



## **“In Christ: Living Life to the Full”**

### **ILC Churches to Meet in Korea**

The heads of confessional Lutheran Churches from about thirty countries in all six continents will come together for the 23<sup>rd</sup> conference of the International Lutheran Council (ILC), to be held from 26 to 31 August 2009 in Seoul, Korea. The bishops and presidents of member churches of the ILC meet in international conference every three years.

The theme of this year’s conference is “In Christ: Living Life to the Full” and is based on the invitation of Jesus Christ in John 10:10: “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” The conference will offer not just a theologic exploration of abundant living, but will also provide an opportunity for experiential education *in* abundant living and wants to give answers to the human pilgrim journey, especially in a post-modern world, a world filled with uncertainties and ambiguities.

Guided by Grace Place Lutheran Retreats, a world-wide continuing education program for Lutheran clergy and their spouses, leaders Dr. John D. Eckrich, M.D. and Rev. Dr. David Ludwig will facilitate experiential learning of Biblically-based, Christ-centered physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual health attitudes, skills and disciplines and show what it really means to live life to the full, live abundantly. The goal of Grace Place Retreats is to keep *healthy leaders healthy*, to encourage *vibrant and joyful service* to our gracious Lord so that the voice of the Gospel is shared with every heart.

Dr. John Eckrich, the founder and Executive Director of Grace Place, is a life-long Lutheran medical physician who has cared for Lutheran clergy, teachers and their families for 32 years. He has witnessed first-hand the physical, emotional and spiritual burn-out from ministry stresses in professional church workers who give of themselves to the detriment of their own personal being. The longevity, vibrancy and joyfulness of their service has been diminished. Along with noted author, psychologist, professor and theologian, Dr. David Ludwig, and other

pastoral advocates, Grace Place was founded for the purpose of offering whole health skills, attitudes and encouragement to pastors and their families. Grace Place has taken over 2 500 Lutheran clergy, teachers, and spouses through a week-long program in over 100 retreats around the world.

The program of Grace Place Retreats is structured on four individual “pause points” to be meditatively in God’s Word. Around these hours of praying the Scriptures, there are times for physical stretching, good diet experiences and education, exploration of marital and parenting (grandparenting) growth, conflict resolution, care of self and care of the marital relationship from a physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual foundation. Time is provided for wives to talk “women talk” and men to talk “manly talk” as it pertains to the different ways of approaching the challenges of life. This conference will also provide ample opportunity to do business, to share fellowship, and to see the beautiful Korean landscape and her peoples.

The conference will close with a very special service of Sending.

## **Mission Beyond the Sanctuary!**

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



Dr. Gerald B. Kieschnick

When considering the mission we have been given by our Lord Jesus to make disciples of all nations, it behooves us in these challenging days and times to think creatively in discerning how best to reach the people in our communities and countries with the

precious Gospel of Christ.

On a recent visit to Germany for meetings with the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELK), a member church body of the International Lutheran Council, I had the opportunity to visit the work in the Marzahn area of Berlin. Pastor Hartwig Neigenfind, by learning the needs of the community and working to meet some of those needs, has been able to reach many in the formerly communist area with the Good News about Jesus. He knows that to reach people with the Gospel, he has to get out of the sanctuary and into the community.

Berlin-Marzahn is a district of the former East Germany marked by high-rise housing, high unemployment (nearly 20 percent), and a large percentage of non-Christians. The SELK mission is in the heart of high-rise apartment buildings that were built in communist times. In 1999, the SELK's mission arm, known as the Bleckmar Mission, rented rooms in a former nursery for a mission congregation. Neigenfind arrived shortly after.

At first, the pastor started to hold services - and he said that his wife was the congregation! Although about 80 000 people live within walking distance of the church, little was happening. It wasn't until he got out into the community, learned the needs of the people, and sought to meet those needs that the mission took off.

The centerpiece of the Marzahn mission's community work is a weekly distribution of food donated by grocers, bakers, and others that draws about 300 people. The project is called "Loaf and Soul." As people wait in line, Neigenfind, wearing his clerical collar, "works the crowd." He has gotten to know the community, and the people have gotten to know and trust him.

About 60 people now attend worship and Bible study in the mission. That is a significant number, given the difficulty of working in a place that was controlled for more than 40 years by an atheistic government. What's more, Neigenfind is able to share the Gospel with many others who are not yet part of the congregation.

