

Northwest Network

Summer 2011

A quarterly newsletter of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin - ELCA

From the Bishop . . .

Two gatherings happened last week that prompted me to marvel at our relationships and partnerships as the whole church. The first was the orientation for the 22 voting members from our synod who will attend the 2011 Churchwide Assembly in Orlando in August. The second was a meeting I attended last weekend as a member of the Memorials Committee for the 2011 Churchwide Assembly.

In the aftermath of the 2009 sexuality decisions, there are some who claim that the way the church makes decisions is broken, that individuals and congregations are at the bottom of a top-down structure, that decisions made are like a bolt out of the blue with no opportunity for input or shaping of the decisions. I disagree, and the two recent meetings in which I participated confirm my perspective.

The churchwide voting members, who will gather in Orlando in mid-August, are from all corners of our synod. Their names were surfaced from our 205 congregations and nominated by the seven conferences of our synod. Each of our congregations sends voting members to synod assemblies; these congregational voting members determined who our 22 churchwide assembly voting members would be. The persons elected were deemed faithful to the Lord and committed to this church. In short, it is a very representative group of our synod who are charged with making decisions on behalf of the whole church at the highest legislative body of our denomination. In other words, ordinary members from regular congregations – from our

synod and the 64 other synods – are the ones who make decisions, decisions that are not dictated by bishops or “Chicago” or others perceived to be part of a directive hierarchy. We are very representative in our polity and decision-making.



The Memorials Committee is a group of about a dozen individuals who are appointed by the ELCA Church Council to sort through all of the memorials – requested actions for the churchwide assembly – that come from synod assemblies. I was appointed to that committee and over two days, we sifted through 97 synodical memorials. The topics ranged significantly: constitutional changes, bullying, Palestinian economic development, immigration, etc. These are primary topics upon which the churchwide voting members will act. Where did these memorials to be acted upon come from? The memorials typically come from individual congregations. They were approved as memorials by their respective synods to be forwarded to the churchwide assembly for action. Again, this is a bottom up, or congregation down, way of **determining the “business” of the church** and what decisions will be made.

I think of the five-year *Book of Faith* initiative of the ELCA. It was the dream of an east coast congregation that all of the members of our denomination

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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

Milestones, Moves & More

Milestones

Congratulations to . . .

Rev. Roger Pittman on his retirement.

Rev. John Kaplinski on his retirement.

Rev. Ken Taylor, ordained June 7, called to serve Immanuel Lutheran in Strum.

Rev. Lori Peper, ordained June 16, called to serve First Lutheran in Barron.

Rev. Sara Pearson, ordained July 5, called to serve Calvary Lutheran in Minong.

Rev. Nate Winterhof, ordained July 6, called to serve Our Saviors Lutheran in Solon Springs.

Rev. Brian Campbell, ordained July 21, called to serve Our Saviors Lutheran and Longwood Emmanuel, Greenwood

Moves

Rev. Sam Jackson appointed to interim ministry at First Lutheran and West Akers Lutheran in Prairie Farm.

Rev. Michael Meier appointed to interim ministry at First Lutheran, Prentice and Zion Lutheran in Brantwood.

Rev. Ralph Thompson called to serve Luck Lutheran in Luck.

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

Rev. Robert Bjornlund called to interim ministry at Rush River Lutheran, River Falls

Rev. Julie Brendan called to interim ministry at Holy Cross, Glenwood City

Rev. Jeanne Warner called to interim ministry at St. John's in Bloomer

Greg's Resource Connection

by Pastor Greg Kaufmann

The Northwest Synod of Wisconsin is a Book of Faith synod. As your synod advocate for the Book of Faith Initiative, I'd like to share four great ways that you and your congregation can continue to dig deeply into our scriptural heritage.

1. **Join the Lay School of Ministry.** This September, your Lay School of Ministry will begin its 19th year of providing the best opportunity for life-long learning anywhere in the ELCA. 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. Open to anyone who has affirmed his/her baptism, registration forms are available on the home page of our website (www.layschoolofministry.org).
2. **Use the Synod Resource Center.** Your Synod Resource Center (www.synodresourcecenter.org) is filled with materials, books, courses, DVDs and much more aimed at helping you engage the Scriptures. You can access these by using the online catalogue, or you can simply call Bonnie Weber and ask her to recommend some great resources for what you'd like to accomplish/experience in your own setting. For example, if you'd like to know what the book of Revelation is actually all about and why it is good news for us today, your Synod Resource Center has just what you need for either personal study or group study.
3. **Visit the Book of Faith website.** The Book of Faith website (www.bookoffaith.org) is filled with great resources for you. From video clips to Bible studies, you can download for free just what you need to engage the Scriptures. You can even join a social network site and share your ideas with others in the many conversation groups. Ten Book of Faith videos, created by Tim Frakes for our synod, are available on this site.
4. **Access resources through Augsburg Fortress.** Book of Faith resources continue to be developed by Augsburg Fortress Publishing. One of my favorites is "The Greatest Story," which includes a DVD with 16 different sand art video clips that summarize the entire Bible. Visit the website (www.augsburgfortress.org) for more information.



