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## ILC Chairman's Meditation

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By Bishop Hans-Jörg Voigt

<sup>4</sup> From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. <sup>5</sup> The people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food."

<sup>6</sup> Then the LORD sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. <sup>7</sup> The people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD to take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. <sup>8</sup> And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live." <sup>9</sup> So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live. <sup>1</sup>

Numbers 21,4-9

1. This is an old story of the reason and the results of sin: "The people become impatient on the way and spoke against God and against Moses."

The wilderness made them hopeless and faithless: in our everyday life we know such situations of discouragement. And these times often become the gate of sin, the gate of faithlessness and hopelessness.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989.



So God sent the poisonous serpents. We, as Lutherans, know that the connection between our doings and our welfare is not often so direct. Thanks be to God!

2. This is an old story of repentance and renewal. "We have sinned by speaking against the LORD", so the people realize. That is a key sentence during our life as Christians. The story will lead us into confession and absolution. Here in the Old Testament the Lord gave us a sign: the serpent of bronze upon a pole. This sign shows us the reality of God's love behind a sign of death.

3. This is a narrative of a symbol and the reality behind the symbol: God's love and grace.

Jesus Christ himself remembers this narrative in the Gospel of St. John (3,14): "And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> that whoever believes in him may have eternal life." Jesus Christ is in person the love of God and he creates forgiveness and grace, when he was sacrificed and nailed to the cross and when he was resurrected.

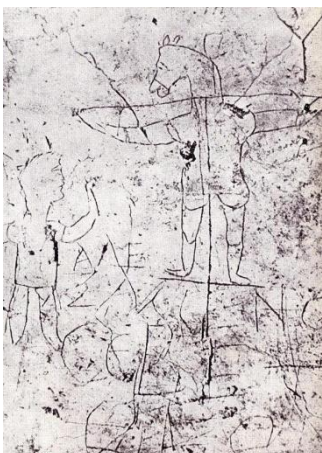
So the reality of God's love in Christ created from a sign of death the wonderful sign of hope: the cross.

These old narrative reminds me of one of the oldest picture of the cross: It belongs to the first century and was painted as graffiti on a barracks wall.

Two small lines are crossing and in the middle of this a simple picture: the head of a donkey. The Roman soldiers are making fun and wrote the words:

“Alexamenos prays to his god.” So

Alexamenos, the unknown Christian takes his cross in the form of the mockery of this picture.



The story of the cross reminds me of the history of Henri Dunant, the founder of the “Red Cross Movement” in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The cross becomes a sign and the reality of help for millions of wounded soldiers.

The serpent upon a pole reminds me of the old Latin sequence: “Salve crux, spes unica!” - "Hail to the cross, our only hope!" - A hope of our own resurrection and everlasting life in Jesus Christ.

Amen.

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## ILC – LWF Meeting

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### **Communique from the meeting between representatives of the International Lutheran Council (ILC) and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Geneva, Switzerland 27 – 29 March 2012**

Representatives of the International Lutheran Council (ILC) and The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) met in Geneva, Switzerland, on 27 – 29 March 2012, as proposed by the “Memorandum of Understanding” they approved in March 2005. The memorandum was described as a legacy from our forebears to be built upon. There was consensus that this meeting would be based on it.

The memorandum states the expectation that ILC – LWF meetings be held on an annual basis, with a view to increased mutual understanding between the two Lutheran world bodies and their member churches. When relevant, the meetings receive and discuss reports on issues of tension perceived to result from activities, statements or policies of member churches of either of the two organizations or agencies related to them.

However, this was the first meeting since 2008. The 2009 meeting was to meet in the Philippines – but local circumstances required the meeting to be postponed. An informal, non-minuted meeting took place at the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) Assembly in Minneapolis in August 2009 with LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, ILC Chairman Rev. Dr Gerald Kieschnick, ILC Executive Secretary Rev. Dr Sam Nafzger and LWF Assistant to the General Secretary for Ecumenical Affairs, Dr Kathryn Johnson. Then with changes of leadership in both the LWF and ILC, meetings were again postponed in 2010 and 2011.

The 2012 meeting, based on the “Memorandum of Understanding” intends to resume the pattern and expectation of annual meetings between the ILC and LWF.

Following introductions in which each participant shared a brief summary of their faith journey, reports were presented by the ILC and LWF on their activities and involvements since the last meeting.

