

Asia Ablaze! Newsletter

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Christmas Greetings

At Christmas time, we often think about family. It is a time when we focus on our closest relationships. We plan to build our connections closer. We hope we will make good memories.

The broken relationship that God and mankind felt because of rebellion and sin left humanity without hope of a good relationship with our heavenly Father. Helpless to mend the relationship, mankind hoped in the promise that our Lord would send a Savior to repair the wrongs of mankind.

And the Savior came. Mary "gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger" Luke 2:7. This is personal. Jesus isn't some mysterious idea. Jesus is the Son of God who came to take on our skin and our sin. He is God and man and He came and still comes to our world to build relationships with us.

We gather with family and friends this Christmas and celebrate the gift of relationships. We thank and praise our heavenly Father for sending Jesus in the flesh. We are thankful for our relationships with family and friends and especially with our Savior.

Rev. John Mehl

LCMS World Mission

Asia Pacific Regional Director

ALEA Conference

The Asia Lutheran Education Association (ALEA) hosted its fourth conference this October 21-22 in Hong Kong. Entitled, "Christ, Conscience and Curriculum: Schools in Mission," its focus was on service learning in ALEA schools.

Nearly 280 delegates from national and international schools attended from China, Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and Myanmar. Australia was also represented by the head of its Lutheran Education Association (LEA). There were also delegates from the US, including LEA, education executives, mission personnel and three Concordia Universities - Wisconsin, Chicago and Nebraska. Most of those who attended were teachers, professors and administrators, but LCMS missionaries teaching ESL throughout Asia and other professionals involved with service were also among those who came.

Rev. Dr. John Nunes, President and CEO of Lutheran World Relief, and David Begbie, Senior Spokesperson for Crossroads Foundation of Hong Kong, joined Marty Schmidt and Mike Kersten, teachers at the Hong Kong International School (HKIS), as keynote speakers. Rev. Andy Whaley from St. Paul Lutheran Church in Plano, Texas was the worship leader, and a music group made up of international teachers in Asia, led by Mary Ewing of HKIS, kept the tempo brisk and provided rhythm and soul to the whole event.

Marty and Mike led participants through the practical steps of how to do service so it is service learning in a Christian context and not just random acts of service. They also shared how to best 'institutionalize' service learning in the curriculum. research also led attendees through the steps of awareness students go through as their conscience is 'opened' by doing service.

David Begbie's poverty simulation helped participants to actually 'experience' both poverty and the stretching of their world view when they encounter it first hand. David's keynote focused on how much God in the Bible shows his concern for the poor, the widow and the orphan. John Nunes provided insight on how poverty affects us all, but that God calls everyone to address the poverty of everyone else in service. He also shared about LWR's malaria initiative, which is working to eradicate this disease worldwide. John's wife, Monique, shared with a moving song about caring for the children of the world.

The panel discussion led by Andy Whaley asked questions of John Nunes, Marty Schmidt, Michelle Cagnin (LCMS World Mission's Human Care Facilitator for the Asia Pacific Region) and Chok Kiu Yung (principal of Sharon Lutheran School in Hong Kong Synod) on their ideas of poverty, injustice and how service can address those.

Attendees were inspired, moved and affected by the speakers. They were also informed and encouraged by the scope of the Lutheran education system in Asia. During the farewell banquet, awards were given to Pat and Sue Frerking by Concordia, Seward for service and outreach. Dr. Tu Ngu and Dr. Al Schmidt were recognized by ALEA for their work with Concordia International School Hanoi and throughout Asia, respectively. In addition, ALEA will be sponsoring a Lutheran Service Initiative across its schools in Asia, and has set up a fund in the name of Al and Sandy Schmidt to

give grants for service learning projects.

ALEA thanks the Lutheran Church– Hong Kong Synod and Hong Kong International School for providing the venues for the conference.

