



# Celebrations

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

## In this issue:

**Bishop's Report – Saved by Grace** *page 2*

**Around the Synod** *page 3*

**Ecumenical Action** *page 4*

**Art + People = Missional Conversations**

Two unique approaches to Doctor of Ministry projects *page 5*

**From the Pew – God wasn't done getting through to me!** *page 9*

**Making Peace With the Land – Interfaith Gathering** *page 10*

**LAMP – Bill Ney, Newest Pastor/Pilot Takes Flight** *page 11*

– Mourning the Loss of Rev. Steve Dreher *page 12*

**Back to Church Sunday** *page 13*

**Augustana – Educating Hearts and Minds  
for 100 Years** *page 14*

**Mar Thoma Bishops Speak** *page 15*

**Church Milestones** *page 17*

**Answering  
the Call**  
*page 18*



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.



## Saved By Grace

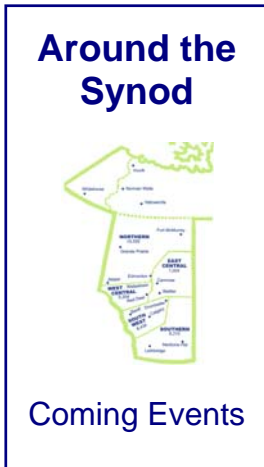
Reformation is upon us once more. It's not the "festival" that it was in days of yore. I'm aging myself here, but back in the day I remember Reformation services in large auditoriums when Lutherans of every stripe came together for a mega-celebration: a famed guest speaker was flown in from somewhere or other, a mass choir sang glorious anthems with six weeks of rehearsals under its belt, brass ensembles punctuated hymns, string quartets filled the hall with melodious sounds – the whole nine yards! It was the kind of spiritual event we have too few of – the mountaintop experience. And here's the clincher: we shared Holy Communion across Lutheran lines. Yes, some of us got our knuckles rapped by our judicatories for such blatant unionism and syncretism, but the sheer glory of those Reformation services was well worth risking a little verbal chastising. Those wonderful services weren't triumphalistic, "We're Lutherans, and the others aren't." Instead, there was a quiet, unspoken pride in standing in this great faith tradition.

Huge banners graced the worship area, tutoring the attendees on the Reformation principles: "Saved By Grace Through Faith"; "Word Alone, Grace Alone, Faith Alone, Christ Alone, Cross Alone"; maybe even a banner proclaiming "Here I Stand...." The banners rehearsed the Lutheran entry point into all of Scripture, as found in Ephesians 2:8–10: "We are saved by God's grace through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is a gift of God not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are [God's] workmanship..."

The homily was consistently based on the Gospel appointed for Reformation from John 8:31b, "*If you continue in my word you are truly my disciples...*" And it was rare indeed for the speaker to fail to recount the denouement of Reformation history. Of course that moment involved Martin Luther himself, who stood before bishops and princes to defend his beliefs at the Diet of Worms, and whose [purported] summation consisted of these words: "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."

All of this is ensconced and finds its expression in the constituting documents of our Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, and here we stand foursquare with all present and predecessor Lutheran bodies. The Church Constitution states in Article II, Confession of Faith, Section 3: "This church confesses the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God, through which God still speaks, as the only source of the church's doctrine and the authoritative standard for the faith and life of the church." Section 4 goes on to state: "This church subscribes to the documents of the *Book of Concord* of 1580 as witnesses to the way in which the Holy Scriptures have been correctly understood, explained and confessed for the sake of the gospel..." As the ELCIC we have declared Article II, our Confession of Faith, to be unalterable. The words say what they say. But as with all words, interpretation is required. What do they mean? More specifically, what do they mean for the ELCIC of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Perhaps the teaching theologians of our Church – our seminary professors, and the Faith, Order and Doctrine Committee could collaborate to prepare a contemporary commentary on our Confession of Faith. The exercise could prove fruitful and instructive for all of us as we claim and test our Lutheran identity.

*By Bishop Ronald B. Mayan*



## **Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols for Advent and Christmas**

Each year the Christian Chaplains at the University of Alberta host a marvelous tradition. The Winspear Centre becomes a cathedral as Robert de Frece, Director of U of A Mixed Chorus and Handbell Ringers, invites you to join with them in singing carols. Together, the voices, handbells, and the magnificent Davis Concert Organ, with organists Marnie Giesbrecht and Joachim Segger, will fill the room with the sounds of Christmas.

This concert, a benefit for the Campus Food Bank, will be held on Monday, November 28, 7:30 p.m. at the Winspear Centre. Call the Winspear Centre Box Office at 780-428-1414 to reserve your ticket. All seats are \$15.00 (plus service charge).

