

The Lutheran Connector

The Official Publication of the Canadian Association of Lutheran Congregations (CALC)

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*CALC is a Community of Independent
Congregations Living Together*

*The Word of God Created Us
The Word of God Sustains Us
The Word of God Redeems Us*

*We are servants of one another
We share one another's burdens
As Jesus served us and bore our burdens*

As one we proclaim Jesus to the world

CALC NATIONAL CONVENTION

This year's CALC National Convention will be hosted by Christ Lutheran Church in Morden, MB. The date to mark down on the calendar is November 5-7.

Our church family is so excited to have been chosen to host the National Convention. We feel as though we can relate to the city of Vancouver when they had been chosen to host the 2010 Olympics!

We look forward to having many of our CALC family friends and other esteemed guests join us in November. We have already begun to plan and work toward giving everyone a wonderful Morden, Manitoba experience!

Pastor Tom Baker

Churches belonging to the Canadian Association of Lutheran Congregations

- Christ Lutheran – Morden, MB
- Christ Lutheran – Sexsmith, AB
- Faith Lutheran – North York, ON
- Grace Lutheran – Kelowna, BC
- Journeys Lutheran – Grande Prairie, AB
- Martin Luther Evangelical – Vancouver, BC
- St. Andrew's Lutheran – Kamloops, BC
- St. Peter's Lutheran – Cochrane, AB

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

I Want To Believe... But I Just Don't Get It!

I have heard words like these a hundred times. They reveal a genuine desire for faith in God which has been frustrated. They also betray the reason for this frustration: the existence of a mental block. The one making the confession has thought the whole thing through and, based on that exercise, cannot be convinced of the reality and existence of God. Some confess that their own suffering and/or the existence of suffering in the world, especially of children, keeps them from believing in God. They contend that they cannot believe in a God that would stand by and watch suffering and death without interfering. Others confess that they simply cannot believe some of the claims made by Scripture. They simply cannot believe that the world was created in six days. They doubt the reality of the miracles described in Scripture, Jesus' divinity, and His resurrection from the dead. If there is indeed a genuine desire on a person's part to believe in God, how can we help them deal with this mental block?

George Orwell wrote, "Sometimes the first duty of intelligent men [and women] is the restatement of the obvious." We must honestly state our case. We must confess that Holy Scriptures, like a CT scan, diagnose the source of the mental block. The source of our mental block is found in a dramatic tension between our human way of thinking and a longing that God has planted in us. We must further confess that, as the church, we have, and continue to proclaim the Gospel in a way that actually increases our frustration and does not bring God glory. We must also state with conviction the Scriptural prescription for our healing.

The Source of Our Mental Block

The source of our "human way of thinking" is found in the third chapter of the Book of Genesis, in the account of the fall of man. In this chapter, the devil's temptation led humanity to fall from grace. God's existence, His power and His authority were known to Adam and Eve; yet, at the same time, they lived by faith. As long as Adam and Eve refrained from eating the forbidden fruit, they would live in a perfect relationship with God and one another. In this state of innocence, even eternal life was freely offered to them in the fruit borne by a tree of the same name. Adam and Eve had to have faith and trust in God's Word; that the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil would change them, would bring about their death. The devil convinced Eve that God's motive for threatening them with death by eating the forbidden fruit was to keep them from gaining the knowledge that would put them on par with God. With the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve could be able to figure things out, including God. So Eve ate of the forbidden fruit, as did her husband, and the rest is, as they say, history. They were changed. They felt shame. They knew that they had done wrong, and committed what was evil to God. They knew that they could no longer stand before God in innocence. So when God came to them, they did the natural thing: they hid.

When God asked why they were hiding, they confessed their transgression; yet at the same time, they rationalized and they laid blame. Adam blamed Eve, the woman God had placed in the garden. Eve blamed the devil, who was also in the garden by God's design. In the end, Adam and Eve blamed God for their transgression, their lack of faith in his word. Adam and Eve passed on their new consciousness to their children, Cain and Abel. Cain knew the difference between good and evil, yet this knowledge did not stop the envy and hatred for his brother from getting the better of him. Jealousy caused the first murder.

We know how they felt after eating the forbidden fruit; it's the way we feel today. They passed their fallen consciousness to Cain, Able, Seth, and to every generation from that day forward to this very day. We still blame God for our lack of faith in Him. We say: "If Holy Scripture would provide a scientifically plausible explanation for creation, then I could believe. If God would simply eliminate suffering by a dramatic intervention into the history of this world, then I would believe. If Jesus would just show Himself to me the way He did to Paul and the Apostles, then I would believe. I can't figure you out God; therefore, it's Your fault I can't believe!" This human attitude collides with a force that God has planted in us.

