

## **In Mission for Others: A People Called BC Synod Bishop Gerhard Preibisch**

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Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

As we meet in convention I greet you with the words of St. Paul:

*"I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift...to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ..." ~ Eph 4:1-13 (NRSV)*

### **Synod Office**

During this past year, there have been some significant changes in the BC Synod Office. We now have an Assistant to the Bishop. The Rev. Dr. Gregory Mohr began serving as Assistant to the Bishop on February 19, 2007. A full time Assistant to the Bishop is a welcomed addition to the office. He enables us to more adequately meet the present challenges and needs for ministry in our Synod. The portfolios of Youth, Missions, and Stewardship are the primary responsibilities of the Assistant to Bishop. His work also includes working with our standing Synod Committees. Greg is also BC Synod's representative on the national Church Extension and Capital Funds (CECF).

This report also encompasses the work of the Assistant to the Bishop.

### **In Mission for Others**

The passage above from Ephesians reminds us of the commitment of our national church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, to be a church in mission for others. The mandate of the BC Synod, as the regional expression of the ELCIC, is to "...share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with people in Canada and around the world through the proclamation of the Word and the celebration of the Sacraments and through service in Christ's name."

We only have to look to our neighbour next door to find opportunities to be the church in mission for others. Over 4 million people now make BC their home. Over two million of these live in Greater Vancouver. The latest statistics suggest that British Columbia attracts about 30,000 immigrants per year. Some of the languages that are spoken in our province include, English, Cantonese, Mandarin, Hakka, Danish, Estonian, Finnish, and German. In recent years, Asia has been the major source of immigrants to BC.

I give thanks to God for congregations, lay people, and pastors who have responded to the mission opportunities in our synod and in their communities. Mission outreach is happening and cross-cultural ministries are flourishing in a number of our congregations. Your benevolence funds are making mission possible in a number of communities across our province. Yet we can do more. We are a people rich in resources.

God has blessed many of us richly both individually and as congregations. We hold these blessings in trust from our gracious God. Therefore, our call to be the church in mission for others includes a faithful review of the stewardship of our resources of money, time, talents and property.

### **Recommendations**

- that as individuals and as congregations we review our proportionate giving to the church
- that all members of the BC Synod consider giving a “planned gift” to the church

### **Mission Challenges**

Several of our congregations are finding it increasingly difficult to be actively in mission for others due to an aging and dwindling membership. One of our challenges is the increasing number of congregations with declining membership. Several congregations in Greater Vancouver have an average Sunday morning attendance of between 25 to 50 worshippers. Although the members of these congregations are faithful and committed, tasks such as ushering, serving on church council and committees can become onerous. The question we need to ask is: “*Who are we here for?*” and “*What is our purpose?*” It is important to remember that our church buildings are a gift from God to serve the mission of God. We are called to be the witnesses of Christ to the ends of the earth. At times, this may mean using the resources of our congregation to do ministry elsewhere or give birth to a new mission congregation.

### **Recommendations**

- that congregations, especially in Greater Vancouver, explore areas of ministry where they can work cooperatively
- that congregations be encouraged to develop an area-mission strategy
- that congregations be encouraged to explore ways in which they can enable the birth of a mission congregation

There are already many examples of congregations working cooperatively and supporting missions in our synod and beyond.

We give thanks to God for the congregational partnership support being provided by the congregations of Basel Hakka, New Life Chinese, and Vancouver Chinese for the establishment of Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Surrey. Their gifts, along with financial support from the Mission Development Fund, have made the organization of this congregation possible. We give thanks also for the vision and support provided by the Basel Hakka congregation for this ministry these past 10 years. It is wonderful to see this mission develop in such a way as to now have a pastor serving on a half-time basis, ministering to those who have recently emigrated from mainland China.

All Saints Lutheran in Kelowna continues to grow and reach out to their community in many and various ways. This mission congregation faces some significant challenges with respect to their land and Luther House. Its growth is inhibited by the lack of a church building. We are grateful to the congregations and individuals who have participated in the “Celebrate All Saints” campaign and we also encourage others to make financial contributions. It is important that we continue to provide adequate funding for our mission congregations. Initiatives such as All Saints and Emmanuel require long-term funding.

## **Mission Development Fund**

The Stewardship Committee has engaged Liberty Quest, fund-raising consultants, to assist the Synod in organizing a financial campaign for the Mission Development Fund and the UBC Campus Centre.