Rev. Dr Ralph Mayan reported for the ILC. He shared a history of the ILC, that in 1958, following an LWF Assembly, some Lutheran churches decided to meet and ask, “How do we relate to the LWF?” Their meetings led to the formation of the ILC, not as opposition to the LWF, but as an association of churches gathered in a forum, or arena, to encourage, support and share with one another and to study theological issues together.

The 23<sup>rd</sup> ILC Conference met in Korea in 2009 on *In Christ: Living Life to the Full*. Its purpose was to strengthen and care for one another, to help pastors in their health and their ministry. At that conference, a statement on homosexuality and the church was adopted, *Same-Gender Relationships and the Church*.

The 24<sup>th</sup> ILC Conference will meet in Canada in September 2012, on the theme *What Does this Mean? How do the Scriptures Speak to Crises Facing Confessional Lutherans Today?* The keynote speaker, Dr Kettner, will address confessional interpretations of four themes: ordination of women, homosexuality and the church, preaching and living the Word. Consideration of the LWF Mennonite Action will take place at this conference as well as the administrative future of the ILC.

The Fourth World ILC Seminaries Conference on *Confessional Lutheran Identity in the Light of Changing Christian Demographics* was held in Ft Wayne, Indiana USA in 2010.

The major change of ILC leadership has been a challenge. With the election of Rev. Dr Matthew Harrison as Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LCMS) President in 2010, Dr Gerald Kieschnick had to resign as ILC Chairman, for the ILC chairman needs to be the elected leader of one of the member churches. As Vice Chairman, Bishop Voigt became chairman. After 18 years of service, Dr Sam Nafzger retired as Executive Secretary at the same time and Dr Ralph Mayan was asked to serve as interim. Both Dr Mayan and Bishop Voigt are serving as interim leaders until new elections are held in 2012. An exploratory committee is considering administrative needs of the ILC and where the administration would be based.

Encouraged by the ILC, the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church has engaged in conversations with the Roman Catholic Church in Germany on worship, church and Eucharistic fellowship, baptism and justification. Results of these conversations will be shared with the 2012 ILC Conference.

The “Wittenberg Project” was introduced by Rev. Dr Albert Collver as a cooperative project between the LCMS and the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church, administered by the International Lutheran Society of Wittenberg. A building has been purchased in Wittenberg and plans are being developed for its use.

Rev. Martin Junge reported on the LWF and gave a brief account of its history since 1947 and the four principles upon which the LWF was founded: Diakonia, Mission, Theology

and Ecumenism. He described the LWF as being on a journey from Federation to Communion.

There was a change of leadership in 2009 when the LWF Council elected Rev. Junge as the new LWF General Secretary. The Council issued an invitation to the ILC to join the LWF in the “Mennonite Action” that was coming to fruition after years of dialogue.

At the Eleventh LWF Assembly in 2010, Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land was elected LWF President. The Mennonite Action of repentance and reconciliation proved to be a profoundly moving experience and resulted in unexpected fruits including a new trilateral dialogue on Baptism involving LWF, Roman Catholics and Mennonites. The study process on Family, Marriage and Sexuality adopted in 2007 was given time to continue conversations in member churches and regions. At the Assembly, various centrifugal forces of potentially divisive issues were met by the centripetal unity around worship, Word and sacrament.

In 2010, the LWF Executive Committee appointed a special committee for *Luther 2017: 500 Years of Reformation* to begin plans for a global commemoration of the anniversary.

The 2011 Council meeting adopted a five-year LWF Strategy with three priority areas of engagement and a strong commitment to church and to the world.

The 2012 Council meeting in Colombia has as its theme *Together for a Just, Peaceful and Reconciled World*. The Biblical hermeneutic of Luke’s Emmaus story will shape conversation on family, marriage and sexuality. Preparations for the Twelfth Assembly in 2017 will get underway.

A wide range of potential plans for observing the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reformation were shared.

Three features for LWF were identified: a global dimension, ecumenical engagement and affirmation that the LWF communion is made

up not only of churches *of* the Reformation, but churches *in* reformation.

There was considerable discussion on a number of theological topics: the different expressions of faithfulness to Scriptures, the meaning of “confessional Lutherans”, human sexuality, ministry and biblical hermeneutics.

A number of local situations were discussed in which tensions have occurred, including in the Philippines, Papua New Guinea and the United States of America. The meeting encouraged ongoing communication in all these situations. In addition, it was agreed to send a letter of encouragement to the Lutheran Church in the Philippines from the LWF and ILC. Acknowledging the value of the global conversation, member churches were encouraged to look for opportunities for interaction at the local and regional levels.

