



ILC NEWS

Vol. XIV, No. 1

A publication of the International Lutheran Council

February 1, 2003

Latin American Regional ILC Conference in Chile

Twenty-four delegates from thirteen Lutheran churches from Latin America and the USA, held a meeting between 9 and 13 September 2002, at Olmue, capital of the Republic of Chile. This conference was chaired by Dr. Carlos Winterle, President of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Brazil and Secretary of the International Lutheran Council (ILC).

Two topics were presented: The Mission Contextualization by Dr. Douglas Rutt from the USA, and the Cultural Contextualization by Rev. Sergio Fritzler from Chile. Dr. Erni

Seibert from Brazil gave a report on the Theological Education in Latin America.

For the first time representatives from Haiti, Panama and Peru took part in this Regional Conference. Two representatives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Peru attended as guests.

This Regional Conference takes place every second year and has as its objective the strengthening of ties between Lutheran churches by means of studies, by Christian fraternal interaction, and by the exchange of experiences in the areas of work done by the different churches.

In an official declaration the representatives of the churches described the



The participants of the Latin American Regional ILC-Conference in Chile

"Contextualization of the Mission" as "the intention to communicate the gospel in words and works, to establish the church in such a manner that it is deeply understood by the people in their cultural context, to present Christianity in such a way that it satisfies their most profound necessities, and to penetrate their vision to make possible the birth of a new life, which only Christ can produce."

The declaration further recommends that the churches exercise care with the contextualization of the gospel and, in their preoccupation in understanding and preaching within the context of the people, do not go to the other extreme and take the gospel out of the biblical context by transforming it into a purely human culture. While contextualization is necessary, the gospel must at all times retain its power when confronting the realities of the context.

It was also emphasized that the "Contextualization in the Mission" is a process, which is best left to those persons who are inside the culture.

In conclusion it is said that it is the work of the Holy Spirit which achieves the wonderful work of converting hardened hearts.

In regard to the Theological Education in Latin America the conference acknowledged that the churches in Latin America have a long tradition of meetings and studies in order to take decisions to achieve a common purpose in all areas of mission work and theological education.

The principal points of consensus which were achieved were recorded and it was agreed upon that this is the road which must be continued.

The next regional meeting is scheduled to take place in August 2004, in Guatemala.

The World's Only Hope

Editorial by Ralph Mayan

Once again our world is beginning to hear the rattling sounds associated with "war and rumors of war." Whether our world is going to be immersed in a major conflict by the time this editorial is published – well, only God really knows. Lord, have mercy!

I remember a time not too many years ago when there was a renewal of hope in every quarter of our world. Many believed we were entering a new millennium of peace and social order with the downfall of the communist world. But that belief was merely a dream, as history has proven. It failed to take into consideration the condition of the human heart. That heart remains as it always has been since the fall in the garden, corrupt and opposed to all that is of God. As long as the corrupt heart remains, so will remain the warning of scripture and the experience of humanity, "There will be wars and rumors of wars."

It is in this kind of world that the church has her mission. She is to expose the human heart for what it is by proclaiming clearly and unequivocally the message of God's judgement against sin.

She is also to expose the heart of God, who from the very beginning has loved His fallen creation. In Jesus Christ, He has redeemed the sinner, giving to all who believe a sure and living hope even in the midst of "wars and rumors of wars."

As the rattling sounds of war continue, may God enable His Church to be ever more faithful in their proclamation of the truth - for the sake of the world. The Gospel is indeed our heritage. It is also our world's only hope!

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.

Editor: Peter H. F. Ahlers, 331 Eastwood Str., P.O. Box 13789, 0028 Hatfield-Pretoria, Republic of South Africa; phone +27-12-3442889 and +27-82-4137334; fax +27-12-3442889; e-mail: felsisa@pixie.co.za. Executive Secretary: Dr. Samuel H. Nafzger, 1333 S. Kirkwood Rd., St. Louis, Missouri 63122-7295, USA; phone 314-965-9000; fax 314-996-1116; e-mail: ic_nafzgesh@lcms.org. ILC News is also available via the internet from the Council's web site <http://www.ilc-online.org>.

Published at Pretoria, South Africa. Future publications dates: May 1, 2003; August 1, 2001 and November 1, 2003. Articles to be received at least two weeks prior to publication dates.