Almost three thousand years ago, King Solomon, a man of God and the wisest man in the world, described the longing God placed in us: ***"I have seen the burden God has laid on men. He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end."*** (Ecclesiastes 3:10-12). Solomon says a great deal in these three verses. God has given us a gift, which is also a burden. He has given us the ability to think, perceive, comprehend and hope. Solomon declares that the beauty and majesty of the created order will interact with the human being and produce something. The Apostle Paul echoes Solomon's understanding: Paul argues that creation reveals the existence of God. "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse." (Romans 1:20). God permits us to see beauty and perfection in ourselves and others. He allows us to give and receive mercy and experience genuine love. He also gives us the ability to comprehend and to some extent, master time. We understand that there is a beginning and end to things and that time marches on like a great flowing river. He gives us the ability to imagine and comprehend eternity; that is,

everlasting life, without time, in a perfect world, where there is no beginning or end. While we can imagine this beauty, this perfection, we have not been able to attain it. We have come a long way as a species in the last three thousand years in comprehending the nature and cause of death. Yet we have not attained the knowledge needed to cheat death and live eternally. Our beautiful world is full of danger and natural disasters. Like death, we cannot harness the forces of nature. We cannot tame the forces of nature and bid them to do our will, nor can we tame the human will.

What happens when an innate understanding of the existence of God collides with the fallen mind that wants to figure things out? Paul says that it produces a million religions and belief systems that try to rationalize God, and even provide methods by which the power of God can be harnessed for the benefit of human beings. Take a course in world religions and you can sample the diversity in human understanding of God. Study archaeology and you will see that throughout recorded history humanity has worshipped gods. However, in these modern times, the rationalization of the divine has reached its zenith. We have witnessed, as the German philosopher Nietzsche penned in one of his works, that "God Is Dead." Religion was seen as necessary in the development of mankind. Religion provided peace and solace in times of trouble. It explained the inexplicable. However each scientific advance and each technological improvement made religion less necessary. The belief that religion was no longer necessary became institutionalized in communist nations where religion was declared an opiate or addictive drug that deluded and hooked the masses, and was therefore declared illegal. This need to rationalize and control religion threatens even the Holy Christian Church. It threatens the way the Gospel is proclaimed.

The "Emerging Church – Progressive Christianity"

There are those within the institutional church who lament: "The world has not changed appreciably for the two thousand years since Jesus' death. He has not come back; He has not brought in the kingdom, although we have proclaimed it and waited patiently." It has become clear to many that we in the church were wrong to hope for this; God had other plans, we have missed the point. They argue that the church has to change. Modern people will not buy the kingdom of God breaking into history of a physical resurrection to eternal life. A new movement has arisen in the church. It is called the "Emerging Church" or "Progressive" Christianity. The aim of the "Emerging Church" or Progressive Christianity is to get people talking about the Christianity in new ways. The movement's adherents spark this discussion by openly challenging what they call stereotypes or myths about Jesus.

By way of example, in its ongoing effort to provoke conversation about spiritual matters, St Matthew-in-the-City in Auckland, New Zealand, put up this billboard outside their church during Advent 2009. The billboard aims to lampoon Biblical literalism. It invites people to think again about what a miracle is: specifically, was Jesus' birth a miracle birth? The church has always declared that Jesus was conceived in Mary of Nazareth by the power of the Holy Spirit. Mary remained a virgin; that is, had not been with a human man. They ask the question: Is the Christmas miracle a male God sending forth His divine sperm or is the miracle that God is and always has been among the poor?



The Reverend Glynn Cardy, priest at St. Mathews, was quoted as saying the miracle at Christmas is described as follows: "At Bethlehem, low-life shepherds and heathen travelers are welcome while the powerful and the priests aren't. The stories introduce the topsy-turvy way of God, where the outsiders are invited in and the insiders ushered out." He further argued that, "the true importance of Christmas is in the radical hospitality Jesus offered to the poor, the despised, women, children, and the sick." "This is the essence of God," he concluded. He continued with this thought, "His [Jesus'] death was a consequence of the offensive nature of that hospitality and His resurrection a symbolic vindication." What is wrong with this picture?

