

New choir format inspires participation

WINNIPEG - Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church had no choir last year, and it looked like there wouldn't be one again this year. Still, several people wanted to sing, so they called a rehearsal meeting - with low expectations. The small group might sing a piece for Reformation Sunday, one for All Saints' Sunday, and then maybe practice a few pieces for Christmas.

Then they made a crucial decision: picking Monday evenings after confirmation class for their one-hour practice sessions. That enabled several of the youth to join in. Now, seven young people (the youngest is age 9) and nine adults sing in the choir, including an entire family-



Intergenerational choir at Beautiful Savior, Winnipeg

Mom, Dad, and two children.

The congregation greatly supports and enjoys this intergenerational group, which even includes some members who had never tried singing before!

The new choir spends quite a bit of time looking at hymns for the upcoming Sunday, learning them thoroughly to support the congregation. They sang one of

Martin Luther's hymns, "Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Thy Word" on Reformation Sunday. The following Sunday they arranged "For All the Saints" so that different groups sang various verses: children, choir, men, women, solo, congregation. The choir recently sang "Beautiful Savior" in four-part harmony and readied its Christmas pieces.

Rev. James Fritsche

Mittens head north

KAMSACK, Sask. - Peace Lutheran's Ladies Auxiliary once again created a mitten tree, giving congregation members a chance to donate tuques, scarves and mittens. La Ronge Lutheran Fellowship in northern Saskatchewan will distribute the handmade warm winter wear.

Noreen Boyd

Fellowship points to the party in heaven

SASKATOON - Food, fun and fellowship can point us to an even greater party in heaven—the Bible mentions feasts and banquets and the family of God. Perhaps that is why Lutherans love potlucks and other celebrations. Members of St. Paul's Lutheran are no exception.

On Sunday, October 26, many enjoyed the sounds of an "oompah" band (including congregation

member, Glenn Kitsch) and perogies, sausage, cabbage rolls, and pie. The congregation used this opportunity to welcome new members. Each family received a gift bag from the Board of Evangelism.

Another crowd gathered on Saturday, November 8 to enjoy fellowship and a breakfast prepared by Hope Circle of the congregation's LWMLC group. After the meal

they turned their attention to guest speaker, Jennifer Beattie, a registered psychologist who grew up at St. Paul's. Her topic was the "Emotional Freedom Technique," a relatively new tool in the kit of psychologists.



Edna Becker spent many hours knitting hats, mittens and scarves.

Economy down; faith up!

Dryden, Ontario's economy is largely based on the forest industry. It has been battered with hundreds of job losses since 2004. In November the community's primary employer, a pulp and paper mill, announced that 200 more jobs would be cut, creating uncertainty and hardship for many families. This story appeared in the Dryden Observer.



(clockwise from left) Rev. James Wood, Marilyn Tilley, Loretta Bilous, Peter Tilley, Reagan Tilley and Ralph Arndt sit in the Fellowship Hall which will soon be converted into a new worship space.

DRYDEN, Ont. - In a time of economic hardship for the community, one local Christian congregation is gathering its flock to boldly push ahead with ambitious plans for the future. Members of Our Saviour Lutheran Church are committing \$300,000 to the further expansion/renovation of their church, housed in the former Hillcrest School. Pastor James Wood says the congregation's decision to

move ahead is not unlike the many questions facing the community in a larger sense. "It was a hard decision to make, given the local economics," said Rev. Wood. "Do we step forward in faith or do we live in fear that everything is going to collapse around us? If we do nothing but sit around and contemplate the worst, then sure enough, you'll get the worst."

The building has already seen

significant renovations since the school was purchased from the Keewatin Patricia District School Board in January 2005. At that time, a temporary worship space was constructed by knocking out a few walls between classrooms in the building's south end. The old boiler heating system was recently replaced with two high-efficiency forced-air furnace systems which helped cut the church's

energy consumption by two-thirds. A peaked metal roof replaced the former flat roof, adding an attic space for better insulation.

The project ahead of them now is a big one—the conversion of the building's northern wing (currently used as a fellowship hall) into worship space that could eventually seat a congregation of 375. (The current worship space can seat around 150 people.) That means knocking out the walls that separate the former classrooms from the hallway, beefing up the outside walls to 16 feet and adding yet another peaked roof—this roof-line running perpendicular to the rest of the building's north-south configuration.

