

Northwest Network

Spring 2011

A quarterly newsletter of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin - ELCA

From the Bishop . . .



I write this on the day that the death of Osama bin Laden was announced. The TV and Internet are filled with the news of the successful raid of highly

skilled Navy Seals, the feelings relived by those who lost loved ones on September 11, the response of people and governments around the world, and the analysis of potential terrorist reprisals.

I am surprised at my visceral, deep response of satisfaction that a mass murderer is dead from a bullet through the left eye and buried in the depths of the cold sea. Perhaps I should wait to absorb the news more fully and ponder my feelings more deeply, but I have already begun to think about what bin Laden's death means to people of faith.

Specifically, what does my sense of vindication mean for me when I do not consider myself a vindictive person?

The American psyche was changed forever when three passenger jets slammed into the World Trade Center and Pentagon, and another into the Pennsylvania soil before it could hit a D.C. target. Before 9-11, the bombing of the Tanzanian Embassy, the USS Cole, a British subway and more are all linked to bin Laden. Security and restrictions are now part of our everyday lives. Terrorism and extremism are "isms"

to which we pay close attention. And Osama bin Laden was a mastermind and a symbol of the dark side of humanity, a dark side we oppose and fight against.

How proud I am of the team that served our country so effectively. How relieved I am that one who has murdered so indiscriminately no longer walks the face of the earth. How pleased I am that some small measure of justice is felt by those who have experienced the cruel pain of loss caused by this elusive man. But, how uneasy I am to be so quickly moved to relish revenge and to think, "Yes! They got him!"

That's why these words from holy writ grab me. Ezekiel 33:11a says, "Say to them, 'As I live,' says the Lord God, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from their ways and live.'" In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous" (Matthew 5:43-45).

The contrast between a sense of justice in the death of bin Laden and words of Scripture that say peacemakers are blessed is reflective of the reality of life this side of the fullness of the Kingdom. The Kingdom has dawned upon us in the

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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

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

Greg's Resource Connection

by Pastor Greg Kaufmann

Milestones, Moves & More

Milestones

Congratulations to...

Elaine Mann, Associate in Ministry on her retirement from Grace Lutheran Church, Eau Claire, June 1, 2011.

Rev. Kari Burke-Romarheim and Vidar Romarheim on the birth of their son Lukas.

Rev. DJ Rasner and Amanda on the birth of their son Reuben.

Moves

Rev. Chet Hoversten appointed to interim ministry at Trinity in Spooner.

Rev. Will Mowchan called to Pilgrim in Superior

Rev. Carolyn Mowchan called to Our Savior's in Rice Lake

Rev. Gerd Bents called to the Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd in Eau Claire

& More

Our condolences to...

The family of **Rev. Vernon Anderson** who passed away April 19, 2011

Your Lay School of Ministry (www.layschoolofministry.org) will begin its 19th year of providing the best opportunity for lifelong learning anywhere in the ECA this September. Open to anyone who has affirmed his/her baptism, registration forms are available on the home page of our website. Ages of our participants range from high school to senior citizens!

You will have the opportunity to study the Bible, our Lutheran theology and history, our worship practices, as well as experience a wide range of spiritual practices with a group of about 25 others. Dates of our sessions, as well as full details about what is covered each month are available on the website. If you've been to Lay School, either ours or in another synod, then you are strongly encouraged to sign up for our Continuing Education class which runs September – May, and meets the same time as our regular first and second year groups. This year's topic is "Lutheran Answers to Real Questions." There is no class size limit, so there is certainly room for you and your friends!

Here is a list of the faculty and topics they will be covering:

2011

Sept 9-10	Susan McCarver, Southern Seminary, Vocation of the Baptized
Oct 7-8	<i>Pending response from LIRS, Immigration</i>
Nov 11-12	Carol Lahurd, LSTC, Muslim/Jewish/Christian Relations
Dec 9-10	David Fredrickson, Luther Seminary, Criminal Justice System

2012

Jan 13-14	Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson, ELCA, Church Structure in a Post Christendom World
Feb 10-11	Ralph Klein, LSTC, Authority of the Word
March 9-10	Phil Ruge Jones, Texas Lutheran, Theology of the Cross/Theology of Glory
April 13-14	Gary Simpson, Luther Seminary, The Church in the Public Square: working for the common good
May 11-12	Jim Martin-Schramm, Luther College, The Church and Ecology/Genetics/Global Warming/Evolution/Cosmology etc.

Dr. Samuel Torvend, Pacific Lutheran University, was the final Continuing Education professor for this year's Lay School of Ministry. He talked about moments in the history of the church when we have figured out how to be missional.

Visit the website to learn more about the Lay School of Ministry :
www.layschoolofministry.org



Companion Synod News

by Diane Kaufmann

An Easter message from Bruno Ari Bublitz, Synod Pastor of our companions in Brazil:

“I greet you with great affection this week so special for us, sons and daughters of God, which is the Easter weekend and I salute you with the Biblical Joshua 1.9: ‘Have I not commanded? Be strong and courageous.’”

In a reality marked by many signs of violence and death, where many people walk around tired and dispirited by the road of life, when they no longer see any prospect of a better tomorrow, the Biblical Joshua reminds us of the warrant of God which sends us out to be a light in the darkness, hope among the dispirited . . . sends us to announce that HE lives, that HE has won the power of death and gives new life to all men and women who put their hope in him.”

