

A quarterly newsletter of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin - ELCA

From Bishop Pederson . . .



This fall, I had the opportunity to visit all seven conferences of our synod for gatherings entitled, "Beyond Our Doors." Some of the gatherings

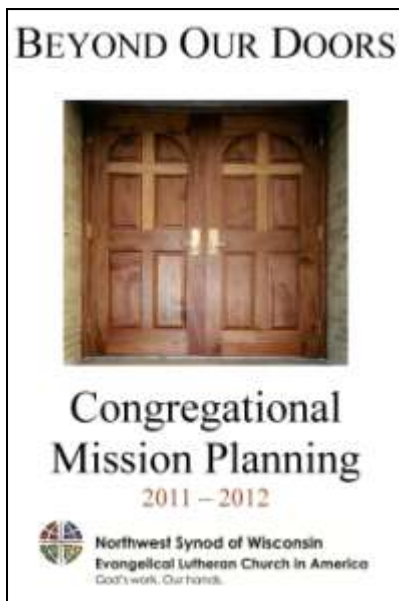
were small, 30 to 40 people; some were very large, more than a 100 people. Each gathering was unique, each took on its own personality, and each explored what it means to move beyond the doors of our churches to engage our neighborhoods in witness and service.

The emphasis of the "Beyond Our Doors" gatherings built upon the ongoing effort to challenge all congregations and leaders to be intentional about who Christ has made them to be and what God is calling them to do in the Lord's name – *identity* and *purpose*.

It has been my experience, as I travel about the synod and visit congregations, that many communities of faith have not done this prayerful, intentional exploration of identity and purpose. Frankly, this concerns me because too many congregations have become chapels to care for their own membership rather than mission posts to launch into the world. They consider pastors employees to provide services rather than shepherds who lead the flock deeper in their relationship with Jesus. The consequences of remaining chapels for those seeking services

will likely be further decline and diminished ministry.

To assist leaders and congregations with missional discernment, Pastor Amy Odgren from the synod staff has written a brief guide entitled, *Beyond Our Doors*. It can be found on the synod website (www.nwswi.org). Click on the Missional Toolbox to see various missional resources. *Beyond Our Doors* is intended to be a tool to help your congregation engage the Scriptures, discover your mission context, and develop a mission strategy that reflects who you are and what God has called you to. Use it, adapt it, explore mission with it. Let the Spirit move in your midst!



Before the 2012 Synod Assembly, I'd like you to tell me of your experience in mission planning and implementation. I want to know how you have moved "beyond your doors" and how you have been blessed to be a blessing!

The Northwest Synod of Wisconsin

Walking together for the sake of mission in God's world

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Walking together † for the sake of mission † in God's world

Milestones, Moves & More

Milestones

Congratulations to . . .

Rev. Curt Rohland on his retirement.

Rev. Danny Wheeler on his retirement.

Martha Libersky, associate in ministry, on her retirement.

Moves

Rev. Terrence Stratton appointed to interim ministry at Lakeside Lutheran in Webster.

Rev. Nanette Hagen Hinck called to interim ministry at Milltown Lutheran, in Milltown.

Rev. Don West appointed to interim ministry at Salem Lutheran, Shell Lake.

Rev. Dawn Lindberg and Rev. Brad Lindberg called to serve English Lutheran in Ellsworth.

Rev. Sandra Johnson called to serve Hope Lutheran in River Falls.

& More

Congratulations to the new ministry, **Vida Nueva Ministerio Lutherano** (New Life Lutheran Ministry), a Synodically Authorized Worshipping Community in Eleva.

Our condolences to the **Rev. Terri Blomberg** on the death of her husband, Roy, October 26, 2011.

Greg's Resource Connection

by Pastor Greg Kaufmann

From October 24 – November 5, a group of 13 pilgrims traveled, studied, worshipped, sang and learned their way from Prague to Mainz. What brought us together? A desire to visit a number of places in which the rich treasures of the Lutheran spiritual tradition have taken root.

