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LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY



NEWS



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Photo by Carolyn Schneider

They Saw the Child

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Statement of Purpose:

Published three times a year, the LTS News, English edition, is a newsletter for local and global alumni/ae and friends of the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Hong Kong. Through stories about people and events at LTS, it aims to connect readers and create a sense of belonging to a broad LTS community even beyond graduation.

To make a donation toward the publication of the LTS News, there are three methods. You will receive an official receipt through any of these methods.

1. A check in HK\$, payable to The Lutheran Theological Seminary, may be sent to the mailing address above.

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3. A check in US\$, payable to Friends of LTS/USA & Canada may be sent to Mimi Borchers, 160 Third Street, Ste 102, Pittsburg, CA 94565, USA.

Maybe this Christmas you heard the story of the Persian sages who followed an unusual star to Bethlehem to see a royal child who turned out to be Jesus. Matthew 2:11 tells us that when they entered the house where Jesus was, “they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage.” Since that time many people have seen the child and worshiped him. This past year of 2017, LTS has been highlighting ways that the sixteenth-century Reformers made Jesus Christ more clearly visible to people, including us. The cover photo shows how the Reformers pointed to Christ in Word and sacrament in a painting by Lucas Cranach. The original stands over the altar of St. Mary’s Church in Wittenberg. This facsimile was on display in the LTS library as part of the commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, which is the focus of this Epiphany issue of the “LTS News”.

Here you will read about:

- how the LTS community sang its way through the musical heritage of the Reformation,
- how Martin Luther’s Ninety-Five Theses on indulgences presented Christ in a way that challenged the church of his time and place,
- how Lutheran and Anglican churches in East Asia today view the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ alone,
- how the Reformation has shaped spirituality and engaged the modern discipline of psychology,
- and how LTS joined many churches in Hong Kong (including the Catholic Church) in a globally televised worship service remembering key scriptures and teachings of the Reformation that are still meaningful today.

Of course, there were other events at LTS, too, this past fall semester. There was the annual celebration of Founders’ Day, for example, along with the successful completion of studies by two DTh students and six exchange students, which you can also read about in these pages, cause for celebration indeed!

As we go through these weeks of Epiphany, may you see the child often, in old and new and wonderful ways.

Carolyn Schneider

A REFORMATION HYMN FESTIVAL

By MDiv 3 student **Catriona Woodrow**

all photos by Mandy Cheung



Carolyn Schneider

The 2017 commemoration of the 500 years since the Reformation gave LTS the opportunity to offer a stimulating programme of events that allowed reflection on the significance and relevance of that period to our present day. Accordingly, on Friday, 15th September, 2017, “A Reformation Hymn Festival” was held in Ming Chieh Chapel. Ably guided by Dr. Carolyn Schneider and Ms. Mabel Wu, the audience was invited to explore, both passively and actively, the development of church music over time, and was given a practical glimpse into the role of instruments and singing in previous days. Haunting plainchant and antiphonal psalms echoed the liturgy of the Daily Office, but emphasized the limited role of the congregation in worship services.

It was Martin Luther, with his high esteem for the potential of music in congregational worship, who grasped firmly the fact that hymn-singing was not only a useful vehicle for theological teaching, especially among illiterate people, but was also a way of gladdening the human heart. In “A Mighty Fortress” – arguably Luther’s most famous hymn and one certainly sung with gusto throughout the 2017 commemorative events – the Christian can rejoice in the victory of Jesus Christ over the devil, and can thus be strengthened in personal faith during any time of trial.

Crucially, for Luther, when emotion is channelled through music, the music keeps the emotion from overwhelming us. Singing was therefore essential for a Christian, giving rise to a happy heart that could withstand the troubles of daily life.



Mabel Wu

While other Reformers either banished music entirely from church services, or limited singing to metrical Psalms only, the Lutheran tradition gave rise to many hymn-writers of note, such as Paul Gerhardt and Johann Crüger. When Europe was traumatized by the horrors of the Thirty Years’ War, hymns of a more individual, subjective nature were written, offering comfort and fostering endurance. “Now Thank We All Our God” stems from the intense relief that ensued at the end of that time of suffering.

Hymn-writing has gone from strength to strength as a result of Martin Luther’s inspiration and continues in many varied forms today. It was fitting therefore that the Hymn Festival ended with the composition, “By Grace through Faith”, written by LTS student Sui Lian Thang.

