

VOICES UNDER THE SOUTHERN CROSS



DISTRICT NEWSLETTER LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA, VICTORIA /TASMANIA

2008 : ISSUE 3, DECEMBER

* *Letting it Shine* * * AT DISTRICT CONVENTION 2008! *



Delegates and visitors gathered from around Victoria and Tasmania for the 34th Convention of the District under the theme *Let it Shine!* The Wodonga parish members were wonderful hosts, arranging an excellent venue at the Catholic College after the opening evening at St John's Lutheran Church. Reports brought news of rapid growth in new members from North Africa seeking a home in Australia and our church. Three new support staff for the District were introduced - Jodi Brook for Child, Youth and Family Ministry, Pastor Nathan Hedt for Tertiary Ministry, and John Graetz, who gave his first financial report as District Administrator. Pastor Greg Pietsch was elected District President for a second four-year term, and a new District Church Council was elected, with Pastor Ray Pace as Vice President. Eyes were opened by stories of the wonderful overseas aid and development work done by our Australian Lutheran World Service, and by our Board for Mission in its work with partner churches in South East Asia. All this and more is reported in this edition of *Voices under the Southern Cross*.





Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Let it shine!

That's the theme under which the District met in Convention at Wodonga in early October. The sun shone brightly, the local hosts shone warmly, the delegates shone in the light of Christ and all enjoyed spirited worship, collegial fellowship and rich reporting on our work together as the Lutheran Church of Australia. As Convention concluded I congratulated delegates on attending what in effect was an extended District Church Council meeting, with its usual shape of reports from the District President, Council for Ministry Support, Council for Lutheran Education and District Administrator - with the bonus of a convention paper from our seminary's Dr Andrew Pfeiffer, and a lively report from the President of the LCA, Dr Mike Semmler, supported by half-a-dozen national church workers with stories about their areas of ministry.

This edition of 'Voices' brings you a montage of the Convention, collected under the five areas for focus I presented in my report. These aim to help us all target our praying and planning so that our energies hit the most need right now. They are there for



congregations to work through, asking *What does this mean for us in particular?* They are there to challenge our schools, aged care facilities, camps and District leaders to ask the same question. God bless your reading and thinking, and thank you for your service to the Lord's church too, as we hear about the work done collectively together as District and national church.

As I write this I'm very conscious that another rural season has ended poorly, and that others may well be feeling pressure from the global financial slow-down. Yet Convention voted to continue the program of the District as presented, with an increase in giving to the LCA by \$50,000 to \$500,000, asking District Church Council to consider how this can be financed. Parish budgets will also be increasing in the new year due to rises in pastors' salaries and other costs. These things combine to challenge us all to focus on stewardship in particular - to live more simply and to do whatever we can to support the church our Lord has given us as home and family. Please pray for the church and for your own contribution to it. *Lord, what can I do for my church?* As we celebrate the birth of the Light of the world, realise that God has put his light into our hands. By his grace, *Let it shine*

Pastor Greg Pietsch

EDITORIAL

Welcome to another packed issue of *Voices under the Southern Cross*. It certainly has been an busy time in Lutheran circles recently, as this issue highlights. We have endeavoured to provide you with as broad a coverage of District Convention as possible, as well as giving you of a glimpse of another other major event, ACLE3, held at the MCG in October. As this will be the last issue before Christmas, I wish you all a blessed and joyful Christ-filled celebration of our Lord's birth.

Chris Otto



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From the District President's report to District Convention: "A shining candle needs constant fuel to burn, a household light cannot illuminate anything without electricity to power it. God's people cannot shine without being shone upon. So a key focus for us has to be personal and congregational growth in Christ. We can't be satisfied with coasting in this regard. We need to learn from Christ in relation to all the challenges and difficulties we face – the issues of today as well as those which are common to every era. And growth in Christ is not just for our own sakes but for others as well. We reflect the light of Christ so other people can benefit from his light too. Faith and mission go hand in hand – inner mission and outer mission as they've been called. So God's call for growth is not just deeper into Christ but also with Christ out into the world."