A number of positive developments among member churches were highlighted for continuing action, including conversations about possible common commemorations of the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reformation through seminars, educational emphases and publications. It was agreed to share continuing plans and update one another.

Both ILC and LWF thanked one another and affirmed the positive spirit of the meeting in which frank and candid conversation could be shared about mutual concerns, while building upon a common Lutheran heritage in Christ’s Church. The value of these meeting for direct mutual conversation as well as of contact with local leaders and their churches was agreed.

Bishop Voigt suggested Wittenberg as a possible site for the 2013 meeting, for which 12 – 14 November may be possible dates, depending on ILC leadership elected in September.

The meeting was co-chaired by Rev. Martin Junge (LWF General Secretary) and Dr Ralph Mayan (Interim ILC Executive Secretary). Participants from the ILC included Bishop Hans-Jörg Voigt (Interim ILC Chairman) and Dr Albert Collver III (LCMS – Director of Church Relations, in representation of LCMS President, Dr Matthew Harrison). Participants from the LWF were National Bishop Susan C. Johnson (LWF Vice-President for North



America,) and Rev. Norbert Denecke (General Secretary of the German National Committee of the LWF). LWF staff based in Geneva who joined the meeting included Rev. Dr Musa Filibus (Director, LWF Department for Mission and Development), Rev. Dr Kenneth Mtata (LWF Study Secretary for Theology in the Department for Theology and Public Witness), Rev. Dr Patricia Cuyatti (LWF Area Secretary for Latin America and the Caribbean in the Department for Mission and Development) and Rev. Dr Stephen Larson (Interim Coordinator of the LWF Department for Theology and Public Witness). Of all the participants, only Dr Ralph Mayan and National Bishop Susan C. Johnson had attended previous ILC – LWF meetings.

This communiqué shall serve as the official record of the meeting.  
Geneva, Switzerland  
29 March 2012

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## Australian Lutheran College recognised by MCD University

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*John Henderson, Adelaide*

In December 2010 Australian Lutheran College (ALC), the post-secondary theological provider of the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA), joined the Melbourne College of Divinity (MCD). MCD is consortium of theological schools founded in 1910 by a group of heads of churches concerned for the quality of their clergy training. In January 2012, MCD became the first specialised university in Australia, known as MCD University of Divinity.

ALC’s journey into MCD took many years. Unlike North America, where the Association of Theological Schools provides accreditation

for theological schools, Australian colleges must negotiate with government on a state and national level. A small theological school simply becomes overloaded. MCD offers an environment which takes care of the processes we previously had to manage on our own.

Three considerations were paramount in our discussions with MCD:

- our Confessional basis and objects in serving the Church;
- our emphasis on matters of Scripture, doctrine, and vocational formation;
- no real assets of the College could be transferred to any outside party.

MCD has satisfied on all three. We retain full independence in terms of church and theology. Teachers are still teachers of ALC. MCD takes care of all registration and accreditation issues, and assists with improvements in learning and teaching, educational quality and academic standards. It also brings a strong emphasis on theological research, and specific resources for that purpose.

An attractive aspect of joining MCD has been the opportunity for closer conversations with differing traditions – Anglican, Catholic, Uniting (Presbyterian / Methodist / Congregationalist), Salvation Army, Baptist, and so on. We face similar challenges in theological education for clergy and lay workers. Since Lutherans are relatively scarce in Australia, there are many conversations to be had.

There are challenges, of course. MCD is based over 800 kilometres away, so we have to watch our travel expenses. Educational awards do not always line up easily. ALC has an egalitarian structure among its pastors and teachers, as does the LCA, whereas some are more accustomed to professorial seniority and rank. We have decided to make sure we are at the table and contributing to discussions on the front foot. We want to help shape the future of MCD through a strong Lutheran contribution.

It is early days yet, but ALC remains extremely positive about the change. We have the opportunity to continue to serve our church for many years to come with learning and teaching that has conviction, integrity, depth, and clarity, for the sake of Christ.

## Brazil – IELB 2012: a year of training, mission and counselling

*Rev. Mario Lehenbauer*

The Brazilian church has 1,470 congregations and 627 missions/preaching stations, organized in 55 Circuits . IELB has 601 pastors working in congregations plus 248 pastors working in institutions (schools, hospital, social institutions...). 46 pastors serve in other countries (United States, Africa, Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Dominican Republic, England, Portugal, Uruguay, and Paraguay, etc.) The most recent statistic has IELB's membership at 238,281.