## **Youth**

Ministry to youth continues to be a priority in our synod. One of the ministries that we are extremely proud of is our annual Confirmation Camp. This highly valued educational ministry is entirely planned and conducted by pastors and lay leaders who volunteer their time for this week-long ministry, usually held in August. Congregations are encouraged to support this ministry by including, in their budget, the registration fee for their confirmands to attend Confirmation Camp.

### ***Recommendation***

- Congregations budget for confirmands to attend Confirmation Camp

## **National Youth Gathering**

I urge congregations to encourage their youth to attend the National Youth Gathering, "Travel Light," in Whitehorse, Yukon, this August. The guest presenter will be Pastor Fred Ludolph. This is a unique opportunity to be inspired, grow in faith and meet as many as 1,200 other Lutheran youth from across Canada.

### ***Recommendation***

- Congregations encourage and enable their youth to attend the 2008 Lutheran Youth Gathering in Whitehorse

Our Synod Youth Committee has developed a strategic plan for youth ministry in our Synod. The highlights of this plan include:

- providing regional opportunities to support youth leaders and enable them to share resources and ideas
- initiate regional youth leadership events
- coordinate a young-adult gathering
- organize a pre-National Youth Gathering event in May 2008
- organize a Synod Youth Gathering in 2009

## **"Serving Spirit," the 2007 Synod Youth Gathering**

Held in Oliver, two dozen youth from across this province gathered for the greater part of a week to study, learn, play and serve together. They worked during the mornings at the Okanagan Gleaners, a non-profit group that receives left-over produce from the area farms and prepares this food for shipment to those in need around the world. All experienced firsthand how a seemingly overwhelming mountain of tomatoes can be washed, diced and prepared for shipment when we work together.

## **Campus Ministry**

As more and more post-secondary educational institutions are established throughout our province, the need for congregations in those communities to engage in chaplaincy work is increasing. The Lutheran Student Foundation (LSF) encourages congregations to seek ways by which they can provide ministry to students, staff and faculty.

## **UBC Campus Centre**

This past year, we received an engineer's report on the UBC Campus Centre building. This report indicates that we will have to spend at least \$360,000 to repair the Centre. We have had a contractor review the engineers report and to give an estimate on the cost of repairs. The contractor recommended that we consider replacing the building.

In May of 2006, together with the New Westminster Diocese of the Anglican Church of Canada, we hosted an area strategy meeting entitled: "Conversation on Campus Ministry." There was a good representation of pastors and lay people from around the Lower Mainland. At the meeting, we resolved to form a working group to review the many ideas generated and to articulate a vision for campus ministry at UBC. The campus ministry board will present a vision for campus ministry at UBC during this convention. We received word in March from the New Westminster Diocese that while they are interested and supportive of the vision being put forward regarding the centre, they are not in a position to commit any funds at this time.

## **Wellness and Care Task Force**

At our 2006 convention, we recognized the effects of acute and chronic stress on our church workers. It was resolved to strike a committee to facilitate Stress Management Workshops for clergy and lay professionals. Synod Council, as a result, convened the "Wellness and Care Task Force." This task force is committed to a long-term view of providing support to parishes and encouraging health and wellness among rostered ministers and congregations. Several data-gathering forums have been held and presentations have been made at conference conventions and study conferences. The task force continues to plan for a 2009 event regarding a stress and burnout seminar. In addition, we are ascertaining whether there is interest in establishing a clergy spouse retreat.

## **Communications**

The BC Synod Web site and Gracewords has generated a lot of interest especially this past year. We are grateful to Brenda Smidt for the work she has done in managing our web site over many years. Brenda recently retired as our web-site manager. Our office secretary, Winnie Fong, is now managing the site. The Communications Committee has been mandated to review the purpose of Gracewords.

## **Stewards of Creation**

To be in mission for others includes caring for God's creation. In 2007, our Faith and Society Committee, together with the Anglican Church of Canada, sponsored the "Greening of the Parish" conference. This event was well-attended by some seventy church members who returned to their congregations with ideas and energy to reduce the carbon footprint we are leaving on the planet. The Faith and Society Committee has developed a "Green Parish Accreditation Program."

### **Recommendation**

- That congregations adopt the "Green Parish Accreditation Program"

## **Mission Societies**

We give thanks to God for the Lutheran Urban Mission Society (LUMS) and the Surrey Urban Mission Society (SUMS) and their ministry to the homeless, disenfranchised, and marginalised of our society. For example, SUMS supplies 30 of the 100 shelter beds in the city of Surrey which are available for the homeless during inclement weather. SUMS has experienced some very difficult days these past two years, yet they have continued to joyfully and faithfully serve many people. We owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to the director of SUMS, Jonquil Hallgate, whose indomitable spirit, tenacious sense of ministry, and gift for locating human and financial resources is truly amazing.

