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## ILC Chairman's Meditation

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By Bishop Hans-Jörg Voigt

*Ephesians 5:1-8 (NIV)*

**(1) Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly beloved children (2) and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. (3) But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. (4) Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. (5) For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person – such a man is an idolator -- has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. (6) Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. (7) Therefore do not be partners with them. (8) For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light.**



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ!

This word of Scripture talks about acting. And let's admit it: we all like to act a bit at times. Our children come home from school putting on a long suffering face and claim something terrible has happened. And we as parents are expected to

react with fright and alarm – so that the children can proudly present their excellent school marks.

A careful look at the Greek text shows why Paul talks about acting as he writes: *“Become God's imitators (or mimics)!”* That's what the text is really saying. Actors of God, his imitators, that is what we are to be. Luther translates this verse in the following way: *“Follow God's example as beloved children.”* Imitators, mimics of God and of Christ, that is the theme of this section.

The Apostle apparently made the rather accurate observation, that mimicry or imitation plays a greater role in our lives than we are willing to admit. And it is my observation, for instance, that on Monday a well known German magazine publishes an article on a specific topic using certain words and phrases. By Friday almost the whole country uses the same words and phrases. That is imitation, mimicry. St. Paul admonishes the Christians in Ephesus: *“Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them.”*

As members of a community we can easily be led astray. When someone we trust tells us: *“Do this!”* we are severely tempted. *“Let no one deceive you with empty words!”* As baptized Christians we are no longer part of what people refer to as “everybody”. We are called out of this world. The word “church” in the New Testament means “those called out”. We are no longer to act the same as all others.

This is rather interesting: The temptations which the Christians in Asia Minor and in Ephesus faced were probably just like the ones we are confronted with today: Adultery, fornication, dirty things, greed. These days we will be dealing with all sorts of ethical issues. *“But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.”*

*(continued on page 2)*

(continued from page 1)

Temple prostitution was part of the religious culture of the day, and greed certainly stands on the same level. Paul addresses exactly those realms of human life to which God attached a strong stimulus: sexuality and self-preservation. When with them you become part of the wrong crowd, they likely will lead you away from God and in the end destroy your life.

But Christians are not to be imitators of the world but of God.

*“Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly beloved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loves us and gave himself for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”*

Now we know what role God has assigned to us: as Christians we are to play Christ’s role. The presentation put on by the world with Adam at the beginning showed the wrong people in the wrong role, one that God never intended man to be in. Man was disobedient and ever since then none of us are fully able to perform the role assigned to us by God’s standard. Only Jesus lived in complete fulfillment of the role assigned to him. He was the first and only to fully take on the role of “human being”. *“He gave himself for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”*

In baroque times the passion story was performed as *spectaculum Dei* – a divinely staged presentation. And the passion and death of Christ is the greatest drama in world history. It is, however, no play, no game, but a bitter, terrible and serious matter. The death of God in his Son Jesus Christ on Good Friday was the climax. As Jesus truly and fully played the role of man in his whole fullness, something Adam had tragically missed out on, he grants us forgiveness and life.

Ever since we are trying to play Adam’s original role and imitate Christ in our lives. We are God’s mimics, even though in a sense we are not experts in this role. And every day we make clear that we are really not able fully to play the role of Christ. But like a group of players in a lay theatre we joyfully try to fill the role of playing Christ: The people of God as a laymen’s theatre – and everyone plays the role of Christ. This then is not something false or pretended, rather we are constantly growing into the role of our lives: *“Live a life of love, just as Christ loved us.”*

May God grant that we are encouraged and

strengthened in our roles as “imitators of God”. May his blessing guide us on his way. Amen.

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## NEWS FROM LATIN AMERICA

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### Elections in Guatemala

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*By Pastor Eduardo Bonilla,  
Guatemala's Lutheran Church President.*

Elections were held last May, and the new Church Council is the following:

|                                   |                 |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Pastor Eduardo Bonilla Porras     | (President)     |
| Pastor Tiburcio Girón Mejía       | (Vicepresident) |
| Doctor Elry Plinio Orozco Aguirre | (Treasurer)     |
| Señora Elizabeth Sapón            | (Secretary)     |

The new Council of the Lutheran Church in Guatemala has decided to open again CLET (Lutheran Centre of Theological Studies, for its acronym in Spanish) This due to the great need there is to support all the churches in Guatemala with formal theological studies.

