

## International Lutheran Wittenberg Society Installs New Managing Director

In a festive worship service on 25 October 2009, leaders of the International Lutheran Society of Wittenberg (ILSW), a joint project of two ILC-member church bodies, bade Godspeed to the Rev. Dr. Wilhelm Torgerson, the society's founding director, upon his retirement and installed a new managing director, the Rev. David L. Mahsman.

The worship service was in the Castle Church, Wittenberg, Germany, where in 1517 Dr. Martin Luther posted his 95 theses that ignited the Reformation. An estimated more than 200 worshipers, many of them from congregations of the Independent Evangelical-Lutheran Church (SELK) who traveled some distance to attend, took part in the service. Representatives of Wittenberg's civic and church leadership also attended.

The ILSW was established by Germany's Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELK) and the U.S.-based Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (LCMS) to carry out ministry in the town most associated with Luther and the Reformation. The initial plans for the project included establishing a welcome center for visitors to Wittenberg, planting a German-language SELK congregation in the town, and providing educational opportunities for Lutheran pastors, students, and lay people. The ILSW owns a historic Wittenberg building, a boys gymnasium built in 1564, that was purchased with the intention of renovating it for use as a ministry center.

Mahsman's first task as managing director is to develop a specific plan for ministry in Wittenberg. The ILSW board has asked for his recommendations by the end of February 2010.

Torgerson, a SELK pastor, began his service in 2007, even before the society's formal establishment the following year. The gratitude of the ILSW for his service was expressed in the worship service by SELK Bishop Hans-Jörg Voigt, who served as the first chairman of the ILSW Supervisory Board.



Officiants after the Retirement and Installation Service

Photo: Torgerson

Later in the service, Mahsman, an LCMS pastor, was installed by the Rev. Dr. Samuel Nafzger, current chairman of the ILSW board, and Rev. Brent Smith, Eurasia regional director with LCMS World Mission. Nafzger is also executive secretary of the ILC.

In his sermon, Nafzger stressed the need for a clear testimony of the Gospel in a region that is the cradle of the Reformation, but where more than 80 percent of the residents today do not profess the Christian faith. In another address to the congregation, SELK Propst Gert Kelter, also a member of the ILSW board, said that the non-Christians represent a challenge to the church and to traditional methods of mission and evangelism.

## **Christmas, Epiphany, Ash Wednesday**

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



Dr. Gerald B. Kieschnick

In order to meet the publication deadline for this newsletter, this article was written on Christmas Eve, 24 December. The next day would be Christmas Day, 25 December, observed throughout the world as the birthday of the baby Jesus, God incarnate. What a marvelous miracle it is that God's great love for fallen mankind would move

Him to take on human flesh, be born a baby in Bethlehem's manger, live perfectly, and die selflessly, that the world might once again be reconciled to God!

Shortly after Christmas, the Church observes the Feast of Epiphany, 6 January, celebrating the arrival of the Magi in Bethlehem and the baptism of Jesus. Epiphany ends the twelve days of Christmas.

The name "Epiphany" comes from the Greek word *Epiphania*, and means "to show, make known, or reveal." The celebration originally began as a commemoration of the birth of Christ. Later, additional meanings were added - the visit of the three Magi, Christ's baptism in the Jordan River, and his first miracle at the wedding in Cana of Galilee.

Then, on a date that ranges from as early as 4 February to as late as 10 March, Ash Wednesday occurs. It is the first day of Lent and comes forty-six days (forty days not counting Sundays) before Easter. It is a moveable feast, falling on a different date each year because it is dependent on the date of Easter. Wikipedia says this about this important day in the Church Year:

"Ash Wednesday gets its name from the practice of placing ashes on the foreheads of the faithful as a sign of repentance. The ashes used are gathered after the Palm Crosses from the previous year's Palm Sunday are burned ... [and] used by the minister who presides at the service to make the sign of the cross, first upon his or her own forehead and then on those of congregants. The minister recites the words: 'Remember (O man) that you are

dust, and to dust you shall return,' or 'Repent, and believe the Gospel.'"

