

# The Bell Tower

**The New Global South Face of Christianity: A Report on the Conference of the International Lutheran Council (June 2 – 4, 2010)** Article by Martin Conkling — August 23, 2010

Philip Jenkins, author of *The Next Christendom: the Coming of Global Christianity* (2007), among others, argues that when American or European church leaders and scholars meet with their counterparts from Asia, Africa, or Latin America, the agenda is crafted by the participants from the global North. As a result, the “new Christendom” emerging in the global South is marginalized and consequently many of the present realities of Christianity in these locations and the impact of their projected future courses are ignored. The growing religious impulses found in Asia, Africa, and Latin America demand attention now if Northern Christian denominations are to avoid a number of misunderstandings. It would be easy to project either our own liberal or conservative political agendas on them, or mistakenly assume that worship practices and doctrine will be common even though the contexts in which we find them vary across three continents. The ability to anticipate geopolitical impulses and upheavals calls on our political leaders and diplomats to play close attention to religious frontiers throughout the world, certainly as closely as they monitor secular and political boundaries.

With such concerns in mind then, how would you describe the face of the average Christian? White, middle age, financially prosperous, possessing liberal political views endorsing liberation theology or maybe a Bush Republican, with some personal opinions about religion that do not agree with the catholic teaching of the Christian Church? Jenkins argues for a different face of the typical Christian today: Asian, African or Hispanic, young, poor, socially conservative, and relying on the Bible as the source of Christian faith and life.

Jenkins asked just that question of theologians and leaders gathered at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana on June 2-4, 2010. For the first time, religion professors from all of the Missouri Synod’s Concordia University System of colleges and seminaries, joined their counterparts in the International Lutheran Council (ILC) seminaries.

Concurrent conferences were held by the heads of the member church bodies, the professors of the ILC conference, and the meeting of the Missouri Synod Professors. For the first time, however, additional common sessions enabled participants to share views based on presentations made to all three of the gathered groups. This continuing essay provides a summarized report on three presenters from that conference: Philip Jenkins, Distinguished Professor of History and Religious Studies at Pennsylvania State University; Dr. Erni Seibert, Concordia Seminary, San Paulo, Brazil, and Dr. Leopoldo Sanchez, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

## DEMOGRAPHIC CHALLENGES

Dr. Jenkins’ address to the assembled professors and church leaders, “Global Shifts in World Christianity,” offered insights gained from his extensive statistical research. In 1900 the world had 1.3 billion people; about one third were Christian (82% in Europe and North America). Today the world remains one third Christian (38% in Europe and North America.) With current trends by 2050 world Christians will remain one third of the world population but only 28% will be found in Europe and North America. Outside of Europe, Christianity is the fastest growing religion. (Article continues in next Bell Tower).



**Come Join the Fun!  
Oktoberfest  
October 10, 2010**

**Immediately Following the Service**

## WEEKLY ATTENDANCE AND RECEIPTS

June 20<sup>th</sup> through August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2010

06/20/10	22	640.00
06/27/10	19	490.00
07/04/10	21	1,035.00
07/11/10	25	332.00
07/18/10	20	300.00
07/25/10	21	721.00
08/01/10	23	726.00
08/08/10	20	487.00
08/15/10	24	545.00
08/22/10	32	1,335.00
08/29/10	22	427.00

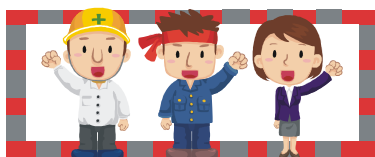
### A letter from a soldier ...

Dearest Ladies of St. Michael Lutheran Church  
("Cool Collar Makers"):

My name is Justin Stutts, and I'm a Lance Corporal with the United State Marine Corps Reserves stationed at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. We traveled to Morocco this summer for our annual training exercise which involved intense training with the Royal Moroccan Army. The exercise was called "Operation African Lion." While training in Africa, we experienced temperatures above 100 degrees every day. On behalf of the 4<sup>th</sup> Marine Division, 4<sup>th</sup> Tanks Fox Company, I would like to thank each one of you for your part in making the "Cool Collars" for us. The financial contributions and the individual talents of those ladies who diligently cut out and stitched together pieces of fabric to make the "Cool Collars" was certainly appreciated by all the men in my unit. I have enclosed a photo of my tank crew in the desert, and as you can see, we have to wear a lot of gear out there. Those "Cool Collars" really did the trick in keeping us cooler and refreshed!

Sincerely,  
Lcpl. Justin Stutts

(Please see the photo on the bulletin board in the hallway.)



Have a Safe Labor Day Holiday !!



carolinas



LUTHERAN SERVICES  
FOR THE AGING

At the end of July, the Boards of Trustees of Lutheran Services for the Aging and Lutheran Family Services in the Carolinas unanimously approved a joint statement that begins a time of study, examination, dialogue, and prayer -- a time focusing on what it might mean to combine these two ministries of the ELCA.

We believe that a union of LFS and LSA will provide collaborative opportunities for improved and additional services, eliminate duplication in administrative services, and strengthen Lutheran social ministry in the face of the new economic reality. We also recognize that these decisions will change the lives of our agencies, so they should not be entered into without an appropriate time of due diligence and discernment.

As a step toward this new relationship, LFS has engaged LSA to provide management services in order to immediately address priority issues and allow opportunity for due diligence review.

Together, both organizations will seek input, guidance and approval from the Bishops and Synod Councils of the North Carolina Synod and South Carolina Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. LSA has just kicked off its Keeping The Promise capital campaign in the N.C. Synod. The capital campaign will not be affected by these discussions.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call or email either one of us. As we live in this time of discernment, we ask for your support, and, most importantly, your prayers for these two important ministries.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ted W. Goins, Jr.".