Thanks to the talents and efforts of the organizing team, the Reformation Hymn Festival was a resounding success. It was a timely reminder to us to be thankful for the wonderful heritage of Christian hymns that we possess today.



Michelle Chiu leads the acapella choir

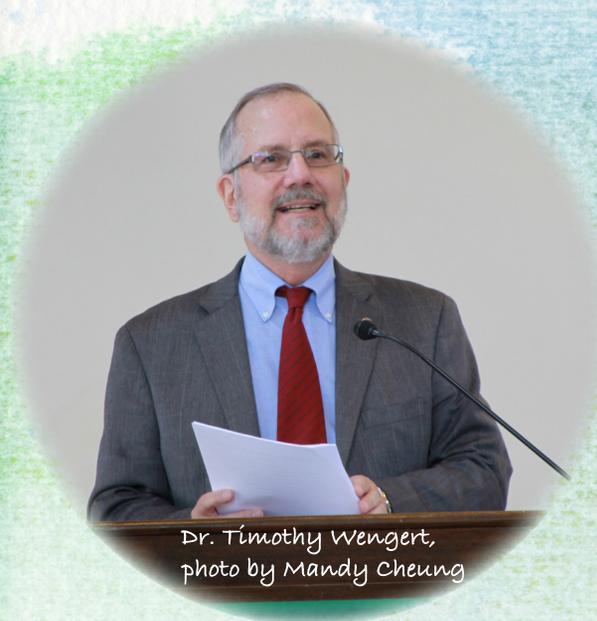


Sui Lian Thang leads a group in singing his original composition

MARTIN LUTHER'S 95 THESES AFTER 500 YEARS

By M.A.2-yr student **Olli-pekka Tuominen**

Last October, in the continuing series of events to commemorate half of millennia of reformation, we were privileged to hear from Dr. Timothy J. Wengert on his research regarding Martin Luther's 95 Theses. Dr. Wengert is a renowned Luther scholar. He has an extensive record of publications in this area. This article intends to recite the most important points made by Dr. Wengert.



*Dr. Timothy Wengert,
photo by Mandy Cheung*

When Luther wrote his 95 theses and published them on the eve of All Saints Day, it was not his intent to start a reformation or any protest movement. His intent was simply to offer a theological rebuttal to the practice of the church to selling indulgencies. According to medieval theology, purchasing an indulgence would effect a partial remission of the temporal punishment that is still due to sin after absolution (plenary

indulgence).

Luther felt strongly that the practice of selling indulges was unbiblical. He also felt that especially the wealthier members in the church were bypassing God's call to repent, by purchasing their way out of it. The chief issue was bad preaching by the church. The church was, in Luther's opinion, misleading people to the understanding that their relationship with God was based on how well they did. If the person did well, then God would reward that person. However, in that case our salvation would be dependent on our deeds. Luther began to argue for salvation by grace alone. Our salvation is unconditional.

Luther sent his theses to Albrecht of Brandenburg, Cardinal and Elector (ruler) in Mainz. Luther expected Albrecht to agree with his points but the opposite was true. The money from the sale of indulgencies was needed to build St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

Luther published a summary of his theses in a booklet that was easy for German-speaking people to understand, and this sermon received a wide circulation and acceptance. Almost overnight, Luther had become famous. The church could no longer ignore him.

In the 95 theses, Luther outlines his theology, including the theology of the cross. The central figure in Luther's theology is the crucified and risen Christ. It is in Him where God's revelation can be found. In the midst of suffering and chaos, is where the peace of Christ resides. We, the believers, are at the same time righteous

and sinners. Therefore, we are called to take up our cross daily. The old person must die daily, so that the new person can emerge.

For us today, Luther's message still sounds true. In all our teaching, Luther reminds us to stay true to the biblical message. He also reminds us to deal with our sin daily.



photo by Mandy Cheung

THE CONFERENCE ON JUSTIFICATION IN ASIA

By MTh student, Patrick Rath

On October 23-24, I had the privilege attending a series of presentations on “Justification by Grace in East Asia: A Lutheran-Anglican Dialogue” at LTS. Over the duration of these two days participants from Hong Kong, Malaysia, Japan, the Philippines and Taiwan presented their papers addressing the question what significance the sixteenth-century church reformers’ doctrine of justification by grace through faith alone may have for Asians today. Rather than giving a brief summary of each of the presentations or to highlight a few, I choose to reflect on a few questions and issues that emerged from the presentations I found relevant.

