AUGSBURG LUTHERAN CHURCHES

VOLUME 4, NO. 2

THE CRUX OF THE MATTER

NOVEMBER—DECEMBER, 2004

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

TWO MAJOR ISSUES STAND AT THE CRUX 2

DISTRICT NEWS AND REPORTS 2-3

VIEWPOINT MISSION CHURCH UPDATE 4

STEWARDSHIP DRIVE FOR 2005 5

TRUSTEE'S LETTER 6

"EARLY BIRD" REGISTRATION FOR 2005 GATHERING 7

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- **Redeemer Lutheran Church in Estherville, Iowa joins the ALC**
- **Bethesda Lutheran calls Rev. Richardson**
- **ALC Trustees map out a plan for 2005**
- **Elk Horn Lutheran forms Call Committee**

REDEEMER LUTHERAN CHURCH JOINS THE ALC

After several years of protesting the theological drift and centralization of power in one of America's mainline Protestant denominations, Redeemer Lutheran Church in Estherville, Iowa, decided it was time to take a more positive direction.

On January 18, 2004, the congregation voted to call Pastor Warren L. Baker. On September 19, 2004, the members voted to join a fellowship of churches and its national association which share their core Lutheran beliefs and the mission to bear witness to the good news that sinners are put right with God by faith alone in Christ alone.

After consulting with representatives of the Western Iowa Synod of the ELCA and hosting an open meeting with a representative from Augsburg Lutheran Churches and LCMC this summer, Redeemer decided it was time to stand and confess their Christian faith.

The vote to join the Augsburg Lutheran Churches (ALC) and LCMC passed with a 93% majority vote. LCMC is a new national Lutheran body of 122 member congregations with more joining every month. The Augsburg district of LCMC places particular emphasis on the Confessional writings of the evangelical-Lutheran church, and the Lutheran understanding of Scripture, *that is,* the authority of Scripture and the proper distinction of Law and Gospel in proclaiming Christ crucified to the world. Their common mission is to bear witness to the good news that sinners are put right with God by faith alone in Christ alone.

The September vote came about after several years of deliberation and increasing dissatisfaction with the theological direction of their mainline Protestant denomination on the crucial matter of God's Word, ministry, and marriage.

BETHESDA LUTHERAN CALLS REV. MARK J. RICHARDSON

Bethesda Lutheran Church voted to call the Rev. Mark Richardson to serve as their pastor, and they ordained him during their Sunday morning service on December 5, 2004. Earlier, the church voted to revise their constitution and leave the ELCA.

The ALC was pleased to add Richardson to our List of Clergy via our colloquy process this fall.

Rev. Richardson is a gifted pastor and theologian who has been associated with the confessing Lutheran movement in North America since the passage of *"Called to Common Mission"* (CCM) on August 19, 1999.

Bethesda Lutheran voted to join ALC and LCMC on June 27, 2004. These actions came after five years of studying scripture and the Lutheran confessions.

TWO MAJOR ISSUES STAND AT THE CRUX OF REDEEMER LUTHERAN'S VOTE — "NO NEED TO WAIT UNTIL 2005!"

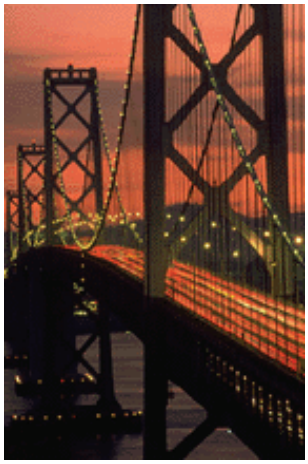
Two major issues stand at the crux of Redeemer Lutheran's decision to take a stand and confess its faith this summer: The ELCA's ecumenical agreement "Called to Common Mission" (CCM) and its ongoing "ELCA Study on Human Sexuality" (approved at the 2001 CWA in Indianapolis, IN). As a result of that decision, the ELCA appointed a committee to study the question and make a recommendation as to whether or not that church body should endorse same-sex marriage, and whether or not it should ordain non-celibate gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, and transgender persons for the ministry of word and sacrament.

Although the ELCA sex-study committee has not yet completed its work, the 2001 appointment of such a committee was a revealing action in and of itself.

The direction the ELCA is heading was made even more evident this summer when ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson issued a statement criticizing the U.S. proposed defense of marriage constitutional amendment.

