

Northwest Network

A quarterly newsletter of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin - ELCA

From the Bishop . . .

A Japanese teenager, Yu Nakajima, won the Rubik's Cube World Championships held in Budapest, Hungary. Nakajima solved the classic 3x3 version of the six-colored cube, which has nine squares on each side, with an average time of 12.46 seconds in five attempts. The world record is 9.86 seconds.

Hundreds of participants competed for the \$7,000 first-place prize and the pride of being the fastest cube-solver in the world. The three-day event also offered prizes for solving the puzzle with two hands, one hand, feet, or blindfolded.



The cube was invented by Erno Rubik in 1974. Since its invention in Hungary, 300 million Rubik Cubes have been sold worldwide. Mr. Rubik made a rare appearance at the competition to award prizes and said, "I'm glad the cube is reaching new generations, who face it with fresh wonder, curiosity and enthusiasm."

I haven't tried a Rubik's Cube in years, mostly because I find them bewildering. The cube is said to have 43,252,003,274,489,856,000 possible configurations. Most people, like me, try to solve the cube layer by layer. This is a rather fruitless method because once you get one layer assembled, you can do nothing to move forward without breaking it up. Thus, the first layer is in the way of the solution, not part of it. Every move needs to be part of the solution.

Sometimes congregational **ministry is like a Rubik's** Cube:

- *Ministry can seem bewildering because congregational life and the context in which we witness and serve are as complex as a multi-sided puzzle.*

- *When mission is at the heart of congregational life, each "move" takes the Gospel deeper into the world; then ministry is not aimless church busyness like endless cube twisting.*

- *Like the cube, ministry is reclaimed by each generation as the Spirit fills them, to quote Mr. Rubik, with "fresh wonder, curiosity and enthusiasm."*

- *Ministry in the name of Jesus can indeed be done!*



The "solution," if we can use such language, always happens because ministry is ultimately **God's** doing, not ours.

Analogies certainly have limits in application, but I want to encourage you to envision ministry in creative, mission-filled ways. **Don't** just go through the motions in church life, like I do when I twist mindlessly on a Rubik's Cube.

Does each "move" made in your congregation contribute to the mission of Jesus Christ? Do you prayerfully rely on the Spirit to send you into the world to speak and live the Gospel?

I am determined to learn **how to solve the Rubik's** Cube (solutions are available online!). But I am more determined to be intentional about how we "do church" as we seek to be faithful and missional.

In this issue . . .

Solving the Puzzle
by Bishop Pederson

Stewards of our Faith
by Rev. Todd Iverson

Transformation –
Participating in God's
Mission
by Rev. Amy Odgren

A Book of Faith Event
by Rev. Greg Kaufmann

A Companion Synod
Update
by Diane Kaufmann

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Milestones, Moves & More

Milestones

Congratulations to . . .

Aaron Sturgis and his wife Nikole on the birth of Ayden James Sturgis (born Jan 14, 2009).

Rev. Terry Lorenz on his ordination and installation at Independence Lutheran and Elk Creek Lutheran in Osseo, December 14, 2008,

Rev. Ben Ahles-Iverson on his ordination December 20, 2008, and his installation at Trinity Peace parish in Taylor, January 4, 2009.

Rev. Daniel Olson on his retirement from Wartburg Seminary.

Moves

Rev. Paul Martinson, retired, to interim ministry at Joy in Prescott

Rev. Kristina Jensen called to Our Saviors in Iron River from the Southwestern Minnesota Synod

Rev. Scott Miller called to First Lutheran, Eau Claire as Senior Pastor from the South Dakota Synod

Rev. Paul Simmons called to Saron Lutheran Church in Ashland from Eastern North Dakota

Tim Voigts, SAM, to interim ministry at St Paul's in Augusta

Rev. John Hosmann called to interim ministry at Our Saviors, Cornell

Rev. Bob Bjornlund called to interim ministry at Zion in Winter and Calvary in Draper

Rev. Susan Anderson transferred to the Sierra Pacific Synod

Rev. Paula Ziems resigned from the roster

Rev. Ron Golberg, retired, transferred to the Grand Canyon Synod

Rev. John Lee, retired, transferred to the Western Iowa Synod

& More

Our condolences to . . .