LCMS Mission Board Cuts Staff and 28 Overseas Positions

LCMSNews - In an effort to "live within its means" in light of declining revenue, LCMS World Mission in December 2002 eliminated 17 positions from its St. Louis-based staff and announced that it also eliminated 28 overseas missionary positions - one-fourth of its career-missionary force.

A sharp decline in donations to missions caused LCMS World Mission to take this drastic action. The mission board cut approximately \$3 million from its current \$29 million budget, and an additional \$6 million from the spending plan initially proposed for the 2003-04 fiscal year.

"There's no way we can have reductions like this without substantial reductions in personnel, both at the International Center and in our missionary force around the world," said Dr. Daniel Mattson, associate executive director of LCMS World Mission.

Mission leaders are attributing the drop in mission funding to economic and political factors: With the current U.S. economy, individuals - as well as foundations and other major donors - just don't have as much to contribute.

The layoffs reduce the size of the mission board's International Center staff from 55 to 38 - a reduction of nearly one-third. Eliminated in St. Louis were 11 full-time positions and five part-time positions. About half of the positions are secretarial. Others include the director of world services, a post held by Dr. Allan Buckman, who plans to retire February 28; director of world team support, Rev. Kenneth Greinke; director of information services, Karin Semler, who voluntarily resigned effective January 15; counselor for campus ministry, Rev. Richard Manus; counselor for recruitment, Sean Harlow; and director for missionary performance, Dr. Mark Schroeder.

Missionary posts were eliminated in 18 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Central and South America. Most of the layoffs will take effect January 31.

Several missionary posts were eliminated in Cote d' Ivoire (Ivory Coast), West Africa, and one in Eritrea, East Africa, leaving no resident LCMS missionaries in those countries. Mission work in those countries is expected to continue

under the auspices of local Lutherans, as well as a nonresidential missionary model in Cote d' Ivoire.

Three other career-missionary positions in Brazil, India and South Africa also are being eliminated, but volunteers will continue working in those countries.

Other countries that have lost missionaries are Germany, Kazakhstan, Guatemala, Kenya, Nigeria, Togo, Japan, South Korea, Macau, Taiwan, Thailand, Venezuela and Vietnam. But other LCMS career and volunteer missionaries will continue to serve in those countries.

The eliminations include 24 missionary families or individuals who are being recalled from the field, and four who have accepted early-retirement offers. An additional three unfilled missionary positions will not be filled.

Among those who are taking early retirements are two area directors - Rev. Robert Hartfield, who serves Central Europe and the Baltics, and Rev. John Duitsman, East Africa. A third, currently vacant, area-director position - for Central America and Mexico - will not be filled.

An LCMS World Mission committee is studying the situation to determine how many area directors are needed and how their positions should be structured in relation to staff in St. Louis.

LCMS World Mission Executive Director Robert Roegner says he is still committed to the mission board's goal of sharing the Good News of Jesus with 100 million unreached and uncommitted people during the next 15 years.

"I firmly believe that this challenge which we have placed before the church and ourselves - to reach 100 million people by the 500th anniversary of the Reformation - is a task God wants done," he said in his letter to missionaries. "Even as we have made our reductions, we have kept this goal ahead of us. Our strategies will change, but we will go forward. God can and will support us."

LCMS World Mission currently supports work - either directly through its missionary force, or indirectly through "partner" churches - in 68 countries. The Synod's mission force includes more than 400 people, including 177 career missionaries.



Cote d'Ivoire and Venezuela Missionaries Evacuated

LCMSNews - No. 79 - Paula Schlueter Ross - LCMS World Mission has evacuated almost all of its career missionaries from Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), West Africa, and Venezuela, South America, amid growing political unrest in those two countries.

Among seven "missionary units" serving Cote d'Ivoire, one who was on home leave in the United States will not return, and five were evacuated in November and December 2002. The term "missionary units" refers to individuals or families on the mission-board payroll who serve in overseas fields.

The seventh, medical missionary Dr. William Foster, became trapped in December when several rebel factions - totaling more than 100 men - took up residence in the village of Toulepleu near the Liberian border. Dr. Foster was under house arrest for just over a day, and then moved into a Red Cross compound, where he treated patients. After intervention from U.S. government officials, Foster was released on December 28 and arrived in the U.S. January 3.

Rebels, intent on ousting the current government, began fighting in Cote d'Ivoire in September. Since then, many Ivorians have fled across the border to Liberia.

In Venezuela, five long-term volunteers were evacuated by LCMS World Mission Dec. 10 because of an ongoing labor strike and growing tensions, including demonstrations and sporadic violence.

