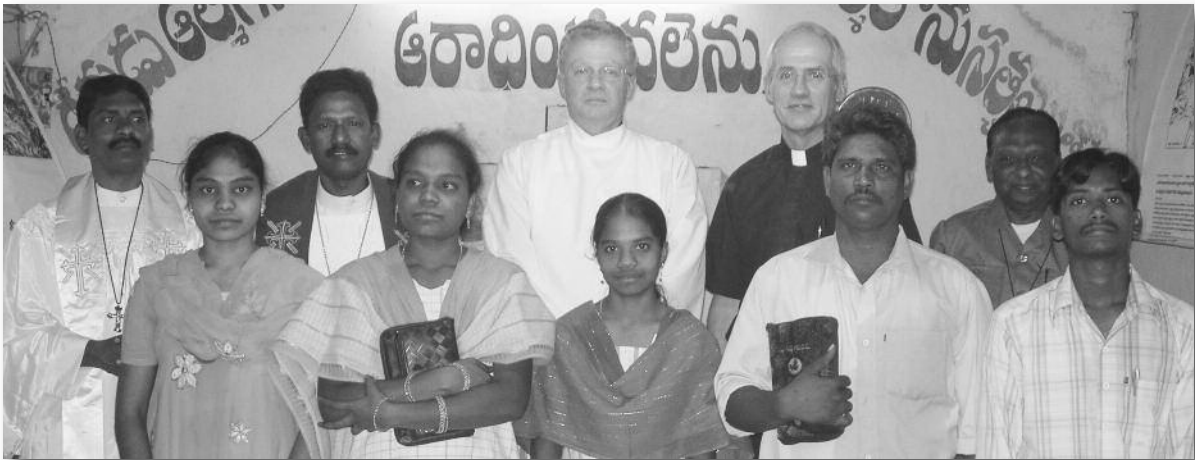




## BAPTISM – THE THEME FOR INDIA CONFERENCE

It is difficult to imagine the challenges facing Christians in India. The culture is overwhelmingly Hindu in its religious beliefs, practices and philosophy. In some places Christians are severely persecuted. Christian teachings are seen by many Hindus as contrary to what it means to be Indian. The differences between Christi-

years, before finally being released from the cycle of human misery. The clear contrast between Christianity and Hinduism was certainly highlighted at the second annual India Luther Academy Conference which focused on the theme of Baptism. For Christians the holiest waters are the waters of Baptism which, by the



*Five are Baptized in Indian Lutheran Congregation*

anity and Hinduism truly are as stark as is imaginable. For example, when Christians ring the church bells, it is to call the people to hear the Word of God and receive the grace and forgiveness His Word offers. When Hindus ring bells it is to wake the gods they wish to address. Christians believe in only one God. Hindus believe in thousands; some believe there are millions. Christians believe “It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.” (Hebrews 9:27) Hindus believe that people may be reincarnated hundreds or thousands of times, taking perhaps thousands or even millions of

power of God’s Holy Word, wash away sins, impart the Holy Spirit and save eternally. For Hindus the holiest waters are those of the Ganges river which carry the ashes of the cremated into the Bay of Bengal with the desperate hope for a higher station of life in the next reincarnation in a seemingly endless journey toward Nirvana and the ultimate dissolution of the soul. The contrast between hope and despair, between grace and works could hardly be greater.

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In order to express the great hope they have as Christians, those who have converted from Hinduism to Christianity are frequently given new names. Since many are given the names of Hindu gods at birth, when they become Christians they discard these names at their Baptism. The pastor instructs the congregation not to use their old names but to call them by their new Christian names. In this way the Baptized testify to their joy in being Christians and their rejection of their former pagan beliefs.

