



# ILC NEWS

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## ILC - LWF Meeting Seeks Warmer Relations

At their recent meeting on 25 and 26 February 2008 in Johannesburg, South Africa, representatives from the International Lutheran Council (ILC) and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) held extensive discussions on a number of theological topics.

These meetings, as proposed by the "Memorandum of Understanding" approved by both organizations in March 2005, are held on an annual basis, with a view to increased mutual understanding between the two Lutheran world bodies and their member churches.

The meeting in Johannesburg was co-chaired by Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko (General Secretary, LWF) and Rev. Dr. Samuel H. Nafzger (Executive Secretary, ILC). Other participants from the LWF were Rev. Dr. Risto Cantell (Finland), Bishop Susan C. Johnson (Canada), Rev. Donald McCoid (USA), Bishop Dr. Ambrose Moyo (South Africa), Bishop Dr. Joe M. Ramashapa (South Africa), Dean Annah Nguvauva (Botswana), and Dr. Kathryn Johnson (Switzerland). Other participants from the ILC were Most Rev. Effiong E. Ekanem (Nigeria) and Bishop Dr. David P. Tswaedi (South Africa).

Reports were presented on current developments pertaining to the life and the relations of the two organizations and their member churches.

Dr. Nafzger presented a report on the ILC, which began by tracing its development from the International Lutheran Theological Conference of the 1950's. He described the decisions at the biennial conference in Accra in September 2007 to reaffirm the identity of the ILC as a "worldwide association of confessional Lutheran church bodies" who pledge to treat one another with mutual respect and consideration. Membership in the ILC does not require church fellowship among its members, but it seeks to "foster, strengthen, and preserve confessional agreement which manifests itself at the altar and in the pulpit." The conference also clarified the meaning of "established church." The question

of its members' holding membership in the LWF is a matter left to the consciences and circumstances of member churches. In Accra the ILC also adopted a three-year cycle of international, regional, and seminary conferences, with the most recent conference of seminaries from ILC churches held in Pretoria in March 2007. Its next international conference will be held in Korea in 2009.

Dr. Noko's report described the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the LWF, which recognized the deepened communion among member churches. He provided two documents from the March 2007 Council meeting at Lund: "Episcopal Ministry within the Apostolicity of the Church," which was adopted, and "Marriage, Family and Sexuality," whose guidelines were "received." He clarified that "reception" of a document did not require full agreement with all its paragraphs; it is forwarded to the churches as a resource.

Noko called attention to the 2008 LWF Council meeting in Arusha, Tanzania and also mentioned the significance of the 11<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the LWF to be held in July 2010 in Stuttgart, Germany, including the churches' presence in the place where the Reformation effectively began. 'Give Us Today Our Daily Bread' is the theme of the Assembly, to be hosted by the Evangelical Church in Wuerttemberg.

This Assembly will involve new levels of ecumenical participation and will act on recommendations for the renewal of the LWF structure. Dr. Noko also provided an update on the range of ecumenical relationships in which the LWF participates.

There was substantial discussion on plans to observe the 500<sup>th</sup> reformation anniversary of 1517. The LWF is concerned that this date be commemorated for its importance for the whole church and has initiated discussion with Roman Catholic and other ecumenical partners. While the ILC has not yet had this formally on its agenda, its churches will also be celebrating the anniversary. All Lutherans share in a desire to make this occasion one which bears witness to the renewing power of the Gospel.

Among the topics discussed were the goal and hopes of relations with other Christian

bodies, the differing meanings of “membership” in the two organizations, the significance of baptism and the relation of ecclesial bodies to the one body of Christ.

There were reports from regions, with special attention to Africa where the meeting was held.

A number of local situations in which tensions have occurred were discussed as well as several positive developments mentioned.

The possibility of ILC participation with the LWF in bilateral dialogues was also discussed.

The “Memorandum of Understanding” was reviewed. No changes were made, but there was

discussion of the possibility of future documents to express agreements about practice.

The Philippines were identified as a desirable site for the 2009 meeting. The value for these meetings of contact with local leaders and their churches was agreed.

The ILC has more than 30 member churches bringing together more than 3 million people. The LWF’s 140 member churches in 78 countries represent 68.3 million of the world’s 71.8 million Lutherans. Eleven LWF member churches also belong to the ILC. Together the membership in the two organizations represent most of the world’s Lutherans.