Planning for the 2011 Pastors’ Academy in Malawi continues. We are thankful that Norda, Inc. has again offered to provide a challenge grant in the amount of

\$10,000 for the synod to help support the costs of the Academy. However, we are short of our goal to meet this challenge grant. Please help support the theological education of pastors, evangelists, and deanery parish workers through this effort! Monies collected are used to provide transportation, food, lodging, and materials for the ELCM church leaders attending the Academy.

There have been many ways to focus on the 2011 Hunger Offering that will be received at the synod assembly. The ten-week approach for the “Ten Ways God Has Worked in Ten Years” appeal ended Sunday, May 1, which was also Companion Synod Sunday. No matter how you collected the hunger offering, please send a check to the synod office before the assembly (June 3-4). The total will be announced at the assembly. Two-thirds of the offering will go to the ELCM and one-third to the ELCA World Hunger Appeal for their life-saving ministries.

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death and resurrection of Jesus, but we are still fallen creatures in daily need of redemption. That’s why our baptism steeps us in the death and resurrection in the Lord every day through repentance and forgiveness.

I have little doubt that I will continue to struggle with earthly “justice” and the radical words of the Bible about turning the other cheek. Frankly, persons of faith should intensely experience such struggle as we live out the Gospel of grace in a broken, sometimes brutal, world.

Recently, I delivered a keynote address at a Martin Luther King commemoration event. In the research for the presentation, I came across this King quote that informs me these post-bin Laden days.

“Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.” And . . . I continue to struggle.



Mark your calendar

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| June 3-4 | Synod Assembly
at UW-Eau Claire |
| July 4-15 | Pastors’ Academy
In Malawi |
| August 1-2 | Soul Support for Church Office Professionals
at Plaza hotel, Eau Claire |
| August 15-19 | ELCA Churchwide Assembly
Orlando, Florida |

Mission Moments by Pastor Amy Odgren

Do You Know Your Neighbor?

"I was talking with a friend recently who said she had over 600 'friends' on Facebook but didn't know anyone in her neighborhood - what's that about?" BBC Report, December 2009.

Twenty years ago, Alan Roxburgh wrote *Reaching a New Generation*, describing the dramatic shifts that would reshape the relationship between Christian life and the culture of North America. His prophetic words helped readers reflect on many efforts to renew, reform and reshape the church to engage this emerging context. Thinking ahead and imagining what it might mean to be God's witnessing people, he wrote these words:

Today's church is in crisis. Its renewal requires far more than liturgical change or doctrinal correction - focusing on new structures...not an adequate response. The tectonic plates of Western culture are shifting. As modernity is questioned and parts rejected, the church is also questioned and marginalized... Despite all our protestations the church in North America remains focused on itself. Until this is changed, evangelization will continue to look like forays into the world in order to recruit members for our clubs.

The twenty-year old book concluded with a picture of the way ahead which was not about bigger and bigger churches that Christians drive to, nor more churches effective at getting other Christians into their buildings. Instead, it mentioned a different kind of movement involving thousands and thousands of lights being lit in neighborhoods and communities across the continent, as God's people **moved back into their neighborhoods** to rediscover that God was already ahead of them creating and calling forth that which was new.

Neighborhoods – the places that we call “our community” are the contexts into which God calls us to live the mission of Jesus. But do we really know who that neighborhood is? For many of us in the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin, neighborhood is changing, yet the people that we sit next to in the pews are still the people that we know and have had a relationship with for many years. How are we doing in seeking to find

where Jesus is working right within our own communities – especially in light of the declining numbers that all of our congregations are experiencing? Are our communities of faith responding to changing neighborhoods? Do you want to know where to find Jesus today? Have you ever wondered how to go about figuring out what God is up to in the world? Are you wondering about how to shape local churches that aren't boring or merely a poor substitute for the self-help programs on TV? The response to each is the same: join with Jesus and move into the neighborhood because that's where we'll connect with what God is up to. There, in the ordinariness and humanness of a neighborhood, we will discover what it means to be Christian and, in so doing, we may start to get what it's like to be more fully engaged in discipleship rather than membership.

I've gotten excited by thinking of the neighborhood possibilities that are right in front of us as we can now review 2010 census records. Counties on the western edge of our synod are growing due to migration and increasing number of births associated with young families that tend to move to suburban areas. Latinos now account for 5.9 percent of Wisconsin's total population, with many new immigrants providing a much needed workforce in the dairy industry in our rural communities.

Our neighbors are not the objects of our work or an assignment for getting people into a church building; but they are God's precious creation. Our calling is to walk with and beside them in order to call forth the stories and narratives that are among these people and comprise the wonderful character of the community.

It will be in this kind of walking together that two things will happen. First, we will discover ways of connecting people's stories with the story of Jesus and, second, we will be so challenged and provoked by what the Spirit is up to in our community that our understanding of the Gospel and the church will be turned upside down. We will be changed!

I invite you to engage more deeply in your neighborhoods. **Listen** to the narratives of the people in your community. **See** that God is already ahead of you and involved! **Ask** where you are being called to join with what God is already doing. **Cultivate** new practices of Christian life as you walk together with your neighbors.