A common concern, addressed in several papers from different angles, is that Christianity is often perceived as an alien imposition that gives a negative perspective of the world in general and humans in particular, one that often contradicts the native understanding of self and the world. In short, Christianity and its conception of sin and therefore the need for justification is seen as a distinctly western idea, and therefore becoming a Christian is often perceived as an alien imposition that stands in opposition to one’s indigenous identity. At this point I must admit that it is quite difficult for me to directly relate to this thought from a distinctively Asian perspective, simply because I am not Asian. Even though I have now lived for over 10 years in Asia and I believe that I have developed a good understanding of some Asian cultures, even

being married to an Asian, I do remain European in the core of my being. And it is distinctly from this western perspective that I want to reflect on the claim of Christianity as an alien, western, imposition.

But before going there, it seems that a few general remarks are in order. First, any worldview and any theology always is, by definition, contextual. And since the Christianity that was brought to Asia was shaped by western missionaries it is surely correct to speak of their message as shaped by their own, western, context. Also, some missionaries, in particular during the colonial times, have been rather insensitive towards local cultures and cultural adaption. Therefore, to speak of Christianity from this perspective as “western” is surely not wrong.

Yet the question emerges whether this does make Christianity as such a distinctly western idea, one that is alien to other cultural contexts. By “Christianity as such” I mean the notion that we are dependent on God and in need of his redemption, brought about through Jesus Christ, by which we are “justified by grace through faith alone” (in the words of the reformers). Personally, I don’t think that this message is alien in non-western contexts. The main reason for that is that to be dependent on God and to be in need of his mercy challenges any cultural conception, in fact challenges human self-understanding, in particular our modern understanding of it, regardless of the cultural context. In fact, I would argue that the

Gospel was and is counter-cultural anywhere and at any time, as seems evident to me from the texts of the New Testament describing the reception of the Gospel by its immediate recipients as well as by those who received it through them.

Therefore, although there is a need for contextualizing that message in different cultural contexts, the question emerges whether there are limitations to that process. In my personal opinion there are limitations. While we may talk about God, sin, redemption, etc. using elements of different cultural contexts, I would argue that in order to talk about them from a Christian perspective we need to talk about how God has redeemed us through Christ Jesus - that we are justified by grace through faith alone. In other words, the Christian message cannot be separated from Christ, or as a friend of mine once said: If you take Christ out of Christian you end up with Ian, and Ian cannot help you much.

I am thankful to all the presenters for sharing their perspectives on how justification by grace through faith relates to their own specific contexts, for this has helped me to think through my own presuppositions more carefully and articulate my own perspective on the topic of contextualization in a more differentiated and nuanced way than I did before. While I believe that theological arguments and terminology are important, and to talk about Christianity means also to talk about sin, justification, grace, faith, etc., the dialogue at LTS has clearly shown me the importance and relevance of cultural contexts and that translating the Christian message into such different contexts is by no means straightforward but requires sensitivity, requires putting ourselves into the shoes of those with whom we want to share the Gospel.



Participants of the ecumenical conference on justification, photo by Robby Indarjono

PUBLIC LECTURES RE-EXAMINE SOUL REFORMATION WITH LUTHER

By MTh student **Alison Hui**

LTS organised three public lectures to commemorate the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation, on the 22nd of September, the 3rd of November, and the 1st of December in LTS's Ming Chieh Chapel. Dr. Jeff Shu, LTS Adjunct Scholar and President of HK Psycho-Analytical Society and Dr. K.K. Chan, LTS Associate Professor in Psychology and Counselling, were invited to give speeches on "Rethinking Sola Scriptura from the Perspectives of Psychoanalysis and Spirituality" and "A Psychological Perspective on Liberation and Liberty" respectively.