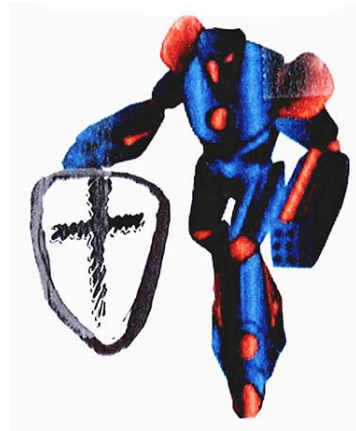
## **Synod Study Conference, Evangelism: God's Way, February 6 – 9, 2012**

All rostered and lay leaders are welcome to attend "Evangelism: God's Way" with special guest speaker Dr. John Bowen, associate professor of Evangelism and director of the Institute of Evangelism at Wycliffe College in Toronto. Also speaking will be the Rev. Dr. Larry Kochendorfer, assistant to the Bishop, Synod of Alberta and the Territories. The visiting Bishop will be Bishop Jessica Crist of the Montana Synod of the ELCA.

The Conference takes place at the Radisson Hotel and Conference Centre in Canmore, Alta. Contact the Synod Office at 780-439-2636 for details. Registration information and fees must be delivered to the Synod Office by January 10, 2012.

## **The Transformers**

The 2012 Church Council Workshop will be held March 17 at Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Red Deer, Alta. It's packed with eight informative workshops, inspiring worship, helpful connections and good food. Congregational councillors and all church leaders are welcome. Rev. Dr. Gordon Jensen of Lutheran Theological Seminary, Saskatoon, will speak on being "Transformed by Grace". What difference can we make in the world? Register with the synod office at 780-439-3940.



## **2012 Camp Kuriakos Confirmation Retreats**

Bring your confirmation class together during one of these dynamic weekends! Camp is a great way to dig into studies and to get to know your students on a deeper level than in formal classes. Church leaders will teach their own curriculum during 4 hour-long sessions, while camp staff takes care of the food, worship, devotions, games and activities. Build accountability and community among your group and with other confirmands from around Alberta.

Winter 2012 retreats: February 24-26; March 2-4; and March 16-18. Fees are \$90.00 plus tax. Contact the camp at 403-746-2702, email [info@kuriakos.ab.ca](mailto:info@kuriakos.ab.ca) or go to their website at [www.kuriakos.ab.ca](http://www.kuriakos.ab.ca) for registration details.

## Ecumenical Action

### Reconciliation, Healing and Justice:

*How to live out forgiveness in a broken world – November 19, 2011*

Fr. Michael Lapsley SSM, is a South African Anglican Priest and social justice advocate. He has worked with the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and established the Institute for Healing of Memories to help people tell their stories and work through their trauma. He has a story of his own. In April of 1990, while living in Zimbabwe, he received a letter bomb in the post, suffering the loss of both hands and one eye. Hear him speak on Saturday, November 19, 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. at King's University College in Edmonton. Tickets are \$30.00. To register, call 780-439-7344.

### 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, is available at [www.weekofprayer.ca](http://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 event, now in its 104<sup>th</sup> year.



*We will all be changed.*

Artwork by Sebastiano Stabile  
for the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism

### Medicine Hat College forms Ecumenical Campus Ministry Chaplaincy

A chaplain is a campus minister, pastor, or priest who accepts the pre-existing Christian beliefs of college community members while encouraging spiritual thought and growth, and acts as a spiritual guide and support to students, staff and faculty. This ministry includes, but is not limited to Lutheran, Anglican, Roman Catholic, United Church of Canada and Presbyterian denominations. Prior to the hiring of a part-time Chaplain in early 2012, several local clergy, including Lutheran pastors Mac de Waal and Julianna Wehrfritz-Hanson, will serve as Interim Chaplains.

### St. Peter's Ecumenical Ministry, Slave Lake, Dedicates New Facility

Sunday, December 11, St. Peter's will dedicate their new church home. All on one level, this building not only accommodates regular church and Christian education services, it provides social and community meeting space, as well as a venue for fine arts, cultural events and musical presentations – an important feature in the wake of the recent destruction of so many buildings. The Rev. Dr. Larry Kochendorfer, Assistant to the Bishop, will be participating on behalf of the ELCIC, Synod of Alberta and the Territories.

### Make an Ecumenical Christmas "Mosaic"

Learn about the Mosaic Centre, a project of community partners and volunteers in Edmonton, Alta., by watching their new video on the ministry of homelessness. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sxwg55TYGbc> If you can help, call 780-722-3247.

