

NOTES & QUOTES

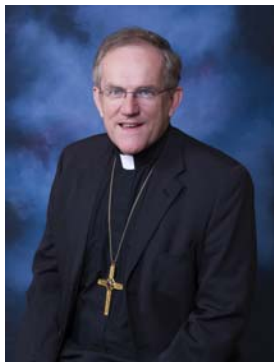
Volume 21, Issue 9

SEPTEMBER 2008

JOY FOR SUPPER

Bishop Thomas A. Skrenes

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The four of us sat down at the restaurant for supper. I was in Omaha for the national gathering of our ELCA's men's organization, *Lutheran Men in Mission*. It was a hot and humid night when I joined three young pastors for supper. One of the pastors is twenty-seven years old, married, with a baby, and serves in a small town in South Carolina. Another is not quite thirty, single, and is an assistant pastor in a large suburban Minneapolis congregation. The third, the "old guy" of these new pastors I ate the meal with, just turned forty, a second career pastor, and with his wife and children live in Florida, where he serves a congregation. All of us knew each other because of our experience with the men's organization of our Church. And now, with those three having been recently ordained, I wanted to know how things were going in their ministries and lives.

I asked two questions at supper - and then sat back and listened. "What was the most difficult part of being a pastor?" And, "What is the best part of being a pastor?" We talked about the rough parts of ministry for only a few minutes. "It's the vision thing," one said. "It's hard to help our people see God's vision for this congregation." And all agreed that some of the other pastors in their areas need to recapture the vision of God for the possibilities of ministry. "A lot of pastors are tired," another said.

And then we moved on to the joys! And over a fine Omaha steak, I listened to this youthful trio and enjoyed their enthusiasm. We spent most of our time on the joys of ministry. They actually argued about what was the best part of being a pastor! "It's the preaching, I love the Gospel." "For me," a pastor said, "it's being with the committed lay leaders." "I think it's the day to day connection with the fami-



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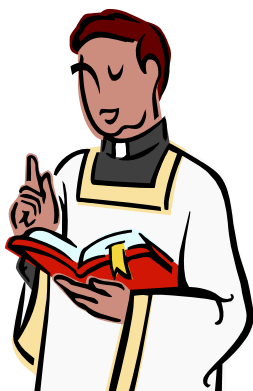
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THOMAS A. SKRENES, BISHOP (CONTINUED)

lies.” “I love youth work and visiting, and all the meetings are not bad either.” All were smiling and laughing and very excited. These were pastors doing God’s work, and they are men of prayer.

It was a great supper. I realize that these three are new to full time ordained ministry, and they are still on their “honeymoons.” I realize they will face disappointments in the years ahead and they are, perhaps, a little naive. But so what! To sit in the midst of young pastors beginning their careers, knowing that they will serve God’s Church for decades ahead, was greatly comforting. And it was fun.

“AND THE MAKING OF STATISTICS THERE IS NO END....”

2008

Every year, the Synod’s congregations are asked to report to the Churchwide organization a statistical summary. This “Parochial Report” gives us a snapshot of our Synod and its congregations. In 2008, all of our Synod congregations reported.

Here is the news!

As of the end of 2007, in our ninety-four congregations:

+ We claim a total of 35,650 members, down from the 2006 total of 37,154 (a loss of 1,504 people or 4.04%). This continues a persistent decline for the last two decades.

+On an average weekend, 8,707 people were at worship. The number was 9,186 in 2006. (A reduction of 479 worshipping persons or 5.21%.) Thus, the average Sunday attendance was, in 2007, ninety-two persons per congregation, down five from the ninety-seven who were in our churches on an average weekend in 2006.

+Five hundred and seven persons were baptized in our congregational ministries last year, down three baptisms from 2006. There were 3,647 persons enrolled at the end of 2007 in Sunday Schools around the Synod, with 725 teachers or leaders in the congregations.

+Ascension Church in Minocqua has the most people on an average weekend in worship - 401. Emmanuel Church in Menominee has the most baptized members - 1,555. The smallest worshipping congregation is Faith in White Pine, with an average attendance of twelve.

“On an average weekend, 8,707 people were at worship (2007). The number was 9,186 in 2006 - a reduction of 479 worshipping persons or 5.21%...”

THOMAS A. SKRENES, BISHOP (CONTINUED)

+We are ninety-nine percent white in ethnicity as a Synod, with 354 persons who are non-white. About half of our non-white members are American Indian.

+Average financial giving to the congregation per confirmed member in 2007 was \$468.58 or a 6.82% **increase** over 2006. This is good stewardship news!

+There are an additional 977 Associate Members of our congregations. These are persons who belong to other Christian congregations but who participate in our churches. They do not have voting membership.

Thank you pastors, church secretaries and congregational presidents who “crunch the numbers” and complete these reports. If you would like a complete statistical report of our Synod and its congregations, e-mail the Synod Office and one will be sent to you!