The Berlin-Marzahn experience is instructive for us, too. Each of our communities has its own character and needs, and is populated with people who need to hear the Good News about Jesus. Consider this my evangelical encouragement for you to do what many pastors and people in congregations of ILC church bodies are already doing - intentionally and strategically to venture out from the church office and sanctuary and meet your neighbors in the community surrounding your church facility. What are their needs? What do they worry about? What keeps them awake at night? How can your congregations be involved in the communities of your country in ways that meet the needs of the people, including their

need to hear the Gospel from someone who truly cares about them?

And then, having discovered the answers to those questions, my encouragement is for you to provide leadership for your pastors and congregations to develop, intentionally and strategically, a plan to address the needs you've discovered in a manner motivated by the love of Christ. What works in Germany may or may not work in your country or community. The key is to use your God-given sensitivity, intellect, and creativity as church leaders to find the needs unique to the communities in your country and to take proactive steps to address those needs in a people-sensitive, Christ-centered, Spirit-directed manner.

God's grace, mercy, power, and peace be with you all!




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## Membership in Lutheran Churches Reaches Nearly 72 Million

### Increase in Africa, Asia and Latin America Compensates for Decline in Europe and North America

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LWI - According to the annual statistical survey for 2008 conducted by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Office for Communication Services, the membership total of all Lutheran churches worldwide rose over the past year by 150 147 to approximately 72 million (71 973 570), an increase of 0.21 percent.

The combined membership in churches belonging to the LWF last year rose by 141 792 to reach a global total just under 68.5 million (68 464 091). The number of Lutherans who belong to non-LWF Lutheran churches rose by 8 355 or 0.24 percent to reach 3 509 479.

While Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean reported increases in membership, churches in Europe and North America once again experienced a slight decline.

#### Africa: Steady Growth in Ethiopia

In Africa, LWF church membership over the past year rose by 158 047 or 0.9 percent to a total of 17 287 277. The membership of non-LWF Lutheran churches on the continent

dropped by 1 854, or 3.3 percent, to a total of 54 215.

The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, the largest African church, registered an increase of 143 329 members or 2.9 percent, to reach 5 012 486.

The highest annual growth in the region was recorded in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya, whose membership figures rose by approximately 17.6 percent or 15 000 new members to count 100 000. The Lutheran Church of Rwanda had a 12 percent increase for its 4 276 new members, bringing the total to 40 000.

Africa's second largest Lutheran church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, did not report any changes in its membership of 4 632 480, nor did the Malagasy Lutheran Church, the third largest on the continent, with 3 million members. Membership in the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria remained unchanged at 1 745 050.

#### **Asia: 270 000 New Lutherans**

The total number of Lutherans in Asia rose by 270 061 over the past year to reach 8 545 479, representing an increase of 3.26 percent. Non-LWF Lutheran churches in the region reported 182 921 new members, corresponding to an increase of 42 563 or approximately 30.3 percent.

The region's largest Lutheran church, the Protestant Christian Batak Church (Indonesia), reported 4 million members last year, an increase of 250 000 or 6.7 percent.

#### **Europe: Decline of over 200 000**

The total membership of Lutheran churches in Europe fell again over the past year by 223 252 or 0.6 percent, to a current total of 36 954 216.

Membership in the world's largest Lutheran church, the Church of Sweden, declined last year by 73 740, or 1.1 percent to 6 820 161. The fifth largest LWF member church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, saw its membership drop by 19 270 or 0.4 percent to 4 514 359.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia and Other States reported an increase of 6.7 percent or 5 000 members, for a total of 80 000.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of France recorded a sharp decline by putting its membership at 10 400 members, a drop of 29 600 or 74 percent.

#### **Germany: Lutheran Churches Lose 84 000**

Germany, the country with the largest number of Lutheran Christians in the world, had a total membership of 12 543 179 in 2008, reflecting a decrease of 84 567 or 0.67 percent.

The Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church, a member church of the International Lutheran Council (ILC), recorded a decrease of 387 or 1.1 percent, to 35 642.

#### **Modest Gains in Latin America**

The total membership in Lutheran churches in Latin America and the Caribbean increased by 19 076 or 1.7 percent, to a total of 1 123 270.

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 membership increase of 14 000 or two percent, to 717 000.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil, which belongs to the ILC, reported 233 416 members last year, a rise of 3 201 or 1.4 percent.

