You are invited to attend:

The LTS Annual Study Conference & Storaasli Lectures

May 1–3, 2018
Singing our Theology

“How Hymns Shape Us For Mission”

Bishop Emeritus, Martin Wells & Rev. Susan Briehl are this year’s speakers

To Register: http://www.usask.ca/stu/luther/study_conf_2018.html
(follow the link at the bottom of the Study Conference page)
This past January, our Cross-Cultural experience took us to Haida Gwaii, British Columbia (formerly known as the Queen Charlotte Islands – south of Alaska and north of Vancouver Island). There were countless differences between what is familiar back home and what we encountered on the trip. The expanse of water was one of many we would encounter.

Looking out at the endless sea, I could not help but be reminded of baptism – the life-giving water given to us by God so that we become children of God; water that daily drowns our sins and brings forth eternal life through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Standing on the shores of Haida Gwaii, I have never felt closer to God.

During winter in Manitoba, the color white prevails; but not so in Haida Gwaii! There were countless shades of green in the mosses and lichens, red in the majestic cedar trees that we came across in the dense rain forest and amazing blue skies and yellow sunshine when we expected rain. Hiking through the ethereal stillness of the greenery that filled these enchanted forests was akin to walking with God. One day near Masset, our group walked in silence around a cemetery hidden deep in the forest in a gentle but persistent rain, which reminded me of tears for those buried there. Some graves were of Haida people — mounds of bright yellow and green moss; others were covered with sea shells and agate rocks; still others had wooden fences around them that were slowly being reclaimed by the forest. We were walking on holy ground — the Creator’s presence was all around us.

Life-changing for me was learning first hand that my white privilege has taken away their privilege as indigenous peoples of Canada. Living freely in Haida Gwaii means being free from hatred and bullying and being able to freely harvest the land and sea and to celebrate their Haida heritage (e.g. the potlatch, which was actually ruled illegal in 1884 under an amendment to the Indian Act was an important economic and celebratory gift giving feast put on by the chief of the tribe). I have always been able to freely express my culture as German and Canadian and have never experienced my rights being taken away from me. In speaking with some of the Haida people we met, we are just beginning to scratch the surface regarding reconciliation and we have a long way to go to make amends. Also, it was hard for me to wrap my head around the fact that the white settlers purposefully and intentionally brought smallpox and other diseases over from the mainland to Haida Gwaii in the 1800’s which killed almost 80% of the Haida people. How does a culture survive after something like that? Well — they have survived and are continuing to fight for the rights of their ancestors.

In Haida culture, the Eagle is viewed as a spiritual guide and symbolizes a connection to a higher realm. The Eagle possesses strength of character, courage and healing powers. We were amazed at the sheer abundance of these magnificent birds on Haida Gwaii. The bald eagles watched over the land and the sea from high in the treetops — just like God watches over us from above. On our last day on Haida Gwaii, several us witnessed between ten and fifteen bald eagles in one tree (thanks to turkey scraps being thrown on the beach). It was a magical way to end a life-changing experience learning about the culture of the Haida people. If the legend of the St. Mary Spring holds true, I will return one day to this glorious land.
Haida Gwaii is a place of raw and majestic beauty. Pictures and words hardly begin to describe the sacred nature of this place. Also majestic is the incredible work of Sean Young at the Haida Gwaii Museum. Through a lifetime of archeological and historical research, thousands of years of Haida history are being preserved. By viewing magnificent canoes, the many different types of poles on display, exquisite carvings, conserved ceremonial button blankets, and artifacts such as weavings and tools, we were afforded an insight into the unique Haida culture.

Some of our most memorable moments occurred during impromptu conversations with people we had just met. We were honoured with honest and candid chats with many Haida — sometimes with people on the street, in a church, on a forest trail or at a diner. These unplanned conversations were, often, the most profound encounters.

