

Asia Ablaze! Newsletter

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June 2010

Remembering Dr. Stephen Lutz

Dr. Stephen (Steve) Lutz, LCMS missionary doctor to Papua New Guinea for more than a quarter of a century, entered his heavenly home on June 15, 2010. Steve, 60, is survived by his wife, Julie, and family, Anton, Paul and Rebecca, Laura and Nathan, and David.

Steve was a medical missionary working alongside national doctors, nurses, and other health care workers at Immanuel Lutheran Hospital in Enga Province, Papua New Guinea. He served as a general surgeon and treated a wide range of illnesses and injuries. He also strived to promote primary health care among the Hewa, Nete, and Penale people who live in remote areas of Papua New Guinea, in partnership with the local Gutnius (Good News) Lutheran Church. Steve returned from the mission field this spring when an MRI showed the aggressive growth of a brain tumor.

Steve was born in Nagercoil, India, to missionary parents, Rev. Arnold and Juanita Lutz. He attended school in India through high school. Steve graduated from the Concordia Colleges in Ann Arbor, Mich., and Seward, Neb., and later received his medical degree from the Medical College of Ohio at Toledo in 1977. The Lutzes lived in Iowa during Steve's surgical residency.

The staff and missionaries of LCMS World Mission mourn with Steve's family Julie, Anton, Paul and Rebecca, Laura and Nathan, David, and all their extended family upon Steve's passing and pray for God's comfort and peace during this time of sadness and change. We give thanks to God for Steve and for his dedication to sharing the love of Christ, impacting the lives of many, and serving the Lord. We also thank the Lord for the promise of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ and His assurance that Steve is now in Paradise with Him.

LCMS World Mission Executive Director Dr. Thomas R. Zehnder shares, "Steve has served God's people with compassion and faithfulness. His love for the people of Papua New Guinea has been evidenced by his determination to bring health and healing in the name of Jesus. We hold Julie and the family in our hearts and prayers, and we thank God for Steve and all he has taught us. Rest in peace, brother Steve."

Memorials may be given to the Papua New Guinea Mission Society (P.O. Box 28356, Oakdale, MN 55128) and LCMS World Mission (1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122).

Hong Kong Ablaze!

"Agenda for Christian Liturgy" Published in Traditional Chinese

"The Lutheran Service Book" published in 2006 by the LCMS has been widely used in English-speaking communities of the Lutheran Church, however, a comprehensive service book written in Chinese is not easy to find.

The Literature Department of the Lutheran Church—Hong Kong Synod (LCHKS) has just completed its project to produce a liturgy book. The book is titled "Agenda for Christian Liturgy" and printed in Traditional Chinese, is well-documented and stylish in design, with clear descriptions and guidelines for various occasions of religious service. This new and timely product will serve as a good reference book for pastors and church leaders, along with many others.

The book is bound in genuine Italian lamb skin and is available now for HK\$400 (US\$50) per copy. For more information, contact the LCHKS Literature Department at info@hkcp.hk.

Jim Rimbach Memorial Dinner

On April 24, 2010, Rev. Carl Hanson and Rev. Joel Scheiwe, both with LCMS World Mission, were able to host the first annual "Dr. James Rimbach Memorial Dinner for Theological Students from Myanmar." Dr. Rimbach was an LCMS Missionary and Theologian who taught in Hong Kong for over 15 years. He had a special heart for students from

Myanmar and often would personally support and encourage them, as well as visit them after they returned to Myanmar. The memorial was established through the generous gifts and vision of Jim's sisters, Caroline and Evangeline Rimbach.

With the help of Dr. Lal Tin Hre from the Association of Theological Education in Myanmar (ATEM), the memorial dinner was able to host 16 students from Myanmar now studying in Hong Kong. Lal was one of Jim's former students and has been a big supporter of this ministry to continue Jim's relationship with many of these students and the schools that they are connected with.

