



**Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

North/West Lower Michigan Synod

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The Bishop's Letter

December 2009

We Are Moving!

The purpose we have claimed for the Center for Mission & Ministry is to be a “catalyst for growth and renewal, connection and collaboration.” The purpose we claim is “catalyst.” The outcomes we seek are growth and renewal, connection and collaboration. A remarkable gift has been given to us on this challenging journey to build a new campus with a dedicated space for worship, room for learning, and offices for the administrative tasks of the synod. I believe that the purpose for the Center is becoming the vision for the North/West Lower Michigan Synod.

We continue to encourage and receive gifts and pledges needed to proceed with construction. And while we cannot yet build a building, by the power of the Gospel, we can build each other up. We can also build up the body of Christ for the sake of the Gospel, for the sake of the world. We as a whole synod can be intentional about growth and renewal, connection and collaboration. This vision can inform everything we do for one another and for the world we serve.

And, the good news is that we can live into that vision by utilizing a temporary place for ministry. St. Stephen Lutheran Church, located 2.7 miles north of the current synod office, will provide dedicated space for worship, room for learning, and offices for our administrative work. The lease agreement is being developed, and we expect to move during the last week of January. This seems an inspired “win-win” for our mission and ministry as a synod as well as for the ministry of St. Stephen.

Blessings to you this Advent as together we remember God's faithfulness.

Bishop John

Note: The synod office will be closed on December 4, 11 and 18 as staff attend to purging files and packing.

Institute of Spiritual Formation

Nancy Brousseau, OP

Center for Mission & Ministry Facilitator

Would your church have one or two persons you would recommend and send for this formation program? They will learn a contemplative approach to small group facilitation that is adaptable for use with any kind of group: group spiritual direction (the person facilitating does not need to be a spiritual director, just one open to guiding the process of the group); and especially prayerful ministry support groups such as spiritual renewal, health care, adult religious formation teams, and catechesis. People in other workplace settings who wish to deepen their presence for God in the workplace may find this model of group spiritual direction useful also.

If two individuals from your church are trained they may serve as a team in guiding a group or provide the possibility of more than one group meeting at a time. Groups that are formed may meet once a month for a year or more depending on need and commitment. Primary purpose of any group is to grow individually in love of God and to develop as a discerning community in Christ prayerfully present to one another in love.

Qualities of facilitators that will serve well:

- open to new learning
- prayerful
- listening and discerning presence
- aware of details
- leadership capacity & confidentiality
- some sense of group dynamics

Training for Facilitating Contemplative Groups

In this 6-month program of seven 3-hour sessions, participants develop background and skills necessary to form and facilitate contemplative spiritual direction or specialized ministry or faith sharing groups while receiving peer group mentoring at each session. Through prayer, discernment, readings, experiential learning, presentations, and short reflection papers, participants immerse themselves in the process of prayerfully guiding groups. It is hoped that participants have a desire to be present to God on behalf of others, to grow as a contemplative person, and have some experience of group dynamics. This process is grounded in a theology of the Holy Spirit as the facilitator of spiritual community.

(continued on page 3)

Location	Christ United, 1000 W. Webb Rd., Dewitt
Dates	Thursdays 1/21; 2/11 & 2/25; 3/25; 4/29; 5/13; 6/3
Time	2-5pm
Cost	\$90 (two payments \$45 each -January and June) Two participants from the same church -\$135 total (participants could share the cost with the church)
Required text	<i>Group Spiritual Direction: Community for Discernment</i> by Rose Mary Dougherty. Paulist Press (as low as \$2.15 used or new plus shipping at Amazon.com)
Recommended	<i>The Lived Experience of Group Spiritual Direction</i> by Rose Mary Dougherty, SSND

Each formation/education session will consist of a time of learning, discussion and group experience based on the assigned readings for the session. Participants will be asked to incorporate personal reflections on the experience of facilitating a group they may wish to begin in their church as a way of practice/praxis during the program. They will receive individual and peer mentoring throughout the program. Two participants from the same church may work as a team in facilitating a group within their church.

