



A Blessed and Fruitful New Year, Even in Times of Trouble!

Editorial from Dr. Gerald B. Kieschnick
Chairman, International Lutheran Council



Dr. Gerald B. Kieschnick
Photo: H. Hoeller

Since our last opportunity to visit via this column in the ILC Newsletter (November 2008), the seasons of Advent and of the Nativity of our Lord have come and gone. I pray that you, your family, and your church received and shared many blessings from our Lord during these important seasons of the church year. I

further pray that the joy of Christmas continues to penetrate your heart and life as you provide leadership in the responsible position to which you have been called and elected.

In addition to Advent and Christmas, the arrival of the New Year of our Lord, 2009, has occurred. It seems that only yesterday we were observing the turn of the 21st century, and now almost the entire first decade of that century has elapsed.

With the passing of every old year and the arrival of every New Year, we have opportunity to reflect upon that which has passed and that which awaits in the year ahead. Reflection upon the year of our Lord 2008 produces a mixture of observations and recollections. For those of us who live in the United States of America, 2008 will be remembered for a number of reasons, not all of them positive.

While the rest of the world has lived with high energy prices for a long time, U.S. citizens were faced with a taste of that reality in the form of gasoline that cost over \$4.00 US per gallon during a portion of the year. In a way that challenges comprehension, at the time this article is written those prices are closer to \$1.50

US per gallon. For many of us, that is difficult to comprehend.

Furthermore, in many parts of the world, economic downturn has been experienced. The jobless rate has increased, many people are without work, banks and other businesses have experienced significant reductions in commerce and thus in revenue, stock markets have tumbled, uncertainty, anxiety and fear have risen and in some cases even skyrocketed.

What do we as Christian leaders say and do in the face of such troubled and difficult times? How is the work of the Christian church affected by these economic realities that impact many parts of the world? Will the people of God respond to the blessings of God by continuing to support the work of God on earth that He has given us to do in the places and positions to which we have been called? These and many other questions naturally arise.

In times like these we do well to recall the Word of God, including the Word of the Son of God:

1. Jesus said, *"Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. ... For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.* Matthew 6:25, 32-34
2. Jesus said, *"Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."* Matthew 11:28-30

We look to the Lord and Him alone for the power and peace so necessary for our ministry of proclamation of the grace of God in Jesus Christ our Lord: *The LORD is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.* Psalm 9:9

With these words of encouragement and hope in the Lord, dear friends in Christ, I pray for you a blessed and fruitful New Year, even in times of trouble!



Divine Service as Realization of the Salvation Talks between Roman Catholic Church and SELK

SELK-news - In the rooms of the Papal Council for Christian Unity in Rome, Cardinal Walter Kasper (Rome), representing the Roman Catholic Church, and Bishop Hans-Jörg Voigt (Hannover) of the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELK) in Germany, met on 4 December 2008. Also participating in the talks were Msgr. Dr. Matthias Türk (Rome) and Professor Dr. Werner Klän (Oberursel, Germany).

The conversation was held in connection with the series of consultations between the Roman Catholic Johann-Adam-Möhler-Institute (Paderborn, Germany) and the Lutheran Theological Seminary Oberursel of the SELK, which began in April and continued in October 2008. Aim and content of the consultations is to bundle up existing common ground between the Roman Catholic Church and confessional Lutheranism, as it is represented in the International Lutheran Council (ILC).

Envisaged is a liturgical-theological proceeding, based on the celebration of the Divine Service as realization of the salvation in the means of grace, Word and Sacraments, as fountain and expression of theological teaching.

As an introduction Cardinal Kasper gave a presentation of the work of the Papal Council for Christian Unity, while Bishop Voigt and Dr. Klän described the theological position of the ILC and the SELK.

During the meeting in Rome, points of common interests were established with respect to questions of the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the celebration of the sacrament of the altar, in the theological valuation of an office of teaching and doctrine of the church, and on the emphasis of the necessity of the ordained office for the celebration of the Eucharist. In addition, comparable principles of admission for partaking in communion and church fellowship were discussed.

This series of consultations is planned to take place over a period of three years. The Executive Committee of the ILC as well as the Papal Council For The Promotion Of Christian Unity are regularly informed about the progress of the talks.