Another sacred moment was our visit to the Skidegate Haida Language School to learn about the Skidegate Haida Immersion Program (S.H.I.P.). In its beginnings, this was a place of tears for a people grieving their language and its culture under siege. With only a handful of fluent speakers left, there is a sense of urgency to preserve, protect and promote the Haida Language. Everyday, people gather in this research center to document, record and conserve their language. Everyday, answering the questions: What’s the Haida word for? How is it pronounced? How is it spelled? A testament to their efforts is a glossary of Haida words with English translations, a copy of which is now accessible at the LTS library.

It would be a lie if I said that I didn’t shed a few tears of shame and remorse as I walked through some of the pristine forest trails of Haida Gwaii. My thoughts centered on a whole generation of children being brought to residential schools, cut off from their families, stripped of their cultural identity, and forbidden to use their own Haida language under the threat of corporal punishment. This doesn’t even begin to address the sexual terror visited upon many of these children and their families. My memories also centered on the foreigners who came in and simply stole hundreds of bentwood burial boxes, poles and other artifacts as trophies.

A Haida person explained to us that as a people loses its language, it loses its identity and culture. Many of us hold dear our own ancestral languages, customs, traditions, and histories as part of our cultural identity. How can we not, then, recognize, value and celebrate the passion and urgency of the Haida people to preserve, protect and promote their culture?

Because of this trip, I have learned that being “in mission for others” is much more than thoughts and prayers. It is visiting, learning, exploring and engaging. It is walking in the forests and on the beaches of a place and taking time to listen (and hear). It is talking and asking questions with genuine hearts. It is acknowledging the past, while being a witness to the present; realizing that mission is a process; and that, in time, it is about restoring and building mutual relationships based on trust and respect. As with God’s love, mission is not a one-way discourse but a dialogue where every voice has value.

As a result of this experience, the greatest challenge for me will be in answering the question: where do we go from here? How do I reconcile the white northern European privilege that I have enjoyed all of my life? After all, it is easy for me to visit and then go back to my rural central Alberta home where my kids play hockey and practice gymnastics. I won’t pretend to have an answer; but for now, I will continue to listen and learn. I will return with my own children, so they will also learn and never forget this sacred land and the people we know as Haida Gwaii.

To learn more for yourself look up:
http://haidagwaiimuseum.ca/
http://haidaheritagecentre.com/
http://www.skidegate.ca/Pages/programs/ship.html
Phone-a-Thon 2018
Tuesday, April 10th or Wednesday April 11th

LTS is once again preparing for its Annual Phone-a-Thon. Pledge forms and letters have already been sent out and we hope that you will consider participating! Students will be phoning on the evenings of Tuesday, April 10th and Wednesday, April 11th.

Last year’s event raised **$20,935**!! Your contributions help sustain LTS so that future generations of rostered and lay church leaders can continue to receive excellent education and preparation for their work in the churches and communities they serve.

If you did not receive your pledge sheet and letter, or would like your name to be added to the list, please be in touch with Rev. Fran Schmidt (contact information below).

LTS Honorary Degree—Call for Nominations

Members of the LTS Board of Governors, members of the LTS Faculty, students or alumni/ae of LTS are eligible to nominate someone to receive an Honorary Degree from LTS. Nomination forms are available in the LTS office and should be accompanied by 3 letters of reference. These are submitted to the faculty who consider recommendations to the Board of Governors in time for the fall meeting. Candidates will be advised and the decision announced. Honorary degrees will be awarded at the spring Convocation. **Nominations close at the end of July.**

Contact Us

For more information about theological studies or to contribute to LTS and the ongoing nurture and challenge of all people for Christ-centered leadership and witness:

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A Reminder

FROM THE SASKATOON THEOLOGICAL UNION LIBRARIES

We are asking our patrons from near and far, to check your homes for any STU library books you have checked out. If you have books out from long ago, please return them or call/email us and we will be happy to provide you with return postage free of charge.

We are currently trying to get our collections in order to prepare for summer inventory. The more books we have back on our shelves, the better! If you have a book out that you would like to keep longer, please give us a call or email and we can renew it for you.

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