For several years there has been a very strong push by Gay/Lesbian activists within the ELCA to certify sexually -active homosexuals, who live in so-called "*committed relationships,*" for ordination.

Several ELCA congregations have already called and installed Gay and Lesbian pastors in direct violation of the ELCA's current policy while bishops simply "look the other way" and allow a "just do it" mentality to become their de facto policy.



In 2004 many of us came to bridges that had to be crossed. We thank God for bringing us through all these "*transitions*" of joy and sorrow, and we pray for strength and comfort in the year ahead.

ALC TRUSTEES MAP OUT FINANCIAL PLANS FOR 2005

Enclosed with this newsletter you will find several Christmas letters that share what Christ has accomplished in us this past year.

As we take time to thank God for all the blessings he bestowed upon us in 2004, we also pray that he will provide the resources we need to continue our work in his Vineyard, i.e., the Great Commission in 2005.

Please take the time to read the enclosed letters, and make a commitment to support the Augsburg Lutheran Churches next year. Pledges and planned gifts are greatly appreciated because they help our mission churches and trustees map out cash-flow needs and plans for the upcoming year.

Several programs, like the multi-media Bible study on Scripture and Sexuality for youth, and the Lay Ministry Academy, need to be funded before they will become a resource for our churches and chapters.

The ALC Trustees thank-you for your support in the past and pray for it in the future! We wish you a blessed and merry Christmas, and God's grace and peace in 2005.

"Although Elk Horn Lutheran Church has been here for 128 years, our ministry has always been energized by Jesus' commission to proclaim the gospel while we serve a broken world in need of the love of Jesus Christ."

ELK HORN LUTHERAN CALL COMMITTEE AT WORK

On October 10, 2004, Elk Horn Lutheran Church elected a call committee. They have prepared a congregational profile and are actively seeking interviews with pastors who are open to serving them under a letter of call.

Elk Horn Lutheran Church is a member of the newly formed Augsburg Lutheran Churches (ALC) and Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC). Elk Horn Lutheran is seeking a full-time pastor for Word and Sacrament ministry who is committed to Scripture and the Augsburg Confession (word alone, grace alone, faith alone).

Pastors interested in interviewing for call at Elk Horn Lutheran Church may send their colloquy packets to the Elk Horn Call Committee at committee@metc.net. For a complete description of this position please telephone, write, or email the Call Committee Chairman, Mr. Doug Smith:

Mr. Doug Smith
P. O. Box 211
Elk Horn IA 51531

committee@metc.net

712-764-8642

Need more information? Visit http://www.elkhornlutheran.org/

Or call Mr. Doug Smith at 712-764-8642

IT WASN'T HIS CHILD

BY SKIP EWING

He was her man, she was his wife
and late one winter night
He knelt by her as she gave birth
but it wasn't his child ...it wasn't his child

Yet, still he took him as his own
and as he watched him grow
He felt such joy.... he loved that boy!
But it wasn't his child ... It wasn't his child

And like a father he was strong
and kind and good
And I believe he did his best.
It wasn't easy for him but he did all he could
His son was different from the rest
It wasn't his child ...It wasn't his child

And when the boy became a man
He took His fathers hand
And soon the world would all know why
It wasn't His child …

And like His father He was
strong and kind and good
And I believe He did his best—it wasn't
easy for him but He did all He could

He grew up with His hands in wood...
and He died... with His hands in wood
He was God's child ...
He was God's child !

He was her man,
she was his wife
and late one winter night
He knelt by her
as she gave birth
But it wasn't his child.

… and so the Son of God is born in Bethlehem

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth Peace,
good will toward men.

EXECUTIVE CHAIR

"For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future, all are yours; and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's"
(1 Cor 3:21-23).

Rev. Dick Smith has picked out another great text for the Bible study at our upcoming gathering this summer.

Church of the Good Shepherd in Florence, Alabama is hosting the 2005 gathering, and it is going to be great!

God reigns—he most certainly does! And all the earth is really GLAD as we sing in "Joy to the World" and Psalm 96. For, God has had mercy on us and has given us grace and truth in the baby Jesus. We know his gracious love for us by his Son who became incarnate and died on the cross for us.

