

Northwest Network

Spring 2009

A quarterly newsletter of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin - ELCA

From the Bishop . . .

The economic downturn has come home to roost. As bishop, I experience and observe daily what the economic crisis does to our church. Many congregations have experienced a decline in giving as their members worry about and struggle with their finances; this decline frequently leads to layoffs, reduced benefits, salary freezes, program reduction, and reduced mission support.

The decreased mission support from congregations means I have been part of tough decisions regarding cutbacks in the partnerships we, as the 211 congregations of our synod, support. Pastoral colleagues who **intended to retire can't because their retirement fund is half of what it was worth six months ago.** Mobility for clergy has slowed across the country because pastors worry that they will be unable to sell their present homes and are concerned that their spouse will not find new employment. Slower mobility means congregations wait longer to call a new pastor because the pool of available candidates to interview is shallow.

These situations represent some of the difficulties we face as a faith community, but it **doesn't even begin to reveal the stories of** some of our members, the individuals and family units who have faced a host of problems on the financial front. I, too, have friends and family members who have lost their jobs, and I know all too well the pain and worry that results.

What do lean times mean for us as the church? **We are called to remember the generosity of God.** We can either live out of a posture of scarcity, or we can trust in the Provider of all blessings. The difference in perspective is primarily a matter of faith and will determine whether we live in fear or in the confidence that is our in Christ.

We are called to attend to the needs of the poor. Those who are most vulnerable are always affected the greatest when resources are tight.



Bishop Duane C. Pederson

Every congregation has an opportunity to teach biblical stewardship—using responsibly what God has entrusted to us, living according to our needs not wants, investing in what matters rather than rampant consumerism and the pursuit of things. What an opportunity to offer workshops on budgeting, tithing, legacy planning, credit management, care of creation, stewardship as a way of life, etc. What an opportunity to study and hear the 2,000-plus passages in Scripture about wealth and possessions in a new way. What an opportunity for pastors to do a preaching series that connects faith with abundant living in Christ.

We must resist the temptation to turn inward, to take care of only self, to hunker down and protect and preserve what we call *ours*. Missional churches are *always engaged* in the world, tirelessly reaching out, and consistently generous in giving for the sake of the other.

Yes, this is an uncertain time, but it is also an opportune time to be the church God has called us to be. Seize opportunities. Give generously. Be missional. Trust the Provider.

Book of Faith:
Living in the
Word

Synod Assembly
May 29-30, 2009
UW-Eau Claire



For up-to-date information
on Synod Assembly,
calendar of events, and
vacancies, visit:

www.nwswi.org

Look inside for:

Who's in "The Ministry?"	2
Milestones	2
Mission Moments	3
Companion Synod News	3
Greg's Resource Connection	4

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

Milestones, Moves & More

Milestones

Congratulations to . . .

Rev. Dorothy Sandahl on her ordination and installation at Laketown and First Lutheran Churches in Cushing, March 29, 2009,

Ken Schmidt on becoming an Associate in Ministry and being commissioned to serve at Central Lutheran in Chippewa Falls, May 13, 2009.

First Lutheran in Barron who celebrated their 125th anniversary April 26, 2009.

Fristad Lutheran in Centuria who celebrated their 100th anniversary April 26, 2009.

New Hope Lutheran in Downsville who celebrated their 75th anniversary May 3, 2009.

Moves

Rev. Mike Wollman, called to Shepherd of the Hill Lutheran in Elk Mound.

Rev. Nathan Aaseng called to St. John's Lutheran in Eau Claire.

Rev. Carol Ann McArdeil called to Salem Lutheran in Shell Lake.

Rev. Ned Lenhart called to Living Water Lutheran in Cameron.

Rev. Jennifer Elmquist called to interim ministry at Augustana Lutheran in Cumberland.

Rev. Chet Hoversten, retired, called to interim ministry at Faith Lutheran in Cameron.

Rev. Curtis Johnson, retired, transferred to the Southeast Minnesota Synod.

Rev. Barbara Lund transferred to the St. Paul Area Synod

& More

Our condolences to . . .

Rev. Bill Wilson on the loss of his mother.

Rev. Bill Stewart on the loss of his father.

Who's in "The Ministry?"

by Pastor Todd Iverson

When you hear the term, "The Ministry," what picture comes into your mind? Often it is a picture of a pastor—and that's dead wrong.

Entering into "The Ministry" is NOT what seminary or the candidacy process is about. Doing "The Ministry" is NOT what pastors are expected to do. Supporting "The Ministry" is NOT making sure that the pastor is doing her or his job. The ministry is the task that all Christians are called to engage in every day.

Pastors are called to Word and Sacrament ministry, that is, leading a community of faith through the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ, whether that be by Word, water or wine and bread. In this leadership role, pastors inspire—literally breathe Holy Spirit words and preside at Holy Spirit actions—among the community of faith so that all get caught up in "The Ministry."

To avoid the trap, let's be reporters and ask the 5 Ws (and 1 H).

The Ministry . . .

Who: All the people of God!

What: Loving God and loving your neighbor.

Where: At home, at church, at work, among friends, in your community, around the world.

Why: Because God loved us!

When: Starting at birth and continuing through every God-given breath

(Birth? Sure, don't babies change the way adults around them act? Until death? Ok, maybe not death, but how you live your life will affect others long after you are gone.)

How: In many and various ways; inspired by God and encouraged by the community of faith in which you participate.