Brazil: Homeless Receive Help in Santa Catarina

Over the last months of 2008 the area of Santa Catarina in southern Brazil has experienced heavy rainfall resulting in severe landslides and record water levels. Approximately 1.5 million people are reported to be affected in approximately sixty cities. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil (IELB) says 118 people lost their lives and 33 000 are homeless.

According to reports from IELB pastors in the region, the homeless have been guaranteed food and shelter by the Civil Defense. One of the worst affected cities is Itajai where 97% of the roads were flooded. Pastors from Santa Catarina have taken food and clothing to the congregations in the city. Pastor Martinho Sonntag from Florianopolis reported: "When we got there, we were overcome with emotion with the situation and the dedication of the pastor's family and other congregation members in assisting the flood victims, but at the same time we were happy because of the gratitude shown by the recipients."

Rubin Brehm, a local pastor, reported that the situation has calmed. But, besides food and clothing, it will be necessary to donate stoves, beds and furniture as most people lost all they had in the floods. Needed most is money for repairs to houses and furniture.



Twenty five flood victims found shelter in the IELB church in Itajai

IELB members in Brusque had to abandon their houses because of the risk of subsidence. At Navegantes, besides the floods, some members had problems with work due to the rains. "It is a pity to see furniture disappearing in the rubbish truck," lamented Pastor Brehm.

At Blumenau some families of the local congregation had to permanently abandon their houses. According to Pastor Wanderley Lange of Balnearion Camboriu, 27 families were affected, but they have already returned to their homes. Donations received by the congregation are being shared with the Lutherans of the city of Itajai.

The IELB is busy coordinating monetary contributions, which will immediately be passed on to the affected congregations. There will be a continued need in the following months.

LCMS Mission Board Appoints Interim Director



Zehnder

Foto: LCMS Reporter

LCMS News - Meeting in Indian Wells, California, USA, from 17 to 19 November last year, the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod's (LCMS) Board for Mission Services appointed Dr. Thomas R. Zehnder of Baileys Harbor, Wisconsin, as its interim executive director.

The appointment became necessary after Dr. Robert Roegner announced his resignation as executive director, effective 16 November 2008, citing his desire to return to "a more hands-on ministry."

Roegner, 55, served in this post since November 2001. He has been instrumental in the development and implementation of the LCMS' *Ablaze!* movement to share the Gospel with 100 million "unreached and uncommitted people" by 2017, the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

In a statement to the missions board and staff, Roegner called his service to the board, staff, and missionaries "a great and yet humbling privilege," and said he appreciated the opportunity "to be a small part"



Roegner

Foto: LCMS Reporter

of helping the Synod and its partners worldwide to become more engaged in mission outreach through the *Ablaze!* movement.

Roegner previously served the LCMS mission board as a missionary to Liberia (1981-90) and as area secretary for Africa, Europe, and the Middle East (1990-95). From 1995 to 1999, he served as executive director of Lutheran Bible Translators in Aurora, Illinois, and after that as senior pastor of Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, Westwood, New Jersey.

Interim executive director Zehnder, 72, is expected to serve in this post until a permanent successor is found. The decision to appoint Zehnder was unanimous, according to board Chairman Butch Almstedt, and Zehnder accepted the appointment the same day.

"This is a wonderful blessing to us, as Tom is already a part of the LCMS World Mission family as Japan missionary alumnus and currently as an advisory member of our board," Almstedt said. He added that Zehnder "is very knowledgeable of LCMS World Mission" and its "plans, vision, and priorities" and "is a great supporter of the Synod's *Ablaze!* movement and the *Fan Into Flame* campaign to support it."

A 1961 graduate of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Zehnder and his wife, Jacquelyn, served as missionaries in Japan for nearly a decade. From 1987 to 1997, Zehnder was president of the Synod's Florida-Georgia District. He has also served as pastor to congregations in Columbus, Georgia; Stuart, Florida; and Williamsburg, Virginia.

Concordia Seminary Holds First 'Reaching out Together' Conference

Concordia Seminary News - Concordia Seminary St. Louis, Missouri, USA will hold an evangelism conference titled "Reaching Out Together" on 14 February 2009 on its campus. The conference is sponsored by the partnership of Concordia Seminary, the Missouri District of The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (LCMS) and North American Missions *Ablaze!* of the LCMS. This event is designed for pastors, evangelism boards, church leaders and lay people in the Missouri District and adjacent LCMS districts.