So, we're gathering for fun, worship, and fellowship this summer on the beautiful Tennessee River to enjoy "the blues" during the W. C. Handy Festival, develop worship resources, and engage in the mutual conversation, consolation, and confrontation of the brethren.

Take advantage of the "Early Bird" registration rate ($50.00 before February 15, 2005) and reserve a room at THE SHOALS (256-246-3600) for half-price. You can even stay an extra day and play golf on the newest Robert Trent Jones golf courses in Alabama. God reigns, we're GLAD, and we'll see you all down at the shoals on July 24, 2005 to celebrate!

GOD REIGNS,

let the earth be glad!

July 24 — 26, 2005

GOOD SHEPHERD

Florence, Alabama

Questions? Write to:

ptoso@hiwaay.net

AUGSBURG PASTOR

CHRISTmas brings to mind the words of Martin Luther from his "Lectures on Galatians, 1535."

> "But FAITH MUST BE TAUGHT CORRECTLY, namely that by it you are so cemented to Christ that He and you are as ONE PERSON, which cannot be separated but remains attached to Him forever and declares: 'I am as Christ.' And Christ in turn, says: 'I am as that sinner who is attached to Me, and I to him. For by faith we are joined together into ONE FLESH AND ONE BONE'." (*Luther's Works*, Vol. 26, page 168. My emphasis.)

Have a GREAT LIFE, because CHRIST IS YOUR LIFE!

Dick Smith

Have a GREAT LIFE, because CHRIST IS YOUR LIFE!

www.augsburgchurches.org

AUGSBURG LUTHERAN CHURCHES

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Executive Chair
546 Loblolly Dr.
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THE AUGSBURG JOINT COUNCIL

Rev. Lenae Rasmussen
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Rev. Drex Morton
Rev. Tim McNutt
Mrs. Dorothy McNaught
Mrs. Darla Bielfeldt

THE CROSS ALONE IS OUR THEOLOGY!

VIEWPOINT

December 3, 2004

Dear Pastors and Members of Augsburg Lutheran Churches:

As the Augsburg Lutheran Churches bring 2004 to a close on a successful note, we sing our "Joy to the World" and recognize God's presence in all our lives ... particularly in the life of our church body.

ALC has added eleven churches to our worshipping community this year, we are in the midst of developing new and exciting educational materials, and we are putting the finishing touches on new worship resources. It has been an exciting year for all of us.

It is important to note that our ministry manages to cut across all age groups and educational/ cultural background. Last year we spoke of 8 yr old Valerie from one of the Wisconsin churches and her valiant strides forward in her spiritual life as well as her educational triumphs. If you remember Valerie is learning disabled and the forecast for her progress was very dim. But Valerie managed to not only learn to read and write (which was not something that professionals thought was a possibility) she also earned her God and Family Award in her scouting group. Valerie was the only one in her troop that even made an effort to work toward that award.

This year I want to tell you a little about Edna. Edna was 80+ yrs old and living in an assisted living facility. A lifelong Lutheran, Edna had not had a visit from her pastor in many years. She attended Bible study offered by one of our ALC churches in her area and was faithful in attendance for communion and worship services provided by that same church in her living facility. Last Christmas Edna shared the Christmas story at worship from the gospel of St Luke. Her voice was strong as she announced the birth of our Lord and Savior. She was excited to share the story with the congregation …the story that had meant so much to her throughout her life. I add…with sorrow mixed with joy that several evenings later Edna went to be with her Lord. With the words of "Joy to the World" still on her lips, Edna "went home" for Christmas.

From 8 years-old to 80, the Augsburg Lutheran Churches have ministered to those who might not have had the privilege and opportunity to continue to hear the joyous gospel message. The successes of Augsburg Lutheran Churches are due in part to your participation in our church body. We take this time to thank you for all that you have done to allow lives like those of Valerie to be taught and Edna to continue to be active participants in the life of their church.

It is our fervent prayer that you will continue to support our Augsburg Lutheran Churches in prayer, gifts, and benevolence in 2005.

Joy to the World!

Pastor Cher Clay
Platteville, Wisconsin

Silent night, holy night,
All is calm . . .

Relax, God is in charge.

The LORD reigns ...
Let the earth be glad!

