

Haitian Lutherans express thanks

HAITI - In a year-end e-mail, Pastor Revenel Benoit, president of the Lutheran Church of Haiti (LCH) expressed a heartfelt “thank you” from those in Gonaives and area who were devastated by four hurricanes and a intense flood in



Canadian, Suzanne White from Living Faith Lutheran Church, Orangeville, Ontario (right) helps sort donations from Canada in Gonaives, Haiti

September. Of the approximate 900 Lutheran families in the stricken area, water destroyed the homes of 150 of them (including those of three lay pastors), and about 800 families lost all their belongings. Fortunately, supporters in Florida managed to ship two containers to Gonaives with emergency supplies of clothing, medicine and some food. As a result of the emergency relief, President Benoit reports “we have seen a tremendous increase in the number of people attending church services in Gonaives.”

After providing immediate emergency assistance, LCH’s first priority was restarting its small loan program so the families who had lost their source of income could begin again. When they are earning income, they will help support the congregations and schools.

The second priority was restarting the quarry project which provides the LCH with funds to support lay pastors and teachers. This happened early in December after repairing the quarry road.

The third priority is repairing damaged LCH buildings and replacing equipment. In November, the Coordinating Committee of the several Lutheran Haiti societies sent US \$23,000 to repair the orphanage, medical clinic, TV and radio studios

and transmitter, a school, and the computer school.

The Board of Directors of Haiti Lutheran Mission Society (in Canada, HLMS) forwarded all of the more than C \$23,000 contributed by Canadians through Lutheran Church–Canada. In addition, HLMS has sent emergency support of US \$10,000, and US \$5,000 for the school feeding program (“Kids Feeding Kids”). This will help offset sharply rising food costs. HLMS has kept other disaster funds in reserve temporarily to assist further reconstruction of homes, etc.

Meantime, members of LCC congregations in Ontario overwhelmed HLMS with donations of material goods for shipping to Haiti. A 40-foot container was filled and sent November 1. It was released from customs in Port-au-Prince, trucked to Gonaives, and unloaded before Christmas. President Benoit reports, “So far our distribution of goods has touched over 26,000 Christians and non-Christians, and we hope to serve another 8000 with that last container we received from Canada.”

The generous quantity of donations (mostly clothing) has filled almost two-thirds of another container. HLMS will continue accepting goods and plans to ship another container this winter.

President visits Ukraine

KIEV, Ukraine – Early in January, Lutheran Church–Canada President Robert Bugbee spent almost three weeks touring and visiting with the Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches of Ukraine (SELCU) and its bishop, Rev. Dr. Viktor Gräfenstein. Though no formal fellowship ties are established between the two churches, SELCU and LCC have worked together for many years, most notably as LCC provided seminary training for SELCU under the direction of Dr. Norman Threinen and Concordia Lutheran Seminary, Edmonton.

During his 16-day visit, President Bugbee preached in various congregations and joined in Christmas celebrations on January 7, as many SELCU parishes still follow the Eastern church calendar. He also addressed a two-day pastoral conference in Nikolayev, and spent time in Dnepropetrovsk, with LCC missionary, Pastor Alexey Navrotskiy.

“I was especially eager to see SELCU’s new seminary building at Usatovo in suburban Odessa,” the president noted. “This facility has been under construction a long time, but was hampered by rampant inflation in Ukraine, so that gifts from Canada and elsewhere have not finished the job.” The president added that the Concordia Lutheran Mission Society (CLMS) has been especially helpful in channelling support for this project to Ukraine.

President Bugbee was accompanied by Oleg Schewtschenko, a native of Dnepropetrovsk, who is LCC’s official “foreign mission student” at Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, St. Catharines. Seminarian Schewtschenko provided translation and other support services during the visit, and had the opportunity to “re-connect” with co-workers in his homeland. He is expected to return to Ukraine after his studies in Canada to assist with theological education in SELCU.

See *Presidential Perspective* (page 42).

Southeast Asian Lutheran church recognized

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia The government of Cambodia granted official recognition to the Cambodian Lutheran Church/Association on January 15. The government approval allows the 32 congregations and 17 pastors to begin working towards creating a constitutional framework and a founding convention. Currently, Lutheran Church–Canada (LCC) is assisting Luther Institute Southeast Asia (LISA) to provide theological training for the church's pastors, deacons and deaconesses with funding assistance from Concordia Lutheran Missionary Society (CLMS).

LCC missionary Rev. Dr. Leonard Harms, who serves as executive director of LISA, explained that the desire for establishing a Lutheran Church body in Cambodia came from the pastors and their congregations. The government approval allows the church complete freedom for worship, evangelizing, teaching and undertaking social ministry. In addition, the governor of the city of Phnom Penh granted registration to work in the city of Phnom Penh.