"For years a group of St. Louis area congregations have been emphasizing the importance of evangelism with their 'Saturday Outreach School'," commented Rev. Rick Marrs, director of continuing education and parish services. "We are very pleased to be able to reach out together with them and with Synod's *Ablaze!* program to encourage even more congregations and Christians to creatively reach

out to their communities with the blessed Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Dr. Dale A. Meyer, president of Concordia Seminary, will serve as the conference keynote speaker. Other presenters will include Rev. Scott Snow, director of national outreach with LCMS World Mission; Rev. Joseph Sullivan, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, St. Louis, and Dr. Yohannes Mengsteab, national director of new mission fields development with LCMS World Mission.

The Word Spreads in Southeast Asia



Dr. Ralph E. Mayan
Photo: Hoeller

LCC-Info - Interim Lutheran Church-Canada (LCC) mission executive Rev. Dr. Ralph E. Mayan recently returned from Thailand and Cambodia where he met with LCC missionary Pastor Suchat Chujit, and Sahatay Lutheran Church president, Pastor Suchat Srikakarn. He also attended theological education classes in Bangkok and Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The

classes are supervised by Rev. Dr. Leonard Harms, executive director of Lutheran Institute Southeast Asia.

In his report, Dr. Mayan told of the excitement the Thai pastors have when someone comes to faith. “There is a joy in their story,” he writes. “It reminds me of Jesus talking about the angels rejoicing in heaven when one sinner repents.”

IELB Grows to 233 000 Members

IELB noticias - Data on the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil (IELB), presented by its Secretary of the Directorate Rony Ricardo Marquardt, show that membership of the IELB has reached 233 400. This represents a growth of 1.39% in comparison with the previous statistics.

Out of each 100 000 Brazilians, 123 are members of the IELB. In the southern region the ratio is much higher. But it was in the northern region where the biggest growth occurred, namely nearly 6%. With the increase of membership also came an increase in preaching stations. In 2007, twenty four new places of

worship were opened. Average church attendance is 35%. In the Vale de Tocantins district, seven out of ten Lutherans attend Church. The statistics also indicate positive financial donations.

The IELB has 503 congregations in Brazil, served by 610 Pastors.

Ablaze! Ambassadors Program Looks to Expand

LCMSNews - No. 56 - by Paula Schlueter Ross - Two years ago, Ida Mall, who served as president of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML) from 1991 to 1995, received a letter from Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (LCMS) President Dr. Gerald Kieschnick asking her to consider serving as an “ambassador” for *Ablaze!*, the worldwide initiative to share the Gospel with 100 million non-Christians by 2017.

If they chose to accept the challenge, Mall and dozens of others who received similar letters would become spokespersons for *Ablaze!*, agreeing to give presentations about the effort in congregations, schools, and other venues to encourage their fellow Lutherans to share their faith with family, friends, co-workers, and even strangers.

Mall says she agreed to serve as an *Ablaze!* Ambassador because of her “passion for outreach.” And, it fit well with her personal mission statement: “To actively seek opportunities to share my faith in Jesus Christ with others.”

Since joining the inaugural ambassadors program two years ago, Mall and 35 other former district and national Synod leaders have touted *Ablaze!* in countless LCMS churches and classrooms, sharing the initiative's vision “slowly but surely,” according to Dr. Richard Bimler, past president of Wheat Ridge Ministries and a member of the *Ablaze!* Ambassadors Planning Team. As team members, Bimler and several others provide leadership and direction to ambassadors, encouraging their ongoing participation.

Bimler says the Ambassadors program works well with his latest venture - serving older adults through Lutheran Life Communities, based in Arlington Heights, Illinois.

Rev. Scott Snow, director of national outreach with LCMS World Mission who has been involved with the Ambassadors program from the beginning, said those currently serving are proven LCMS leaders and include former district presidents, LWML presidents, and LCMS and Lutheran Hour Ministries executives. They are, he said, “people of influence” who have “national vision and national reach.”

They are being asked to stay with the program as it grows. Twenty seven more Lutheran leaders have been invited to become Ambassadors, beginning next year. A meeting held 13 and 14 January this year in St. Louis, Missouri, brought current and future Ambassadors together, along with *Ablaze!* representatives in LCMS districts, to learn more about the program and hear how it is changing.