Eight Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod career-missionaries and their families have left the country, where they were serving, and returned to the United States, based on recommendations from U.S. embassy officials. The missionaries were "not in any physical danger," according to Ken Reiner, counselor for personnel services with LCMS World Mission, but, because of the strike, necessities such as petrol and food have become scarce.

Reiner said an LCMS World Mission crisis-management team, of which he is a member, is "continuing to monitor the situation."



Only One Seminary of IELB in Brazil

"God's mission - the Church's challenge: ONE OR TWO SEMINARIES?" was the title of an article by President Dr. Carlos Winterle of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Brazil (IELB) in its church magazine, the "Mensajeiro Luterano". This article was written immediately after the decision was taken at the national convention of the IELB in May 2002 to retain both seminaries in Sao Leopoldo and Sao Paulo.

After 60 days, as prescribed by the rules of the Convention, the two seminaries met with the National Directorate to analyze what had been done to date and what was being planned for the future. The financial burdens just increased once again. The Budget Commission, projecting a cumulative loss of R\$ 367,715 for the end of 2002, introduced a series of cuts and canceled some grants, in order not to increase the deficit. A committee was formed to analyze and study the situation in the area of theological education. Facing ever increasing financial difficulties, the subject was put before the Directorate Council in October 2002, where after many debates, it was decided to unite the two seminaries at Sao Leopoldo, immediately in 2003. These decisions were taken with more than 80% of the valid votes.

When President Winterle had to announce this decision, he commented: "No one considers this decision as a victory for a part of the Church. On the contrary, it was painful to take this strategic step backwards, so that within this reality we can start planning anew".

Most affected by this decision are the Concordia Seminary of Sao Paulo and the congregations in its immediate vicinity as well as those in the center and north of the country.

"We understand the criticisms and the protests of many but at the same time we plead for the collaboration of all in order to implement this unification. We had to take this decision so as not to aggravate the financial situation and avoid an impossible state of affairs. The future belongs to God. It is now for us to work in the best possible manner, without causing further losses due to our lack of co-operation. To the professors, students and parents in the two seminaries directly

affected by this decision, we ask for special understanding in the process of uniting the two seminaries. Those individual students most distant will receive special attention - with God's help," Winterle said.

New President for Lutheran Church of Nigeria



C. Tessaro -
Rev. E. E. Ekanem has been elected to the office of the President by the Council of the Lutheran Church of Nigeria (LCN) at its meeting on Nov. 29 to Dec. 1, 2002. Rev. Sunday O. Owateobe has been elected Vice president.

Both have been installed during the LCN National Convention held January 3 to 5, 2003.

Rev. E. E. Ekanem is from Ekpene Ukim in Akwa Ibom State. He received his degree from Daystar University in Nairobi, Kenya. He then served the LCN with the Christian Radio Studio. Thereafter he was a lecturer and Dean of Students at Jonathan Ekong Memorial Lutheran Seminary at the LCN Headquarters, before becoming Acting Principal of that institution. Then he was transferred to supervise the LCN work in Abuja, the nation's capital. Following that he served as Chaplain at Lutheran High School, Ikot Ekpene. Early last year he was transferred to be the District Superintendent of LCN Calabar District; Calabar is the Cross River State capital.

Rev. Ekanem succeeds Rev. S. J. Udofia, who served the LCN as President for nine years and Vice President for twelve years.

Lutheran Church of Nigeria Celebrates Convention

On January 3 to 5, 2003, the Lutheran Church of Nigeria held its annual National Convention. Convention in the LCN is not a

decision making event (National church decisions are made at Lutheran Council). Convention is worship, Bible study, prayer and fellowship. On Sunday, 12 to 13 thousand people attended the seven-hour worship service. In that service the new LCN president, Rev. E. E. Ekanem, was installed, 40 pastors were ordained, a new LCN Board of Directors was installed as well as other things done.

Dr. David Erber, Instructor at Jonathan Ekong Memorial Lutheran Seminary summarized the event in the following way: "There was great preaching, Bible lessons, prayers and singing. It was amazing how quickly the seven hours passed by."

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Argentina Elects New President

On its General Convention held October 12 to 14, 2002, the Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Argentina (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Argentina) (IELA), has elected **Rev. Edgardo Elsser** as its new president for the next four years. On January 15, 2003, he was installed into his new office, in which he succeeds Rev. Waldomiro Maili.

