

- Farewell to Our 14th President
- Elias Chocour Visits Gustavus
- Association of Congregations Convention Recap



Ohle Coming to Gustavus



Jack Ohle

On April 25, Jim Gale, chair of the Gustavus Adolphus College Board of Trustees, announced that Jack R. Ohle had been named to be the 15th president of the College. Ohle (pronounced OH-lee) will begin his tenure at Gustavus on July 1, replacing President Jim Peterson, whose announcement of retirement last fall launched a nationwide search for his successor.

“Jack has all the attributes that we were looking for in our next president,” Gale said. “He has strong leadership skills, broad experience in higher education, a strong understanding of what makes Gustavus a special place, and innovative ideas to help move Gustavus forward as a first-class liberal arts institution.”

Ohle will use the vision of the College’s new strategic plan to drive initiatives such as the goal of building the College’s endowment. While it will take some time in office before he identifies his own specific plans, he has stated interest in getting alumni reconnected with Gustavus activities and working on resources that support the faculty and academic programs.

Ohle considers Gustavus’s Lutheran heritage a critical foundation and the affiliation with the ELCA an important connection. “A college cannot be a church, and a church cannot be a college,” he said. “We have an obligation as a college to give students a chance to ‘go deep,’ to ask the important questions, to examine and inquire as to how their education can help form their life ... to explore for their own self, their own faith.”

Ohle comes to Gustavus with ten years of experience as president of another ELCA college, Wartburg College in Waverly, Iowa; eleven years’ experience as vice president for

institutional advancement and senior vice president for external affairs at Drake University, Des Moines; and ten years of experience as vice president for advancement at Nebraska Wesleyan University. He received his bachelor’s degree in 1969 from Ohio Northern University, did graduate work at Hamma School of Theology, and earned a master of arts degree in higher education administration from Bowling Green State University. Ohle also holds an honorary doctor of divinity degree from Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa.

Ohle is married to Kirsten Lindquist Ohle. The couple has three adult sons: Robert, formerly a student at Gustavus; John; and Thomas.

Lutheran Youth Music Featured in Christ Chapel

“A Celebration of Lutheran Youth Music Ministries” will perform in concert in Christ Chapel at Gustavus on Tuesday, July 1, 2008, at 7 p.m. The concert, under the direction of Thomas D. Rossin and accompanied by Stephen Gabrielsen, will feature students from the 2008 Minnesota All-State Lutheran Choir and Lutheran Summer Music Academy. There is no charge for the concert, and all are welcome and invited to attend. A free-will offering will be collected.

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A Letter from the Director

Summer greetings to you from Gustavus and the Office of Church Relations!

One sign of an effective sermon is if the content of the message lingers in your mind for a while. As the semester drew to a close, Chaplain Brian Johnson shared some thoughts in a homily that have remained with me. He spoke about taking the time to say “good bye”—really taking the time to say not only the “good bye” but to share your feelings with each other. Looking around at the students and faculty, you could tell his words were resonating deeply. Many laughed and could relate when he spoke of the Swedish way of saying “good bye.” The “good bye” happens in a few stages; the initial one while sitting around the table following dinner, the hugs in the front room as coats are gathered, the lingering conversation on the front steps, and then finally, the last hugs at the car door and waving as the friends drive away.

For everything there is a season. The end of the academic year is always a time of both celebration and sending. With great pride we watched 589 of our beloved students receive their college diplomas. With great respect we celebrated with them the fantastic accomplishment this moment represents in their lives. With great anticipation we look forward to the many wonderful things these young leaders will do in our world. With tender care we said “Godspeed” to these graduating seniors who have come to mean so much to us all.

For everything there is a season—and sometimes seasons overlap. At Gustavus the seasons overlapped in two ways this spring. The first came as a result of the well orchestrated presidential transition. A season of “good bye” has overlapped in a good way with a time of “hello.” Mixed into all this for the community, of course, has been a deep sense of gratitude—gratitude to retiring President Jim and Susan Peterson for the many, many ways they have blessed the people of Gustavus and the wider community, and gratitude to incoming President Jack and Kirsten Ohle for the passion, expertise, and good leadership they have already begun to offer Gustavus.

