

The mission of the CHARIS Ecumenical Center is to build up the Body of Christ by

- providing a balanced array of continuing education for clergy and laity
- promoting ecumenical collaboration and interfaith dialog
- assisting the community in exploring emerging issues in faith and life
- serving as a regional resource for churches, lay church staff, and others

Vocation is the Fall 2006 Theme

Three events in this Fall focus on the theme of vocation: a Concordia College symposium called “Celebrating Vocation in Action;” an address by Tony Campolo on “God’s People in Action;” and the CHARIS Fall Theological Lecture on “The Centered Life.” Concordia College received a grant from the Lilly Endowment for the theological exploration of vocation, a grant serving the undergraduate, faculty and staff of the college. CHARIS is following this theme in Fall 2006 by having Jack Fortin help us think about how congregations can assist members to discern their vocations and be empowered and equipped to fulfill them. Details about all these events are in the “Lifelong Learning” section of this newsletter.

Pioneer Ecumenist Dies

Cardinal Johannes Willebrands of the Netherlands died August 1. A champion of ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue, Willebrands led the Vatican’s Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity from 1969 to 1989, retiring at age 80. In the Vatican, the tireless Willebrands was known as “the flying Dutchman.” One of his greatest achievements was in the area of Catholic-Jewish relationships. He had been involved in the creation of the landmark document, *Nostra Aetate* (1965), which was a turning point in the Catholic and Christian relationship to Jews, and he continued that work in the Secretariat, issuing new guidelines in 1974 and 1985. Rabbi David Rosen called him “the captain of the Catholic-Jewish ship.” He was born Sept. 4, 1909.

New CHARIS Policy on CEUs

Certificates attesting participation in continuing education continue to be available for CHARIS events, but we now charge \$5 each. One Continuing Education Unit represents 10 contact hours. You receive two copies of the certificate, one for you and one for your bishop/superior or employer.

Kittel, the Nazis, and the Nazi Bible

Gerhard Kittel, editor of *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament=TDNT*, found in many pastors’ libraries including my own, was a Nazi-sympathizer. After World War II, he lost his academic position and appealed for help to a young American who had studied in Germany. The American was Herman Preus, who taught for many years at Luther Seminary. It is not clear whether Preus did anything to help Kittel, or whether he even tried.

Kittel was by no means the only pro-Nazi scholar. Walter Grundmann, whose commentaries are still cited by New Testament scholars, was head of the Institute for the Study (and Eradication) of Jewish Influence on German Church Life. The institute produced a Bible cleansed of Jewish influence—words like hallelujah, hosanna, amen, and Jerusalem. The Old Testament was eliminated and only the New Testament included. Called “God’s Message,” the book sold 200,000 copies. One such copy turned up just recently in the archive of the North Elbian Church in Germany. Jesus, of course, was presented as an Aryan, so references to his Jewish roots were eliminated. The institute also produced liturgical materials, a hymnal, and a catechism.

The institute, the inauguration of which was celebrated in May 1939 in the castle at Wartburg, attracted a number of well-known German scholars. It had a Scandinavian branch headed by Swedish scholar Hugo Odeburg of the University of Lund. Institute members were prominent contributors to the *TDNT*. Grundmann contributed twenty-seven articles to Kittel’s theological dictionary (the same number as Rudolf Bultmann, who rejected Nazi ideology). Gerhard Kittel contributed twenty-six articles; other institute members who contributed to *TDNT* include Georg Bertram, Gerhard Delling, and Rudolf Meyer.

More information about Grundmann and the work of the institute may be found in an article by Susannah Heschel, “Nazifying Christian Theology: Walter Grundmann and the Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Church Life” in *Church History* 63 (1994) 587-605.

A Dream Trip to Egypt

Dr. Larry Alderink, emeritus professor of religion at Concordia, has scouted out the best guide and the most exciting places to visit. This twelve-day, all-Egypt trip includes a sunrise climb up Mt. Sinai, the Pyramids of Giza, Luxor and the Karnak Temple, Coptic monasteries, the famed library of the Greek Orthodox Monastery of St. Catherine, the Egyptian Museum, the great mosques of Cairo, Sakkara, the Valley of the Kings, the Temple of Queen Hatshepsut, Sharm El Sheikh, and more!