Among new developments, each Ambassador will be asked to make an annual presentation to his or her own congregation, as well as to two or three other groups, with an average of 100 people attending each time. That means the program could conceivably reach 20 000 people a year, according to Snow, who might be encouraged to share their faith as part of *Ablaze!*

“Sharing the Gospel is not our *Job* - it's our *Joy!*”

R. Bimler

International Presence at the ELCE's Synod

By Rev. Paul Landgraf - The 54th annual Synod and Budget Conference of The Evangelical Lutheran Church of England (ELCE), held at St. Paul Lutheran Church, Borehamwood, on 10 and 11 October 2008 had a distinctively international 'flavour'. Among the guests were Revs. Priestley Balasingh of the India Evangelical Lutheran Church, Neal Guthrig of the Lutheran Church of Australia, Roger Humann of the Lutheran Church of Canada and Karl Fry of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod.

The Synod's theme was Christ's saying, "Behold, I make all things new" (Rev. 21:5). This theme predominated both within the services and the paper given by Rev. Arno Bessel of the ELCE, originally of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil.

All fourteen ELCE congregations were represented, and eight resolutions were passed. One resolution will require the election of the next chairman in the year previous to the end of Dr. Reginald Quirk's term. Another resolution gave thanks to God for all the churches of the ILC.

The synod chairman commented, "This synod has been a fine example of Christians working and praying together. It is a privilege to serve as leader in the meetings of such a church body."

LCC Executives Meet With US Partners

LCC-Info - For the second consecutive year representatives from Lutheran Church-Canada met with various Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (LCMS) departments and agencies to discuss current projects and areas of concern. LCC president, Rev. Robert Bugbee, interim mission executive Rev. Dr. Ralph E. Mayan, and communications director Dr. Ian Adnams met on 5 November 2008 with the LCMS Commission on Fellowship, chaired by LCMS Director of Church Relations, Dr. Samuel H. Nafzger. After updating the current activities of both church bodies, the members discussed the protocol agreement between LCC and the LCMS of 1988 and emphasized the importance of keeping everyone informed about the agreement presented in this document.

Representing the LCMS on the commission, were LCMS president, Rev. Dr. Gerald B. Kieschnick; first vice-president, Rev. William Diekelman; secretary, Rev. Raymond Hartwig; Commission on Theology and Church Relations executive director, Rev. Joel Lehenbauer; and Ron Schultz, chief administrative officer for the Board of Directors.

During their time in St. Louis, LCC's representatives also met with LCMS World Mission; LCMS World Relief and Human Care; the executives of Concordia Publishing House, the Schwan Foundation, and the Int'l Lutheran Laymen's League, where President Bugbee was the guest preacher at the chapel service.

LCMS Structure Task Force Gears Up for Presentations

LCMSNews - No. 68 - Responses from boards of directors of all thirty five Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (LCMS) districts will be used by the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synod Structure and Governance to refine its "Proposals and Possibilities" for presentation to district conventions this year.

This document deals with relationships between congregations and districts, including consideration of the number of districts; relationships between congregations and the national Synod, including the number of boards and commissions and national staff; congregational representation at district and national conventions; and frequency and function of district and national conventions.

The district conventions began with North Dakota District on 18 to 21 January and ends with the Central Illinois District 5 to 7 July. The Task Force will use feedback from these

conventions to further refine its findings and recommendations. Once delegates are elected for the 2010 LCMS convention, LCMS President Dr. Gerald B. Kieschnick will host regional caucuses of the delegates to present the Task Force's proposals, concepts, and options for consideration and discussion.

The Task Force will bring its final report for action to the LCMS convention to be held from 10 to 17 July 2010 in Houston, Texas.

LCN Elects New President

Rev. Christian Ekong has been elected as President of The Lutheran Church of Nigeria (LCN) and installed as the new President on 11 January this year.

As the Lutheran Church of Nigeria was elected by the International Lutheran Council (ILC) at its meeting in Accra, Ghana in 2007 as the representative from the African World Area on the ILC Executive Committee, Ekong will replace former President Rev. Ekanem on this Committee.

President Ekong is a grandson of Rev. Jonathan Ekong who is generally considered to be the founder of the LCN.