In March of 2007, the synod was served with a Writ of Summons from the Supreme Court of British Columbia concerning our property in Surrey which was previously owned by Christ the King Lutheran in Surrey. The congregation was declared defunct in 2000. In February of this year, the bishop and treasurer were added as defendants to the Writ of Summons. Please see Appendix J43: "Response of Bishop Preibisch to Neil Peterson's Email."

## **National Worship Conference: Order and Chaos**

I encourage congregations to send one or more of their worship leaders to the National Worship Conference this summer, to be held in Montreal on June 25 - 29, 2008. Gordon Lathrop, a world-renowned liturgical theologian, and Karen Ward, a church-planting guru, will be the featured speakers. We congratulate Rev. Karen Johnson-Lefsrud of Lutheran Church of the Cross in Victoria who will be awarded the "2008 Companion for the Worship Arts" at this conference.

## **Visioning**

Representatives from our synod Standing Committees joined Synod Council and the Conference Deans for a visioning process led by Don Storch. The gathering first engaged in an exercise that identified strengths and weaknesses, noted where progress had been made on the existing vision and goals, and then identified goals yet to be met.

Arising out of this process were the following:

1. Reaffirmation of the 2004 visioning document as an important tool and guide for our ministry as a Synod
2. Four of the vision statements were selected as the primary ones that should be the focus of our Synod for the next two years. These are as follows:
  - To be a church in mission
  - To be an inclusive church where all are welcome
  - To excel in shepherding our congregations and rostered ministers
  - To enhance our effectiveness through creative models of ministry

3. Participants in the visioning day began developing strategic goals in response to what these four vision statements might mean for us as a Synod. In addition, all of the vision statements will be referred to the Standing Committees as strategic directions to assist them in their own planning. Subsequent to the visioning day, a sub-committee was formed to complete the task begun that day.

The strategic goals arising out of the visioning day are as follows:

1. **To be a church in mission**
  - a. Establish new congregations, specialized ministries, and mission projects
  - b. Assist in the revitalization of existing congregations
  - c. Encourage and support growing congregations
  - d. Assist congregations that are struggling due to diminishing membership
  - e. Provide assistance for rostered ministers to attend the mission developer training events
  - f. Promote resources and workshops that enable congregations to identify and enact their mission, vision and goals
2. **To be an inclusive church where all are welcome**
  - a. To discern and understand the needs of the people in our communities so that we might more faithfully engage the work of the gospel
  - b. Seek ways within our respective communities to minister to those living with situations such as addiction, unemployment or underemployment, homelessness, language barriers or mental illness
  - c. The 2006 Synod Convention mandated that a welcoming motion be brought for consideration at the 2008 Convention. If that motion is adopted, the following goal would then be applicable: "To help the members of the BC Synod implement the welcoming motion in their personal lives and in the lives of their congregations and Synod"
3. **To excel in shepherding our congregations and rostered ministers**
  - a. Equip, enable and educate rostered ministers and lay leaders to engage the ministry of the gospel in a post-modern, emerging church world
  - b. Provide Synod-wide learning opportunities for lay people to address questions about what it means to be Lutheran in the 21st century
4. **To enhance our effectiveness through creative models of ministry**
  - a. Provide theological and worship leadership training for lay people
  - b. Initiate area strategies in rural and urban situations
  - c. Develop a multi-point parish model and shared ministry options
  - d. Develop and promote an evaluative tool to assist congregations in assessing their health
  - e. Provide resources for congregations to engage in a revitalization process

I continue to be energized and excited about the future to which God is calling us. I am grateful for the support I receive from many members as I travel about our synod. I appreciate your support and prayers.

### ***Recommendation***

- Pray that our gracious God will continue to bless and strengthen us as we seek to be in the church in mission for others

I began this report with the words of St Paul to the church in Ephesus:

*"I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."*

This is my prayer for our congregations, synod and our ELCIC. We are members of a family called the Evangelical Lutheran Church In Canada. In this family, we can respect each other as brothers and sisters in Christ even when we disagree on important issues. Diversity has been a strength and characteristic of our ELCIC since its beginning. God formed us and continues to call us to be a church in mission for others, to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ in Canada and beyond. This is a time of opportunity for our church to be the church for others. There is a new spiritual hunger in the land. Together we can do more to fulfill the mission which God has entrusted us. I pray that we will not let the issues divide us and thereby impede our proclamation of the gospel.

