

## Africa and Asia see Lutheran growth

**GENEVA** - The membership total of all Lutheran churches worldwide rose over the past year by 150,147 to approximately 72 million (71,973,570), an increase of 0.21 percent. In 2007, all Lutheran churches worldwide counted some 71.8 million members, compared to approximately 70.2 million in 2006. The number of Lutherans who belong to non-Lutheran World Federation (LWF) churches rose by 8,355 or 0.24 percent to reach 3,509,479.

In 2008, total membership in North American Lutheran churches fell by 114,494 or 1.44 percent. Of a total 7,826,192 Lutherans.

Lutheran Church-Canada reported 72,116 members, a loss of 2372 or 3.1 percent. The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (USA and Canada) reported 2,383,084 members, a loss of 34,913 or 1.4 percent.

“The ongoing loss of members is a real concern to us in LCC,” commented President Robert Bugbee. “Often we are not as diligent as we could be in holding on to those who come into our fellowship. This has to become a priority.”

Lutheran Church-Canada collects statistics annually, however almost one-third of congregations do not report.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada last year had 161,142 members, an annual decline of 13,358 or 7.7 percent. In Africa, LWF church membership over the past year rose by 158,047 or 0.9 percent to a total of 17,287,277. The membership of non-LWF Lutheran churches on the continent dropped by 1,854, or 3.3 percent, to total of 54,215.

The total number of Lutherans in Asia rose by 270,061 over the past year to reach 8,545,479, representing

an increase of 3.26 percent. Non-LWF Lutheran churches in the region reported 182,921 new members, corresponding to an increase of 42,563 or approximately 30.3 percent.

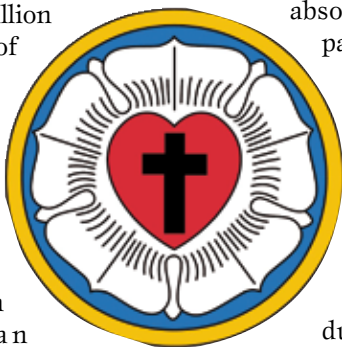
The sharpest membership increase in Asia in terms of absolute figures over the past year was reported by the Good Samaritan Evangelical Lutheran Church (India), with an additional 40,331 members to 50,168 or five-fold. This increase, according to church sources, is due to a restructuring

which resulted in the incorporation of new congregations into the non-LWF member church. The Chinese Lutheran Brethren Victory Church (Taiwan), also a non-LWF member church, more than doubled its membership with an additional 2,178 members (130.6 percent), to attain a total of 3,846.

The total membership of Lutheran churches in Europe fell again over the past year by 223,252 or 0.6 percent, to a current total of 36,954,216. Germany, the country with the largest number of Lutheran Christians in the world, had a total membership of 12,543,179 in 2008, reflecting a decrease of 84,567 or 0.67 percent. Lutheran churches in Germany had around 12.63 million members in 2007 compared to 12.73 million in 2006.

The LWF statistics are based on information received from LWF member churches, recognized churches and congregations and council, as well as from other Lutheran churches, organizations, mission bodies and congregations. The figures recorded for the year ending 2007 were used for churches that did not indicate any changes by the end of January 2009.

*Based on a report from Lutheran World Federation*



## LCMS responds to gay ordination plan

**ST. LOUIS** - In a February 22 e-memo to leaders and congregations, LCMS President Gerald B. Kieschnick



LCMS President Kieschnick

expressed “great disappointment and deep sadness” as he shared comments on the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America’s (ELCA) Task Force on Sexuality documents titled “Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust” and “Report and Recommendation on Ministry Policies.”

The ELCA task force released the two documents February 19. An ELCA news release that day stated the documents “are open to review by the ELCA Church Council—the church’s board of directors—when it meets March 27-30, and they will be considered by the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, August 17-23 in Minneapolis.”

As Kieschnick stated in his memo, the “Report and Recommendation” document “recommends that the ELCA undertake a process that would result in the incorporation of ‘structured flexibility in decision making to allow, in appropriate situations, people in publicly accountable, monogamous, lifelong, same-gendered relationships to be approved for the rosters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.’”

“If this recommendation should be adopted by the Churchwide Assembly,” Kieschnick continued, “it would constitute a change in the ELCA’s present position, which precludes ‘practicing homosexuals’ from being included on its rosters. More importantly, it would constitute a radical departure from the 2,000-year-long teaching of the Christian tradition that homosexual activity, whether inside or outside of a committed relationship, is contrary to Holy Scripture.”

*LCMS Reporter Online*

## Lutheran hospital in Jerusalem models cooperation

**WINNIPEG** - During a recent presentation to the Board of Directors of Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR), Dr. Tawfiq Nasser, CEO of Augusta Victoria Hospital (AVH), pointed to the valuable role the institution plays in Palestinian community. The Lutheran hospital is not only the sole provider of essential medical services like pediatric dialysis, cancer treatment and specialized geriatric and end of life care, but also an advocate for rights of patients to access this care.

Additionally, AVH offers employment opportunities for Palestinians that benefit civil society. It also serves as a model for a diverse staff team of Christian, Muslim and Jewish colleagues.

