

*A quarterly newsletter of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin - ELCA*

## From the Bishop . . .

**8,603 miles. That's the distance** between Lilongwe, Malawi, and Eau Claire, Wisconsin. **That's a long, long way!** This distance is on my mind these days because I am looking forward to **the upcoming visit of the women's** delegation from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malawi. Bishop Joseph and Maria Bvumbwe and Mphatso Thole will be with them. The delegation will journey half way around the world to be with us.



Diane Kaufmann, our synod companion coordinator, has an article in this issue that I ask you to read. Note particularly **the delegation's presence at the Synodical Women's Convention and the Glocal Mission Event.**

*Accompaniment* is a key term in global relationships. It means that we walk together to learn from, to support, and to pray for one another. It is a mutual relationship wherein we discover the gifts of the other, even as we become gifts to the other.

There was a time when a global relationship meant raising money for a poor, marginally Christianized people. Not anymore! From our sisters and brothers in Malawi, we learn about and experience Spirit-filled evangelism, mission posts and preaching points, holistic ministry, strong lay leadership, lives shaped from communal study of the Word, extensive social ministry, and music that knocks your socks off! We are blessed by a people who have so little by way of things, but are so rich in trust and confidence in what God is doing in their midst.

Each March and October, the 65 bishops of the church gather. We frequently talk about our global relationships because every synod has

one or more global partners. In those discussions, one can literally feel the energy in the room rise, the conversation becomes lively, and it is evident how precious these relationships are. *We* know that same lift, liveliness, and preciousness in the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin. Global relationships and our walking together are life-giving!

It is the face-to-face meetings, the traveling to and from, that puts real **"flesh and blood" to our relationship.** Many have contributed and planned and prayed to make the upcoming visit of women from Malawi a possibility. My heartfelt thanks to each of you!

Please consider attending the Glocal Mission Event on April 23-24 at Our **Savior's Lutheran in Eau Claire.** Pre-register at [www.nwswi.org](http://www.nwswi.org). Attend the bi-annual **Synodical Women's Convention** at The Plaza in Eau Claire, April 30–May 1. **Don't miss the opportunity to interact with our Malawi companions!**

**You know, 8,603 miles really isn't so far**—not when Jesus binds us together. Walking together, accompaniment, for **the sake of mission makes God's world a whole lot smaller!**

The Northwest Synod of Wisconsin

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

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For up-to-date information about the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin, visit [www.nwswi.org](http://www.nwswi.org)

*"Accompaniment . . . means we walk together to learn from, to support and to pray for one another."*

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

## Milestones, Moves & More

### Milestones

#### *Congratulations to . . .*

Rev. Sarah Semmler Smith on her ordination. She has been called to serve **Our Savior's Lutheran in Stanley**.

Brahm Semmler Smith on his ordination. He has been called to serve **Our Savior's Lutheran in Cornell**.

Rev. David Almlie on his retirement from Zion and Grace Lutheran Churches in Frederic.

Rev. Harlen Menk on his retirement from English Lutheran in Ellsworth.

### Moves

Rev. Loren Barker called to Faith Lutheran in Cameron.

Rev. Curt Rohland called to interim ministry at **Our Savior's and Longwood Emmanuel** in Greenwood.

Rev. Joel Olsen appointed to serve as interim at **Our Saviour's in Whitehall**.

Stacy Johnson Myers called to serve First Congregational Church-UCC in River Falls.

Rev. Ken Vollmers, retired, transferred in from the Northwest Minnesota Synod.

### & More

#### *Our condolences to . . .*

The family of Rev. Maynard Larson, of Menomonie who passed away March 9, 2010.

The family of Carolyn Berkland, widow of Rev. Ted Berkland, who passed away March 11, 2010.

Rev. Dorothy Sandahl on the loss of her mother.