The second overlap of the seasons at Gustavus occurred on April 26, the day of the Association of Congregations gathering—and it was not a welcomed sight! Winter reared its head one last time with a blast of cold and snow. *Yes, snow on April 26!* However, this overlap soon began to generate feelings of deep gratitude as carload upon carload of Association pastors and delegates came to campus. I must confess, at first sight of the snow, I feared the impact it might have on attendance. Yet, the very opposite occurred—we had the fewest cancellations in recent years, only 10 were unable to attend at the last minute. I hope you know how much your loyalty and passion for the work of Gustavus inspires the leadership of this great college!

For everything there is a season. Reflecting upon the academic year at Gustavus, one cannot help but enter into a time of sincere gratitude. So as you enjoy this summer issue of the *Spire*, please know that with it comes our sincere appreciation. *Thank you* for caring about higher education for young people and *thank you* for helping build up the church-college connection.

Pastor Grady St. Dennis
Director, Office of Church Relations

Peace is the Message, Education the Common Ground

Elias Chacour Visits Gustavus

On Monday, May 12, Archbishop Elias Chacour, of the Melkite Catholic Church in the Galilee, visited Gustavus Adolphus College, bringing a message of peace and hope that resonates with people and spans religious denominations, and diverse political and cultural traditions.

Chacour gave the morning homily during Chapel; visited a class; met with students, clergy, and community members for a question/answer session; and was honored at an afternoon reception.

Abuna Chacour is the author of *Blood Brothers*, blending his personal story with historical facts to reveal insights of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Chacour grew up a Christian in a small Palestinian village in the Galilee. In this town, people were proud of their ancient Christian heritage and lived at peace with their Jewish neighbors. In 1948, life as they had known it ended, and tens of thousands of Palestinians were killed and nearly a million more forced into refugee camps. In 1965, following his call into the ministry, Chacour was appointed parish priest of St. George Melkite Catholic Church in Ibillin, an Arab village in the Galilee region of Israel. Believing that the future of peace in Israel and Palestine depended upon the children, youth, and young adults receiving an excellent education, he founded and is president of the Mar Elias Educational Institutions in Ibillin, Israel, a cluster of eight schools offering classes for kindergarten, elementary, high school, technical college, university, gifted students, and continuing education. There students of every age learn and work together toward peaceful coexistence. What makes the cluster of schools so unique is how they peacefully and effectively bring together students and faculty who are Christian, Jewish, and Muslim to dialogue and learn from each other.

During his visit at Gustavus, he talked about respecting and getting along with others, trusting in God, and living as pacifists, giving everyone who heard him a lot to think

about. A Palestinian Christian, his vision for hope for the Middle East is that children, youth, and young adults of different faith traditions can learn to live and work together peacefully. Education is the key to teaching the Israeli and Arab people to live together, and to find a peaceful and just

solution to the conflict between the people in the Middle East. “We don’t teach nonviolence,” he said, “We live it!” He asks that American people respond in friendship by visiting the Holy Land, and let the people see that the Israelis and Arabs do not need to be divided. “We know how much we need the understanding and the friendship of the American people in order to have some kind of hope,” he said. For Christians, Jews, and Muslims, understanding is needed, and all must see that, whether Israeli or Arab, neither side is the enemy.

The American organization, Pilgrims of Ibillin, helps to support Chacour’s efforts and schools in the Galilee. His visit to Gustavus was sponsored by the Office of Church Relations.



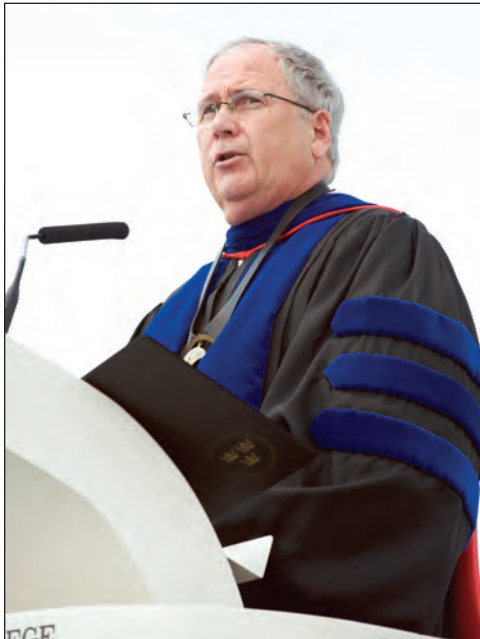
Elias Chacour is recognized as an international voice for peace and reconciliation between Christians, Jews and Muslims in Israel. Photo by John Cross