#### **North America: Nearly 100 000 Fewer Lutherans**

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

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the LWF's third largest member church, registered 4 709 954 members in 2008, a decrease of 64 249 or 1.4 percent.

The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (USA and Canada), the largest ILC member church, reported 2 383 084 members, a loss of 34 913 or 1.4 percent.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada last year had 161 142 members, an annual decline of 13 358 or 7.7 percent.

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

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## **LCMS Fan Into Flame Campaign Tops \$ 44.1 Million**

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LCMSNews - No. 19 - by Paula Schlueter Ross - *Fan into Flame*, the synodwide campaign of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, USA to raise \$100 million for new *Ablaze!*-related mission projects, has netted \$44 185 311, as of 20 February 2009.

*Ablaze!* is the initiative of the LCMS and its partner churches worldwide to share the Gospel with 100 million people - "unreached" or

uncommitted to faith in Christ - by 2017, the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation.

Authorized by the Synod's 2004 national convention, the *Fan into Flame* funding campaign is slated to run through the 10 to 17 July 2010 convention in Houston, Texas, although many of those who have made pledges are expected to honor them after that date.

With just over 16 months left, and the campaign nearly halfway toward its goal, planners and others who've been involved in the effort say they are pleased with its progress. Ten LCMS districts have completed *Fan into Flame* campaigns, sixteen are involved now, and several others are planning to start them.

Even if the total falls short of the \$100 million goal, the campaign will still have raised awareness about mission-centered stewardship and raised an "unprecedented" amount of money for God's mission worldwide, according to Jeffrey A. Craig-Meyer, who oversees the fundraiser as associate executive director of Development Services with LCMS World Mission.

Each congregation and district that contributes to the campaign receives back a portion of the funds they collect. These fifteen percent "distributions" are to be used for new, *Ablaze!*-related outreach projects.

The funds received so far in the campaign have enabled the Synod to place nine new missionaries; distribute free MP3 audio Bibles to more than 55 000 children and teenagers at LCMS schools and the National LCMS Youth Gathering; renovate and reopen St. Michael Lutheran Church in St. Petersburg, Russia; and begin other mission-related efforts.

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## LCP to Establish 100 New Congregations by 2017

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Asia Ablaze Newsletter - The North Luzon Highland District (NLHD) Board of the Lutheran Church in the Philippines (LCP), including LCP President Rev. James Cerdenola, made a visit to congregations in the NLHD from 23 to 29 February 2009. In total, the group visited six NLHD congregations. The congregations are located in remote locations, so travel took anywhere from four to seven hours per trip. At every stop, food was prepared by the host congregation and was followed with a worship service. After the service, the local pastor and lay leaders (which was often much of the congregation) engaged in discussion with the NLHD Board group. The pastors, lay leaders and church members were so happy to be able to welcome the group and share stories of how their ministries were doing.

One mission station was happy to show the group some of the lumber and iron sheets ready to be used in the upcoming construction of their church building. One lay worker told of his plan to register his mission station at the next NLHD convention this April. Another congregation was in the process of constructing a larger church building because the old church is too small to accommodate everyone; the old building will become their Sunday School room once the new church building is finished. And still another congregation shared how their laymen walk three to four hours in order to share the Gospel. One congregation eagerly told of their mission outreach in three different areas, hoping that each would become a congregation in the next few years.



L-r: President James Cerdenola, Layman Edgar Pasking, and Rev. Philip Echican at a church during a recent trip to the NLHD congregations  
Photo: Asia Ablaze Newsletter

On the final leg of the trip, the NLHD Board installed a pastor at one of its congregations. The installation service was very well attended.

Through the work being done in the NLHD and elsewhere, it is clear that things are moving in the direction of fulfilling the LCP's goal to establish at least a hundred new congregations by the year 2017.

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## First IELC Summit on Mission and Ministry

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LCMS World Mission - Leaders from the India Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELC) presented their vision for mission and ministry at the first-ever India Summit, held from 15 to 17

January 2009 at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Des Peres, Missouri, USA. The IELC, Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (LCMS) World Mission, and LCMS World Relief and Human Care jointly hosted the summit, which highlighted fifty years of work by the national church body and LCMS partners in the world's second-most populous country.

In 1895, the LCMS began mission work in India - the first foreign mission field in the Synod's history. In 1958, the IELC was independently established and has now grown to a baptized membership of 50 000 with almost 1 000 congregations and preaching stations.