First, in an effort to make Jesus and Christianity palatable to the un-churched, the Emerging Church has challenged most of the Creedal beliefs of the church: 'Jesus is no longer the Son of God conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, crucified, died, and buried, who then rose from the dead. Jesus did not ascend into heaven nor does He sit at God's right hand. Jesus will not come back to judge the living and the dead. He will not bring in an everlasting kingdom. Therefore Jesus has to do only with this world.'

If Jesus can no longer be considered a saviour in the way comprehended in the Apostles' Creed, He must be our saviour in another way. In the Emerging Church, Jesus has become a saviour in a way which is curiously similar to the way Socrates, the ancient Greek philosopher, became a saviour of Greece and philosophy.

Socrates was born 469 years before Christ. He spoke with anyone who would strike up a conversation with him. It did not matter whether they were young or old, rich or poor. He believed that truth could be derived from relentlessly asking questions and relentlessly giving answers to those questions. Although he was educated, he never set his ideas to paper. In the year 600 BC, Socrates was sentenced to death for allegedly corrupting the youth of Athens by inciting them to rebel against their parents and other authorities. He spoke against the religion (gods) of the ruling class in Athens and introduced new gods. He spoke of the immortal soul briefly before his death but was indifferent to death. He was pronounced guilty by a majority of over 500 judges. Following his death, Socrates' disciples Aristotle and Plato, using Socrates teachings, revolutionized philosophy and Greek Society. Some argue that the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle ultimately shaped the western world.

Jesus' followers, like Socrates' followers, are called to change this world. They are to change the world by fellowship; specifically, by fellowship with the poor and the downtrodden. The priest at St. Matthew's-in-the-City acknowledged Jesus' death, not because He claimed to be the Son of God and promised to rise from the dead on the third day, rather, 'that Jesus was crucified and died because He practiced 'radical hospitality' (ate with sinners). Jesus did not rise from the dead on the third day in reality. What arose on the first Easter Sunday was not Jesus; rather, what arose was a new appreciation and love for Jesus which vindicated His life, death and radical hospitality.'

The problem is that the "Emerging Church's" Jesus has been stripped of His divinity and His vitality. Sin, punishment and atonement become irrelevant. Most importantly, bodily resurrection from the dead and life everlasting are not even in the picture. The Emerging Church will not permit its adherents from believing anything that contradicts human reason. What is important to the Emerging Church is the human community and fellowship. The problem with the "Emerging Church" is obvious. Paul said it in 1 Corinthians 15:19-20: ***"If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."*** Progressive Christianity does nothing for the "eternity" that God has set in our hearts. It says nothing to the hope that God has planted in us for life after death, as this goes against reason. This movement will fail as a result. In the interim, it will cause many to fall away from the faith out of a real sense of frustration.

Fire and Brimstone

Another tried and true method of proclaiming God relies on fear and shame. This method has been given many names over the centuries, however the name I grew up with is, "Fire and Brimstone Preaching." It readily confesses everything that is found in the Apostles' Creed. Jesus is our Saviour, died on the cross for our sins and rose from the dead. It proclaims that God hates sin and is angry with the world and its people because they sin. God has identified sin chapter and verse in the Bible. God is Holy and He demands that we be holy. The role of the Christian is to accept this and live a life which conforms to rigid rules set by authority figures in the church (based upon scripture). It is argued that God's anger and wrath can be seen everywhere in this world. Every natural disaster, every war, every famine represents divine judgment which should drive us to faith. This style of proclamation was most recently experienced when American Televangelist Pat Robertson linked the recent disaster in Haiti to a pact that Haitian slaves made with the Devil in the 1800s: that this pact with the Devil made possible their defeat from the French Imperialists who had enslaved them, and won their independence in a bloody coup.



Luther would be the first to point out what is obviously wrong with this kind of preaching and proclamation. It is precisely the preaching Luther heard all his young life. This preaching made him fear the future. He believed in eternal life. He did not want to spend eternity in Hell. He wanted to spend eternity in Heaven. He would do anything to escape Hell.

There are always those who will prey on Luther's fear. They will offer ways to make one acceptable to God. The church in Luther's day said: Enter the Holy or sacred life. Enter a Religious Order; that is, become a Nun or a Monk. Even better become a Priest! In response, Luther did enter a Religious Order, that is, he became a Monk and then he became a Priest. Luther tried to conform to God's will. He attempted to live a Holy life. However, the harder he tried to live a Holy life, the greater his failure. Moral failure produced a fear of God, life and death. He searched for a loving God.

