



## BLUES NEWS...

An official publication of Concordia Deaconess Conference (CDC). Distributed six times a year, it serves our members by circulating devotional thoughts and articles, professional submissions, and member announcements.

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## OUR CONFERENCE

Concordia Deaconess Conference – Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is a free association of certified and LCMS rostered deaconesses, who subscribe to and live by the confessional position of the LCMS and who hold membership in a congregation or partner church of the same.

We work to provide opportunities for spiritual, personal, and professional growth and fellowship for deaconesses and support for diaconal service in Christ.

**Donations** for the work of the conference, a 501(c)(3) organization, may be mailed to Carol Schroeder at Epiphany Lutheran Church 4460 Lyons Rd Lake Worth, FL 33467-3614.



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## FROM THE PRESIDENT: LIFE TOGETHER IN CDC

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. . . Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. (Romans 12:10, 15)

In the course of the last four and a half years, Concordia Deaconess Conference has been blessed with an exponential increase in membership, from 80 members in 2006, to 125 members today. Yes, that means CDC membership has increased by more than 50% in that time-span!

Accompanying its various joys and surprises, growth brings growing pains. More committees; bigger mailings; the need to accommodate larger numbers at conferences; keeping apace with the felt needs of the members both new and old. On top of that, CDC is still learning what it means to serve the LCMS as one of our Synod's Recognized Service Organizations. There are big expectations with high learning curves. And perhaps, in some ways, even a struggle to maintain or retain our core identity as a conference.

A glance at the CDC Member Directory shows that we are a diverse group of women. Our membership includes deaconesses of all ages. Some are working; some are looking for work; and others are retired. We have graduated from at least five different deaconess-training entities, and the variety of mercy work that we do or have done or wish to do is phenomenal.

Still, we want a "life together" as Concordia Deaconess Conference. Our common meeting ground is not just that we are LCMS deaconesses, but that we are Confessional Lutheran deaconesses, who walk together in Christ, as forgiven children of our one Savior, Jesus Christ. CDC provides a platform—what I like to call a warm and neutral meeting place—where we can be together to connect, network, support and love one another; to share

ideas, laugh, and grow with those who share a common vocation. Toward that end, I hope all of you will make an effort to be at the annual conference in Seward, Nebraska, from June 15-18, 2011.

In the meantime, while we are physically apart, we continue to connect via *BLUES News* and weekly email prayers, plus any privately-initiated emails, phone calls, text or Facebook messages. I am hoping too, that many of you make deliberate arrangements to meet up with other CDC members.

Last August I appointed an Ad Hoc Committee to Encourage/Facilitate Local Area CDC Gatherings, to assist us in thinking about "life together" as conference members; in particular, to explore ways that CDC members might create purposeful time together between annual conferences. This committee has been collecting information regarding how women around the country have already gathered together on a local level, to share these ideas with the whole membership. By the time this goes to print, all CDC members should have received a list of geographical groupings of CDC members, to encourage us to begin thinking about what could be done together with those who live in our proximity.

As this conference grows, and as we grow together—personally, spiritually, and professionally—let us always remember that we have life together because of Christ, what He has done and what He continues to do, for us.

Cheryl D. Naumann

*GERHARDT'S SONG  
FOR THE BURIAL OF A  
CHILD*

Translated by Brigitte Mueller  
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

*The grieving father comforts  
himself over his now departed,  
blessed son:*

You still are mine and will remain mine. (Who will contradict me?) But, you are not mine alone; the Lord of eternal days has the most right to you. He demands you from me, you, o my son, my will, the fullness of my heart and wishes.

Oh, if I could choose, I would choose you, you little star of my soul, above all the goods of the world. I would wish for you above all. I would say: Remain with me! You shall be the glory of my house! I would love you dearly to my dying day.

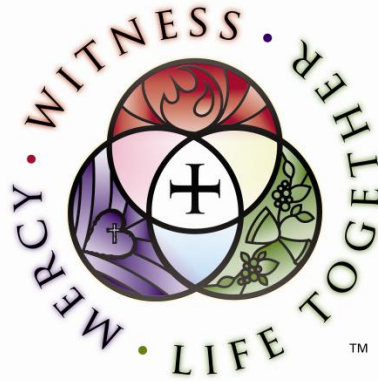
Thus speaks my heart and means it well, but God means it even better. Great is my love, but God's is even greater. I am a father—and nothing more. But God is the head of all fathers. He is the true fountain from which we all spring—old or young.

I long for my son; still, the One who gave him to me, wills that he should live before his throne in heaven. I say: alas, my light disappears. God says: welcome, dear child, I want you to be with me and I myself will give you joy forever.

Oh, sweet comfort, oh beautiful word, and more holy than we think! With God there is no place for evil, no accident, no illness, no fear, no need, no sin; with God, no one can suffer. In God's care and presence you will never be sad again.