Participants of the LWF - ILC Meeting in Johannesburg

## **“What It’s All About!”**

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

*“Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” (John 20:30-31)*

These words from your International Lutheran Council Chairman are written the weekend of the Festival of the Resurrection of our Lord. Like you, my family and I are attending and participating in numerous worship services, including Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil, and Easter Sunday Festival of the Resurrection. Each service provides opportunity for spiritual reflection, self-examination, and renewal of devotion to our Lord and Savior.

The scripture passages being read in these services of worship take the listener on a journey through the end of the passion story, the betrayal, the Last Supper, the crucifixion, the burial, and the empty tomb. Post-Easter scripture lessons also include Jesus’ appearing to the disciples “the evening of the first day of the week,” His walk with and sudden disappearance from the disciples on the road to Emmaus, His powerful conversation with Thomas, etc.

One passage that has always meant a great deal to me is John 20:30-31, quoted above. Near the end of his written recollection of the life and times of Jesus, the apostle John ties it all together with an assurance to the reader that his account of the life and times of Jesus is not exhaustive. In fact, says John, “Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book...”

One can only imagine that the signs referenced by John include more miracles of many kinds, perhaps similar to or even quite different from the ones described by John in his Holy Spirit-inspired gospel.

And then John writes words that have always intrigued me. After his rather detailed account in twenty chapters of his gospel, John clearly articulates the purpose for which his gospel had been written: "... *but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God ...*" For John and for us, that's the bottom line. His focus and ours in telling the good news about Jesus is to plant the seed of God's Word in the lives and hearts of people, that they may believe in Christ.

And what's the purpose for our focus on people believing that Jesus is the Christ? John says it clearly and succinctly: "... *and that by believing you may have life in his name.*" Now, that's really the bottom line! John says what we all know. Jesus came that we might have life, in all its fullness. That fullness of life is intended to be lived both while we're still here on earth, on this side of heaven, and also in the eternal life that awaits us and all believers in Christ, as some day we cross the threshold from earthly life through the portal of death.

So, my dear friends in Christ, be encouraged by your tireless labors on behalf of the Gospel. For we have been called to be ambassadors of the message of Christ and God's love for the world, made real in the death and resurrection of our Lord. Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!




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## **Membership of Lutheran Churches Increases to 71.8 Million**

### **An Additional Two Million Members in Africa's Lutheran Churches**

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LWI - Africa's Lutheran churches saw their total membership increase over the past year by just under two million, boosting the total membership of the Lutheran churches worldwide to over 71.8 million. Lutheran churches in Asia registered an increase overall, while slight decreases were again recorded in other world regions.

According to the latest LWF statistics, membership in the organization's 140 churches,

10 recognized congregations, and one recognized council in 78 countries worldwide rose by a total of 1 640 700, to reach 68 322 299, an increase of 2.5 percent over the previous year. In 2006, LWF member churches had some 66.7 million members worldwide.

Over the past year, the total membership of all Lutheran churches worldwide rose by 1 623 024 to approximately 71.8 million (71 823 423), an increase of 2.3 percent. In 2006, all Lutheran churches worldwide counted some 70.2 million members, up from 69.8 million in 2005. The number of Lutherans in non-LWF member churches fell by 17 676, or 0.5 percent, to reach 3 501 124.

Over the past year, LWF church membership in Africa rose by 1 926 407 or 12.7 percent to reach a total of 17 129 230. The membership of non-LWF Lutheran churches in Africa remained unchanged at 56 069.

With an increase of 368 861 members, or 8.2 percent, to 4 869 157, the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus now becomes the second largest Lutheran church worldwide. The Church of Sweden remains the world's biggest Lutheran church with 6.9 million members.

Among African churches, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, the continent's second largest Lutheran church, recorded the highest membership increase, 32.4 percent, with an additional 1 132 480 new members to reach a total of 4 632 480, making it the fourth largest Lutheran church in the world.

The total number of Lutherans in Asia rose 101 439 in 2007, an increase of 1.22 percent. Membership in Asia's largest Lutheran church, the Protestant Christian Batak Church (Indonesia) remained steady at 3.75 million.

Over the past year, the total membership of Lutheran churches in Europe fell again by 292 117, or 0.78 percent, to reach 37 177 468.