Archbishop Elias Chacour advocates peaceful coexistence of all peoples—living non-violence, not merely teaching it. Photo by John Cross

Saying Farewell to Our 14th President

In August 2007, President Jim Peterson '64 announced to the Board of Trustees his intention to retire at the end of June 2008. Important as it is to properly welcome new leadership, the way we say good-bye is also very important. The time is here for acknowledging the accomplishments President Peterson has made during his five years at Gustavus.



President Peterson addressed the Gustavus Class of 2008 on June 1.

Having accomplished most of the objectives that were identified with the Board of Trustees when he came in 2003, Peterson is pleased to be leaving Gustavus in very good condition physically, with a strong administrative leadership team, a great faculty, and financial stability. A new strategic plan is in place,

with new initiatives being developed. A common purpose and direction for the College have been identified. The landscape has changed with the establishment of a provost position to be academic leader and college-wide leader of institutional planning, and we now have two academic deans. A search is in the final stages for a new vice president to lead the institutional advancement area.

President Peterson's administration has marked growth and achievement in many areas. The Kendall Center for Engaged learning has been developed, with great promise for faculty development and faculty-student research. The Johnson Center for Environmental Innovation has also been established, and its director is in place. A new football stadium and athletic fields have been inaugurated, and the Arboretum's prairie restoration is under way.

Closer ties to the Lutheran Church and integrating diversity goals within the College operation were two of President Peterson's priorities that were named early on. The leadership of key College personnel and the Board of Trustees will help us to continue to make strides in these areas.

Gustavus's core values, identified early in Peterson's administration—community, service, faith, justice and excellence—are consistent with what he recalls when he was a student here, and this is the place where Peterson feels grounded. "Our values are what make the place authentic," he said. "There is consistence, truthfulness, and authenticity here at Gustavus when we are at our best. I think that's been true for a long time."

He continued, "Gustavus needs continuing strong leadership—across the College. It needs clear articulation of goals for the future and how to achieve them. It needs more endowment and annual support to make that future happen."



Jim and Susan look forward to enjoying time together in his retirement.

Looking ahead to the future, for College in the next five to ten years, Peterson said, "The entire Gustavus community needs to believe in its directions. And we need to believe we can achieve our goals."

For his own future as he steps into retirement, Peterson looks forward to enjoying more time with his family. He is eager to spend more time with his wife, Susan, and to play with his grandchildren; to get back to his wooden boats and to spend more time on the water. "I hope I can continue to make a difference—in some new ways," he said.

On behalf of the Gustavus community, we want to say thanks, Jim, for all you've done for Gustavus, for Gusties, and for friends of Gustavus. Thanks for the significant contributions you've made, and for your vision and leadership for the past five years. We are grateful for the difference you've made here. Best wishes, and many happy returns!

Taken from an interview for *The Gustavus Quarterly* by Gwen Freed, vice president for college relations

Association of Congregations Convention Recap

“The Unfinished Reformation: Faith in Daily Life”

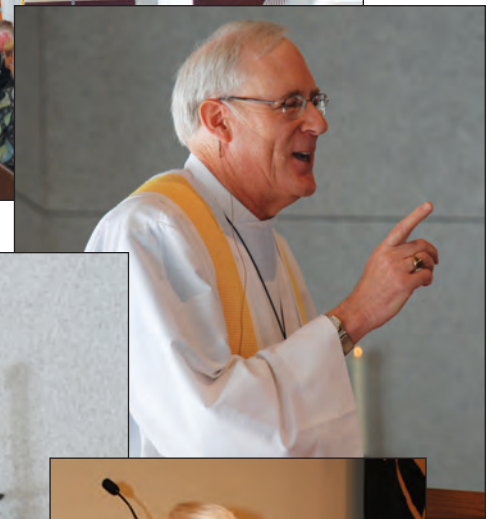
April 26, 2008 — Gustavus Adolphus College

The Gustavus Adolphus College Association of Congregations gathered April 26 under the theme “The Unfinished Reformation: Faith in Daily Life.” The theme flowed throughout the day, beginning in morning worship. The Rev. Paul Harrington connected the theme to the morning texts and the day.

