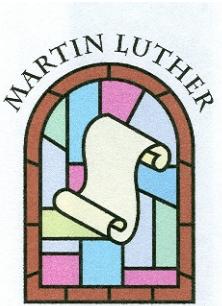


Congregational newsletter



December 2010 & January 2011

LUTHERAN CHURCH
—Founded 1955 Gegründet—

DEVOTION

Dear Fellow Christians !

"Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." These words express the deep mystery of Christmas. These words of Mary, by which she opens herself to God's creating and renewing act.

We can see this in a most impressive way on the painting in the centre. It was painted by Fra Angelico around 1440 AD for the Convento di San Marco in Florence. Fra Angelico was a Dominican monk, and his paintings are characterized by a wonderful clarity and tenderness.

Simple and poor, as the room is, so are the three persons also. Mary in a very plain gown, one of the "poor in the country", kneels on a little bench for prayer. The angel approaches her, in un conspicuous human figure, but wings and gown blaze in the fire of God's holiness. On the left, there is a monk, contemplating this scene.

Mary's and the angel's hands correspond. In tender gestures, they betoken the mighty mystery of Christmas. With the right hand, the angel points to the heaven: from God the almighty creator,



Gabriel has been sent. With the left hand, he points to the coming miracle: Jesus is born, and in this child, God himself comes in the world, can to be found and touched as a tiny child and a weak human. Mary bows under this announcement; with her hand placed on her heart, she shows that she is entirely open for the acting of God's Spirit.

"Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Yes, God my Lord, whatever you plan, do it, I am yours. With these words, Mary is an essential example of Christian life. We also are told about her openness and obedience in Luke 2:19: "Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart." Mary receives, treasures and ponders the Word of God.

What a miracle is Christmas! The mighty God in the midst of our endangered world. In the midst of perils and poverty of humanity, we find our Lord and Saviour.

A hymn by Charles Wesley sings of this marvellous experience.

Love divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of heaven, to earth come down,

Fix in us thy humble dwelling,
All thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesus, thou art all compassion,
Pure unbounded love thou art.

Visit us with thy salvation,
Enter every trembling heart.

*I wish you the Peace and Blessings of Christmas,
Your Pastor Alexander Mielke*

We are looking forward to the **Christmas Play on the third Advent Sunday, Dec 12**, the great event during the Advent Season. Come, enjoy, and bring friends and neighbours too!

We very cordially invite to our services in the Christmas Season:
4th Advent Sunday, December 19, 5:00 p.m.: English Candlelight Service for the Young and Young at Heart

December 24, Friday, 5:00 p.m.: German Service in Christmas Eve (with some English translation)

6:30 p.m., English Candle Light Service

December 25, Saturday, 11:00 a.m.: German Service on Christmas Day

December 26, Sunday, 11:00 a.m.: Joint Service as Sing-Along with English and German Carols

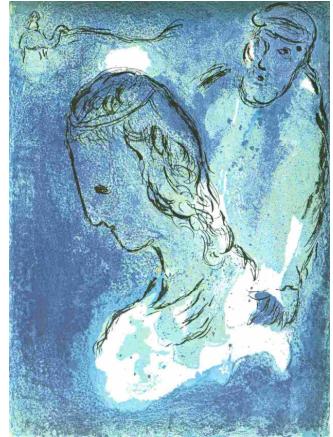
With Jazz and Swing, we will have a good start into the New Year.
Very welcome to our Joint Service on January 2, 2011, Sunday, 11:00 a.m. Bruce and friends will play saxophone, guitar and bass. Please note that this is on Jan 2 – there isn't any service on Jan 1!

In the coming year, we want to develope the musical programme of our Martin Luther Church.

First a **CHILDREN'S CHOIR** starts. **Children are invited to meet and practice every second Sunday** during the German service. So the English-speaking parents can enjoy coffee and cake while their kids meet and have fun. And German parents can attend the service. We'd like to sing lively and fun songs with the kids. Aim is the performance of a **musical** in a service after Easter. We will provide you with more information. We very cordially invite our families to this new activity in the MLC!

And second our **CHURCH CHOIR IN A NEW SHAPE** way starts. The new choir director is **Richard Heinze** who is already wellknown in our congregation through concerts on Palm Sunday and First Advent. The choir will meet on **Tuesdays, 6 – 7:30 pm** in the church. R.Heinze was music lecturer and nowadays he has his own music school. He wants to practice a colourful choice of classic and contemporary songs with the choir. Aim is a performance on Good Friday.