## Art + People = Missional Conversations

*Pouteaux and Wray - Two unique approaches to Doctor of Ministry projects*

### Imago Dei to Missio Dei

*Preston Pouteaux, Director of Discipleship Ministry, Our Saviour, Calgary, Alta.*

Photo by: Sharon Graham Sargent



Preston Pouteaux at the show opening on February 11

As an Evangelical it might be surprising to note that my inspiration for *Imago Dei to Missio Dei* came from Eastern Orthodox iconography. Throughout history, Christians have created pictures of Saints that acted as inspiration for others on the journey of faith. These saints were not perfect people, just people who trusted God and joined God's mission in the world. Our church is full of imperfect people whom Jesus loves, whom he delights in and is working out his mission in their lives. I wanted to paint portraits of people in our congregation to help us see how God tells his story of love, redemption and grace through each of us.

Imagination is a gift that God has given all of us. It's with our imagination that we might see our Heavenly Father embrace us when we're lonely, and it's with our imagination that we envision Jesus teaching on a hillside or dying on the cross. It's also through our imagination that God can help us see

ourselves differently. We may begin to see that we're people made in God's image, we have a purpose, and our citizenship is in the Kingdom of God.

The series, part of my doctoral studies at the Tyndale University College and Seminary in Toronto, was created to carry people on a journey of prayer and reflection. Each portrait was presented with a write-up that allowed people to consider themselves and God in ways they may not have done so before. The very last "portrait" was a mirror, which encouraged viewers to consider how they were in fact made in the image of God and part of God's mission in the world. There were some tears and deep feelings that emerged from many who spent time at the show. As one person said, "I felt like the Holy Spirit was going back and forth in the room, talking to people." Very few people spoke about the art itself, because that was not the focus, the focus was on being transformed by Christ.

While working with the people whose portraits I painted, I learned that I love witnessing with Jesus, the imperfection in myself and in others. As I painted, I saw all the wrinkles, pimples, jowls, receding hairlines, and crooked teeth. As I painted, I felt as if Jesus was showing me how he loves these people, and that he loves me! We don't have to be perfect when we come to Jesus, we just have to come. In many ways I've come to see Jesus as my artist. The closer he is, the more he can shape me and turn my life from a pale white canvas into a vibrant colorful reflection of his grace and love.

At Our Saviour, we've done sermons, congregational studies, and activities in the community, but I wanted people to understand, at their very core, that they are made in the image of God (*Imago Dei*) and because of that they are invited into the mission of God (*Missio Dei*). Art became the conduit for that message and a means for spiritual transformation and growth.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Imago Dei to Missio Dei*, has been shown at a number of churches in southern Alberta, and as part of Pouteaux's doctoral dissertation, will be displayed January 2012 in the Tyndale University College art gallery, Toronto.



"Larry"



"John"



"Annabel"

**Excerpts from Pouteaux's show booklet:**

**Larry** reflects the goodness of God. On warm summer evenings Larry can be found mowing the lawn in front of the church. On quiet afternoons he might be helping a neighbor fix an appliance, or mending a fence. Larry knows that he does not do his work alone. Jesus is right along with him, speaking with him, sharing his life and love with him.

**John** once told me that he can't do big things for God, but he can do lots of small things - and he does! God is not looking for the strongest or fastest or most able people to work with him, he's looking for the most willing and most trusting.

**Annabel's** strength is not her own. Her character, authenticity, love, and delight in God is not something she mustered up, it's something she received from God and it shows. She knows who she belongs to and since her identity is firmly in Christ then she's happy to let go and let God do something new in her.

*God will take your offerings and by his might, God will do wonderful things in and through you.*

## What Are You Looking For? *Pastor Tim Wray, St. Peters, Millet, Alta.*



Pastor Tim Wray (right) talks with photographer Ed Lang at show opening June 26

The Doctor of Ministry program through Lutheran Theological Seminary Saskatoon and CIRCLE M (Centre for Rural Community Leadership and Ministry) required that I conduct a project that researched the effect of community and church engagement. I chose to work with young adults since this age group is noticeably missing at both church and community events, and yet there are many young people living in the area. My project sought to better understand their lives. Further to that, my research asked the question, what happens to their sense of community when they are given the opportunity to talk about what matters to them? I believe our culture makes it difficult for young people to engage in meaningful public discourse. I see the church as having much to offer, as the church naturally brings people together to publicly engage in matters of the deepest kind, such as forgiveness, life, death, restoration, community, identity, God, and so on. The church has a role

to play in community development just by doing what the church does.

The core group was made up of 10 young adults who met in the church basement on Tuesday nights from March through June. The group included a cross-section of young adults from the rural community west of Millet, Alta., 18–33 years old. They were a good mix of single, married, divorced, Christian, agnostic, seeking, Catholic, Lutheran, Mormon, Christian Reform, male, female, professionals, tradespeople, unemployed, moms, dads, new to the community and lifelong residents.

We met to share photographs of our lives. The photos were used as springboards to meaningful conversation about what its like to be a young adult in rural Alberta. The most positive thing that happened was that the young adults in the group got to know each other – their own neighbors – and discovered they had much in common – similar questions, struggles, anxieties, experiences, and values. Friendships were fostered and participants expressed a sense that “we care about this place and want to invest in it.”