**Recommendation**

- Pray that our gracious God will continue to bless us, keep us united and strengthen us as we endeavour to be in the church in mission for others

I give thanks to God for the dedicated ministry team in our synod office: the Rev. Dr. Greg Mohr, Assistant to the Bishop; Winnie Fong, our office secretary/receptionist; Robert Hampel, our bookkeeper; and Jill Gingrich, our Canada Lutheran-BC Synod pages Editor. I deeply appreciate the commitment of our officers: Vice Chair, John Boucher; Secretary, Loris Martin; and Treasurer, Gene Blishen. I am also grateful for the devoted work of the Conference Deans, members of Synod Council and of our synod committees.

Your servant in Christ,

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+ Bishop Gerhard Preibisch

## Report to the Synod ELCIC National Bishop Susan C. Johnson

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*Listen, listen God is calling, through the Word inviting  
offering forgiveness, comfort, and joy.*

Many of us are familiar enough with *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* hymn #513 that we know the words by memory. Several times a year we include this hymn as part of our daily worship service at the National Office. During these and other moments, we are more keenly aware than ever of our need to listen to where God is calling our church. This is one of the reasons why in March 2008, the ELCIC's National Church Council spent extra time together discerning the mission and vision of the ELCIC and determining the strategic priorities for our church in the coming years.

During our 2005 National Convention, we embarked on a journey to be a church *In Mission for Others*. Four simple words that together form a powerful statement reminding us of our call to be an outward-focused church. It was hoped that by setting this theme the members of our church would be encouraged to connect with others to fulfill this call and the response has been overwhelming. We thank you for seeking out your call to this mission. Your involvement has made a difference on so many different levels – locally, nationally, and globally.

*Jesus gave his mandate; share the good news  
that he came to save us and set us free.*

In so many different ways, the mission of the church is carried out each and every day because of you.

The attentiveness of our youth to listening to their call is inspiring and encouraging. ELCIC youth from congregations across our church, including some Anglican Church of Canada youth, gather together every second year and offer a creative witness and opportunity to experience being part of a larger body of Christ. Through the 2004-2006 National Youth Project, youth raised \$146,000 for Habitat for Humanity, building a house in Winnipeg, as well as supporting Habitat projects in the four other synods.

We thank those who feel the call to serve through mission opportunities. October 2008 marks the 20th anniversary of Rev. Brian Rude's involvement in El Salvador, Lori Endress continues in her mission placement in Thailand, and Margaret Sadler and Marcus Busch serve as Short-term Missionaries in a joint placement with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) at the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) office in Cambodia. We also express our thanks and gratitude for the dedicated service of retiring missionaries Rev. Katharine Bergbusch, 13 years of service in Peru, and Bonnie Weppler, 10 years of service in Papua New Guinea.

Even though you may not be serving a mission opportunity yourself, these opportunities are only possible because of your generous donations to the ELCIC's Mission and Missionary Sponsorship.

*Let none be forgotten throughout the world.*

The work we do together through the ELCIC's Global Hunger and Development Appeal (GHDA) is something we can truly celebrate. Giving to GHDA has shown a steady increase with donations, including designated giving to Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR), growing 12% from \$1,074,927 in 2006 to \$1,205,308 in 2007. Through this, our church helps make a difference in the lives of the world's poor and marginalized.

Our relationship between GHDA and CLWR allows us to be *In Mission for Others* by responding with international emergency relief, development programming and refugee resettlement. CLWR continues to help communities in Africa, Asia, and Latin America find sustainable solutions to extreme poverty, violence and injustice. Financial contributions from donors in the past year have enabled CLWR to assist over half a million people living in 181 communities to improve their access to nutritious food, safe water, health care, education and human rights.

ELCIC congregations are also vitally important to the work of GHDA. Increasingly, congregations live out the commitment to be a church *In Mission for Others* by feeding the hungry, giving shelter to the homeless, and providing education, encouragement and hope to those in need.

Within ELCIC Synods and congregations, your participation in projects, programs and committees helps us keep connected to the wider work of the church. The following are just a few examples of your involvement:

- Stewardship Consultants coordinate and make available stewardship resources to every congregation in the synod. Their experience assists with the development of stewardship programs and identifying opportunities and strategies.
- GHDA Consultants work with ELCIC members and congregations to identify opportunities for projects, programs and activities in the Synods.
- Lutheran Planned Giving (LPG) Consultants help identify opportunities within the Synods and share information with congregations and members.
- *Canada Lutheran* Synod Editors help tell the stories of our church.
- A task force comprised of a diverse representative of individuals from our church are involved in the process of developing a social statement on human sexuality. Eventually calling on the whole church for input and feedback, the anticipated outcome of the study is the development of a social statement which will be brought forward at the 2011 National Convention.
- National Church Council (NCC) members gather together at least two times a year to carry out the business of the church between National Conventions.
- The Church Extension and Capital Fund (CECF) committee oversees seed money for new church buildings and new mission initiatives. Through the administration of this fund, many congregations receive support for their first building.
- Those who serve on the Program Committee for Leadership for Ministry and synodically on Committees for Theological Education and Leadership (CTEL) work with congregations, seminaries, bishops and candidates for leadership to identify, prepare and certify on behalf of the ELCIC gifted women and men who are called by God to serve in public ministry.