### **Leadership Seminars and Sunday School teachers training meetings are on schedule for 2012.**

IELB planned 55 Leadership Seminars, one in each one of the 55 circuits, to be held in three years (2011-2013). More than half of these are already accomplished and they have been a great blessing. The goal of these leadership seminars is to present an overview of IELB's planning for 2014; also a study of reality in that circuit in last 10 years; a discussion on leadership principles; Biblical guidance for the leadership and planning; also the importance of local realities; pointing to solutions and alternatives. Congregations and Circuit leaders bring and take ideas; and decide how to turn ideas into actions. The target audience of these seminars are all local and Circuit leaders, people in many different boards in congregations, as well as group leaders and pastors. And also aiming for the improvement and motivation of Sunday School teachers for this important work in the church, IELB performs every two years regional meetings for Sunday school teachers. The work for 2012 already started and to the end of the year we will be performing 20 regional meetings across the country going to



Sunday School Teacher training in Horizontina, RS

circuits and congregations. ( Information from Rev. Adilson Schünke – national exec. for evangelism)

**Mission Festivals for 2012.** The Board for Missions is scheduling local, regional and one national Mission Festival in 2012. The proposal of IELB’s Mission Board is that these festivals are held in all congregations. The board offers mission material to aid congregations to promote the festivals, and shows step by step how to organize the Festival. With these festivals the Board intends to mobilize and involve all members, in all congregations, in the honourable task of bringing Christ to all.

**Regional Pastoral Councils:** For 2012 IELB scheduled 14 Regional Councils. In these Councils special attention will be given to IELB’s pastors. The following themes will be presented: The pastor and his family; The pastor and his time; The pastor and his finances; and The pastor as equipper. The National Board of Officials will be responsible for these councils.

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## Canada - First graduate from LCC’s Pastors with Alternate Training Program

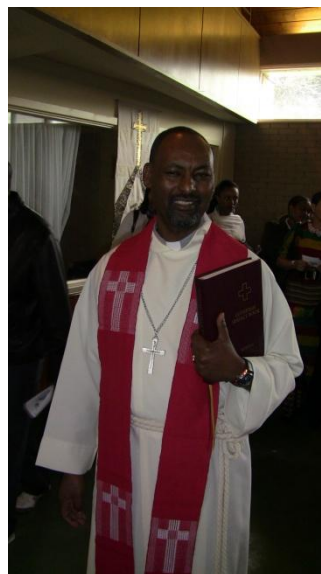
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*By Mathew Block, Communications Manager, Lutheran Church-Canada*



At the Central District Convention of Lutheran Church–Canada (LCC), Rev. Assefa Nega Aredo was recognized and congratulated on his recent ordination. Rev. Dr. Leonardo Neitzel—LCC’s Executive for Mission and Social Ministry, and director of the Pastors with Alternate Training (PAT) program—presented Rev. Aredo with an Amharic-language edition of the Book of Concord and

an English-language edition of Martin Luther’s Sacristy Prayer. Rev. Aredo was ordained at a mixed English-Oromo language service April 15, 2012 at Lutheran Church of the Redeemer (Winnipeg, Manitoba).



Rev. Aredo is the first student to complete the PAT program—a process which took more than four years of study— and so his graduation is particularly eventful.

Following his ordination, Rev. Aredo continues to serve the Lutheran Oromo community in Winnipeg. Other students in the PAT program are members of congregations with cultural roots in Africa, South America, and the Middle East.

“For many years, we didn’t have a pastor,” explained Rev. Aredo. “Having an Oromo-speaking pastor will make a significant difference in the faith-lives of the people”, he said. He also spoke of the opportunity to be a witness to the wider community: “I’m looking forward to helping the church prepare for mission and outreach. We can reach out beyond the Oromo community and into the areas around us.”

As Canada’s ethnic diversity continues to increase, churches face new challenges in providing pastoral ministry to immigrant populations in a language and context they understand. Acknowledging this reality, LCC approved in 2002 the creation of the PAT program—a program designed to prepare candidates for culture-specific or site-specific pastoral ministry. PAT candidates remain in their particular cultural communities while studying, serving there while continuing their education through one-on-one instruction, online courses, and short-term class modules. Many, like Rev. Aredo, continue to work full-time while in the program.