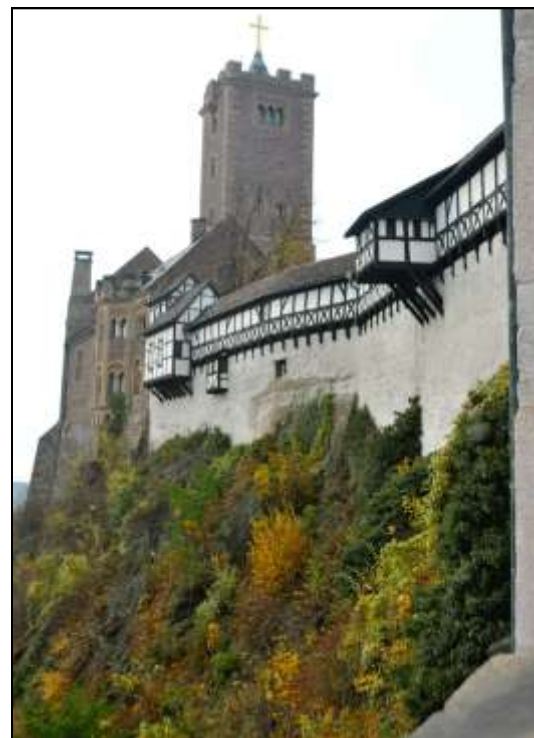
We began in Prague, one of the 10 most visited cities in the world! Walking across a stone bridge built in 1172, standing in a castle built in 880, and praying in the Jewish Quarter's historic cemetery served as the backdrop for our conversations about Jan Hus, who was burned at the stake July 6, 1415.

The highlight of our time spent in Herrnhut, birthplace of the Moravian brotherhood, was a conversation with the woman, who for 11 years has selected the New Testament passage which is paired with the Old Testament watchword, for every day of the year. We used these daily texts to frame our pilgrimage across Germany.

Imagine 100,000 people pouring into Wittenberg to celebrate Reformation Day. I was asked to read the New Testament lesson at the English service in the Castle Church. I was surprised at the wave of emotion that flooded through me as I stood where Luther and other reformers had stood and read the same good news to a full church.

Leipzig, the birthplace of the peaceful revolution, is also famous because Johann Sebastian Bach once served there as organist and music director. As we sat in the St. Thomas church listening to a choir perform one of Bach's works, we were reminded of the role music has played to tell both the Biblical story and our own Lutheran theology.

In Eisenach, we walked up to the Wartburg castle, and of course stood in the room where Luther translated the New Testament into German. We learned that his work combining the 28 different German dialects, created the modern German language. Equally important was to stand in the room of the Hungarian Princess Elizabeth, born in 1207, betrothed at the age of four to Count Ludwig IV of Thuringia (owner of the castle), and exiled from the castle after her husband died on a crusade in 1227. Elizabeth believed and lived out a very modern idea of the Christian faith. She spent her short life in solidarity with the sick, poor, and forgotten, which was unthinkable at that time in history.



Wartburg castle

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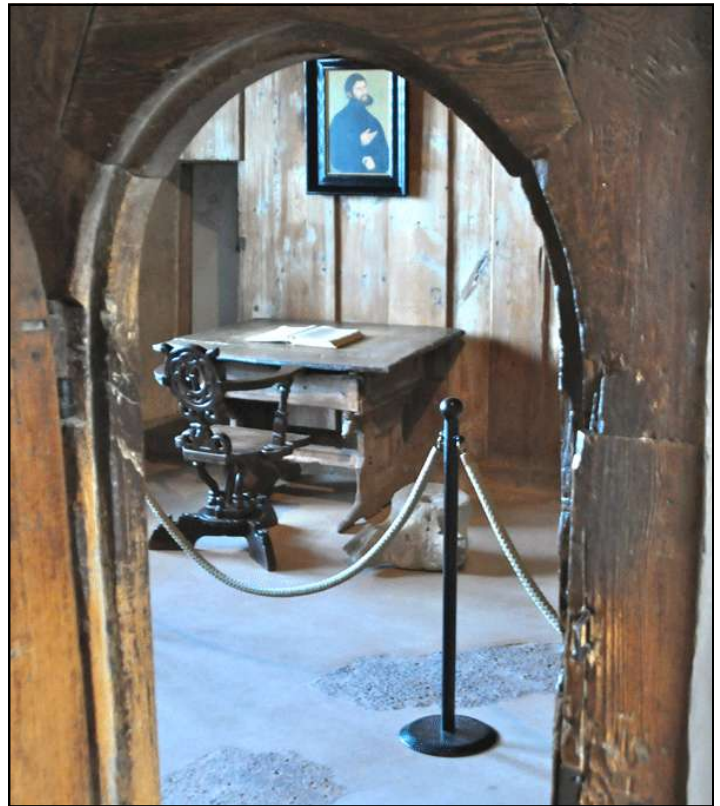
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We ended our journey near Mainz, and of course stood in the vault and looked at one of 49 remaining original Gutenberg Bibles.

