

THE MESSENGER OF HOPE



The Newsletter of Hope Lutheran Church
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**Twelfth through Fifteenth
Sunday after Pentecost**

August 2005



WORDS OF HOPE

by Pastor Curtis Aguirre

By the time you read this the National Convention of the ELCIC will have taken place in Winnipeg, and the delegates there, including our delegate Jan Nilsson, will have voted one way or another on the proposal to adopt the "local option" for the blessing of same gender unions, i.e., that each congregation be given the authority, under certain guidelines, to decide to offer or not offer such blessings.

In the lead up to the convention, a lot of letters, messages, resolutions, and, from some of the opponents of the resolution, threats of secession, have been circulating. This has led me to reflect again on the nature of the Church, and what it is that might legitimately prompt a group of people to demand separation from the particular institutional manifestation of the Church to which they belong [N.B.: I use capital C "Church" to refer to the spiritual entity which transcends institutional boundaries, and lower case c "church" to refer to the human institutions, such as denominations and congregations].

Given that our own Lutheran tradition began life as a movement of conscience which was declared heretical by the church authorities of the day, I thought it might be informative to go to the Lutheran Confessions to get a sense of how they dealt with questions of Church unity.

The Augsburg Confession defines the Church as "The assembly of believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are given according to the Gospel." This article goes on to assert that "it is sufficient for true unity of the Christian church that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and that the sacraments be given in accordance with the divine word. It is not necessary... that ceremonies, instituted by people, should be observed uniformly in all places." (Augsburg Confession VII)

(cont. pg.2)

KAIROS AT WORK - AN APPEAL FOR REFUGEE RIGHTS

A final count of 24 thousand signatures is in for the APPEAL FOR REFUGEE RIGHTS petition. This is more than double the number of signatures ever received for any previous action by KAIROS, and a positive reflection on the power of a focused campaign action with strong church and church leader support.

New Democrat MP Alexa McDonough and Bloc Quebecois MP Meili Faille tabled the first 10,000 signatures in the House of Commons on April 4 (Refugee Rights Day). Citizenship and Immigration Minister Joe Volpe responded to the petition, stating that security remains a primary concern of the government; that the appeal process should be looked at in the context of a full-scale review of the refugee determination system; and that Canada is under no international obligation to instate any particular form of refugee determination.

KAIROS, along with member churches including the ELCIC, remains concerned about the government's continued use of the security agenda to postpone implementation of an appeal process that has been a part of Canadian law since 2002, and reiterates Canada's moral and ethical obligation to treat refugees with justice. KAIROS will continue to pursue this point with the minister.

"In Canada, you can appeal a traffic ticket, but you can't appeal a decision that could send you back to death in the country you fled when you put your trust in us," said KAIROS executive director Mary Corkery, in a March 2005 news release. "Three-year-old revisions to refugee legislation included provisions for an appeal process, but the federal government still refuses to implement those provisions?its own legislation."

(cont. pg.3)

As this debate about same-gender blessings does not involve the sacraments as understood in the Lutheran Confessions per se, the question remains: What, then, is the Gospel? The Formula of Concord, which is the grand summary of Lutheran teaching at the end of the Book of Concord, has the following to say. "...the Gospel, strictly speaking, is the kind of doctrine that teaches... that Christ has satisfied and paid for all guilt and without human merit has obtained and won... forgiveness of sins, the Righteousness that avails before God, "and eternal life." But the Gospel is also "the entire doctrine of Christ which he proclaimed personally in his teaching ministry... a proclamation of both repentance and of forgiveness of sins." Finally, the Gospel, "when law and Gospel are opposed to each other, as when Moses is spoken of as a teacher of the law in contrast to Christ as a preacher of the Gospel is not a proclamation of contrition and reproof but... comforts consciences that are frightened by the law, directs them solely to the merit of Christ, and raises them up again by the delightful proclamation of God's grace and favour acquired through the merits of Christ." (Formula of Concord, Epitome, Article V, Affirmative Theses 4, 5, and 6)

The Lutheran Confessions set the bar fairly low for Church unity, or even for church unity. Sacraments aside, they declare that as long as we 1) teach that Christ has paid the price for our sin, 2) teach what Jesus taught, and 3) distinguish between Law and Gospel, we have no reason to operate separately from each other.

