

Small towns are mission frontiers

DIDSBURY, Alta. -

“Rural and small-town congregations are mission outposts,” said Dr. Ralph Geisler of Saint Paul Institute for Education (SPIFE), affiliated with The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod. “Thousands of people in rural and small-town communities are dying without faith in Jesus Christ and going to hell.

Would you not agree they need the life-giving message of Christ’s life, death and resurrection?”

Nearly 40 people from 10 different ABC District congregations heard that message and more at Images: The Nature and Purpose of Church in Community, a conference held at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Didsbury November 28-29.

Dr. Glenn Schaeffer, ABC District’s executive assistant for outreach, articulated their purpose: praying for the expansion of God’s kingdom and developing a mission plan that addresses specific challenges facing these important segments of LCC.

Dr. Geisler helped participants evaluate their own community’s



Bible studies, led by Rev. Carl Droege Mueller (Hope Lutheran, Maryville, Missouri), provided a foundation and framework for all missionary activity.

demographics and how that information can help them connect to local people with the Gospel. Participants received helpful materials to use with congregational leaders as they develop a targeted outreach strategy.

One useful tool: a 135-page report, just released by Statistics Canada, that identifies and analyzes Canadian rural and small-town trends. Download or read it at <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/21-601-m/21-601-m2008090-eng.pdf>.

Afterward, a participant commented: “I hope the Department of Outreach organizes another of these rural/small town conferences

next year. We have so much to learn so we can be better equipped to share the treasures of God’s Word with the lost people in our communities.”

One participant said, “It is so encouraging to gather with other people who are experiencing similar challenges and hear how they are responding to those challenges.”

Please pray for the pastors and laypeople who are living, working and witnessing in these mission frontiers.

Loud: turning up the volume on youth

KELOWNA, B.C. - We live in a noisy world, constantly bombarded with traffic, TV,

music blasting from cars and headphones, let alone the noise of life itself.

Teenagers are not only surrounded by noise, they know how to make it. They want to change the world and have the ability to do it. Never before has a generation of young people been able to make such a significant impact—a Loud noise.

But our God has spoken and He is louder. He calls out to us through the redemptive work of Jesus, and our lives are an overflow of His love in us. That is the inspiration for *Loud*, ABC District’s next youth gathering, July 23-26, 2009, at UBC’s Okanagan campus in Kelowna, B.C.

Planning is in full swing, and we pray to have an impact on as many youth as possible: at least 250. Our vision? Each one will be touched by God’s amazing love and inspired to love back and get Loud.

Check out www.loudyouthgathering.ca and encourage the youth in your life to attend *Loud!*

Miranda Wemys



Students raise funds for SMARTer learning

EDMONTON - A perogy dinner and silent auction hosted by the class of 2009 made for one of Concordia High School’s most successful grad fundraisers ever.



(l-r) Debbie Ewanec, Irene Keogh and Daniela Castro-Zolezzi, members of the grad committee and the faculty advisor, take a break from cooking during the perogy dinner.

Those attending the November 14 event, including ABC District’s Board of Directors, had a chance to go home with gift baskets, gift certificates and artwork.

The \$4800 raised will go toward two class goals: putting SMART Boards (a kind of interactive whiteboard) in classrooms; and creating a fund for extras to make graduation day—May 16, 2009—as memorable as possible.

Teachers Irene Keogh and Gloria Elliot did an outstanding job of helping students put the evening together.

Lutheran school stacks up nicely

PORT COQUITLAM, B.C. – In November, students at Hope Lutheran Christian School helped set a new world record in a new sport: cup-stacking.

Hope registered as a member of the World Speed Stacking Association, which needed more than 145,000 people stacking cups for half an hour on a single day to make the Guinness Book of World Records. The association ended up having 199,936 cup-stackers worldwide, including Hope.

In the sport, students learn patterns for stacking cups and then must repeat them in a limited time.

Cup-stacking combines movement with fine motor skills and coordination. B.C. Ministry standards require schoolchildren to participate in 30 minutes of physical activity every day, and Hope has incorporated cup-stacking into its daily workout.



Students helped create a new world record for cup stacking.