The LCMS Reporter Online also published an article on the ALEA conference which can be viewed here:

<http://reporter.lcms.org/pages/rpage.asp?NavID=19409>

PHILIPPINES

Team from Hong Kong's Church of All Nations

In October a team of 13 students and adults from the Church of All Nations (CAN) in Hong Kong came to Manila to serve at Concordia Children's Services (CCS). The team spent a few days with the children at CCS, which include infants, toddlers, and older children. The team happened to be in town on October 31 and decided to prepare an American-style Halloween party that included games, face painting, a drawing station, and of course, lots of sweet treats. For many of the children, this was their first Halloween party.

CAN was able to raise US\$2,000 for CCS. In addition, the team also brought a lot of supplies to share, along with other in-kind gifts to be used at CCS. Many of these supplies were gathered and collected by a group of Filipino women who live and work in Hong Kong and attend CAN's Filipino Prayer Share Care Group. The volunteers enjoyed spending time holding and feeding the infants and toddlers.

Lutheran Church in the Philippines 21st General Convention

The 21st General Convention of the Lutheran Church in the Philippines (LCP) took place in October at the Betania Retreat House in Baguio City. Nearly 100 delegates and guests attended the event where the theme of the convention was "*Celebrating the Ties that Bind.*" *These conventions are a gathering of LCP clergy and lay people who are chosen and elected at district level conferences to represent the four districts of the LCP in the convention. The convention is a source of great blessing for everyone present because of the teaching, encouragement, and fellowship.*

Elections were held for LCP officers. This year Rev. James Cerdeñola was elected LCP President, Rev. Felipe Ehican Jr. was elected LCP Vice President, Rev. Henry Paul Roa was elected LCP Secretary, and Mr. Mario Galdones was elected LCP Treasurer.

Additionally, there were also deliberations and decisions made regarding proposals submitted for proper action by the delegates. These proposals included policy, mission/evangelism, theological education, finance and other issues.

3rd Annual National Pastoral Conference

During the first week of December, 45 pastors, lay leaders and guests gathered in the city of Tagaytay (just south of Manila) for the annual National Pastoral Conference. The main purpose of the conference was to gather to study the Word, pray, worship, and encourage one another. The theme for this year's conference was "*Re-visiting the Augsburg Confession,*" with a focus on Articles 14 and 15. Many of the pastors mentioned that the highlights were being able to dig into the Word and sing hymns together. They also valued the time together in fellowship, being able to encourage and lift up one another.

HONG KONG

Martha Boss Community Center Celebrates 25 Years

The Martha Boss Lutheran Community Center recently celebrated its 25th Anniversary. The community center was established by Lutheran Social Services, a ministry of the Lutheran Church – Hong Kong Synod. The center currently provides a nursery and kindergarten, day center for the elderly, a rehabilitation training center, a Lutheran congregation, and numerous community programs. The center serves over 7,000 members and hosts hundreds of activities each year. Through the Martha Boss Lutheran Community Center and other centers of the Lutheran Social Services, the Lutheran Church – Hong Kong Synod continues to be active in engaging the community in mercy and witness.

Sunday School Growth

Allen and Shirley Piepenbrink, LCMS educators from Wisconsin, are serving as LCMS missionaries in Hong Kong. They serve in four different schools of the Lutheran Church—Hong Kong Synod using English to teach subjects such as math, home economics, general studies, music, English, and most importantly, Bible studies/religion classes. Euon Lutheran Church where they serve has tried to start a Sunday School with little success in the past. Allen and Shirley were very eager to help the Sunday School program. It was advertised that there would be an English Sunday School, and everyone was overjoyed and stunned with the blessing of 76 students on the first Sunday! With the help of Crystal and Billy, two Chinese teachers, and other volunteers, the students are divided into three groups each week to work on a lesson, an activity, and singing or a craft. Praise God that 20 new parents have begun to attend the church service while their children are at Sunday School. Everyone is looking forward to the Sunday School children presenting the Christmas message of Jesus' birth to the church members through a play on Christmas Day.