Rajahmundri in Andhra Pradesh was the site for the conference which brought together over 250 Lutheran

pastors for a study of the doctrine of Baptism. For four days, from 9:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. the pastors listened attentively to presentations covering the Scriptural texts describing Baptism by Rev. Stephen Briel, Baptism as taught in Luther's *Large Catechism* by Rev. Daniel Preus, Baptism and the Divine Service by Professor John Pless and the Baptism stories recorded in the New Testament by Rev. Michael Albrecht. All Luther Academy conferences are conducted to educate in Lutheran teaching so that the pastors who attend are strengthened in their understanding of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. Some may wonder why it is necessary to teach Lutheran doctrine to men who are already ordained as Lutheran pastors but many of the men who serve as Lutheran pastors in India have not received a sufficient theological education. Consider the fact, for example, that at this conference, for the first time, the pastors had Luther's explanation of Baptism in the *Large Catechism* in their own language. The pastors who attend these conferences are extremely appreciative of the opportunity to receive the instruction we provide. They want to be faithful Lutheran pastors.



*An Indian goddess*



*Pastors in attendance at the 2009 India Luther Academy Conference*

## LUTHER ACADEMY BULLETIN

*Luther Academy Bulletin* is the official newsletter of the Luther Academy, a non-profit religious foundation incorporated in the state of Minnesota. Luther Academy devotes all its assets and gifts received to the promotion of Lutheran theology in the United States and worldwide. In all its work Luther Academy is guided by God's inerrant Word and is committed to an unconditional subscription to the teaching of the *Book of Concord*.

*Editor: Daniel Preus*

*Layout Editor: Janette Schanbacher*

*All unattributed articles written by the editor.*

## MISSION WORK AMONG THE SAMI

One of the joys in working with the Luther Academy is the unexpected discovery of mission work being done in various parts of the world by Lutherans still committed to the proclamation of the pure Gospel. One such occasion took place this last summer at the annual North European Luther Academy meeting, held in August in Norway, when I met Rev. Thor Henrik With who does mission work among the Sami in Norway and Russia. The Sami (sometimes spelled Same)<sup>1</sup> are historically a nomadic people who for over 2,000 years have lived and worked in northern Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. Their primary occupation has been the herding of reindeer which they have used for food, clothing and trade. The Sami traditional religion is one that recognizes many gods and is heavily animistic, viewing the landscape itself as being spiritually alive.

Although mission work has been done among the Sami for hundreds of years, the influence of Christianity has been slow, due in part perhaps to the confiscation of Sami land rights by Sweden and Norway creating ill will between the Sami and the Lutheran states of Norway, Sweden and Finland.

Today, however, effective mission work is being done among the Sami by Norges Same Misjon (Norway's Sami Mission [NSM]). I had the privilege of interviewing Rev. Thor Henrik With, the Deputy General Secretary of NSM about the work being done by their organization among the Sami. NSM began work among the Sami people in 1888 at the request of the Sami themselves who wanted the Bible in their own language. Work was begun immediately on the translation of the New Testament into one of the Sami languages. Later the Old Testament was also translated. Today NSM works mostly in Norway and Russia among the approximately 75,000 to 80,000 Sami in those two countries. In Norway the work entails



*Rev. Thor Henrik With*

primarily the proclamation of the Gospel to the Sami people. In Russia the work is threefold:

- ♦ The establishment and support of Lutheran congregations in the heart of Sami territory.
- ♦ Diakonia – the provision of food, clothing and medicine to address the malnourishment, severe illnesses and alcoholism prevalent among the Sami.
- ♦ Support of the Sami cultural and ethnic identity as the Sami transition from being a nomadic people to confinement to specific territories for the raising of reindeer.

“Looking through the ‘Iron Curtain’ in 1980, there seemed to be little hope of bringing the Gospel to the Russian Sami,” observed Rev. With. “Today the experience of seeing little and poor Sami congregations rejoicing in the Gospel is the fulfillment of long-time dreams.”

The Luther Academy does not directly support the work of Norges Same Misjon but at meetings of the North European Luther Academy confessional Lutherans, representatives of many church bodies and mission societies, meet together with the goal of providing spiritual support to each other, while expressing a mutual commitment to the proclamation of the pure Gospel. Please pray for the work of the NSM among the Sami people.