Membership in the world's largest Lutheran church, the Church of Sweden, remained nearly unchanged over the course of 2007, with a slight drop of 0.03 percent to reach 6 893 901. The fifth largest LWF member church worldwide, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, saw its membership drop by 22 983, or 0.5 percent, to 4 533 629.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria in Russia recorded a 25 percent membership increase or 3 000 new members to reach 15 000, while the Lutheran Church in Great Britain grew by 18.6 percent (440 members) to 2 810. The Evangelical Lutheran Church - Synod of France and Belgium, a non-LWF church, recorded the highest percentage increase in Europe by a two-thirds' rise (400 members) to 1 000. The Protestant Church of the Augsburg

Confession of Alsace and Lorraine (France) increased by 10 000 members, or 4.8 percent, to 220 000.

In 2007 the total number of Lutheran Christians in Germany was 12 627 746, reflecting a decrease of 105 245, or 0.83 percent.

Germany continues to be the country with the highest number of Lutheran Christians in the world. Lutheran churches there had 12.7 million members in 2006 and 12.9 million members in 2005.

The total membership in Lutheran churches in Latin America and the Caribbean fell last year by 14 053, or 1.26 percent to reach 1 104 194.

While most Lutheran churches in Latin America and the Caribbean reported little change in their membership statistics, the region's largest Lutheran church, the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil, registered a 2.3 percent decrease or 16 756 members to reach 703 000. Declining membership was also reported by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia and the Argentina-based Evangelical Church of the River Plate. The non-LWF Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil reported 230 215 members last year, a rise of 5 692, or 2.5 percent.

Total membership in North American Lutheran churches fell by 98 652 or 1.23 percent in 2007. Of a total 7 940 686 Lutherans, 4 958 203 belonged to LWF member churches.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the LWF's third largest member church, recorded 4 774 203 members in 2007, a decrease of 76 573, or 1.6 percent.

Decreases were also recorded in non-LWF churches, the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (USA and Canada), with 2 417 997 members, for a loss of 22 867 or 0.9 percent, and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, down by 1.2 percent, to 396 000.

Membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada remained relatively stable in 2007, falling by a mere 0.03 percent to count 174 500.

The LWF membership statistics are based on information received from the LWF member churches, recognized congregations and council, as well as from other Lutheran churches, organizations, mission bodies and congregations.

A one-page summary of the 2007 LWF membership figures is posted in PDF version on the LWF Web site under: [www.lutheranworld.org/LWF\\_Documents/LWF-Statistics-01-2007.pdf](http://www.lutheranworld.org/LWF_Documents/LWF-Statistics-01-2007.pdf). Full details can be found under: [www.lutheranworld.org/LWF\\_Documents/LWF-Statistics-2007.pdf](http://www.lutheranworld.org/LWF_Documents/LWF-Statistics-2007.pdf).



## **LCC Helps Launch New Nicaraguan Church**

LCC-Info Digest - With help from Lutheran Church - Canada (LCC), worldwide Lutheranism added a new church body on 11 January 2008. In Chinandega, Nicaragua, a city northwest of Managua, representatives of 23 Lutheran congregations voted to form Iglesia Luterana Sinodo de Nicaragua.

The congregations in the area are the result of a pastor from Winnipeg-based Lutheran Church-Canada proclaiming the Gospel and helping meet physical needs for more than ten years. Rev. Sandor Arguello, a refugee to Canada during the Nicaraguan civil war, received his theological training at LCC's Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary on the campus of Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario. Two years after graduation, he accepted the assignment to Nicaragua and moved to Chinandega with his wife and three children.

The Canadian Lutheran church had received an invitation to begin working in the area. Eighteen months later, in October 1998, Arguello found himself heavily involved with disaster relief following a mudslide resulting from Hurricane Mitch. More than 3000 persons died and thousands were left homeless. The pastor rallied support from Canada and the US, both providing immediate and long-term relief.

In the years since, the church has grown to more than 6000 members in 23 congregations and provides a school program for some 700 children and operates two sewing schools.

With teachers from Canada, the Nicaraguan church has trained 16 pastors and 30 deaconesses who serve the communities where the churches are located.

Following the formation of the church, the 81 delegates elected Pastor Luis Antonio Díaz Turcio the church body's first president. Pastor Luis, 47 years old, is a native of Chinandega and has served Emmanuel congregation since 2002, the year of his ordination. Before becoming a pastor, Luis studied communications at university and worked with drug addicts as a probation officer.

The convention formalized its relationship with Lutheran Church-Canada, heard greetings from the Canadian church, other Central American confessional Lutheran church bodies as well as agencies which have played an important part in the development of the Nicaragua mission. These include the Canadian Concordia Lutheran Mission Society, Lutheran Women's Missionary League-Canada, Lutheran Laymen's League, the Schwan Foundation and Orphan Grain Train.