The problem with Fire and Brimstone Preaching is threefold. Firstly, it turns some people off immediately. They experience God as a bully. They hear God say, "Love me and obey me or I will send you to Hell." If it is impossible to really love a human bully, how can we in the church possibly believe that people will love a divine bully? Secondly, it drives some people to try to comply with God's word by their own reason or strength. Some who try to conform to God's word turn out like the Pharisees. They make up their own rules that permit them to comply with God's word, and they follow their own rules to the letter. The problem is that they became a self-righteous and self-congratulatory club. They became the mark by which all others in the world are judged. Unless one conformed their behaviour to the Pharisees' standards, one was lost. Others who tried to follow God's word by their own reason and strength have Luther's experience; they understand the impossibility of the task and live in fear and trepidation of God. Fire and Brimstone preaching keeps those who are turned off, become Pharisees, or become Luthers, from experiencing the heart of the Gospel message: ***"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."*** (John 3:16-17)

Law and Gospel

Luther eventually found faith and a loving God in the Gospel. He found God without figuring it out. The message of John 3:16-17 is this: It is in God's giving of Jesus that we see His love. Luther put it this way in his explanation to the Third Article of the Apostle's Creed:

"I believe that I cannot, by my own reason or strength, believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way, He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith."

Luther believed, confessed and professed that the scriptures teach us that we must proclaim Christ by Law and Gospel. You cannot see the light of the Gospel unless you experience the darkness of the Law.

How can God be a merciful King if we are not guilty of something which deserves punishment? How can God be a gracious Monarch, who bestows upon us the gifts of forgiveness and everlasting life, unless we were utterly undeserving? How can Jesus be our Saviour if He leaves us where He found us and sanctifies a lifestyle Scripture denounces? What then does Jesus save us from?

The scriptures testify that we will come to see Jesus' divinity and His love for us in His innocent suffering and death, and in the perpetration of violence against him. We see this most clearly in the account of Jesus and the thief on the cross. Jesus was crucified between two criminals:

One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:39-43)

The repentant criminal experienced the Law, the Gospel and the realization of the eternity God had placed in his heart. The repentant "other criminal" came to see his sinfulness. He came to see that he was getting what he deserved as payment for his life of crime. The thief came to see that God hated sin and that he was guilty of the sin that God hated. He also experienced the Gospel; that Jesus was not getting what He deserved. He experienced Jesus' suffering as innocent suffering, as sacrificial suffering. The suffering of Jesus also sparked an understanding of eternity in the heart of the 'other criminal'. He had heard Jesus declare He was a king and His kingdom is not of this world. He believed that Jesus was a king and he believed that Jesus had the power to grant entry into that kingdom. The 'other criminal' stepped out in that faith and asked Jesus to remember him when He got to His kingdom not of this world. Jesus made the faith of that other criminal grow by leaps and bounds, when He gave him more than what he asked for. Jesus was not only going to remember him; Jesus was going to welcome him into that kingdom, that very day. Faith came from seeing the suffering servant of God, suffer.

The Apostle Paul reminds us that there will be many who demand that we convince them to believe in Jesus by clear, convincing and logical arguments. Others will want to see miracles and even experience miracles themselves; and then they will believe. However, in the end, Paul's advice is this:

"Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." (1 Cor. 1:22-24)

This requires discipline on our part. We must preach this Gospel message over and over again without fail. We must ask God for the wisdom and strength to convey this Gospel message with different words, but the message must still be the same. We also must be aware that the Devil will oppose this preaching. He will create division within the church and will bring outside forces to bear upon the church but Jesus calls us to be faithful and to convey that Gospel message.

Every one of our congregations in CALC is experiencing challenges from within and without the church. Some of our congregations may not be growing as expected. Some congregations may have shrunk to the point that we wonder whether our congregations will continue. This situation may cause some to question why this is happening to us as individuals, congregations and as a church body. We may wonder whether we are facing these challenges because we may have been soft on the law or we have not lived holy enough lives. I believe that we are experiencing setbacks precisely because we want to preach the Law and the Gospel. We have to believe that these challenges present an opportunity for God to act. God can bring a great good out of our lot. In this season of Easter, when we proclaim the good news of the death and resurrection of Jesus, that same Gospel reminds us that the good news of the Gospel was a huge challenge to the disciples at first. They were eleven without the physical presence of their leader. There were other disciples but they were scattered. They feared the Roman and Jewish authorities. They were told by Jesus to go into the world and preach the Gospel. They had no resources. They had no choirs, praise bands, buildings or budgets, but they did have Jesus. He told them that they would succeed because He was with them. They stepped out in faith - and look what happened! Jesus wants to remind us that He is with us and that is all that we need. He tells us, as He told them, to keep preaching, teaching and loving. Jesus promises that, as we do this in His name, a resurrection will occur: renewed faith, a new vitality and a new love for Him will well up inside us.