<sup>1</sup> For many years the Sami have been referred to as Lapps or Laplanders. The Sami themselves consider this term denigrating.

### MEMORIALS 2008

Luther Academy gratefully acknowledges gifts given in loving memory of:

*Timothy Andrew Simcak*

given by Rev. & Mrs. Andrew Simcak, Jr.

*Pastor John W. Gerlach*

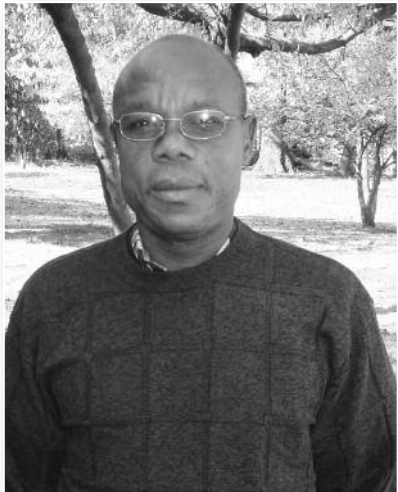
given by Robin and Cheryl Fish

## CONFESSIONAL LUTHERANS IN WEST AFRICA

When the Luther Academy began work conducting theological conferences for pastors in various parts of the world, we knew that God would bless this work. After all, we have His promise that His Word will not return to Him empty (Is. 55:11). During the three years we have conducted such conferences in West Africa, we have seen the joy on the faces of the pastors who attend these conferences. Their desire to be faithful pastors is evident. Their gratitude to Luther Academy for providing sound Lutheran instruction is expressed frequently. But this last August an event took place that demonstrates God's blessing upon our work in a particularly vivid way. African pastors from six different countries decided to form a new Confessional Lutheran organization for the purpose of promoting the proclamation of the pure Gospel and fidelity to the Lutheran Confessions in West Africa.

The name of this new organization is West African Council of Confessional Lutheran Pastors (WACCLP). Elected as officers were:

- Rev. Michael Amegah, Togo – President
- Rev. Amos Bolay, Liberia – Vice President
- Rev. Daniel Kofi Akoh, Ghana – General Secretary
- Rev. Claude Abiounda, Benin – Treasurer
- Rev. Joseph M. Sesay, Sierra Leone – Financial Secretary



*Rev. Michael Amegah, President of the West African Council of Confessional Lutheran Pastors*

Also elected as Advisors of the West African Council of Confessional Lutheran Pastors were Dr. Paul Kofi Fynn, President of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in

Ghana, and Dr. Nelson Unwene, President Emeritus of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Nigeria. The creation of WACCLP was not at the direction of the Luther Academy or any of the teachers who have taught



*Rev. Daniel Preus prays with newly elected officers of the West African Council of Confessional Lutheran Pastors*

on our behalf in West Africa. Rather, the African pastors who have been attending Luther Academy conferences, recognizing God's Word as precious and the Lutheran Confessions as essential to the building up of Confessional Lutheran churches in West Africa, took the initiative to found an organization that would actively promote Confessional Lutheranism in their churches and countries. In order to accomplish the goal the founders immediately determined to write a constitution that would identify the ways in which Confessional Lutheranism could be promoted in West Africa.

In the minutes of the founding meeting the General Secretary, Rev. Daniel Kofi Akoh, writes with great joy about "the 'birth' that has been given to the WEST AFRICAN COUNCIL OF CONFESSIONAL LUTHERAN PASTORS [WACCLP] at the Luther Academy Conference." Rev. Michael Amegah, the first President of the WACCLP has expressed his hope for the future of this new Confessional Lutheran organization: "WACCLP is an organization *par excellence* which not only serves to expand what we receive as teachings from Luther Academy via its important conferences in Africa, but also allows us to reflect on how best we can serve our people through this sound doctrine of ours."

We celebrate with our Confessional brothers in West Africa and pray God's blessing on their proclamation of the pure Gospel through this new organization.