We observe that all three of these important church festivals center around and focus upon Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. What a privilege and responsibility we have as Lutheran Christians around the world to proclaim the wonders of God's love in Christ! This proclamation happens in many different languages, with celebrations unique to our respective country's traditions, with specific challenges that stretch our comfort level in many ways, in the face of economic realities that demand implementation of efficient stewardship principles and practices.

In the midst of all we are, say, and do, there is the Christ child - born, baptized, betrayed, crucified, risen, and reigning! May Christ bless each of you richly, that the peace of God that passes all understanding will keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord!

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## **LWF Council Elects Chilean Pastor Martin Junge as New General Secretary**

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First Latin American to Head the LWF

LWI - On 26 October 2009, Chilean pastor Martin Junge was elected as the eighth General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) for a seven-year term.

The Council held its 22 to 27 October 2009 meeting at Chavannes-de-Bogis, near Geneva, Switzerland.

With this election, Junge becomes the first representative from the Latin America and Caribbean region to hold the highest position at the LWF Secretariat.

The LWF Council elected the 48 year-old theologian to succeed Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko who, upon election in June 1994, became the first African to hold the chief executive post in the LWF. An ordained pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe, Noko's position was affirmed in 1997, and he was re-elected for a second seven-year term in 2004. He

announced at the June 2008 Council meeting in Arusha, Tanzania, that he would be leaving office on 31 October 2010.



LWF General Secretary-Elect Rev. Martin Junge

Photo: LWI

Since September 2000, Junge has been the area secretary for Latin America and the Caribbean at the LWF Department for Mission and Development (DMD). His key achievements as DMD area secretary include the strengthening and refocusing of the LWF's programmatic work in the region, and the implementation and structuring of the advocacy program launched by Latin American LWF member churches to deal with the problem of illegitimate foreign debt in the region.

Since 2008 Junge has been pursuing a diploma in the management of not-for-profit organizations at the "Verbandsmanagement Institut" (VMI) of the University of Freiburg in Switzerland.

From 1996 to 2000, Junge was President of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile (IELC). Following his 1989 ordination as an IELC pastor, Junge served in two congregations in Santiago de Chile from 1989 to 2000. He studied Protestant theology between 1980 and 1986 at the Georg August University in Göttingen, Germany.

General secretary-elect Junge is married, with two children.

The LWF General Secretary conducts the business of the Federation in collaboration with the Cabinet, which is made up of the directors of departments and units appointed by the Council.

The position holder is responsible for the implementation of the Council and Assembly decisions.

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## LCHKS Celebrates 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

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Asia Ablaze Newsletter - The Lutheran Church - Hong Kong Synod (LCHKS) celebrated last year's Reformation Day in an extraordinary way, as it commemorated the church body's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary at a special celebration worship service on 31 October. The anniversary celebration included a number of addresses from former and present leaders in the LCHKS

and a variety of musical choir performances from LCHKS churches and schools.

Lutheran Church Missouri Synod - World Mission Regional Director Rev. John Mehl delivered a congratulatory address to the gathering on behalf of the LCMS.

In 1949, LCMS missionaries set up a mission in Hong Kong to serve the local people, many of whom were refugees from mainland China. God blessed this small mission and it has developed into the now thriving LCHKS, which consists of 37 congregations and 8 700 members.



Rev. John Mehl (LCMS World Mission Asia Regional Director) and Rev. Allan Yung (LCHKS President) at the recent celebrations for the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the LCHKS

Photo: Asia Ablaze! Newsletter

New pastors are trained at the LCHKS's own Concordia Seminary in Hong Kong.

The church body has developed a strong outreach to the local community through its many kindergartens, primary and secondary schools. The LCHKS also reaches out to the community through its Hong Kong Lutheran Social Services, which provides many services, including counseling, substance abuse rehabilitation, elderly care, youth centers, foster care, day care, and family life education.

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## Liberians Unite to Form New Church Body

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LCMS-Reporter - After 14 years of war, it has taken four Lutheran church bodies in Liberia, West Africa, just two years to come together and form the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Liberia (ELCL).

"At the meeting two years ago when they promised each other that they would try to overcome their differences, one of their themes was our Synod's vision statement - 'One Mission, One Message, One People of God,'" said Dr. Daniel Mattson, associate executive director of Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod

World Mission, USA. "Clearly, God guided them in achieving that goal so that they can proclaim the reconciling power of the Gospel in powerful ways after all the chaos and killing. Even the current Liberian president, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, has noted the importance of this development."