This CLET will be managed by Pastor Abdiel Orozco Aguirre, and to be able to support those churches far away from Guatemala City, the face-to-face courses will also be transmitted via Internet.



Lutheran Church Castillo Fuerte, which is affiliated to Conlut, will transmit The Holy Service on Sundays, and Biblical Studies on Thursdays via Internet. To participate, please visit:  
[www.ustremtv/castillofuerte](http://www.ustremtv/castillofuerte) or in Facebook: [iglesiastillofuerte](https://www.facebook.com/iglesiastillofuerte).

## NEWS FROM NORTH AMERICA

### Fort Wayne Hosts International Conference on Wilhelm Löhe

By John T Pless

The International Löhe Theological Conference III met on the campus of Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne from July 26-29 with an excursion to the Frankenmuth and Frankentrost, Michigan on July 29-30. Both Frankenmuth and Frankentrost were settled by Lutheran colonists sent by Pastor Löhe to the United States in the 1840s.

Over 50 pastors, scholars, and interested laity from the United States, Canada, Germany, South Africa, and Korea heard fifteen presentations on the historical setting, theology, and contemporary legacy of Wilhelm Löhe (1808-1872) who is responsible for the founding of both Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana and Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa.

In the tightly packaged conference, participants heard the following speakers:

Dr. Lawrence Rast (Fort Wayne): "Löhe, Wyneken, and the Fort Wayne Seminary"

Dr. Dietrich Blaufuß (Erlangen): "Löhe and Enlightenment Movements"

Dr. John Stephenson (Saint Catharine's, Ontario): "Löhe as an Ecumenical Lutheran"

Dr. Klaus Detlev Schulz (Fort Wayne): "Löhe's Missiological Perspective"

Rev. Martin Lohrmann (Philadelphia): "Löhe and the Ministerium of Pennsylvania: Löhe's Reception Among his Contemporaries in the Eastern United States"

Dr. Paul Chung (Saint Paul): "Confession as Mission-Retrieving Wilhelm Löhe"

Dr. Thomas Kothmann (Regensburg): "Löhe as Religious Educator"

Dr. Craig Nesson (Dubuque): "Wilhelm Löhe in Deindoerfer's History of the Iowa Synod"

Mr. Jacob Corzine (Berlin): "Wilhelm Löhe and Chiliasm in the Context of 19<sup>th</sup> Century Eschatology"

Deaconess Cheryl Naumann (Oakmont, PA): "Lutheran Deaconesses in North America: An Assessment of Löhe's Influence"

Dr. Thomas Schattauer (Dubuque): "Löhe's 1844 Agenda"

Dr. Wolfhart Schlichting (Augsburg): "Löhe's

Correspondence with Wedemann 1849-1850 on Theory and Practice in Church and Ministry."

Rev. Mark Loest (Frankentrost): "Löhe's Colonies: Then and Now"

Mr. Matthias Honold (Neuendettelsau): "Archival Research on the Immigrants to Michigan"

Plans are underway to publish the essays presented at the conference.

Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, President of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod was present for part of the conference and welcomed participants on behalf of his church body. In addition to the scholarly presentations, those attending the conference enjoyed the hospitality of Kramer Chapel, St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church and Trinity English Lutheran Church for evening worship. An excursion on the final two days of the conference to Frankenmuth and Frankentrost, Michigan was high-lighted by a "Löhe Hymnfest" at Saint Lorenz Lutheran Church led by Dr. Scott Hyslop and Pastor Stephen Starke.