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Argentina Sends Missionary to Spain

On October 20, 2002, Walter Ralli and his wife Paola of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Argentina (IELA) left for Spain to do mission work there. State approval for the Evangelical Lutheran Mission in Spain has been applied for and the IELA hopes that its organization will soon be recognized officially.

Former President Waldomiro Maili reports further that the mission program in Argentina is sound. "The last meeting has started the program 'In the Name of God's Mission', which will emphasize the priesthood of all believers, so that in accord with 1 Peter 2:9 they 'may declare the praises of God'," Maili said.



LCSA and FELSISA Sign Protocol Document

Since 1892, when the Free Evangelical Lutheran Synod in South Africa (FELSISA) was established, it was in altar and pulpit fellowship with the congregations which came into being through the work of the Bleckmar Mission in South Africa, in which the FELSISA co-operated from the very beginning. When the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (LCSA) was constituted in 1967 from the congregations which had grown out of the mission work, the fellowship was continued without saying.

But the existing altar and pulpit fellowship has never found its expression in an official declaration signed by the two churches. Therefore the desire arose to document and openly express the existing church fellowship between both churches. For this purpose a protocol document was drafted by Bishop D. Tswaedi of the LCSA and President P. Ahlers of the FELSISA. In addition to the doctrinal content the document contains passages about the common history and relationship in the past and states explicitly: "We also acknowledge, that in the past it has been difficult to practice the existing fellowship. Different languages and

diverse cultural backgrounds have complicated the relationship and the political situation also had some influence.

But in spite of these difficulties meaningful contacts and co-operation took place through mission festivals, a joint commission on doctrinal matters and inter church relations, a joint examination commission, the striving to establish a joint theological seminary, occasional joint meetings of both church councils and pastors conventions, the representation of FELSISA in the Field Mission Council and co-operation on the local level between neighboring congregations."

After the FELSISA had approved the document some time ago, the convention of the LCSA, which took place in December 2002, also gave its approval to it.

With that, the way was free for the signing of the document by the respective leaders of both churches. This happened during the LCSA convention in Piet Retief in the church building of the local LCSA congregation.

Both bishop Tswaedi and president Ahlers emphasized the importance of this document for the clearer expression of unity in faith and confession between the LCSA and the FELSISA as in the past, before signing it under the applause of the convention.



Bishop D. Tswaedi and President P. Ahlers signing the protocol document at the LCSA Convention in Piet Retief.

Photo: K. Pahlen

Latvia: Agreement with SELK

selk news - During a special occasion in the house of the Church Board of the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELK) in Hannover/Germany, Archbishop Dr. Janis Vanags of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia (ELKL) und Bishop Dr. Diethardt Roth of the SELK signed an agreement about a relationship as partners between the ELKL and the SELK on October 25, 2002.

The document, which remains below the level of altar and pulpit fellowship, emphasizes that both churches are bound to the Holy Scripture and the Confessions of the Lutheran Church. It accentuates that ELKL and SELK share the experiences of adverse trials while acting according to Scripture and Confessions.

With the agreement, both churches declare their "joint willingness to far reaching co-operation in the spirit of brotherly togetherness and acting as partners. The goal of such co-operation is the mutual furtherance as well as the strengthening of Lutheran witness in the environment of church and society."

Fire Destroys Part of Lutheran School in Papua New Guinea

The building housing the library, computer lab, six elementary school classrooms and administrative offices at Highlands Lutheran International School (HLIS) in Papua New Guinea was burned to the ground on Wednesday, January 8. Everything in the building was destroyed. The fire was related to tribal fighting in close proximity to the school.

Rev. David Piso, newly re-elected Head Bishop of the Gutnius Lutheran Church (GLC) has called the incident "a sad moment in the church's history" and described the fire as an "act of terrorism against the innocent children of Papua New Guinea." But despite the tremendous loss he remains optimistic. In an e-mail to LCC and LCMS mission departments he stated, "We are currently assessing the situation and will prepare a complete report

including plans for the rehabilitation of the school. We intend to move forward with faith and hope in our Lord and Savior."

Fortunately, only Canadian Brent Kilback, a missionary of Lutheran Church-Canada, who serves as headmaster, and an Australian teacher were at the school when the fire started, as other teachers and students were away on holiday. Neither suffered injuries.

HLIS is owned and operated by GLC, with financial support for the headmaster coming from the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod in the U.S.

With a student population of more than 150, the school offers classes from preschool to Grade 12.

