



Newsletter

Lutheran Study Centre

Fifth Edition
June 2015

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Farewell letter from LSC Director

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ!

My time as LSC director has come to an end and my church has recalled me to Germany. I have enjoyed my work with the churches and students and hope that we

were able to deepen our understanding of Lutheran Theology in the context of Malaysia and Singapore.

When I was appointed as coordinator and later director of the LSC at the end of 2011 there was nothing but the pledge of the Lutheran churches to start this Centre in order to foster the education of pastors and leaders in Lutheran theology. Four years later we have a great space at STS, a library with almost 500 books in English, BM and Chinese; LSC has published BM translation of the Catechism, the Confessions and an English book about Lutheran Ethics; LSC has conducted 14 seminars with the churches in Malaysia and Singapore attended by more than 700 participants and has outreached to the Lutheran Churches in Indonesia. Furthermore, new programs like the Master of Divinity and Master of Theology in Lutheran Studies at STS were established.

It seems that the LSC has convinced all that its existence is a blessing to the Lutheran Churches. From the beginning it was clear that Lutheran theology will be taught not in a narrow denominational sense but as a tool to understand better the biblical tradition and the theology of the Protestant Reformation. This has been proven to be helpful in making pastors aware of the difference between a moralistic/legalistic preaching and the Lutheran proclamation of the law and gospel whereby good works are the result of faith. This is important in relation to the impact of Confucianism and the laws of the tribal society. Furthermore the difference has become clearer between the Lutheran view of the presence of Christ in the liturgy and the sacraments and other churches. Also the relationship between Christians

and the civil society has been discussed.

To Lutherans our unconditional acceptance in our justification remains fundamental to all theology. This distinguishes the Lutheran churches from other evangelical and Pentecostal churches. Lutheran theology does not offer recipes how to fill the churches, rather it focusses on the Centre of our salvation, how God accepts us sinners in Jesus Christ without conditions. This opens our hearts and eyes to the service to our neighbors.

Challenges remain: Not all pastors and churches have recognized the need for constant education and training in order to meet the challenges of the 21st century where the Lutheran church is one among many on the market place of religions and growing materialism. It is necessary for the churches to organize this education and convince the pastors of their duty to upgrade their theology. The churches need competent and well educated local leaders who serve as resource persons. Right now only one student is trained in Lutheran theology, more are needed and scholarships can be provided. Every pastor should be able to teach Lutheran theology to all groups in their congregations, from Sunday School to confirmation and bible classes. We must also do more to make available Lutheran material especially in BM.

I wish to thank all partners, church leaders and colleagues for their support and their trust in my work for the past four years. May the gracious God continue to bless the Lutheran Study Centre, its new leadership and let it bring many fruits.

Michael Press



Dr Michael Press



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Lutheran Study Centre

Note from Acting Director



This is a time of transition for the Lutheran Study Centre, to be sure, but it is also a time full of potential. The Centre has been blessed over the past four years by the leadership of Dr. Michael Press, who has done an excellent job of providing a foundation for the work of this Centre. He has provided guidance in bringing an idea into reality. As he moves on to a new calling, the Lutheran Study Centre can build on that foundation to continue to find ways to aid the churches of Southeast Asia. The LSC remains committed to helping to sharpen the theological reflection of the Lutheran churches here in a way that draws on the Lutheran heritage but also engages

es contemporary Asian contexts.

As we begin to chart our way forward, I am excited about the many direction that may be possible. We will continue with some of the projects that have already been underway, in particular the translation of some Lutheran writings into Bahasa Malaysia. I also look forward to talking with church leaders to see if there are particular areas to focus on in greater detail in the future. We are also beginning to see some individuals who want to delve more deeply into Lutheran thought. Indeed, we now have several students in our masters programs in Lutheran Studies, and I hope that we continue to have more coming.

I thank Michael for his work and leadership these past years, and for all of the supporters who have and continue to make the work of this Study Centre possible. I am grateful for this opportunity to continue and expand my work with the LSC, and appreciate your continued prayers as we work together in Christ's name.

Eric Trozzo

PCS Seminars

In January and February, LSC led four sessions introducing Martin Luther's Small Catechism with members of PCS churches. Dr. Michael Press led one day of discussion of the Ten Commandments in Kudat on Jan. 17. On Jan 31 Dr. Eric Trozzo went to Kota Marudu to look at the Creed with the participants. Two weeks later he discussed the Lord's Prayer, this time based in Pitas. Finally, on Feb. 28 the seminars returned to Kudat, where Dr. Trozzo talked about worship and sacraments. The seminars averaged about 100 participants, with many people attending all of the sessions.

Eric Trozzo

"Understanding Charismatic movement : Theologically and Practically" Seminar

On April 18, Dr. Wilfred John led a one day seminar in Kota Marudu on the topic "Understanding Charismatic movement : Theologically and Practically". The seminar has 79 participants. He will be offering this seminar again in September 2015 for BCCM-BM in Lutheran Study Centre.