I implore every congregation in CALC to pray for one another; specifically, to pray this prayer:

Gracious heavenly Father, we pray for your Holy Christian Church and for the congregations of CALC in particular. We beseech you to fill it with truth, peace and love for you and our neighbors. Where it is corrupt, purify it; where it is in error, direct it; where in anything it is amiss, reform it; where it is right, strengthen it; where it is in need, provide for it; where it is divided, unite it. Increase, O Father, the faith and energy of your Church and the congregations of CALC in particular; kindle within us a deep desire to work with you for the salvation of all people through the proclamation of the Gospel. Make us preach Christ crucified and resurrected without fear or intimidation, so that people might be freed from sin and that hope be renewed in many hearts, to the increase of the kingdom of your Son, Jesus Christ. We ask all this for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour. Amen.

I know God will answer this prayer in ways we cannot comprehend.

In Christ's Service,

Pastor Ed Skutshek,
President, CALC



A NEW ARRANGEMENT

Since my teen years, I have greatly enjoyed the process of rearranging furniture - perhaps not the physical aspect of it, as much as the recreation of something old into something new. I love the feeling of sitting in a "new" room, all clean and organized; the feeling you get when you move to somewhere new but without the hassle of boxing everything up. Mike and I have been in our place for about eight months now and I was beginning to feel the itch to rearrange. Kind and loving husband that he is, Mike agreed to help; and so we took on the task of rearranging the suite.

We spent five hours shifting furniture and knick knacks around our two bedroom suite and it seemed like the more we tried to move stuff and make it fit perfectly, the more mess we made and the smaller our place became. We just couldn't seem to get it right and it was starting to show in our temperaments. We were snipping at one another and you could feel the fight coming, building in the tiny spaces between our ill-fitting furniture. Finally we couldn't do anything but stop! Mike and I both stood back and took a very deep breath scanning the room and taking a moment to relax. After about 5 minutes we tackled the job again and suddenly everything slid right into place. It was really amazing. Suddenly, I understood one of my favorite Psalms better than ever before. Psalm 46 says,

"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts. The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Come and see the works of the LORD, the desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear, he burns the shields with fire. "Be still, and know that I am God I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress."

Often in life, we spend so much time trying to arrange everything in our lives to 'fit' perfectly. We run from here to there, work three jobs to pay the bills, and be the good parent, spouse and child, while trying to fit in time to relax and have a social life – to say nothing of finding time to work out, eat right, and reach the unattainable goals of beauty and perfection thrust upon us daily by the media. Are you overwhelmed yet? Are you tired of trying to rearrange all the stuff into too small a time space?

I was tired as I tried to stuff all the furniture into my little place. I became so frustrated that nothing felt important anymore. I became stressed and worried and took no joy in a process that I normally loved. I realized in that five-minute break what it means to 'be still'. I realized that something would have to go, that not everything would fit into the space that I had. I realized that we would have to take stock of what was really important and then dump the rest.

As we try to cram all the "furniture" into our lives we often find that we have too little time and energy to complete all the tasks we set out to accomplish. And yet we don't stop when we hit the wall, do we? We scramble and fight to climb up and over, pushing ourselves to the very edge of sanity. With nerves frayed, at the end of our ropes, we half-heartedly go about our lives feeling that nothing is really important anymore. We find ourselves lashing out at those we love, the pressure and anger continuously building within us. There is no more joy to life, no more passion, no more excitement; only the endless drudge of an overfull life.

But what if it didn't have to be like that? What if things could fit into the time and energy that we had? What if we could rely on someone else to guide us and give us energy, to clear the way and help make the pieces all fit together so that once again we could take joy in our daily tasks? What if you lived every day knowing that you are called to the tasks you are taking on and, when things get stressful, there is always someone to turn to, somewhere to lay down your burdens, and be still?

This is what Psalm 46 is all about. Through the words of the psalm, we are called to take refuge in our God, to lay our worries and burdens at His feet. We are told that we have a place to dump some of that stuff we carry around with us that just doesn't fit. God himself tells us to "Be still and know that I am God." God wants us to rely on Him and go to Him to help us rearrange our busy lives. God wants us to let go of the things that do not give us life. He asks us to take a five-minute break to look over our lives and to take stock of everything we cram in. My prayer is that you will be able to find joy and rest through this beautiful psalm; that you will be able to look to God, take a breath and rely on our Heavenly Father to fit things into place, so that you may know the fullness and joy that life has to offer - that life was meant to offer under God's great design. Through Psalm 46, we are called to take a step back from the hectic pace our lives take, let go of those things that don't fit, can't fit and are not good for us. We are called to be still, take refuge and rest firmly....