You may answer **WWWWWH** differently, but this much must be true: "The Ministry" is something that all of us share. Leadership in the church makes sure that we do.

EMAIL SCAM—BEWARE!

Have you recently received an email that is from the "Malawi Office of The Bishop" (the actual email address is bishop@mail2Malawi.com)? Beware, this email is a SCAM!

Bishop Bvumbwe's email identity was stolen several months ago and apparently his address list is now being used in targeted emails which end with a solicitation for money. Bishop Bvumbwe would like members of the synod to know the following: he rarely communicates on an individual basis; his communications are done at the synod level. Secondly, he would NEVER privately ask for money. If you have received an email from this address, ignore it, do not respond to it, and certainly, do not send money. Normally, email communications from Malawi are also copied to me. If you receive a communication from Malawi which does not include a copy to me, and have any doubt about its origin, please contact me, Diane Kaufmann, dkaufmann@nswi.org, 715-579-1731, and I will verify the email for you.

Mission Moments by Pastor Amy Odgren

I'm certainly not the first person to point out that we are living in tough economic times. In fact, we're all reminded every time we turn around, making it hard to ignore the fact that so many people are facing extraordinary challenges right now.

It is during tough times that people begin to worry. Naturally, we fear for our security and well-being in the face of job losses, the faltering stock market and shrinking investments.

But it is also during tough times that we begin to see things in a new way. We recognize how much it means when others look out for us and share what they have or share in a message of hope. As a result, we begin to truly see the value in reaching out to others with Christ's love. That's what we're all called to do after all – to respond to the gospel by bringing healing, justice and wholeness to others in God's world – by sharing the Good News.

Recently, I addressed First Lutheran in Barron as they celebrated 125 years in

ministry. It's been a delight to read over their history of both challenge and determination that so many had through the years to "strengthen faith, help in time of need, and shield people from dangers, temptations, and evil" as their anniversary document notes. Their history goes on to indicate that early church founders were "staunch and loyal followers of God's Word. They were willing to endure untold hardships, and they knew no security except God alone. They withstood poverty, pestilence and heartaches . . . these were people of faith who laid the cornerstone of this church in the wilderness."

I'm certain that many congregations have similar histories. Through the ages, God's people in all places and in all times have been met with fear, financial uncertainty, and numerous concerns of well-being. But we live as people of gospel hope. Like those saints who founded First in Barron and so many of the congregations around us, may we know the security we have in God alone. Now that's a faith filled message to share!

Through the ages,
God's people in all
places and in all
times have been met
with fear, financial
uncertainty, and nu-
merous concerns . . .
but we live as people
of gospel hope.

Companion Synod News

by Diane Kaufmann

Women from our synod visit Brazil

The first delegation of women from our synod will travel to southern Brazil May 4-18. Helen Anderson, Phyllis Beastrom, Marilyn Danielson, Sharon Klabunde, Ruth Larson, Carolyn Meinen, Audrey Severson, Avalene Swanson and Diane Kaufmann will visit three separate areas of Sinodo Centro Campanha Sul, our companions in Brazil. **The visit will include a Women's Assembly and 75th Anniversary of the Deaconess Motherhouse in Sao Leopoldo.**

In 2005, four women from Sinodo Centro Campanha Sul traveled throughout our synod. Not only will this return visit provide a memorable experience for the American women, it will also help strengthen the bonds between our synods. During their visit, they will compare stories of how women in both countries view their mission in the home, churches, community, and nation.

Please pray for their safe travel and for our relationship with Brazil.

Read the new Protocol Agreement for Companion Synod Relationships between the Conference of Bishops and the Global Mission unit. [Click here to download a pdf copy.](#)



Visit us on the web:

www.nswwi.org

Synod Assembly, "Book of Faith: Living in the Word" • May 29-30 • UW-Eau Claire

Greg's Resource Connection

by Pastor Greg Kaufmann



As your Book of Faith Synod **Advocate, I'm very excited** about two great opportunities available to your congregation. The first is the First Annual Book of Faith Jubilee. **I'm part of the planning team** for this incredible event and encourage your congregation to join the fun.

Are these questions you've asked? How do you equip everyday people to read the Bible? Christians have an understanding, even an expectation, that the Bible has the power to change lives. But as pastors and lay leaders, *how do you help people even begin to open Scripture to let it do its work? How do you teach the Bible to change lives?*

The Book of Faith Jubilee, hosted by Luther Seminary, in partnership with the ELCA Book of Faith Initiative; Augsburg College; The Youth and Family Institute and Augsburg Fortress, will help you answer these questions. This event will bring together lay leaders, teachers, pastors and church staff August 14-16, preceding the 2009 Churchwide Assembly. Through inspiring keynotes, practical workshops and conversational dinners you will get skills, resources, contacts

(and an abundance of encouragement) to lead congregational and community renewal in reading the Bible. Open up Scripture to change lives! To register, go to this website:

<http://www.luthersem.edu/jubilee/>

The second opportunity is an invitation to sign up for the 16th group to begin our two-year Lay School of Ministry course. I can think of no better way to become fluent in the first language of our faith than to attend our lay school.



You've already attended our lay school? Then by all means don't miss the continuing education topic for the coming year. We will be looking at the Old Testament Prophets with 9 of the top ELCA teaching faculty from across the country. Complete registration material is available at: <http://www.layschoolofministry.org>