



Winterle Represents ILC at Global Christian Forum

At the request of Dr. Samuel H. Nafzger, Executive Secretary of the International Lutheran Council (ILC), Dr. Carlos W. Winterle, former president of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil (IELB) and previous vice-chairman of the ILC, who presently serves as English-speaking pastor of Uhuru Highway Lutheran Cathedral, Nairobi, represented the ILC at the Global Christian Forum, which took place in Limuru, Nairobi, Kenya, from 6 to 9 November 2007.

245 Christian leaders, men and women coming from 72 nations and six continents, from a broad range of churches, confessions and organizations, reflected on their journeys with Jesus Christ the Reconciler.

For nearly a decade the participants of the Global Christian Forum process have yearned to bring together church leaders and other Christians from all the families and traditions that lay claim to faith in Christ as Savior and Lord.

Representatives of the historic Protestant Churches, the Catholic Church, the Orthodox Churches, the Pentecostal Churches, the broader Evangelical movement and other Christian Churches and communities have discerned the need to be brought into relationship with one another for the sake of witness to the Gospel. In regional meetings held in North America (2002), Asia (2004), Africa (2005), Europe (2006) and Latin America (2007), this vision has found strong affirmation. The forum in Limuru was the first global gathering.

"It was really a CHRISTIAN Forum with good biblical messages, and not just a 'social or anthropological forum,' as other ecumenical

meetings I took part in," said Winterle and added: "The opportunity to share personal Christian experiences in the 'Groups of 30' and the other discussions in these groups helped all participants to grow in the understanding of one another. The meetings of 'Families of the Same Tradition' (Lutherans, Catholics, etc.) and of 'People From the Same Geographic Area' brought us more together in our common ground and challenges."

The Global Christian Forum desires to create an open space wherein the representatives from a broad range of Christian communities and inter church organizations can gather to foster mutual respect and to address common challenges together. The Forum acknowledges that there are differing views on substantive issues such as ecclesiology and the scope of evangelism and mission, but wants to initiate a new beginning for encounter and dialogue.

The meeting in Limuru enjoyed times of prayer, fellowship and Bible study, and the participants discussed the challenges and opportunities in sharing the Gospel and in pursuing justice, loving mercy and walking humbly with God. They shared their experiences of what God is doing in their churches and organizations, and how to participate in God's mission in the world by witnessing to the Good News of Jesus Christ in word and deed.

"The theme of the Forum was 'Our Journey with Jesus Christ, the Reconciler,' in the same line as the last ILC conference theme 'Living as Reconciled Children of God.' Is the Spirit blowing in the same direction in different church bodies? We have much to learn and to share in such a meeting, without compromising our identity," thus Winterle.



Participants of the Global Christian Forum

“Living as Reconciled Children of God”

**Editorial by Dr. Gerald B. Kieschnick
Chairman, International Lutheran Council**



Dr. Gerald B Kieschnick
ILC Chairman

Photo: H. Hoeller

As I write these words to you, the presidents, bishops, and other leaders of member churches of the International Lutheran Council, I do so with clear recollection and warm remembrances of our time together in Accra, Ghana, at the ILC International Conference this past September. In many ways it was a memorable event,

setting the direction for the future of this important Council. I truly believe the ILC will continue to provide confessional Lutheran leadership at a time when what we have to offer as evangelical Lutherans is so greatly needed by the people of the world in which we live.

Those of you who were in Accra will remember the central theme of the conference - “Living as Reconciled Children of God.” Dr. Ted Kober, main presenter, dealt with the topics of:

1. Understanding Conflict from a Biblical Perspective
2. Four Principles of Peacemaking
3. Confession and Forgiveness
4. The Ministry of Reconciliation

The potential barriers of language and culture were melted away by Ted’s Gospel centered presentations, principles, and personal stories of reconciliation. His presence among us was a great gift from our gracious God!

All of us, no matter what nationality or race or language, are sinful human beings in need of God’s forgiving love through Christ our Lord. As we receive that love, so we are empowered to share it, especially with those from whom we are separated by sin. The result, by God’s grace and through His Spirit, is confession, forgiveness, and reconciliation among people previously separated by strife and conflict.