In His Grip,

Pastor Karen Seifert



CONGREGATIONAL NEWS

CHRIST LUTHERAN – MORDEN

2010 had started off well for us here at Christ Lutheran in Morden. After a busy Christmas Season, we held a church potluck early in January to celebrate a brand new year and decade. It was also a great opportunity to get to know some of our newer people. Dinner table gatherings are so wonderful and no one does potlucks quite like we do here at Christ Lutheran in Morden.

The Holy Week is observed by holding a joint Maundy Thursday Service with St. Thomas Anglican Church at our church. We participate in a community Good Friday Service and end the weekend with a celebration Service on Sunday morning.

We are also very excited in Christ Lutheran. There have been some new families recently joining us, which is wonderful. And there are children in those families which is also great. It will mean more ministry responsibilities, but that is what every church would want.

Adding to our excitement is that the CALC National Council has chosen Morden to be the place for National Convention in November. We are looking forward to hosting Convention and to giving everyone a fantastic experience in our town and in our church.

We appreciate all of our CALC family and thank you for your prayers and we pray for God's richest blessings on the ministries that each of you have in your respective cities and towns.

CHRIST LUTHERAN – SEXSMITH

The main objective of the Christ Lutheran Church in Sexsmith has been working toward acquiring a Pastor for the church. We ask that our brothers and sisters in CALC would join Christ Lutheran in prayer as they seek the person whom God has in mind to serve as shepherd in this church.

Blessings,
Christ Lutheran - Sexsmith

FAITH LUTHERAN – NORTH YORK

CALC welcomes Faith Lutheran to our family of churches and is grateful to have them join us. We look forward to hearing more from them and of them in future editions.

GRACE LUTHERAN – KELOWNA

On Sunday, March 14, 2010, our congregation ratified the necessary amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws of Grace Lutheran Church, in a second and final unanimous vote, due to the severance of our ties with the ELCIC and subsequent alignment with CALC and LCMC. It is great to have this done and over with! On to new and exciting growth with our brothers and sisters in Christ!

The Season of Lent has been observed with a great Pancake Supper on Shrove Tuesday, followed by Ash Wednesday worship service, and weekly Lenten Studies on Thursdays, preceded by soup and bun fellowship suppers. We anticipate Holy Week, with the children marching in waving homegrown palm branches on Palm Sunday, then a morning service on Good Friday, leading up to our two Easter Sunday services. We look forward to our contemporary 8:00 AM outdoor sunrise service, led by our Pastor Karen Seifert, at the beautiful Bear Creek Provincial Park, followed by an Easter breakfast, and a candy hunt and craft table for the children. Our Pastor Ed Skutshek will lead our traditional Easter Sunday worship service at Grace Lutheran, with both services offering Holy Communion. Oh, happy day!

We continue to be blessed with writings from Pastor Ed and Pastor Karen – these are submitted to our local paper twice a month for community publication. We are blessed with an advertising budget that permits us to pay for these insertions, freeing our Pastors to use Jesus' and God's names and Scripture liberally and 'unapologetically' in their writings!

With our first Men's Retreat in April, our GLC Showcase fundraiser and supper in May, our outdoor congregational picnic in June, and our VBS in early July, our energies are high and the Spirit is moving! Praise the Lord!

JOURNEYS LUTHERAN – GRANDE PRAIRIE

Journeys Lutheran shares the same concern as Christ Lutheran in Sexsmith and needs a pastor. It has also been an emotional time for Journeys with 2 ladies from their church family dealing with much stress. Please pray with them for:

- Nora, a dear friend, is having her leg amputated.
- Shirley, another dear friend, has been ill for more than a year and is currently in a long-term facility care centre.
- Both Nora and Shirley have also lost their husbands within the past few years.

In spite of the struggles, the people of Journeys continue to look to the cross for their source of Light.

MARTIN LUTHER – VANCOUVER

Hello Everyone,

What beautiful weather we are enjoying in Vancouver at the moment. I hope it stays this way for a while.

Our church, Martin Luther Evangelical Lutheran Church, is a small-sized church. We have two services just about every Sunday. We have German service at 9:00 am and English service at 11:00 am. When these two services are combined the service time 10:30 am.

