



FAITH EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

echoes

05/15

**PARISH COUNCIL FINANCIALS
CONFIRMATION
REFUGEE SUNDAY**

BI-MONTHLY CONGREGATIONAL NEWS MAGAZINE
BRANTFORD, ONTARIO, CANADA
Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church, 57 Brant Avenue,
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Please submit your materials by August 1, 2015 for the next edition.

Send your submissions to sandy@arndtinthehouse.com

PARISH COUNCIL AND COMMITTEES:

Please consider volunteering for Church Council and/or working with one of our Committees.



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Publisher

We want to feature the news and events of the Family of Faith at Faith Lutheran Brantford. Contact us if you would like to be in future editions, have an article you'd like to submit or an event you want to promote. Submitted manuscripts accepted but may not be returned.

Authors of selected materials only will be contacted.

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VOLUME 35 ISSUE 3

Member of ELCIC



FAITH 39'ERS THEATRE TRIP

39'ers THEATRE BUS TRIP to St. Jacob's Playhouse (Chicago in the Roaring 20's)



Wednesday June 17th at 2 pm.

Cost is \$67.00 which includes the bus, your ticket and your meal.

For information and reservations (limited to 30), please call Betty (519-753-5472)

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Parish Council Members:	Anne Porr
Volker Storjohann, Chair	Helga Sen
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Gigi Todd, Treasurer	Pastor Stephen Scheidt,
Sandra Arndt, Secretary	Ex Officio
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PARISH COUNCIL TREASURER'S REPORT

Gigi Todd,
Treasurer

FINANCIAL INFORMATION FROM OUR TREASURER:

As requested by congregational members, the following 2015 budget update is provided:
Figures to April 30, 2015:

Total income \$45,543.15
Total expenses \$54,852.53
Current deficit for 2015 (\$9,309.38)
Deficit at the end of 2014 (\$13,766.00)
Total deficit (\$23,075.38)

RENEWAL AND RESTORATION (R&R) Plans for 2015 include the parsonage chimney liner and kitchen window, Church Fire Panel and safe winter walkway (parking lot to Church Street entrance). You may direct any offering to the R&R Fund by marking it on your envelope. R&R is a dedicated fund and is not part of current offerings. Thank you.

A NOTE FROM JANAKI (DATED MARCH 2015)

Dear friends at Faith Lutheran Brantford,
Today I have been in the office two weeks at St. Peter's Cambridge and each day it has been a wonderful experience. I am learning a lot and getting to know people by name. It took me a while to recover from the super-high I was on from ordination when your outpouring of love and presence

was so upholding for me. Thank you for loving me so well, for continuing to be a place I could be as I waited for this call, and for your very generous ordination gift. I shall use it to buy very pastorly things (like bacon and chocolate - haha - just kidding).
Lots of love, yours in Christ
Janaki Bandara



FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK: CONFIRMATION

Stephen Scheidt
Pastor

Today is a joyous day of celebration. Not only do we continue to celebrate the wonder of Easter, we also rejoice over the faith of Dysan, Eli and Josh as they are confirmed. These two years have gone by so quickly it seems, and I shall miss seeing you every Thursday. When I asked Eli, Josh, and Dysan what their impression of Confirmation classes had been, they said it was not as boring as they thought it was going to be. It was also not as dangerous, I was told. I have no idea what that last comment is about, but I suspect it might have something to do with rather wild wheelchair races held by an earlier class in the basement.

In our two years of studies, we devoted a generous amount of time to Biblical study and to developing some skills and some general knowledge about scripture and how it came to be. This is important, as scripture is so often misused by Christians to hurt or insult others; instead of being what Luther called it - the manger that holds the Christ for us ... a life-giving and life-affirming gift from God. Scripture is not always approached by Christians with humility and grace. Sometimes, instead of being approached as a holy book that holds great mystery and wonder, grace and promise, it is seen as a harsh book of rules and laws. Christians who see the Bible in this light often end up being harsh, mean-

spirited and even dangerous, because they think they know everything about God's truth and God's ways.

Luther called the Bible the Living Word of God that speaks to our hearts, that leads us to Christ and shows us Christ. Many Christians have replaced a living faith in the

is within you, with gentleness and reverence. It is good to be able to articulate - to put into words - the faith that is in us - so that we can speak to others - and so that we can help others see and know the Christ, whose life we share as a gift.