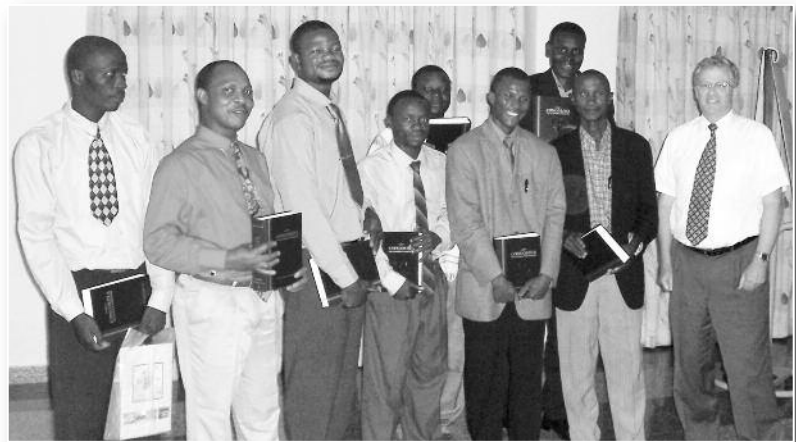
## LUTHERANISM AND THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS IN WEST AFRICA

The Challenge of assisting African churches in forming a strong Lutheran commitment on the part of congregations and pastors is an imposing one, not because of a lack of desire on the part of African pastors, but because of the lack of good theological resources. This truth was driven home clearly by the fact that many African Lutheran pastors do not own their own copy of the *Book of Concord*. Thus, it was a great privilege to make a gift of *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions* to eight African pastors at the 2008 West Africa Luther Academy Conference in Tema, Ghana last August. Pastors from six different West African countries came together to study the topic of the person and work of the Holy Spirit taught by Dr. Leo Sanchez of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. After the class had concluded one day, Rev. Daniel Preus made a presentation of the Lutheran Confessions to eight of the pastors in attendance. These were all men who, though serving as Lutheran pastors, had never actually owned a *Book of Concord*. It is sometimes difficult for us in the West to fathom the financial challenges facing many Christians in third world countries. Not only are many struggling for the basic necessities of life but they also yearn for education and with education goes the need for books, which can be very expensive in third world countries.



Rev. Edward Young of Ghana (left) and Gregoire Legbanon of Benin share a happy moment at the West Africa Luther Academy Conference

The Luther Academy has pledged that it will conduct all its work with a commitment to the Holy Scriptures as the inspired Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions as a true and accurate exposition of the Scriptures. All of the pastors we have encountered in third world countries have Bibles. But many do not have copies of the *Book of Concord*. Imagine a doctor doing surgery with kitchen utensils. It can probably be done,



Eight West African pastors receive their first copy of the "Book of Concord", a gift from Luther Academy

but will it be done as well? One can certainly be a pastor without owning a *Book of Concord* but for pastors to educate their people well in the teachings of the Lutheran Church and to preach doctrinally solid, Scriptural sermons, they need the *Book of Concord*. Luther Academy will not only continue our mission of proclaiming and teaching Lutheran doctrine but also make it a commitment to get the Lutheran Confessions into the hands of as many Lutheran pastors as we can. Help us in our task of promoting the pure Gospel in Africa and elsewhere.

## Buenos Aires Hosts Second South America Luther Academy Conference

The second annual South America Luther Academy Conference took place November 17-21 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Once again pastors from five South American countries attended – Chile, Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay and Bolivia. In addition, some of the professors from the Lutheran seminary in Buenos Aires attended as well. Each year the Director of the Luther Academy confers with Rev. Carlos Schumann concerning the potential topics for the conference. Rev. Schumann is the President of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Chile and the Luther Academy contact person for South America.

After polling the pastors the previous year, it was clear that they had a strong desire to study the doctrine of Justification – the central article of the Christian faith. When it comes to lectures in South America, the Luther Academy identifies a Spanish speaking theologian who can lecture in Spanish. In 2007 the teacher was Dr. Leo Sanchez of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. In 2008 the primary teacher on the topic of justification was Rev. Martin Teigen, Mission Director for the Minnesota South District of the LCMS. Rev. Teigen covered subjects such as justification in Luther's commentary on

Galatians, justification as a forensic act of God, justification and missions and many others in the week-long class. Rev. Daniel Preus also lectured for one day on the current Lutheran and Roman Catholic positions on the doctrine of justification.