My tangible goals were modest, yet significant. I wanted the wider community to wake up to the fact that young people live in this neighborhood and care about it. I wanted our community associations and the church to begin to engage them more intentionally. As a pastor I wanted to know the answer to Jesus’ question to his first disciples, “What are you looking for?” I saw this question as a good opening to meaningful dialog with a population that has not been engaged in local activity, religious or otherwise. I saw this project as opening a door to further partnership and focused ministry to young adults. On an emotional level I was interested in giving these young people a sense of ownership in their community, as well as an opportunity to express their hopes and concerns and to develop some leadership skills in doing so. I also hoped the project would renew my congregation’s sense that we have something to offer our neighbors. The church has a wonderful ability to convene people around things that really matter.

ABT EDITOR'S NOTE: On Sunday June 26, 250 people filled the auditorium at Pipestone School west of Millet, Alta. to view the culmination of the group effort. "The intent was to bring young people together and intersect them with the community in an affirming way," said Pastor Wray. "Seeing this room full of beautiful photographs and the community response to them makes me very happy."

**A few photos and comments from "What Are You Looking For?"**



**Rest Stop: Don't drive tired!** (guest comment)



**The Rink: The playful side of the rural hard work ethic.** (guest)



**Incense: The moment before we say grace in our home.** (photographer comment)



**Family Harvest: Self-sustaining. Food for the world. Working together.** (guest)



**Can We Keep It? Showing the community and adventure of life in rural Alberta!** (guest)



**Road Home: Yes! It's Alberta!** (guest)

Photos by participants in "What Are You Looking For?"

## 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, Jenny Samm of Hope Lutheran, Edmonton, tells how she got the courage to talk about “what matters”.

### **Jenny Samm: “Obviously, God wasn’t done trying to get through to me!”**

One Sunday, a woman from my church shared a powerful story of how God was with her and her husband as their granddaughter choked on a piece of sausage. The woman’s 80 year-old husband, who had no first aid training, administered the Heimlich Maneuver and the young girl revived. I don’t think there was a dry eye in the congregation as we looked over at the 10 year-old girl. Before the story, the grandmother read a paragraph written by our National ELCIC Bishop Susan Johnson, in the July/August Canada Lutheran.

“Who is God putting in your path? Well, I believe we need to begin learning to share our faith stories with one another. Instead of talking about the weather or the upcoming church picnic at coffee hour after church, we need to have the courage to start talking about how we experienced God in our lives in the past week. Make faith sharing a part of every congregational gathering.”

“Remember, when you start to share your faith, you do not have to have the answers for every theological question that people might ask. You do not have to defend God or the church. You just need to share what matters to you.”

That is what was done that Sunday in church and it’s what I’m going to do now.

I have a dear friend from University who I lost track of for a while, but this last summer we became reacquainted. She and her two-year-old son moved to our neighbourhood a year ago, but it hasn’t been until this summer that we found ourselves going on play-dates with our children to the local playgrounds. She has always had a very strong faith in God but her busy life as a single working mom meant that she fell away from the support of a church community. We enjoyed sharing a friendship this summer but we hadn’t talked about our faith. One day we headed with our kids to the new outdoor pool at the Kinsmen. My friend briefly mentioned that she might be ready to find a church to go to. But I didn’t take the opportunity that God put before me to invite her to Hope – God must get frustrated with me sometimes! The conversation quickly turned to something else, as it often does when there are three little kids needing attention, and we talked no more about church.

I didn’t give this conversation a second thought, but obviously God wasn’t done trying to get through to me because that night I dreamed about my friend and her son. The next morning I woke up thinking about her, and specifically thinking about how our “Young Couples” study at Hope did not include her or others at Hope who are single moms or single young adults. I had all the details about the “Young Couples” study ready to send



Photo by Christopher Samm

to our “*Messenger*” newsletter, when I realized that this just wouldn’t work. I called Pastor Laird (Borst) and without any hesitation, he provided me with the new name for our bible study group for singles and couples at Hope – “Young Professionals”.

The next phone call I made was to my dear friend. After some polite pleasantries, I just dove right in. I invited her to Hope ... and guess what? She accepted the invitation! She works as a nurse every other weekend, but on her free weekends she is going to come to Hope. God’s plan is truly amazing because she told me that if I had made that invitation six months ago, she wouldn’t have been ready.

And that’s when I told her, that six months ago Hope also wasn’t ready for her. After all, she is the craftiest lady I know and Hope’s crafting club is only a few months old. She also told me that because her parents live out of town she would like to have some “grandparent-type” figures in her son’s life. Hope can provide that – especially with the Prayer Buddy Program that began this spring. My daughter is enjoying a special relationship with her Prayer Buddy, and I know someone at Hope is just waiting to be a Prayer Buddy to my friend’s son. Our God is an awesome God!

