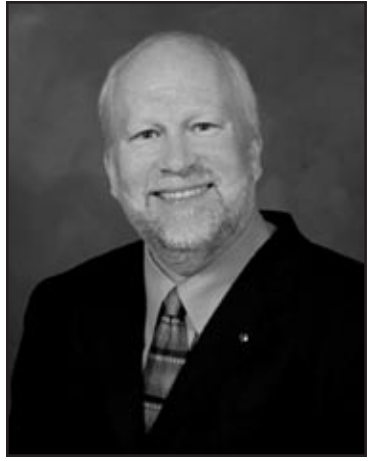


Ahlersmeyer Elected President of Concordia-Ann Arbor

Rev. Dr. Thomas Ahlersmeyer was selected as the fifth elected president of Concordia University-Ann Arbor by the school's electors at their September 23 meeting. He will be officially take office at his November 4 installation.



Rev. Dr. Thomas Ahlersmeyer

Ahlersmeyer has served as interim president for CUAA since August of 2003.

He is the former executive director for Cleveland's Lutheran High School Association and served as pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church and School-Toledo, OH, and of St. Paul Lutheran Church and School-Boca Raton, FL.

Ahlersmeyer has held volunteer positions on Concordia-Ann Arbor's Board of Regents and on the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Board for Communication Services. He taught several college courses between 1979 and 2005, and has served as narrator and radio announcer for various live and taped programs.

"It is a privilege to be able to continue to do the work

that God placed before us two years ago," stated Ahlersmeyer. "I'm looking forward to taking a ministry which has grown over the last two years and leading energetic students, faculty and staff as we expand and impact our community for Christ."

Ahlersmeyer earned his B.A. in English literature from Concordia Senior College-Fort Wayne, IN; a Master of Divinity degree from Concordia Theological Seminary-Fort Wayne; and a Ph.D. in Public and Interpersonal Communication from Bowling Green State University.

Ahlersmeyer is married to Janet Ahlersmeyer, and they are the parents of six children: Elizabeth, 23; Rebecca, 21; Benjamin, 18; Samuel, 15; Caleb, 9; and Daniel, 7. □

New Youth Ministry Symposium to Focus on Teen Abuse Issues

A new conference experience for those serving high school youth in Lutheran congregational and school settings will debut in January of 2006.

Back from a one-year hiatus, the YM Series of Seminars will return with a new name and focus. "YM2006: A Youth Ministry Symposium" will focus participants on a major topic

relevant to youth culture and probe its impact on ministry to and for young people across the Church.

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod District and Congregation Services Youth Ministry Office will host the event at the JW Marriott in Houston, TX, January 13-15, 2006. The focus will be on teen abuse issues.

Reflecting on the timeliness of this sensitive topic, Rev. Terry Dittmer, Director for DCS Youth Ministry, said "The church is not immune to issues of abuse: physical, sexual, emotional or spiritual. Children and youth who are victims of abuse sit in the pews of our churches. YM2006 leads participants to confront the reality of abuse issues and the implications for congregational life, and discover how they and their churches can minister to children and youth in need of healing."

Invited speakers include Dr. David Ludwig, counselor, speaker, LCMS pastor and author; and Dr. Trisha Bennet of the Darkness to Light Foundation. Both will lead participants in a discussion of teen abuse issues, including physical, sexual and emotional abuse, and the impact this issue has on the ministry to youth across the Church.

YM2006 is open to professionals and volunteers serving youth in congregations, schools, agencies and districts of the LCMS. College students pursuing careers in church work and youth ministry are encouraged to attend.

The registration fee for the three-day event is \$175. Through January 1, registrants can take advantage of a special savings by registering for the Youth Worker Conference Package which includes registration for both YM2006 and the 2006 National Lutheran Youth Workers Conference scheduled for July of 2006.

YM2006 registration details are available online at www.lcms.org/youth. □

Dr. Oswald Hoffmann Remembered

Dr. Oswald C.J. Hoffmann, 91, religious broadcasting pioneer and honorary speaker of radio's *The Lutheran Hour* died September 8 in St. Louis after a brief illness. Dr. Hoffmann, was the voice of the radio program for 33 years, from 1955 to 1988.

"We come today not to praise a man, but to praise God who gave us this man with unique gifts and abilities," said Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod President Rev. Dr. Gerald Kieschnick, addressing some 400 mourners at a September 16 memorial service at Concordia Lutheran Church-Kirkwood, Mo.

Dr. Hoffmann lived through years of great changes in government, society, and even in the church, noted Kieschnick. "In all these times, Dr. Oswald Hoffmann was determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified," Kieschnick said. "He personified the determination that the Gospel of Jesus Christ be heard throughout the world."