The Summit goals included to provide the IELC with an opportunity to present its mission vision; to allow people and organizations involved in India to network and connect; and to enable people and organizations involved in India to present their vision and expectations to the IELC.

Among those taking part were five IELC leaders, including the new IELC president, Rev. J. Samuel, as well as more than 75 other participants. The IELC leaders led the summit devotions and gave presentations that included overviews of their medical, human care, and school ministries. Speakers also included Rev. John Mehl, LCMS World Mission regional director for Asia, and Rev. Matthew Harrison, LCMS World Relief and Human Care executive director. Individuals and congregations working with the IELC also gave reports about their experiences and plans for work in India.

Herb Hoefer, LCMS World Mission's area director for India and Sri Lanka, pointed out that the IELC is on track to attain its personal goal of reaching out to 25 million people as part of the *Ablaze!* goal to reach 100 million people by the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017.

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## **ELCK Dedicates Luther Plaza**

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In Nairobi, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Kenya (ELCK) has dedicated and opened Luther Plaza, a multi-purpose building that serves as its headquarters as well as generating rental income.

Dedicated on 27 February 2009, Luther Plaza was financed by a loan through the Arthur C. Haake World Ministry Fund of the Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF), USA. The ELCK will use about 25 percent of the floor space for its headquarters, a diocese office, and a parish. The church body is renting the balance of the space to several businesses and organizations, including a restaurant.

"It is a testament to the vitality of the ELCK, representing a strong church body," said Dr.

Dean Nadasdy, Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (LCMS), USA fourth vice president and pastor of Woodbury Lutheran Church in Minnesota. He represented the LCMS at the ceremonies and presented a dedication plaque from LCEF to ELCK Archbishop Walter Obare Omwanza.



Luther Plaza in Nairobi, Kenya

Photo: LCMS Reporter

The ELCK has about 100 000 members, 110 pastors, 185 trained evangelists, and 440 congregations. During 2008 it had the highest annual growth of any Lutheran church body in the region.

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## **German Churches Meet with Churches from Russia, Lithuania and Belarus**

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selk news - On the initiative of the German National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation (DNK/LWB) and the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELK) in Germany, a first consultation on the topic of "Ordination in Belarus" took place in Hanover, Germany, in the office of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany on 14 January this year.

High ranking representatives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia and other States (ELCROS), the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lithuania (ELCL), the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Belarus (IELCB), the Evangelical Church in Central Germany, the Evangelical Church in Germany, the SELK and the Alliance of Evangelical Lutheran Congregations in Belarus (AEELCB) had accepted the invitation of DNK/LWB secretary Senior Church Counciller Norbert Denecke.

The starting point of the talks was the inquiry of SELK with Bishop Mindaugas Sabutis of Lithuania to ordain those deacons in Belarus,

which had been consecrated by his predecessor. It was planned to also involve the AEELCB in this process, which is closely joined with the ELCROS

Archbishop Dr. Edmund Ratz (ELCROS) accented the importance of theological training of ordained office bearers, while Bishop Hans-Jörg Voigt (SELK) emphasized the necessity of church unity between the small Lutheran congregations in Belarus and proposed that they should mutually find and go their own way.

The participants in the consultation agreed to jointly serve the unity of the evangelical Lutheran church in Belarus and therefore continue their consultations. They entrusted Bishop Sabutis with the decision about possible ordinations.

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## **Korea Lutheran Study Society Founded**

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The Communicator - Some one hundred-thirty Korean scholars seeking to study Luther and his writings embraced the Korea Luther Study Society at its inaugural session held at Central Lutheran Church in Seoul, Korea on 24 October 2008. Dr. Jin-Seop EOM, Director of the Luther Study Institute at the Luther University/Seminary in Korea, convened the meeting and was elected president of the new society.

This new Luther study society in Korea will have monthly research and study meetings. Each October an overseas guest lecturer and a local Korean lecturer will present major papers continuing the pattern of the inaugural meeting.

The society will also undertake further translations of Luther's works into Korean.

The Lutheran Church in Korea (LCK) has forty-two congregations with some 5 000 members. President Dr. Hyun-Sub UM of the LCK and the leaders of the church have set a goal of planting many more churches, for a total of 500, and of reaching out to northeast Asia with mission effort by the one-hundredth anniversary in 2058.