*By Jenny Samm, Hope Lutheran, Edmonton, AB*

## **Making Peace With the Land**

Descendants of Edmonton’s African, European and Indigenous communities formed a circle of understanding in the foyer of City Hall, May 3<sup>rd</sup>.

“Edmonton is a natural gathering place for many different nations,” said Lewis Cardinal, during a public gathering to encourage listening and reconciliation. “We must not forget how to have relationships and how to connect with one another,” said Cardinal, a community leader and Aboriginal elder.

More than 90 people assembled for “Peace Movement: A Process of Listening to Self, Others, the Land” – a reconciliation process developed by faith, community and aboriginal leaders. The multi-cultural, interactive event was a feast for the senses. Participants shared a variety of ethnic dishes, and then took part in “kiskinowashita” (Cree for listening which changes the listener) through Aboriginal dance, dialogue, music and prayer.

The City of Edmonton is considering a possible bid to host the 2019 Parliament of the World’s Religions. Held once every five years in a different city around the globe, the parliament is the world’s largest interfaith event. It would bring to Edmonton representatives from 200 different faith traditions, including religious, civic, academic, political and grassroots leaders from over 80 different countries.

The Rev. Dirk Ficca, Executive Director, Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions, arrived in Edmonton two days before the Peace Movement event to “get to know Edmonton culturally”. He told the city hall gathering, “I have been privileged to see many signs of hope here in Edmonton. I have met with elders and listened to stories of pain and regret. What I did not hear was bitterness.”

*By Margaret Marschall, Communications Director, Anglican Diocese of Edmonton, AB*



Photo by Margaret Marschall

Stories of the Clan Mothers:  
Elaine Brass shares her wisdom with her granddaughter, Gabrielle Cardinal.

## Bill Ney, LAMP's Newest Pastor Pilot Takes Flight



Pastor Bill with his Piper Lance

My work as the newest Pastor/Pilot with the Lutheran Association of Missionaries and Pilots (LAMP) began in June, and by July I was spending most of my time in northern Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Since I have received so much prayer support and interest from Vancouver Island to Ottawa, I am happy to let the church know that the mission of

Christ to “make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19) is alive and well and flourishing in vast areas of northern Canada.

My Pastor/Pilot partner Pastor Steve Dreher, Mr. Ron Ludke (Executive Director, LAMP) and I spent most of the summer assisting Vacation Bible School teams from across Canada and the United States bring the life-giving Gospel of Jesus Christ to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples across vast expanses of rock, trees, lakes and rivers. Without these dedicated teams of bible school teachers, many in these communities would have no other means to be assured of God’s love for them and His on-going presence with them through Word and prayer and acts of Christian service.

I flew into 12 communities (Steve and Ron, about 30 communities) and drove to many others where no landing strip existed. There I always witnessed excited, eager and dedicated volunteers in mission teaching, leading crafts and singing, and leading outdoor and indoor sports activities. I was touched deep in my heart by the warm, accepting responses of both children and adults in all the communities.



Photos supplied by Pastor Bill Ney

Children at our VBS in South Indian Lake, MB



A view from the cockpit in northern Manitoba

God opened up many other opportunities to bring His love in Christ Jesus to hurting people. For example, when Ron and I arrived in Brochet, Sask. we discovered that an 18 year-old boy had just drowned in a boating accident. In this community which is accessible only by air, God gave

me the opportunity, with Ron at my side, to comfort the young boy's sisters and family members with the assurance that because of God's grace and mercy in Christ, this young man, being a baptized and confirmed child of God, was indeed now in heaven with his Maker and Redeemer.

Later on at Hall Lake, SK one of the children who had attended the LAMP VBS there for a number of years was shot and killed just before the team's arrival. Once again both the team and I were able to bring God's sustaining, biblical and personal care to many families laid low in the small community by the sudden unfortunate death of Ivan, only 12 years old.

If you wish to know more details of our mission on your behalf to the people in northern Canada, please go on-line to my Blog: [www.flyingney.com](http://www.flyingney.com) and you can keep up with the huge working of the Holy Spirit through Gospel proclamation and acts of simple love in the north.

And, finally may I please request your prayers as I carry out the mandate of my call as a Missionary Pastor/Pilot. God bless you all!

*By Bill Ney, Missionary Pastor/Pilot, LAMP*



## **LAMP mourns the loss of Rev. Steve Dreher**

Just before Pastor Bill Ney's story and this issue of *Celebrations*, was to be released, word was received that Rev. Steve Dreher, Pastor/Pilot with LAMP was killed in a plane crash shortly

after take-off from Alamosa, Colorado late on Thursday afternoon, November 10. His energy, devotion and love for the people within the LAMP ministry will be greatly missed.