The day’s highlight was the keynote address delivered by Jack Fortin about “The Centered Life.” Fortin explained our common ministry as members of the church. “We’re drawn into God’s world because God is fully present. He wants us to be in community and have a mission. Community without mission is self absorption. Mission without community is exhaustion. It’s when those two come together that we have life.”

Business was addressed with elections for the College’s Board of Trustees and the Board of Directors of the Association. President Jim Peterson reported on new initiatives on campus and introduced Provost Mary Morton. Reports were given about ministries on campus, and students shared their perspectives about faith life on campus. Paul F. Tillquist ’63 was recognized during the luncheon with the 2008 Covenant Award for his contributions to strengthen the partnership between Gustavus and member congregations of the Association.

During the afternoon, workshops on multiple topics addressed the conviction that we can be true to our faith and keep our spiritual center in every domain of our lives: home, workplace, community, and congregation.



Restoring the Prairie in the Arboretum

On the day in mid-May that Naturalist Emily Hoefs explained the expansion project underway in the Linnaeus Arboretum, wild violets were in bloom on the “old prairie,” and prairie smoke and pussy toes were just beginning to bloom. Other than that, there was very little floral activity going on. The spring had been too cool, and most of the prairie flowers were late in showing their color. Within a month, the 20-year-old Uhler Prairie would look much different, Hoefs promised.

The new Coneflower Prairie, a 70-acre prairie restoration project planned for an undeveloped area along the west side of the Linnaeus Arboretum, is scheduled to be planted after this fall’s soybean harvest. It will be the newest addition to the 35-year-old Arboretum, which now covers 125 acres of land.

A mix of prairie plants, as species-diverse as possible, will be planted in November 2008, when it is dry and cold and after any chance of seed germination this year is over. The seeds will be settled in by the snow pack to give maximum soil-to-seed contact, which will give them the best chance for an on-time start in the spring. The range of wildflowers

and grasses will, in turn, attract a variety of birds, insects, and animals.

In the middle of this prairie, the land has been excavated and contoured to build a hill, creating unique microhabitats to accommodate various prairie plants. It takes very little terrain change to create the ecosystem changes of a prairie, with some locations dry, others moist, and everything in between. A stand of Siberian elm trees is being removed, and the plan is to replace them with bur oak trees, which are typical on the prairie. Some remaining invasive plants, such as buckthorn, are also being managed. Arboretum Director Cindy Johnson Groh meets regularly with the Prairie Restoration Committee to make decisions about plant management.

The Carl and Verna Schmidt Foundation has generously matched many gifts of other donors toward the projected \$550,000 cost of the restoration project. To learn more, or to make a gift, visit the Coneflower Prairie website at gustavus.edu/arboretum.



Photos, clockwise from left: The existing Uhler Prairie; pussy toes in the spring; coneflowers in bloom

Meet the Rev. Brian Fragodt, Association Leader on the Board of Trustees



The Rev. Brian Fragodt '81 was elected president of the Board of the Association of Congregations during a board meeting on May 22, 2008. In this capacity, Fragodt will also represent the Association as an ex-officio member of the College's Board of Trustees for the coming year. He is stepping into this leadership position held since 2007 by the Rev. Terry Morehouse.

Fragodt is married to Kim (Beyer '83) and lives in Andover, Minn.

Exploring Faith Questions Series: “Sorting Out Conflicting Approaches to Interpreting the Bible”

When major public figures appeal to the Bible, they often come to quite different conclusions—about peace and war, for example; about the death penalty; or about marriage and divorce. When a church assembly debates these or similar issues, the arguments usually exhibit differing ways of interpreting the Bible. How do we sort out those conflicting interpretive approaches?