The family of Rev. Scott Tunseth and his wife Kathleen on the loss of Kathleen's mother, Ruth Donlan

The family of Rev. Guy Redfield and his wife Renee on the loss of Renee's mother, Betty Harmornick

The family of Rev. Keith Ruehlow and his wife Lisa on the loss of Lisa's father, Paul Monson

In the Sty

by Pastor Todd Iverson

According to legend, Martin Luther was asked, "What would you do if you knew that the world was going to end tomorrow?" He responded, "I'd plant a tree."

While I look forward to hearing Dr. Rossing's presentations on "Are we living at the end of the world?" at the Winter Theological Event, I am more mindful of a different end these days. This will be my last "In the Sty" column. Shifting responsibilities in the synod office will mean that Amy Odgren will oversee stewardship with her work as the Director of Evangelical Mission and I will be working with the candidacy committee and the candidates for the four rosters of the ELCA.

With the end of stewardship responsibilities for me, I've got a "bucket list"* of things I want to share before I'm done, but I will limit myself to two.

When I was first asked to consider the position of Assistant to the Bishop last year, I was told that part of my responsibilities would include the work of Synod Stewardship Specialist. It was further confirmation of God's (and the Bishop's) sense of humor. But in these 15 months, I have become passionate about the need for deeper and more overt conversation about stewardship in our congregations. This is the core of Christian stewardship: *God has called us to be disciples. When disciples address the needs of the world, that is called mission. When disciples use the gifts that God has given them, that is called stewardship.*

All aspects of personal stewardship (vocational, intellectual, relational, emotional, physical and financial) grow out of this core truth. This fundamental treatment of stewardship needs to be in the forefront of our thinking, preaching, praying and working if we will lead our congregations to active living in the kingdom of God.

The second item on my "bucket list" concerns our spiritual stewardship of the mysteries of God (1 Cor. 4.1). I am first and foremost a Christian. That is our common confession. I understand this confession from a Lutheran perspective—a perspective that is a gift to the wider Christian church. The essential core of the Lutheran approach to following Christ has been and will be endlessly debated and here is my own humble addition to the debate:

- (1) God saves us by grace; we respond in faith.
- (2) God speaks through all of Holy Scripture, most clearly, eloquently, and passionately through Christ's suffering and death (aka Theology of the Cross).
- (3) God became present in the Word made flesh and continues to do so in Word and Sacraments.
- (4) The Word of God is best interpreted by discerning the difference between Law and Gospel.
- (5) We are at the same time saint and sinner.
- (6) We are called by God to live out our faith through our vocation for the good of all creation.
- (7) We are compelled to talk with other Christians who do not share our distinctively Lutheran approach to following Christ so that we can learn from them more fully what it means to be a child of God. (Lutherans DO have blind spots: evangelism anyone?)

If we, all 106,000+ baptized Lutherans in the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin, are good stewards of these mysteries of God, we will indeed be a gift for the sake of the whole body of Christ.

**"Bucket List" comes from a popular movie, "The Bucket List," in which the main character creates a list of things he'd like to do before he "kicks the bucket." If you haven't seen it, check it out!*

Mission Moments by Pastor Amy Odgren

Transformation – Participating in God’s Mission

As the Mission Director of our synod, I have met many pastors and lay leaders who recognize the need for change in their congregations. Some are looking for practical help to address issues of reaching out evangelically in their communities, ways to tackle declining attendance, ideas to encourage more youth into the life of the congregation, ways to add spark into the congregational structure and leadership, or maybe even some ways to incorporate new inspiring worship practices. Some are also interested in exploring partnership ministry with other congregations in an effort to expand their ministries in a collaborative way.

What is apparent to me in all of these concerns is that they have everything to do with *transformation*—what God has in mind and is up to with each individual congregation **and its members. Maybe it’s time to ask these questions: “What is God doing in the world—in our community?” and “What is God calling our congregation to be and do?”**

What Does Transformation Look Like?

Transformation can look like many things. Each congregation is a unique place for mission and ministry. However, there are several common themes:

- ✦ Congregational life is, first and foremost, based on *spiritual depth and vitality*. Dynamic preaching, scripture study and prayer are central in the activity of the transformed congregation.
- ✦ The congregation is coming to

grips with its identity and core values.

- ✦ The pastor and key lay leaders work together.
- ✦ The congregation reconnects with its surrounding community.
- ✦ They are willing to plan for mission and then carry out the plan.
- ✦ They are committing adequate resources to the mission of the congregation.