The International Löhe Theological Conference III was sponsored by the International Löhe Society. The conference included the triennial business meeting of the Society at which time Dr. Christoph Weber (Basel) and Prof. John T. Pless (Fort Wayne) were elected co-presidents of the German and English language sections of the Society with Dr. Thomas Kothmann (Regensburg) and Dr. Thomas Schattauer elected to serve as co-secretaries. The next International Löhe Theological Conference is scheduled to meet in Neuendettelsau, Germany in July 2014..



Pictured left to right are: Prof. John T. Pless (co-president of the International Löhe

Society and assistant professor at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne), Pastor Mark Loest (pastor at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Frankentrost and conference speaker), Jacob Corzine (doctrinal student at Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany), and Dr. Wilhelm Weber (Bishop of the Lutheran Church of Southern Africa and Rector of Lutheran Theological Seminary, Pretoria).

## NEWS FROM AFRICA

### The Free Evangelical Lutheran Synod in South Africa (FELSISA) Past, Present, Future

*Bishop Dieter Reinstorf explains the complex landscape of confessional Lutheranism in South Africa*

Within the fraternity of the *International Lutheran Council* (ILC) the FELSISA became known through the efforts of its previous president Peter Ahlers. In 1995 the FELSISA was received as a member of the ILC. Apart from serving on the executive committee of the ILC from 2001 to 2003, he also became the publisher of the *ILC News* in 2002 until past his retirement at the end of 2009. From January 2010 vice president Dieter Reinstorf served as interim president, until his election as bishop of Synod in May 2010. The title “bishop” was accepted based on a motion tabled by president Ahlers, who argued that the title “bishop” comes from the New Testament and accurately depicts the task of this office. Bishop is also the title widely used in Africa.

The FELSISA is one of “two” confessional Lutheran Churches in South Africa that are members of the ILC. Although the *Lutheran Church in Southern Africa* (LCSA) was already received into the ILC in 1991, the FELSISA is the older of the two confessional Lutheran Churches in South Africa. The FELSISA was founded as early as 1892. Its roots date back to the missionary efforts of Pastor Ludwig Harms (1808-1865) in Hermannsburg, Germany. Harms developed the vision of sending missionaries to the heathens in faraway lands. In 1849 he opened the *Hermannsburg Mission*, which in 1853 sent its first missionaries to Africa, eight ordained pastors and eight lay colonists. Although destined for Ethiopia on a ship called the *Candace*, these missionaries docked in Durban and soon began mission work amongst the Zulus in Natal. The missionaries focused on preaching and teaching, and the colonists provided for the physical needs of the community. When after Louis Harms’ death most lay colonist were released from the service in the mission (some having left before) they formed little German (farming) communities and established their own congregations, their spiritual needs at first being met by the local missionaries. These congregations always saw themselves as part of the Hermannsburg mission and continued to support the mission activities amongst the Zulu.



**A confirmation service in the Emmanuel Congregation, Diepkloof (Soweto), in Dec. 2010**

The support for the mission continued even after the “Great Divide”. In opposition to the Prussian Union the *Hanoverian Evangelical Lutheran Free Church* was founded in 1978. When the *Hermannsburg Mission* (*de facto* an institution of the “free” Church) merged with the *Evangelical Lutheran Hanoverian State Church* in 1990, it led to both the establishment of the *Bleckmar Mission* in Germany and the *Free Evangelical Lutheran Synod in South Africa* in 1992. Supporting the mission activities amongst the indigenous people of South Africa remained a core value of the FELSISA, epitomised by its role as sole supporter of the missionaries during World War II. But there also lie the roles of the establishment of two confessional Lutheran Churches in South Africa. From the time of its establishment the FELSISA was always an autonomous “German speaking” Church in support of the mission amongst indigenous South Africans. When however the mission activities led to the formation of various congregations and gave rise to the establishment of an autonomous church in 1967, there was no merger, but rather the formation of a second confessional Lutheran Church in South Africa, the *Lutheran Church in Southern Africa* (LCSA), serving the indigenous people in both South Africa and Botswana in their own mother tongue. The LCSA and the FELSISA soon established church fellowship. Although the FELSISA continued to support the mission and the congregations of the LCSA as before, church fellowship was hardly practiced. The lack of a common language, social and cultural differences, and not least of all the Apartheid poli-

cies of the South African government sadly promoted separate development.