A GREAT STEWARDSHIP SPEAKER -----**Pastor Charles (Chick) Lane**

The author of *“Ask, Thank, Tell”* will be our guest in September for a night of stewardship. Please come and hear this engaging pastor.

THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 25, 2008

7:00 - 8:30 p.m. CT

First Evangelical Lutheran Church

Iron Mountain

Pastor Lane is recognized as an expert in stewardship ministry. He currently serves as Director for Stewardship Key Leaders of the ELCA. Prior to that, he served as a pastor of three congregations and on the Synod Staff of the Northwestern Minnesota Synod. His book is now the main resource for most ELCA stewardship leaders around the country.

Bring your Congregation Council, Stewardship Committee and other key leaders! All who attend will receive a free copy of *“Ask, Thank, Tell”* made available to you from the Synod Stewardship Committee with a grant from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans. Other stewardship resources will also be available for your review. A registration form for the 25th of September event is enclosed in this newsletter. Let’s hear from you, and fill up the First Lutheran Fellowship Hall!

TRANSITIONS

+Congratulations to **Pastor Kevin Kaiser** who begins his work at **Bethany in Amasa and Trinity in Stambaugh**. Ordained on August 24, 2008, Pastor Kaiser comes to us from Luther Seminary. Welcome! God keep you.

+Ordained and installed on the same day, **Pastor Lloyd Luedeman** is at work at **Bethany in Mohawk**. Congratulations to him and his wife, **Amy**, on his August 16, 2008 ordination and installation. Welcome to the Synod! The Luedemans have three adult children.

+God bless **Pastor Tom Lindblad (Retired, Menominee)** as he recovers from open heart surgery. He reports that "I am healing and feeling great."

+Our sympathy to **Roger Knuth** and his wife, **Kay**, on the death of Roger's brother, Dennis Knuth, who died on August 19, 2008. May God comfort us in the Risen Christ.

+**Kathy Godec** resigned as the Licensed Lay Minister at **First Lutheran, Trenary**. We thank her for her ministry and years of service to the congregation.

+College is beginning again and hundreds of our Synod young people enter into and continue their academic work in schools around the nation. Our Synod campus pastors are interested in your young people! Email the names of your congregational college youth to these pastors at their schools:

+Finlandia University - Rene Johnson, Chaplain
rene.johnson@finlandia.edu

Michigan Technological University, Houghton - Pastor Bucky Beach bsbeach@mtu.edu

Northern Michigan University, Marquette - Pastor Jon Magnuson icmmu7@charter.net

Bay College, Escanaba - Pastor Dean Peterson dpeter-son2@charter.net

+Thomas A. Skrenes

tskrenes@nglsynod.org



WORD AND SONG FESTIVAL



The Fall Word and Song Festival of the Suomi Conference (Michigan area) will be held on Sunday, October 5, at Zion Lutheran Church of Skanee, located twelve miles north of L'Anse, Michigan. The event begins with a welcome coffee at 2:30 p.m. ET, followed by the main worship service at 3:00 p.m. ET. After a brief business meeting, a gala dinner will be served at 5:00 p.m. ET.

The featured speaker will be the Rev. C. Thomas Kangas of Bremerton, Washington. Pastor Kangas is a native of Ishpeming, and has served parishes in Massachusetts, North Dakota, and Anchorage, Alaska. He is married to the former Jane Kauramaki of Newberry.

Licensed Lay Minister Judy Mattson is the hostess and Pastor Les Niemi will serve as presider. A varied array of special music will enrich the worship.

Welcome to beautiful Skanee on October 5!

Thank You



ELCA Disaster Funds

Mission United, Pelkie
Salem, Ironwood
Faith, Calumet
Grace, South Range
Zion, Marinette

Lutheran World Relief

Bethany, Negaunee
Zion, St. Ignace
Calvary, Rapid River
Holy Trinity, Chassell

Lay School for Mission

Trinity, Rapid River

World Missionary Support

Bethel, Ishpeming
Trinity, Stambaugh
Calvary, Rapid River

Lutheran Campus Ministry

Christ the King, Escanaba
WELCA, Zion, Felch
Bethany, Amasa

Tanzania

Christ the King, Escanaba

Endowment Fund

Rev. John Autio
Elizabeth Froberg
Joan & John Lillie
Rev. Gene Wickman
Bill & Betty Ann Pyhtila

Seminarian Support

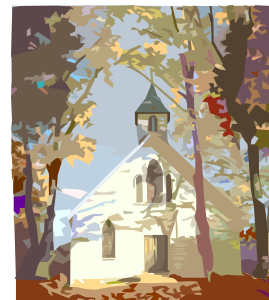
Calvary, Minocqua
Christ Lutheran Parish, Ironwood

Companion Synod Support

Messiah/St. Mark's, Marquette
Bishop Thomas & Luanne Skrenes

Answer the Call

Rev. Robert & Deloris Langseth



+ From the Assistant to the Bishop +

Pastor Jennifer Johnson Wrege



For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

2 Corinthians 4:6

One sunny summer Sunday morning, Marv and I visited a congregation in central Wisconsin. Yes, this congregation was without a regularly called pastor. Their full time interim had not yet arrived, and they were experiencing a few weeks of pulpity supply. But while they were without a pastoral leader, they were not without leaders, nor were they without a witness, a proclamation, or a purpose.