“Because of Christ Jesus and what He did for us, God forgives us our sins, which makes it not only our duty, but also our privilege, to forgive and reconcile with those who sin against us.”

Those are the words with which I began a recent article on the topic of reconciliation through the love, forgiveness, and power of Jesus Christ our Lord. Unresolved conflict can

range from fairly insignificant differences of opinion to matters of greater gravity and importance. It can lead to unhealthy - even sinful - emotions and feelings toward another person. It can find expression in such behaviors as gossip, slander, the bringing of lawsuits, or acts of violence. Such conflict has a way of hanging on to us, and we have a way of holding onto it and even cultivating it. This can damage our relationship with God and make it even more difficult to resolve the conflict.

The apostle Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 5:17-19 are very helpful in this regard: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting mankind’s sins against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.”

Because of Christ Jesus and what He did for us, God forgives us our sins, which makes it not only our duty, but also our privilege, to forgive and reconcile with those who sin against us.

Dear friends in Christ, it is the message of reconciliation through Christ that you and I have been called by God to proclaim. As elected leaders of national church bodies, we have the added calling, privilege, duty, and responsibility of providing leadership for the ministry of reconciliation of pastors, other church leaders, and members of our congregations.

May God’s rich blessings attend the work you do. May He give you great joy in doing it. May He bless the work of the International Lutheran Council in the years ahead. And may we continue to be a formidable force for the Gospel in a world full of many people who have not yet learned the art and blessing of “Living as Reconciled Children of God.”

Lutheran-Orthodox Commission Members Prepare for 2008 Plenary Meeting

LW I - The preparatory meeting for the 14th Session of the Lutheran-Orthodox Joint Commission was held from 3 to 8 October 2007 in Joensuu, eastern Finland, hosted by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

Participants in the meeting held at the Orthodox seminary in Joensuu discussed papers that provided theological expositions of Orthodox and Lutheran teaching on “The Mystery of the Church: The Holy Eucharist in the Life of the

Church,” the theme currently being studied by the Joint Commission. They also deliberated specifications of the common attributes and differences between the teachings of both Christian traditions.

A Draft Common Statement developed by the preparatory group and the papers presented will be discussed during the 14th Plenary Meeting of the Lutheran-Orthodox Joint Commission scheduled for 30 May to 7 June 2008, hosted by the Orthodox.

The Commission’s co-presidents are Metropolitan Gennadios of Sassima (Orthodox), representing the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and Rev. Donald McCoid (Lutheran), former bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod, and currently head of the ELCA’s Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations section.

Wittenberg Plans Luther Garden

An Interactive Reformation Monument of Trees

LWI - The symbolic groundbreaking of a “Luther Garden” on 31 October 2008 in Wittenberg, Germany, will mark a major preparatory step toward the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation in 2017.

Announcing the initiative on 16 November 2007 at the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Geneva (Switzerland) secretariat, Wittenberg [City of Martin Luther] Mayor Eckard Naumann said the city saw itself as the venue of a vital process, and a meeting and communication place that is open to the global community in view of the Reformation jubilee.

An approximately 230-meter-long Luther Garden will be developed in Wittenberg as a symbol of the global magnitude of the Reformation, and of the interconnectedness, interaction, and reconciliation between Christian churches. Churches throughout the world will be invited to sponsor one of the 500 trees to be planted in the garden, said Oberkirchenrat Norbert Denecke, executive secretary of the Hanover-based LWF National Committee in Germany (LWF/GNC). A plaque on each tree will describe the sponsorship.

During the project’s presentation, LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko affirmed the Lutheran communion’s support and LWF’s leadership role. “It is important that the Wittenberg mayor and churches in Germany through the LWF German National Committee have demonstrated a strong desire to have the commemoration of the 500 years of the nailing of the 95 theses as an ecumenical and international event,” he remarked.