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## **LCC: Task Force on Cost of Seminary Education**

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Winnipeg - Board of Directors' chairman, Randy Stefan and Lutheran Church-Canada (LCC) president, Rev. Robert Bugbee announced the make-up of a task force created to fulfill the 2008 LCC Convention Resolution: "To implement a cost efficient seminary program for Lutheran Church-Canada."

President Bugbee noted that the task force will undertake its work with no preconceptions of

outcomes. It will have extensive consultation with the presidents, faculty and staff serving LCC's two seminaries. The task force will also seek input from the church-at-large.

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## **Kieschnick Visits Wittenberg Project**

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Dr. Gerald Kieschnick, President of The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (LCMS), USA, visited Germany, 27 February to 3 March 2009. The purpose of this visit was to meet with leaders of the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELK) and to get first hand impressions of the plans and work of the International Lutheran Society of Wittenberg (ILSW). He was accompanied by LCMS Director of Church Relations, Dr. Samuel H. Nafzger; Concordia Seminary in St. Louis Professor, Dr. Robert Kolb; Eurasia Regional Director for LCMS World Mission, Rev. Brent Smith; and LCMS contact for the Wittenberg Project, Rev. David L. Mahsman.

The ILSW was established by LCMS World Mission, LCMS World Relief and Human Care, Concordia Publishing House, and the SELK of Germany to conduct work in Wittenberg.

Bishop Hans-Jörg Voigt and church Councillor Ulrich Schroeder from the SELK welcomed the group. Dr. Wilhelm Torgerson, Director of the ILSW, led the visitors on a tour of the historic town of Wittenberg and of the old Latin School near the Wittenberg city church. This historic building, which is in need of major renovation, has been purchased for a variety of possible uses, including a Word and Sacrament ministry, a welcome center for visitors, and an academic meeting place.

A dinner, hosted by Propst Siegfried and Dr. Hanna Kasparick of the Evangelical Church of central Germany, and attended by the mayor of Wittenberg, Eckhard Naumann, and several local state-church representatives provided an opportunity for the LCMS delegation to discuss the development of the Lutheran church center with them.

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## **LCMS, SELK Meet EKD**

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selknews - On 2 March 2009 the president of the Church Office of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), Dr. Hermann Barth, Hanover, met with Dr. Gerald Kieschnick, St. Louis, Missouri, USA, president of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, in the House of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) at the *Gendarmenmarkt* in Berlin-Center.

Also present, among others, were the Authorized Representative of the Council of the

EKD with the German Federal Republic and the European Union, Prelate Dr. Bernhard Felmborg (Berlin), Prelate Stephan Dorgerloh, Wittenberg, Rev. Dr. Samuel Nafzger, St. Louis, USA, and Bishop Hans-Jörg Voigt, Hanover, of the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELK), the German sister church of the LCMS.

Prelate Dorgerloh explained the concept of the Luther-Decade titled *Luther 2017 - 500 Years Reformation*. President Kieschnick reported on the plans for the International Lutheran Center in Wittenberg of the LCMS and its sister church in Germany. Both church leaders agreed that cooperation and mutual transparency should be furthered, especially in the context of the various Wittenberg projects.

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## Bishop Elisa Dies

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Bishop Andrew M. Elisa †  
Photo: H. Hoeller

Rev. Andrew Mbugo Elisa, bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sudan (ELCS), was called to eternal glory on 31 December 2008. Rev. Elisa would have been 43 years old on 1 January 2009. He is survived by his wife, Linda, and their four children.

Rev. Elisa's funeral service took place on 9 January 2009 at the Lutheran church in Yambio, Sudan.

The Holy Spirit worked mightily through Rev. Elisa to establish the ELCS. Fifteen years ago, Andrew Elisa received five copies of Luther's Small Catechism and the Book of Concord. Excited by what he read, Andrew eagerly shared this Christian doctrine with everyone he met.

Today, there are more than 80 Lutheran churches, five Lutheran elementary schools and two kindergartens located throughout Sudan, attended by more than 15 000 baptized Lutherans. More than a dozen men attend the seminary in Baguga, studying to become the faithful shepherds of these people.

"I've always been led by faith, full of optimism," said Rev. Elisa in a 2005 interview, as he reflected on the incredible growth of the ELCS. "If I think of something, I just want to do it, and I do it. I don't doubt. Some elements of pastoral practice were central in my thinking: 1. How do I shepherd the flock of God? 2. How do I reconcile the people of God? 3. How do I

evangelize the people of God? 4. How do I show love to these people? Our success should be based only on our commitment to the Word of God. It's God's doing."