Uganda Lutheran Church Holds Delegates Conference

Each of the about sixty congregations of the Uganda Lutheran Church (ULC) sent three voting delegates to the Delegates Conference held on 31 October and 1 November 2008.

The Delegates Conference is the chief legislative assembly of the church. It is charged with the powers to establish and review policies, programs, procedures and the constitution that guides all activities that help to fulfill objectives of the church.



From right: President Noah Isanga, Pastor Charles Bameka (Vice-President), Rev. Elijah Lwanika (General Secretary), Kulaba David (Treasurer), Jane Byakutaga (Women Representative), five Regional Representatives and the Youth Representative.

The conference was held at a Kampala congregational worship center (a large tent).

A new Board of Directors was elected comprising of thirteen members. Among them are representatives for the youth, the women, evangelists and regional representatives.

Mr. Noah Isanga, 61, was re-elected to serve as the church president for a second term (2009-2012).

The ULC has four congregations in the Northern Region, eighteen congregations in the Western Region, four Congregations in the Central Region, twenty six congregations in the Eastern Region and eight congregations in the North-Eastern Region.

President Noah Isanga attended the last conference of the International Lutheran Council (ILC), held in Accra, Ghana in 2007.

IELP Has Forth Pastor

ielb/selk-news - With the arrival of Rev. Genivaldo Agner there are now four pastors of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Brasil (IELB) serving in Portugal. This was communicated by the responsible missions department of the IELB in October 2008.



IELP President
Rev. Jonas Flor

Photo: Hoeller

The most important task of the four IELB-pastors is to serve Brazilians living in Portugal. They lead congregations in Lisbon, Porto, Ponte de Lima and on the Azores.

They form the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Portugal (Igreja Evangélica Luterana Portuguesa - IELP), which is lead by president Rev. Jonas

Flor. The IELP belongs to the International Lutheran Council and the European Lutheran Conference.

Korea: Ground Breaking for New Building at LTU

On 11 November 2008 the ground breaking for a new building at Luther University/ Seminary (LTU) was celebrated with a worship service. The new 5-story building, called "Gangeui-Dong" (Lecture Building) will have a total space of about 1 650 square meters.

Among the 150 participants were Dr. Young-Il Ji, the Chairman of the Board of Directors, Rev. Hyun-Sub Um, President of Lutheran Church in Korea (LCK), as well as

Lutheran pastors and students. The new building will have lecture halls and seminar rooms, as well as professors' offices.

In his sermon, LTU President Il-Yong Park expressed his hope that through the construction of the new "Lecture Building", LTU will play an even more important role for Korean society as a delivery room that produces workers of the Gospel.

The construction will be funded by the LCK, LTU, and the association of alumni and supporters of LTU.

What Measure of Fellowship is Possible? SELK Starts Doctrinal Talks With VELKD

selk-news - On 8 October 2008 delegates of the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELK) in Germany and the German United Evangelical Lutheran Church (VELKD) met for their first doctrinal talks in the church office of the SELK in Hannover. The starting point for these talks, which were set up in addition to yearly contact meetings between VELKD and SELK, is a resolution of the General Pastors Convention of the SELK, to investigate under which conditions associate membership of the SELK in the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) would be possible.

The LWF has, after consulting its partner churches in Germany, authorized the VELKD to enter into talks with the SELK.

In addition to the matter of associated membership in the LWF, their talks also touched on a potential agreement about mutually permitting members of each church body to be communed by the other on the basis of guest status.

The first meeting served to set the goals of the talks and their structure. The existing differences were clearly outlined, but at the same time, the willingness was expressed to confront disagreements.

From the side of the VELK it was made clear that membership in the LWF can on the long term be only a full one - including altar- and pulpit fellowship. Against that position, the SELK representatives emphasized that church fellowship based on the Leuenberg Concord between Lutheran, Reformed, and United churches (today Communion of Evangelical Churches in Europe - GEKE) is a substantial obstacle for relationship between SELK and VELKD.

With regard to the goals of the talks the participants of the meeting agreed that expectations should not be overestimated but approached on a realistic manner. These talks

should be conducted without any pre-expectations of its results. The next round of these talks is scheduled to continue on 5 February this year.

The VELKD is a federation of eight Lutheran state churches in Germany, which was established in 1948. Today it incorporates about ten million Lutherans. VELKD is a member of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF).