Internationally renowned landscape architect Dr. Andreas Kipar commissioned with the project, plans a public square shaped around a Luther Rose created from a variety of cobblestones. He said outdoor worship services and other events could be held at the site.

The plan is to have an oval shape from a group of 500 trees surround the Luther Rose by 31 October 2017. The garden will serve to connect the town center and the Elbe River, with the garden pointing southward to the river, thus symbolically opening itself to the world.

A triangle will connect Wittenberg’s Castle Church, City Church and Luther Garden as part of the town’s green belt. The outdoor garden will add another Luther symbol to the city in addition to the Luther House and Luther Monument.

Kipar said the trees would represent the events in Wittenberg 500 years ago that fundamentally changed the world, providing people today with the opportunity to reflect on these developments.

Further information on the Luther Garden including photos and project’s presentation can be accessed on the LWF website at: www.lutheranworld.org/Luthergarden.html.

Since May 2007 the former provost of the German Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELK), Rev. Wilhelm Torgerson, also works in the city of Luther. Torgerson directs a Lutheran church center for interested visitors from all over the world. The center was initiated and is financed by the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod and is being established in the old Latin School near the Wittenberg city church.

Germany is ‘Mission Field’

**‘German Days’ in St. Louis on the Religious
Situation in The Land of Reformation**

Overseas tourists who visit Germany, the motherland of the Reformation, often expect “a country full of Lutherans,” said Dr. Jobst Schöne, bishop emeritus of the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELK) of Germany. In reality, less than a third of the reunited country’s population is even Protestant, and about the same number (31 percent) have no church affiliation at all, Schöne told members of the Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, community and guests during “German Days at the Sem.”

“We can speak of Germany as a mission field,” Schöne said, even among so-called ‘mainstream Protestants,’ who are largely no longer characterized by a Lutheran heritage “but by pluralism and a great variety of opinions, positions, and convictions, often contradicting each other.”

"Germany - Post-Christian, Still Christian, or Pre-Christian?" was the theme of the 2007 "German Days" event, one of ten planned for each fall leading up to the 500-year anniversary of the Reformation on 31 October 2017.

The event was sponsored by the Concordia Seminary Center for Lutheran Theology and Public Life, and took place on 12 and 13 October 2007 on the seminary campus. It featured several German presenters, including Schöne; Dr. Hans Christian Knuth, who led the eleven million member United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany from 1999 to 2005 and still serves as bishop of Schleswig and presiding bishop in the North Elbe region; Ulrich Pöner, director of the International and Migration Office of the German (Catholic) Bishops Conference; and the Hon. Wolfgang Drautz, Germany's consul-general in Chicago. Seminary faculty members also gave presentations and responses.

Leipzig (Germany)-born Dr. Uwe Siemon-Netto, director of the Center for Lutheran Theology and Public Life, coordinated the event and gave a presentation on the decline of faith in the former East Germany - Luther's homeland - where less than a quarter of the population is Christian.

As a result of East Germany's former communist regime, which attempted to eradicate Christianity, the region is now the most atheistic in Europe, akin to a pre-Christian mission field, Siemon-Netto said.

Besides scholarly presentations and debate, "German Days" included a "Bach at the Sem" concert in the seminary's Chapel of St. Timothy and St. Titus, an exhibition of Reformation-era books and manuscripts, and a *Winzerfest*, or wine festival, organized in cooperation with the town of Hermann, Missouri, settled by Germans and known for wine-making.

Next year's event is planned for 24 and 25 October and will focus on Christianity and politics.

CLC Focuses on Cooperative Ministries

LCMSNews - No. 72 - Leaders of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) discussed their denominations' cooperative ministries when they met on 24 October 2007 at the Lutheran Center in Baltimore, Maryland, USA. The ministries address domestic disaster response, immigration matters, social services, and international development and relief.

The Lutheran church leaders, meeting as the Committee on Lutheran Cooperation (CLC), normally meet twice a year to discuss their common witness and provide updates to each other about current joys and concerns within their church bodies.