*Dr. Jeff Shu,
photo by Mandy Cheung*

The first lecture reflected on the understandings and implications of sola scriptura held by Chinese churches, while the second focused on the relationship between Luther and the concept of liberty in a modern context, in which several psychologists' perspectives on the topic were surveyed. With the wide spread of the modern idea of individual liberty, the predicament of human being came into force, in that we are trapped into "struggle for freedom" and "struggle with freedom" at the same time. Toward the end of his

speech, Dr. Chan brought forward the importance of



*Dr. K.K. Chan,
photo by Mandy Cheung*

our alertness toward the temptation brought by liberty.

The final talk of the series was

on "Martin Luther on Christian Spirituality", delivered by Dr. Carolyn Schneider, LTS Associate Professor in Church History. She noted that "Lutheran spirituality is an expression of the work of the Holy Spirit creating and strengthening faith and love in a person's everyday life." The outline of the presentation was based on Luther's Small and Large Catechisms, drawing audience's attention to the human experience of God's salvation. Starting from God's law in the Ten Commandments, then moving to God's act of salvation confessed in the creed, then to our response in the Lord's Prayer, concluding with the formation of a new holy community through



*Dr. Carolyn Schneider,
photo by Mandy Cheung*

baptism and the Lord's Supper, Dr. Schneider demonstrated Luther's comments on the role of the Holy Spirit in Christian spirituality. For Luther, real spirituality was expressed in the context of daily commitments, no special practices, like taking monastic vows and making pilgrimages to shrines, were required.

This lecture was followed by a response from Fr. Stephen Tong S.J., Director of Xavier House, Ignatian Retreat Centre. From an Ignatian perspective, he added the importance of self-understanding, especially identifying inordinate attachments, in one's spiritual journey towards the Lord. The similarities between Lutheran and Ignatian spirituality were also highlighted, namely the various conflicts and struggles between good

and evil in the journey, and the necessity of listening to the word of God.



Fr. Stephen Tong, S.J.,
photo by Mandy Cheung



photo by Mandy Cheung

LTS JOINS LUTHERAN CHURCHES IN HONG KONG FOR A WORSHIP SERVICE OF COMMEMORATION OF THE 500TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE START OF THE REFORMATION

By Carolyn Schneider

all photos by The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong

With a striking liturgy and a fabulous 300-voice choir led by Ms. Mabel Wu, we in Hong Kong commemorated the 500th anniversary of the start of the church's Reformation on October 31. Representatives of the various Lutheran churches were there as well as representatives from the Roman Catholic Church and, of course, from LTS. Dr. Nicholas Tai, Vice-President and acting President of LTS, was the preacher, basing his sermon mainly on Romans 1:16-17 and 3:22-28. It was these Pauline texts about the righteousness given by God and received by faith that Martin Luther credited with opening his eyes to a whole new understanding of God.

Dr. Tai warned us not to make the commemoration of the Reformation a time of boasting over Catholics, since no one has cause to boast and all have cause to repent and even more cause to thank God together for rescuing us from our sin by drawing us into Christ's life so that Christ's actions, his death, and his resurrection become ours by faith and make us

right in God's eyes. With the past behind us we move together into the future with confidence and creativity, looking out for ways to unite in action, increase in love, and communicate God's marvelous work to others so that they may join us in faith. The joy of this salvation was expressed beautifully in Psalm 118:14-24, sung by Ms. Michelle Chiu (the director of the LTS choirs) and Enrico Luk Kin-Chi. After celebrating the Lord's Supper together, we poured out of Elizabeth Stadium, more than 2,000 of us, and headed back into the streets of Hong Kong, refreshed and inspired.

If you would like to watch the commemoration service, listen to the music, follow the liturgy in English, and read the sermon in English, you may visit the website of the Lutheran World Federation at <http://www.lutheranworld.org/ReformationDayLive>. Click on "Asia Region".



SUCCESSFUL DOCTORAL DEFENSES IN 2017: A PHOTOGRAPHIC CELEBRATION

by DMin Candidate Robby Indarjono

“Origen on Spiritual Reading of Scripture and Prayer as Divine Pedagogy for the Perfection of Life”
Casthelia Kartika
October 3, 2017



“The Samaritan Woman in the Fourth Gospel: A Character Study”
Mar Lar Myint
October 26, 2017



FOUNDERS' DAY 2017

By DTh candidate **Umnai Kui**

all photos by Mandy Cheung

Founders' Day of the Lutheran Theological Seminary (LTS) 2017-2018 was held on November 24, 2017. Its theme was "Trusting God Anew." It was the celebration of the 104th Anniversary of LTS and the 40th Anniversary of Support for LTS by the Chinese Lutheran Churches. In the day time about 120 people joined the program and in the evening about 230 joined dinner and worship. The celebration covered spiritual, cultural, and social dimensions.