Please keep Rev. Dreher's wife and daughter, other family members, as well as the LAMP staff and community in your prayers.

## Back to Church Sunday – The Second Time Around

On Thursday, October 20, Lutherans and Anglicans gathered at Trinity Lutheran Church in Edmonton for a “Back to Church Sunday” Seminar by Michael Harvey. We gathered around the “incredible” claim that we would learn how to double our church attendance in a day, and keep all of them! Wonder of wonders, could it be true?

The first part of the day dealt with a pretty simple assertion: if every person in the church invited one other person, and they accepted, we would double our worship attendance. Is it too simple? If you are anything like me, you are finding all kinds of reasons why this *is* too simple. First off, if I *were* to invite someone, they are probably going to refuse, right? That's probably the biggest issue that gets in the way of any of us inviting people to church: we fear being rejected. Well, Jesus tells those he encounters (and us) again and again, “Do not fear”. Michael suggested that fear is an acronym for “False Evidence Appearing Real”. We need not fear rejection. The “and they accepted” bit is God’s part. Our part is to invite. Christianity *is* about the invitation.

When we invite someone to church we are not forcing them to come. We are not forcing our beliefs on them. We are inviting them to find out about something that gives us life and, we hope, gives them life too. So, practice the question: “Would you like to come to church with me this Sunday?” Really. Say it out loud. Really. Not too difficult is it. If someone hears you by mistake, that’s a good thing. They might accept! Now, say it to another person; a friend, an acquaintance, a stranger in the grocery store, someone. You can do it. *If* they say “no”, that’s OK, ask someone else (and you can even ask that other person again later, they may change their mind and wish they had said yes, and are just too embarrassed to tell you).



Advice from Michael Harvey: “Spend more time with newcomers than regulars.”

After lunch (lunch was very good by the way) we talked about how to keep every single person that we’ve invited and has accepted. So, what stops a person from coming back a second time? Generally, we don’t know because we assume that they won’t come back. Well, let’s stop assuming and ask or imagine that they come back not because of something inside them but because of something in, with and under us.

Michael Harvey gave us 10 keys to keeping every first time visitor:

1. God sent you his precious people. (We need to see visitors as God’s gifts!)
2. Spend more time with newcomers than regulars. (But isn’t church about our friends?)
3. Manage the first impression. (Some of our people are better at welcome than others.)
4. Find a way to appreciate the visitor. (look up lagniappe in google).
5. Find out about the visitor (eg. Would you mind filling in this card?)

6. Contact your visitor in the first week, if not the first 36 hours.
7. Go and visit them in their home.
8. Send three invitations to do something fun with the church. (*Fun* in the church? Novel!)
9. Introduce them to a small group.
10. Transform your Welcome Team into a Pastoral Keeping Team.

Michael also suggested that we consider using “Mystery Worshippers” to give feedback. (Don’t tell anyone *when* they are coming, only that they *will be* coming.) An added bonus is that there is another way to invite someone new to come to worship services.

There was a great deal of excellent food for thought and practical suggestions. Now, just to *do* it! With God’s help. If you want to learn more visit [www.mjhassociates.org.uk](http://www.mjhassociates.org.uk) and click on “Back to Church Sunday”.

*By Pastor Calvin Skriver, Lord of Glory, Lac La Biche*

## Augustana – Educating the Mind and the Heart for 100 Years

A legacy grad. This is how Gail Stolee’s son perceives himself. His family’s four generational involvement with Augustana, then known as Camrose Lutheran College in Camrose, AB began with his great-grandfather as one of the founders. Gail’s son and many other Augustana alumni, have a strong and important sense of the inheritance they have received by being able to come to this place of learning.

An important part of Augustana’s embrace of both the mind and heart comes from the Chaplaincy Program. Barry Vall, chair of the chaplaincy council, said, “Augustana has been through lots of changes in its 100 years.” Most significant was in 2002 when it became part of the University of Alberta. “This partnership was approached in a spirit of trust, communication and effort to maintain the legacy,” he said, “and took the genuine cooperation of government, faculty and staff, and the church in making difficult decisions.”

Now, in 2011, the partnership is still working well. The council is responsible for calling a chaplain and for raising 1/3 of the funds necessary to run the Chaplaincy Program. The University of Alberta provides the remaining 2/3. Of the chaplaincy council’s share, half is raised through the staff and faculty of Augustana, with the remaining half coming from community donations.

To insure the future existence of the Chaplaincy Program, a “Remember the Future Endowment for Chaplaincy” fund has been created. As Gail Stolee says, “We are people of hope and faith. This is an opportunity to build a legacy such as we have inherited.”