The new church body of some 350 congregations was formed earlier this year when the separate Liberian Lutheran church bodies merged. Leaders of the four churches, the Evangelical Lutheran Church - Liberia Synod, the Universal House of Prayer Evangelical Lutheran Church of Liberia, the Evangel Temple Lutheran Church, and Christ Assembly Lutheran Church, signed a "memorandum of unification" during a five-hour service on 14 May 2009 in Monrovia.

"The peaceful merger has been held up as an example to the nation, which is still recovering after the Liberia civil war," said Dr. Michael Rodewald, regional director for Africa with LCMS World Mission.

During the unification service, Rev. Amos Bolay, former president of the Universal House of Prayer Evangelical Lutheran Church of Liberia, was installed as interim president of the new church body, along with interim members of the new church council and executive committee. The interim leaders are charged with fine-tuning the new church's constitution and programs. In two years, elections will be held.

Major goals of the ELCL include establishing a seminary with both pastoral and deaconess programs, and applying for membership in the International Lutheran Council.

In the years before the merger, each of the church bodies had started congregations and schools throughout the country, so the new ELCL "now has congregations, Lutheran schools, pastors ... and church leaders in almost all of the 16 language/cultural groups and major regions of Liberia," notes Dr. David Erber, area facilitator for English speaking West Africa with LCMS World Mission. "The church is in a tremendous position to share the message of Jesus Christ to the entire nation."

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## **SELK Prepares for 2<sup>nd</sup> Ecumenical Church Day in Munich**

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selk news - From 12 to 16 May 2010 the second Ecumenical Church Day (ECD) takes place in Munich, Germany. More than 100 000 Visitors from all over Germany are expected to attend the more than 3 000 events. For the

Evening of Coming Together more than 300 000 guests are awaited.

"So That You May Have Hope - Being a Christian in the Society - Being a Christian for the Society" is the theme of the ECD.

In forty so called "Centers" the theme is going to be developed methodically as well as in substance.

Many VIP's from politics, church and business are expected to show up.

The Independent Ev. Luth. Church in Germany (SELK) is represented by one of its pastors on the "Center for Social Work and Social Network," which emphasizes the responsibility of Christians in the world, in the circle of friends, and in the family.

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## **LCV Elects New Administrative Council**

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From 20 to 22 November 2009, the 49<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly of the Lutheran Church of Venezuela convened at El Salvador Lutheran Church in Caracas.



Signing documents at the LCV convention

Rev. Luis Coronado of Fuente de Vida Lutheran Church in Porto Ordaz, Bolivar State, was elected President and Rev. Sergio Mait from the Juan de Frias Institute in Caracas, Capital District, Vice-President.

Also elected were the office bearers of the Ministries of Public Worship, Christian Education, Evangelism, World Missions, and Social Work.

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## **2009 Ablaze! Award Recipients Honored**

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LCMS World Mission - Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod World Mission, USA was pleased to announce the winners of the 2009 *Ablaze!* awards at the Mission Partners' Conference in Tampa Bay, Florida on 18

November 2009. Executive Director Rev. Dr. Thomas Zehnder announced the winners and presented them each with their awards.

The 2009 Executive Director's *Ablaze!* Award recipient is Rev. Jim Keurulainen and the New England District. This award is given annually to a district president who exemplifies a heart for sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with unreached and uncommitted people through active involvement in the *Ablaze!* movement.

President Keurulainen and his staff, congregations, schools, and members work tirelessly in a region of the country which statistically ranks as one of the most "unchurched" areas in the United States. Under Keurulainen's leadership, the New England District has set courageous goals to involve 50 percent of their congregations in the revitalization process and 60 to 75 percent of pastors in local learning communities. The district is intentionally working to assist its congregations in becoming active mission outposts of the Gospel.

The 2009 LCMS World Mission *Ablaze!* Vision Award recipient is Rev. Dr. Robert Scudieri, while the recipient of the 2009 LCMS World Mission *Ablaze!* Partners Award is the Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML).

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## LCK President Um Re-elected

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On 8 and 9 October 2009, the Lutheran Church of Korea (LCK) held its 39<sup>th</sup> Regular General Assembly.