We live in an age of fear, and many

Christians have become very insular and withdrawn, building fences around themselves and the Church. We are called to reach out to the world in which we live with the grace and the Gospel of Christ, with holy wisdom our guide. It means learning to live with our Jewish and Muslim neighbours, our agnostic and atheist neighbours



Risen Christ with a staunch rigid belief in a holy book, which, in the end, is not very life-giving. If the Bible does not lead us to Christ and his Gospel, if it does not reveal Christ to us, and speak its warmth to our heart, it has no value to us, or to God, for that matter.

It is good to remember that your going to confirmation class was not just about you. Your two years in confirmation was also your gift to Christ and his Church .. and for others who do not belong to the Church. Now you have a better understanding of our faith and our life in Christ, and you can do what St. Peter called us to do ... speak to others of the hope that

... and treating them as fellow children of God, no matter who they are, or who the world might think they are. It means having Christ's compassion in our hearts for all people, no matter how different they may be from ourselves. Anyone can love people who are similar to ourselves. Learning to love others who are different takes some effort. We can do this, for we are secure in God's love and God's grace. People who know a gracious God can reach out to others with compassion, understanding and tolerance. Fearful people make lousy Christians. Christ has taught us not to fear, but to live with hope and grace for all, and to do so bravely and with abandon.

CONFIRMATION (CONTINUED)

Confirmation is another step in your maturing in Christ; but it must not be your last step, for you must continue to grow into the fullness of Christ's life. To do this you must always listen to Christ speaking to you in the Living Word of scripture, continue to receive his very life in the sacrament of Holy Communion, and daily die to sin and rise to newness of life as you remember God's promise to always be with you, forgive, love, and lead you.

That doesn't sound very easy, does it? It's not. It's quite a commitment. Sharing Christ's life, living with maturity, trusting faith, belonging to Christ's body, the Church, is not easy. Several generations ago, many people went to Church because that is what you did, what everyone else around



you did. Now, to belong to the Church and to follow Christ, you will be swimming against the current.

You will be making a choice that many people around you are not making. That is why you need to surround yourself with faithful people who will support and encourage your faith ... and why you also need to support and encourage others in their journey of faith, because following Christ is not easy and they need your help too! Luther made it very clear in the Confessions of our Church: If you are committed to Christ, then you are also committed to his body, the Church. The two are inseparable. You cannot be a Christian and not belong and be an active part of the Church, Christ's body. You cannot separate your faith from your life in the Church, because the Christian faith is always lived in and with the community of the faithful.

(Photos by Shawn Lemp)

SCOUTING REPORT

Jane Redin

Group Commissioner



20th Faith Scouting has been actively camping and doing their badge work. Beavers had a very active year with terrific program planning on the Scouters part. Their year finished off with a Bowling night. Cubs taking a hike and then linking with the Troop for an OFAH camp at the Brant Rod and Gun Club in June. Scouts had FUN, got wet and dirty at the DIBC camp in Dorchester Mother's Day weekend with 4,000 participants. Venturers will be attending a MOOT and preparing for their fundraising Spaghetti Dinner and Silent Auction at the Brant Navy Club on June 6th. Meetings are being held to start the registration for the next Scouting year. All Scouters are returning, but we are still short in a couple of sections. Looking for a chance to work with a great group of young individuals and share experiences, get in touch with us. You can make a difference in someone's pathway in life!

Beavers visiting the Library! (right)



REFUGEE COMMITTEE LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR

Liz Mongeon

Update

So, the fundraising phase for the Sero family sponsorship is complete—much, much sooner than dreamed possible. With the help of members of our own church family, very generous individual contributions from Bethany Lutheran Church in Woodstock, friends of Dammee Sero in the Oromo community, and many in our local community who chose to support us in our cause, we have met our goal. God's grace has certainly been with us.

At this point in our sponsorship process of the Sero family, we begin the long waiting period for the Nairobi visa office to schedule an interview with the family. Nairobi is a very busy office and it, historically, has a long processing time. But, anything is possible.

A very sad development took place concerning a member of the Sero family. The mother, Jamila, suddenly took ill and died in January of this year. As can be imagined, health and hospital options may have been less than adequate. Daughter Dammee, here in Brantford, was devastated at the news and has been trying to deal with the reality that she has lost her mother, who she was hoping to be reunited with.