For information on this Concordia-sponsored adventure, call the Alumni Office at 218.299.4560.

Christians in Lebanon

The conflict between Israel and Hezbollah brought Lebanon to the world's attention. Lebanon has by far the largest population of Christians of any Middle Eastern country. But accurate figures do not exist. There has been no official census since 1932 because the precarious political balance in Lebanon entails quotas by religion for the Lebanese parliament, and meddling with population numbers could lead to civic disorder. Christians had the majority of seats until it was re-adjusted in 1989. It is now equal (64 each) Christian and Muslim, which still gives Christians a disproportionately large number of seats.

The total population of Lebanon is under 4 million. Estimates of the Christian population in Lebanon range from 30 to 50% (the latter in *Who Are the Christians in the Middle East?* by Betty Jane Bailey and J. Martin Bailey [Eerdmans, 2003]). A 1956 estimate had Lebanon at 56% Christian and 44% Muslim, but there has been significant emigration of Christians in the last couple decades. A 1986 estimate by the CIA said 27% of the population is Sunni, 41% is Shia Muslim.

The largest Christian group are the Maronite Catholics, an Eastern rite church in communion with Rome. The CIA estimated them at 16% of the total population in 1986. The next largest groups are the Greek Orthodox (Antioch Patriarchate) and the Greek Catholics (Melkites). Among American groups, the Presbyterians have historically the most significant presence.

A poll in late July by the Beirut Center for Research and Information, reported in the *Christian Science Monitor*, said 80% of Christians now support Hezbollah.

Two very good reads on Christians in the Middle East are Charles Sennott, *The Body and the Blood: The Holy Land's Christians at the Turn of the New Millennium* (Perseus, 2001) and William Dalrymple, *From the Holy Mountain: A Journey Among Christians of the Middle East* (Henry Holt, 1997).

Global Warming and Your Congregation

Energy costs, both the direct cost to the congregation and the environmental cost, keep going up, but there are lots of things you can do. The best place for information is the Environmental Protection Agency's Energy Star® program. They have a special section of their website designed for congregations at www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=small_business_sb_congregations. On the website is a booklet accessible online (90 pages) called "Putting Energy into Stewardship: Energy Star® for Congregations." You'll find lots of information, including a handy checklist and a "shopping list" that your congregation's governing body can use to review. Another part of the website has stories of real congregations and the savings they realized.

Al Gore's movie, "An Inconvenient Truth," is in many theatres, and is a powerful documentary. Their official website is www.climatecrisis.net/, and you'll find steps you can take at home to reduce your consumption of energy and water.

One of the handiest and simplest guide to the whole global warming issue has been produced by the Hinkle Charitable Foundation. Their website is at www.thehcf.org/email1.html. Six "reports" give a step-by-step explanation of the evidence for global warming. Another highly accessible site is www.whrc.org/resources/online_publications/warmin_g_earth/index.htm. It's called "The Warming of the Earth: A Beginner's Guide to Understanding the Issue of Global Warming," produced by the Woods Hole Research Center. Another nicely illustrated site is www.koshland-science-museum.org/ and click on "Global Warming Facts and Our Future." The museum is associated with the National Academy of Sciences. The Sierra Club focuses on solutions, including a report on increasing the fuel efficiency of pickup trucks. Go to www.sierraclub/globalwarming/

The EPA also has a good site on global warming: <http://yosemite.epa.gov/oar/globalwarming.nsf/content/index.htm>.

Tools to Make Your Community Better

The Blandin Foundation in Grand Rapids, Minnesota has worked at community leadership issues for years. Now James Krile, director of their Community Leadership Program, has put together a terrific resource: *The Community Leadership Handbook: Framing Ideas, Building Relationships, Mobilizing Resources* (Fieldstone Alliance, 2006). The book will help identify assets, problems, and data, and provide ways to address the issues. It includes 29 worksheets to make the process much more simple. It's a hands-on guide to community building.