“Positive Palestinian stories provide living examples that give



Dr. Tawfiq Nasser address the CLWR Board of Directors

hope to the peace process,” says Dr. Nasser. “Celebrating our successes reduces polarization in the community.”

During his presentation, Dr. Nasser expressed his thanks to those who make quilts for CLWR. The bedding is a regular fixture in the Lutheran hospital.

CLWR supports AVH’s mission to provide excellence in health care and build a successful presence in Jerusalem. Currently, the agency is receiving support from Canadian International Development Agency to fund a new geriatric care unit that will address the specific needs of elderly Palestinians, including palliative care and guiding families through the grieving process.

*CLWR News Service*

## India’s cycle of anti-Christian violence continues

Persecution of Christians in India continues alarmingly. In February the Baptist leader Hrudayananda Nayak was murdered in the east-coast state Orissa, and a congregation in the neighbouring state of Andhra Pradesh attacked. In March another church was attacked and the pastor shot.

Hindu extremists in Orissa offer rewards of money, weapons or alcohol for killing a Christian, destroying a church or a Christian’s property. The reward for killing a pastor is so lucrative that most pastors have left their families to go into hiding.

With most of the incidents taking place in northern India, no reports of attacks have surfaced against the India Evangelical Lutheran Church, daughter church of the LCMS, in the south.

This follows in the wake of the worst persecution ever of Christians in present-day India, triggered by a combination of politics, murder and rumour in 2007-08.

On August 23, 2008 Swami Laxmanananda Saraswati, a leader of Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP)—a Hindu group that calls for a ban on religious conversion, among other things—was killed in a guns-and-grenade attack. VHP’s chairman immediately blamed it on Christians, and newspapers publicized the lie. Hindu extremists began a violent campaign against Christians the next day. Though Maoist rebels (who opposed VHP’s religious/nationalistic ideas) admitted to the murder, the violence continued viciously for four months.

Hindu extremists had been attacking Christians and their institutions for some time. Saraswati himself organized a violent persecution in Orissa on Christmas Eve, 2007 that saw 90 churches and 600 Christian homes burned. His widespread propaganda accused Christians of forcibly converting Hindus to Christianity and of being traitors

who would betray India in case of a war with Pakistan—thus the explosion of anti-Christian hate at his death.

Figures vary of the number of Christians killed, from the official account (87) up to 500. More accurately, 450 churches and 4400 homes were destroyed, besides schools and orphanages. More than 70,000 Christians became refugees, 50,000 of them homeless; 18,000 were seriously wounded.

The government prevented private organizations and churches from bringing in any aid, and recently the government closed its own barely adequate refugee camps. Many Christians who ventured back to their villages have been rejected unless they convert to Hinduism, or threatened with dire sanctions if they attend church. Some 30,000 may still be hiding in the jungle facing starvation.

*From a report compiled by  
Rev. Dr. John Wilch*

## Board tackles current LCC issues

**WINNIPEG** – At its first meeting of 2009, LCC’s Board of Directors (BOD) finalized a \$1.7 million national budget for the work done together by members of the Synod. This figure represents an increase of slightly more than three percent over the 2008 budget. The budget currently anticipates a deficit of approximately \$53,000. The treasurer, Dwayne Cleave commented that by the end of the 2009-10 fiscal year the combination of unplanned revenue (usually bequests) and continued efforts to reduce administrative expenditures could possibly produce a balanced budget. “With such a dynamic economic environment, budgeting this year was more complicated,” Mr. Cleave explained. Our commitment to mission needs to continue even in difficult times and we have to trust that the Lord will provide the resources to do the work He calls us to do.”

Prior to the board meetings, the Committee for Mission and Social Ministry Services conducted its business with interim mission director, Rev. Dr. Ralph Mayan joining from Nicaragua with both video and sound through *Skype*, an

online communication service which works computer-to-computer with no cost. From the committee, the Board of Directors learned that the search for a new mission executive is in its second phase. The president has contacted all those whose names were brought forward asking them if they are willing to have their names stand for nomination.

In other business, the BOD discussed issues relating to Concordia High School and its relationship with Concordia University College, and ongoing discussions between the university college and LCC’s Worker Benefit Plans.

Board members also spent time looking at current issues within the Synod, including aging membership, engaging younger people and motivating the laity. Board chairman Randy Stefan added this discussion time on the agenda. “As a board we easily become focused on immediate needs and don’t take enough time looking at ‘big picture’ issues,” he noted.

The BOD meets three times each year. The June meeting is scheduled as a conference call.

## New website

**CYBERSPACE** - Canadian Lutheran World Relief has launched its new website at [www.clwr.org](http://www.clwr.org).



The development agency redesigned the entire site to better serve the needs of visitors, facilitate easier donation and direct people to Four Corners for alternate trade merchandise.