It was spiritual because we prayed, listened to the word of God, and sang songs. We offered flowers to Dr. Hsiao Ken-Hsieh Andrew's memory stone at the fishpond as Dr. Nicholas Tai told the story of LTS. We prayed in the Luther Garden and watered the trees for the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation. In the Eucharist Worship Service, LTS students praised God with the song "All the Earth Will Sing for Joy." Rev. Dr. Jan Martin Depner preached on "Looking Ahead (Luke 9:61-62)" and administered the Lord's Supper. In the community worship at 8 pm, Rev. Dr. LI K.S. Peter preached on "Together Let's Give Thanks to God (Philippians 1:1-11)" for guiding LTS for 104 years.

provided different kinds of special snacks. We enjoyed dinner in the Luther Garden at 7 pm.



Founders' Day was a fellowship day for students, professors, and sisters and brothers from churches. A group of teaching staff led by Dr. Carolyn Schneider performed a Scottish dance. They danced first and then the audience joined them. The first year students sang "This Is the Day that the Lord Has Made" and the Student Association of LTS led singing and acting the song "J-O-Y." All the audience participated in singing and acting the songs. At the end of the community worship service, we sang "We Are a Happy Family; Thank You, Jesus." While singing, we shook hands, spoke to one other, smiled at one another, and fellowshiped with one another. The faces of worshippers smiled and felt happy and warm.



The Founders' Day celebration was cultural. Students from Mainland China, Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Taiwan, Thailand, USA, and Germany exposed their cultural paintings, dresses, and flags and maps of their countries at Ming Yee Hall from 5 pm to 6 pm. They also



LTS HOLDS A RECOGNITION SERVICE FOR MEMBERS OF THE 41ST GRADUATION CLASS LEAVING IN DECEMBER

By Carolyn Schneider

all photos by Mandy Cheung

On December 6, 2017, during our morning chapel, LTS held a special service of recognition for those who have completed their studies and have left LTS this December. Congratulations to our two new doctors of theology, Casthelia Kartika and Mar Lar Myint! Casthelia has returned to Indonesia to take up a position as president and professor of church history at Amanat Agung (The Great Commission) Theological Seminary in Jakarta. Mar Lar Myint has returned to Myanmar and is teaching New Testament at Tahan Theological College.

Congratulations and farewell also to those students who have been with us as part of an exchange program: Leung Shuk Man (China Lutheran Seminary, Taiwan), Liu Ri Xin (Shandong University, Shandong, China), Luke William Owens (Concordia College, Minnesota,

USA), Tang Ming Fang (Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China), Xue Ling Mei (Sun Yat-Sen University, Guangzhou, China), and Zhang Shuang (Wuhan University, Hubei, China).

Well done, good and faithful servants!



*Dr. Tai and Cathelia Kartika,
photo by Mandy Cheung*



*The exchange students bid us farewell,
photo by Mandy Cheung*

2018



FRIDAY LECTURES

Time: 10:30a.m. to 12:20p.m.

Venue: Ming Chief Chapel, Lutheran Theological Seminary

| Date | Topics | Speakers | Language |
|-------------------------------|--|---|-----------|
| 16 Mar (Fri) | How Luther became the Reformer | Dr. Christine Helmer Professor of Religious Studies and German, Northwestern University | English |
| 13 Apr (Fri) | Crossing Pain: Pastoral Companionship and Growth | Dr. Joseph Siu LTS Assistant Professor in Psychology and Counseling Dr. Angel Lam LTS Assistant Professor in Psychology and Counseling | Cantonese |
| 11 May (Fri) | Mission in Asia | TBC | English |

Translation Provided. All are Welcome.
No Cost or Registration required.
Tel: 2691 1520 Website: www.lts.edu

Upcoming Event



**Annual Sacred
Music Worship**

Restoring the Beauty of God's Creation

Date: 20 April 2018 (Friday)
Time: 8pm
Venue: ELCHK Truth Lutheran Church
(50 Waterloo Road, Kowloon)

*Come!
Worship
with Us*