



**Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

North/West Lower Michigan Synod

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The Bishop's Letter

March 2010

Of Calm and Realism and Hope

It had been a full and exhausting three days. On Saturday, February 20, the Synod Council addressed with wisdom and love several issues related to our life together. Over the next two days, Phylis and I traveled hundreds of miles, visiting a congregation in process of deciding whether to continue its relationship with the ELCA, preparing with others for a trip in March to our companion church in Latvia, meeting with pastors, each in their own way seeking to do the right thing in stressful circumstances. Demanding work all, culminating in a trip to Stevensville to meet with leaders of St. Luke's. Perhaps most poignantly with these folks at the end of this three-day journey, I witnessed the gift of calm and realism and hope.

In recent years St. Luke's contrasted sharply in membership and financial resources. With laudable courage, their pastor and lay leaders have looked at this reality squarely. Meeting in retreat recently with Pastors Bates and Hardy, they concluded that God is calling them to continue as a congregation in their community but not without partners. Facing their vulnerability and efforts unrewarded over the years to bring in new members, they bore witness to a calmness and a joyful freedom to consider various options, to think about different ways to be viable and faithful in the years ahead.

At their request I had talked with full communion partner judicatory leaders who oversee congregations nearby. In recent months I had visited with neighboring ELCA pastors. All expressed openness to exploration. If St. Luke's wanted to look at future ministry together, they would talk with their respective flocks to see if there was readiness to take a prayerful step that might result in some kind of partnership. Sharing this, I think all felt uplifted, that we all could be part of something new and wonderful.

Here is the gift of God: in the midst of temptations borne of panic or pure reactivity or sheer weariness, I see all around people blessed with a spirit of calm and realism and hope. The Synod Council, travelers to distant companions, congregations and pastors striving to do what is faithful and right, the people of St. Luke's, all are in this Lenten wilderness where both the Holy Spirit and the spirit of deception dwell. And all of them are in Christ Jesus who is their calm, their ultimate reality, their hope.

When I arrived at home, I was as tired as I can remember being for a long time. And as grateful as I can remember for the impressive, ever vigilant, more than adequate grace of God, whose fullness we know so wonderfully in Jesus.

Bishop John

A Time to Begin Gathering

Please invite your congregation to begin gathering “Jacksons for Justice,” twenty dollar bills that your voting member will bring (in the form of a check) to the Synod Assembly in May. All of these 20’s will go to the ELCA World Hunger Appeal. We look forward to reporting to you in June the total of many thousands of dollars we together have given to make tangible God’s love for the hungry.

Our second offering at the Assembly will be given to Lutheran Volunteer Corps, a Lutheran “Peace Corps” kind of ministry of mostly young adults beginning its work in Michigan this summer in Detroit and Port Huron.

Prayers for Latvia Trip

Pastor Andreas Teich

Global Mission Committee

On March 7, a delegation from the North/West Lower Michigan Synod will head to Latvia to spend a week with our partner church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia. The delegation consists of eight folks from the synod (Bishop John and Phylis Schleicher, Pastor Doug Ogden, Tom & Beverly Emery, Dan Girvan, Jim Rudicil and Pastor Andreas Teich). We will be met in Riga by Dr. Arden Haug, the ELCA Global Mission regional representative for Europe. Our agenda is full and we ask for your prayers as we travel. Listed below is the current itinerary so that you can focus your prayers each day.

DATE	LOCATION	ACTIVITIES
March 9	Saldus	Meeting and worship with students at St.Gregor`s School for Evangelists
March 10	Liepaja	Meeting with Bishop Bruvers and pastors of the Liepaja diocese
March 11	Riga/Sigulda	1. Meeting with Archbishop Vanags 2. Visiting Sigulda 3. Meeting students at the Luther Academy (Seminary)
March 12	Riga	1. Visiting the Museum of Occupation 2. Visiting Diakonia projects (Social Service)
March 13	Daugavpils	Meeting with Bishop and Alpe and pastors of the Daugavpils dioeces
March 14	Riga	1. Preaching at various churches in Riga 2. Visiting Jewish memorials in and around Riga

Center for Mission & Ministry News and Updates

Nancy Brousseau, OP

Center for Mission & Ministry Facilitator

This article contains reminders for the Institute of Spiritual Formation programs scheduled in April. Additional details for both of the following programs are in the February Newsletter:

Spirituality in Lutheran Perspective

Primarily for Pastors and Lay Leaders

Friday, April 23, 2010, 2pm – 5pm

Immanuel, Mt. Pleasant

Donation: \$10/person or \$25/group of 3 or more, payable to North/West Lower Michigan Synod - with “Spirituality” on the memo line. Send to attention of Nancy Brousseau at the Synod office.