The program included dinner at a local restaurant and an opportunity for the students to gather together for fellowship, followed by a visit to the LCMS World Mission office in Kowloon Tong, Hong Kong. All of the students were presented their own copy of Luther's Small Catechism, and for the 10 graduates, a special gift was given to support them as they return to their homes and schools.

Vietnam Ablaze!

Seoul Foreign School Student's Service Trip

After a successful service trip last summer, a larger group of 15 students from Seoul Foreign School (SFS), led by Mark Altmann and Cathi Wiebusch, visited and served in Vietnam for a full week from May 21-28.

The group began its trip with a three hour bus ride to Phu Tho Province and went directly to Dieu Luong Commune, where LCMS World Mission has implemented many healthcare (health station, nutrition activities), agriculture (farmer training, irrigation system), and infrastructure (bridge) projects. The afternoon and the following morning were spent digging a ditch in one of the farming areas of the commune. With instruction and support from the communal Youth's Union, as well as many others, the SFS students became "experts" in ditch digging and surprised many villagers with the wonderful job they did.

The group spent the last afternoon in Dieu Luong visiting the communal health station and several families, some of whom have received cows through the LCMS World Mission Cow Project. This gave the students a deeper understanding of how people in a developing country like Vietnam live and work. Team members saw firsthand how access to opportunities and resources like education and healthcare, while often taken for granted at home, are things others may have limited access to. In one of the visits, SFS students met with a family who received a cow from LCMS but had to sell the mother cow and her calf (after having paid back the loan), to pay for the father's hospital expenses. The students were inspired to do some fundraising to buy this family a replacement cow. With a family whose *annual* income ranges from US\$ 60-110, a cow, which costs about US\$400 USD and can bring home US\$300-400 every year, is a very precious gift.

While the team only had a day and a half to visit, the trip was meaningful for both the team members and the villagers. The lives of many villagers were lightened up with the visit of young and active students from SFS, while the students went home appreciating what they, too, had received from this experience and the blessings they enjoy in their own countries.

Visit from St. Paul's

From May 1-6, Rose Robinson and Les Syring, representatives from St. Paul Lutheran Church in Trenton, MI visited Vietnam after several years of supporting personnel of LCMS World Mission there. The purpose of their trip was to experience firsthand the work of LCMS WM in Vietnam in order to explore how St. Paul's could be more involved.

On May 4, Rose and Les went with two LCMS National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) workers, Dr. Ngu and J.P Cima, to Phuong Vien Commune in Phu Tho Province. They spent the morning visiting the communal health station and kindergarten, both supported by LCMS World Mission. The group then went on to visit several families in the area who have received cows from the LCMS-NIN Cow Project. It was an excellent opportunity for them to get to know more about Vietnam, its communities and people, and especially those whom LCMS WM has been supporting for so long.

The following two days were spent at Hung Vuong University, also in Phu Tho Province, where Michael Tan has been serving as a volunteer English teacher for nearly four years, and at Hanoi University of Technology in Hanoi, where Sarah Schaff has been teaching English since her arrival in January. These visits helped Rose and Les better understand the building of relationships through teaching English as a Foreign Language.

Phuong Vien Commune

Last week, LCMS National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) workers, including J.P Cima, Ms. Nga Viet Hoang and Mr. Hai Quang Trinh, visited Phuong Vien commune in Phu Tho Province to make the second payment for the construction of

two additional classrooms for the kindergarten there, as well as to visit other projects in the commune.

Construction on the two classrooms is currently underway and is projected to be finished in about one month. When finished, the new classrooms, together with new toilets constructed with LCMS support last year, will contribute to making the kindergarten a nice, safe place for the children.

LCMS-NIN workers also visited two families who received cows from the LCMS-NIN Cow Project. While the two families' situations differ, both are benefiting from and appreciating the support they received.

Japan Ablaze!

Earthquake Relief Continues to Come In

Ongoing disaster relief contributions for Haiti and Chile continue to come from Japan. Japan Lutheran Church (NRK) has sent a second installment of donations directly to LCMS World Relief. In a letter to LCMS World Relief and Human Care on April 28, NRK President Kumei expresses the heartfelt thanks for the work being done and prayers for the people affected by the ongoing challenges of rebuilding their lives.