LUTHERAN SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

The Director of Lutheran School of Theology, **Marlene Pietsch**, promises another 'LST goes Bush!' day in 2009. Marlene reported, "In the last three years, we have run 19 different subjects, some more than once. About 220 people have enrolled in subjects that normally run for 6 to 8 sessions, and we now have a loyal base of students who have re-enrolled many times. Lecturers are drawn from within the church, and are mostly (but not exclusively) pastors who, with some sacrifice of time, give their time to LST to teach subjects which interest them and benefit the wider church. We've run subjects on the Bible, Lutheran theology, spirituality, pastoral care, creative arts and church & culture. And what fun we've had!



Last year we tried something different in an attempt to extend LST's boundaries. In July, we ran *LST Goes Bush!* at Ballarat, and over 100 people from all over Victoria enrolled in one of 7 mini-subjects for the day. These subjects were mostly condensed versions of those already held in Melbourne. Overwhelmingly, the participants voted for more of these opportunities so we hope to do this again in 2009. We'll have room for 200 enrolments this time!"



Ready, set ... for the opening service for the 34th District Convention.



Sharing the light and peace of Christ.

AUSTRALIAN LUTHERAN WORLD SERVICE

ALWS Communication Manager **Jonathan Krause** promotes the mission of ALWS, including the Christmas 2008 Gifts of Grace – revolving pigs, long drop toilets, foot-power fashion, a village bank, and more for people in need in countries like Kenya, Sudan, PNG, Cambodia, and Nepal. Do your Christmas shopping from home on www.alws.org.au/grace or call Jenny Pfitzner on 1300 763 407! ALWS Executive Secretary Peter Schirmer reported that



Vic/Tas Lutherans gave \$583,488 to ALWS in 2007, up from \$256,912 in 2006, showing their strong support for Australia's most effective aid agency.

FOCUS 2 - GROWING THE SUPPLY & UTILISATION OF PASTORS & OTHER CHURCH WORKERS, & ENSURING THEIR CARE & DEVELOPMENT

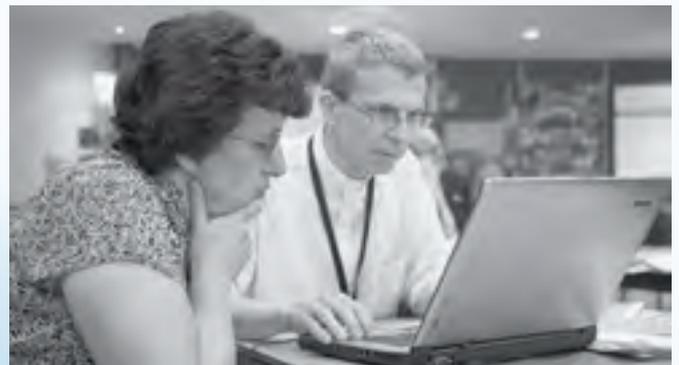
From the District President's report to District Convention: "Central to the existence of the church is the ministry of word and sacrament to which pastors are called and ordained. So the church needs healthy, faithful pastors. I praise God for the pastors he has provided and whom I have the privilege of serving. Most of us would know that the church is suffering a shortage of pastors at the moment (we could do with a dozen more right now), witnessed by the larger number of vacancies and longer periods in vacancy. And we are also suffering a shortage of qualified Lutheran school teachers too **Everyone, help find pastors and teachers!** Fundamentally it's the responsibility of all of us to do what we can to grow the supply of pastors. This means actively encouraging young men to be pastors and challenging faithful adult men to consider a change of vocation to the public ministry. It means nurturing and mentoring children so they receive the warmth of Christ through you and have positive attitudes about the church and its schools, opening the way for them to consider the public ministry or teaching as a career (across the LCA we need 350 new teachers a year); a great opportunity to combine church and professional service."