We don't have any young people in our German service but a few young people in the English service. We have a combined service usually once a month. Most members enjoy the combined service. The combined service is usually in English. The lessons are read in German and English by members from our congregation. In between church services we meet downstairs for fellowship with coffee and cake.

In Saturday, March 6th, we, Martha Bayer, who is 92 years old, Edith and Arno Schilling and us, Waldemar and Erika Gunther, returned home from Camp Luther on Hatzic Lake, close to Mission, BC. We go out every year and cook a German dinner, of homemade sauerkraut and cabbage rolls, for their annual meeting. Martha Bayer made the sauerkraut and the stuffing for the cabbages. It was a very delicious meal and everyone enjoyed the meal. This meal was a contribution of our German Ladies Circle.

In our church we have a quilting club of five ladies. Every Tuesday, we meet in the basement of our church and make quilts for people living in 3rd world countries. Last year we made 90 quilts.

We have a Friendship Bowling Club that meets every Thursday afternoon in the basement of our church. You can hear the members laughing and having a real great time.

We also have a German Ladies Circle, chaired by Martha Bayer, where we discuss charity work and upcoming events. Martha reads a Christian story at the end of our meeting and then explains what she thinks about this story. This is always followed by a very heartfelt prayer. Martha is really our rock in our church. All of us depend on Martha and are always asking her for advice. Her memory is excellent. Martha is also in charge of lunch when we have a funeral. She orders the meat, bread, cake and asks members to come and help. I do hope that we have Martha with us for a long, long time. There is no one else in our church who can take her place. Martha is a role model for all of us teaching us how to live a Christian centered life by going to church, reading the bible, having devotions and visiting the shut-ins.

Thank you,

Erika Gunther,

ST. ANDREW'S LUTHERAN – KAMLOOPS

Pastor Steven Herbert resigned as Pastor of St. Andrew's effective December 7, 2009. Since then Pastor Terry Sauder and Roger Plestad have been taking turns conducting the services and preaching the Gospel message. For lent they have been preaching on Luther's Small Catechism.

God Bless,
Roger Plestad

ST. PETER'S LUTHERAN – COCHRANE

St. Peter's purpose statement is "To reach our neighbors for Jesus Christ and together develop into his fully devoted followers."

We keep on asking the question, "Are we doing that well?" Jesus said to his disciples, "Go ye therefore into all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit." Are we doing that well?

The old idea that if you build it they will come is no longer a reality for the Christian church in North America. We have to realistically face that fact in blunt honesty.

Jesus said in the gospel of Luke, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." Are we really searching and seeking the lost of our community?

Our Church Council is presently studying a book called "It – How Churches and Leaders Can Get It and Keep It" by Craig Groeschel, which challenges us to look outside the box on how we do ministry and to reflect on our mission as a congregation. Our mission statement is: "To be and make disciples for Jesus Christ".

Pastor Rick is spending much time in prayer, meditation and in God's Word listening and discerning what God's next step might be for the people of God at St. Peter's

At our last Council meeting, we challenged ourselves with a 'what if' question. What if we threw everything out the door and started over from scratch, what would our ministry look like? What would happen next? Would it allow God to move us in a new and exciting direction? As scary as this thought may seem, maybe it's the right way to go as we would then perhaps allow God's Holy Spirit to bring about something new and different, innovative and unique in our ongoing challenge and mandate to reach out with the Gospel message of Jesus Christ.

Pastor Rick presented a brief report on what it might mean and look like to be Techno- Church and is presently pulling together a strategic plan to look at how we can use existing modern communication technologies to reach the lost of the world, especially our young people and young adults who continue to drift away from the institutional church.

We know this for certain: People continue to search for a deep message that touches the soul, the message we know as Jesus Christ crucified and risen. The message has not changed but the medium of delivery needs to be explored and for us at St Peter's, we are beginning to be intentional in examining, praying, reflecting, debating and waiting for God to move us in some new possible directions that truly reach the lost and hurting people of our community. And as such, this may become our new vision.

NATIONAL COUNCIL NEWS



Since the 2009 General Convention, CALC's National Council has met four times, by teleconference on December 1, 2009, January 26, 2010 and April 22, 2010 and in person in Calgary on February 27, 2010.