"Please accept heartfelt thanks for the precious work of LCMS World Relief. In response to the catastrophic disasters that have occurred in Haiti and Chile, and in order to have assistance offered to those visited by these events, the NRK, through LCMS World Relief, has made a second contribution, with the first contribution already sent in, the total amount donated comes to 953,681 yen (US\$10,450). Funds are the result of money raised from each church, school, kindergarten, and school of the NRK. Haiti and Chile, there are people who have been victimized by overwhelming disasters and have been scarred in body and spirit. Together with our prayer that God bring healing to these victims, we also pray that he would pour out his mighty strength upon the work of LCMS World Relief." Yutaka Kumei, NRK President.

Easter in Japan

Suginami Lutheran Church in Tokyo, Japan, held its Children's Easter sunrise service at a nearby park on April 4, beginning at 7:30 a.m. The children explored the park looking for plastic colored eggs, each containing an item connected to Holy Week. Mr. John Plagens, a professor at Japan Lutheran College, led the message, while two church members played guitar. As the message was delivered, it was remarkable to watch as people passing through the park stopped to hear the Gospel proclaimed. Following the sunrise, everyone returned to the church for an Easter morning breakfast. After breakfast, the group went to another park where the children looked for more Easter eggs that many neighborhood children had colored the previous day.

Pentecost BBQ

On May 23, Suginami Lutheran Church Tokyo, Japan, followed up its Pentecost worship service with food and fellowship at a BBQ. Rev. Suzuki, a professor from Japan Lutheran College and Seminary, was a guest pastor for the service. In addition regular church members, there were also visitors from other Lutheran churches in attendance. After the service, since it was raining, the congregation with its visitors gathered downstairs and under tents outside. Despite the inclement weather conditions, there was still a good crowd of people. The BBQ ended with the singing of four Japanese praise songs.

India & Sri Lanka Ablaze!

Lutheran Schools in India Making an Impact

Why do Hindu parents send their children to the Lutheran schools in southern India? When David and Beth Hoepfner, retired Lutheran teachers who are serving in India, asked this question, the principals answered that the parents want the attention that the Lutheran teachers give their children and that their children have a better self-image of themselves when they attend India Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELC) schools.

The Hoepfners visited over 80 IELC schools to learn about the needs of the schools, and will be distributing resource boxes with a curriculum based on the translated Indian versions of [100 Bible Stories](#) to the IELC primary schools. The resource boxes will provide teachers with additional materials such as Biblical posters, children's books, CDs and puppets to use when sharing the Gospel message with the students.

Biblical posters were the most requested resource. The Hoepfners have already given some Concordia Publishing House posters to the IELC high schools and middle schools. The principals of these schools were grateful for these additional resources as they reminded them of pictures they had seen when they attended the schools that were

supported by former LCMS missionaries. Their request was for more posters, for a syllabus for teaching Bible stories, and for Christian DVDs to show students. The Hoepfners are packing their suitcases with these requested materials for their return trip to India in August.

There are over 15,000 students attending IELC schools in southern India, and more than 85% of these children are from Hindu families. May the Holy Spirit set *Ablaze!* the hearts of these children when they hear that a loving Savior holds His arms open to them.

Light Shining in the Darkness

Quietly hidden in a community just outside the city of Colombo, Sri Lanka, is a congregation of Lutheran believers. Their pastor instructs his little flock with the teachings from the Lutheran Confessions. Each Sunday he offers God's Holy Word and the Sacrament of Holy Communion to the faithful members.

The believers and their pastor have suffered many hardships. The leader of this small church-body perished with his wife in the 2004 tsunami. Then two years ago another pastor was lost in a motorcycle accident, and still recently a third pastor has left to work with another denomination.

By God's grace the current pastor and his followers continue on in the name of the Lord as they labor in the harvest field of their community and share the message of Salvation. Truly, here is the Light of the Gospel shining in the darkness of this world, as it brings joy and peace to all who hear and believe.