Eric Trozzo



Lutheran Ethics Seminars

On April 13-15, the LSC presented a seminar at the Malaysia Council of Churches offices in Petaling Jaya, on the topic "Sacraments and Christian Life." Along with Drs. Michael Press and Eric Trozzo from the LSC, Dr. Jeffrey Silcock from the Lutheran Church of Australia led the discussion. The focus on the seminar was the emphasis that receiving the sacraments are not merely a religious ritual unrelated to the rest of

life, but rather the means by which we re-



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LSC KL seminar 13-15 April 2015

ceive God's grace and thus the foundation for all of Christian life. Along with lectures from the presenters, participants engaged in the reading and discussing together selections from several of Martin Luther's writings on the sacraments. Participants in the seminar came from the Lutheran Church of Malaysia, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Malaysia, the Lutheran Church of Singapore, several Indonesian churches and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cambodia.

Dr. Jeff Silcock also gave a public lecture, "Worship and the Christian Life," at Damansara Utama Lutheran Church as part of the seminar.

The three presenters then travelled to Medan, Indonesia, to offer a seminar, "Introduction to Lutheran Ethics," at Abdi Sabda Seminary, April 16-17. They were joined by Dr Olaf Schumann in giving presentations. Over sixty people attended, in addition to many of the seminary students attending parts of the seminar. For many of the participants this was their first opportunity to hear about Luther's understanding of social involvement as part of the Christian life. The participants read and discussed Luther's "The Freedom of a Christian" in small groups. Lectures from the presenters dealt with topics such as the relevance of the law and gospel distinction for social action, the Lutheran understanding of two kingdoms, and the role of community in Lutheran theology.



LSC KL seminar 13-15 April 2015

The students at the seminar also invited the presenters to take part in the student-led evening devotion time and even taught them a little bit about Batak dance.

Eric Trozzo



"Introduction to Lutheran Ethics" seminar at Abdi Sabda Seminary, Medan April 16-17 2015



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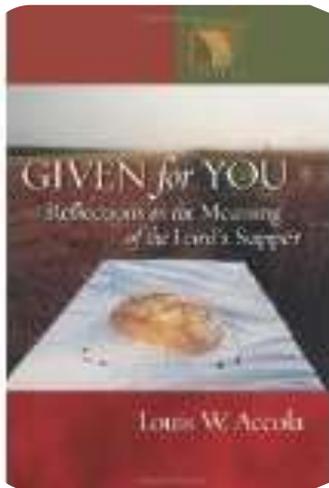
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Seminar at Abdi Sabda Seminary, Medan April 16-17 2015

Indonesian Lutheran Academy

Members of the Indonesian Lutheran Academy, a group of pastors from the HKBP church in Indonesia who have an interest in deeper study of Lutheran theology, came to Kota Kinabalu March 4-9 to study with the LSC staff. During this week the nine members of the group attending engaged in close readings of several key texts for the Lutheran tradition. Dr. Michael Press led discussions of Luther's writings, including the Large Catechism and *Disputatio de Homine*. Dr. Eric Trozzo, meanwhile, led discussions of the Heidelberg Disputation and the Augsburg Confession. Bonar Lumbantobing of the Indonesian Lutheran Academy and a lecturer at HKBP's seminary in Pematang Siantar, also led a session on Lutheran spirituality. The group was excited by the deep and stimulating conversation over these several days.



Book Review

Given for You: Reflections on the Meaning of the Lord's Supper, by Louis W. Accola

Explaining the Lutheran understanding of the Eucharist is perhaps the question that I am most often asked when I am leading seminars, and seems to be a topic that causes a great deal of confusion. This is not surprising, as sacramental theology is one area where there is a strong Lutheran distinctiveness. However, receiving the Lord's Supper is not ultimately about theology, it is about receiving God's grace and being called to be God's people. The Eucharist brings spiritual formation.

Accola's book helps give an accessible introduction to a Lutheran understanding of receiving the sacrament. He is not writing for theologians or pastors, but rather aims to introduce the importance of the practice of communing in a way that any curious Christian can understand. He writes theologically but in a devotional style. This book is part of Augsburg Fortress Press's *Lutheran Voices* series, which is a series of short books aimed at introducing aspects of Lutheran thinking to practicing lay Lutherans. The book has five short chapters, each followed by several questions for group discussion. Each chapter title begins with "The Lord's Supper is..." and then is completed by a different aspect of the meal: a meal of forgiveness, a sign of remembrance, a means of grace, a source of life for the world, and a foretaste of the feast to come. Thus we get to understand the Eucharist from five different angles.

The book could be a wonderful basis for a cell group discussion. It could easily be read and discussed together over just five or six weeks.

Eric Trozzo

Lutheran Courses offered

The Lutheran Study Centre offers several courses in Lutheran theology each year through STS. In the first term of 2015, offered courses included: Lutheran Ethics, Asian Lutheran Perspectives, and Reformation History. In the second term of 2015, Lutheran Biblical Hermeneutics will be offered.

As a reminder, anyone interested in pursuing an MDiv II or M.Theo. degree with an emphasis in Lutheran Studies should contact the LSC.