



A SHORT HISTORY OF

ELSA

1996-2009

«Suffer
the little
children to come
unto me, and forbid
them not: for such is
the Kingdom of
God»



GOD OPENED THE IRON CURTAIN FOR SUNDAY SCHOOL

Who would have thought of an international sunday school conference in Latvia, Romania or Ukraine before 1989? Or of the possibility to use a new communist center for a sunday school training seminar?

With the fall of the iron curtain God opened for renewed contact between the churches and the possibility to exchange ideas for sunday school work across borders that earlier was blocked. The lutheran sunday school organisations in Denmark and Norway soon started to travel to the former communist countries in order to encourage to sunday school work. It was mainly Bjarne Gertz Olsen (Denmark) and Alf Danbolt (Norway) who visited bishops and pastors, and held training seminars in sunday school work. On a bus in a valley in Norway Bjarne and Alf started to talk about having an european sunday school conference.

This conference came in to reality and was held in Denmark in 1994 by the sunday school organisations in Denmark and Norway. Among the delegates at this conference there was a strong wish to meet again. And two years later the next conference took place in Slovakia. Since then the conferences has been in Poland, Latvia and Romania. The next conference takes place in Slovakia in 2012.

Wallemtunet, Norway nov. 1993

The nordic leader conference for sunday school work with delegates from Estonia, Latvia and Hungary



Between the main conferences mentioned in this short presentation, there has been several regional conferences. The last regional conference was in Ukraine October 2009.



Delegates at
the conference
in Denmark

The first conference held at the missionary hotel Stella Maris in Svendborg 20-26th of August 1994

The conference was held to support the rebuilding of sunday school work in the lutheran churches in eastern Europe. The conference was a cooperation between the danish and norwegian sunday school organisations. The conferences was supported economically by the danish foreign departement. 17

sunday school leaders from 9 countries in eastern Europe attended the conference.

Every country presented reports about the sunday school work in their country, and there were lectures about the place of the Bible in the sunday school, the aim and content of lutheran sunday school work, new religious movements, how to teach sunday school workers etc. Sunday school materials from several countries were also presented.

SVENDBORG 1994



1. Information about about sunday school work in Slovakia.
2. Danish evening
3. Coffe brake
4. The delegates from Czech Republic and Slovakia
5. The conference meetings were in a sitting room with good chairs and a deep carpet.

SLOVAKIA

1996



Smolenice 4-10. of November 1996

The conference were held at an old castle in Smolenice 60 km north of Bratislava with help from the bishops office in Bratislava.



«EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SUNDAY SCHOOL WORK»

We were welcomed by bishop Filo who also introduced us to the Slovakian lutheran church. The Bible lectures were about the three articles of faith. Other lectures were about The Sunday School and the Congregation, The Law and Gospel in the teaching in Sunday School, Christian teaching of children.

On Saturday the conference was opened for sunday school teacher from the vicinity, and the lectures was about The Message of the Sunday School, The basic Idea of the Sunday School and Practical Sunday School teaching.

The participants shared practical ideas, materials and had an evening with prayer and personal witness as well as a social evening when all countries had their own part of the program.

One day we went to the little town of Kosariská were Milan Rastislav Štefánik was born in 1880, and visited the evagelnic parish house were he was born as well as the monument on the top of the hill

above the town Brezová pod Bradlom. He was together with Masaryk and Benes one of the three cofounders of the modern Czechoslovak state.

The foundation of ELSA

The pirtures are from the top left:

- 1.Smolenice castle
2. From morning prayer in the library
3. From the social evening
4. The delegates at the Štefánik memorial
- 5.From the social evening

At the conference the organisation ELSA was founded, statutes decided and a board elected: Alf Danbolt, chairman (Norway), Vilija Riteryte (Lithuania) and Janina Gazda (Poland).



POLEN 1999



1. From open day
2. Bishop Szarek and Janina
3. From the disussions
4. The polish hosts
5. Ingrida and Ingrida
6. All the delegates together with Bjarne Gertz Olsen (Denmark), Janina Gazda and Alf Danbolt sitting.



«JESUS CHRIST THE HOPE FOR THE CHILDREN IN EUROPE»



The first ordinary conference of ELSA was arranged in Wisla, Jawornik, Poland.

The conference was held in the lutheran church's campsite on the border to the Check republic. All members attended except for Hungary, and there were observers from Croatia and Russia.

We were welcomed by the general bishop of the polish Lutheran Church Jan Szarek. Professor Oddbjørn Evenshaug from Norway participated on the open day with two main lectures about the child and the family.