Each participant is to submit two personal reflection papers; a 1-2 page paper is due mid-term (after the third session) and a 2-3 page paper at the final session of the program.

Call (517-321-5066) or email (nancybrousseau@mittensynod.org) for more information or to register.

Wernyol Lith Payam Relief for Hunger

Rev. Clay Bates, Director for Evangelical Mission

One of the congregations of our synod is the Sudanese Christ Lutheran Church, in Wyoming. Many of the members of that congregation, including Matthew Riak, are from the community of the Wernyol Lith Payam. In August of this year, a militia from a nearby community attacked the village. Forty-seven people were killed and 64 were wounded, many of them critically wounded. Many of our brothers and sisters in Christ who are a part of Sudanese Christ Lutheran Church are grieving the death of as many as six of their relatives, and many more friends.

Our Synod Council has authorized a synod-wide call for support of Sudanese Christ Lutheran Church as they organize a relief effort. We call upon your prayers and support for the provision of food, water, medicine, clothing, and mosquito nets; for on top of this tragedy is a time of hunger. It has been a dry “rainy season” so food is scarce, and along with the violence upon the village, food, clothing, and livestock were taken. Five thousand people have been displaced.

Please be watching and listening for opportunities to support this relief effort.



Earthkeeping News & Updates

Kim Winchell, Diaconal Minister

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Dawn Smith

EKO Team

Your EKO team has ideas for a greener and happier holiday for you, your family and the Earth.

To purchase a live tree or artificial?

The results will surprise you. The greenest choice is a living tree that can be replanted. Next is the natural cut tree (most cities recycle them into mulch). The least favorite is the artificial tree. The artificial tree is made from nonrenewable PVC and contains some lead. Also, on average people replace the artificial tree every six years. If only 10% of the households purchasing an artificial tree chose a live tree, forty-four million pounds of non-biodegradable material would be saved from landfills.

Oh Ribbons and Bows!

Instead of using ribbons and bows, decorate your package with recyclable bows (natural fiber raffia) or dried flowers, or a reusable scarf. If two out of three households saved an arm length of ribbon, we could tie a bow around the earth.

To Wrap or not to Wrap?

Cut back on wrapping paper by using reusable bags or baskets. If you need to wrap find a brand with recycled content and also reuse some of the larger sheets next year for presents. If each family saved just two sheets of wrap this year, the savings could gift wrap Manhattan Island.

Greeting cards

If one percent of Americans purchased greeting cards made from recycled or tree-free materials, we could save 15,000 trees.

To Light or not light the house?

Lighting is fine, but when the old strand goes out, you can save significant money and energy by choosing LED types. Three hundred-light strands of LED bulbs running 5 hours every day from Thanksgiving until New Years only uses 3 kilowatt hrs--an energy cost of 30 cents. For the same time period incandescent bulbs will use 472 kilowatt hours- an energy cost of \$60. Also, with the life span of LED you will never have to replace your lights again.

Gift Giving at a minimum (for waste)

Gift cards, concert tickets, movie vouchers, can make a great alternative to heavily wrapped packages and presents. They can also be ordered on line saving between five and ten pounds of packaging waste. If 50 percent of households replaced just two packaged presents with gifts that could slide in envelopes, fifty million pounds or more of waste could be saved. (PS, this also saves on time, gas and stress.)

Visit <http://www.readthegreenbook.com/> for more information. We hope these tips are helpful to you and you have a very Blessed and Green Holiday!

Source: Rogers, E. and Kostigen, T. (2007). *The Green Book: The everyday guide to saving the planet one simple step at a time.* New York, NY: Random House, Inc.

It has been proven that one of the best ways to involve more people in Bible study is to offer opportunities for Bible study on a variety of days and at different times. To do this we need to equip more lay people to lead these groups. To accomplish this task I would recommend using the “Guiding the Conversation” DVD, available through Augsburg Fortress. This DVD contains 7 sessions, each runs about 5 minutes, and deals with Active Listening, Respect for Other Opinions, Preparing Your Session, Using Effective Responses, Connecting the Bible to Daily Life, Basic Caring Skills, and Evaluating Your Session. It is a helpful resource for group leaders.