The leaders spent considerable time discussing their collaborative ministry through Lutheran Disaster Response, focusing on different understandings of the ministry that have emerged in recent years. Rev. Matthew C. Harrison, executive director of LCMS World Relief and Human Care, and Rev. Rebecca S. Larson, executive director, ELCA Church in Society, agreed to continue discussions about the ministry and return to the CLC with recommendations for the future.

At this meeting, the leaders met with executives who lead Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS), Lutheran Services in America (LSA), and Lutheran World Relief (LWR).

Dr. Gerald B. Kieschnick, LCMS president, presented the key actions of the 63rd LCMS Regular Convention in Houston in July. Dr. Mark S. Hanson, ELCA presiding bishop, discussed key actions of the 10th Biennial ELCA Churchwide Assembly, held in Chicago in August.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Lutheran church leaders agreed to keep meeting as a sign of commitment to shared ministry.

The day before the CLC meeting, an LCMS-ELCA discussion panel met to discuss theological topics and concerns.

History and Future Celebrated in Nicaragua

LCC-Info Digest - Lutherans in Nicaragua celebrated the 490th anniversary of Luther's Reformation with a special worship service on 30 October 2007 in the Martin Luther Chapel on the mission center campus. "It is so wonderful to see how these new believers in Jesus celebrate and rejoice remembering this special celebration," commented LCC missionary, Rev. Sandor Arguello. "They give thanks to our gracious God for Luther and his Reformation, and for Lutheran Church-Canada for sharing our living faith in Jesus and sharing our Lutheran Confessions."

The previous weekend, Pastor Arguello attended "Christ, King of kings" mission congregation in Granada. Missionary Quintero and his faithful deaconess wife, Mariana did more than 254 home visitations in less than two years. The fruits of the Lord's work was the baptism of seven children from Granada.

"The Gospel of Jesus is producing abundant fruits wherever the Word is faithfully preached," Pastor Arguello said. "The Kingdom of God is truly increasing its number upon this, His mission field of Nicaragua and Central America."

New Missionary Couple Begins Service in Jamaica

LCMS World Mission - On Sunday, 28 October 2007, a new era began in Lutheran ministry in Jamaica. That day, Rev. Obot Ite was installed as a missionary at St. Andrews Lutheran Church, Kingston, Jamaica. Obot and his wife, Abasifreke, are from Nigeria and were selected, called, and sent as missionaries through a partnership between The Lutheran Church of Nigeria (LCN), LCMS World Mission, and the members of St. Andrews Lutheran Church. Obot was installed by Rev. Effiong Ekanem, president of the LCN, who accompanied the Ites to Jamaica. Obot and Abasifreke will shepherd and walk alongside the members of the Lutheran church in Jamaica to focus on evangelism and gathering together more congregations on the island.

The LCMS began mission work in Nigeria in 1936. Today, the LCMS' partner church, The Lutheran Church in Nigeria, has grown to over 100 000 members, and has accepted the challenge and opportunity of mission work across the ocean in Jamaica. The Nigerian church has already sent a missionary, Rev. Samuel Essien, to The Gambia, West Africa, but this is the first time it has sent a missionary to serve outside of Africa. The Ites will build on the work that was begun about 15 years ago when the first LCMS missionaries started the mission in Jamaica.

Mission Project Brussels

After a lot of preparatory work, the Mission Project Brussels could be started with the installation of Rev. Matthias Tepper as pastor of the All Lutheran Church of Brussels (ALCB) on 25 November 2007.

A city which boasts three official languages (French, Dutch, and German) and has been named the capital of Europe, Brussels continues to assert itself as a notable international entity, hosting such institutions as the European Union Council and Commission headquarters, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a thousand other international organizations, and thousands of international corporations. Roughly

fourteen percent of its one million residents are expatriates, representing more than twenty-five different countries of origin. With three years' experience serving the expatriate community in Germany, Tepper has accepted the call to minister to an international Lutheran congregation in Brussels.