New pastors to our District were blessed at Convention and introduced by President Greg Pietsch (centre back):
(from left) Pastors Richard Taylor (Hamilton / Coleraine / Cavendish), Gus Schutz (Horsham), Andrew Ruddell (Rainbow, Pella, Hopetoun), Ray Pace (Ballarat), Mark Henderson (Tarrington/Wurrayure), Andrew Bettison (Mildura), Harry Ludwig (Minyip/Warracknabeal).



Pastor Alan Heppner (Pastor for Congregational Support) seen chatting with an acquaintance.



Always working - Pastor Thomas Böhmert and Dania Ahern attempt to solve some deep issues.

National President Dr Mike Semmler promotes Australian Lutheran College wherever he gets the opportunity, including to the Vic/Tas District Convention: "**Australian Lutheran College** responds to the needs of the Church by implementing courses and units to prepare people for ministry through its three schools: the School of Educational Theology; the School of Pastoral Theology and the School of Theological Studies (available for laity seeking a degree in theology or simply coming to better equip themselves theologically).

The ALC continues to rely heavily on funding from individuals and the Church budget as it also joins what is a constant highlight in our Church, Departments working together, in this case with the **Board for Mission** and the training of overseas post graduate students from our partner churches in Papua New Guinea and across SE Asia. It works in partnership with **Finke River Mission** and **Aged Care Australia**, providing appropriate support and delivering essential training. Geographically we are placed in a region of the world where our treasures are not readily available and so ALC is being called upon for the teaching we take for granted. The freshest face to join the teaching staff is Pastor Stephen Pietsch."



From the District President's report to District Convention: "Just as we have received the light of Christ, so we are to shine with this light on others. Some of our shining happens through our daily witness by the priorities and faith we express, and by the grace we extend to others in Jesus' name. Some of it occurs in our daily vocations, as pastors, parents, teachers, colleagues. But it is not sufficient to leave the Lord's mission at that. He also says, 'Go and make disciples of all nations' - put into practice by the church in deliberate mission projects. He says through Paul in Romans 10, 'How can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching? And how can they preach unless they are sent?' Our regular life together as congregations, gathered around the gospel and sacraments, is God's mission. But we also need to engage in specific mission projects beyond our own doors, and we need to develop the appropriate heart and mind, as well as structures and resources, for mission beyond ourselves."



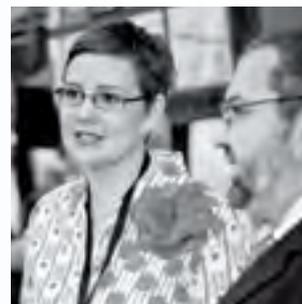
Moorabbin/Dandenong lay Pastoral Ministry Assistant, **Michael Jang**, reports the fast-growing Sudanese ministry in the District – over 40 baptisms and 30 confirmations in the past year at Dandenong alone! The Dandenong congregation doubled in worship attendance and baptised membership in 2007. Contact the Moorabbin/Dandenong Ministry Team on 9553 7099 or email stjameslca@bigpond.com to support this ministry.



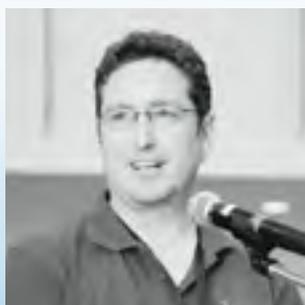
Hospital Chaplain, **Pastor Gordon Wegener**, assures members of the District that excellent Lutheran pastoral care extends to hospitals and invites congregations to access pastoral care training by asking him to lead his Basics in Pastoral Care course. Phone 0412 200 946 or email gordon.wegener@vic.lca.org.au



Lutheran Media Ministry Director, **Pastor Richard Mau**, introduces an exciting children's website, www.happyland.com.au, to complement Lutheran radio and TV programs. Check out www.facetoface.org.au, www.onmainstreet.org.au, www.lutheranmedia.org.au and www.lca.org.au.