Rev. Elisa first fell ill in October 2008. After consulting with several doctors over the next few weeks, he was diagnosed with an aggressive glioma (tumor) in the brain stem.

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## LWF Seeks Further Action with Russian Orthodox Church

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LWI - The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) hopes for a further nurturing of ecumenical relations with the Russian Orthodox Church, as its newly elected leader His Holiness Patriarch Kirill assumed office on 2 February this year.

In a letter congratulating Kirill on his consecration as Patriarch, LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko expressed the LWF's eagerness to continue to work together with the Russian Orthodox Church "toward better mutual understanding and common action to address the needs of our hurting world."

The Local Church Council of the Russian Orthodox elected 62-year-old Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad on 27 January 2009 in Moscow. He succeeds Patriarch Alexei II who had led the church from 1990 until his death on 5 December 2008 at the age of 79.

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## LCMS Seminaries Receive Accreditation for Distance Education Program

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St. Louis - Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, USA has been granted preliminary approval from the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) for a comprehensive distance education program that may now offer courses for academic credit, applicable toward the Master of Divinity degree. This will enable students in the new Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program the opportunity to receive such credit, and it also attests to the academic credibility of the educational models that are being used.

"We are pleased that our sister seminary at Fort Wayne has also received this approval, as we have supported our synodical commitment to pastoral formation and have worked together in making our institutional petitions to the ATS," added Dr. Andrew Bartelt, vice president for Academic Affairs at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

Concordia Seminary St. Louis has also pioneered distance education to meet the needs of contemporary pastoral ministry through the Center for Hispanic Studies, the Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology, the Deaf Institute of Theology and in revising the DELTO program.

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## **LCG Re-elects President Chan**

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At its convention on 21 February 2009, the CONCLUT-Lutheran Church in Guatemala (LCG) re-elected its President, Ignacio Chan, for a new term of office.

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## **LSM has New President**

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Rev. Isaac Garcia from Rio Bravo-Mexico was elected president of the Lutheran Synod of Mexico (LSM) in the last assembly of the LSM held in Guasave-Mexico on 30 March 2009.

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## **Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Republic of Chile**

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LCMS President's Letter to Pastors - Known by its Spanish acronym, IELCHI, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Republic of Chile is a small church with a vision for mission.

Rev. Carlos Schumann, president of the IELCHI, says the church body "arose as a spontaneous work of the Gospel." He explains that in the early 1950s, a disaffected former Roman Catholic seminary student, Jose Avendaño, was looking for a church whose teachings were based firmly on the Word of God. He looked into many different churches but did not find what he was seeking until he heard "The Lutheran Hour" in Spanish and took some of its Bible courses.

When Avendaño contacted Lutheran Hour representatives in St. Louis, he was referred to what then was the US Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod's (LCMS) Argentine District. After two years of study, Avendaño was colloquized through Concordia Seminary in Buenos Aires, ordained, and installed as missionary to his native Chile. At the same time, he was joined in the missionary task by a pastor from Argentina, Rev. Juan Berndt.

The Argentine District became an autonomous partner church of the LCMS in

1986. The IELCHI in turn was granted autonomy by the Argentine church in 1992.

Today, the IELCHI has three congregations, two missions, three schools, and a publishing house. Two of the schools, both named "Concordia," have classes from pre-kindergarten to college. The third school is the Lutheran Bible Institute, which was founded in 1989 to educate pastors and other leaders.

About 70 percent of the population of Chile professes to be Roman Catholic. In a 2003 presentation to the International Lutheran Council, President Schumann said the IELCHI, which at the time had about 200 members, "is a small church with big plans, challenges, and needs." Its reason for being, he said, is "communicating the Gospel of salvation to the context of each community."

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## **Septuagint in German**

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selk news - For the first time the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament dating from about 250 B.C., was published in the German language by the German Bible Society. On 28 January 2009 the "Septuaginta Deutsch" was officially presented in Berlin to the public in the presence of numerous guests of honor from church and science.

The Septuagint was the Bible of the Hellenistic Jews and the first Christians. Up until today it is the Holy Scripture of the Orthodox churches. For theology, philology and religious history the Septuagint is of high scientific value. Many passages of the Old Testament can be better understood with the help of its Greek version.

Up to eighty persons participated in the ecumenical translation project, which started in 1999. The translation will soon be supplemented by a volume with scientific explanations.

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