*By Colleen McGinnis*



# Mar Thoma Bishops Bring Ecumenical Outlook to Ronning Centre Consultation

*Representing the tradition of the Apostle Thomas*

Photo by Reiner Loewan



From left to right: David Goa, director, Ronning Centre; Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosios and Rt. Rev. Joseph Mar Barnabas of the Mar Thoma Church

The understanding of ecumenism “has changed from the unity of the churches to the unity of all in the inhabited earth”.

This was an observation by the Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosios, Diocesan Bishop of the Mar Thoma Church in North America and Europe, who explored the implications of the change for his church in the course of an address to a Ronning Centre Consultation in Edmonton.

The church, he observed, “intercedes for the world by being conscious of the various needs of the people”.

Bishop Mar Theodosios was joined at the July 5 consultation by the Rt. Rev. Joseph Mar Barnabas, one of the Diocesan Bishops of the church in Kerala, in southwest India, where the Mar Thoma church originated and has its headquarters.

The name “Mar Thoma” means “St. Thomas”, and refers to the church’s continuity with the original Christian movement in India, founded according to a strongly held tradition through the missionary work of Jesus’ disciple St Thomas, beginning in AD 52. Largely isolated for centuries from Western Christianity, the St Thomas Christians in the age of colonialism were confronted with aggressive moves to incorporate them into first the Roman Catholic church of Portugal, then the Anglican Church.

The Mar Thoma Church of today took shape at the end of the nineteenth century among Indian Christians who, without becoming an isolated community, wished to maintain a church structure free of foreign influence. In 1947 it declined to merge with the Church of South India, but it is in full intercommunion with the Anglican Church and takes an active role in the World Council of Churches and other ecumenical bodies.

It describes itself, as Bishop Mar Theodosios explained, as “apostolic in origin, universal in nature, Biblical in faith, evangelical in principle, ecumenical in outlook, democratic in function and episcopal in character.”

Central to its identity is the Western Syrian liturgy it has inherited and now performs in Malayalam (the language of Kerala) and also in English. “The whole theology of the Church is embedded in the liturgy of the Church”, Bishop Mar Theodosios declared. “The Word of God and its contextual exposition is an integral part of our worship and we take both the ‘altar’ and the ‘pulpit’ seriously.”

Possessing a keen awareness of social needs, the Mar Thoma Church has been responsible for organizing an extensive array of educational and charitable institutions in

its home territory. And, in line with a consistent tradition of reformation within the church, it is now confronting – not without much heart-searching – issues such as the status of women in worship.



Bishop Mar Theodosios describes the Mar Thoma church

Photo by Reiner Loewan

The formation of communities of Mar Thoma Christians who had emigrated abroad led to the creation of a new “zone” of the church in 1982, which has since become the Diocese of North America and Europe, administered by Bishop Mar Theodosios from a base in New York. Three of the churches comprised in it are in Western Canada, in Edmonton, Calgary, and Vancouver.

Trinity Mar Thoma Church in Edmonton goes back to a congregation that began regular services in 1976. For Bishop Mar Barnabas this is a very familiar setting; before being called to the episcopate he served as the parish priest here from 1989 to 1993.

Bishop Mar Theodosios also has close ties with Canada, having taken his doctorate in theology at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario.

The present vicar of Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Rev. Reji John, who also attended the consultation, cordially invited anyone interested to visit his church and join in its worship.

After the formal part of the consultation, those present had the pleasure of being treated to a light lunch featuring South Indian fare.

*By Nicholas Wickenden, Managing Editor, Ronning Centre Newsletter*

### **Canadian Lutheran World Relief**

**has **32** ways  
you can make someone's life  
better this Christmas.**

**To view the catalogue,  
go to [clwr.org](http://clwr.org) and click on  
Gifts from the Heart**

### **JUBILOSO!**

#### **BELLS OF CONCORDIA**

The largest set of handbells and handchimes in Canada in concert at Messiah Lutheran Church, Camrose

**7:00 pm - November 19**

**\$12 Adults**

**\$2 Children 12 and under**

## Celebrating a Holy Centennial Event in New Sarepta

St. John Lutheran Church history dates back as early as 1905, when church members met in a private home on a weekly basis to worship. The congregation was officially organized in 1911. It was a year later that the church acquired an official building – a house chapel – that served as the place of worship until 1926. A new church building was constructed and completed in 1927.

Over the next forty years the congregation expanded until it again outgrew its home and in 1966, the current church was completed. Today however, like many other small, rural churches, the New Sarepta congregational membership has decreased. It is the parishioner's hope that news of this event, our 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, will allow people to gain knowledge of our past, our present and our dreams for the future.

It was a holy celebration for the members of St. John Lutheran in New Sarepta. Approximately 200 people attended on August 27 and 28, beginning with a meet and greet on Saturday evening, and followed by a church service and dinner on Sunday to mark the centennial event.