But I wonder if the underlying issue is not so much theological as it is sociological and even biological. Throughout the history of our species human societies have had a hard time with difference and outsiders. Any minority, any group that deviates from the societal "norm" has always been vulnerable to being ostracized, exploited, expelled, or even killed. Whenever voices arise that call for the equal treatment or full integration of those vulnerable groups into the larger society, there is often a backlash against those prophetic voices. Sometimes the backlash is violent (pogroms, ethnic cleansing, etc.) and sometimes it is "merely" systemic (segregation laws, "glass ceilings", exclusion from certain economic opportunities, etc.) Consider the long struggle of Jews to be accepted in western society, or the long struggle of Japanese born Koreans to be accepted in Japan, or the long struggle of African-Americans to be accepted in the United States, or the long struggle of India's untouchables to be treated fairly and equally, or the long struggle of mentally ill people

and their advocates to garner the support of the larger society, or the long struggle of the physically handicapped to have their needs taken seriously. Majorities do not like to accommodate minorities. Majorities prefer to make the minorities conform.

So perhaps this fight and the potential for people and congregations splitting off from the ELCIC over this issue is inevitable because of the biological make up of our species. Maybe this is just how homo sapiens sapiens works, and only God can really redeem us out of this state. Now there's an interesting thought./

CHARITY OF THE MONTH FOR AUGUST 2005

The charity of the month is Habitat For Humanity. Habitat For Humanity is an organization that helps low income families build their own houses. The organization raises funds to acquire a piece of property and building supplies. The designated recipient family signs an agreement with the organization to participate in the fundraising and in the construction. The family and skilled and unskilled volunteers work together to build the house.

Habitat For Humanity is an international organization, supported by many churches and community groups. Habitat For humanity is also the designated National Youth Project of the ELCIC for 2004-2006. Youth groups across the ELCIC are raising funds to at least sponsor a house in Winnipeg, the site of the 2006 Canadian Lutheran Youth Gathering, and ideally to sponsor a house in each Synod.

Your Habitat For Humanity donations will go toward our youth group's efforts to raise money for Habitat For Humanity through the National Youth Project.

If you would like to support this work, please indicate the amount on the "Charity of the Month" line on your envelope.

On June 20 (World Refugee Day) a joint statement was issued by Amnesty International, the Canadian Council for Refugees, and KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Initiatives. In their joint statement the three organizations outlined their continued efforts towards ensuring that the Canadian refugee determination system include an appeal process to review negative refugee decisions.

Immigration Minister Joe Volpe had been invited to appear before the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration on June 21 to clarify his position on this issue and make his plans known. Previously the Minister had indicated that he would respond by the end of June 2005. The Minister declined the June 21 invitation and stated that the government's response will now come "in the near future".

The absence of the appeal has been recognized as a fundamental flaw in the Canadian refugee determination system by both the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. Currently the Canadian refugee determination process does not conform with international protection standards and the joint statement urges Canada to implement the Refugee Appeal Division.

More information at <http://www.kairoscanada.org/e/refugees/appeal/index.asp> or contact Tanya Chute, Refugees and Migrants Program Coordinator, 1 877 403 8933 x230 or tchute@kairoscanada.org

The original Healing and Hope dealing with this issue can be read at <http://www.elcic.ca/ghda/enews.html> (August 2004).

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Dexter Vosper is heading off to Belgium for a year as an exchange student. He will be living in the French (Walloon) speaking part of Belgium, so we wish him bon voyage!

Confirmation Camp (Aug. 14-19) at Nanoose Bay Pentecostal Camp and the BC Synod Youth Gathering (Aug. 27-31) at Moorecroft Camp are garnering a lot of volunteer help from current and former Hope Lutheran members. Confirmation Camp needs kitchen help and the Youth Gathering still needs a woodworker to lead the kids in a project, and a liturgical dancer. If you are able to help, please sign the Confirmation Camp sign up sheet, or call Pastor Curtis in regards to the Youth Gathering.

HEALING MINISTRY - UPDATED INFORMATION

by Pastor Curtis Aguirre

This fall Beth Paton and I hope to introduce healing prayer ministry into the life of Hope Lutheran Church. Healing prayer ministry is based on the New Testament examples of prayer, laying on of hands, and anointing with oil for healing. This is not the ecstatic healing ministry of tent meetings and television healers. Rather, this is a quiet, prayerful rite of healing with emphasis on "spiritual" healing. It can take place either in a separate Service of Healing or as part of the Sunday Communion Service. In the case of the latter, there would be a place, perhaps in the narthex, where two or more trained lay ministers would be waiting to offer the rite of laying on of hands, anointing, and prayer for those who choose to receive it. Normally, the recipients would receive communion at the altar first, and then proceed to the healing station, though one could also have only the rite of healing if one wished.

If you are interested in being trained for this ministry, please indicate this by putting your name in the sign up sheet. The sign up sheet is already up. The deadline for signing up will be August 14. The training sessions will start the week of week of Sept. 4-10 --- ending week of Oct. 2-8. A commissioning service will be held on Oct. 9.