Perhaps it’s time we have a discussion. If you can imagine your congregation greeting a new day in evangelical outreach, becoming excited about the activity of God and what God has in store for your congregation; if **you’re becoming energized to work in new and meaningful ways, then let’s talk about transformation and the new life that is possible!**

2009 Synod Assembly
Book of Faith: Living in the Word
 May 29-30
 University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

Northwest Network
 Winter 2009

Calendar of Events

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| Feb 7 | Council Leadership Training Good Shepherd, Eau Claire |
| Feb 8-9, | Winter Theological Event, The Plaza, Eau Claire |
| Feb 21 | Tending the Baptismal Journey, Zion Lutheran, Stratford |
| Feb 27-28 | Spouse Retreat, Heartwood, Trego |
| Mar 14 | Council Leadership Training First Lutheran, Hayward |
| Mar 28 | Book of Faith Event Teaching the Bible: Joining the Conversation Grace Lutheran, Tomahawk |



FUND FOR LEADERS
 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

At the 2008 synod assembly, a resolution was passed authorizing a two year Fund for Leaders appeal for the purpose of building the Fund for Leaders endowment. The advanced commitment phase was completed in 2008. The congregational phase begins in 2009. Please participate in the Fund for Leaders appeal, give generously, and hold future leaders of the church in your prayers.



Northwest Synod of Wisconsin

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

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book of faith

Open Scripture. Join the Conversation.

Greg's Resource Connection

by Pastor Greg Kaufmann

Teaching the Bible: Joining the Conversation

A Book of Faith Initiative event hosted by your Resource Center and the Resource Center of the East Central Synod of Wisconsin

Date: Saturday, March 28, 2009

Time: 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Place: Grace Lutheran Church, Tomahawk, WI

Cost: Only \$30/person (includes lunch)

Have you ever wished you knew more about the Bible? Has it been awhile since you actually spent time reading it? Are you looking for ways to equip homes to be places where the Bible does more than adorn an end table? Are you looking for ways to grow your devotional use of the Bible?

Teaching the Bible: Joining the Conversation will provide you with an opportunity to explore biblical insights with our bishops, workshop leaders and musicians, and discover how to bring the Bible to life in your church and home! Our two Keynote Bible Teachers are Bishops Pederson and Justman.

Our workshop leaders include:

Dawn Rudman (*creator of SPLASH, Augsburg's resource for parents of young children*), Jonathan Rudman (*musician*), Diane Monroe (*Director for Christian Education – ELCA*), Bill Huff (*Assistant Director for the Book of Faith*), Andrea Fieldhouse (*Director of Family and Youth, Mount Calvary Lutheran Church*), Lyle Griner (*The Youth and Family Institute*), Anna Marsh (*Web Coordinator for the Book of Faith*), Greg Kaufmann (*Director of the ELCA's Fisher's Net Select*), and both bishops.

A brochure with complete descriptions of these workshops, which range from working with young children in the home to using Select Multimedia Resources in adult Bible study, will be on our synod website (www.nswi.org) soon.

Companion Synod News

by Diane Kaufmann

Late winter and spring will see lots of activity with our companions in Sinodo Centro Campanha Sul, Brazil and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malawi.

BRAZIL

Nine women are preparing to visit Brazil May 3-18. This will be a face-to-face visit with home stays and a **women's assembly to explore, experience, and celebrate the subject, "God's Mission and Women."**

MALAWI

Our synod will welcome Mphatso Thole, Companion Coordinator for the ELCM, February 6 to March 17. He will

be visiting congregations, synod events, and participating in the Malawi Summit. All are welcome to join us for the summit, which is being held February 22, 3 to 5 p.m. at First Lutheran Church in Barron. We will look at the past, present, and future of our relationship with the ELCM, and share best ideas about living into this relationship. A light supper will follow. **To see Mphatso's schedule online, visit <http://ical.me.com/nazulu/Mphatso>.**

A *Culture and Companionship* retreat will be held at Luther Point Bible Camp Thursday, March 26. We will focus on understanding how different cultures

learn and study, so that we can brainstorm ideas on how, as a Book of Faith synod, we can study scripture together with our companions. This retreat is not to be missed! For more details, visit www.lutherpoint.org.

A Mission Pilgrimage to parishes in central and northern Malawi will take place June 21 to July 7, 2009. There are still openings available.

Contact Diane Kaufmann, Companion Synod Coordinator, dkaufmann@nswi.org, 715-579-1731 for more information on any of these opportunities.