

# GENEVALUTHERAN

January-February 2007  
The Season of Epiphany

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Geneva  
English-speaking Congregation

[www.genevalutheran.ch](http://www.genevalutheran.ch)

## Celebrating our 300th anniversary in 2007

**'Building Bridges in Faith' is theme to mark three centuries of Lutherans worshipping in Geneva**

In 2007, the English-speaking congregation, as well as the German- and Swedish-speaking congregations, all part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Geneva, will celebrate 300 years of Lutheran worship in Geneva.

On August 28, 1707, the first Lutheran worship service in Geneva took place. Granted permission by the local authorities—the “compagnie des pasteurs”—six German Lutheran merchants from Lyon were finally able to worship. Although our current building was erected only some 60 years later, over the past 300 years the congregation has known both good and challenging times. Today, we are a strong group, comprising three language-specific congregations, with others associated to us, namely the Finnish, Norwegian, Danish and French Lutherans with their own worship locations in Geneva, the “City of Calvin,” another “pillar” of the Reformation.

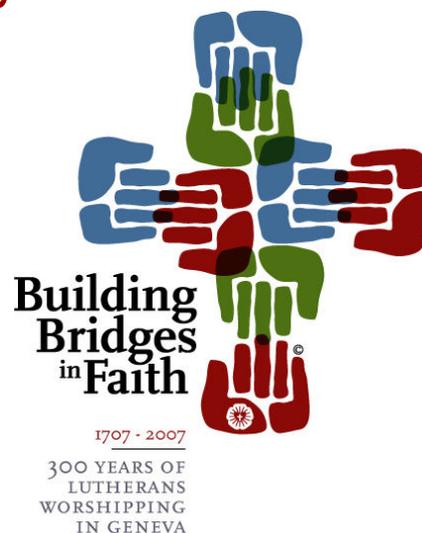
From our humble beginnings of six people, today we are a multicultural and multilingual group that has congregated from all paths of life, from all corners of the earth. We can count several thousand families within our many Lutheran congregations in the Lake Léman region. More than 50 nationalities are present, and several languages are spoken and sung during worship. As we contem-

plate the worldwide prayer cycle that covers the whole year, we pray for the betterment of our world. Refugees at first, our commitment has been and remains to be a refuge for foreigners passing through Geneva, and as such we must continue to care for the foreigners in our midst and build bridges to welcome the wealth and diversity of a wonderful world.

We are indeed a very privileged church. Thankful to Christ, seeking peace, rich in both liturgy and diversity, worldly, beautiful and in the heart of Geneva's Old Town, we are celebrating our 300-year presence in Geneva—on August 28 this year, to be precise. With the passion of our pastors to lead us, to incite us and nurture us, we shall make this moment a time to cherish and have fun discovering our life's vistas—paths directing us toward the destiny we deserve.

Over the past year, a group of some 30 volunteers has been mandated by the Church Council to organize a number of events that will highlight the many unique facets of our church. Our Lutheran traditions and evolution over the past 300 years, demonstrated in worship, music, art, theatre, politics, finance, and other fun events, are intended to teach us about our traditions, help us to understand our faith, and bring

*See “300th Anniversary,” page 2*



### MORE INFORMATION

#### Website

Starting in mid-February, you can visit the website for the anniversary celebrations at [www.luther300.ch](http://www.luther300.ch). You'll be able to link to it from our congregation's website at [www.genevalutheran.ch](http://www.genevalutheran.ch).