Throughout this pilgrimage, we were reminded of the critical role art (i.e. Lucas Cranach), music (i.e. Luther and Bach), and politics (i.e. Frederick the Wise), played in reforming the church and opening the Scriptures to all.



First Edition German Bible



Entry to Luther's Study in Wartburg Castle

Mission Moments by Pastor Amy Odgren

I recently attended a theological event with the first call pastors of our synod. With review of Martin Luther's *Treaties on the Marks of the Church*, we were offered a thought-provoking challenge to remember why we are Lutheran communities in mission. Afterward, I came home and read through Mary Hinkle's book, *Signs of Belonging: Luther's Marks of the Church and the Christian Life*. Dr. Hinkle wrote that each of the marks (God's Word, Baptism, Holy Communion, forgiveness, ministry, worship, and suffering) is a "public pointer to the work God does on earth to gather God's people together and make them holy."

How do the ministries that we are engaged in within our congregations make a public witness to God's work and mission in the world? Have we traded God's vision of the church for one that is less demanding of us? Have we traded the mission of Christ, with its difficult commandment to love one another and be servants to one another, for a mission to serve only "our own," or those who meet our standards and our criteria? Have we traded God's expansive vision for the church, where the community weaves new elements seamlessly into itself, for a narrow, blinded vision that finds subtle and not-so-subtle ways to discourage and reject those who don't belong?

What if we asked these questions instead:

- ◆ Where is our community fractured?
- ◆ What are we doing to heal those places where humanity is broken?

The first call workshop presenter proposed that Lutherans orient themselves missionally toward places where suffering and humiliation are profoundly present. Based on Luther's writings regarding *suffering* as one of the Marks of the Church, the presenter went on to encourage us to embrace our Lutheran theology of the cross as the way to redefine our faith communities and reorient ourselves from inward to outward focus. I liked the way he framed everything that we've heard about the missional church into a Lutheran context.

The theology of the cross reveals to us that we are called to risk boldly for the sake of our neighbor. It reveals to us that God is most glorified when God's children love as their Savior loved — to the end. Our congregations are not sanctuaries from the world, but a window on what God, in the body of Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, is doing in the world. That reign is characterized by risk, by relationships that are

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Mission Moments

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redefined in Christ and renewed by forgiveness, by motley groups of people singing praise to the Lamb, and by love that overcomes evil with good.

There has been a lot of encouragement to go beyond the doors of our churches to participate in what God is doing in the world. We are called to shape our communities of faith around whatever the love of God asks us to do. Wash feet. Feed the hungry. Build houses. Sing. Dance. Make pizza. Laugh. Whatever you do, do it in love. This love creates our belonging

together. This love, commanded by Christ, calls us to form genuine community that is shaped by mutual confession and forgiveness. This love, commanded by Christ, calls us to risk where we have often preferred to play it safe. This love, displayed by Christ in the giving of himself, in the serving of others, and in his faithful suffering on the cross, is both promise and power. It is a promise of rebirth and renewal where sin, death and destruction try to drown us. It is a power to evoke rebirth and renewal in others when we, like our Lord Jesus, humbly bow to his command: "Love one another...do this in remembrance of me."

Companion Synod News by Diane Kaufmann

"Tsalani Bwino"

In the Chichewa language this phrase is a farewell term that translates as "Stay well." And that is my hope, prayer, and expectation for our companion relationships as I end my tenure as companion synod coordinator. This is my last Network News article. On December 1, Pastor Ramie Bakken takes over this position with a new title, assistant to the bishop for global relationships.