New Chapels

Many congregations of the India Evangelical Lutheran Church have outgrown their facilities. The members are giving sacrificially to build chapels like the one above that bring the glory and message of Christ to their communities.

Korea Ablaze!

Easter Worship Service at LCK Church Office

On April 5, the Lutheran Church in Korea (LCK) Headquarters held its 2010 Easter Worship service at its offices in Seoul. Participants included LCK President Hyun-Sub Um, LCK office staff, members of the pan-denominational organization "Donating Blood of Love" that has offices in the same building, Rev. Patrick O'Neal from LCMS, and Rev. Malte Rhinow, ecumenical co-worker from Germany. The sermon was given by Rev. Taek-Ju Hong from Bethel Church in Daejeon City. The LCK Office holds worship services for its staff every Monday, inviting LCK pastors to give the sermon.

2010 Special Faith Lecture for Lutheran Lay Church Members

On April 18, about 100 participants assembled at Luther University south of Seoul for the "2010 Special Lecture on Faith for Lay Members." The lecture was organized by the Educational Committee of the Lutheran Church in Korea's (LCK) General Assembly for Lutheran church members. The event began with singing hymns and was followed by prayer, a special lecture, and a dinner. The lecture was led by Prof. In-Jong Hong from Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary in Seoul and had the theme "Healthy Faith, Healthy Life." The LCK General Assembly holds these Faith Lectures every year in May with the purpose of nurturing the faith of local church members and promoting community and fellowship among Lutherans.

Development Program for Local Churches

The General Assembly of the Lutheran Church in Korea (LCK) has a Church Development Program aimed at the support of mission by local churches. This program gives financial support for non self-sustaining local churches requiring architectural remodeling of their place of worship. The financial aid amounts to US\$25,000 and receiving churches use the money to remodel their buildings. Through this program, the LCK General Assembly leads local churches to more active missions.

In March 2010, Cheongju Lutheran Church in Cheongju City, located in central South Korea's Chung-Cheong Province, celebrated the opening worship service for its new place of worship. In May, Onyang Lutheran Church in the mid-western City of Onyang completed its remodeling and held a thanksgiving worship service. Every year one church is supported by this program.

Joint LCK Choir Festival

On May 3, about 250 Lutherans assembled at Central Lutheran Church in Seoul for a joint Lutheran Church in Korea (LCK) choir festival. The festival was organized by LCK's Women's Association. Church choirs from seven local Lutheran churches participated and performed at the festival. This festival is held with participants from local

Lutheran churches to perform choir compositions, praise God and promote fellowship among Lutherans. LCK President Hyun-Sub Um participated in the festival, in addition to giving a congratulatory speech and blessing. The Women's Association also held a ceremony called 'offering of small coins of love' at the end of the festival. The offerings will be sent to the pan-denominational Korea Church Women's Association in support of missions throughout Korea.

Farewell Reception for LCMS's Rev. O'Neal

On June 1, a farewell reception for LCMS missionary Rev. O'Neal and his family was held in Seoul. The reception was an official LCK event and attendees included LCK President Rev. Hyun-Sub Um, LCK Vice-President Rev. Hyun-Gil Kang, LCK General Assembly Secretary Rev. Kyungman Hong, LCK General Assembly English Secretary Rev. Kwang-Woong Kim, LCK General Assembly Treasurer Rev. Young-Seok Jin, and their spouses. LCK President Hyun-Sub Um thanked Rev. O'Neal for his service and engagement. Rev. O'Neal was installed in Korea as an LCMS missionary on October 13, 2005, and plans to leave Korea in late June 2010 to begin ministry in a church in the U.S.

News from Local Churches of LCK

On May 17, about 150 people attended the founding worship service for a new Lutheran church in Seoul. The new Gospel Church installed Rev. Yong-Bok Han as its pastor. Rev. Han previously founded Gu-il Lutheran Church and served as pastor at Cheonan Lutheran Church and Central Lutheran Church. Gospel Church currently shares facilities with International Lutheran Church which was established for English speaking foreigners in Korea. Gospel Church plans to move to its own facilities in the future.