November 18, 2004

Dear Friends in Christ:

Grace and peace to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. On behalf of the Augsburg Lutheran Churches, thank you for your prayers, support, and benevolence this past year. The pastors and members of the Augsburg Lutheran Churches have faithfully proclaimed the gospel and brought forth much fruit in the Lord's vineyeard in 2004. It is impossible to list all the "real ministry" accomplishments and contributions you have made, but it is our sincere hope that the letters from the mission church pastors will give you a taste of what goes on in ALC every day in part because of your contributions. Working as fellow brothers and sisters for whom Christ died, our fellowship has been blessed by Christ's love and grace, for which we give him thanks and praise. Our accomplishments are the fruit of the unique relationship we share in Christ who reconciles us to God and each other. As Pastor Dick Smith says so often, "Christ is our life!"

This fall we ask that our churches and affiliated individual members include the ALC in their budgets for 2005. It is simply amazing that the ALC has operated on less than $15,000 per year! This is only possible because of the tireless efforts of our many volunteers. Neither our leadership nor our committee positions are paid. Although almost all of the money we receive is given to mission congregations, we are also committed to support our pan-Lutheran house of studies to educate and train pastors, our multi-media study for youth and young adults on the Bible and sexuality, and the first series of new worship resources for our churches. We ask that you prayerfully consider helping ALC meet our financial goals for 2005. Apart from Christ (who is in you as your life) we can do nothing.

2005 Fundraising Goals

Operations/Communications	$15,000
Mission Church Fund$	95,000
New Worship Resource	$10,000
Claus Harms House	$10,000
Multi-media Bible Study for Youth	$10,000

It has been a privilege to serve you and be a part of our successful ministries to praise and glorify God this year. With his help and guidance, the Augsburg Lutheran Churches will continue to grow and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ from coast-to-coast in North America, and around the world. God reigns, let the earth be glad!

Rev. Lenae Rasmussen
Executive Chair

FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH

P. O. Box 273
Humboldt, SD 57035
Cell 605-359-3021

November 18, 2004

Dear Friends in Christ:

Greetings to each of you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. As we come to the end of the church year and approach the end of another calendar year, the members of Faith Lutheran ask that your congregation prayerfully consider gifts to Augsburg Lutheran Churches, as part of your regular benevolence during the next year.

The Apostle Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 9:6-8, 11 *"He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work. . . You will be enriched in every way for great generosity which through us will produce thanksgiving to God."*

God provides us with blessings beyond comprehension, not only in a material way, but also through the gift of His Son who redeems us, and through the gift of the Holy Spirit who calls us. We can show our Love for Him by giving back a portion of what we have received. As Paul says, God calls us to give cheerfully and freely. This becomes possible when we realize that all that we have, our family, possessions, vocation, financial resources, and life itself, comes from God. We are only stewards, not owners, of what God provides.

Just as our members are called to give a portion of what they receive to the Lord's work, each of our congregations is called to give to God's work in a way that goes beyond itself. One way to do this is through Augsburg. The ALC Mission Fund has helped numerous mission congregations over the past year, including Faith Lutheran of Humboldt, SD. In order to continue this important work of starting and growing churches, Augsburg needs your continued support. If we take the Great Commission seriously, if our churches are ***really*** to be more than a social club, then there is no more important task than that of starting churches to reach into our communities and proclaim the Gospel to the lost.

God's blessings to you, as you spend time in prayer to consider your financial commitment to the service of our Lord, through Augsburg Lutheran Churches.

December 3, 2004

Dear Friends in Christ:

Grace and peace to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ:

In a recent letter the Executive Chair expressed Augsburg's thanks for the prayers, support, and benevolence you graciously extended this past year. The Board of Trustees wishes to add its appreciation for the work you have done and to thank God for the work that God has done through you.

We have been, and continue to be, committed to support the education and training of pastors through our pan-Lutheran house of studies, the development of a multi-media study for young people on the Bible and sexuality, and drafting the first series of new worship resources for our churches.

While it is entirely appropriate that we should give thanks for what has been accomplished, it is also appropriate, especially in this time of Advent, to look forward to the future. At our annual convention in Brookings last summer, the Board of Trustees was charged with developing a staffing plan that would support and foster the growth of our fellowship. There are several concerns that need to be addressed by staff in a more systematic way than is now possible given our current financial resources. These areas include mentoring of pastors and candidates, discipline, congregational support, and outreach to prospective member congregations. These are all critical needs.

