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“I am about to do a new thing; / now it springs forth, / do you not perceive it? / I will make a way in the wilderness / and rivers in the desert.” ~ Isaiah 43:19

31 October 2011

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

As bishops of the North/West Lower Michigan and Southeast Michigan Synods, we call all our active and retired rostered leaders, synodically authorized ministers, lay ministers, and their spouses and partners to join us at a jointly sponsored Winter Leadership Event, January 22-24, 2012 to be held at Trinity Lutheran Church in Midland, Michigan.

We see much delight and joy as we mingle together for these couple of days in worship, easy conversation, good food, and mutual conversation about how we perceive what “new thing” God calls us to do.

We see friendships strengthened, created or renewed through our being and doing with each other and with ecumenical and inter-religious partners in the lower peninsula.

We see opportunities to affirm what we hold in common, to speak respectfully of our differences, and to consider ways in which we participate as servant leaders in a church always being re-formed, being made new for the sake of the clearer proclamation of the Gospel.

We see a chance to pray for faithful brothers and sisters whose joys and struggles can be shared among us. We pray that you will make your attendance a high priority as we see our way through the wilderness and discover, drink from, and safely cross the rivers God is creating in the desert.

We’ll be blessed by the presence of these guests:

- Bishop Todd Ousley of the Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Michigan,
- Pastor Karl Reko, former missionary to Papua New Guinea, researcher and primary writer for the Living Into the Future Together (LIFT) project of the ELCA, and now the facilitator of our discernment process toward the formulation of a “plan for mutual missional action.”
- Pastor Beth Ann L. Stone, assistant to the bishop in the Upper Susquehanna Synod, and specialist in young adult ministry
- James Hamilton, Rector at Trinity Episcopal Church in Farmington Hills. The liturgy Rev. Hamilton has developed, “Lex Orandi,” has been very successful at reaching the generation missing from most of our congregations: the 25-40 year olds.

We, as your bishops, have already become good friends, frequently sharing our joys, concerns, anxieties, and hopes. We are excited about the “new thing” God is doing in the ELCA and in our synods. We look forward to seeing you in January when we can all be together as leaders in this church, to perceive what God is about to do in us and through us.

Yours in Christ,

Donald Kreiss

John Schleicher