#### Trying to plan your summer?

Want to make sure you're in town for the main anniversary events? Block off in your agenda these days around the actual anniversary day, August 28:

- Sunday, August 26 at 15:00: **anniversary worship service**
- Tuesday, August 28 at 17:30: **Historic exhibition opens and continues for two months** (Place du Bourg de Four)  
At 19:30: **ceremony** (church) for officials and guests (state authorities, church and Lutheran representatives, former pastors)
- Week of August 26: **Parish feast (fête de paroisse)**: A week-long celebration with historic lectures, children's activities, exhibitions with the Reformation and Bodmer Museums and a more dynamic “open church” time

#### For contributions toward the 300th anniversary

Bank account UBS–Geneva: 0240-287198.00U  
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## 300th anniversary *continued from page 1*

us closer to our commitment to Christ. Caring for the other, peace with one another and the greater community should enable us to fulfill our aspirations. The year of anniversary events will include:

### **Historical:**

- Worship services and music using traditions from 500, 400, 300, 200 and 100 years ago
- A lecture series with French-speaking experts speaking about the situation in Geneva 300, 200 and 100 years ago
- A “Calvin-Luther” debate
- Films and plays on the life and impact of Martin Luther
- Historical exhibits in partnership with museums

### **Current:**

- Contemporary vision of Geneva Lutherans during the week of August 28—celebrating our Lutheran traditions with a week-long series of events in and around our church—fête de paroisse, church assembly
- Cultural events: concerts, art exhibits, Luther feast
- Lecture series on the meaning and aspirations of Lutherans

### **Future:**

- Renovating our church infrastructure
- Creating and funding outreach projects locally and worldwide

—Carl-Gustav Bjertnes, acting chair,  
300th anniversary committee

### **GenevaLutheran Team**

Susan Steinhagen, editor  
Federico Besnard  
Carl Bjertnes  
Jacinta Goveas  
Stephen Padre

## Pastor's Reflection **A body hosting poetry**

by The Rev. Lusmarina Campos Garcia

*A body has to be tuned as an instrument capable of receiving the poetry of the world; poetry suspended in rotation and translation movements; mild movements tracking days and moonlights, seasons and harvests, minutes and millenniums, provisionally.*

As I started to write this reflection, I remembered this poem by Bartolomeu Campos Queiros. In our journey through Christmas and Epiphany, we enter a world of images and symbols that point to profound human hopes and beauties. Stars, angels, music, pregnancy, gifts, solidarity, discrimination, exclusion, harmony and many others are words of a poem born in our inmost experience, expressing our outmost desire. The Christmas and Epiphany saga is not only about an event based in history, but about who we are, what we hope for, how we lead with segregation, how we practice solidarity, what are our visions for the world, how we expand ourselves beyond the limits of our understandings, and what we declare before the unknown. It is about how we profess our faith.

Christmas and Epiphany are not only about Mary, Joseph, Jesus, the pastors and the Wise Men living back then. It is about all those who are living now. It is about remote and ever-present hopes, the interpenetration of heavens and earth, then and now.

As a congregation, we journeyed through Advent and Christmas under the theme of HIV and AIDS. What does it mean to celebrate Christmas and Epiphany in times of AIDS? The displacement of Mary, Joseph and Jesus speaks to the segregation millions of people living with HIV and AIDS still experience today. But it also echoes the strength born from solidarity and love of those who stay together. In the journey of the Magi we find a call to be committed to the search for truth. What is the truth about HIV and AIDS? What is the truth of the pharmaceutical

industry and the scientific researchers? What is our truth? If the baby Jesus was sero-positive, would we run away from him? Would we receive him as our God? Would we get involved? I believe this is an important key for us in deciding how much we want to be committed to people living with HIV and AIDS, to people suffering for different reasons, to our own sufferings.

The journey of the Magi offers other calls. It calls us to search for truth, but also to rejoice in what we find, to bring our gifts, which may change our findings, to discover joy and satisfaction, to capture the essence of what our search reveals to us. Isn't that what an epiphany is? A realization or comprehension of the essence or meaning of something? From a Christian perspective, Epiphany is the feast commemorating the revelation of Jesus to humanity.