There will be another **Adult Retreat** in the end of January. For the second time, we will meet for this in the cozy **Mount Alverno Centre**. It is going to start with supper on Jan 28 and end with lunch on Jan 30. Join us for this weekend of good fellowship in having time together, singing and Bible reading. The topic will be: "**Abraham and Sarai – Led on New and Unknown Ways**".



Price is about the same as last year: \$119.00 for the weekend, accomodation and food included. Please contact Pastor Mielke if you like to participate (see the registration form at the end of this newsletter). The address is: 20704 Heart Lake Road, Caledon, Ontario L7K 2A2, (Close to Orangeville) - Carpooling Will Be Provided.

Please mark your calendar: The Annual Meeting is on Feb 27.

The **Ladies' Group now meets in the morning, basically every second Wednesday a month**, 9:30 – 11:30 a.m. The next meetings are Dec 8 and Jan 12.

Katarina Prosenjak, already well-known to us, is **starting as a curate/student of internship in January 2011**. Financed by EKD as well as Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau, she will be with us until November. Here she introduces herself.

It has been a while since I last set foot in the Martin Luther Church in Toronto. To be exact: it's been two years since then. From November 2008 until January 2009 I was in Toronto visiting my then boyfriend, now fiancée John. I had just graduated from university and had some time until the beginning of the second part of my education – the practical education to become a pastor. So I used that time to get to know the life of a German/English congregation in a big city and a different country - an interesting experience for a young theologian as me, who grew up as a pastor's daughter in a village with 1300 inhabitants.



For me – one of the most memorable things of my time in the Martin Luther Church remains the rehearsal for the nativity play with the funniest soldiers I've ever seen in such a play – marching along yelling "Left, left, left – right - left" with a skipping voice.

In the past two years I've completed my education for becoming a pastor. I was working in the evangelical city church in Rüsselsheim (Ev. Stadtkirchengemeinde Rüsselsheim) assisting the pastor Dr. Annette Mehlhorn, who trained me there. Besides that I continued having classes that I completed with a number of exams beginning in May and ending in October of this year. In November I then took over the work in the congregation for my training pastor, who got to take off one month for studying purposes. The work in Rüsselsheim was a whole new experience for me. I got to know the difficulties of an evangelical congregation in a city where Christians are by far in the minority. In such a city intercultural and ecumenical as well as interreligious work will become more and more important. For that reason I'm happy that next year I will not only work in the Martin Lu-

ther Church in the multireligious and multicultural Toronto, but also in the Canadian Council of Churches, whose work is per se interreligious.

So far I've had many opportunities to live and study in different places, which everytime made my horizon wider: I went to school in West Virginia for a year when I was 16. After my graduation from highschool I spent a year in Slovenia (Ljubljana) learning my father's language. During my studies of protestant theology in Marburg, I had the opportunity to study catholic theology again in Slovenia (Maribor) for a semester.

I can truly say: God has set my feet in a broad place (Ps 31), which I am very greatful for.

And so I look very much forward to another interesting experience in Toronto – maybe this time not with soldiers (since I will not experience christmas with you), but surely with angels and hymns and the good news...

Yours sincerely,

Katarina Prosenjak

The **official introduction of Katarina will be in the Joint Service on Jan 23, 2011**. Here the sermon will be delivered by **Karen Hamilton, General Secretary of the Canadian Council of Churches**.

In 2010 we have started with "**Getting to Know Our Neighbours – Understanding World Religions**" by learning about Judaism and visting a synagogue. In January I will give an introduction to the understanding of **Hinduism**, with a **Presentation** after the services on **Jan 16, 2011. After that, we will visit a Hindu temple**, probably on Saturday, Feb 5.

We cordially thank Ernst Carl, John Knopp, and Gerald Grottsch, who have provided the new good and solid cement floor in front of our church entrance. They and other helpers are busy at many more places in our church – thank you so much to each of them!

For our English service, we were able to purchase a **new red hymn book** which we can use since the 2nd Advent Sunday. It provides an excellent choice of classic and contemporary hymns.

Thank you so much to all who expressed their support by promising a donation. The cost of 1 copy is \$ 27. Please give us an extra cheque with the memo "New English Hymn Book" in compliance with your signing in the list. Thank you!

Please mark your calendar:

For **Sunday Feb 13, 2011**, we very cordially invite to another **German Family Service** which will be starting at 11:00 a.m., a lively service with contemporary songs for young and old.

In this newsletter, you also find special Christmas Envelopes. A big Thank You for all support you can give to the Martin Luther Church!