Foundations of Christian Spirituality

(a study/reflection day on Luther & Bonhoeffer)

Saturday, April 24, 2010, 9:30am – 4:30pm

St. Stephen, Lansing

Donation: \$20/person or \$55/group of 3 or more includes lunch/breaks and materials (NOT the books that will be recommended –these are a participant expense.) You can register for this event by sending a check payable to North/West Lower Michigan Synod - with “Foundations” on the memo line. Send to attention of Nancy Brousseau.

Regarding preparation for April 24th program: the books Professor Dahill is recommending for the Saturday group are:

- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Life Together/Prayerbook of the Bible*. Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, volume 5. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996.
- Luther, Martin. *Luther’s Spirituality*, ed. Philip Krey and Peter Krey. Classics of Western Spirituality Series. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2007.

The following articles will be sent to those who have registered:

Dahill, Lisa E. “Christ in Us: A Response to Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen.” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 34:2 (April 2007): 97-100.

_____. “Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-45), *Life Together*.” In *Christian Spirituality: The Classics*, ed. Arthur Holder, 329-40. London and New York: Routledge, 2010.

_____. “Probing the Will of God: Bonhoeffer and Discernment.” *Dialog* 41/1 (Spring 2002): 42-49.

Those attending the Saturday session are invited to focus on the following:

Life Together (especially chapters 2, 3, and 5 = pp. 25-80 and 108-118); Luther (“Freedom of a Christian,” pp. 69-90; the commentary on “Magnificat,” 91-103; and the preface to Romans, 104-118); and the three articles mentioned above.

Area hotels recommended for lodging:

Sleep Inn

1101 Commerce Park Dr.
Dewitt, MI 48820
(517) 669-8823

Baymont Inn

1055 Aaron Drive
Dewitt, MI 48820
(517) 374-0000

Germany Trip Update

October 10-23, 2010

All is in place for this amazing trip of a lifetime — we have some wonderful plans in place for this pilgrimage/study tour. 2 full weeks – and the price, \$3,395 per person double occupancy, covers everything (gratuities, hotels, taxes/fees, seminars & sessions with local folks on a variety of topics and round trip from Detroit). Mark your calendars, make your plans & find some friends and invite them –along the way. The brochure with details about the trip is available at www.mittensynod.org.



Earthkeeping News & Updates

Kim Winchell, Diaconal Minister

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We may be in the midst of Lent and yet a little more snow, but the inner stirrings of nature and our own spirits give hints of spring's awakening, not far ahead, and of our own inner renewal when Easter finally arrives. Here are some notes and resources to aid you in ways to help renew and restore creation, through faithful earthkeeping:

The "Lutherans Restoring Creation" (LRC) initiative is set to "go public" this month; visit www.lutheransrestoringcreation.org for more information. I am on the Steering Committee for LRC, and I look forward to sharing more news of it as time goes on.

Our Synod EKO (EarthKeeping Opportunities) Team is planning to sponsor two retreats this year – one in May at Stony Lake, the other in October at Michi-Lu-Ca. They will be Fri-Sun offerings this year and will again focus on the theme of "greening our spirits, greening our congregations." The retreats are a wonderful opportunity for congregational "green team" members (or any clergy or lay folk) interested in fostering and sustaining earthkeeping efforts in your congregation. Join us for a time of spiritual renewal, connecting with creation, and learning from one another. Keep an eye out for the Living Water Ministries 2010 retreat brochure and make plans now to send one or two (or more!) people from your congregation.

The ELCA Washington Office is continuing their special Lenten email reflection series; this year's theme is on "Climate Justice" and features three mailings per week. I highly recommend them; sign up to receive the reflections at www.elca.org/advocacy. If you scroll down the page, you can also access the ones you may have missed.

Although it is not part of our tradition to fast during Lent, some of you may be interested in a Lenten "calendar" that gives daily ideas for a "carbon fast" in terms of how you use energy. If you're interested, let me know, and I'll email the two page document to you.