Changes are however on the horizon. There is a deep sense within the FELSISA that God is paving the way for a new future for the confessional Lutheran Churches in South Africa. The changes are not radical, but small steps within a fast changing post-Apartheid South African society impacting on the FELSISA and its members. The 2010 Synodical Convention witnessed two such steps:

For the first time in its history the Synodical Convention was chaired in English and not in German. This was necessitated by internal changes within the FELSISA. Although the majority of its members are still German speaking, extension work has resulted in the establishment of various English (and Afrikaans) speaking congregations, primarily in the larger cities. This in turn resulted in more and more Africans joining FELSISA congregations. English is the one language understood by all.

A large autonomous African congregation (almost the size of the FELSISA), the *Evangelical Emmanuel Lutheran Church* (EELC) in Diepkloof (Soweto) applied for membership within the FELSISA. As the present structure of the FELSISA would overburden such a congregation financially (synodical levies are calculated based on confirmed members) the 2010 convention granted "associated membership" to the EELC.

Although it has been a known fact for some time that the FELSISA is no longer an exclusive "German" Lutheran Church, the events ascribed above erased all doubts on the FELSISA's composition: The FELSISA is a multi-lingual, multi-cultural, and multi-ethnic church. When this reality was "stated" it came to some as a shock, fearing a loss of identity. Others welcomed it.

Changes are challenging. Invariably they lead to introspection, an examining of one's own biblical and confessional values that drive a church's focus and mission. A pastor's convention held in August 2011 dedicated four sessions to formulating core values, leading towards a clear Mission Statement. There is unity amongst the pastors: In the FELSISA everybody is welcome.

But what about the LCSA? On invitation from the LCSA both the FELSISA and the *Lutheran Church Mission* (LCM - previously the *Bleckmar Mission*), became members of the *Lutheran Theological*

*Seminary* in Tshwane (Pretoria) in 2008. And on invitation from the LCM a new "Mission Board" was also established in 2010 on which both bishops of the LCSA (Bishop W. Weber) and the FELSISA (Bishop D. Reinstorf) serve. Furthermore, in October 2011 both church councils of the LCSA and the FELSISA will be meeting again (for the first time) to discuss matters of mutual interest, to exchange ideas and to share future visions.

Changes are challenging, but they are also exciting. They are exciting because amidst all unanswered questions and overwhelming challenges our hope is fixed on a gracious God who in Jesus Christ prepared salvation for all, loves all equally, and promises us his presence and guidance as we serve Him and all people with his Word and Sacraments.

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## NEWS FROM EUROPE

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### Changes in Portugal

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*By Revd. Genivaldo Agner*

The Portuguese Evangelical Lutheran Church has gone through some changes in recent months. As we know, every change requires some sort of adaptation. Since the Revd. Jonas R. Flor accepted the call to Rio de Janeiro - Brazil, the Revd. Genivaldo Agner took over as president.

Despite some difficulties, we realize that "*great things God has done for us, and we are glad*" (*Psalm 126:3*). He has acted in many different ways, to encourage us and strengthen us in our daily struggle.

Through contacts and friendship between other Church bodies here in Europe, we can see how God uses us as his instruments. Although weak and sinful, we are always being shaped in his image and made to work with more fervour and joy in his harvest. Even when we feel so small in our respective realities, we realize that in other European countries and around the world, there are people who pray for us. That despite different culture, different language and different cultic ways, we have "one shepherd" (John 10:16). We preach the same word of repentance and

forgiveness in a different way from each other, according to our cultural reality. Discover and abide by these social and cultural differences is the key to our work. Is like Paul says to the Corinthians: *"To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all {men}, that I might by all means save some"* (1 Cotinthians 9:22). All in one spirit, one heart, in one gospel.