Here We Need Your Help

Flowers on the altar make our church beautiful for the Sunday. Flower donations which can be made in memory of loved ones are very much appreciated. Please sign up in the list which you find in the entrance hall, for a Sunday which is still free and convenient for you. For coordination it might be helpful if you leave your phone number on a card.

*Please also have a look at the **Coffee Duty List** – thank you for helping on a Sunday!*

On the First Advent Sunday, which also was the 55th anniversary of our Martin Luther Church, we could enjoy a lovely Advent Concert by the Edelweiss Choir, under the direction of Manfred Petz.

Watchword for the Year 2011
Do not be overcome by evil, but over-
come evil with good.
Romans 12:21



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Radio Devotion (in German) every Sunday 9:30 a.m. on AM 530

Editor of MLC Newsletter: Pastor Alexander Mielke

Homepage and List Administrator: Mona Frantzke; Mailing List: Anita Ratz

Registration Form

Erwachsenenfreizeit der Martin-Luther-Kirche 2011

Adult Retreat of the Martin Luther Church 2011

January 28 - 30, 2011, Mount Alverno Retreat Centre, Friday 7:00 p.m. – Sunday 2:00 p.m.

Price per Person: \$ 119.00 (for Food and Accomodation)

Please send this form to Pastor Alexander Mielke until December 19, 2010

I / we want to participate in the Adult Retreat of the Martin Luther Church, Jan 28-30.
My name / our names

Address

Phone

Email

I am attaching a cheque (payable to "Martin Luther Church", Memo "Adult Retreat"):

Yes/ No.

Special dietary and other needs:

Date and Signature

I found the following article in the Toronto Star. I think it is so important that I'd like to share it with you here.

Christianity arguably the most persecuted religion in the world (Excerpt)

Published on Toronto Star, Sunday, December 5, 2010, Ron Csillag (Special to the Star)

Earlier this month, Christians who are free to observe their faith gathered in churches around the world for the annual International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church. They recited pre-written invocations for fellow Christians who face violence and oppression.

Certainly, there are many reasons to take action:

- Terrified Christians in Iraq are still mourning the 50-plus deaths in an Oct. 31 attack against worshippers attending mass at Our Lady of Salvation church in Baghdad, in which a militant group called the Islamic State of Iraq sprayed the sanctuary with bullets.
- *StarAsia Bibi*, a 45-year-old Christian mother of five in Pakistan, remains on death row — after spending more than a year in prison — for allegedly blaspheming the Prophet Muhammad. Last week, a court blocked a presidential pardon until an appeals court hears her case. Also in Pakistan, police said two Muslim extremists shot a Christian to death in Punjab province shortly after the victim was granted bail in a “blasphemy” case — and less than a week after Islamic militants in the same province killed four members of a Christian family for their faith.
- The Vietnamese government has announced the continuation of a massive military operation to “wipe out” Christians in the central highlands who refuse to join the state-approved church.

Christianity is arguably — and perhaps counter-intuitively — the most persecuted religion in the world. And the reason for the blissful obliviousness to that fact of well-fed Christians in the West is “ignorance,” says Michael Horowitz, a U.S. Jewish activist who has written on Christian persecution. Horowitz contends this lack of awareness “is fostered by preconceptions and conventional wisdoms that lead many in the West to dismiss anti-Christian persecution as improbable, untrue, impossible.”

Persecution of Christians just doesn't compute. After all, it's the faith of record in the world's richest and most powerful countries, where Christians have been ensconced for centuries.

And given Christianity's well-documented history of brutality, modern-day elites are more conditioned to think of Christian believers as the persecutors, not the victims, says Horowitz.

But the face of Christianity has changed drastically. “There's still the mindset that Christianity is white, Western and European,” says Paul Marshall, of the Hudson Institute in Washington, D.C., and a former senior fellow at the Center for Religious Freedom.

Today, he points out, two-thirds of the world's Christians live outside the West. “The average Christian, if one can use that term, is now a Nigerian woman,” Marshall says. And numbering 2 billion, there are plenty of Christians to oppress.

Virtually every human rights group and Western government agency that monitors the plight of Christians worldwide arrives at more or less the same conclusion: Between 200 million and 230 million of them face daily threats of murder, beating, imprisonment and torture, and a further 350 to 400 million encounter discrimination in areas such as jobs and housing. A conservative estimate of the number of Christians killed for their faith each year is somewhere around 150,000.

In a report to a conference on Christian persecution hosted by the European Parliament last month, the U.S. Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life put it this way:

“At least” 75 per cent of all religious persecution in the world is directed against Christians, the conference was told.