## Kudos for Lutheran publisher

**ST. LOUIS**-Concordia Publishing House (CPH) has received certification as a Center of Excellence by Benchmark Portal and the Purdue University Center for Customer-Driven Quality. The award recognizes the CPH Customer Call Center as ranking in the top ten percent of 20,000 nationwide call centers studied for efficiency and effectiveness. CPH’s Canadian online ordering desk is <http://canada.cph.org>

Recently, the company launched its official Facebook page, hosts a YouTube channel, and uses the social network “micro-blogging” Web service Twitter to provide updates about its products and services, [www.twitter.com/concordiapub](http://www.twitter.com/concordiapub).

## Give Jesus glory for faithful servants

**WINNIPEG** – In March, Lutheran Church–Canada’s staff bids farewell to, and prays God’s blessings upon Helga Downey. Since October 2000, Helga has worked behind the scenes of *The Canadian Lutheran* taking care of advertising, proofreading, doing story research, and making sure congregations receive the correct number of magazines.



Helga Downey

In addition, if you have ordered DVDs or any LCC materials, she has taken care of the transaction. Pastors will remember her for the annual statistical report she not only sent out, but compiled.

Helga joined the LCC staff in May 2000 on an interim basis, and when the assistant to the director of communications position became vacant she became a much-loved fixture.

Helga is retiring March 31, but we know she will still be active in her congregation (Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, Winnipeg) and maintain her vibrant witness for the Lord she loves and serves.

We give Jesus glory for Helga’s smiles and laughter, warm friendship and diligent service to the Lord and His people.

*Ian Adnams*

## Up-to-date online

[www.lutheranchurch.ca](http://www.lutheranchurch.ca)

*News and information*  
[www.lccinfodigest.ca](http://www.lccinfodigest.ca)

*Overseas mission reports*  
[www.lccontheroad](http://www.lccontheroad)

*Evangelism and outreach*  
[www.one2oneconnect.ca](http://www.one2oneconnect.ca)

or follow  
LCCInfoTweet on Twitter  
([www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com))

## Mission society aims high to assist Lutherans overseas

**WINDSOR, Ont** – At its winter meetings in Windsor, Ontario, the Concordia Lutheran Mission Society (CLMS) board adopted a 2009 mission goal of \$120,000 in support of mission projects in Ukraine, Nicaragua and Southeast Asia. In its report to the annual general meeting February 1, the board told members of the volunteer society that all its 2008 projects were fully funded with more than \$116,000 in donations. (See [www.concordiamissions.org](http://www.concordiamissions.org) for details).

Featured speaker at the annual meeting, Oleg Schewtschenko highlighted how he is a direct result of LCC's mission efforts in Ukraine. He was born in Ukraine, when it was under Soviet Union control. For 70 years, communists tried to destroy the Christian faith in this country. By God's grace Oleg came to faith in Jesus Christ and became a member of a Lutheran Church. He met Pastor Roland Syens and was introduced to his mission work at the Alpha and Omega Student Center.

After graduation from high school he attended the Concordia Seminary in Kamenka, Ukraine receiving theological instruction



New and retiring CLMS board members: (back) Rev. Dr. Norman Threinen; Terry Goerz; Rev. Irwin Pudrycki. (Middle) Jody Haberstock; Lauren Bugbee; Rev. Konny Hahn; Darcy Wershler. (Front) Bill Anderson; Rev. Gilvan de Azevedo; Anne Taylor; Rev. Al Schmidt; Rev. Dr. Ed Lehman.

from LCC volunteer professors. You can read more about Oleg's story in the upcoming Mission Advocate, published in the April edition of The Canadian Lutheran.

In other action, the board welcomed new members Rev. Gilvan deAzevedo from Windsor, Ont., and Darcy Wershler from Winnipeg and recognized the service of Rev. Konstantin Hahn (Kitchener) and

Jodie Haberstock (Vernon, B.C.), whose terms ended. The board elected Terry Goerz, president; and Darcy Wershler, vice-president; Lauren Bugbee, secretary; William Andrew, treasurer.

Concordia Lutheran Mission Society thanks God for all of the many blessings he has bestowed upon the board and its mission partners.

*Lauren Bugbee*

## Call leaves vacancy in LCC praesidium

**WINNIPEG** - Following the acceptance of a call as senior pastor at Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Kitchener, Ontario, Rev. Nolan Astley will resign his position as First Vice-president of Lutheran Church - Canada. The three LCC vice-presidents must come from each of LCC's three districts. Pastor Astley's move will leave a vacancy in the ABC District.



Rev. Nolan Astley

The Board of Directors will likely appoint a successor to Pastor Astley in a teleconference meeting in late June.

## Telling the mission story online

**GRIMSBY, Ontario** – An increasing number of LCC congregations are involved in servant events in Nicaragua. Anyone experiencing one of these trips returns with a new appreciation for overseas mission work.

To help share those experiences a group in southern Ontario has established [www.nicaraguamission.ca](http://www.nicaraguamission.ca). The site features first-hand reports from team members, photographs, information about Nicaragua, and an opportunity to comment and ask questions. Pastor Gary Kuenzel (Christ Our Savior, Grimsby) who is working with the site hopes it will encourage others to support ongoing needs in Nicaragua either financially or by being part of a mission team.



### DATES TO REMEMBER

#### Listed Service Organizations

**March 8**

*Thank the Lord for the many organizations which work in support of LCC's mission.*

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