Christmas and Epiphany are seasons of amazement. I think the fascination of this period has to do with mystery and joy, with the fact of humanity hosting God and God becoming human, with innocence as an element for renewal. In the midst of our troubles and struggles, of HIV and AIDS, the Child offers us the opportunity to reconnect to a time when life seemed simpler and imagination resembled reality; a time when wise people looked for truth as we look for cures for our lives and our world. But I also think that what makes this period magic is the possibility of having our bodies being “tuned as an instrument capable of receiving the poetry of the world.” Every time we tell the story again we reaffirm our capacity, as Mary did, to host God within us, to face our displacements within a perspective, to be committed to revealing searches, to believe that our gifts can make a difference, to echo the words of an old poem affirming God's presence with us.

Speaking of Christmas and Epiphany, a body hosts poetry.

## Regular Church Activities

### Every Sunday morning

Worship, 11:00 *church*  
Christian education programme  
3-12 yrs. old, 11:00 *church*  
Adult Forum, 10:00 *Spaghetti  
Factory*

### Every Thursday

Adult choir, 20:00 *church*

### Every Friday

Confirmation class, 17:30  
*third floor of the church*  
Junior choir, 18:30 *church*

### Monday-Saturday

Open Church, 12:00-17:00 *church*

### Third Tuesday of each month

Japanese Bible study, 20:30 *home  
of Thomas and Koko Taylor, 11  
chemin Gamay, Bernex*

### First Saturday of each month

Worship in French, 18:00 *cave  
vouteé at the church*

### Second Friday of each month

Concerts for Peace, 18:30 *church*

### Every other Monday

Evening Reflection Group, 19:00  
*(at various homes)*  
*For details, check website, or  
Contact Jacinta Goveas (goveas@  
unhcr.org).*

### Guest preachers

Throughout 2007, Pastor Lusmarina will be inviting different preachers from within and outside our congregation to share their teachings through the sermon. These guest preachers will be present on the third Sunday of every month. Coming up:

**February 18:** The Rev. Satoru Kishii, ELCG member

## Ecumenical Prayer Cycle

### Week 4: 21-27 January

Algeria, Libya, Morocco,  
Tunisia  
Week of Prayer for Christian  
Unity

### Week 5: 28 January-3 February

Denmark, Finland, Iceland,  
Norway, Sweden

### Week 6: 4-10 February

Ireland, United Kingdom

### Week 7: 11-17 February

Belgium, Luxembourg,  
Netherlands

### Week 8: 18-24 February

Portugal, Spain, Italy, Malta

### Week 9: 25 February-3 March

Germany, France

## Refreshment Duties after Worship

Every week, a neighborhood group prepares refreshments after worship. If you are unsure of which group you belong to, please contact the church office.

**28 January**                      **Group A**  
*(Nyon, Coppet, Crans, Gex, Ferney)*

**4 February**                      **Group B**  
*(Versoix, Bellevue, Chambesj)*

**11 February**                      **Group C**  
*(Meyrin, Vernier, Chatelaine, Lignon)*

**18 February**                      **Group D**  
*(Grand-Saconnex and Petit-  
Saconnex)*

**25 February**                      **Group E**  
*(Servette, Paquis, Vermont, Delices)*

### Refreshments schedule

When is your neighborhood group set to serve refreshments after worship? Now you can find out on the web at [www.genevalutheran.ch/ministries/Refreshments\\_2007.pdf](http://www.genevalutheran.ch/ministries/Refreshments_2007.pdf)

## Bible Readings

### EPIPHANY

#### January 21

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER  
EPIPHANY

Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10  
Psalm 19 (Ps. 19:7)  
1 Corinthians 12:12-31a  
Luke 4:14-21

#### January 28

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER  
EPIPHANY

Jeremiah 1:4-10  
Psalm 71:1-6 (Ps. 71:6)  
1 Corinthians 13:1-13  
Luke 4:21-30

#### February 4

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER  
EPIPHANY

Isaiah 6:1-8 (9-13)  
Psalm 138 (Ps. 138:2)  
1 Corinthians 15:1-11  
Luke 5:1-11