A variety of community groups currently utilize the building for various functions and Wood says they hope to make the transition as painless as possible for everyone. While contractors will most definitely be involved for the bigger jobs, Rev. Wood says they rely upon a strong and handy congregation whose members have been eager to be involved in the ongoing project. Volunteers from beyond the congregation are always more than welcome to join the effort. "They've rolled up their sleeves, knocked down walls, put up plaster, painted," says Rev. Wood. "Some bring lunches and coffee; we have seniors pushing brooms and directing traffic—everyone helping."

*Chris Marchand,
Dryden Observer*

Outrageous grace excites giving

OXBOW/FROBISHER, Sask. - Our two-point, small-town parish received Rev. Revenel Benoit's heartfelt letter asking for prayers and financial aid to the hurricane-ravaged city of Gonaives, Haiti. At about the same time, our lectionary reading of St. Matthew 18:21-35 proclaimed the outrageous grace of a servant's master who forgave him an enormous, unpayable debt.

This image, the outlandish grace of God in Christ Jesus who has paid our enormous debt of sin by His incarnation, death and resurrection, stirred our hearts to respond to Rev. Benoit's letter in faith.

At both congregational voters' meetings, St. Peter in Oxbow and St. John in Frobisher, we set a large financial goal for ourselves, which ended in a healthy competition within the

parish to see which congregation could donate more money for our brothers and sisters in Haiti. As a result, we raised approximately \$10,000 and immediately sent it to Haiti via Lutheran Church-Canada.

It is truly an awesome thing to see God's people respond in faith and reach out to those in need with the same outlandish, outrageous grace that we have been given in Christ.

Rev. Jason Schultz



District finances in deficit

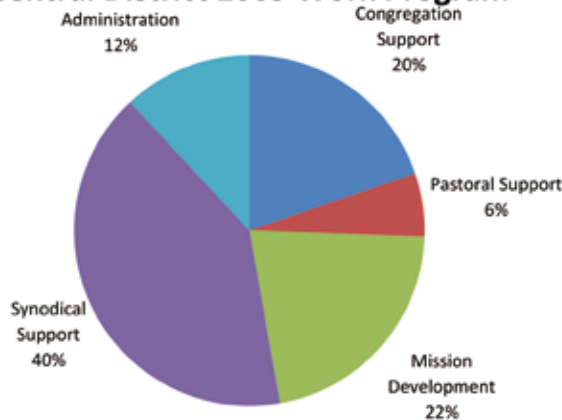
LUMSDEN, Sask. - Meeting at St. Michael's Retreat Centre November 24-25, the district's Board of Directors welcomed newly-elected LCC president, Rev. Robert Bugbee, as he visited each district. President Bugbee reported on synod activities since taking office September 1.

The board also installed two members: Rev. Rod Buck (St. James, Winnipeg) as regional vice-president, replacing Rev. James Scholz, who was elected to a synodical board; and Derek Clark (St. John's, Warman, Sask.) as Saskatoon regional layperson, replacing Wayne Gust, who has moved. One vacancy remains on the board: a layperson from the Yorkton region.

The treasurer reported that current economic uncertainty has not affected district investments since they are in bonds and treasury

ills. Still, the district showed a deficit of \$204,236. Based on 2008's first nine months, mission receipts from congregations will not exceed last year's total of \$896,000.

Central District 2009 Work Program



The board can anticipate a decrease in expenditures in two ways. After a review of the duties and responsibilities of the executive director/treasurer's position, the work week will be

reduced to 50 percent from the current 80 percent. The district will also sell property at Zehner, Sask., where there was once a church.

The adopted three-year Work Program shows \$35,000 allotted in 2010 for renovations to the district office. The building's foundation continues to shift, causing drywall cracks, and existing original windows need replacement. The district continues to search for someone to do ongoing maintenance work.

Five parishes in the district are currently in the calling process, with 17 parishes currently not calling. The assistant to the president, Rev. Sye VanMaanen reported that initial conversations have begun with Russian/German Lutheran church leaders in the Steinbach, Manitoba area.