Parish Concerns

The Sponsorship Committee is aware of some concerns as to the sponsorship. Why are we resettling a Muslim family; why not Christian? Jesus taught us to love our neighbour. That direction wasn't qualified by saying, love thy neighbour next door, love thy white neighbour, nor love thy Christian neighbour. This is not to say that we are not deeply disturbed by the world crisis regarding the terror of ISIS. Instead, we believe in the many Muslims who do not adhere to violence. Fear can blind us to the goodness of many Muslims and Lutherans. Canadian Lutheran World Relief has historically walked alongside refugees of many cultures and creeds.

About the Sero Family

The Sero family has been cleared for United Nations Convention Refugee status, that is, their story has been verified by the United Nations. This Ethiopian family, while in their home country, suffered severe ethnic and political persecution. They have submitted very detailed reports of their suffering, especially Jacob and eldest son Dawole.

If we focus on Father Jacob Sero, he reports, "I was targeted by the regime in Ethiopia only because I am of Oromo ethnicity. I was not guilty of harming anyone,

but I did not agree with the government and its corruption and human rights violations.

"My brother was killed by government militia after they raided our home for our cattle, in an attempt to bring our family to its knees. Later, my eldest son was also killed by the local police. So in late 2000, I fled to Kenya and was directed to the Kakuma Refugee Camp with my wife and children to find safety. My second eldest son barely escaped with his life."

Documentation as to Work and Ethics

Born in 1952, Jacob Sero was a primary school teacher in his homeland. He soon put his skills and belief in education to work at the camp, where he and his family have been for over 10 years.

This family clearly has a proven strong work ethic and belief in higher education. Jacob is an example to his children.

On file, one document out of 15, is a Letter of Recommendation from Lutheran World Federation Education Department (Kakuma) as to Jacob's contribution and work in the school system in different capacities, e.g. member of School Management Committee (7 yrs.).

Also, from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), we have a Confirmation & Certificate of Service for interpretation services since 2010 in the Amharic and Oromo languages. It states that Jacob has been reliable, has a good command of the English language, has been working with dedication, and has good social and interpersonal relations.

And, as well, there is a glowing recommendation letter from the Jesuit Refugee Service commending Jacob for his service as Community Counsellor. He has identified clients in need of psychological support and conducted counselling sessions. He was also a trainer for a 60-hr. Basic Counselling Skills course conducted in the camp. And, to improve his skills in counselling, Jacob attended advanced counselling in-service training.

Jacob's son, Dawole Sero, born 1986, is also actively employed in the camp. Although in his homeland, he was a Rural Agricultural Extension Officer, he has taken an 8-month Patient Attendant course and works in the camp hospital.

One daughter, Nadhi, has finished school and is now teaching.

We believe the other children to be in school full time.

As the refugee resettlement process moves forward, we will provide updates for you. May God bless you for your compassionate hearts and your willingness to care for others who so desperately need our help.

REFUGEE SUNDAY

An excerpt from your pastor's Homily for Refugee Sunday, April 26, 2015
 Stephen Scheidt

I found myself squirming a bit when the passage from 1 John was read this morning in worship, especially during the reading of one particular verse:

How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?

The writer of this letter is not trying to guilt us into generosity; he is making a very simple statement of fact. Our faith is to be active in love and compassion is a sure sign that God's love abides in us. Compassion for others flows from God's love dwelling in us - flows from our faith in God's grace.

We have had the joy of welcoming many refugees over the years at Faith Lutheran Church and helping them adjust to life in Canada. They did not choose to become refugees. Refugees are not immigrants. Often, the lives of refugees are in great danger and they no longer have a home to which they can ever return. By welcoming refugees, we offer hospitality to other children of God, welcoming them to share what God has so generously given us as a gift ... our home, our country.

Refugees are children of God. Like us, they have been gathered together by Christ our Good Shepherd in a new flock, a new fold. Perhaps you noticed a very interesting verse in today's Gospel, as Jesus was speaking to his disciples:

"I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice."

Refugees often come from very different cultures - very different flocks indeed; they expand and enrich our lives as Canadians, making us a diverse and interesting people. I believe that God is at work among us, teaching

us how to cherish and treasure each other as people gathered together by God. Sometimes that stretches us a bit ... and maybe that is a good thing. That way there will be more room in our hearts and lives for God's love to live, to abide in us, after God has made a little bit more room in us to dwell.