TAIWAN

Poverty Simulation in Taiwan

Poverty is the state of existence which billions of people in our world live each day. Almost 30 boarding students at Concordia Middle School in Chiayi, Taiwan, were taken through a series of events and activities to introduce them to the world of living in poverty. For three weeks the students were able to watch a movie, participate in a simulation, and finally go online to discover the world where games meet social needs. Team Taiwan used the poverty simulation to help create more awareness with the church community as well. A Saturday evening in mid-November was selected for Salvation Lutheran Church youth, members, and guests to voluntarily experience the unfamiliar, disturbing, and sometimes frustrating life of living in poverty. Small in number, the process and discussion produced newfound respect and appreciation for those who are less fortunate. Prayers are being asked for these lessons to be remembered by all involved and for future considerations of how to address the problem of poverty.

Short-term Volunteer Visit

Ken and Mildred Young from Chester, Illinois were able to serve in Taiwan for a two-week short-term mission trip in October. The Youngs led Bible studies for the American teachers, taught Bible classes for several grade levels, and visited Chiayi Girls Senior High School.

In the elementary classes, they led activities for the students, as well as spoke about Jesus' love for the students. Chiayi Girls School was a special opportunity for the Youngs to share the Gospel because it is a public school and students do not regularly hear the Gospel. Here they provided English practice and a cultural exchange. Most classes had a skit or performance to share with Ken and Mildred.

VIETNAM

Concordia International School Hanoi Walk-A-Thon

On November 17, students from Concordia School Hanoi (CISH) descended Nghia Do park for a Walk-A-Thon to raise funds for Son Tinh primary school in Phu Tho province, Vietnam. The project was coordinated in partnership with LCMS World Mission.

Students from CISH collected pledges from people to sponsor them in their walk. All was said and "walked," CISH students walked over 100 miles and raised more than US\$2,300! It is wonderful news for the students at Son Tinh primary school. The money raised will be used to buy school supplies that will fill 160 backpacks (donated by LCMS World Mission).

On December 12-13, middle school students from CISH will travel to Son Tinh to deliver the filled backpacks to the rural students of Son Tinh and to spend time with the students there. They will also spend time learning about rural life in Vietnam, visiting homes and rice fields.

CISH Celebrates Thanksgiving

On November 24, the Concordia International School Hanoi (CISH) community celebrated American Thanksgiving with an International Feast of Thanksgiving. All the students, parents and teachers gathered in the large multipurpose room around long tables for fellowship and good food.

CISH Head of School, Steve Winkelman, welcomed the large group with reminders of how all the cultures represented at CISH celebrate a thanksgiving holiday sometime during the fall. Middle School Principal Pat Frerking reported that CISH students had walked over 100 miles (200 km) in a charity Walk-A-Thon to gather sponsorship for backpacks full of school supplies for 160 village students in Phu Tho province.

Each student, parent and teacher completed a Concordia Thanksgiving Flower that filled the glass wall in the multipurpose room. Parents came into classrooms and played with students. Middle school students took family photos and helped reset all the tables in the school after the feast in record time.

Thanksgiving at CISH had the genuine feel of a large extended family. Many thanks to all the parents who came, contributed such fine food and made the day so special for everyone. The CISH community has so much to be thankful for.

Bat Trang Visit

Hanoi, Vietnam is filled with interesting places to see which gives LCMS World Mission teachers Hanna Hartman and Sarah Schaff ample opportunity to explore with their students from Bach Khoa University. A favorite choice for students (many of whom are from surrounding provinces and have not spent much time in Hanoi) is Bat Trang, a pottery village on the outskirts of Hanoi. On October 29, they joined one of their first-year Pronunciation classes, and fellow LCMS teacher Mary Ettner, for a day of exploring and pottery.