The project is a joint venture of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Belgium (ELCB), the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS), USA through its Board of Missions, and the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELK) in Germany through its Lutheran Church Mission, Bleckmar. Therefore the installation was done by ELCB president Gijsbertus van Hattem, assisted by bishop Hans-Jörg Voigt of the SELK, and Bleckmar Mission director Markus Nietzsche, while the sermon was preached by LCMS World Mission regional director for Eurasia, Brent Smith.



Installation of Rev. Tepper at the All Lutheran Church of Brussels. L.t.r.: Rev. Brent Smith, Regional Director Eurasia (LCMS), Provost Johannes Rehr (SELK); President Gijsbertus van Hattem (ELCB); Rev. Matthias Tepper, Bishop Hans-Jörg Voigt (SELK), Director Markus Nietzsche (SELK - Lutheran Church Mission) and Rev. Richard Tepper (SELK).

The All Lutheran Church started in 1992 with monthly services. It is an indirect continuation of the American Lutheran Church in Brussels which ceased to exist in 1987. The attendance has known ups and downs, typical to the nature of the congregation, with people coming and leaving all the time. In November 1996 the frequency of the services was increased to two services a month. The facilities are rented from a German congregation already in Brussels.

Rev. Matthias Tepper will work in the ALCB with mission outreach in Brussels. He comes with wife, Michelle, and one-year-old daughter, Lillian, from Epiphany Lutheran Church of the SELK in Bochum, Germany, where he completed his vicarage and was ordained in November 2006.

In addition to expatriate outreach, Tepper, who is fluent in English and German, hopes to expand the mission and reach out to native Belgians in the Brussels region. Historically Roman Catholic, Belgium has experienced a marked decrease in religious culture since the late 1800s. According to a 2005 census, only ten percent of Brussels' citizens attend church regularly. Though many Belgians speak English, Tepper is committed to French and Dutch language study so that he can minister to Belgians in their native language.

English Pastor Installed in Paris Mission Outpost

LCMS World Mission - Rev. Roger Jones was installed as pastor on 16 September 2007 at Holy Savior Evangelical Lutheran Church in Paris, France. He and his wife, Emily, arrived in Paris six weeks earlier from London, England, where Roger served as head pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran Church.

After a nearly 80-year partnership between the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (LCMS), USA and the Evangelical Lutheran Church-Synod of France and Belgium (EEL-SFB), the synods are continuing their collaborative tradition by calling Roger of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of England (ELCE), to serve in France. Jones left his long-time home in London, and is one of twelve *Ablaze!* Alliance missionaries supported by LCMS World Mission.

Having spent ten years in modern language study and mastering French during frequent seasons in residence in a small French village, Jones comes to the pulpit fluent in French, German, and English. His wife, Emily, was born Chan Cheng in Hong Kong and is fluent in English and Cantonese. She hopes to reach out to first- and second-generation Chinese immigrants in France through a language school on the church grounds. Their multilingual repertoire, they believe, will continue to attract an already multi-cultural, multi-lingual congregation.

"It is my conviction that the future of our church is in the Paris region. Here are the most people; here are the most heathen and the most unchurched," said Rev. Jean Haessig, president of the EEL-SFB and director of L'Heure Luthérienne (Lutheran Hour). "About one-fifth of the French population is living here, so, statistically, the future is here," Haessig said.

Holy Savior is located at the bottom floor of an apartment building and stands indistinct among the row of off-white apartment complexes on Rue de L'Abbe Groult. But in spite of the low visibility, the congregation is already a bustling

fifty strong - an impressive number considering the anti-religious climate cultivated in France since its eighteenth century Revolution. "I have only been here three days, and I have already had two people knock on the door," Jones said.

Interest in Lutheran Christianity is an anomaly for France, where more than 30 percent of the population identify themselves as atheist or agnostic, and Lutheran as a denomination is virtually unheard of. "In the month that I've been here, we've had six new people attending church regularly," said Jones.

Roger and Emily Jones have come prepared with an enthusiastic perspective. Ambitions of an international congregation have already taken shape. Families from French-speaking Africa, England, and the United States are among the congregation's members.

