

Lutheran Church of Australia WA District Convention

Concordia Duncraig - March 27th – 29th 2009

Popular Report

‘Remind, Renew, Rejoice’

Wow! Convention: what a fascinating view of the energy exploding for God across our church. From inspiring WA Youth to ALWS service in Africa we were reminded of the many paths that God is asking us to tread.

‘Did Luther say...?’ was the challenging Quiz which started the first night of convention with the lesson that Luther was definitely not in the politically correct league and that we probably don’t know him as well as might be expected – top score was 68%! As he revealed some surprising answers, Pastor Milo Velebir made us think, laugh and guess. He has offered to make this Quiz available to anyone who would like to take it back to challenge their home congregation. Thanks go to ladies of the Concordia congregation for ensuring that all were well fed with a bounty of finger food washed down with a glass of beverage that would have met Luther’s approval – a bounty that continued across the weekend.

Saturday started with representatives from the 12 ‘tribes’ of the WA District carrying in rocks to form our own circular ‘Gilgal’ as a focus for our own weekend covenant renewal, a sight to remind us of what Jesus has done for us. A five ‘P’ band swung into action throughout the weekend (a ‘P’ band is one composed entirely of pastors) a band that played, sang and composed some of the songs, is this ‘P’ band some sort of record for a District Convention?

The Joondalup Mayor, Troy Pickard extended a civic welcome to all and expressed his gratitude for the many activities that the church is involved in within the local area. In particular the Christmas lunch which saw many Northern Churches of differing denominations working together.

The Book of Reports provided an interesting ‘woops’ with the numbers 2-24 being added mysteriously to the end of the date. The challenge was issued to find which book of the bible God intended this message to mean. Several answers were suggested during the weekend including Exodus 2:24.

One nomination for President was received as the 2008 ‘three amigos’ team of Pastors Mike Fulwood, Adrian Kitson and Julian Bayha relinquished the interim presidential ‘threesome’ which has carried the role through the past year. Pastor Greg Pfeiffer is now our very able President!

A 1955 Synod Proposal was read out to the effect that ‘repetition was not according to the rules of debate’ so we also were given the hint 50 years later that there is no point in saying the same thing more than once. The real question to be asked was however, ‘Why was our chairperson reading the 1955 minutes!’

Mike Fulwood noted that WA doesn’t have a vacant Parish at the moment PTL!

Our new Esperance Pastor, Adrian Kramer let us know that it is only 198 days before his wedding but of course, who's counting! (Pastor Adrian Kitson informed us that this new pastor is now to be known as 'Adrian the younger'!)

LCA President Mike Semmler presented himself as a 'big picture man' and the picture that he sees for WA is that we are "special...our Pastors are all very different ...we are on the verge of something new and exciting "

Larrisa McKenzie informed us that the LCA has a new 'LAMP' system available on the net with a database which will provide a one stop shop for information and will form the hub of LCA communication. Contact will be made directly with all church office holders rather than pushing all communications through our overloaded Pastors.

The work of Glenice Hartwig carrying the needs of the Board for Missions was acknowledged and we were asked to pray for the Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea as it is in a dangerous place with a proposal to take over the Seminary building for a University. In her report on Sunday, Glenice pointed out that we only have one full time worker there compared to 160 workers when she was young.

Alternate routes to ordination are being considered by the LCA – internship, apprenticeship, and reworking the current program. We need to go to the word of God for the answer i.e. follow the model that was used to unite the two Lutheran Churches in 1963.

Jonathan Krause of Australian Lutheran World Service (ALWS) also sees extraordinary things coming out of WA – we doubled our giving last year to \$91,000. The ALWS sent one million dollars overseas and helped 200,000 people in developing countries. Jonathan illustrated this with some amazing stories of his own experiences – such as a woman who had lost everything including a husband and a child but who could still say 'I don't blame God'. The ALWS commitment is to 'make you come as close to the people you are helping as possible' and Jonathan exhorted us to 'forget about the money and think about the people'. He will come and talk to groups whenever possible (cheap flights help!). Overheads for ALWS are kept to 10% which is far better than any other Australian aid organisation.

There are new ALWS campaigns to encourage us to give particular items such as a goat or a water supply and this has resulted in 500 new people giving through the Christmas Catalogue. One delegate pointed out that giving could be tailored, 'my brother got a drop down toilet 'cause he's anal retentive'!

Linda McQueen gave us an update on the Lutheran and commented that most speakers hope and pray that they are not on after Jonathan! After 10 years as Lutheran editor Linda still has an 'incredible energy' for the job. Her success is demonstrated in that it reaches 25,000 readers and is one of two remaining denominational magazines in Australia that survive by subscription alone. If the '12 tribes' of WA can get together Linda is prepared to show us how we could ensure that every member who doesn't now get the Lutheran could get three free copies in the next year – just ask!

Pastor Michael Parker of the Ocean Keys congregation updated us on the challenges of their Catalyst Program which is providing education for young people in need of particular care. On any given week they are presented with 3 or 4 young people who are homeless

and are praying for a house to meet this need. The Education Department will have a meeting next week to decide on giving Catalyst a license to be an independent school and there is also a possibility of an aboriginal catalyst program starting up down south. Teresa Roberts told of how she became involved as a staff member through searching for a school for her autistic son but also had to bid a sad farewell as she has to return to NZ due to family illness. The cafe and book shop are re emerging and need staffing and Ocean Keys are extending the patio as the members have all committed their 'Rudd bonus' to carry out the work.

The Catalyst staff and students demonstrated the success of the program by catering a delicious spread for Saturday's morning tea, afternoon tea and lunch.

Other inspiring presentations included Serica Yurisich (LYWA) showing a video impressing on us the challenge of providing meaningful connections with our young people, Jon Offszanka of St Johns sharing a huge vision of developing their city property and reports of Living Waters College and Ocean Forest College growing rapidly in numbers and programs.

Serica also brought home the need for us to provide the safe place that our children need by embracing the requirements of the Childsafe program. Progress has only been gradual but should be encouraged by the successful motion for all congregations to appoint a Childsafe Officer.

Saturday's activities were concluded with a yummy roast dinner and once replete, Jonathan Krause kept us enthralled with more stories as our after dinner speaker.

Our Sunday started with Worship and the chance for each person to collect their own small white stone with a message of renewal and to ponder what this personal message from God held. The LCA President, Mike Semmler delivered the address for the day, one of 'Rejoice' based on the creation Psalm 104 which shows us a God who is continually renewing and refreshing us.

Anna Velebir was busy throughout the weekend with her camera and by the end of Sunday was ready with free CDs of photos. The church building was decorated with floral displays which started on Friday as a desert landscape with the Jordan River flowing down from the altar. Each day the desert flowers bloomed with more colour and on Sunday they reflected the call to rejoice. The weekend was peppered with many such acts of service and love, too many to all be recorded here but seen by our Lord and felt by everyone.

Following worship, more positive and thought provoking reports were received from the Lutheran Homes (but with a mystery development under way!), the LLL, the Board for Missions and the Lutheran Women of WA. We also heard of a new 'Vetamorphous' program running in Living Waters which is supporting students to **be** Christians in the student body and equipping them with a Certificate III in Christian Ministry. Business was then completed with a pleasing report that a legacy during the year has allowed the District to gift funds towards a Mandurah school worker, LYWA Leadership training and a Young Person's Worker at Duncraig.

Lunch was shared before a very inspired group of people spread out across Australia to serve our Lord according to His plan in 2009/2010.