For most of the students and Mary, it was their first trip to the pottery village. The group spent the morning wandering around the stalls in the market place. The items for sale range from small beads and tea sets to vases large enough to fit a grown man. After meandering through the market, the teachers and students found a small place to make their own pottery. Some only wanted to play with the clay, but others used the time to craft presents for friends and family members. It is these types of outings that provide such wonderful opportunities for LCMS teachers to build lasting relationships with their students.

CHINA

CISS Interim Courses

September 2011 once again brought the annual interim trips for Concordia International School Shanghai (CISS) students. Interim is a week-long off-campus learning experience designed to challenge the hearts, minds and bodies of CISS's high school students. Interim provides opportunities to strengthen community among students and teachers and to learn by doing. Interim also exposes students to cultural diversity and challenges pre-conceived notions through discussion and reflection. The program seeks to develop communication and leadership skills, self-reliance and compassion.

The offerings of CISS's Interim courses are diverse and include outdoor adventure, cross-cultural learning and community service activities. This year's offerings included 18 different courses, five of which were the work of CISS's flagship service program, the Yunnan Education Project (YEP). YEP works in partnership with Concordia Welfare & Education Foundation (CWEF), a Hong Kong-based, non-profit organization. The projects are dedicated to poverty alleviation through education, public health (including clean drinking water), appropriate sanitation, and rural development programs.

LCMS Staff Promoted at CISS

Two LCMS staff at Concordia International School Shanghai (CISS) have been promoted to new positions.

Eric Semler was selected to serve CISS's Elementary School as Assistant Principal in the 2011-2012 school year. Eric brings administrative experience from Illinois as well as Indonesia, where he served as head of school. He was a student teacher at Hong Kong International School in 1994 and served as a volunteer missionary in Japan from 1994-1997. He also is a board member for Asia Lutheran Education Association.

Karin Semler serves the CISS community in an expansion position, Director of Student Life, which includes coordinating school-wide co-curricular activities, organizing the high school's Interim program, as well as providing leadership for integrating service learning across the grades. One overarching thread for Karin's new position is facilitating CISS's flagship charity, the Yunnan Education Project (YEP). This year 100 students participated in YEP Interim courses. There is also a new multi-grade YEP Club this year which hopes to find real-world opportunities for alleviating poverty through service learning projects via YEP.

MACAU

New Deaf Ministry in Macau

Missionaries in Macau have been working with a new deaf ministry which is meeting at the Concordia English Center twice a month. In their spare time, missionaries Elliot and Serena Derricks have been studying the Macau Sign Language to help with the Deaf Fellowship. The first meeting in November was the 5th and was a time of sharing, eating together, and the preaching of God's Word by visiting pastor, Rev. Tom Dunseth. They also watched a video about a man named Nick Vujcic. He tells the powerful story of his walk in faith after he was born with no arms and no legs. Nick now travels around the world and teaches others about God's love for them, no matter how the world may view them. It was a good message for the attendees to hear, and it was exciting to see them talk about it afterwards. Please pray for upcoming times of fellowship, especially during the Advent season as missionaries share the story of Jesus' birth.

Bible Study-Cooking in Macau

In a fun combination of Scripture and cooking, Wednesday mornings are never dull in Macau! There is a Bible study at 11am, and then students prepare a recipe that relates to the lesson. The missionaries at Concordia English Center in Macau opened a makeshift kitchen in one of the classrooms where they cook American recipes. Many students have lunch breaks at that time, so they are able to come to eat and learn to cook Western food. They have a variety of classic American recipes. One example is crispy rice cereal treats which were tied into scripture by talking about how Jesus binds us together. Please pray for the Concordia English Center in Macau and this new and exciting outreach.