#### February 11

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER  
EPIPHANY

Jeremiah 17:5-10  
Psalm 1 (Ps. 1:3)  
1 Corinthians 15:12-20  
Luke 6:17-26

#### February 18

TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR  
LORD

Last Sunday after the Epiphany  
Exodus 34:29-35  
Psalm 99 (Ps. 99:9)  
2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2  
Luke 9:28-36 (37-43)

### LENT

#### February 21

ASH WEDNESDAY  
Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 or Isaiah 58:1-12  
Psalm 51:1-17 (Ps. 51:1)  
2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10  
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

#### February 25

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT  
Deuteronomy 26:1-11  
Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16 (Ps. 91:11)  
Romans 10:8b-13  
Luke 4:1-13

## Renovated nursery to be re-dedicated in February

In November, renovations to the nursery on the second floor were completed. The renovations were funded by our congregation's Adeline Keller fund. Adeline was the infant daughter of Daniel and Ann Keller, members of ELCG in 1996 and 1997. When one-year-old Adeline died in 1997, her parents established the fund at ELCG in her memory.

In late November, Pastor Lusmarina sent an e-mail to the Kellers, informing them of the renovations to the nursery and the use of the fund that carries their daughter's name. In their reply, the Kellers said they were touched by this news. "We think of the church in Geneva often as it was very close to our hearts," they wrote.

The Kellers hope to be in Geneva in mid-February, at which time they will attend worship, and a ceremony to re-dedicate the nursery will be held. A plaque and photo of Adeline will also be installed,



and it is planned for the children of both the German- and English-speaking congregations to produce a piece of art for the nursery as well.

### Birthdays

#### January

- 1 Erica Gibson-Even
- 3 Julie Parkins
- 4 Patrick Bracken  
Nia-Christine  
Mbuli
- 5 Anne Rantanen
- 6 Hugo Charvet  
Chris Evans-Klock  
Meribeth Van  
Elderen
- 7 Marit Bauer-  
Moore
- 8 Peter Hunsperger
- 11 Rudelmar Bueno  
de Faria
- 14 Jonathan Gnana  
dason  
Eghbet Nemariam

- Kristopher Paige
- 19 Peter Prove
- 21 Kaburo Kobia
- 22 Chandran Paul  
Martin
- John Roaldseth  
Moyer
- 25 Musa Filibus
- 27 Kirayanni Prince  
Christina Schrade
- 28 Johnny Camaddo
- 30 Njeri Njoroge  
Pauli Rantanen  
Yann Woodcock

#### February

- 2 Ursula Bulti
- 5 Solomon Tesfay
- 9 Stephen Padre
- 11 Lila-Rose Mshana  
Wariri Muhungi
- 13 Daniel Lopez

- 17 Carl Bjertnes  
Diane De Loes  
Karina Gjerpe
- 19 Hannah Monica  
Yesudian
- 21 Bill Strehlow
- 23 Isabelle Graessle  
Mako Hayafuji  
Nkatha Kobia
- 24 Nadda Christ-Taha
- 25 Gonzalo Jose  
Mazzei-Braschi  
Fuentes
- 26 Elly Mlaki  
Berliana Siahaan

### Anniversaries

#### January

- 9 Chandran Paul &  
Mercy Martin
- 10 Elliott Paige &

- Marsha Lougheed  
Paige
- Ishmael & Gladys  
Noko
- 16 Oshi & Nithi Sam-  
Thambiah
- 30 Jacques de Haller  
& Isabelle  
Graessle

#### February

- 7 Maarten Wilbers  
& Cynthia  
Wilbers-Muturi
- 8 Hans & Bernice  
Dorig
- 13 Melkamu &  
Ursula Bulti
- 22 Saburo & Toyoko  
Tanaka
- 26 Ginda & Berliana  
Harahap

## ELCG congregational committee corner

At the October 2006 meeting of the congregational committee, it was decided that as part of a more transparent and open communications strategy, there will be an update on committee actions in each issue of the GenevaLutheran. Updates will also appear in the Sunday worship bulletin and on our website.