Newly appointed District Facilitator for Child, Youth and Family Ministry, **Jodi Brook** chats with Pastor Peter Ghalayini. Jodi is keen to identify people in every congregation who are involved in child, youth or family ministry in their congregation or interested in developing this ministry. (See Jodi's article on Page 7)



Tandara Camp Manager, **David Moss**, makes his point: Tandara Camp has made big improvements, such as new en-suites and beds, a resurfaced car park and new playground equipment, that are attracting old groups to come back to Tandara. David would like to see more congregations using Tandara for congregational camps. Give David a call on 5356 4253 or email him at tandara.vic@lca.org.au



Linda McQueen, editor of *The Lutheran*, deep in conversation about mission projects with Geoff Matuschka.



Glenice Hartwich, Project Officer for the Board for Mission. Glenice told Convention of ways in which congregations and individuals can support mission projects in Papua New Guinea, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and Sabah. For more information, contact the Board for Mission Office on (08) 8267 7334 or email bfm@lca.org.au

From the District President's report to District Convention: "Our church historically began schools for nurturing our own children in Christ, and preparing those who would go on to be pastors and teachers. The landscape has changed a lot since then. The number and capacity of our schools has outgrown the education needs of our church's own children. Now we offer them to all who can pay as places of 'quality education in which... the word of God, with the gospel of Christ at its heart, informs all learning and teaching, all human relationships, and all activities of the school' (The Lutheran School as a Place of Ministry and Mission adopted at General Convention, October 2006). Underpinning this is the expectation that our schools will be fertile fields for mission, the sowing of the gospel, the shining of Christ's light."



Principal of Victory Lutheran College, Wodonga, Cain McDonald, makes a point with Deputy Director of Lutheran Education for the Region, Elizabeth Kloeden (now appointed to succeed the Director, Dr Ken Bartel, on his forthcoming retirement).

Cain was part of the presentation by the Council for Lutheran Education South Eastern Region, focusing on how our schools do in fact serve the mission of the church.



An animated Tertiary Chaplain, **Judy Bowman**, invites tertiary students to contact Lutheran Tertiary Ministry on 0409 097 294 or by email to judy.bowman@lca.org.au because new Tertiary Pastor, **Nathan Hedt**, has commenced serving in tertiary ministry from St John's Southgate.

FOCUS 5 - MAKING THE BEST USE OF THE RESOURCES THE LORD GIVES US

From the District President's report to District Convention: "The last focus is the one of stewardship – free and glad use of the resources God has given us in his service. How do we both receive the light of Christ and let it shine in this regard? Healthy Christian stewardship is a part of regular Christian life, of course, so maybe it should be in focus all the time. That's true, but I hold it up here because, despite our relative wealth, the church does not have the funds for the commitments we have collectively made – the LCA has budgeted for a deficit again, and reserve funds are running out. Spiritually we are all under attack in a wealthy and greedy society. 'Affluenza' is a sickness of our nation – the heart finding its joy in what it consumes rather than in its Lord. Light needs to shine here too. On a broader front, our Lord challenges us all with the question, What can I do to serve him? Our daily calling gives us the context, but within that there are many challenges."



Members of Christ the Lord congregation in Laverton, Suzana Gajdos and George Pasula with Pastor Jan Havjar (on the right), extending an offer for District Convention to be hosted by their community in 2010.



President Greg (centre rear) presents the critical resources of the newly-elected District Church Council and newly-appointed Zone Councillors after blessing them at the District Convention service: Pastor John Heidenreich (Wimmera Mallee Zone Counsellor), Bob Menzel (Portland, DCC), Tim Wiebusch (Geelong, DCC), Faye Schmidt (Werribee, DCC), Jane Leslie (Box Hill, DCC), Pastor David Borgas (Western District Zone Counsellor), Pastor Matt Anker (Goulbourn Murray, DCC), John Paech (Lilydale, DCC and later elected its chair), Pastor Lester Priebbenow (North Geelong, DCC), Pastor Ben Mogg (Tasmanian Zone Counsellor), Pastor Ray Pace (Ballarat, DCC and newly elected Vice President). Pastor Greg Pietsch was re-elected by Convention for another four-year term as District President. A member from the Wimmera/Mallee is still being sought for District Church Council.