KOREA

2011 Retreat for Evangelists and Pastors-in-Training

From November 28-29, 2011, nine pastors from the Lutheran Church in Korea (LCK) and 17 candidates for ministry met for an annual retreat for evangelists and pastors-in-training at "Acts 29 Vision Village" in Yongin City, Gyeonggi Province. The theme for this year's retreat was "Attitude of Calling" (Gal 4:10). In his keynote address, Rev. Seung-Min Baek (New Life Lutheran Church) spoke about "Dreams, Despair, and Hope." Pastor-in-training Jeong-Woo Lee (Seoul Bethel Lutheran Church) reported about his practical training with the Japan Lutheran Church (NRK). These retreats for the candidates for ministry are held annually in December, and evangelists and pastors-in-training receive a call from a local church in which they will continue their practical training for the next year. The Committee for Evangelists and Pastors-in-Training holds individual interviews with the candidates, in which the candidates are informed about their future place of training. The Committee consists of the Board of Directors and the Presidents of the four main committees of the LCK General Assembly, as well as the Dean of the Graduate School of Theology at Luther University (LTU). Connecting the candidates for ministry with local churches is one of its most important duties. LCK's evangelists are students of the Graduate School of Theology at LTU, who receive their practical training at a local church, while pastors-in-training already have graduated from the Graduate School of Theology of LTU and passed the pastors-in-training examination and receive a full-time practical training for one year, after which they can prepare for their examination for ordination.

41st Regular General Assembly

The Lutheran Church in Korea (LCK) held its 41st regular General Assembly from October 6 to 7 at Somyoung Lutheran Church in Incheon City. Its theme was "A Church that Lives Only by Faith" (Romans 1:17). Among other things, the Assembly agreed to its financial budget proposal and received reports from each of its committees and institutions. Elections were also held for new members of LCK Board of Directors, Executive Committee, as well as auditors, all of whom will serve for the next two years. Presently, the LCK has 48 local churches and about 5,000 church members. The General Assembly consists of 53 ordained pastors, 25 lay members, as well as five invited members who have the right to speak, making a total of 83 members.

Memorial Worship Service Marking 494th Anniversary of Martin Luther's Reformation

Some 270 Lutheran church members from various congregations in Korea came together on Sunday, October 30, 2011 at Central Lutheran Church in Seoul to celebrate the 494th anniversary of the beginning of the Reformation. The offering collected during the worship service was dedicated to the LCK's overseas mission in Southeast Asia and other places. This year's Reformation Anniversary Worship Service was nationally broadcast twice in the beginning of November. The broadcast was also recorded on CD and sent to all local churches as a mission tool. The Reformation Anniversary Worship Service is held annually by the LCK as a joint worship service.

Publication of Meditation Booklet by Lutheran Hour Korea

During Lent 2011, the Lutheran Hour Korea published a booklet with meditations called "28 Days of Waiting." This

sixth booklet with meditations was distributed to the Korean churches throughout the country. With financial support from the Head Office of Lutheran Hour Ministries in the U.S.A., Lutheran Hour Korea annually translates and publishes meditation booklets for the Advent and Lent seasons. The author of this year's Lent Meditations is Rev. Wayne Palmer Lutheran Hour Ministries theological editor and writer.

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Ms. Alissa Asmus (Macau)

Ms. Adelina Balunsat (database administrator)

Rev. J.P. Cima (Vietnam)

Ms. Joni Coughlin (China)

Ms. Serena Derricks (Macau)

Mr. David Elliott (Vietnam)

Rev. Ted Engelbrecht (ALEA)

Mr. Sean Harlow (Philippines)

Ms. Hanna Hartman (Vietnam)

Rev. Kyungman Hong (Korea)

Ms. Annissa Lui (Hong Kong)

Mr. Matt Myers (Macau)

Rev. Dr. Malte Rhinow (Korea)

Mr. James Rush (Taiwan)

Rev. Joel Scheiwe (Hong Kong)

Mr. Ed Strohschein (newsletter coordinator)

Ms. Heidi Tannarat (newsletter design)

Mr. Matt Wasmund (Korea)

Mr. Mark Wolfram (Taiwan)