We human beings scheme very hard to make our loved ones honorable. We worry day and night how we can lead them into a beautiful station in life. Yet, rarely do things turn out the way that we had planned them.

Continued on p. 3



Many a proposed theodicy has offered that the reason our Lord permits sorrow is for love and service to be known in the midst of sorrow. I don't recommend being so bold, especially since the idea is speculative and not actually detailed in Holy Scripture. At the same time, I am greatly encouraged by Gerhard's boldness in his sacred prayers recorded in the prayer book *Meditations On Divine Mercy*. Gerhard reminds us that while in the Lord's hands, He leads us in mercy as we remain in Christ so that even our trials are permitted in mercy.

We simply don't know why as we might like to know, but what we *do* know is that it is in the context of sorrow that our comfort in the body of Christ overflows. When any of us sorrows and we are then recipient to the ministry of a brother or sister in Christ we come in contact with a divinely opened door to receive God's help while we grieve. Service that responds to sorrow enacts the Scriptural dynamic "weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15b) and immediately we are assured that even if our sorrow is not relieved, it is not isolated either and hope is given to us because a fellow Christian has entered in; an

incarnational ministry of Jesus Himself!

St. Paul teaches us that our Heavenly Father "comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too." (2 Corinthians 1:4-5). It is in this "abounding consolation" that we know the joy of the Christian faith.

This rejoicing is not the superficial forms of sensate happiness here today and gone tomorrow. It is rather the assurance that we really are inscribed on the palms of the Lord's hands (Isaiah 49:16). Christ's hands are extended through the hands of His ministers (friends in Christ, deaconesses, pastors, true neighbors who bear the Name of Jesus). And when these touch us in love, Jesus is touching us.

Our Savior, who bore all of our griefs and carried our sorrows (Isaiah 53:4), sends real servants

*LIFE TOGETHER IN  
SORROW AND REJOICING*

Rev. Dr. Alfonso O. Espinosa,  
Senior Pastor  
St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Irvine, CA

who continue to bear our burdens in the actions which mark the body of Christ (Galatians 6:2). When the one who sorrows receives such a ministry—even while the sorrow does not suddenly vanish—something else comes. Through the Word and the ministry of those who abide with us in our suffering, there is also joy: Christ is here and He will never leave me, He will never forsake me; I am His, He is mine... His servants are living testimonies to the truth of the Word of promise! So I will pray with Gerhard: "The heat of various afflictions harasses me, but the taste of Your sweetness brings me cool consolation. The tears stream from my eyes, but Your gracious hand wipes them away (Revelation 7:17)." (*Meditations*, p. 121) For those who are in Christ are also receivers of the ministry of Word and Sacrament, and real servants who bring these, so yes there is sorrow, but this sorrow does not dominate our lives, because when Christ comes there is joy... the Lord of the heavens and the earth is with us, so rejoice the Lord is near (Philippians 4:4-5).

Rev. Dr. Alfonso O. Espinosa

GERHARDT  
CONTINUED...

How many a young, pious blood, is led astray most grievously, through bad examples and ends up living not as a Christian should. Then he will only earn God's wrath, and on earth nothing but disdain. The father with much sorrow ends up being ashamed of his child.

This I need not fear for my son since he stands before God's face and walks in Christ's garden, has joy which is a wholesome joy, and rests from all heartache. He hears and sees the angels above who protect us here below.

He hears the voices of angels; his own little voice is joining in the singing. He knows all wisdom and speaks of such things which none of us below know yet, and which we will not learn while here on earth, no matter how we study with great labor.

Ah, if I could but stand from afar and just listen in a little, when your senses are raised up to honor God's name who is Holy, Holy, Holy, in whom you also are made holy: I know that I would also overflow with tears of joy.

Then I would say: stay there! I won't complain anymore by saying: oh, my son, were you with me. No! I would say: come, oh, Elijah's chariot, come and get me quickly also to where my child and so many dear souls, speak of such wonderful things.

Now, it shall be YES and shall remain, I will stop crying for you. You live and are happy, see the pure sunshine, the sun of eternal joy and rest. There live and stay now! I will soon, God willing, make my way, together with dear ones, to the place where you are.

Paul Gerhardt  
Pastor and Hymn Writer  
17th Century

German text from *Lieder Paul Gerhardt's*, mit Bildern von Rudolf Schäfer (Leipzig: Gustav Schloessmanns Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1921).

## TOGETHER BY CHRIST

Sarah Longmire



Sarah with children from the Concordia Daycare in Bangna, Bangkok, Thailand. Picture used with permission.

Life Together. Close quarters. Shared responsibilities, shared joys. Care for the widow. Care for the orphan. This is the picture of life in the slum community in Bangna, Bangkok, Thailand.