Over the past decade, the Cambodian office of Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM) has undertaken media-oriented outreach alongside the work of Lutheran Heritage Foundation and missionaries from The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod. “As we have seen before, as the Holy Spirit brought people to faith, they gathered and formed worshipping communities,” explained Dr. Harms. “As the people of God recognized those with the gifts and talents for the pastoral office and the diaconate, LISA with the support of professors and teachers from Lutheran Churches in North America, Germany and Brazil, responded by providing theological education.”

Most of the teachers and professors have come from Lutheran Church–Canada and included seminary professors as well as parish pastors with expertise in specific areas.



Instructors and future pastors and deaconesses of the Lutheran Church of Cambodia

“What we were seeing in Cambodia follows a similar track to our experience in Nicaragua,” observed Rev. Dr. Ralph Mayan, LCC’s interim mission executive, “But with Cambodia, it seemed like it was fast-tracked.”

Lutheran Church–Canada’s involvement with this group of Christians in Cambodia began only three years ago when Dr. Harms, then LCC’s mission executive, visited the country and met with church lay leaders. As discussions continued, the leaders expressed the need for theological training.

In 2005 Dr. Norman Threinen and Dr. Duane Peters travelled to Phnom Penh, met with the church leaders and laid before them the basics of the Lutheran confession of the Christian faith. Thirsty for God’s Word, the leaders asked for more training. “This is a country that suffered a genocide under Pol Pot and the Christian message of hope found a place in their hearts,” said Dr. Harms. “What we are witnessing is the power of the Gospel.”

The eleventh seminary session for the churches in Southeast Asia begins in early March when Dr. Norman Threinen, a professor emeritus at Concordia Lutheran Seminary in Edmonton, will teach Pastoral Theology and Church Polity.

Hymnal fills demand

MONTREAL – An introductory workshop for the LCC-produced French hymnal is generating interest throughout French-speaking Christendom. An e-mail invitation to Lutheran groups around the world was circulated even further and generated interest within evangelical circles.

In addition to primary interest in Canada, Haiti and the US, “we have received inquiries from all over Africa including Rwanda, Congo, Togo, Burkina Faso and Burundi,” reports Rev. Dr. David Somers, “and it looks like some of these people are planning to come!”

Scheduled for April 27-29, 2009 in Montreal, a grant from the Schwan Foundation will cover participants’ costs for two nights’ accommodation, the bilingual program and meals. Transportation is the responsibility of the participants.

The project is a labour of love by Rev. Somers, LCC East District missionary in Quebec and Rev. David Saar, (St. John, Mount Forest, Ont.) With the support of Concordia Publishing House and the LCMS Commission on Worship they have produced a French-language version of *Lutheran Service Book*. A grant from the Schwan Foundation will cover production costs.

For more information contact Rev. Dr. David Somers in Montreal.

LCC builds online community

CYBERSPACE - As part of its ongoing use of the Internet, Lutheran Church-Canada has launched *LCC InterActive*, a series of website/blogs (web logs) which allow readers to subscribe, comment and interact online. There are four blogs currently established: *InfoDigest*, *On the road*, *Think Digital First* and *One2One Connect*.

“The Internet has evolved from



one-way information giving to an interactive, collaborative medium,” explained Dr. Ian Adnams, LCC’s director of communications. He explained that an increasing number of organizations and old media outlets are encouraging an ongoing dialogue. “LCC is a community and this is one way to keep in touch.”

To comment on a blog or ask a question, readers simply click on the ‘comment’ area at the bottom of each post. As in the current LCC Discussion Forums, there is ongoing monitoring and opinions expressed in the comment section may not necessarily reflect those of Lutheran Church-Canada.

Each blog fulfils a different function.

InfoDigest features current news and information and is updated when new items arrive. A compilation of articles will still be sent to current recipients. (www.lccinfodigest.ca)

On the road is an opportunity to read ongoing reports from LCC executives as they travel on behalf of the church. President Robert Bugbee posted information when he was in Ukraine in January. Currently, interim mission executive Rev. Dr. Ralph Mayan who is spending three months in Nicaragua is posting his observations and news. (www.lcontheroad.ca)

Think Digital First comes from director of communications, Ian Adnams as he explores the nature of the dynamic new media and how the church can use the new communication tools. (www.thinkdigitalfirst.ca)

One2One Connect puts online information, idea and encouragement for building relationships for the sake of the Gospel. Contributors include LCC’s three district mission executives. Participants are encouraged to share their ideas and concerns. (www.one2oneconnect.ca)

The *LCC InterActive* page also has links to the ongoing Discussion Forums which now include discussion of the seminary task force. (See page 15.)

For those who are part of the *Twitter* community, you can receive instant messages by following @LCCInfoTweet. To join *Twitter* go to www.twitter.com.

LCC also has a group on *Facebook* called LCC Lutherans.

“Interactivity is what’s important with each of these,” Adnams emphasized. “As people read posts, there are sure to be comments and questions. When this happens, everyone benefits.”