Without these individuals and many others, we would lose our vital connection to the local levels of our church. We thank all those who feel called to contribute their gifts of time and talent to work *In Mission for Others*.

*Help us to be faithful, standing steadfast.*

Across the country, ELCIC congregations are living out the commitment to the Stewardship of Creation initiative adopted at the 2007 National Convention. We have heard the call to be attentive to the environment; a vital challenge to our current lifestyle, habits and economics. Through KAIROS, we were involved in lifting up water as a sacred gift and a right. We questioned the use of bottled water and explored the international issue of communities being denied access to clean water. As a part of our Stewardship of Creation initiative, we continue our partnership with KAIROS through their Re-Energize campaign, moving us towards a just and sustainable energy future.

Increasingly, we realise the need to work together ecumenically. We not only recognize our call to be good stewards as it encompasses our sharing of resources with other denominations but this cooperation makes for a stronger Christian witness to the world.

With our full communion partner, the Anglican Church of Canada (ACC), we celebrated the six year anniversary of the signing of the Waterloo Declaration at our respective national gatherings in 2007. This relationship has impacted not only local congregations where joint services are enriched by this partnership, but also in the National Office where colleagues from the ELCIC and ACC work together and collaborate in the areas of communication, justice and advocacy.

Through our involvement with the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC), we join with 20 other church bodies to work together to promote understanding among one another, as well as to come together to speak out and act on conditions that involve moral and spiritual principles: securing a \$1.4 billion commitment from the Canadian government for affordable housing; encouraging the government in the pursuit of peace in Afghanistan; and calling on the government to take immediate steps to develop and implement a national poverty reduction strategy.

Within North America, we have worked to strengthen our partnership with the ELCA. Through the LWF North America regional office we were blessed with the friendship and collegiality of Kathy Magus, who has moved on to new opportunities. We look forward to welcoming the Rev. Teresita C. Valeriano, who was recently appointed to the position.

Through the ELCIC's Mission in the World, we are connected to world mission partner churches in Peru, Argentina, Colombia, El Salvador, Guyana, Cameroon, Papua New Guinea and Jordan and the Holy Land.

Globally, *67... now 68, million Lutherans DO make a difference.* Through our participation in the global community of LWF we, along with 140 member churches in 78 countries, impact the lives of others through the humanitarian, mission and development, and ecumenical work of LWF.

And through our participation in the World Council of Churches we are able to connect with 347 churches, denominations and church fellowships in more than 110 countries and territories throughout the world – representing over 560 million Christians.

On so many different levels, your partnership and support allows our church to make a difference. Locally, Nationally, Globally.

In the midst of this, we understand that our work is certainly not without challenges. We are facing an aging demographic within our church that affects us on so many different levels. We need to discern and understand how our church does (or doesn't) connect, engage and is relevant to young adults. We need to ensure we are attentive to discerning God's call and how we can assist in making the Gospel known in today's sceptical and hectic, modern world where people are faced with societal demands.

The Evangelical Lutheran Women (ELW)'s challenges of redefining itself and finding ways to be viable within the church indicates that our fear of change need not hold us back from being the people God is calling us to be. We need to be open to these new realities that will develop and encourage support and participation in its programming.

The ELCIC strives to inspire, encourage and share the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Amid our challenges, it's easy to lose sight on this and get bogged down in administrative tasks or just be content with how we've always done something. This is when it is most crucial for us to listen. *Listen*

*God is calling.* Hearing this call and the life giving power of the Holy Spirit is energizing. It strengthens us in our faith, provides guidance and empowers us... *offering us forgiveness, comfort and joy!*

As you gather together as a Synod, I want to thank you for your ongoing partnership and support in our common mission and ministry. I look forward to sharing with you in person the results of National Church Council's visioning process. And I invite you to join with us in listening to how God is calling us all to be a church *In Mission for Others*.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susan C. Johnson', with a cross symbol at the beginning.

The Rev. Susan C. Johnson  
National Bishop