Students became excited about the sport, and it evolved beyond the competition into a tower-building event. Eager to see how high they could build their cup towers, students used

plastic cups with holes in the bottom for better air flow and balance.

Next time you're browsing the Guinness records, look up the World Speed Stacking Association entry, and take pride that Lutheran students stacked more than their share to put together that record!

Mike Schiemann

principal, Hope Lutheran School

Grace-ful rodeo dinner

EDMONTON - For sheer fun, the Canadian Finals Rodeo had nothing on Grace Lutheran Church's Chili Dinner and Rodeo November 7.

All kinds of chili, from vegetarian to meaty to spicy, started off the

evening. Country music, cowboy jokes and even a poem, supplied by Grace's pastor Rev. Wayne Jensen, provided excellent dinner entertainment.

Pastor Jensen, a collector, also brought many of the fellowship hall's authentic decorations, including the saddle his father used when courting his mother.

Following dinner, the youth sponsored a rodeo even a tenderfoot could love.

Events included:

- Barrel-racing (one person as blindfolded "horse," the other as command-shouting rider)
- Cowboy-boot bowling (roll a basketball rolled toward paper boots taped to wooden skittles)
- Cowboy-boot ring toss (throw the ring around the boot)
- Horse-roping (a wooden rocking horse, that is)

Proceeds will go toward upcoming youth gatherings.

Deacon Tara Barnes

High school has international reputation

EDMONTON - Tanzania's Lutheran bishop, Rev. Peter Mwamasika, accompanied by his wife Anna and daughter Victoria, visited Concordia High School (CHS). The Mwamasikas hope to have their granddaughter, Anna Gloria, begin her studies at CHS as soon as she receives her student visa. Anna and Victoria presented CHS teacher Amy Sanders with a traditional Bantu garment, welcoming her into their family as Anna Gloria's future host parent.

Visit the ABC District website at
www.lccabc.ca



Seminarian Quinn Moerike plays the horse in barrel-racing.

Real estate boom in Bethlehem

OSOYOOS, B.C.

- Angels wearing Hannah Montana baseball caps and 'blingy' sunglasses; a shepherd who's tired of minding sheep and wants to become a realtor. With characters like these, Good Shepherd Christian School's nativity play, *The Tale of the Drowsy Shepherd*, was not your average Christmas pageant.

On Friday and Saturday, November 21 and 22, the children put on a moving and humorous performance that managed to convey the good news of Jesus Christ's



birth in a thoroughly modern way. It starred Sydney Fernandes as Aaron, the shepherd who always falls asleep while counting his flock. He's thinking of a career change when he suddenly receives an angelic visit.

Before the play started, the audience, which packed Grace Lutheran Church in Osoyoos, enjoyed a delicious meal provided by parents.

Simine Arnfield

Alberta care extends overseas

EDMONTON - Women of Redeemer collected items for *We Care* children's kits throughout the summer, and in September sent 55 completed kits to Canadian Lutheran World Relief in Winnipeg for distribution overseas. Calling it "a joyous mission project for our group," they thank church members for their generous support. Visit www.clwr.org to learn about making children's kits.



From the President

"In those days..." These three words begin the account of the birth of Jesus recorded for us in the second chapter of Luke's gospel. They are probably three words to which few will pay attention; but they are powerful words.

First of all, they place the birth of Christ in actual history. This is not some kind of myth or legend. It really happened. It happened in those days when Caesar Augustus was emperor of Rome and Quirinius was governor of Syria. It happened when Herod was king. These were real people and real history.

God entered human history as a real child, born in the little town of Bethlehem in Judea. You can go to those places today and see that they actually exist.

Romans ruled the "civilized" world. Their rule was felt everywhere. Their government was often cruel and oppressive. Through their governors, they ruled Galilee and they ruled Judea. When they decreed that all the world should be taxed, the world had no choice but to submit to the might of Rome.

In the midst of economic uncertainty and unpopular politics, people often looked for a messiah who would fix the economy and get rid of the Romans. I daresay people would welcome such a messiah today.

If our political systems were fixed and our economy placed on solid ground, would that really be enough?

Jesus said He had come "...to seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:10).

Jesus entered human history and became a man, not to tinker with politics or economy, and not to practice diplomacy or good fiscal management. He came to save a lost and fallen race.