This update covers October to December 2006. The congregational committee met each month in this period to discuss and plan the various parts of the congregation's life. Some of the highlights of this period are:

- The annual Harvest Festival was held on 5 November 2006 and raised a total of around CHF 8,000. This year there was a new format – a mix of a silent auction and a noisy auction, which was appreciated by all. All items were sold and in record time as well. The youth made and sold sandwiches, and the neighbourhood group of the day provided additional snacks and drinks. The Sharing Concern Group is receiving proposals for projects, especially in Ge-

neva and Africa, that will be supported with the proceeds of the Harvest Festival (for more details, see related article in this issue).

- The Fellowship Concern Group is organizing cultural/educational evenings during the year. The first one was held in November and introduced various European cultures to the congregation.
- The congregational assembly was held on 3 December 2006. The main action of this meeting was approving a budget of CHF 285,000 (see related article in this issue).
- The congregation participated in the STAND UP campaign against poverty by standing up in church or wherever people were during the two days of the campaign in October.
- There was a projected shortfall of CHF 40,000 for the 2006 budget. A "stretch" campaign was initiated. A total of CHF 8,486 was received as of mid-December.

- Preparations for the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemorations continue in collaboration with the other Lutheran churches. The theme of "Building Bridges in Faith" and a logo has been finalized. Emese Posfay is in the process of contacting former members of our congregation. She has a list of more than 1,300 people who will receive letters inviting them to participate through their presence and contributions.
- The 2007 stewardship campaign started in November. 167 letters were sent, asking members to pledge finances as well as their time and talents.
- Three congregation committee members resigned.

### Annual congregational meeting

The congregation gathered in assembly on December 3 following worship. The meeting was chaired by congregational president Linda Hartke. Two major agenda items were considered: the congregation's finances and the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations in 2007 (see article on page 1).

The congregation's treasurer, Michiel Hardon, provided an update on the to-date 2006 finances, reported on the 2007 stewardship campaign, and presented the 2007 budget. A total of 167 letters were sent to member households as part of the stewardship campaign.

The proposed 2007 budget of CHF 285,000 was adopted.

Carl Bjertnes, acting chair of the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary committee, gave an update on the planning for the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, which will run from spring 2007 to spring 2008, with a formal celebration August 26 to 28, 2007. In a PowerPoint presentation, the logo for the celebration, designed by ELCG member Edwin Hassink, was unveiled, as well as the theme – "Building Bridges in Faith."

## Concerts for Peace

In 2007, Concerts for Peace will be at our church on the second Friday of every month, starting at 18h30. These concerts are meant to be a moment of peace and reflection after a busy week and before the weekend begins.

Entry is free with a collection going to support the church and a project of the association Musique et Vie.

Coming up:

February 9 at 18:30

### Chants des Hommes:

Mathieu Chardet, comedian and singer, accompanied by Ayser Vançin, oboe and piano  
Texts and music

March 9 at 18:30

### Ensemble Prisma:

Verena Bosshart, Saskia Filippini, Hans-Walter Hirzel and François Abeille with flute, violin, viola and cello  
Music of Mozart, Beethoven, Haydn and Ries

# HIV and AIDS theme marks the season of Advent

## Congregation's special Sharing Initiative supports HIV-positive religious leaders

The ELCG has a tradition during Advent and Lent each year of marking these seasons in creative ways, with the use of symbols, images and tangible items that are used in Sunday worship and that are given to members to use in their prayer time at home during the week.

To mark Advent at the end of 2006, the theme of HIV and AIDS was used, and members were given pill boxes for a special collection of funds over the weeks of the season.