LCC InterActive is a tab on the website or you can go directly to www.lutheranchurch.ca/interactive.

New captain aboard!

PARKSVILLE, B.C.-The BC Mission Boat Society (BCMB) has named Marcus Huff its new executive director. His official installation is scheduled for February 8, as part of the Sunday morning service of Our Saviour Lutheran Church.

Marcus worked with the BCMB as an intern to complete his Director of Christian Outreach degree. For the past year, he has served as temporary director, helping out when Kathy Bender went on disability leave from the executive director position.

BCMB’s Board of Directors are grateful for God’s provision of Marcus, and for His grace that has brought the organization through a difficult time to this point of new beginnings. The board knows there will be challenges ahead, but it is committed to going forward in faith, hope and joyful expectation.

The B.C. Mission Boat Society sends land and sea-based mission teams to remote villages on the B.C. coast.

Resources connect men to the Church

ST. LOUIS, Mo.- What takes creativity, initiative, and out-of-the-box ideas and puts them into one men’s ministry resource? If you said, “the Men’s NetWork,” you’re right! Be among the first to check out this brand-new go-to Web site from Lutheran Hour Ministries. It’s located at www.lhmmen.com.

The Men’s Network is a Christ-centered, Scripture-guided, service-oriented resource center designed to draw men to the Church and motivate them to greater levels of discipleship. By offering practical tools, the Web site gives individuals useful resources to strengthen their faith lives and deepen their relationship with their Savior. For men’s groups, the Web site offers numerous opportunities to expand ministry impact within their congregations or outside their church’s doors.

Task force to focus on cost of seminary education

WINNIPEG - Board of Directors' chairman, Randy Stefan and Lutheran Church-Canada president, Rev. Robert Bugbee announced the make-up of a task force created to fulfill 2008 LCC Convention Resolution 08.3.04: "To implement a cost efficient seminary program for Lutheran Church-Canada." The chairman and president appointed Rev. Nolan Astley (first vice-president); Rev. Robert Krestick (third vice-president); Rev. Colin Liske (pastor, St. Paul, Nanaimo, B.C.); Rev. Arron Gust (pastor, Christ, Langenburg, Sask.) and Howard Famme (First St. John, Seebach's Hill, Ont). Dr. Todd Sands, (First Lutheran, Windsor, Ont.) has agreed to serve as an advisor to the task force.

The president also noted that the task force will undertake its work with no preconceptions of outcomes. "The convention didn't want to consider a resolution that concluded there should only be one seminary, that is why delegates chose to focus on overall cost efficiency."

The two vice-presidents on the task force each serve on the seminaries' Boards of Regents; Rev. Astley at Concordia Lutheran Seminary, Edmonton, and Rev. Krestick, at Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, St. Catharines. Rev. Liske, in addition to being a parish pastor, has vast teaching experience at the university level. To bring the voice of a younger pastor to the deliberations, Rev. Arron Gust is a 2001 graduate of Concordia Lutheran Seminary, Edmonton. Howard Famme is a respected chartered accountant and former member of LCC's Board of Directors and past member of the Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary Foundation. As an advisor, Dr. Todd Sands brings his perspective from secular education where he serves as executive director and CIO of the Centre for Smart Community Innovation (CSCI) at the University of Windsor.



Members of the task force investigating cost-efficient seminary education: (back) Rev. Arron Gust; Third Vice-president Robert Krestick; Howard Famme. (front) First Vice-president Nolan Astley (chair) and Rev. Colin Liske (secretary).

At its first meeting, held in Winnipeg, Monday, January 19 the members reviewed the convention resolution and established terms of reference to guide their research, evaluation and recommendations. First Vice-president Nolan Astley is the task force chairman and Rev. Colin Liske will serve as secretary. Advisory member, Professor Todd Sands, joined the meeting by telephone.

While the resolution calls for cost effectiveness, the task force also saw its role as providing a framework for sustainability. "This has to be a long-term solution," noted Rev. Astley, "so being able to sustain the cost efficiency is critical."

The task force also moved forward its deadlines so that recommendations are available well ahead of the 2011 convention deadline. Before the end of May it will undertake extensive consultations with faculty, staff and Boards of Regents of LCC's two seminaries. Three LCC district conventions this

year will also provide opportunities for input.

The members also decided the best way to hear from the church was by receiving formal submissions from congregations, pastors, deacons, and circuit forums. These can be e-mailed to the chairman at bod@lutheranchurch.ca. The task force will only consider submissions sent to the e-mail address or hard copy sent to synod office, 3074 Portage Ave, Winnipeg, MB R3K 0Y2. The submission deadline is June 1, 2009.

Anyone may participate by posting comments on the task force's public discussion forum at www.lutheranchurch.ca/forums.

DATES TO REMEMBER

Lutheran Hour Ministries

February 22

Keep in your prayers LHM's international and domestic outreach and congregational resources