The General Assembly re-elected both Church President Dr. Hyun-Sub Um and Church Vice President Rev. Hyun-Gil Lang.

President Um's re-election is the first time the LCK has re-elected a president to a second term since it enacted a two-term limit following the retirement of its first president, Rev. Wan Sang Ji, who served from 1971-1993. Since that time, three other pastors have each served one four-year term. President Um was elected to his first term in October, 2005, and his re-election will allow him to serve for another 4 years, until October, 2013.

The main issues at LCK's General Assembly were the reports about the construction of the new Luther Building; the commemorative event on occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup>

anniversary of Lutheran Mission in Korea in October 2008; the Conference of the International Lutheran Council in August 2009; and mission cooperation with Lutheran Churches in the U.S., Japan, and Germany.

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## FELSISA President Retires

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President emeritus  
Rev. Peter Ahlers  
Photo: J. Haessig

After reaching the official retirement age of his church, Rev. Peter Ahlers retired from the presidency of the Free Evangelical Lutheran Synod in South Africa (FELSISA) on 31 December 2009.

Besides serving in the pastoral office for 35 years, Ahlers can look back on 27 years of work on the Synodical Council, out of which he represented the FELSISA for fifteen years as its president.

From January this year Vice president Dr. D. Reinstorf is FELSISA's acting president until the Synodical Convention will elect a new president in May 2010.

Ahlers will continue serving the Wittenberg Congregation as its pastor. He will also continue as the editor of ILC News, which is published four times each year.

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## Mayan Concludes Service as Mission Executive

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LCC-Info - With the installation of Dr. Leonardo Neitzel as the new Lutheran Church-Canada (LCC) mission executive, former LCC President and Chairman of the International Lutheran Council (ILC), Dr. Ralph Mayan concluded his work in that post on 30 September 2009. Mayan took on the mission portfolio along with presidential duties



Dr. Ralph E. Mayan  
Photo: Hoeller

after Dr. Leonard Harms retired in 2006. When Mayan left the Synod presidency, he was appointed for a year to serve as interim mission

executive until a replacement could be found. Now after retiring - again - Dr. Mayan will serve as a "volunteer missionary" to assist the new Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua to grow stronger as a self-governing church.

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## IELB-President Accepts Teaching Position

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Dr. Paulo M. Nerbas  
Photo: J. Haessig

The Rev. Dr. Paulo Moisés Nerbas, president of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil (IELB), recently accepted the position as Professor for Systematics at the pastors training institute of the IELB, the Seminário Concórdia in Sao Leopoldo. He will remain IELB president until the next convention in April 2010.

When leaving the presidency, Nerbas will also have to give up his position on the Executive Council of the International Lutheran Council, which will then be filled by the new IELB president.

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## LCSA Elects New Bishop

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LCSA Bishop-elect  
Dr. W. Weber  
Photo: W. Weber

Convening in Klerksdorp from 30 November to 2 December 2009, one of the major decisions for the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (LCSA) was to elect a successor to Bishop Dr. David Tswaedi, who did not make himself available for another term of office.

On the second ballot, Rev. Dr. Wilhelm Weber, rector of the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Tshwane (LTST), received a clear majority of the votes and was elected the third Bishop in the history of the LCSA.

"We were all taken by surprise that an all-Black voting delegation of 71 persons could settle for a non-Black candidate," outgoing bishop Tswaedi commented the result. "But quickly our surprise was removed by the realization of two aspects: 1. In Christ Jesus there is no Tswana, Zulu or German, we are all

baptized and forgiven children of the heavenly Father. 2. It reminded us again of the same grace of God that still over-shadows our country, that we South Africans are indeed on the road to becoming that wonderful Rainbow Nation that we have been talking about since 1994!"

Weber studied Lutheran Theology in Pretoria, South Africa and in Oberursel and Erlangen, Germany. After serving the Wittenberg congregation of the Free Evangelical Lutheran Synod in South Africa (FELSISA) from 1992 to 2000, and earning his doctorate at the University of South Africa in 2003, he accepted a teaching position at the LTST in Pretoria, whose rector he became in 2004.

The 48 year old theologian is married to Angelika Scharlach. The couple has four children.