District President Rev. Thomas Prachar



Ponderings from the president

When it comes to Christmas, myths, legends and superstitions abound. There is the actual historical event—Jesus' birth in Bethlehem—but then the story gets changed or expanded slightly with extra information. Or some "details" are added to explain gaps where the Biblical account is silent.

One extra-colourful example: a story about a robin that helps Mary keep the fire going in the stable by flapping its wings. (We aren't told what happened to Joseph.) In another legend, spiders cover a Christmas tree with their webs, and when the Christ child appears in the night to bless the tree, He touches the webs, turning them into sparkling gold and silver—a forerunner of our tinsel.

Another story is told about a choirmaster in France, some 230 years ago, who was having a difficult time keeping his children's choir quiet and attentive. He gave out long white sugar-candy sticks, bending them

at one end so they looked like shepherds' crooks—the invention of candy canes.

Christmas superstitions claim to foretell how much good or bad luck a person will experience. Difficulty lighting a fire on Christmas Day means a bad year ahead. Dogs that howl on Christmas Eve will go mad by year's end. Unmarried girls are advised to put sprigs of mistletoe under their pillows to dream about their future husbands.

For Christians, Christmas centres on the Bible's factual account of the birth of our Saviour in Bethlehem. While it is a familiar story we hear every year, there is power in those words to create and sustain faith in our hearts: "In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus..." (Luke 2:1-20). When we are finished sorting through all the superstitions, legends and myths surrounding Christmas, we are left with the simple yet profound story of a baby born to save us.

Through that baby—Jesus—born in Bethlehem's stable, may "God bless us, every one."

Rev. Thomas Prachar

Recruit finds a church home away from home

REGINA - Early in 2008 Rev. Terry Defoe of Mount Olive Lutheran Church received a phone call from someone asking about worship times and the possibility of a ride to church. The caller was Micah Chan, a young man from the Vancouver area about to start his training at the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Training Centre in Regina (also known as Depot).

It turned out Rev. Defoe knew the young man's parents. They were connected to Vancouver's Killarney Park Lutheran Church, which Pastor Defoe and his wife Kathleen attended in the early '70s.

In the six months after that phone call, Mount Olive took Micah—and eventually his whole family—under its collective wing. Congregation members gave Micah a ride to church each week during his months of training at Depot.



Micah Chan with the Mount Olive members who attended his graduation ceremony.

Micah graduated and received his badge in a special ceremony October 6 at the RCMP Training Centre. Of course, Mount Olive had offered many prayers the Sunday before. On graduation day a good-sized contingent from the church turned out to wish him well.

Micah has been assigned to Salmon Arm, B.C.

Mount Olive members will continue to remember him and his family in their prayers, and feel blessed for their worship time together.

Well-travelled servant shares stories



Vivian Griffin (left) and Ingrid Lechler check out the Four Corners store.

MIDDLE LAKE, Sask. - Responding to God's love in service to others was the theme when Iris Barta spoke at LWML—Canada's Northland Zone Fall Renewal at Faith Lutheran Church October 25. She shared her experiences on the B.C. Mission Boat last summer and distributing eyeglasses with MOST Ministries (Mission Opportunities Short Term) in China.

Iris also works for Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR) in Winnipeg. Her PowerPoint

presentation showed how CLWR responds to crises as well as everyday needs through refugee resettlement, emergency assistance, volunteering, material goods, development and alternative trade in Bolivia, Peru, Mozambique, Zambia and India.

A mobile Four Corners store showcased fair trade items from around the world. Young and old enjoyed the shopping experience, which benefits CLWR's alternative trade program and supports artisans in many countries.

Arlene Kish

Coming events

December 23 Nominations, overtures, reports due for 2009 District Convention

January 16-18 Lay Enrichment Grads retreat

Anniversaries

100 years

St. Paul, Cupar, Saskatchewan

June 21, 2009. 11 a.m. service with banquet to follow at Cupar Town Hall. Adults, \$8; age 12 and under, \$4. RSVP by June 1.

Visit the Central District website at www.lcccentral.ca

Send news, photos, articles and announcements six weeks prior to publication month. Elaine Stanfel, district editor

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