In Portugal, we have invested in recent months to increase the number of Bible study groups in the homes of the members. They are small family groups gathered in homes to study and reflect on God's Word. We have the opportunity to meet people where they live, participate in their cultural reality, meet neighbours and friends who are invited to participate in the meetings. Thanks to these studies, we currently have 5 people having lessons on the principles of the Lutheran faith, and became Lutherans and members of our congregation in Lisbon.



We are grateful to God for the opportunity to preach the word of repentance and forgiveness to people in their homes, along with their families in their own realities. And we sense that God has been acting in people's hearts. And even if some of them do not become Lutherans, but will above all hear about Christ. They can hear the good news that Jesus loves them and wants save them as well. The seed is planted.

Soli Deo Gloria.

## French Church celebrates 40 years of Prailles congregation

By President Jean Thiébaud Haessig

The celebrations took place from spring to autumn on account of the regional Mission Festival. But the church of Prailles was full to bursting on Sunday, 4 September, 2011.



On the day of the dedication of the church in Prailles in 1971 the ordination of Pastor Marc Amilhat, who had worked in Poitou for 40

years (until 2008) was also celebrated. The gathering also recalled this anniversary. Also an impressive exhibition of photos of the work accomplished with Nicole, his wife, at his side throughout this time was mounted. Pastor Constantini delivered the sermon, Pastors Haessig, Jones and Aoustin G. conducted the liturgy, the first two each addressing a message for a quarter of an hour, one for the synod, the other for the region, at the parish celebration.

Thomas and Dawn Constantini, and Marc and Nicole Amilhat



This fortieth anniversary opened on the eve with a concert in the *Temple de Beaussais*, another place of worship of the parish. Songs (duets et trios) and musical instruments (violin solo, German flute and violin duets, violin and cello, interspersed with pieces on the electronic organ) resonated in the wonderful 12<sup>th</sup> Century Norman church.

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## NEWS FROM ASIA

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*More information and pictures about stories on this page, can be found in Asia Ablaze at [www.asiaablaze.org/newsletter.html](http://www.asiaablaze.org/newsletter.html)*

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### **Vietnam: Concordia International School Hanoi Opens Its Doors**

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On August 24, 2011 Concordia International School Hanoi (CISH) opened its doors for classes for the first time. With nearly fifty students from ten different countries, the school hosts children from Pre-school through Grade 7. The long anticipated school opening comes after sixteen years of humanitarian work in Vietnam by LCMS World Mission, that laid the foundation in relationship building for the school to become a reality.

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### **Lutheran Church Hong Kong Synod Opens School in Shenzhen**

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Buena Vista Concordia International School (BCIS) opened on August 19, 2011 with 41 students. BCIS, operated by the Lutheran Church-Hong Kong Synod (LCHKS), is an English medium school that accepts both expatriates and local Chinese in Shenzhen, China, across the border from Hong Kong. Seven full-time teachers join the support staff composed of local Chinese, Hong Kong Lutheran educators, and expatriates. LCHKS President Allan Yung says, "BCIS is an innovative model to meet the educational needs of a developing China."

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### **Korea: Announcement of LCK's 41st General Assembly**

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The Lutheran Church in Korea (LCK) announced that its 41<sup>st</sup> General Assembly will be held from October 6-7 at Somyoung Lutheran Church at Incheon City under the theme "A Church living only by faith" (Romans 1:17).

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### **Community Health Project in Thailand**

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The Concordia Welfare and Education Foundation—Thailand (CWEFT), working in partnership with Lutherans in Medical Missions (LIMM), was able to lead a Community Health Training project in two Hmong communities in northern Thailand. These types of training are important to local communities because of problems with inadequate health and wellness resources and limited education and health facilities among rural hill tribe populations. The trainings were held on July 7-11, 2011 at the Baan Khun Khuay Kai village in Chiang Rai province and the Baan Mae Sa Mai village in Chiang Mai province. Attendees

received training in community health care.

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### **Macau -Deaf Fellowship Grows**

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Macau Concordia English Center (CEC) has become home to a number of Lutheran outreach activities. Recently, a fellowship for the Macau Deaf Community has made CEC its home. The participants enjoy biweekly Bible Studies and fellowship activities. Several local people lead the fellowships and enjoy the regular teaching from CEC missionaries and Vicar Ho from Lutheran Church-Hong Kong Synod.