Special guests on Sunday included local, provincial and federal politicians, as well as synod Bishop Ron Mayan who was the presiding minister for the service. Several former pastors and Rev. David Eriksson, Dean of the East Central Conference also attended.

Gifts received by the congregation included a painting (shown above) by Rev. Benedicte Gormly, banners made by Janet Carlton, Christ candle from the Lippiatt and Kosinski families, and a candle stand made by Paul Miko.

*By Nona Kosinski, St. John Lutheran, New Sarepta, Alberta*

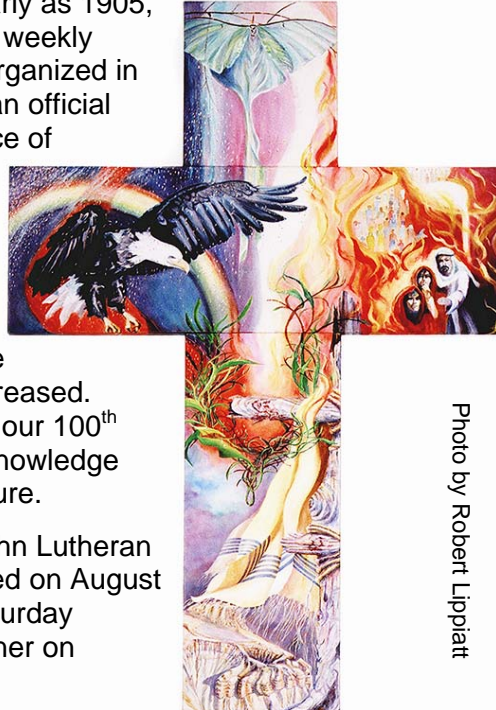


Photo by Robert Lippiatt

## Abundant Life Formally Becomes Part of ABT Synod



In 2007 this Chinese mission began its ministry in Calgary, with Pastor Peter Chau (left) serving as Pastor/Developer. Reaching out to Calgary's growing immigrant population in northwest Calgary

has been their priority, and on Sept 25, Abundant Life Lutheran Church was formally organized and welcomed as a congregation in the ABT synod.

## One More Anniversary!

**St. Peters (Historical) Lutheran Church** near Scapa, north of Hanna, AB, celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> birthday with a service and picnic lunch for about 150 people on August 13.

St. Peter's history is unique, as it was originally built for a Wetaskiwin parish, but became vacant 10 years later. In mid-winter it was cut into sections by a group of men from Scapa, and delivered 230 km by rail car to Craigmyle. It travelled 50 km more on horse-drawn sleds to its present site where it was reassembled the following spring. A bell, which also came from Wetaskiwin, provided the finishing touch 84 years later.

## Answering the Call – Groote, Schnell and Penrod

**Groote:** On September 18 Barbara Groote was ordained at Augustana Lutheran Church in Saskatoon, SK. The support she received from those with her in person and in spirit that day touched her deeply. She says, “People came from different communities that I have been part of since moving to Canada 17 years ago. Each of these communities had a profound impact on my pastoral journey. The people in the places I have been, where I am, and where I will be are a visible expression of how we are bound together into the body of Christ.”

Pastor Groote has received and accepted a call to serve as pastor of Ascension Lutheran Church, Edmonton, AB.



Photo by Darcy Calkins

Rev. Barbara Groote

**Schnell:** Aaron Schnell was ordained June 17 at Highwood Lutheran, Calgary into the Ministry of Word and Sacrament after having received and accepted a Call to serve as Second Pastor at First Lutheran, Calgary, Alberta.



Photo by Philip Tang

Rev. Aaron Schnell

And the other good news for the Schnell family? On August 21, at 8 pounds, 5 ounces, and 21 inches tall, Toby Alan Emmanuel Schnell joined his mom, dad and big sister in their ministry at First Lutheran.

**Penrod:** July 31 saw Philip Kyle Penrod being ordained into God’s service at Lord of All Lutheran Church, Strathmore, AB. Bishop Ron Mayan presided over the



Photo by Dr. Pamela Giles

Rev. Philip Penrod

afternoon celebration.

Pastor Penrod received and accepted a call to serve as Lead Pastor at Our Savior Lutheran in Edmonton, AB and was installed on

August 14. Rev. Kevin Ree, Dean of the Northern Conference, was guest preacher.

### **Celebrations** IS A PUBLICATION OF THE COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE OF THE SYNOD OF ALBERTA AND THE 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:

mail@caelinartworks.com  
4728 – 50 Avenue  
Wetaskiwin, AB T9A 0R7  
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*.

**Celebrations** IS COPYRIGHTED to the Synod of Alberta and the Territories. However, photocopies of **Celebrations** are encouraged for use in the congregations of our synod.

**Celebrations** may not be republished in print or posted to a website outside of the congregations of our synod, either in whole or in part, without the express permission of the Synod – abtsynod@elcic.ca.