Through drama and movements, as well as in the regular parts of the liturgy, those at worship during the four Sundays of Advent became aware of the barriers in accessing life-saving medicines that millions of people who are infected with HIV or AIDS face. Members were asked to collect empty pill boxes at home and bring them to worship on the first Sunday in Advent. On that Sunday, the pill boxes were redistributed, and people were instructed to pray for people who are sick, without medicine or who have no access to pills.

Among other activities on subsequent weeks using the pill boxes were filling them with prayers and exchanging those boxes and prayers, and then filling the boxes with money. Members were then invited to bring their boxes filled with their special offering back to



**Pastor Lusmarina performs a drama with pill boxes at worship on the first Sunday in Advent.** Photo: S. Padre

worship on the fourth Sunday of Advent.

The funds that were collected, a total of CHF 620, were given to support the formation of the International Network of Religious Leaders Living with or Personally Affected by HIV and AIDS (INERELA+). This was a cause proposed by the Sharing



**INERELA+**

*The International Network of Religious Leaders Living with or Personally Affected by HIV and AIDS*

Concern Group and approved by the congregational committee.

The goal of INERELA+ is to establish a network that links HIV-positive or personally affected religious leaders in positive fellowship, mutual support and empowerment. It is not a power group, a funding agency or a political group. It builds upon the successful African network (ANERELA+), which has more than 1,500 members from the Christian, Muslim and Bahai traditions.

The mission of INERELA+ is to equip, empower and engage these religious leaders to live positively and openly as agents of hope and change in their faith communities and coun-

### For what do God's people pray?

In addition to an offering to support INERELA+ (see main story), some people included photos of leaders in the fight against HIV and AIDS and written prayers when they brought back their pill boxes. Here is a sampling:

"I pray that all the orphans who have been orphaned because of HIV-AIDS will be looked after."

"...ease the suffering of the refugees in the world...heal all those suffering from mental illnesses..."

"I pray for those businesses and political leaders who have the power to make the difference but are not doing it."

tries in order to:

- overcome self-stigma and break the silence among men, women and children
- stimulate faith communities' responses toward ending stigma and discrimination
- advocate for enhanced HIV and AIDS prevention, care, treatment, and impact mitigation among women, children and men
- address the very specific social, cultural and economic vulnerabilities of girls

Our congregation was able to hear about this initiative directly from Rev. James Matarazzo, an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ in Boston, USA, who has recently become the Americas coordinator for INERELA+.

The vast majority of HIV-positive people live in developing countries, where religion, particularly Christianity and Islam, have a profound influence, and therefore INERELA+ can reach millions of people through religious leaders.

“Once a religious leader is willing to talk about HIV as a virus—not as a moral condition—congregations are more likely to go for testing and protect themselves against infection. Those who are HIV-positive are then also more likely to be fully integrated into church life,” said Matarazzo.

The offering collected by members and friends of the congregation is an important sign of solidarity with people living with HIV and makes our church a “supporting partner” and “Friends of INERELA+.”

Flyers are available at church with more information about INERELA+ as well as contact details if you know a religious leader who might like to join.

## Sharing Concern Group now accepting proposals for projects for congregation to support

The Sharing Concern Group aims to extend the congregation's care to communities in Geneva and around the world by supporting small projects that serve and empower people in need, such as the marginalized, refugees, the sick, the disabled and survivors of natural and human-caused disasters.

The Sharing Concern Group is concerned with how we share financial resources that come as a portion of our annual income and special offerings of the congregation that are shared with other parts of the world, both near and far. These funds include the CHF 8,000 raised at the 2006 Harvest Festival.

Project proposals for 2007 are invited and will then be reviewed on the basis of established criteria. To be considered, each proposal must be in writing and submitted by January 31 by a member of the congregation who is willing to help follow up with the project, and the proposal should describe the possibility of developing a relationship of partnership. The Sharing Concern Group's recommendations of project support are presented to the congregational committee for approval.