Neighbors live within feet of neighbors and the mentality of “a village cares for a child” is in place. The Concordia Daycare, located just outside the slum community, is a highly valued and important part of this “life together.” At this daycare, children are fed, clothed, washed, loved, and taught. The care is offered by loving and competent Thai women.

It all sounds idyllic and complete. However, the motivation for all these good works comes from the Law. All people involved—in the slum, at the daycare—are Buddhist. Their sense of responsibility comes not from Love (not from Christ), but from their need to outbalance their bad deeds.

As a missionary in this, the opportunities to share God's love were everywhere. When I was asked “why”—why do I give, why do I love, why did I leave the riches of America for this place—I was able to simply answer: because I have Love and want and need to share Him.

The slum community suffered a fire that destroyed many, many homes. And out of their “neighborly” togetherness, families took in family and friends with open arms...for the moment. Non-Government Organizations within Thailand rushed in to aid, only to leave short days (hours) after they had come. A lot of work left to do—very little help.

Through an overflow of monetary gifts and donations from Christians around the world, I was continually able to be present in the slum sharing God's love through stability, presence, and needed items.

When looking from the outside in, this slum, this daycare, had “life together.” However, after digging in, they were missing the most crucial element—the reason why we have life, why we celebrate togetherness. Through the efforts of missionaries, with the gifts given to them by God, true and lasting love and peace are brought to people, like those in Bangna, Bangkok; bringing them to true and lasting togetherness in the Life of Christ.

“Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.” (Romans 6:3-5)

Sarah Longmire



Bástate mi gracia; porque mi poder se perfecciona en la debilidad. Por tanto, de buena gana me gloriaré más bien en mis debilidades, para que repose sobre mí el poder de Cristo. Por lo cual, por amor a Cristo me gozo en las debilidades, en afrentas, en necesidades, en persecuciones, en angustias; porque cuando soy débil, entonces soy fuerte. (2 Corintios 12:9-10, Reina-Valera 1960)

### CDC SCHEDULE

June 1<sup>st</sup>—Newsletter  
deadline for “Rest and Care  
for Caregivers”

June 15-18<sup>th</sup>—Conference in  
Seward, Nebraska

August 1<sup>st</sup>—Newsletter  
deadline for “Security and  
Insecurity”

October 1<sup>st</sup>—Deadline for  
“Ministry to the Less Mobile  
and Those Far from Home”

## CDC OFFICERS

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Digital pictures can be emailed to [photos.cdc@gmail.com](mailto:photos.cdc@gmail.com).

Email [publicrelations@concordiadeaconesslms.org](mailto:publicrelations@concordiadeaconesslms.org) with PR suggestions or requests for banners.

Members may purchase extra cross pins or insignias for themselves from Linda Cosgrove.

**EXCERPT ON  
HARDSHIPS**

Martin Luther

“For thus says the Lord: ‘If those who did not deserve to drink the cup must drink it, will you go unpunished? You shall not go unpunished, but you must drink.’” (Jeremiah 49:12)

Even though Daniel and his companions endured the captivity among the heathen, nevertheless they had not deserved the captivity because of their sins, as the others had. ... For disasters never occur among a people without also affecting the godly. These are being tested, but the others are being judged.

Then, too, the godly are often afflicted, not because their sins deserve it or because they are being tested, but in order that they may be kept humble and may not be puffed up on account of their gifts. Thus Paul says about himself that a thorn in the flesh was given to him to keep him from becoming conceited because of his extraordinary revelations. “An angel of Satan,” says he, “beats me with his fist that I may not exalt myself” (2 Cor. 12:7). It is as though he were

saying: “Because of my superb gifts I might rate myself above all the other apostles and perhaps look down upon them; but God is curing this evil with that thorn of Satan, to show me that *I am nothing* and to cause me to humble myself.”

This is also the reason why the church, which God has endowed with the most excellent gifts of the forgiveness of sins, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life, experiences such manifold dangers and misfortunes. If it enjoyed these gifts without affliction, it would become proud and boastful.

Thus you may observe that frequently a pious and godly person is afflicted with a variety of perils and misfortunes in quick succession, when, on the

other hand, for the wicked and ungodly everything turns out in accordance with their hearts desire.

This inequitable state of affairs often gives rise to resentment in the saints. But if you consider the situation rightly, you are enduring these hardships for your own great good; for if you had no affliction, you would become proud and would be condemned. Now when God ties want, scorn, sickness, a vexatious wife, and disobedient children to your neck like a heavy stone, you are not what the Greeks call υπερήφανος or proud; but you take it patiently, and you do not look down upon those who are less gifted than you. These discussions about the causes of misfortunes are profitable, for they supply not only knowledge but comfort as well.

*Luther's Works: Volume 2* (CPH, 1986), 320ff.