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### **Hong Kong: Cultural Exchanges Around the World**

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Hong Kong Lutheran Schools are preparing students for engagement in the world. During the summer break, individual schools sent students and teachers on cultural exchange trips to Australia, Singapore, Taiwan, and the United States. In addition, a cooperative effort from all of the high schools of the Lutheran Church-Hong Kong Synod sent a youth team to Nebraska, USA. The team included three students from each high school for a total of 18 youth and four teachers. The team assisted with VBS at Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church in Omaha, engaged in social service activities in the inner city, and visited Mission Central in Northwest Iowa. The students gained cultural insights, heard the Gospel, served others, and returned to Hong Kong with a new sense of connection in the Lutheran school system.

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### **CELC mission trip to Myanmar**

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From July 4-11, 2011, Eternal Life Lutheran Church in Taipei sent its fourth team to Northern Myanmar. The goal for this eight-day trip was to follow-up with the preaching station that was opened last year, as well as to visit the surrounding communities to see what they could do in terms of making a significant impact in the daily lives of the people in these Chinese speaking areas of Myanmar.

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### **Philippines: Missionary Reunion**

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On July 12, 2011 sixty-four former and present missionaries and children of missionaries to the Philippines gathered at the St. Malo Retreat Center near Estes Park, Colorado for a three-day reunion. The group was inspired by the majesty of their surroundings and even more by the wonder of God's Word and their unity in Christ.

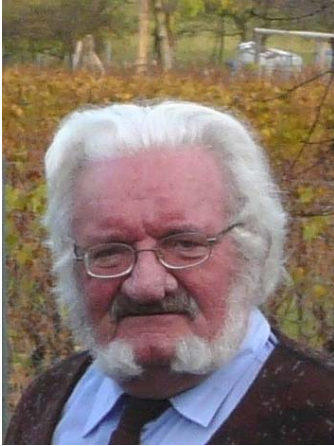
*Thanks to Asia Ablaze for permitting inclusion of this material*

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## Wilbert Kreiss 1937-2011

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By Jean Thiébaud Haessig, Pastor  
L'Église évangélique luthérienne - Synode de France President



**"The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."** (Job 1.21)

It has pleased the Lord to call home on 23rd October, 2011 Dr. Wilbert

Kreiss now part of the Church triumphant. He was attending a meeting of "The Lutheran Heritage Foundation" in Tanzania.

Wilbert Kreiss was born January 4, 1937 in Paris. He studied theology at the "Centre d'Etudes Théologiques" of "the Evangelical Lutheran Church - Synod of France and Belgium" in Châtenay-Malabry and at the "Lutherische Theologische Hochschule" in Oberursel (Germany). He earned a doctorate of theology at the University of Strasbourg (France) and received three honorary doctorates from both LCMS seminaries.

He served the Lord as pastor at St-Pierre (Châtenay-Malabry) from 1962 to 1964 and simultaneously at four congregations in Al-

sace from 1964 to 1972, then at two congregations from 1972 to 1973. He then served as director and professor at the "Centre d'Etudes Théologiques" (seminary) in Châtenay-Malabry until his theoretical retirement (1997).

He served the Church (L'Église évangélique luthérienne - Synode de France) as vice-president (1974-1992) and as president (1992-2000).

For the last thirty-five years he was very much involved in Africa, primarily as theological trainer of Congolese pastors. He went fifteen times to both Congos to help to build up two confessional Lutheran Churches there. At the same time he wrote the French TEE material for the LCMS Board for Missions, mainly for their African missions (Togo; Ivory Coast, Guinea) where he also gave courses, for example at the seminary in Dapaong (Togo).

So the Lord has chosen to call him back from that continent which he was always willing to serve even to his end.

We give thanks to the Lord for the many blessings that He has granted His Church through the ministry of Pastor Christ.

Our thoughts and prayers are now with his wife Marguerite and his family.




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