Dr. Paul A. Maier, LCMS second vice president and son of Dr. Walter A. Maier, founding speaker of *The Lutheran Hour*, said he couldn't imagine anyone living a more interesting life than Dr. Hoffmann. "He was our representative [to] world Christianity in so many ways it would require another book to tell."

Dr. Dale Meyer, who succeeded Dr. Hoffmann as *Lutheran Hour* speaker and now serves as president of Concordia Seminary-St. Louis, said he and other preachers "molded ourselves after the style of Rev. Hoffmann. He was absolutely human, and not throwing a lot of theology jargon around. He always talked as one human to another."

Ordained a Lutheran minister in 1939, Dr. Hoffmann served the LCMS as a religious leader and ambassador. His almost 70-year career included varied roles

as an author, pastor, broadcaster, classical and linguistics scholar, teacher, translator, public relations director, film production adviser and member of numerous organizational boards.

He was the author of eight books, including his 1996 autobiography, *What More is There to Say But Amen*; magazine articles; and thousands of sermons. Dr. Hoffmann was a consultant and friend to foreign dignitaries; U.S. presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy and Nixon; and world religious leaders, including Dr. Billy Graham.

In the 17 years since his retirement as speaker of *The Lutheran Hour*, Dr. Hoffmann made many public appearances, traveled throughout the world on behalf of the ministry, and corresponded with many people, including listeners of the radio program. He recently had retired from his duties as honorary speaker.

In his last public appearance, Dr. Hoffmann addressed the 88th international convention of the International Lutheran Laymen's League, held July 28-30 in Topeka, KS, taking part in an event kicking off a year-long celebration of the 75th anniversary of *The Lutheran Hour*.

"*The Lutheran Hour* has a mission, a mission to bring the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ in a language people can understand," Dr. Hoffmann told convention-goers. "I didn't do anything special. I just told the Good News. I'm still willing to do that. I look back with great thanksgiving — for myself and for all of the other people who benefitted from the Good News of the Gospel."

Dr. Hoffmann's wife, Marcia, died in November 2000. The couple had been married 60 years and had four children, 10 grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren. □

LCMS Trend continues

Contributions Up, Membership Down

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod lost more than 25,000 members from 2003 to 2004, according to recent statistics released by the church body — yet total contributions rose by \$51 million among the 6,151 congregations.

According to congregational reports of statistics for 2004, LCMS members contributed a record \$1,307,764,010 to their congregations during 2004. Giving also increased by \$53 million during 2003, following declines of \$13.8 million in 2002 and \$12.1 million in 2001.

The drop in membership continues a trend that has continued almost annually since 1972. During 2004, congregations reported 2,463,747 baptized members or 25,189 fewer than 2003. Confirmed membership was 1,880,213, a decrease of 14,609.

"Since 1972, our peak membership year, the Synod has lost some 317,000 baptized members," said Dr. John O'Hara, LCMS research analyst. "We have

reported sporadic increases in baptized or confirmed members over the past 30 years, most recently in 1997 — a gain of some 1,900 — but they have been overwhelmed by the intervening declines.

"Our recent history of membership losses should lend some urgency to such efforts as the Ablaze! initiative and 'Igniting Congregations,'" O'Hara added.

The 2004 statistics were based on reports from 72% of the Synod's congregations, according to O'Hara. If congregations did not report, the system automatically rolls forward their total membership numbers from the last time they reported. However, the system does not roll forward details about membership changes.

The Synod had 6,151 congregations served by 5,323 pastors in 2004. The number of congregations declined by nine, while the number of active pastors increased by 42. Average weekly worship attendance was 168.9 in 2004, compared to 158.9 the previous year. □

Amigos Center Awarded Wheat Ridge Grant

Amigos Center-Bonita Springs, FL, is one of eight new ministry projects that recently received a grant from Wheat Ridge Ministries. The eight grants totaled \$235,000.

Amigos en Cristo will use the \$30,000 Wheat Ridge grant to open a social service center in Collier County, FL, to help Hispanic immigrants achieve success by learning English, improving their immigrant status and finding employment.

"Once again, our donors have provided resources to help seed unique and stimulating ministries which will provide health and hope to thousands of children, youth and adults throughout the world," said Dr. Richard Bimler, president of Wheat Ridge Ministries. "We are also grateful for the project leaders and their organizations that make these ministries happen."

More than 100 ministries are currently receiving assistance through Wheat Ridge funding. For information regarding grant proposals, contact Dr. Richard Herman, vice president and chief operating officer of Wheat Ridge at rick@wheatridge.org or visit the website at www.wheatridge.org. □