In these days, Jesus comes to each of us. The apostle Peter said it so well: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:3-5).

By His life, death and resurrection we are raised from death to life. Our sinful nature has been put to death and we are now God's new and living creation in Jesus Christ.

In these days, Jesus comes to real people—to you and me. He is a real Saviour who came into actual history so that we may be granted the gift of eternal life with Him.

As we hear again the account of the birth of our Lord, don't dismiss the first three words of St. Luke's account. They are a reminder of how real our hope is.

Rev. Don Schiemann

New shepherds for Alberta flocks

CANMORE, Alta. - Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church saw Rev. Mark Lobitz installed as pastor at a 4 p.m. service on November 2. About 70 members and guests attended, including district president and guest preacher, Rev. Don Schiemann.

ST. ALBERT, Alta. - Despite competition from Grey Cup Sunday, attendance soared at the installation November 23 of Rev. Jan Pastucha at King of Kings Lutheran Church.

With the title of his sermon, "What Did You Come Out to See?" Rev. Wayne Jensen (Grace, Edmonton) prodded his listeners to think about the office of the pastor.



Back row (l-r): Revs. Michael Kuhn, Dr. Harold Witte, Curtis Boehm, Markus Zeuch, Laverne Hautz. Front row (l-r): Revs. Ronald Tabbert, Keith Haberstock, Theodore Reiner (liturgist), Orlin Anderson, Nick Wasylowich (circuit counsellor), David Dressler, President Don Schiemann, Dr. Ed Lehman (emeritus).

Conference changes hearts and minds

Although I considered myself pro-life, I did not fully understand why I felt that way until I went to the Love Life conference, November 15 at Concordia University College. An enlightening and spiritual experience, it helped me solidify some beliefs and rethink others.

I didn't expect to get much from the conference. I figured it would be the same old speeches—"All humans should have respect for life because God said so"—and preaching. But this conference was not that. Not by a long shot.

The presentations and discussions were anything but the "same old." I was pleasantly surprised. I learned so much about how respect for life relates to how we view *all* life, not just that of an unborn child. And, in fact, about our society's true lack of respect for life.

I'd never thought before how our criminal-justice system works to reinforce an inability to take responsibility for one's actions. How many people would think twice about committing a crime if they knew without a shadow of a doubt the consequences of their actions? How many people would have casual sex if they knew there was no easy way out of the consequences, such as getting an abortion? Not that abortion is easy. An unplanned pregnancy is going to



Back row (l-r): Revs. Dr. Harold Witte, Larry MacKay, Dr. Manfred Zeuch, Warren Steckelburg, Robert Marshall, Richard Williams, Ken Rodeman. Middle row: Prof. Jonathan Kraemer, Revs. Neil Stern, Cliff Haberstock, Les Gierach, Mark Just, Vic Esperanza. Front row (l-r): Revs. Don Schiemann, Dr. Glenn Schaeffer, Dr. Vern Raaflaub, Jan Pastucha, Wayne Jensen, Lowell Eckert.

change your life, no matter what you choose to do about it.

I knew we lacked this knowledge in our society, but the Love Life conference gave me a whole new perspective. Prior to legalized abortion, respect for life was a right and not a choice made by the people who conceived you. This hit me hard.

It makes total sense, with such a lack of respect for life, that so many people in our society are chronically and clinically depressed. It really got me thinking: What gives life meaning? What gives life purpose? Thinking you are nothing but someone else's "choice" would punch holes in anyone's belief system, regardless of religion. It's particularly harmful to those without a strong faith. There's nothing to make life special or keep it sacred. Knowing it is so easily expendable really cheapens and diminishes life.

I commend the Love Life speakers

for presenting their point of view straightforwardly and concisely. You didn't have to guess what they believe in and stand for.

That is one of the important points I took away from the conference. Make up your mind on where you stand! And once you do, stand by it. Your faith and beliefs are one thing no one can ever take away from you.

Genoa Waymen

Send news, photos, articles and announcements six weeks prior to publication month.

**Evan Adnams, district editor
7100 Ada Boulevard,
Edmonton, AB T5B 4E4
phone: 780-474-0063
eadnams@lccabc.ca**

**Next deadline:
January 16, 2009**