Dirty Thirties.

Someone reported that a weather front was starting to build south of the border several hundred miles away. The conversation remained guarded and tentative, as if too much enthusiasm or hope would jinx the last hope of this crop year. But as it continued to creep up slowly from Montana and through the southern foothills it became impossible to

quell the nervous excitement. On the third day, the morning sky was layered with a thick, dark blanket of moisture. The heavy-laden clouds seemed to be just hanging there, teasing, almost defying hope. For a while it looked like they might move past to the west, missing the desperate community altogether.

Around five a.m. on the fourth day, in the early morning dawn a light pitter-patter began resonating through the early morning dawn; no fanfare of thunder and lightening or sudden downpour, just a soft misty cover over the community. The Inuit have dozens of words for snow that define the determinant of their world. Farmers need the same vocabulary for rain. Some rain can fall hard and wash away the dusty topsoil, doing more harm than good. Some rain falls too light and pools like droplets of oil on a silky base, barely penetrating. Some rain evaporates in the heat, the veil of moisture hanging suspended above the hot earth, full of promise but no substance. This rain was none of those. It soaked into the thirsty ground, gently massaging and healing the parched, cracked soil. Not a drop was wasted over the ensuing three days of rain. No water ran in the gutters or pooled alongside the road, no topsoil washed away. The earth was satiated, the crops nurtured, the heart and faith of the community restored.

*By Gordon Vickruck, Edmonton, Alberta
Gordon writes under the name Aydan Dunnigan*

Every Sunday morning, those same men and women who had been on the tractor until two in the morning the night before, were up bright and early to set the altar for communion or to hand out bulletins, or to sing in the choir, ensuring that their soul was tended to as carefully as the soil, thankful to a God who long ago promised that as a reward for their meekness they would inherit the earth. G.V.

75 Years for Peace Lutheran in Leduc



Photos by Sharla Wiesener, Peace, Leduc

Bishop Ron Mayan with
Pastor Trish Schmermund
of Peace Lutheran, Leduc

With a procession of church banners, Peace Lutheran Church in Leduc, Alberta began its 75th anniversary worship on May 15, 2011. Celebrating its past and looking forward to a future ministry, Bishop Ron Mayan preaching to the 300 plus gathered worshipers stated, “Your ancestors needed to give testimony to their faith. They needed a means to pass that faith on to their children and their children’s children. They knew what was important, and had no trouble keeping the Main Thing the main thing.”

He spoke about the “mind-boggling changes” that have occurred during the last 75 years and how we must learn to “see and serve the needs of the people around us now.” He said, “It’s not easy work, and we’re not always successful, but as we continue in our *mission for others* we can rest in the assurance that our God simply calls us to be faithful, and all of the rest of it is in the good Lord’s hands.

This is the complex simplicity of being a Christian Lutheran community of faith. And you *are* that!"

Seventy-five years ago, on May 17, 1936, the founding families organized the church. On Sept. 27, 1936 a place of worship previously owned by St. Michael's Roman Catholic Church in Leduc was dedicated for worship. The parish generously offered this building to the Lutherans, but it had to be moved off site. It was readied for move by members of the Lutheran community and resituated on the present site of Peace Lutheran Church. Since that date, two further building projects have taken place on the site.



In its infancy Peace Lutheran was part of a larger parish in the Leduc area, aligned with Gnadenthal Lutheran, west of Leduc, Heimthal Lutheran northwest of Leduc. In 1959 Peace withdrew from the larger parish to become an independent congregation with its own minister to serve an increasing membership. With the help of the Mission Board of the United Lutheran Church in America, Pastor Otto Goos was called to be its minister. In its 75 year history Peace has been served by eight resident and five interim pastors.

Pastor Trish Schmermund, present minister, led the congregation in its celebratory worship service. Attendees at the worship included many former members who had moved from the community. Together with present members they were able to recall their memories of life at Peace and renew old acquaintances.

By Walter Goos, Peace Lutheran, Leduc

50 Years Celebrating the Cross in Calgary



Photos submitted by Dianne Fortier

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Cross in Calgary, Alberta, celebrated its 50th Anniversary on June 11, 2011 with a worship service, dinner and program.

Clockwise from the left is:

Sunday morning worship with Bishop Ron Mayan, Pastor Greg Kern, Pastor Joe Rostad, Pastor Corliss Holmes

Charter members still active at Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Cross

Church of the Cross interior - nave



Newly Ordained Anglican Priest Serves Three Parishes

Photo submitted by Rev. Gordon Cranch



On May 29, Rev. Gordon Cranch was ordained at St. Aldhelm's Anglican Church in Vulcan, Alberta. Since Rev. Cranch serves two Lutheran churches and one Anglican, the Anglican Wardens and Lutheran Chairmen of the three congregations took part in the induction. Rev. Cranch's Sundays begin with a 9:00 Lutheran service at either one of Hope, Milo or Bethany, Lomond followed by an 11:00 service at St. Aldhelm's Anglican in Vulcan. Both Milo and Lomond are 50 km from Vulcan. Tom Schierman, St. Aldhelm's organist does "double duty" as well, by driving Rev. Cranch to the Lutheran services where he also serves as organist.

Pictured from left to right are the Anglican Bishop of Calgary Rt. Rev. Derek Hoskin; Arvid Thompson, Hope Church, Milo; Rev. Gordon Cranch; Marvin Maronda & Randy Schlaht, Bethany Church, Lomond.

Farewell to Pastor Don Hall

After a lengthy illness, Pastor Don Hall passed away June 6. He was ordained June 25, 1986, serving Peace Lutheran, Leduc, Alberta, from 1986 to 1997 and Holy Cross, Okotoks, Alberta from 1997 to 2006. He was chair of the Alberta Synod Canadian Missions Commission until his death. Pastor Rod McLeish of Holy Cross writes: "Pastor Don was pastor and friend to many. Sick or healthy, he faithfully lived out his call to share and live the gospel." He will be missed.

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 ...to help us learn from each other and encourage each other in our work for Jesus Christ.

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