At its first meeting after Convention, DCC also appointed members to the Council of Ministry Support in addition to those elected at District Convention, making up the Council as follows - (elected by Convention): Pastor Thomas Böhmert, Miriam Zanker, John Huf (Doncaster); (appointed by DCC): Pastor Mark Winter, Angela Walkenhorst, Mara Schillat. There is still one lay member vacancy.



Watched by Leonie Hateley, District Administrator **John Graetz** engages Pastor Bill Fry between sessions. In presenting the District Budget John challenged convention delegates to pray, quoting relevant Scriptures about prayer and God's provision. John reminded us that God will provide also in relation to financial needs, when we commit our needs to him in prayer. Since the District had met its budget last year, John presented a budget that increased our giving to the national LCA by \$50,000.



Wodonga Parish Nurse Angela Urhane checks blood pressure for District Chaplain, Pastor Brett Kennett (Greensborough/ Thomastown).



A "NEW" FACE AT DISTRICT OFFICE - JODI BROOK IS BACK!



Jodie Brook (right) enjoying Convention with Jane Leslie from DCC.

It is with great excitement and anticipation that I begin my new role as Child, Youth & Family Ministry Facilitator for the Victorian District.

For those who don't know me, let me introduce myself. I am married to Pastor Andrew Brook and have three children. We have lived in Melbourne for nearly eleven years after beginning our ministry in the Burnie/Devonport Parish in north-west Tasmania. After working at both Good Shepherd Lutheran Primary School and Luther College, I developed

skills in the area of parent education and have a passion for equipping good parents to be great parents! I am employed half-time and have started to familiarise myself with current Child, Youth and Family (CYF) ministry resources. I will meet with Pastor Greg Priebsenow regularly as well as lay workers of the District, and the Faith Inkubators Australian National Coordinator, Peter Eckermann. Here are some of my immediate ideas:

- to create an awareness of what is available to congregations working

with children, youth and families and to offer resources to suit the different congregational contexts. We hope to offer workshops in regional Victoria in February and August next year and in Melbourne during May.

- while Faith Inkubators, an inter-generational ministry program, is certainly one resource we are encouraging congregations to consider, to also work on developing a Milestone's Ministry, a strategy encouraging the naming and marking of events in the life of a child and in their spiritual journey.
- to gather resources for post Confirmation ministry and to offer ideas and resources for youth and leaders to use in a small group context; to approach young people to write Bible studies relevant to their peers for distribution to congregations

- in the 'dream' category is a District Family Camp, to enable families of smaller congregations or congregations which don't already have a camp to participate in this wonderful opportunity of family ministry.

In order to promote relevant resources I need to know about them! If you are using a wonderful program in your congregation and are happy to share it, let me know so that we can pass it on. It's all about collective knowledge.

Another important part of my role is to keep you informed of events, ideas and new resources. If you are interested or involved in child, youth and/or family ministry, are a parent, grandparent or mentor and would like to receive information about CYF ministry, please let me know your email and postal address. You can contact me at District Office, PO Box 642, Box Hill 3128 or email jodi.brook@vic.lca.org.au

CALL NEWS

Extended:

John **Gerhardy** to Ringwood/Knox, Vic

Accepted:

Thomas **Böhmert** to Bordertown, SA

Stephen **Mattner** to Tabor, Vic

Richard **Schulze** to Living Waters College, WA

Graduate Pastor Assignments:

Stephen **van de Hoek** - Gippsland Parish

Chris **Raatz** - Grampians Parish

Declined:

Peter **Ghalayini** to Esperance, WA

Geoff **Havelberg** to Portland, Vic

John **Heidenreich** to Birdwood, SA

Rolf **Lungwitz** to Portland, Vic

Heath **Pukallus** to Murtoa, Vic

Installations:

Stephen **Mattner** at Tabor on 18 January 2009 at 5.00 pm.