Speaking of energy use, many utility companies are making an effort to help their customers save money and energy, by offering rebates and special incentives. In mid-Michigan, Consumers Energy has info on efficiency programs and how to apply for project incentives by visiting www.consumersenergy.com. It is my understanding that churches can apply for some of the incentives (and possibly grants) offered to small businesses. See also www.yourenergysavings.com and www.MichiganEnergyOptions.org (formerly known as Urban Options) and look under the Energy "Optimization Incentives Map."

Peace to you, Peace to the Earth!

My Call as Your Director for Evangelical Mission

Pastor Roger Hardy

“What exactly is included in your call as Director for Evangelical Mission?” More than one person has asked this question. Let me give a brief answer.

My role is to be in partnership with our missionary Bishop John Schleicher, with our missionary rostered and lay leaders, with our missionary congregations and members, as we develop and support missional strategies for our Synod. I work closely with and supervise new mission starts and redevelopment ministries that are receiving partnerships grants from Churchwide and from the Synod. I also work with any congregation that wishes to renew its mission and ministry strategy. I also give leadership to congregational and Synod Mission Support/Stewardship strategy. All of this means I relate to Outreach and Stewardship committees.

In other words, if you want to talk, dream, think, explore, try, risk, and pray about God’s mission in your context, give me a call.

Mission Partners

Pastor Roger Hardy

Director for Evangelical Mission

In recognition of our common Partnership in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and our common concern for outreach and proclamation of that Gospel in our nation, Mission Partner congregations commit to sustaining and even increasing benevolence support of the synodical and churchwide ministries of the ELCA. The supporting congregation also commits to providing prayers, financial assistance, and gifts of time and talents to the receiving congregation in the Mission Partners Agreement.

The receiving congregation accepts only those Partnership Support Funds that are needed above its own challenging stewardship efforts and provides its Mission Partners a description of worship, nurture, outreach and service goals. Furthermore, the receiving congregation shares its talents and training, remembers its Partners in prayer, and develops avenues of direct communication.

Mission Partner relationships are vital to all of us---both the giving congregations and the receiving congregations. Mission Partnership relationships are a concrete way to live our partnership in God’s mission. If you are interested in being a mission partner, please contact me.

Watch for my DVD greeting next month.

A copy will be sent to each congregation and it will be available at www.mittensynod.org.

ELCA Office of the Treasurer Provides Helpful Resources

Rebecca G. Bossenbroek

Executive Assistant for Administration

We all agree that careful management of financial resources is part of responsible stewardship. You may know that the ELCA Office of the Treasurer provides helpful resources for congregations. In the past, you have been encouraged to utilize the Congregational Audit Guide and the Congregation Treasurers Finance and Accounting Guide.

Recently the Office of the Treasurer added some new resources to the list:

- Internal Control Best Practices
- Accountable Reimbursement Practices
- Financial Contingency Planning
- Data Security
- Identify Theft

Another helpful resource is *Administration Matters* - an e-newsletter that addresses common, practical issues facing ELCA church leaders including finance, governance, risk management, tax, legal concerns and other topics of interest about a congregation's day-to-day operations and management.

To access the resources listed above, visit www.elca.org and click on **Office of the Treasurer** at the bottom of the home page. Then select **Finance for Congregations** in the bar on the left side of the page. If you have questions or are unable to download these resources, contact the synod office for assistance.

The Easter Basket that Keeps on Giving

The traditional Easter basket is filled with jelly beans, dyed eggs, chocolate rabbits and marshmallow chicks. It is all pretty tasty, but gone and forgotten in a short time. This year why not consider honoring your loved ones with a donation to ELCA World Hunger. Visit www.elca.org/goodgifts and click on **God's Global Barnyard**. Instead of marshmallow chicks, consider \$10 towards the purchase of real chicks that will soon be laying eggs and providing nutritious food for a family in need. A donation of \$50 will purchase a sheep or goat and can help an entire community. When you are finished shopping, visit www.elca.org/goodgiftscards for cards and creative ways to announce your gifts. Can't give up that chocolate? How about filling baskets with Fair Trade chocolate? Visit www.lwr.org/chocolate/index2asp for details.

Easter blessings from your Synod Hunger Team.