As Christians, we are called by Christ our Lord to have love for everyone - not just other Christians. God's children include Christians, Muslims, Jews, agnostics, atheists, and even people who do not know or even think they are God's children. We are all people for whom Christ has laid down his life. We will speak to all of the tender-hearted kindness of our Good Shepherd and we

will live God's compassion in our lives for all people, including those from other flocks and pastures.

We could probably argue that such love is dangerous. Probably. In the name of such compassion Christ laid down his life for us. We do not honour Christ's sacrifice by being timid in our love for others ... or by labelling others so that we do not have to love and care for them. Christ did not call us to love Christians more than

Muslims, or straight people more than gay people. It is not about being tolerant and liberal. It is about loving as Christ loves ...radically, fully, sacrificially, wholeheartedly.

I pray that God will continue to push away at the boundaries in our hearts until we can love one another as Christ loves us. May God continue to bless our efforts to share our home and the world's goods with refugees, that all may see Christ's compassion in us.



Dammee Sero (front left) shares a joyous moment with friends at the Refugee Sunday dinner held on April 26. Many former Faith Church sponsored refugees were present to celebrate over 35 years of sponsorships. These individuals and families have grown, prospered, and become contributing citizens of Canada; their friendships have enriched the lives of many at Faith.

Helga Sen

On April 10th, upon an invitation by one of the members, I went to the Mosque. I had missed the Open house on Saturday the 21st of March but really wanted to go there on a Friday when they worship.

When I came in, a young man greeted me and showed me where I could put my shoes. (To show respect for Allah, you must take your shoes off and cover your head with a scarf) then he led me upstairs to the women's room, a large area with a wall-to-wall carpet in beautiful broad stripes and I knew later that the reason for that was that the women could stand in long rows following the directions of the stripes then bow, kneel and touch the ground with their foreheads, facing towards Mecca (Maccah).

It was quite an impressive sight. The women were all dressed in skirts that they had brought along and pulled on over their slacks. Two little girls were enjoying running around.

A couple of women had come to welcome me. I was sitting in a very comfortable sofa and followed the service of the men downstairs on a television screen where I could see and hear the Imam who talked in their own language and afterwards in English.

When the worship was ended. I was asked to come and have lunch with them. I politely declined as I had already had my lunch at home.

The Imam then came to me just before I left and we exchanged some information about our churches. He

was very friendly and told me that he has close ties with the Lutheran Seminary in Waterloo.

To have insight into another religion, to know about it, is important to me. It improves understanding among people.

I am wholeheartedly a Christian and always will be. We must not forget however, that there are man-made rules in all religions and history tells us of dreadful religious wars and other happenings. Sensibility should lead us to a more peaceful future.

And I love our church where I have found peace and encouragement ... and friends!

I have a book with the title "What I Believe". It is a schoolbook for children grade 5 and up that explains in simple ways about each World Religion.

The book for adults, "The World's Religions", by Huston Smith that our daughter Sonja gave me after the 9/11 attack in New York I have studied with great interest. It is very well written. I feel there is a great need for respect and understanding of other world religions and efforts are being made to inform us.

We all believe in the same God.

Islam is very confusing by what we see on television. In the Middle East, ISIS and their heinous crimes have nothing to do with true Islam belief that rejects any form of hatred.

Christianity, Islam and Judaism are really closely related. Huston Smith writes:

"Abraham married Sarah. Sarah had no son so Abraham, wanting to continue his line, took Hagar for his second wife. Hagar bore him a son, Ishmael, whereupon Sarah conceived and likewise had a son named Isaac. Sarah then demanded that Abraham banish Ishmael and Hagar from the tribe. Here we come to the first divergence between the koranic and biblical accounts. According to the Koran, Ishmael went to the place where Mecca was to rise. His descendants, flourishing in Arabia, became Muslims; whereas those of Isaac who remained in Palestine were Hebrews and became Jews."

Ishmael's line, if we follow that, takes us to the second half of the sixth century A.D. to the prophet Muhammad who formed Islam.

The amazing and emotional story of Mohammad's life is written in the Koran. I have not read the Koran. In Huston Smith's book, "The World Religions", the author writes sections of it that gives us insight into the book.

Muslims pray to Allah (God). The word Allah is formed by joining the definite article 'al' (meaning 'the') with Ilah (God). Literally, Allah means "the God". Not a God, for there is only one. The God. (Quotation from the book "The World Religions" by Huston Smith)

There is more to learn about Islam through the Brantford Mosque by visiting

www.brantfordmosque.com