The installation of Bishop-elect Weber will take place on 21 March 2010 in the Mofolo North congregation in Johannesburg.

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## Former IELC President Dies

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LCMS Reporter - Rev. John Sundaram, who was president of the India Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELC) from 1980 to 1985, died on 5 September 2009 of a heart attack. He was 69.

At the time of his death, Rev. Sundaram was coordinator of Lutheran Heritage Foundation (LHF) projects in India. He also served as the IELC's mission director from 1989 until 2004.

Under Rev. Sundaram's guidance, five books were translated and published into the Tamil language for LHF: *Luther's Small Catechism*, the *Standard Bible for Children*, *History of the Reformation*, the *Lutheran Agenda*, and most recently a reader's edition of the *Book of Concord*. He also oversaw translation of the catechism into four other Indian languages.

A news release from LHF reported that the two people Rev. Sundaram had planned to baptize, were baptized at the side of his coffin on the day of the funeral.



Rev. John Sundaram  
Photo: LCMS Reporter



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## LCP Holds National Pastors Conference

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LCP President  
James D. Cerdenola  
Photo: J. Haessig

Asisa Ablaze Newsletter - The Lutheran Church in the Philippines (LCP) held its first national Pastors Conference from 7 to 12 December 2009 at Christ Our Savior Lutheran Church in Matina, Davao City, Mindanao.

Twenty-four ordained ministers participated. Reports from pastors and district presidents were encouraging as there

has been an increase in the number of baptisms and confirmations.

There are also 40 new *Ablaze!* mission stations, which leaders hope will become official congregations in two to three years. At these new mission stations, much of the work is being accomplished through the participation and work of lay people.

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## New French Hymnal

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LCC-Info - The French-language hymnal *Liturgies et cantiques luthériens* went to press the week of last year's Reformation Day. This Lutheran Church-Canada project has spread excitement around the French-speaking Lutheran churches worldwide. The most recent hymnal was printed in 1975 and is no longer available and any existing copies are well-worn.

No other French-language hymnal has been so comprehensive and reflective of Lutheran practice and doctrine. *Liturgies et cantiques luthériens* has 864 pages and includes 434 hymns, three settings of the Divine Service, Matins, Vespers, and Compline, Holy Baptism, Marriage, and Funeral services among many other liturgical resources. Slightly more than half the hymns have parallels with the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod's Lutheran Service Book (LSB) and one of the settings of the Divine Service is a translation of Setting 4 in LSB.

"In real and important ways this volume restores and edifies and strengthens and establishes evangelical Lutheran practice and teaching in francophone churches as never before," says Rev. David Somers, who along with Rev. David Saar have created this new resource. "Never before has such a complete service book and hymnal been available in

French for members of any church body, Roman Catholic or Protestant."

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## Luther Speaks Chinese

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Asia Ablaze Newsletter - Professor Lei Yutian, Director of World History Research Office and Director of China Luther Study Center at Guangzhou University, is one of the co-editors for the Chinese Edition of Luther's Works (CELW) project. He is working with two volume editors, Rev. Dr. William Liao, Professor of Church History and Systematic Theology at China Evangelical Seminary, in Taipei, Taiwan, and Rev. Dr. Stephen Ip, Professor of Systematic Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary, Hong Kong, on the project.

When the three met recently, Lei encouraged them by stating that, "ten years on, Luther is closer to speaking Chinese than ever before."

On 28 November 2009 these three men met in Shenzhen with Edward Strohschein, Financial Officer for the project, and Rev. Carl Hanson to work on translation issues related to the project and to discuss timetables for the coming three volumes (3, 4, and 5) of CELW.

Volumes 1 and 2 were published in 2005 after six years of intense work. Volumes 3, 4, and 5 are scheduled to be published by 2011. This work involves translators from both Chinese scholars in China as well as those who live outside of China.

Dr. Lei noted that during the past four years there has been an ever growing interest in studying Luther among the academic world in China. Coupled with the rise of China and its influence in the world today, Luther's transformational thinking is poised to make a critical impact at yet another formational moment in history.