Macau Ablaze!

New Macau CEC Director

In May, Macau Concordia English Center (CEC) welcomed a new director, Matt Myers, along with his wife, Kim, and two children, Mark and Emily. The Myers' have previously served with LCMS in Vietnam from 1998 - 2006 and Indonesia from 2006 - 2009. has a master's degree in Teaching, with a concentration in TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages), and has been teaching English for the last 12 years in Asia. One of his interests is incorporating technology into the learning process, as well as helping people make real breakthroughs in English acquisition.

Matt's arrival gives witness to God's work in South China. The opportunities to share the Gospel through teaching English as a Second Language, based on the Macau CEC, have led to two additional English centers being opened in the last five years. It is with great excitement that Matt is welcomed to the Macau field, and the teaching team and staff look forward to a new chapter in serving Christ under Matt's leadership.

China Ablaze!

CISS Elementary Principal Retires and Receives Honor

Michael and Louise Weber began their work in international education in Asia nearly three decades ago. It was their tenure at Hong Kong International School that opened the door for the Webers to be on the founding faculty of Concordia International School Shanghai (CISS) in 1998, where Michael served as Director of Technology (1998-2008) and Louise served as elementary school principal, as well as Head of School (2006-2007).

Prior to Louise's retirement in June, she received an honor as Concordia University Chicago's Alumna of the Year at the May commencement ceremony. The graduation program states, "The Alumna of the Year Award is presented to a graduate of Concordia whose service to the church and community has brought honor to Concordia University Chicago." During the ceremonies surrounding her honor, Louise engaged with new graduates, encouraging them to take the leap into international education.

As the Webers prepare to "reposition" into life in Ft. Myers, Florida, they leave a permanent impression on the CISS campus and the lives of thousands of families, students and faculty. Having witnessed the growth of the school from vacant swampland to five purpose-built facilities over 12 years, the Webers participated in shaping the vision of CISS into reality.

Philippines Ablaze!

Northern Luzon Celebrates Annual SportsFest

On May 24-29 nearly 300 young people and adults from six regions throughout Luzon traveled to Christ Lutheran Church in Barangay Moreno, Binalonan, Pangasinan to participate in the annual Northern Luzon SportsFest. Activities included team and individual sporting events, board games, instrumental and vocal musical performances and drama competitions. Although this was a sports camp, participants were able to enjoy plenty of good food and fellowship activities, including daily devotions, praise and worship time, as well as talent shows and skits, focusing on this year's theme of "Ambassadors of Reconciliation." Guest speakers for the Bible studies and devotions included Rev. Abel Villos, professor at Lutheran Theological Seminary (Baguio, Philippines), and Mr. John Plagens, former missionary kid to the Philippines, currently serving as a professor at Japan Lutheran College (Tokyo, Japan). Mr. Plagens was joined by Japan Lutheran College seminarian Yushi Ichuhara. Mr. Ichuhara was actively involved in the worship services playing drums and guitar. In addition, he taught the SportsFest participants worship songs in Japanese.

The annual SportsFest is one of the week-long camps hosted by the Lutheran Church in the Philippines (LCP) to promote fellowship among youth from different LCP congregations. The overall mood of the camp was very festive and joyous, and participants can hardly wait for next year.

New Volunteer to the Philippines

Sean P. Harlow, most recently from Portland, Oregon, has been living in central China for nearly two years assisting with earthquake relief efforts in Sichuan Province. Sean's full-time commitment to this project will come to an end in October. At that time, he will be moving to Manila in the Philippines, where he will serve as assistant to Lutheran Church in the Philippines (LCP) President Rev. James Cerdenola. Some of Sean's duties will include building relationships with local leaders across the Philippines, working on human care projects and helping to write grants in order to carry out these projects, and being involved with nationwide conferences assisting with music development (leading music time at conferences and coordinating service teams to perform at various projects). Sean and Rev. Cerdenola enjoyed opportunities this past March and May to travel to various stations around the Philippines to visit and fellowship with leaders and members, as well as gain an understanding of the ministry needs within these congregations.