Worship in the Small Church

If you are serving a congregation in which fewer than 50 typically worship, you may find some good ideas in a new book from the Alban Institute. Peter Bush (a United Church of Canada pastor in southwest Ontario) and Christine O'Reilly (a Presbyterian pastor in Mitchell, Ontario) have published *Where 20 or 30 Are Gathered: Leading Worship in the Small Church* (Alban, 2006; \$17). The book incorporates insights gathered from three Worship Renewal Projects which they co-directed, focused on training lay people to plan and lead worship services and to preach. Their ideas capitalize on the special characteristics of small churches. They give special attention to the challenges of serving multi-point and yoked congregations.

How To Be A Perfect Stranger

Suppose you visit a Buddhist temple, a Jewish synagogue or a Muslim mosque. How should you behave to be respectful and proper? Help is to be found in a book, now in its 4th edition, called *How To Be A Perfect Stranger: The Essential Religious Etiquette Handbook* (Skylight Paths Publishing, 2006). Winner of the "Best Reference Book of the Year" award, this paperback volume (\$19.99) gives extensive information not just about Buddhist, Jewish and Muslim houses of worship, but Mennonite/Amish, Mormon, Bahá'á, Presbyterian, Quaker, Assemblies of God, Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Baptist, and many others. Basic questions like what should I wear, where should I sit, are there parts of the service I should not participate in, what should I do on special occasions (like weddings or funerals), and what do these people believe are given answers derived from representatives of the various religious groups. For example, you are told what happens in a Buddhist temple. You are told that you are not expected to do anything, but you can join in the chants if you wish.

Moltmann in January

The Trinity Institute in New York will be presenting a conference called "God's Unfinished Future: Why It Matters Now" January 22-24, 2007. It will feature Jürgen Moltmann, Barbara Rossing, Peter J. Gomes, and James Carroll. The early bird rate for registration is \$300, but you can access it online. The lectures occur on Tuesday and Wednesday, January 23 and 24, beginning at 9 a.m. Eastern Standard Time. On Tuesday, Moltmann and Rossing speak and on Wednesday, it is Moltmann and Gomes. Carroll speaks at the opening Eucharist Monday evening. Go to www.trinitywallstreet.org/institute/ for information about joining the webcast.

Pastors Misjudge Parishioners Priorities

According to a study by the Barna Research Group in California, "There is a huge gap between the perception of pastors and the reality of people's devotion to God." On average, Protestant pastors say that 70% of the adults in their congregations regard their faith in God as their top priority. But a survey of adults found that only 15% said faith in God was their top priority. The percentage was a little higher for those who attend church: 23%. The Barna Group maintains that the reason for the gap is that pastors use criteria for measuring faith in God such as attendance in church. Apparently, that's not a very good criterion for assessing people's faith in God. Other criteria were rarely used by pastors, such as stewardship or witnessing. Lifestyle issues tended to be ignored. Barna also found that "Pastors are nine times more likely to seek reactions to their sermon [sic] than they are to assess the congregation's reactions to visitors." And "Perhaps most alarming of all, pastors were 21 times more likely to evaluate whether people showed up (i.e., attendance) than to determine whether people experienced the presence of God during their time at the church." The study was released in January, 2006.

Pastors Are Just Like Other People!

The same Barna Research Group released a study in July, 2006 that found that "today's pastors are surprisingly similar to people from other walks of life." Was this really a big surprise?

For example, Barna found that 61% of pastors have few close friends. One-sixth of today's pastors feel under-appreciated. Many confess to be shy or introverted; in fact, 24% of senior pastors say they are introverted (about the same as the general population). Barna also found that risk-taking drops off among pastors 20-plus years in ministry; that is especially true of pastors serving that long in the same congregation. The director of the study, David Kinnaman, concluded that "Most pastors say they are driven by a clear vision, but very few pastors are able to articulate a firm, compelling vision statement for their church. Many pastors talk about their church's deep engagement in the community, but most church programs are focused on the congregation, not people outside the walls of the church."

Apparently, the study did not examine differences among pastors of differing gender, but they did explore differences between white and black pastors. They found that "Black pastors . . . had a different take on their interaction with others: they were more likely than white pastors to describe themselves as introverted and significantly more likely to feel under-appreciated."