“I am proud of Rev. Assefa Aredo. He has worked hard many years preparing to serve the Oromo community in Winnipeg,” said Rev. Dr. Leonardo Neitzel. “I thank God for his commitment to the PAT program, to his congregation, and most especially to our Lord Jesus Christ.”

He continued: “We are indeed pleased and grateful to the Lord for the way He leads His church in Canada in reaching out with His Gospel to the nations. Rev. Assefa’s missionary work will be of great blessing, especially to people coming from Ethiopia, Kenya and other parts of the Horn of Africa.”

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## On-line radio station launched in UK

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*By the Rev'd Jaime Kriger*



LRUK was dedicated to the glory of God on the second Sunday in Lent (March, 4<sup>th</sup> 2012) during the Divine Service at Christ Lutheran Church in Petts Wood. Christ Church is the base of our operations and we began a 24-hour test broadcast in September 2011 with a trailer and demos of our programmes. At the same time we set out to contact Lutheran synods and institutions throughout the world to tell them about this project of the ELCE.

By God’s grace, at the time of our launch we counted listeners in just over 40 countries. 2 months on and the number has gone up to 69 countries, 15 of which are either Muslim or Christian minority countries. Thankfully, the growth has been in outreach and in consolidating that audience by the constant addition of new listeners in most of those countries.

The UK is our target audience because Lutheranism isn’t well known here and it is our hope that this will help raise the public

profile of the ELCE by means of the faithful proclamation of the Good News of Christ for the salvation of the whole world.

We currently have 15 programmes on rotation (including 5 Daily Offices) featuring mainly the ELCE’s clergy and lay people, but we also have contributors abroad like Surgical Chaplain Lynn Hanson in the US and Denise Seaman in Cyprus. Our entire programme is Christ centred and our playlist features a well-balanced mixture of contemporary and traditional Christian music. Even our commercial breaks are dedicated to pointing our audience to the several activities the Church is engaged with to bring God’s Word forward, that is, worship services, Bible Studies, Sunday Schools, retreats, and concerts as well as our seminary Westfield House and our magazine The British Lutheran.

Paul Hill, an elder at Christ church and former Foreigner Desk Manager of the Daily Telegraph is in charge of LRUUK’s newsroom. Paul leads in telling what happens in and around the Lutheran Church throughout the world and is always searching for new sources, and it is our intention to form and strengthen the ties with the Lutheran Church wherever it is. So if you’d like to feature on Lutheran Radio News contact us at [newsdesk@lutheranradio.co.uk](mailto:newsdesk@lutheranradio.co.uk).

Go to [www.lutheranradio.co.uk](http://www.lutheranradio.co.uk) and click on the Listen Live button. Browse our website for more information about our programmes and how to contact us and help us spread the Good News by telling everyone about us.



Jaime Kriger interviews ELCE chairman, Pastor Jon Ehlers for broadcast in the studio of Lutheran Radio UK

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## Cambridge seminary marks jubilee

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On Saturday, 25th February Westfield House celebrated the 50th anniversary of its inauguration as a Lutheran house of theological studies in Cambridge. The programme of Lutheran theological studies in Cambridge has its roots in the work of the late Dr William Arndt in the 1950s. The House, built more than a century before, was inaugurated on the 22nd of February, 1962 at a service of celebration at which the bishop of Sweden, Bo Giertz gave the inaugural address. Since that time, Westfield has been welcoming students from the Lutheran Church in the United Kingdom, North America, Europe and Africa. It was fitting, then, that the occasion



was marked with a thanksgiving service at which Archbishop Janis Vanags of Riga, Latvia preached to the faculty, students, alumni and many guests. Riga has been the seat of an archbishop since the 13th century and it has been Lutheran since the Reformation.

The day also included two lectures on Luther presented by faculty. The new tutor of doctrinal theology, Jonathan Mumme presented a paper entitled Law and Gospel: A Living Legacy. Visiting scholar and Westfield alumnus Roger Whittall looked at the early history of the reception Luther's works in the English language. The celebration was well-attended by the Lutheran community in Cambridge, esteemed guests and Lutherans from other congregations throughout the United Kingdom.

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## News items for ILC news

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News items are sought for the next issue of ILC News from all member churches of the ILC, and especially from church bodies in the African and Asian regions. It is preferred that submissions are made through the church's leadership, and in the English language.

Submissions should be e-mailed to the editor, with photographs where appropriate, at the address given below. Material for the August issue is requested by the beginning of July.




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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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