IELB Supports Lutheran Church in Angola

ielb-news - In October 2007 president Paulo Moisés Nerbas of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil (IELB) recently visited the Lutheran Confessional Church of Angola (ILCA). In the state capital of Luanda he met the president of the ILCA, Benjamin Nzuzi Mavungo. In Cabinda, Nerbas could inform himself about the distance learning program of the ILCA. A service attended by Nerbas was broadcasted by local radio and TV stations.

Nerbas also met with state representatives to prepare the official recognition of the ILCA.

ELCE Re-elects Chairman Quirk

By Paul Landgraf - Twelve of the fourteen congregations of The Evangelical Lutheran Church of England (ELCE) met on 12 and 13 October 2007 in East Kilbride, Scotland, for their 53rd annual budget conference and synod. Rev. Dr. Reginald Quirk, pastor of Resurrection and Preceptor of Westfield House (Cambridge), was re-elected for a third three-year term.

The theme for the synod was 'Saved by Grace - Created for Good Works' (Eph. 2.8-10). The paper given by Rev. Brian Mosemann, tutor of Westfield House and assistant pastor of Resurrection, was entitled 'With all your HEART, and with all your SOUL, and with all your MIND' and examined the attacks of moralism, mysticism and speculation on God's work of justification and sanctification.

Westfield House has long been known as a center for Lutheran teaching. This teaching helps to connect the distant and sometimes struggling

congregations. The congregation which hosted the synod, St. Columba Lutheran Church, is the only ELCE congregation in Scotland and is over 150 miles from its nearest sister church.

One of the resolutions passed, was the adoption of the new LCMS hymnal, Lutheran Service Book, a significant step, since no other hymnal has ever been adopted by the ELCE. Thankfully this comes at a time when the United Kingdom has never been more diversified. In one ELCE suburban London congregation alone there are worshippers from over fifteen different countries.

The ELCE thanked all ILC churches who have helped it over the years, by passing unanimously the very first resolution of 'Gratitude to other Lutheran church bodies,' and the singing of 'Now Thank We All Our God.'

Forty Years LCSA

With a festive reformation-day service on 28 October 2007 in Khutsong in the province of Gauteng, South Africa, the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (LCSA) celebrated its formation 40 years ago. On 2 April 1967 the congregations grown out of the work of the Bleckmar Mission, Germany, established the LCSA in Ventersdorp, North-West Province.

All other LCSA congregations also remembered this occasion in their services.

The work of the Lutheran Church Mission - Bleckmar Mission started in South Africa in 1892.

Hermann-Sasse-Award and Dies Academicus in Oberursel

selk-news - On 10 November, the birthday of Martin Luther and the traditional date of the Dies Academicus (academic day) of the Lutheran Theological Hochschule (seminary) (LThH), Oberursel, Germany, the Hermann-Sasse-Award of the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELK) was awarded to Professor Dr. Bengt Hägglund, Lund, Sweden, by SELK Bishop Hans-Jörg Voigt.

Professor Dr. Ernst Koch, Leipzig, himself a recipient of the Hermann-Sasse-Award and guest lecturer at the LThH Oberursel, appreciated the broad literary work of Bengt Hägglund in which he has presented essential analyses of the history of Christendom from a decidedly Lutheran perspective.

In the afternoon of the Dies Academicus, Hägglund, in thanking for the award, read a paper with the topic "Faith and History - a

Principle Theme of the Theology of the 20th Century."

Lithuanian Lutheran Bishop Demands Equal Status for Churches

selk-news/eni - Bishop Mindaugas Sabutis of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania has emphasized that the smaller churches of his country, among them also the Lutheran Church, should have an equal status as the Roman Catholic Church, which is by far the largest church in the country, with the agencies of the state.

"The relationships of the other traditional religious communities with the state, need the same framework of the law," Sabutis said on the 80th anniversary of the first Concordat between the Republic of Lithuania and the Vatican. Sabutis regretted the fact that official representatives of the state treat the smaller religious communities as second rate, although the constitution values them as part of Lithuania's spiritual, historical and social heritage.