Mark your calendar

Aug. 1-2

Soul Support

for Church Office Professionals
at Plaza hotel, Eau Claire

Aug. 15-19

ELCA Churchwide Assembly

Orlando, Florida

Sept. 18-20

Fall Ministry Retreat

At Heartwood, Trego

Oct. 6

New to Synod Event

Oct. 12

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

Companion Synod News

by Diane Kaufmann

In 1999, the ELCA produced a strategic planning document entitled, *Global Mission in the Twenty-first Century*. The overall purpose of the plan is more effective witness to Jesus Christ. The document suggests that this can best be pursued by churches effectively walking together in companionship, as we are doing with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malawi (ELCM).

One of the goals outlined in the strategic plan involves supporting education programs in our companion church. *Growing Together* is a joint effort of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin and the ELCM to do just that--to work together to increase the theological capacity of pastors, evangelists and deanery women's coordinators in Malawi.

To achieve this, Pastor David Anderson, Immanuel Lutheran in Eau Claire, and Pastor Amy Odgren, synod staff, traveled to Malawi in July and taught at this year's Pastors' Academy.

Here are some of their observations about their experience:

"Why is the Academy important? Not all pastors have received formal theological education. Many of them became pastors after serving as evangelists for a period of time and attending twelve months of theological training offered by the ELCM. So for them, continuing education is necessary to build their theological knowledge base. The ELCM is a growing church and is experiencing a severe pastor shortage. One pastor may serve 10 or more preaching points. A church experiencing that kind of pastor shortage can't

keep up with growth. Training 'short course' pastors is one way to quickly get more pastors into the system."

"It's fun to be at the Academy. We see pastors renewing friendships and relationships. We see them challenging one another in friendly debates during the educational sessions. We are all learning from each other!"

The pastors of the ELCM are deeply appreciative of the teaching pastors. Here are some of their comments:

"Thank you for helping us to see things more deeply. You've worked hard and done your work to bring us such good teaching. We know it has cost you time and effort. Each day we are increasing our knowledge and learning more."

This year the nine deanery women's coordinators, a new position in the church, have been included in the academy. Three of them have had sufficient training to remain in the Pastors' Academy. The other six women were grouped together with the lay evangelists to learn at a more basic level. They are all eager to learn and I anticipate that in future academies they will be ready for higher-level coursework. In fact, I look at them and wonder, will one of them become the first female pastor of the ELCM?

Although this year's academy has ended, it's not too late for you to become part of this important effort. Mail your donation to the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin, 944 24 1/4 Street, Suite 2, Chetek, WI 54728.

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might become more fluent in the primary language of faith, the Bible. This dream made its way from a handful of individuals to a formal resolution submitted by a single congregation to a synod assembly for adoption and forwarded as a memorial to a churchwide assembly for approval as an initiative of the whole church.

Please do not misunderstand me. There are indeed times when decision-making is cumbersome, hard, or

controversial. But the church has been served very well, both as the ELCA and its predecessor bodies, for a long, long time with a representative polity that affirms, values, and trusts the relationships of the whole church.

The 2011 Churchwide Assembly will be held August 15-19. Watch for updates and live streaming of the assembly at www.elca.org.

Leadership Matters

by Pastor Todd Iverson

Many paths to rostered leadership

Once upon a time, in our predecessor church bodies, there was just one way to become a leader in the church. One went to college (most likely a college affiliated with the denomination) and then to seminary. Finally, the individual was ordained into word and sacrament ministry. Oh, times have changed!

In June, the Candidacy Committee of our synod met with four gifted people who are beginning the work to become leaders in our church--each in a unique way. .

The first candidate is studying youth and family ministry at Augsburg College and wants to be commissioned as an associate in ministry in the church. Associates in ministry choose a specific ministry emphasis, receive training in that field, and work with the Candidacy Committee to discern how their gifts may be a calling to a vocation in the church.

The second candidate is a traditional student, getting ready to graduate from college (also Augsburg). In her early 20s, she is feeling a call to ordained ministry and is looking forward to starting classes at seminary in the fall. The Candidacy Committee will explore both the internal and external call to ministry with her as she moves toward ordination.

The third person is a second-career candidate for ordained ministry who saw an opportunity in a special program called Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM). In the TEEM program, people are trained for culture-specific ministries or for work in rural congregations. The program raises up leaders from local communities to serve underserved congregations in our church.

The fourth candidate is also a second-career person who feels called to bridge the divide between church and world by becoming a diaconal minister, one consecrated to word and service rather than word and sacrament ministry. Diaconal ministers seek to lead all the baptized to live out their baptismal identity in their daily lives. Often they choose a specific ministry emphasis, and they examine their own spiritual journey in order to draw out the spiritual gifts of the people they serve and address the spiritual needs of the communities in which they serve.

Today nothing is simple. The church is working hard to meet the needs of the mission that Jesus has set before us by equipping leaders to equip the saints for work in God's world. Your Candidacy Committee is committed to this important—and sometimes dizzying—work.

What is a Candidacy Committee?

It is a committed group of 10 people from our synod who walk with candidates for ministry on their spiritual journey to become rostered leaders in the church.

Every synod has their own candidacy committee. These are the members of ours:

Rev. Ramie Bakken
Lynn Fering
Rev. Rick Hoyme
Heather Kistner, Diaconal Minister
Rev. Randy Olson
Bishop Duane Pederson
Rev. Brad Peterson
Suzanne Vitale
Rev. Bill Wilson
Sue Zahrbock

Please pray for our candidates and the members of the Candidacy Committee.