"These years in Nicaragua have been a tremendous blessing to our church," commented LCC president, Rev. Dr. Ralph Mayan, who was in Nicaragua for the event. "We have seen God at work in ways we never imagined and His Spirit has moved the members of our LCC congregations to be involved in His mission here in practical ways."

More than 400 members of Iglesia Luterana Sinodo de Nicaragua congregations filled a theatre Sunday morning for a celebration worship service, concluding the founding convention. LCC president Mayan preached the sermon with the convention theme "Unidos en Cristo" - United in Christ. Missionary Sandor Arguello led the service and installed the president and members of the administrative council.

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## **I n t e r n a t i o n a l Lutheran Foundation Wittenberg Established**

**Important Step for LCMS and SELK with  
Wittenberg Project**

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Church representatives from the USA and Germany met on 17 March 2008 in the former university "Leucorea" in the Lutherstadt Wittenberg, Germany to proceed with the required legal registration of the newly established International Lutheran Foundation Wittenberg, which has been set up as a charitable organization according to German law. The foundation is supported by the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (LCMS) from the USA and its German sister church, the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELK) of Germany.

In connection with the meeting, the former SELK provost Rev. Wilhelm Torgerson was officially appointed as the project director of the Lutheran church center in Wittenberg, which is situated in a historic building next to the famous St. Mary's church where Luther preached.

The former school will include a chapel, guest accommodations, a bookstore and a modest diakonic office.

The center was purchased with funds provided by the Central Illinois District of the LCMS and given as a gift to LCMS World Relief and Human Care. Its running is financed from the USA by Concordia Publishing House and LCMS World Mission.

The three LCMS lead partners have established two primary goals for the use of the property. It will house a much-needed mission start in the city that was in Luther's day the heart of Lutheranism, and it will serve as a magnet to

gather and strengthen the Lutheran community worldwide.

The property will have multiple uses and has been welcomed by the mayor of the city of Wittenberg as "both daring and necessary."

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## **Australian Lutherans Support Government Apology to Aboriginal People**

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Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) president Rev. Dr. Michael P. Semmler has welcomed Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's recent apology for historic policies that inflicted profound suffering on Australia's Aboriginal people. "As a church, we hope the Government apology will promote a process to improve the well-being of our Aboriginal sisters and brothers," Semmler said in a statement titled "Reconciliation and the Lutheran Church of Australia."

Addressing parliament on 13 February, Rudd apologized for past policies of assimilation under which Aboriginal children were taken from their families to be raised in white households (known as "the stolen generation").

Semmler's statement affirmed Christian understanding of reconciliation and the LCA's continued commitment to involving the Aboriginal people "equitably in planning to meet their distinctive needs, many of which are largely unmet."

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## **Roman Catholic Church and SELK to Hold Talks**

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selk news - Representatives of the Roman Catholic Church and the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELK) in Germany have prepared bilateral theological consultations in preparatory talks in May and October 2007. Between the Council For Unity of the Vatican, represented by Monsignor Dr. Matthias Türk (Rome) and the SELK, represented by its bishop Hans Jörg Voigt (Hanover), professor Dr. Werner Klän (Oberursel) and provost Gert Kelter (Görlitz), it was agreed to begin scientific-theological talks from the middle of 2008. The Johann-Adam Möhler Institut, Paderborn, will take part in the talks from the Roman Catholic side while the Lutheran Theological Seminary, Oberursel, will represent the SELK. Each institution will send three participants.

Aim of the talks is to identify existing common ground, but also to discuss basic difficulties in order to prepare further dialogs and processes of reception. The first phase of talks is scheduled for three years.

A liturgical-theological proceeding was envisaged for the talks, based on the celebration of the Divine Service as realization of the salvation in Word and Sacraments as the means of grace and as fountain and expression of theological teaching.

Proposed topics are ethical and hermeneutic questions, "law and gospel" and the theological interpretation of the reformation as an inner-catholic reform movement.

In connection with the second preparatory talk, Monsignor Türk conveyed an invitation from cardinal Kaspers to bishop Voigt to visit Rome.