A new five-week, non-academic credit class this fall will explore that question. Rather than focusing on the debates themselves, it will provide an opportunity to “dig deeper” and see what is behind those debates—and to understand what arguments made from the Bible can and cannot accomplish.

Over this five-week class, some of the topics addressed will include: The Conflicting Appeals and What Is at Stake; The Nature of Biblical Language; The Authority of the Bible in Church and Society; Diversity and Unity—in the Bible and in the Community of Faith; and Interpreting the Bible: What Does It Tell Us about How to Behave and What to Believe?

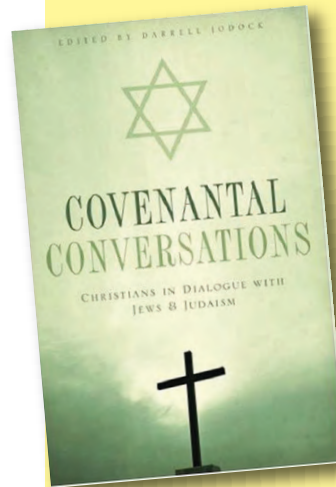
The class will be held five consecutive Monday evenings, October 13, 20, and 27 and November 3 and 10, 2008, at 7 p.m. in the St. Peter Room of the Jackson Campus Center. Primary faculty for the class will be the Rev. Dr. Darrell Jodock, with assistance from other professors in the Gustavus Religion Department.

Participants must register in advance. The cost for the series is \$30 per person. Registration deadline is October 8, 2008, so that curriculum materials can be printed prior to the first session. You may register by phoning the Office of Church Relations at 507-933-7001, or the registration form is available online at gustavus.edu/churchrelations.

New in Print

Covenantal Conversations

The Rev. Dr. **Darrell Jodock**, the Drell and Adeline Bernhardson Distinguished Professor of Lutheran Studies, is editor of a new book titled *Covenantal Conversations: Christians in Dialogue with Jews and Judaism*, released



March 1, 2008. The volume includes writings of Christian and Jewish theologians as though in conversation with one another, defining the historical relationship, shared theological framework, and the current trouble spots of the Jewish-Christian relationship today. The essays will help students, scholars, and Christians to understand the vital link and special promise that Jews and Christians share.

“The relationship between Judaism and Christianity is special,” says Jodock. “No other religion shares so much with Christianity as does Judaism. Both religions affirm the same God. Both religions see God active in history, working toward a goal of shalom. Both regard God to be a God of justice and mercy, who makes covenants and is faithful to them.”

Loyalty: A Biography of Richard Gustavovich Reusch

A 13-year labor of love by **Daniel H. Johnson '64** to write the biography of a most colorful man has culminated in the release of this biography about Dr. Richard Gustavovich Reusch, the former Russian calvary officer turned missionary turned Gustavus Adolphus College professor.

The most unusual story of this unforgettable, colorful, and eccentric character is sure to intrigue the reader, as his life story is told in the historical events that shaped him. From the Bolshevik revolution in Imperial Russia to the life of a Lutheran pastor in colonial Tanzania, East Africa; from the American Augustana (Swedish) Lutheran Synod to the indigenous African Lutheran Church in Tanganyika (Tanzania) and living among the spear-wielding, blood-drinking Masai tribe; from shooting a lion and climbing Kilimanjaro to living among Minnesota farmers and teaching American college students at Gustavus—*Loyalty* was the value he believed counted most in life, quoting Revelation: “Be you loyal unto death and I will give you the crown of life.”

Office of Church Relations Information

Our mission is to strengthen the presence of the College in congregations of the ELCA and to strengthen the presence of the Church in the College. If your congregation is not now a member of the Association of Congregations but is interested in becoming a member, contact the Office of Church Relations. The Association of Congregations is one of the key resources in helping to ensure that Gustavus remains a college of the Church.

The Rev. Grady St. Dennis '92

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Office hours: 8 a.m.–4:45 p.m. M–F
(unavailable during Chapel 10–10:30 a.m.)

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507-933-7023

confirmation-retreats@gustavus.edu

Gustavus Youth Outreach (GYO)

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Adult Retreat Programs

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Partners Programs

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