The Sharing Concern Group is especially interested in receiving proposals for support of projects in Africa and Geneva.

Criteria and application forms are available on the website at [www.genevalutheran.ch/events.html](http://www.genevalutheran.ch/events.html) (look under “Announcements”). Printed copies are at the church in the stairwell leading to down to the kitchen.

## Updates on former members and friends of ELCG

**Eliana Fanger** writes from Brazil, saying she is well and working as an English teacher at a school. She is singing in the choir at her church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Vinhedos, but she misses our church very much. She sends greetings to the whole congregation and especially to the choir members. Her e-mail is [liafanger@yahoo.com.br](mailto:liafanger@yahoo.com.br).

**Jennie and Charlie Smith** write from Singapore, where they moved last year from Geneva: Greetings from our equatorial paradise! Singapore is a lovely city, very welcoming to expats, full of great food, and everyone speaks English! We live in a high-rise condo just off Orchard Road, a bit of a lifestyle change from Veyrier, and we are enjoying the change of pace. Charlie's job takes him around Asia-Pac—he loves the adventures. Jennie tagged along on a trip to Hong Kong recently—quite fun! Now that we are settled, Jennie is pursuing her professional coaching certification and has started her own practice. Life is good! We miss you all. You blessed our lives in so many ways during our short stay in Geneva. If you find yourself in our part of the world, be sure to get in touch!

### Stay in touch with us!

We would love to hear how you are doing after you move away from Geneva. Send updates and contact information to the church office and/or to [newsletter@genevalutheran.ch](mailto:newsletter@genevalutheran.ch) for your update to be included in a future issue.

## BELK holds its assembly at ELCG

Both the English- and German-speaking congregations of the ELCG are members of the Federation of Lutheran Churches in Switzerland and Lichtenstein (BELK), which, in turn, is a member of The Lutheran World Federation. BELK gathers in assembly twice a year, and our congregation is represented by two members—Rogate Mshana and Dorine van Teeseling. Pastor Lusmarina is also a member as are all pastors of the participating churches.

The main item of the last assembly, which met on November 19, 2006, in our church, was to discuss and deepen BELK's partnership with the Malgash church in France. The president and secretary of the Eglise Malgache en France were in attendance, and they informed us extensively about their independent international church.

The FPMA (Madagascar Protestant Church Abroad) has 34 churches worldwide with a total of 15,000 members and only five paid pastors around the world. In France, the first congregation was founded in 1959 in Montpellier. Now there are more than 25 congregations in France, with the largest in Paris (1,000 members). Therefore, they urgently seek support to train lay leaders in France to be able to minister to the six national regions and the different communities. For this reason, they have created a project called "LAIKA." Its aim is that current lay leaders receive practical and theoretical training. This will take place in collaboration with theological faculties of universities where the emphasis will be on leadership, motivation, communication, conflict management, ethics and some project management.

BELK, together with the Martin Luther Bund Switzerland, has decided to support this training program and aims, therefore, to collect funds in our different church communities. Our own congregation could seek ways to support this project through Sharing funds, but we could also consider offering ourselves to provide training for the leadership of the FPMA in France. We are a gifted congregation and can provide other resources as well as financial support.

As an established immigrant church, the FPMA teaches us a lot about the struggles such churches undergo and helps European churches to consider their possible role in the integration debate in Europe.

In the coming years, BELK hopes we can expand our partnership and attend important landmark events of each respective church body in order to grow together and learn from our different values and traditions.

### Other business

The BELK assembly addressed some other issues, including the report of the new president, Dagmar Magold, a seminar on the theme of involving youth in our congregations, and the well-received visit to Liechtenstein by the BELK visitation team. The next assembly will be in Zurich on March 31.

For more information, check out the newly established BELK website at [www.luther-schweiz.ch](http://www.luther-schweiz.ch)

- Dorine van Teeseling

## Contact Information

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