Our South America Luther Academy Conferences have been greatly appreciated by the pastors who have

attended, men who strongly desire to see the Lutheran Confessions honored as the flag under which Lutherans gather in their fidelity to the Scriptures. The kind of education we provide strengthens their theological understanding and their commitment to the preservation of pure doctrine in the Lutheran churches in South America. For most attendees, the Luther Academy Conference is the educational highlight of the year. All experience the additional benefit of becoming better acquainted with Lutheran pastors from other Lutheran church bodies in South America. These relationships will be very valuable in enabling confessional Lutheran pas-

tors to present a common front in the face of cultural and theological attacks and challenges to the preaching of the Gospel.



*Rev. Juan Huayta (left) and Rev. Roberto Calero from Bolivia*

## REDESIGNED LA WEB SITE

Check out the Luther Academy web site.

It has been redesigned to make it more informative, user friendly and efficient.

Thanks to Dirk Preus for the new design and the attractive new format.

## ECONOMIC DOWNTURN AFFECTS LUTHER ACADEMY: AN APPEAL TO OUR SUPPORTERS

The Luther Academy, like many other organizations, has been affected significantly by the recent downturn in the financial markets. At one time we could depend on our investment income to support most of the mission projects approved by the Board of Directors. Today that is no longer the case. Not only have the common stocks in our investment portfolio decreased in value in line with the stock market generally, our fixed-income investments have also decreased in value. Thus, despite having a well diversified portfolio, we have seen a deterioration in value akin to what most institutions and endowments have reported — and, I'm sure, many of you have experienced.

Due to the serious erosion of our financial assets, the Luther Academy faces the unpleasant prospect of informing pastors in some of the areas we are working that our annual theological conferences will no longer be possible — at least in the foreseeable future. We believe such decisions would represent a great loss to the pastors who have come to depend upon us for ongoing theological instruction. In some of the areas we are working the Luther Academy is virtually the only source for continuing theological training and this training is greatly needed in order to strengthen the Confessional, Lutheran proclamation in these places.

We are therefore appealing to those who believe in the value of our mission to begin or increase their financial support for Luther Academy in one of the following ways:

- ◆ *Personal donations*
- ◆ *Placement of Luther Academy in the annual congregational budget*
- ◆ *Adoption of Luther Academy projects by congregations or circuits*
- ◆ *One time gifts from congregations*
- ◆ *Bequests*

We are not ashamed to ask for your support. The work we do is not for our own benefit but for the sake of the church of Christ. Unlike many organizations that call almost any kind of overseas activity “mission” work, the Luther Academy has as its sole purpose in working overseas, the teaching of God’s Word according to the Lutheran Confessions. We do not believe there is any more effective way to support our Lord’s mission than this teaching of the pure Word of God.

Included in this issue of the *Luther Academy Bulletin* is our current “Project List”. Please read the description of what we are doing and consider supporting one of our Luther Academy projects. Gifts of any size will help us. It is not necessary to fund the entire cost of a project in order to support that project.

We believe that the Lord of the harvest is using the Luther Academy to sow the seed of His Word. Help us to sow that the harvest may be great.

Daniel Preus  
Director, Luther Academy

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## ***INSIDE THIS ISSUE...***



*A Pite Sami man in front of a Sami tent.*

page 1 & 2	Baptism-The Theme for India Conference
page 3	Mission Work Among the Sami
page 4	Confessional Lutherans in West Africa
page 5	Lutheranism and the Lutheran Confessions in West Africa
page 6	Buenos Aires Hosts Second South America Luther Academy Conference
page 7	Economic Downturn Affects Luther Academy: An Appeal to Our Supporters
insert	Luther Academy Projects