Latvian Church Now Has Three Bishops

LWI - The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia (ELCL) now has three bishops following the consecration of Bishops Einars Alpe and Pavils Bruvers early in October 2007. Archbishop Janis Vanags currently heads the ELCL.

Until then the ELCL had only one bishop - the archbishop. Consecrated on 13 October 2007 at the Lutheran Cathedral of Riga, Alpe and Bruvers serve the newly created dioceses of Daugavpils and Liepaja respectively. The ELCL synod elected the new bishops at its meeting in June. The Riga archdiocese will be under the jurisdiction of the ELCL Archbishop.

The need for more dioceses and bishops was predicted by Archbishop Teodors Grīnbergs (1933-1944) in the First Republic of Latvia, but this could not be realized at that time due to the start of the Second World War, followed by the Soviet occupation.

Vanags explained the need for additional bishops: "If the church has only one bishop with many international, interchurch, church-state, and other responsibilities, then it is not possible to meet regularly and intensively with all the

pastors, talk with them, and help establish a pastors' fellowship within a smaller setting that could be realized within a diocese."

The 250 000-member ELCL has 297 congregations, served by over 130 ordained pastors and around 70 evangelists.

Pomeranian Church Plans B u g e n h a g e n Commemorative Year

epd/selk-news - On the 450th anniversary of the death of the reformer Johannes Bugenhagen (1485-1558), Pomeranian's Evangelical Church, Germany, in cooperation with other institutions, plans a number of events for 2008. For April a symposium in the Barther Bible Center is planned and in June a conference in cooperation with the theological faculty of the Greifswald University will be held, the press office of the church informed.

Johannes Bugenhagen, who was born in Wollin, Pomerania, rendered great services when the reformation was introduced to North Germany. He drew up new church regulations for Pomerania, Brunswick, Hamburg, Denmark, and others. In 1523 he became the first evangelical town pastor in Wittenberg, where he died on 20 April 1558. Bugenhagen was also personal pastor of the reformer Martin Luther (1483-1546).

WELS Declares Fellowship With Portuguese Church

lgb/selk-news - The 59th Regular Convention of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS), USA, officially declared altar and pulpit fellowship with the Lutheran Church of Portugal (Igreja Luterana de Portugal - ILP).

The ILP has two small congregations with fifteen adult members in Lisbon, the capital of Portugal, and Porto, which are ministered by Rev. Dr. Artur Villares.

The congregations came into existence in the early 1990s. Since then they have been in contact with WELS. Recognition by the state of Portugal was achieved in 1998.

The ILP is connected to the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference.

The International Lutheran Council's (ILC) member church in Portugal is the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Portugal (Igreja Evangélica Luterana Portuguesa - IELP) with congregations

in Merces (Lissabon area), Maia (Porto area), on the Azores, and a mission outpost in Ponte de Lima.

Two Reformed Church Bodies to Merge

LWI - The World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) agreed on 20 October 2007 to unite with the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) to create a new global body representing over 80 million Reformed Christians.

The historic decision took place at WARC's Executive Committee meeting held 18 to 28 October 2007 in Trinidad and Tobago, following detailed discussions on aspects of the proposed merger. The committee agreed to recommend to REC that the new global entity be called the World Communion of Reformed Churches. It also approved terms of reference for a merger implementation working group to be responsible for a constitution, budget, staffing and structure details, the Uniting General Council (likely in 2010), as well as fundraising and communication plans.

The meeting's theme was "Called to Communion: From Elmina to Port of Spain," and it focused largely on justice issues and church unity at large and within the Reformed family.

At its Executive Committee meeting in March 2007, REC had approved in principle a new Reformed body.

WARC is a worldwide fellowship of 75 million Reformed Christians in 214 churches in 107 countries. REC represents 12 million Reformed Christians in 39 churches in 25 countries, with 27 of the churches also belonging to WARC.

ILC News is published quarterly to provide information for and about churches associated with the International Lutheran Council. Articles for publication and requests for additional copies of the publication (free of charge) should be sent either to the editor or to the executive secretary of the Council.

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