WORDS OF NOTE:

The recent events in London have brought to our attention how serious the situation has become in the so-called "war on terror". The power and richness of multi-ethnic communities seems to have been turned upside down in these extraordinary events. But a word from a Muslim scholar may help in our coming to terms with what is going on, and the ultimate solution to a problem that is almost out of control. Ziauddin Sardar is a leading Muslim writer and author of more than 30 books, including "Desperately seeking Paradise: journeys of a skeptical Muslim". He is based in London. He says: "The war on terror, in fact, cannot be a war at all. It has to be a reasoned engagement with the politics of tradition. If Islam has been construed as the problem, then Islam is also the essential ingredient in the solution."

Charlie Fox

SOCIAL JUSTICE

The Kairos Regional Meeting is being held Oct 14th - 16th at Naramata. Lisa Rokeby is our official delegate. Everyone is welcome.

The next local Kairos meeting is to be held at Hope Lutheran on Tues. Sept 20th @ 7:00 pm.

Lynn Wytenbroek from Malaspina Faculty Human Rights Association is invited to speak re: sending young [poor] to the military offering a bonus to sign up. The recent influx of war resisters from the USA seeking refugee status in Canada has raised awareness to this issue.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Don't forget the next Coffee House on August 12th at 7:30 pm. We need your support. Paving project is the designated charity.

SAME GENDER BLESSINGS DEFEATED

Our delegate Jan Nilsson reported from the National Convention venue that the proposal to allow the "local option" for offering blessings for same gender couples was defeated. The vote was 183 in favour, 220 against. That breaks down to 45% in favour, 55% opposed. More information will be forthcoming in the delegate's report.

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH PHASE 2?

After the Annual General Meeting Council decided to have a look at Phase II of the Church building plan, now that Phase I was successfully completed, and there was a small sum of money in the Phase II fund. A committee was struck and I was elected Chair of the committee (a fancy title for the person who makes sure there is coffee for the meeting). The committee was somewhat surprised to find out how little area we had to work with and the restrictions placed upon us by the city Building Code and the costs involved in making the space useable for small rental groups and for church activities with Handicap facilities.

After several meetings and much discussion, it was decided that Phase II would have to be put on hold until we become much more financially secure in our present facilities!

Should you have ideas regarding financing and/or construction for Phase II, please forward them to me at the church or on email at (r-mmcmamus@shaw.ca). I strongly suggest that people go into the Council Room and take a look at the area we have proposed to develop and then present your ideas. Pastor Curtis' idea to make the area into a bus parking area and my plans for a sports complex both were shot down by a strong dose of reality!

Don't be shy about offering us your advice! We appreciate any and all the help we can get as we contemplate the future of Hope Lutheran's Phase II.

God Bless, Dick McManus
Chairperson of Phase II Committee

MOMENTS OF INSPIRATION



“Every human action, whether it has become positive or negative, must depend on motivation.” — Dalai Lama

“The real richness is in be-ness. People can take all that you have, all that you collected. People can stop your labor, or an accident can stop you. When you are, you never lose what you are.” — Torkom Saraydarian

“Change is created by those whose imaginations are bigger than their circumstances.” — Unknown source

“Your imagination is your preview to life's coming attractions.” — Albert Einstein

FROM THE TREASURER

Arnold Gill

Along with the changes to the bulletin, some reporting changes will also be made to the Messenger. Along with a short summary of the current financial situation, I will also include attendance and offerings amounts for the last month.

For the four weeks in June and the first four weeks in July, the following are the total attendance and offerings received.

	<u>June</u>	<u>July</u>
General Offerings	6869.10	8694.33
Designated Offerings		
CLWR	80.00	30.00
dishwasher	7.00	n / a
Haven House	53.00	320.00
GHDA-AIDS South Africa	300.00	177.00
VBS	60.00	40.00
7-10 Club	60.00	n / a
paving	1580.00	470.00
confirmation camp	450.00	675.00
youth	6.00	5.00
Average Sunday Offering	1717.28	2173.58
Needed from Budget	2330.00	2330.22
Attendance		
8:30	33	42
9:30	131	125
11:00	127	169
per Sunday average	73	84

As you can see, attendance and offerings were quite a bit off in June compared to July. Additionally, offerings did not come close to meeting the budget requirements. This needs to be remedied if we are to continue meeting our expenses. Currently, we are running at about \$10,000 behind (expenses exceed offerings by this amount).

The deadline for the September Messenger is Friday, August 26. Please send your submissions to the office via email at hopelutheran@nanaimo.ark.com or phone (250) 758-1232. You can also speak to Olena directly or through email at mind-body@telus.net