"The School Administration, the Faculty, the Gutnius Lutheran Church, the Enga Administrator and the Enga Provincial Governor are fully committed to resume excellence in education and the full services of the Highland Lutheran International School as soon as possible. Please bear with the Church and School as we do the best we can to return to a stable and peaceful environment where the Word of God is proclaimed to the children of Papua New Guinea," bishop Piso writes.

St. Louis Seminary Launches Immigrant Program

LCMSNews - No. 73 - A distance-education seminary program for immigrants to the United States is expected to be "up and running" in mid-February with some 40 students.

The Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology, based at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, is a specialized, interdisciplinary program that incorporates distance education, local mentoring and on-campus training. It is designed to provide "the necessary foundation for competent missional pastoral ministry and the process of lifelong learning" for men, who are serving as missionaries in ethnic-immigrant and urban cultures in North America, according to Dr. Andrew Bartelt, the seminary's vice president for academic affairs.

Inspiration for the institute came from workers in the Synod's African immigrant ministries, and the program was originally

intended solely for African immigrants, according to Rev. Yohannes Mengsteab, facilitator for new African immigrant and urban missions with LCMS World Mission and director of the new Ethnic Immigrant Institute. But students in the program will include Africans, Asians and Middle-Easterners who work with Muslims.

African-immigrant work in the Synod is modeled on "a missionary strategy," Mengsteab said. "So the missionaries that we have called will work in a district and plant multiple ministries. And they will all have leaders, and, in most cases, those leaders are lay people who have been identified by their communities as spiritual leaders. Now these people need training."

While the Synod has more than 70 African-immigrant ministries, the vast majority of them are led by laymen - only 10 African-immigrant leaders are ordained, Mengsteab said. "This institute," he said, "will prepare [the laymen] for ordination."

The Ethnic Immigrant Institute differs from the Synod's Distance Education Leading to Ordination, or DELTO, program in that courses are tailored more to non-American and urban cultures and take into account the often limited educational background of foreign students, Mengsteab said.

But, like DELTO, the institute brings the seminary to the student, allowing them to "integrate what they have learned with their day-to-day ministries."

Some Statistics and Facts on the HIV-AIDS Pandemic

The South African Diakonia Council of Churches supplied the following statistics, focusing especially on children affected and infected by HIV/AIDS in South Africa:

- Today, 42 million people in the world live with HIV/AIDS, including 1.3 million children less than 15 years of age.
- Earlier estimates that more than 13 million children worldwide would lose their mothers or both parents to AIDS by the year 2001 were passed by the end of 1999. 90% of these orphans live in sub-Saharan Africa.
- One in every 11 people infected with HIV in South Africa is a child.

- More than 90% of infected children contract HIV from their mothers during labor, delivery, or breast-feeding. Approximately 200 HIV+ babies are born every day in South Africa.
- It is estimated that 1.2 million children are currently orphaned and this is predicted to rise to between 3.6 and 4.8 million by 2010. Between 9 and 12% of these orphans will live in the Province of KwaZulu-Natal. (Approximately 750 000).
- In the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands, 75% of hospital beds are occupied by children with AIDS-related disease, while 50% of childhood deaths in that area were AIDS-related. (Figures as at August 2000)
- The Infant Mortality Rate in South Africa, that is the number of babies who die before they are 12 months old, is already more than 50 per 1000.
- The Child Mortality Rate, that is the number of children who die before the age of five, is expected to rise to 100 per 1000 in the next couple of years.
- By 2010 it is estimated that AIDS could kill as many as 6 million South Africans. This means that one in three children will have lost a parent to AIDS. No one has any idea what kind of country these children will inherit, or how well equipped they will be to begin the process of rebuilding.

In African countries that have had long, severe epidemics, AIDS is generating orphans so quickly that family structures can no longer cope. Traditional safety nets are unraveling as more young adults die of this disease. Families and communities can barely fend for themselves, let alone take care of orphans. Typically, half of all people with HIV become infected before they turn 25, acquiring AIDS and dying by the time they turn 35, leaving behind a generation of children to be raised by their grandparents or left on their own in child-headed households.

Millions of children, because they have lost one or both parents to AIDS, are growing up malnourished, undereducated, and at risk of being infected themselves.

"The Church has a duty to not only care for these children affected and infected by HIV/AIDS, but also to have a voice in the prevention of this disease, the changing of behavior, and the saving of a generation," the South African Diakonia Council of Churches concludes its report.