## Mark your calendar . . .



April 20-30

**Pilgrimage to the Holy Land** with Rev. Todd Iverson

April 23-24

**GLOCAL (Global/Local) Mission Gathering** at Our Savior's, Eau Claire

April 30-May 1

**Synodical Women's Biannual Convention** at the Plaza, Eau Claire

May 15

Miles for Malawi - 7x77 Mile Running and Biking Relay

May 20

**Book of Faith Pre-assembly Event**, "Digging Deeper into the Word," in Stevens Point

May 21-22

**Synod Assembly**, "Sowing Seeds of Hope: God's work. Our hands." at the Holiday Inn, Stevens Point

October 12

**Luncheon for Retired Pastors and Spouses** at Turtleback, Rice Lake

## Leadership Matters by Pastor Todd Iverson

***"I am just too busy to volunteer my time outside of the church."***

I confess to you, my sisters and brothers, that this heresy has slipped from my lips. Rostered leadership in the church can be an all-consuming call, but we miss the **mark when we don't walk the walk** of generosity with our time.

My own pastor has helped me to see that seeking balance can easily devolve into a fundamentally law-oriented exercise that is life taking rather than life giving. Rather than seeking balance, he encourages us to be centered, or rooted, in our

baptismal identity. Out of that grace-filled reality we live our lives to the Lord.

The Board of Pensions has given us a great visual way to think about this. The Wholeness Wheel is a tool that can help us as leaders think about a holistic stewardship of life. When we make excuses for not giving generously of our time or other resources because the demands of our vocation are overpowering, neither our vocation nor our generosity is well served. Our well-being is out of whack.

I encourage you reorient your thinking away from elusive, balance-of-the-scales, misuse-of-the-law equilibrium toward a life **centered in God's good grace** with the law as the good guide toward serving the neighbor in vocation *and* in generosity of volunteer time—not to mention **the other "pie pieces" in the Wholeness Wheel!**



*Pastor Todd Iverson, assistant to the bishop, guides congregations and pastors in the call process and works with the Leadership Support Commission to tend to the gifts of rostered and lay leaders throughout our synod.*

# Mission Moments by Pastor Amy Odgren

The congregations of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin have an exciting opportunity to encourage one another to be missional participants in the Lutheran Malaria Initiative (LMI) pilot project. Our synod is one of five who will begin to develop resources and ideas to share with others about the importance of education, advocacy and the prevention of one of the **world's most debilitating diseases**.

LMI is an unprecedented collaborative effort that unites the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, and Lutheran World Relief in an effort to mobilize *7.2 million* Lutherans in the United States to fight malaria. In partnership with the United Nations Foundation and other global organizations, this initiative will join Lutherans in raising \$75 million over the next five years to engage in learning about malaria, to advocate for global health initiatives, and to raise funds to help combat this disease.

Globally, *one child under the age of five dies from malaria every 30 seconds!* More than *one million people die each year from malaria*. This is particularly tragic because malaria is *preventable*. Although this disease has been nearly eradicated in the United States, it is a deadly disease for many in the world—especially for our brothers and sisters in Christ in Malawi.

Jesus calls us to work for justice, peace and healing in the

world. This is our opportunity to respond to that call. For as little as \$10, a life-saving bed net can be purchased and used to protect a person from the deadly bite of malaria-carrying mosquitoes. A donation of more than this can go miles in helping to support needed medical treatment programs



and to mobilize community-based and faith-based organizations to address malaria in a sustainable way—including insecticide spraying, local malaria prevention and education in areas where this disease is epidemic, and in the provision of anti-malarial medication—especially to pregnant women and children.

Malaria is a disease of poverty. People living in poverty cannot afford nets for protect from malaria-carrying mosquitoes. Malaria simply exacerbates poverty when people are too ill

to work. Finally, for many people, poverty is an insurmountable barrier that prevents them from purchasing medications that can readily treat and cure malaria.

Join in this opportunity to do **God's work with our hands**. **Share God's love** through prayer, education, giving, and advocacy and be a part of the change to reverse the incidence of malaria and other diseases.

On Saturday, May 15, a running and biking relay will be held throughout our synod. **This "Miles for Malawi" event** will raise money to purchase bednets and will bring attention to the challenges of those suffering from malaria. More information on this event can be found on the synod website ([www.nswi.org](http://www.nswi.org)).

**A portion of this year's Synod Assembly offering** will also go to support LMI. Watch for more ways that you can heighten **your congregation's awareness** of and participation in this critical initiative. Get involved!





## Walking Together: A Congregational Resource Event

March 20, 2010  
Chippewa Falls Middle School



A day of learning,  
growing, sharing and  
connecting!