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## **LCC Leaders in Australia**

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LCC-Info Digest - Lutheran Church-Canada's Council of Presidents (COP) has held a two-week series of meetings with its counterparts in the Lutheran Church of Australia. This is the first such meeting in the history of the two churches. The Australian and Canadian churches face similar challenges and the joint meeting created the opportunity to share ideas and solutions. It also marks a follow-up to the "Relationship Agreement" signed between the two church bodies in 1993.

The meeting in Adelaide replaced a similar meeting the Canadians usually hold with the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod Council of Presidents. The COP comprises LCC's president and three vice-presidents and three district presidents.

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## **AALC, LCMS Meeting Continues Work on Operating Agreements**

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LCMSNews - No. 16 - Representatives of The American Association of Lutheran Churches (AALC) and The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (LCMS) met from 31 January to 1 February this year in Burnsville, Minnesota, USA, to continue developing formal operating agreements between the two church bodies that declared altar and pulpit fellowship with each other last year.

Discussion centered on developing a formal operating agreement to govern movement of pastors between the two church bodies.

According to a joint press release issued after the meeting in Minnesota, the commission

also will develop "other operating agreements necessary to facilitate day-to-day relationships and cooperation between the two church bodies and their pastors and congregations."

The release also states that as the meeting concluded, "the members of the commission noted that the close proximity of AALC and LCMS pastors can offer opportunities for mutual nurture and support through study, worship, and fellowship events. The commission encouraged those who host meetings, conferences, and gatherings of other church bodies to remember the partner church when extending invitations."

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## **New President for New Zealand's Lutheran Church**

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The Lutheran - Australia - Rev. Robert Erickson is the new president of the Lutheran Church of New Zealand (LCNZ). The LCNZ is a district of the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA).

LCA president Rev. Dr. Michael P. Semmler installed Erickson into his new position in late October 2007. Erickson, 55, succeeds Rev. Steen Olsen.

Before taking up the leadership position at LCNZ, Erickson, originally from the United States of America, had served as a pastor in California. When he joined the LCA, he served in parishes in the Brisbane area. The LCA has 75 000 members. The LCNZ has 976 members.

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## **LWF and LCMS Directors Meet**

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LWI - Representatives of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (LCMS) and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) meeting at the LWF secretariat in Geneva from 21 to 24 January 2008, have affirmed the need to establish direct communication between both organizations in order to mutually benefit from their common heritage in the Reformation.

"From our meetings and conversations, we have been able to verify that mutual suspicions exist between our respective church bodies and their members, yet we have a lot in common because of our Lutheran heritage," remarked Rev. Dr. Kjell Nordstokke, director of the LWF Department for Mission and Development (DMD).

In an interview with Lutheran World Information (LWI) Nordstokke and LCMS Associate Executive Director for International Mission Rev. David C. Birner, emphasized the need for further dialogue and sharing of relevant materials and resources "in order to jointly

discern opportunities for potential cooperation at regional and local level.”

The conversations at the LWF included meetings between the LWF/DMD area secretaries for Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean and the LCMS regional counterparts.

The Geneva discussions highlighted common areas of work and potential collaboration including conflict resolution in the churches.

There are also potential areas of collaboration and common initiatives in lay training, scholarships for both men and women, the churches' response to the HIV epidemic, violence against women, and churches' relations to Islam, among others. “The meeting has encouraged us to see Lutherans together becoming part of the solution to global issues,” noted Birner.

Discussions were also held with LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko.

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## **LCC Presidential Slate Announced**

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LCC-Info Digest - Following balloting by congregations, five candidates have agreed to stand for election for president of the Lutheran Church-Canada. Delegates to LCC's eighth Convention, to be held from 5 to 9 June 2008 in Winnipeg will cast ballots to elect the new president who will serve the LCC for the next three years. The presidential candidates are Revds. Nolan D. Astley, David Bode, Robert Bugbee, Dr. Bryan King, and Robert Krestick.

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## **LCC Seminary Board Names Acting President**

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LCC-Info Digest - After the resignation of Rev. Dr. Harald Tomesch as president of Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary in St. Catharines, Canada on 5 February 2008, Rev. Dr. Tom Winger, assistant professor of theology, serves as acting president. The Board of Regents appointed him to serve in this position until the end of the academic year.

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## **103 LCMS Congregations Pledge to Plant Churches**

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LCMSNews - No. 7 - 103 Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (LCMS) congregations have completed orientation to become *Ablaze!* “Covenant Congregations,” pledging to start up

to four “daughter” churches each over the next decade.