The new board:

Alf Danbolt, chairman (Norway), Ingrida Augustane (Latvia) and Janina Gazda (Poland).



Delegates in Jawornic1999

«GOD'S WORD IS OUR GREAT HERITAGE»

The second conference was held in Saldus, Latvia in 2003. Twenty-four participants from 10 countries attended the conference.

Janis Vanags, the archbishop of Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia (ELCL) opened the conference with a lecture "God's Word is Our Great Heritage." Throughout the conference the emphasis was put on the Luther's Small Catechism and its meaning in Sunday schools. The representatives of every country presented short overviews about their country and the Sunday school work. Along with a theoretical part of the conference there also was a practical involvement. Participants from different countries did activities, sang songs, exchanged teaching material, presentations, shared ideas concerning practical Sunday school work, gave testimonies, and spent time together in morning and evening prayers

The new board:

Alf Danbolt, chairman (Norway), Aija Dzene (Latvia) and Janina Gazda (Poland) and Bjarne Gertz Olsen as stand in for the chairman.

The pictures from the top:

1. From the social evening
 2. Bjarne Gertz Olsen and Janina Gazda
 3. The latvian delegates
 4. Alf Danbolt and Bjarne Gertz Olsen
 5. The delegates with the chairman
- decorated according to Ephesians chap 6.s

LATVIA 2003



**Delegates
Saldus 2003**



ROMANIA 2006 10 YEAR JUBILEE

1. The delegates at the conference after the jubilee service in Săcele. The Banner for ELSA with greetings from the countries is hanging on the wall.
2. Ilze Gulbe taught practical sunday school work.



«THE FOUNTAIN OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.»

Bishop Adorjáni Dezső Zoltán opened the conference with an introduction to the Lutheran church in Romania. Reports from all attending countries gave an update on the situation of the Sunday school work in Europe. Belarus was for the first time at the conference, and it was wonderful to hear about the start of Sunday schools there. The themes of the Bible lectures were Sola Scriptura, sola gratia and sola fides: only the Scriptures, grace and faith. Lectures were given in practical Sunday school work and there was an exchange of practical ideas for Sunday school work. A lecture about the historical background of the Sunday school, a discussion on the theme: The child in the congregation and a lecture on rituals in Sunday school.

The conference celebrated the 10th Anniversary of ELSA with a jubilee service and a jubilee evening.

The new board:

Mikael A. Laursen (Denmark),
Beatrix Török (Romania),
Ilze Gulbe (Latvia) and
Alf Danbolt (Norway), chairman.

Brasov 2006

The pictures below:

1. From Belarus and Romania
2. From Slovakia and Norway
3. Beatrix Török taught practical Sunday school work



KALNAMUIŽA, LATVIA 2009

«TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER I HAVE COMMANDED YOU»
(MATT 18,20)

The fifth conference was held in Kalnamuiža in Latvia 13th to 19th of July. Bishop Pavils welcomed us. 22 participants from 8 countries, and this time financial problems made it impossible for a couple of countries to attend.

From the program

The theme for the conference was:
«Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you» (Matt 28,20) with lectures about Baptism and faith, The Child in the Bible, The Child and Holy Communion, Upbringing in the Christian Faith etc. Exchange of materials and ideas for sunday school work.

Carten Hjorth Pedersen from Denmark had several lectures about christian pedagogics.

Countries represented

Latvia, Belarus, Slovakia, Ukraine, Germany, USA, Denmark and Norway.

The new board:

Bjarne Gertz Olsen (Danmark), chairman.
Beatrix Török (Romania),
Ivars Jekabsons (Latvia) and
Jostein Bildøy (Norway),

Next Conference

The next conference will be held in Slovakia 26th July to 1st August 2012.



What is ELSA?

1. The work in ELSA is based on the view that the Holy Bible is the Word of God, and the symbolic books of the Lutheran church as our understanding of the Bible.

2. The association is between Sunday school movements in Europe who in allegiance to the Holy Scripture and our Evangelical Lutheran confession gathers children in Sunday schools and their activities.

3. The aim of ELSA is to create a supporting fellowship that gives true spiritual advice and theological and pedagogical support mainly through conferences every third year.

This presentation is made by pastor Alf Danbolt who was chairman of ELSA from 1996-2009.

ADDRESS

ELSA

c/o Chairman Bjarne Gertz Olsen
Nyager 12, Bredstrup

7000 Fredericia, DENMARK

Phone: +45-75954317

Email: bgo.office@gmail.com