I began this journey unofficially in 2001 and officially at the synod assembly in 2004. So it has been a large part of my "50's" decade. I was not one who grew up always wanting to go to Africa (Malawi) or Brazil. But having been to both countries numerous times, I have learned much, especially about how important cultural issues are! Without an exposure to other cultures, we tend to assume that the culture we grew up and live in is predominant and authoritative. Not so much when you have your eyes opened by exposure to other cultures!

I have seen changes in our relationships. The hardest part has been learning and then trying to educate others that old models will not grow and develop these companionships. You have often heard my drumbeat of "accompaniment" language and a desire to make the new model of accompaniment a part of the DNA of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin. "Walking Together" has been a shorthand way of describing this way of living into accompaniment. We are making progress; this is a journey of generations I believe and one we must be intentional about.

Favorite memories: in both of our companion relationships, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malawi and Sinodo Centro Campanha Sul, Brazil, it has been delightful to see stereotypes stripped away as travelers from here and to here have visited face-to-face and had the opportunity to see the realities of everyday life and church life. We find that we have many similarities even in the midst of our differences. I pray that face-to-face remains a priority so that we can see Jesus in each other in a personal way.

Thank you (zikomo kwambiri, obrigada) for your prayers for me during my time as companion coordinator and for our companion synods. Please continue those prayers for Pastor Bakken and our companions!

Tsalani bwino.



Walking together with our companions in Malawi



Global Relationships by Rev. Ramie Bakken

It is with great joy that I begin working with congregations in the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin and our global companions to strengthen our ability

to engage in God's mission. In anticipation of beginning this new work, I attended the Region 5 Global Mission Gathering.

A renewed focus for the ELCA Global Mission Unit as a result of the LIFT task force will be to "integrate the work of the whole church as it relates to synod's ability to build and strengthen relationships with this church's global companions and ecumenical partners, focusing on **accompaniment, mutual growth, capacity building and sustainability of relationships.**" You will be pleased, as I was, to know that the work of our synod has been a model to other synods with global companion relationships in embracing these characteristics. Three different presenters, independently of each other, chose to illustrate their point with a video story from Malawi! Each of these short videos can be found on the [ELCA website](#) or by clicking on these links: [ELCA Malaria Campaign](#), [ELCA World Hunger](#), and [Voices of our Companions](#).

Looking to 2012, plans are underway for an Eye Mission to Malawi in April, the Pastor's Academy with

teaching Pastors Joanne Sorenson and Michael Meyer in July, and Bishop Pederson's trip to the ELCM 12th Assembly in August. Invitations to strengthen relationships with our companions from Sínodo Centro-Campanha Sul of the IECLB in Brazil are also underway. In addition, I will be inviting your participation in the ELCA international companion program. The ELCA will be providing partial scholarships and inviting international guests to participate in the 2012 youth gathering. Our synod may have an opportunity to host a youth from our companion synods. Congregations that are traveling to the ELCA Youth Gathering should talk to me about being involved! Finally, if you want to learn more about advocacy with our companions, consider attending either the Ecumenical Advocacy Day's 10th annual conference (March 23-26, 2012, in Washington D.C.) or the Churches for Middle East Peace 2012 conference.

Please contact me with your questions about companion relationships and your invitations to present information about this ministry. The best way to get in touch is by email: rbakken@nswi.org or you may also reach me by phone 715.284.4213 (office), or 715.896.0772 (mobile).



Mark your calendar

- Feb. 12-13 **Winter Theological Event**
for rostered leaders
at Plaza hotel, Eau Claire
- March 17 **Walking Together: A Congregational Resource Event**
Chippewa Falls Middle School
- April 13-14 **Middle School Youth Gathering**
at Wapogasset Bible Camp, Amery
- June 2-3 **Synod Assembly**
at UW-Eau Claire

Leadership Matters

by Pastor Todd Iverson

Thank Goodness THAT'S Over!

Enough of thanksgiving! Enough of gratitude and appreciation. Enough of recognition and acknowledgment. Leftovers are gone and so is our need to give thanks. Isn't it great that we have a holiday into which we cram all of this thanksgiving sentiment so that we can get back to our normal, "Hey, World, look at me!" way of life?