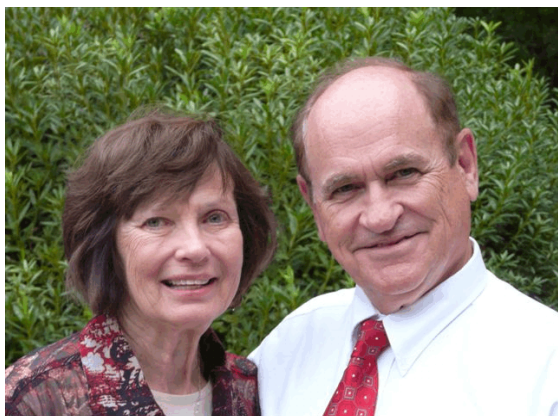
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## Gala Honors Ludwigs

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Grace Place Lutheran Retreats honored Dr. David and Kathy Ludwig of Hickory, North Carolina, USA, for the couple's "passionate concern and active and energizing commitment to the health and wholeness of Lutheran church workers and their families."

Grace Place Executive Director Dr. John Eckrich presented the Ludwigs with the organization's Charis Award, noting that the couple has served church workers throughout the world and in almost every LCMS district. (Charis is the Greek word for "grace.") David Ludwig is Grace Place associate director of retreat programs, and the couple has led retreats



Kathy and Dr. David Ludwig

Photo: J. Haessig

throughout the world with the St. Louis-based ministry.

David Ludwig also serves as associate pastor at Christ Lutheran Church and is professor emeritus at Lenoir-Rhyne University, both in Hickory, North Carolina. Kathy is a retired teacher and active volunteer in her church and community.

The Ludwigs have introduced their program to the conference participants of the International Lutheran Council (ILC) 2003 in Foz do Iquaçu, Brazil and 2009 in Seoul, South Korea.

Eckrich, a longtime internal medicine physician, founded Grace Place in 1999 after years of treating church workers and their families and recognizing how ministry challenges lead to health problems and professional burnout.

More than 2 500 Lutheran pastors, teachers, seminarians, and spouses have participated in Grace Place retreats to recharge spiritually and physically and learn biblically based personal and professional growth tools.

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## Rev. Juan Beckmann: A Word of Thanks

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In October 2003 the Rev. Juan Beckmann, a pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Argentina, was asked by the members of the Latin American World Area of the International Lutheran Council if he would translate the **ILC NEWS** into Spanish. Only one week later Pastor Beckmann had submitted his translation of the August 2003 issue of the **ILC NEWS** for posting on the ILC website ([www.ilc-online.org](http://www.ilc-online.org)).

Accompanying this translation was the following note to the Executive Secretary of the ILC:

In the regional ILC meeting in Olmué, Chile, the chapter asked me

to translate the **ILC NEWS** into Spanish. This I have done. I am sending one copy of this translation to you and one to Rev. Peter Ahlers, the editor. As soon as the new **ILC NEWS** will appear on the Internet, I shall translate it into Spanish for the Spanish speaking members of the ILC.

Pastor Beckmann has kept this promise for six years. Almost immediately following the posting of the English version of **ILC NEWS** on the Internet, Beckmann's Spanish translation of **ILC NEWS** called **Noticias de CLI (ILC)**, shows up in my office in St. Louis, and it is immediately posted on the ILC website.

¡Muchas Gracias, Pastor Beckmann! Thousands of Spanish speaking readers all around the world are able to read **ILC NEWS** in their own language because of you. I know that they join me in expressing their gratitude to you and in thanking God for this "labor of love" which you have done and continue to do so well and so faithfully.

Samuel H. Nafzger  
ILC Executive Secretary

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**Correction:** In the second last paragraph of the article about the ILC-Conference in Seoul on page two of the October 2009 edition of the ILC NEWS it was said that the next conference of the ILC will be hosted by the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod in 2012. This is not correct as the Executive Committee of the ILC decided that it would accept an invitation to hold its next conference in 2012 in the North America World area, but it did not decide which of the four churches would be the host. A decision regarding this will be made on the next meeting of the Executive Committee in October 2010.

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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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ILC News is also available via the internet from the Council's web site <http://www.ilc-online.org>.

Published at Wittenberg, South Africa. Future publications dates: 1 May, 1 August, and 1 November 2010. Articles to be received at least four weeks prior to publication dates.