Thailand Ablaze!

Akha Outreach

The Akha village of Doi Sango in Chiang Rai, northern Thailand continues to be a place where God's Word flourishes and the message of Jesus Christ is changing the lives of the people in the community. These changes were evident during a three day youth camp in April which was attended by 25 children and many more adults. During the camp the children learned about God's creation, prayer and their life as part of the body of Christ. They participated in songs, games, crafts, bible study and fellowship with each other and the volunteer leaders from LCMS-WM, the Concordia Welfare and Education Foundation– Thailand and the Thailand Concordia Lutheran Church. Prior to the camp the local church welcomed 12 new members into the body of Christ through holy baptism. It is exciting to see the Lord at work in His Kingdom. Please continue to pray that the ministry among the hill tribes of Thailand would continue to grow and flourish.

TCLC Seminar

This past April the Thailand Concordia Lutheran Church (TCLC) hosted a four-day seminar for its leaders and partners. The seminar gave the participants the opportunity to become familiar with one another's ministries and identify ways to support and uplift one another as they serve in regions throughout Thailand. It also provided the chance to further strengthen relationships among TCLC members.

The seminar featured several guest speakers including Rev. Ted Na Thalang, TCLC President, and Rev. Jeff Ehlers, Garuna Foundation Chairman.

ALEA Ablaze!

ALEA Appoints New Executive Director

In its May meeting, the Board of the Asia Lutheran Education Association (ALEA) appointed Rev. Ted Engelbrecht, LCMS World Mission Area Facilitator for Southeast Asia, as its new Executive Director. He succeeds Dr. Darrell Van Luchene, who had been serving as interim director for the past year. Ted is a long serving educator, pastor and administrator with LCMS World Mission, and he will be helped in his duties by Darrell, who will continue as an associate.

Started in 2002 by Dr. Allan Schmidt, ALEA has several purposes and goals. It works to connect the almost 200 schools that the LCMS or its church partners run in Asia, both independently and with schools and school associations in the U.S. It also helps facilitate trainings, curriculum development and infrastructure projects. Another way it helps is in the recruitment of teachers from the U.S. and elsewhere for the schools in Asia. Finally, it runs tri-annual conferences bringing together educators from all over the world, with the next conference set for October 20-23, 2010 in Hong Kong.

ALEA's board is made up of educators and other professionals from around Asia. Current board members and advisors include Mr. Fred Voigtmann from Taiwan, Ms. Anna Hu from Concordia International School Shanghai, Dr. Marty Schmidt and Ms. Janet Abercrombie from Hong Kong International School, Mr. Francis Lee and Ms. Mary Chiu from the Lutheran Church – Hong Kong Synod, Dr. Darrell van Luchene who is now in Montana and has previously served for many years at schools in Indonesia, and Rev. John Mehl, LCMS World Mission Regional Director for Asia.

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Ms. Adelina Balunsat (database administrator)

Mr. Kwok Kuen Chan (Hong Kong)

Rev. Ted Engelbrecht (East Asia)

Rev. Carl Hanson (East Asia)

Mr. Sean Harlow (Philippines)

Mr. Matthew Hass (Japan)

Rev. Dr. Herbert Hoefler (India & Sri Lanka)

Ms. Beth & Mr. David Hoepfner (India)

Rev. Kyungman Hong (Korea)

Ms. Betsy Karkan (Thailand)

Ms. Megan Kincaid (Hong Kong)

Mr. Matt Myers (Macau)

Rev. Malte Rhinow (Korea)

Ms. Stephanie Roegner (Taiwan)

Ms. Karin Semler (China)

Mr. Ed Strohschein (newsletter coordinator)

Ms. Heidi Tannarat (newsletter design)

Ms. Patricia Temple (Sri Lanka)

Mr. Hai Quang Trinh (Vietnam)

Ms. Mary Eddy U (Macau)