Congratulations to Pastor Ed **Koch** who celebrated his 80th birthday on 7 November 2008.

Pastor John **Schultz** retires from the Gippsland Parish on 22 February 2009 where he will have served since November 1998.



Pastor Geoff Schirmer - Emeritus (71) recently completed his third consecutive Bicycle Victoria 210 km 'Around the Bay in a Day'. Pastor Geoff served the Victorian District in parish ministry and college and hospital chaplaincy for 30 years until retiring in Geelong in 2004.

RESPONDING TO SEXUAL ABUSE COMPLAINTS

A confidential service for responding to complaints of sexual abuse/harassment by church employees has been set up. Trained advisers are available to help. Write to: The Supervisor, P O Box 19, Marden, SA, 5070 or use the freecall number 1800 644 628 or email to report.abuse@safeplace.lca.org.au

After recovering from rheumatic fever at 13 he was told he might have "a weak heart" so he took up exercise - playing football, bushwalking extensively, and running four marathons. He now rides approximately 120 km per week, fills in during vacancies, and participates in a cycling group at St John's, Geelong.



ACLE3 (AUSTRALIAN CONFERENCE ON LUTHERAN EDUCATION)

After many months of planning, the conference committee can now look back on a very successful ACLE3, held at the MCG from 1-3 October. The three days of the conference were a buzz of activity as the threads of the conference were woven together under five conference threads: Spiritual, Global, Social, Learning and Teaching and Communication. There were keynote presentations, a range of over 60 electives and a trade exhibition which featured our sponsors. On Friday morning we appreciated the time the Deputy Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, spent addressing conference delegates.

The program provided opportunity for colleagues to meet or renew friendships, to share times of discussion and question, and to come together in worship. There was music, singing and praying. We shared the message of special guests. The ultimate tapestry of the conference was a celebration – a coming together of over 800 people who all share a love of students and a passion for learning and teaching, and most importantly who know and want to share God’s love and his peace and hope within their local context and beyond.



An ACLE attendee studying the intricacies of the ACLE Quilt. The quilt, in the form of a triptych, was made up of squares each one of which was submitted by a different Lutheran school or kindergarten. There were 103 squares in all.



The eye-catching altar piece which became the visual focal point for all assemblies held in the main conference room.



IN OUR SCHOOLS



- **Victory Lutheran College**, Wodonga, recently celebrated the opening of a new classroom block named Anson. Mrs Sophie Mirabella, Member for the local Indi Council, officially opened the building and past principal Alan Wiebusch spoke to the gathering of students, staff, parents and guests.

- **Sunshine Christian School** (left) will open and dedicate new classrooms, library and toilet block on Thursday 4 December.

- **Geelong Lutheran College** will open in 2009. Staff have been appointed, the buildings are now being fitted out internally in readiness for pupils and teachers to commence, and the grounds are being landscaped.

- Two principals will be installed in our schools early in the 2009 school year: Mr Tony Peters at **Tarrington Lutheran School** and Mrs Bev McFarland at **St Paul’s Lutheran Primary School, Henty.**

- At this time of the year, as students prepare for and sit their exams or complete assignments, and teachers prepare final reports for the school year, we thank God for the privilege and opportunity we have to provide Christian education to so many through our schools. We thank the principals, teachers and support staff for the commitment and dedication they bring to their role and we pray that God will keep staff, students and their families safe during the Christmas holiday break.

LESER STAFF

The Chair, Council for Lutheran Education, Mr Tim McInnes recently announced the appointment of Elizabeth Kloeden as Director for Lutheran Education South Eastern Region, commencing 2009, following the resignation of Dr Ken Bartel. In his announcement, Tim said, “Our prayer is that God will guide Elizabeth in her service as Director and that her leadership experience will be a blessing to the LESER community. Further our hope is that she will receive much Christian joy, and experience growth in her own personal life, through this special role.”



Elizabeth Kloeden and Ken Bartel presenting their reports to District Convention.