The following are some highlights from the recent National Council meetings:

- Council supported Pastor Ed Skutshek's attendance as a guest speaker at a Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC) event in the Niagara region of New York State, January 23, 2010, which also provided an opportunity, accompanied by Board of Trustees' member Ron Voss, to meet with representatives of ELCIC congregations in the Toronto/Kitchener/Waterloo area on January 24th and the Ottawa area on January 25th.
- Pastor Ed Skutshek was charged to proceed with Application For Recognition as a Religious Body under the B.C. Marriage Act.
- Christ Lutheran Church, Morden will host the 2010 CALC General Convention on November 5-7, 2010.
- CALC's Pastors Retreat will be held from April 26th to 29th in Fernie, BC.
- Pastor Rick Bergh joined the National Council on February 27th to provide an update on the Holistic Pathway (HP) program for pastoral ministry and plans for the Christ Centered Pastoral Formation (CCPF) component. CCPF will run for a three-week period in June of 2011.
- Members of CALC's Pastoral Review Panel were appointed and are subject to confirmation.
- Council decided to solicit Annual Congregational Reports & Church Statistic Reports from CALC's congregations.
- In response to an invitation for CALC's president, Pastor Ed Skutshek, to address the WordAlone Convention April 18 – 19 in Golden Valley, Minnesota and provide a "breakout session" on CALC, the Council authorized President Skutshek and Ron Voss, Trustee, to attend the Convention.

- It was decided that CALC's newsletter, *The Lutheran Connector*, should be issued quarterly.
- Council discussed the congregational votes received with respect to the constitutional amendments.

The next face-to-face meeting will be held in Calgary on Saturday, June 12th.



Launch of CALC's Christ-Centered Pastoral Formation (CCPF) Program

CALC's Holistic Pathway for preparing people for parish ministry is set to launch in the summer of 2011 with the inaugural Christ-Centered Pastoral Formation (CCPF) training program being held at King's Fold Retreat Center, located 20 kilometers west of Cochrane in the striking mountain landscape of the Rocky Mountains. <http://www.kingsfoldretreat.com/>

This summer's CCPF camp offers three exciting weeks of education and learning as pastors-in-training are challenged and encouraged to begin a time of personal and pastoral formation as they ready themselves for parish ministry.

During this period of stay, teaching modules under the Holistic Pathway's heart, mind, body and soul model offer intellectual stimulation in areas of personal and internal reflection, as well as, practical leadership training – skills required to be effective in shepherding a congregation.

Each teaching and learning module is supplemented with real ministry opportunities in hospital, church, hospice, senior's homes, inner city, prisons, etc. Each candidate will reflect and examine their participation in all these experiences through individual and group supervision in order to experience further learning and growth opportunities.

The candidates are asked to assimilate their learnings into these ministry opportunities and grow in areas of weakness or challenge, and, at the same time, recognize areas of giftedness that can be better used to its maximum in parish ministry.

Through the 'boot camp' experience, each candidate is challenged to develop areas of discipline which will help them live a balanced life in the midst of serving a parish, including take care of one's body, soul, family, marriage, finances and personal recreation.

The initial Christ-Centered Pastoral Formation camp is the first requirement prior to entering into CALC's theological training for Pastoral Ministry Certification, which begins this fall through the Institute of Lutheran Theology.

For further information and cost associated with CALC's Christ-Centered Pastoral Formation 'boot camp', contact Pastor Rick Bergh, CALC's Pastoral Personnel Director at 403-932-3345 or email at pastorrick@saintpeteres.ca.

In Christ's Service,
Pastor Rick Bergh

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

At the last National Council Meeting in February it was expressed that *The Lutheran Connector* have four editions published each year. We will do our best to honor that request. Publications such as these can be invaluable as they give us a window to view one another through and become familiar with one another. We will be able to share ideas and resources with each other. We will also know how we can better pray and encourage one another in our CALC family.

Your contribution is invited. Send us your articles, church updates, ministry ideas and let's see how *The Lutheran Connector* will develop and shape as time moves on.

Pastor Tom Baker
Christ Lutheran - Morden



FYI

Lutheran Church-Canada's National Youth Gathering

2B>>2010



belong&believe>>believe&belong
1 Peter 2:9-10

Dates: July 2 – 6, 2010

Location: Edmonton, Alberta

Officially called 2B>>2010, the gathering focuses on building up Lutheran youth. The theme is "Belong and Believe + Believe and Belong" based on 1 Peter 2:9-10 ("But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy").

The final registration deadline is April 1, 2010. For more information, go to the National Youth Gathering's website:
<http://nyg.lutheranyouth.ca/2010/>

NOTICE: The congregational votes necessary to ratify the constitutional amendments passed at the 2009 General Convention were received; accordingly, CALC's constitution and by-laws are thereby amended.

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