Ted W. Goins, Jr., President  
Lutheran Services for the Aging

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Suzanne Gibson-Wise".

Suzanne Gibson-Wise, President  
Lutheran Family Services in the Carolinas

## Back to School Tips

*“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” - Proverbs 22:6*

How you get your child started in the new school year will set the tone for their success. Better prepared children have a better chance of doing well.

1. Talk with your child about being nervous, excited or apprehensive about going to school. Remind them that going to school is a normal event and their feelings are normal. Many students, teachers and parents are feeling the same way. Remind them that they will see old friends, make new ones and that their teachers are there to help them. Keep your feelings and fears to yourself or share them with an adult friend. Be a good listener.

2. Attend Back to School Open House Events with your child. Take a tour, meet the teachers, and explore all the places your child will go, the library, bathrooms, cafeteria, playground.

3. Make a plan for normal drop off and pick up and for emergencies.

4. Have normal evening and morning routines. Allow for slow starters. Do as much picking of clothes, packing of backpacks, lunches, and finding shoes, in the evening. Make the mornings as stress free as possible. Have regular bedtime and wake up schedules.

5. Talk with your child about their day. Ask for any papers they may have brought home, sign and return promptly.

6. Have a calendar for activities at home, school and church so your child is aware of things coming up and so you can make sure they are not overscheduled. Children need time to relax, play and unwind.

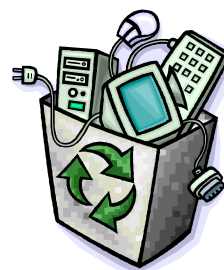
7. Determine a homework routine. Have a well lit, comfortable place to do homework with needed supplies. Provide guidance, not answers when they ask for help. Check to see that homework is done, not correct and read teacher comments on returned work.

8. Encourage your child to share their school experience with you. You can share that experience with them by volunteering, attending special events and teacher conferences and coming to school to have lunch with your child. Keep all lines of communication open with your child and school. Be open and be a good listener.

Additional information can be found at your child's school and the local, state and national PTA websites. Grades, school behavior and changes in appetite, sleep and other behaviors may indicate a child is having some difficulty with managing school. The Lutheran Counseling Center provides counseling and referral services for children and families who may be experiencing challenges at home or at school.

## Do You Have Metal You Want to Recycle?

Thank you to Tom Corron for creating and donating the wooden box behind the church in the parking lot for metal recyclables. Bring your recyclables and put them in the container.



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## Sunday, September 12, 2010

There will be a brief reception following morning worship celebrating the baptism of Robert Reed Blair, son of Juli and Steve Blair. Worshipers are invited to attend.

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**LWF Addresses Past with Eyes on Future, A** continuing Article from September 2010 issue of the Lutheran Magazine. Text by Charles M. Austin

Lutherans from around the world healed some 16<sup>th</sup>-century wounds and pledged themselves to bring hope and healing to 21<sup>st</sup>-century ills as the Lutheran World Federation Assembly met in Stuttgart, Germany, in July. About 1,000 people – including 418 delegates from the 145 LWF member churches – took part in the assembly, held every seven years.

Through a statement adopted by the assembly and a worship service of reconciliation, Lutherans asked forgiveness of Mennonite Christians for the persecutions launched against Anabaptists, their spiritual ancestors, during the Reformation. Anabaptists, who disagreed with the Lutheran reformers on such issues as infant baptism and obedience to civil authority, were driven from their homelands, imprisoned and even executed, sometimes with the approval of Lutheran theologians.

Lutherans and Mennonites already work together on projects worldwide and pledged further theological dialogue and cooperation.

## THE MILLIONAIRE

Several decades ago there was a television program (fictional, of course) about a very rich man who had a habit of giving away a million dollars. He would select some ordinary person he had never met and authorize his lawyer (whose name was Mike, I think) to present a check for one million dollars to that person without telling him/her who was giving the money. This was a free gift with the taxes already paid. (The program never really explained how they arranged that.)

The very rich man wanted to see what the recipients would do with the money; whether the person would act selfishly or use at least some of his/her new wealth to help others in turn. My memory is poor on the subject, but I think the rich man could take back the gift, or what was left of it, under certain circumstances. Though the rich man knew about the people to whom he gave this money, it was not because of their past actions that he made the gift. They had not earned the gift. He wanted to see how the gift would change their lives; whether their existing values would change for the better or worse when given the power that such a large amount of money could buy.

The Biblical story of God's gift of his only Son, Jesus Christ, could have been the material from which that television program was created. In Christ God also gave a free gift; not money, but a more important kind of power -- the power to heal broken relationships between people and between humanity and God -- the power to forgive sins and to live in a new kind of world filled with love, and to live in it forever.

God does not give this wonderful gift to those who have earned it in some way, but to anyone who needs it. The gift which Jesus Christ offers is available to everyone. The gift has the power to change people's lives. As with the rich man in the television story, God judges the recipients on how they use his gift. Do they try to keep his gift of love for themselves or share their good fortune with others in need of the gift? If they are selfish, they lose the gift in the end. If they use the gift to help others become more loving, they get to keep the gift eternally.

Very few people would turn down a free gift of one million dollars, yet many people refuse the even greater free gift of the power of God's love because they are not willing to change their lives. You do not have to wait for some anonymous lawyer to knock on your door to receive this gift. It is available from any individual Christian or at your church. You do not have to earn it, only receive it on faith and use it to change your life for the better. Receive the free gift which is offered to you and stop waiting and hoping for that million dollars which will never come.

## Saint Michael Lutheran Church

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