SELK came into being in 1972 through the merger of several independent Lutheran Churches, which have been organized since 1830 in opposition to the union of Lutheran and Reformed churches and the diminishing of the Lutheran confessions in Lutheran state churches. It co-operates in committees of the VELKD as a guest. The SELK belongs to the International Lutheran Council.

Theologians Explore Further Possibilities for Interfaith Dialogue With Islam

LWI - A group of 50 theologians from a broad range of Christian traditions and scholars in Christian-Muslim relations met in Chavannes-de-Bogis near Geneva, Switzerland to deliberate Christian self-understanding in relation to Islam and Christian-Muslim relations today. The 18 to 20 October 2008 consultation was a joint initiative of the World Council of Churches (WCC), the Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions (including the Lutheran World Federation) and the World Evangelical Alliance.

Trinitarian reflections were prominent throughout the consultation, with some of them focusing specifically on the implications of incarnation and the work of the Spirit. Papers on various Christian approaches to Islam were presented - Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican and Evangelical. Contextual experiences were shared through two panel discussions - Christians living in majority Muslim contexts, and Christian-Muslim relations in plural contexts. This allowed participants to connect theological reflection and lived experiences from their diverse contexts.

Participants said they recognized dialogue as an aspect of spirituality, and acknowledged the virtue of patient listening in Christian-Muslim dialogue.

Christian-Muslim collaboration was recommended on issues such as social and economic justice, climate change, peace and healing of memories.

Three Year Global Christian Forum Program

GCF NEWS 9 - The group of about fifty representatives of churches, church families and organizations participating in the Global Christian Forum (GCF) that met in New Delhi on 8 to 11 November 2008, has formulated the objectives and identified the main GCF activities for the period 2009 to 2011. The group affirmed the unique calling of the Forum and emphasized that it should continue its efforts centered on its core vocation of deepening and broadening relationships of trust and mutual respect.

At the same time, the group affirmed that "we should not be afraid to face more deeply the issues that impede our relationships and rejoice at the gift that the Forum process can be for addressing difficult questions."

Among the activities outlined for the coming three years are regional consultations (specifically in Africa and Asia, possibly also in the Caribbean and the Pacific), a leaders meeting in Latin America, sub-regional meetings in Europe, team visits (possibly to the Middle East), national meetings (countries to be identified), the gathering and sharing of case studies, and applying the faith-sharing approach of the Forum to difficult issues on which opinions differ, taking into account the advances of many other conversations and dialogues between Christian traditions.

The three-year program will lead up to a Global Forum Meeting that will take place in 2011.

On Luther's Tracks to Rome by Bike and Bus

selk-news - "Good acoustics but unsuited for the proclamation of the Word," was Martin Luther's laconic comment when he saw the minster of Ulm in Germany in 1510. On his journey to Rome the reformer crossed the Alps and also saw Milan, Bologna, Florence und the Toscana. The experience made deep impressions on him.

500 years after Luther, two teams from the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELK) in Germany plan to re-experience the journey to Rome by bike and bus in 2010.

A group of fit church members is scheduled to start from Erfurt on 22 August to complete the nearly 1 500 kilometers to Rome by bicycle during the following three weeks. In daily stages between 60 and 100 kilometers the route leads

via Coburg and Memmingen to Lake Constance, and after crossing the Alps, in a southerly direction through Pavia, Florence and Siena. Only the crossing of the Alps on the historic Septimer pass is going to be made by foot, while the bicycles will be transported by other means.

A few days after the bicycle group, another travel group starts in a comfortable coach. In similar stages along the historic route walked by Martin Luther, this group will meet the bicyclers in Viterbo to experience the last stage to Rome together.

In Rome meetings with the German congregation, the Lutheran Church of Italy and even an audience in the Vatican are planned. The ecumenical aspect is very important for the organizers of the tour as part of the "Luther Decade."

LCC: 2007 Youth Gathering Bible Challenge

During the youth gathering of the Lutheran Church-Canada (LCC) in Ottawa in July 2007, Pastor Jim Schnarr challenged the youth and their leaders to read the Bible in a year. The first two who completed the Bible in one year or less were eligible to win a digital camera and all will receive a personalized plaque displaying the youth gathering logo indicating completion of the Bible challenge.

Eleven young people began the trek and five have so far crossed the "finish line."

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