Don't miss next year's event—  
**March 6, 2011**



[www.nwswi.org](http://www.nwswi.org)



**Northwest Synod of Wisconsin**  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
God's work. Our hands.

# Companion Synod News by Diane Kaufmann

As I write this article from Malawi, I am waiting. Waiting for the arrival of the Eye Care Mission group from Central Lutheran Church in Chippewa Falls tomorrow (April 8). Waiting for the visa interviews on April 14 of the remaining seven women who we hope will be part of the larger group traveling to their companion churches on April 21. In Malawi I have learned patience for waiting, finding it a **time to rest in God's time.**

Shortly after you read this issue of Network News, our guests from Malawi will arrive. The majority of our guests are women, invited by their synod companion congregations to come and meet face-to-face. The guests will spend time in their companion congregations and participate in two synod-wide gatherings: the Global Mission Gathering and the **Synod Women's Convention. A grant from the trust fund of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Eau Claire, assisted six of our congregations to make this visit possible. The day after their arrival on the 22, you will have the opportunity to meet them at the Global Mission Gathering in Eau Claire. We will be gifted through their witness and songs. We will hear stories from them about their holistic approach to ministry in a country with severe challenges but with confidence in God's abiding presence. We will learn more during the gathering about accompaniment—walking together.**

On Easter Sunday, the Gospel lesson read here in Malawi was from Luke 24, stopping just short of the Emmaus story that begins with verse 13. It is this story that gives us so much hope for our companion relationships. We read that in the giving of thanks together, breaking bread together, sharing scripture together, we meet Jesus in one another. With this visit, we have the opportunity to do all these things. We pray as our guests bring Jesus to us, they will also find Jesus in us. Come, Lord Jesus.



**Diane Kaufmann and friends squeeze into the back of this vehicle during her visit to Malawi.**

Looking for ideas,  
materials, tips?

Visit these websites today:

[www.synodresourcecenter.org](http://www.synodresourcecenter.org)

[www.feautor.org](http://www.feautor.org)

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Looking for links to other resources, organized in such a way that you can actually find them and use them? The Synod Resource Center website continues to be the Association of Lutheran Resource Centers official website to house useful weblinks. We are continually looking to add to our collection. If you have a favorite weblink that is not included, please email it to me at [gkaufmann@nswi.org](mailto:gkaufmann@nswi.org) so that it could be included.

This amazing ministry has been supported by both grants and gifts from some of our congregations and the **Women of the ELCA for the past ten years. Don't forget to send in your promised annual gift from your congregation.** (Synod assembly resolutions in 2000, 2003 and 2006 committed every congregation to give an annual gift to this ministry.) Together, we are making a difference!



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 Register today!

Visit us on the web:  
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## Greg's Resource Connection by Pastor Greg Kaufmann

Your Synod Resource Center will celebrate its ten-year anniversary at this year's synod assembly. From a humble beginning, supported by a grand vision, your Synod Resource Center has grown to become one of the premier full service centers in the ELCA.

Here is just the tip of the iceberg:

Your Synod Resource Center has about 6000 hard copy resources (DVDs, Books, Magazines, Tapes, Kits, Education Resources, etc.) on file at the center. **You can borrow any of them you'd like. You don't live in Eau Claire and wonder how to find out what is there? Think public library. Just go to our website and click on the online catalogue, where you can browse all 6000 titles! You will find a short synopsis of the resource and recommended age groups it would be appropriate for. We'll even mail it to you!**

Are you looking for creative ideas that you could adapt to your life or ministry setting? Are you wondering if an idea or **ministry you've figured out could be shared with others? Your Synod Resource Center pioneered the website where this is now happening for the entire world.**

In 2000, we received a grant to create a website ([www.synodresourcecenter.org](http://www.synodresourcecenter.org)) where good ideas from across the entire ELCA could be shared with everyone. The site grew in use and size to the point where we began looking for another grant to move the entire site (over 1000 creative ideas) to a database. At the same time, the World Council of Churches created a database ([www.feautor.org](http://www.feautor.org)) but had no content to put in it. With encouragement from Paul Edison-Swift, ELCA Department of Communication, we merged our two resources and have now created the best website out there for sharing resources in multiple languages. Check out [www.feautor.org](http://www.feautor.org). Better yet, add one of your own ideas to the site. It is easy to do. If you have questions, the resource center staff will be happy to assist you.

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