Men’s Bible Study/Fellowship Breakfast

A model I have used for a year now and works well because of its simplicity. We meet once a month for one hour, 8:00 -9:00am. We average 15 to 20 men, most of whom have never attended any type of Bible study before. We have a sign-up, so we know how many to plan for, charge \$3.00, and serve a real “Lumber Jack Style” breakfast. Our typical menu includes scrambled eggs, bacon, sausage gravy and biscuits, fried potatoes, fruit salad, juice, coffee and toast. This menu is a real selling point! The three men who prepare the food have become good friends. I do the prep work the night before, the cooks arrive at 7:00am and we begin promptly at 8:00am with breakfast and a lot of good fellowship.

THE BIBLE STUDY: I choose one of the many narrative stories, in the Bible, and write a script. The script involves 6 – 9 readers, some readings are only one or two lines. If the narrative parts are long I divide them among a couple of readers. As the leader, I intentionally avoid taking a part. As the men arrive I seek out readers. If someone is reluctant I let them know that they don’t need to feel badly about not reading and I go on to someone else. I start with a very brief introduction to the story and we begin the reading. At the end I may have a couple of questions or observations.

SEVERAL STRENGTHS OF THIS MODEL: The men enjoy the breakfast and fellowship. Taking the time to briefly make sure everyone is introduced is important. I do this before the Bible reading. The men have already introduced themselves around the tables during breakfast, so I ask someone at each table to introduce their table. We keep to a one-hour format.

Having the voices come from different tables keeps the attention of the whole group. Not everyone reads loudly and not everyone hears well so it is good to have scripts for everyone to follow. We let the story speak for itself as this is not intended to be an in depth Bible study.

If you have any questions or would like copies of the scripts I’ve put together, e-mail me at rwpooley@msn.com.

OPEN THE BOOK AND JOIN THE CONVERSATION!

Robert Pooley

Synod Book of Faith advocate

Coaching Corner

Paul Werner, Coaching Coordinator

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A coach is someone who comes alongside and walks with you as you discover and do God's will.

RELATE REFLECT REFOCUS RESOURCE REVIEW

Coaching uses five tools as listed above in capital letters: the five “Rs”. Each is important to the coaching process, and at first may unfold in the order listed. Later, the process rotates the five “Rs” like tools in a tool box. After “relate” and “reflect” comes REFOCUS.

After the leader (person coached) and coach learn about the current situation and each other, what usually happens next?

Works begins on making the vision clear, brainstorming possible solutions and action steps, setting priorities, committing to the actions found necessary, considering the effects and likely outcomes of the changes required and who will be affected, setting precise action steps and time-lines for completion, and agreeing on a system to evaluate results and assure accountability. Refocusing often requires dipping back into reflecting and relating for additional information, looking for helps or obstacles that affect the vision. Refocusing uses lots of coaching time—like a wheel turning round—until vision is as sharp as can be and an action path is ready.

Coaching works by asking probing, powerful questions to help the leader surface information he or she owns, analyze it and make plans. The coach asks questions that encourage the leader to view things from a variety of perspectives. This sharing leads to “diagnosis” and goal setting. Data retrieved is analyzed and retained.

Powerful questions that may be asked when refocusing include:

- If you knew you would be completely successful, what would that look like?
- What are the possible ways to get there?
- What principles will guide your process?
- What are your options and what decisions need to be made?
- What commitment are you personally willing/able to make?
- What are the more important next steps? Time-line?
- How will you need to change personally?
- What resistance do you expect from others and yourself?
- What can be delegated to others? Who might they be?
- How will you measure progress?
- How would you like to be held accountable?
- What must we pray about?

We will explore the remaining “Rs” in upcoming columns.