Of course not. For any Christian, the feeling, the knowledge, the recognition that we have something to be thankful for never ends: "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6.23). Gratitude abounds.

Compelling Christian leaders know this and live it.

What does that look like? Like a whole lot of thankfulness, a whole lot of praise, a whole lot of humility, and an absolute commitment to the mission of Jesus Christ.

Wha-huh?

Thankfulness, praise, and humility seem to go together; they sound soft or pleasant or gentle.

"Absolute commitment to the mission of Jesus Christ" sounds powerful and confident and assertive. Are we playing the "Which of these is not like the others" game?

Not at all. *Thankfulness* is about recognizing that someone else is responsible for the goodness in my life. *Praise* is directing that thanks to in the right direction: to God. *Humility* is keeping that relationship straight. And the *absolute commitment to the mission of Jesus Christ* is our wholelife response to God's grace in our lives.

For Christian leaders that whole-life response includes expressing gratitude regularly (cf: Paul's repeated phrase: "I thank God for..."), submitting to the will of God in humility (cf: Paul's letter to the Philippians, chapter 2), and dedicating their lives to the kingdom of God in such a way that others follow (cf: Paul's life in general).

Jim Collins in *Good to Great and the Social Sectors* writes that great leaders differ from effective leaders "in that they are ambitious first and foremost for the cause, the movement, the mission, the work—not themselves—and they have the will to do whatever it takes (*whatever* it takes) to make good on that ambition." Great leaders know that they are committed to something much larger than themselves and inspire others to follow, not by force or coercion, but "by a paradoxical" (so this has a good chance of being Lutheran!) "blend of personal humility and professional will," says Collins.

This is strong leadership not passive leadership; leadership rooted in gratitude for the sake of the kingdom of God.

A Psalm

Written by retired pastors and spouses; compiled by Chaplain Aimee Wollman, November, 2011

Lord God, our Shepherd and Deliverer
You are our Provider,
our source of love, joy, peace, and kindness.

In times of joy and mystery you are our Savior and Protector
You are the Gift of presence and patience,
incarnate in our Messiah, Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

As we live into the twilight of our years,
You are our Friend and Companion,
Our Helper and Comforter,
loving us as Father and Mother,
Our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier.

As we grow older and mature in faith we have a spirit of thanksgiving.

We rejoice in the wonder of grandchildren
seeing this life through their young eyes,
and accepting the responsibility to help form their faith in You.

We have new interests, new hobbies, new relationships,
we are less worried about making money,
but we are busy with volunteering, meetings, prayer groups,
Bible studies, and circles.

In this season of retirement we experience freedom;
from external responsibilities and expectations,
from internal pressure and guilt about tasks undone,
to choose what to do with today,
to live genuinely as oneself.

Our bodies may begin to fail us, but our spirits long to make a difference.
We start projects and make long-range plans not knowing
if we will see them to completion.
We seek to accept our mortality in the face of declining health and energy,
We are keenly aware of time and how we choose to spend it,
There are blessings in our forgetfulness,

and there is joy in letting go.
We are learning to live with ambiguity
and to accept the unknown.

But there are days when we question Your call in our lives.
We wrestle with Your mystery,
We grieve the loss of positions of power and influence,
We reflect on our regrets, and we worry
about Your church, the nation, Your world.

God of hope and promise, in this transition in our lives
You continue to open doors to new opportunities.
Your presence resonates within us.
We are reminded that we have a purpose and responsibility
to live out Your will in our lives,
to share Your message of love and mercy.

O God, you are the Creator of our genuine being
Your acceptance and forgiveness overcome our sins and our shame.
You comfort us in the midst of our limitations.
You are the Light of our life.

You help us to know that Your story reaches beyond our understanding,
and encompasses more than we can imagine.
You listen to our prayers,
our worries,
our frustrations,
our confessions.
You are the Rock on which we stand.
Help us to play our small part in Your infinite story.

O God, you are Love, and we are Your instruments of love
to the world.

Lord we believe, but in our moments of unbelief remind us
Jesus lives,
Your Holy Spirit is at work,
God's love is complete, for everyone, everywhere

We await Your coming that we may have Joy complete.

For no matter where we go or how we get there,
God is already there. AMEN