Moreover the growth of our fellowship itself has increased the scope of our needs. To move out of our start-up phase and become a viable network, the Board considers it a necessary first step, to address the normal administrative costs of our fellowship. Hitherto, virtually all of the money we have received has been forwarded directly to mission congregations. In our start-up phase, ALC has operated on a minimal operating budget. Since our leadership is not compensated, our operations to date have only been possible because of the tireless efforts of our many volunteers who have substantially met organizational expenses out of pocket. We need to address these "daily bread" issues.

Since the successful transition to our next phase of development depends on the full financial partnership of all our member congregations and chapters, we are boldly asking all our members to help ALC meet its financial goals for 2005. We ask that our churches and affiliated individual members include the ALC in their budgets for 2005. To assist us in planning we would ask that each congregation advise the Trustees of its intended level of giving for 2005.

It is a privilege to be partners with you in God's service. We pray that God will continue to bless the growth of the Augsburg Lutheran Churches that we may serve as an instrument for the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Yours in Christ,

Augsburg Board of Trustees:

Philip G. Schoner

Don Albright

Barb Christensen

John Leistad

Please respond to:

Board of Trustees Or : Phil Schoner <sil4bul8@comcast.net>

Augsburg Lutheran Churches

c/o Philip G. Schoner

1023 Columbus St

Half Moon Bay, CA 94019

Church or Affiliated Individual

_____

Anticipated level of giving to Augsburg Lutheran Churches for 2005:

General Fund:

_____ per month.

_____ one-time benevolence

Mission Fund:

_____ per month.

_____ one-time benevolence

Contact Person:

Name: _____

Position:_____

Address:_____

Telephone:_____

E-mail:_____

Pastors and Members of Augsburg Lutheran Churches

SAVE THE DATE!

GOD REIGNS,

let the earth be glad!

July 24 – July 26, 2005

Church of the Good Shepherd in Florence, Alabama, has graciously offered to host our 2005 gathering. Our convention committee is planning another great gathering for July 24-July 26, 2005, in Florence. We highly encourage everyone to register in advance for **"GOD REIGNS, let the earth be glad!"** Our Bible Study will be on 1 Corinthians 3:18-23, and the Early Bird Registration fee is only $50.00. If you have questions, please call Pastor Perry Toso at 256-766-6952 or email ptoso@hiwaay.net

Please mail registration forms and money to:
Church of the Good Shepherd
2001 Cloyd Blvd.
Florence Alabama 35630

For more information about Good Shepherd –

http://www.churchofgoodshepherd.net/

GOD REIGNS, let the earth be glad! will focus on worship and fellowship, while Florence celebrates its annual *W. C. Handy Music Festival*. Sponsored by the *Music Preservation Society*, this event is held annually in the Shoals area of Florence, Alabama. Previous festivals have featured jazz and blues legends including Jimmy Smith, Ramsey Lewis, Dizzy Gillespie, Bobby Blue Bland, Diane Schuur, Billy Taylor, Dianne Reeves and Charlie Byrd.

For more information about the W. C. Handy Music Festival –

http://www.wchandymusicfestival.org/

Church of the Good Shepherd in Florence, AL, has reserved a block of rooms under "Augsburg" at **Shoals Hotel and Convention Center & Spa *on* THE ROBERT TRENT JONES GOLF TRAIL.** The Shoals is a luxurious new hotel located on the beautiful Tennessee River adjacent to two new Robert Trent Jones Golf Courses: The Schoolmaster and Fighting Joe. The discounted nightly rate is only $89 - which is half-price! For reservations call 256-246-3600.

For more information about Shoals Hotel –

http://www.shoalshotel.com/

Mission Churches and Churches in Redevelopment seeking Mission Partners for 2005:

Faith Lutheran Church $35,000
Pastor Glen Peterson
P. O. Box 273
Humboldt, SD 57035-0273
Phone: (605) 359-3021
Email: petersongln@aol.com

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church $25,000
Rev. Perry Toso
2001 Cloyd Blvd.
Florence, AL 35630
Phone: (256) 766-6952
Email: ptoso@hiwaay.net

Peace Lutheran Church $15,000
Rev. Michael Bonham
% Mrs. Esther Nance
9248 Hammock Road
Elberta, AL 36530
Phone: (251) 474-3465
Email : YMRB@cs.com