The short-term goal is ten percent - or 600 - of the LCMS' 6 000 congregations seeing themselves as “mission outposts,” according to LCMS World Mission executive Rev. Yohannes Mengsteab. “The long-term goal is that every congregation will become a planting congregation,” he says.

As Covenant Congregations, congregations will have access to funding, assessments, and training from LCMS World Mission, Lutheran Church Extension Fund, Church Development Partners, the Center for U.S. Missions, and the two LCMS seminaries.

“I think congregations are excited about it,” Mengsteab said. “In the past, church planting was the responsibility of the districts, but now congregations are seeing this as *their* responsibility, as they are increasingly realizing that they are in the mission field.”

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## **Ablaze! Connection Phase One Pilot Concludes**

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LCMS World Mission - Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (LCMS) World Mission's *Ablaze!* Connection pilot has been in the beta testing phase over the last several months with “learning centers” in twelve LCMS congregations nationwide. It has strived to offer exciting and diverse ways for members to learn how to link Jesus to their daily lives and connect their faith to the most important aspects of their world - home, work, church, and community.

The feedback and participation in this Phase One pilot project have provided valuable learning which will be of great use as LCMS World Mission begins to work on Phase Two of this project.

Phase Two decisions will be made in close consultation with the Board for Mission Services after the results of Phase One have been carefully analyzed.

The *Ablaze!* Connection Web site ([www.ablazeconnection.com](http://www.ablazeconnection.com)) will remain online and the resources produced to date will remain accessible. As steps are being taken to prepare for Phase Two, there will be limited new programming while LCMS World Mission gathers and processes data, makes decisions about what to start, stop, and continue, and draws up plans to go forward again.

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## **IELB: United Mission Efforts For Latin America**

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ielb - Lutheran churches in South America want to cooperate more strongly in mission and evangelization. This was reported by Rev. Mario Lehenbauer, vice-president of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil (IELB) after a meeting on 7 and 8 December 2007 in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Together with Lehenbauer, Alceu Figur (Paraguay), Guillermo Herigert (Uruguay), Edgardo Elsezer (Argentina) and the representative of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, Dr. Jorge Groh, took part in the meeting.

In future the experiences of the respective missionaries will be exchanged, the needs of the missionaries jointly analyzed and their preparation coordinated. The aim is to reach a concerted action when preparing missionaries in Latin America.

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## 200 Years Löhe Anniversary Congress

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On the occasion of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Wilhelm Löhe, the Neuendettelsau Diaconal Society organized an international scientific congress from 20 to 24 February 2008 in Löhe's place of birth, Fürth, Germany.

The goal of the congress was to summarize the state of the international Löhe research and to encourage new research. The topics of the convention referred to the broad spectrum of Löhe's work. Its main theme was "Wilhelm Löhe's diaconal work and his significance for church and society."

In the evening of 21 February the birthday of Wilhelm Löhe was officially remembered by a state reception. The festive commemoration service on 22 February was conducted by the Bavarian state bishop Dr. Friedrich.

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## LWF Publication Offers Theological Reflections on Interreligious Relations

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LWI - "Deepening Faith, Hope and Love in Relations with Neighbors of Other Faiths" is the title of a new Lutheran World Federation (LWF) publication with the aim to deepen commitment to and theological discernment within interreligious relations.

Theologians from different parts of the world have contributed to the book produced by the LWF Department for Theology and Studies (DTS) in the second volume of its "Theology in the Life of the Church" series. The subjects covered delve into ecclesial, societal, pedagogical, biographical and gender dimensions of interreligious relations. The concept of a dialogue of hope is investigated, and theological reflections on salvation and the Triune God in interreligious dialogue are explored in the books' final section.

In the introduction, the editor, Rev. Simone Sinn, LWF/DTS theological associate, points out the importance of an increased public awareness of interreligious relations but notes some caution is necessary with regard to the "accompanying haste and breathlessness." She adds that "building relationships among neighbors of different faiths is a long-term process that involves serious commitment and vision."

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## WELS Considers Sale of Administration Building

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WELS-together - The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS), USA, has been approached by several commercial real estate developers who have expressed interest in purchasing the Synod Administration Building in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The entire area has undergone major redevelopment in recent years, and the location is viewed to be very desirable from a commercial standpoint.

A committee has been discussing the various options open to the synod. It is already aware that major infrastructure repairs are needed in the current building, which is more than forty years old. In view of the estimated cost of the repairs, and with developers expressing an interest in the building, the committee has explored several options for a potential relocation.




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