Following the *Prayer of the Day*, a young Mom stood up, placed her about eighteen month old daughter in her chair, and made her way to the altar where she was going to deliver some prepared thoughts with the congregation. Even before her notes were spread out before her, her daughter began to whimper. The whimper grew to a soft cry, and then escalated to fierce sounds that were intended, I am sure, to demand the attention of her mother. Softly and gently, she walked over to her daughter, picked her up, attempted to soothe her, and returned to her place at the altar bearing her daughter in her arms and leaning into her shoulder. Even in the shelter of her mother's arms, this became an opportunity for more cries and tears which led the Mom to apologize to the congregation that "this wasn't going to work this morning," turn and begin to make her way over to her chair and her two sons who were waiting there.

The supply pastor asked if he could read her notes for her. She gave her permission with a nod of her head and what followed was a powerful testimony (Lutherans, though, I think, are shy about using that word) of how God has worked through this congregation to make all the difference in her life and in the life of her

family. Expressions of gratitude to God and to this congregation were long and loud in her words. She spoke about her tentative beginnings: dropping off her children at Vacation Bible School and meeting other moms. Fearful of how her family would be accepted, she revealed that it took two years before she felt courageous enough to come to worship with young children in tow along with the commotion they may cause. She talked about the truth of how Jesus Christ has changed their lives. Now she is a member, an ambassador, a proclaimer, a witness, a worker in the vineyard, a Mom who apparently cannot keep silent about the wondrous acts of God in her life and in the lives of those she loves. She is also, we learned that summer Sunday morning, a woman who invited others to worship.

She has not been a Lutheran long enough to know that we tend to invite others to worship only once every twenty- one years.

I've been wondering why! It's not the act of inviting. We do that all the time - over for dinner, out for lunch, shopping trips, hunting trips, weddings, baptisms, birthday parties. We even invite people over to help us out with projects or work on unpleasant jobs and tasks. What is it that makes us uncomfortable about inviting someone to worship? Are we embarrassed, unsure of the value of the Christian faith, afraid of rejection, unwilling to cross the sort of unwritten, unspoken boundary that discourages discussion of faith and religion with family and friends? What gets stirred up in you when you imagine inviting someone to worship? Would it be possible to invite one person to worship sometime this fall? It may be that even now God is working through you and your congregation to make a big difference - a transformational difference, a life-giving difference - in the life of someone else.

Blessings!



Pastoral Vacancies and Interim Pastors

Bethany, Covington & Trinity, Trout Creek - Pastor Scott Williams

Holy Cross, Baraga - Pastor John Autio

Immanuel, Escanaba - Pastor Jonathan Schmidt

Grace, Gwinn - Pastor Chad Christensen

First, Ewen & Our Saviour's, Paynesville - Pastor Gerald Anderson

Our Savior's, Marinette - Pastor Nickolas Johannes

Concordia, Palmer & Our Saviour's, Negaunee - Pastor Virginia Eggert

Immanuel, Negaunee - Pastor Peggy Rose

Holy Trinity, Chassell - Pastors Jimalee Jones & Peter Gundersen

Prince of Peace, Eagle River - (April 2009)

First, Trenary - Pastor Stephen Gauger

Mission support giving through July 31 is relatively flat compared to last calendar year. Fifty-seven of our congregations have remitted at least 50% of their yearly pledge, with five congregations at 75% or above. Designated gifts are up by over \$9,300 due to increased giving to World Hunger and Seminarian Support. We give thanks to God for the consistent and generous giving of our NGLS congregations as we partner together to do God's work.

Betsy Koski - Bookkeeper

As of 7/31	2007	2008	\$ Change	% Change
Pledged Amount	1,045,301	1,032,591	-12,710	-1.2%
Amount Received	520,462	523,473	+3,011	+0.5%
Designated Gifts	96,999	106,337	+9,338	+9.6%



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ON-LINE DEVOTIONS FOR SEPTEMBER 2008

www.prayfaithfully.org

August 31-September 6 / Karen DeZeil, Bethany, Escanaba

September 7-13 / Seminarian Dan Durbin, First, Gladstone,
(Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago)

September 14-20 / Seminarian Jean Schmidt, First Gladstone,
(Wartburg Theological Seminary)

September 21-27 / Seminarian Michael Mannisto, Grace, South
Range, (Luther Seminary)

September 28-October 4 / Seminarian Amanda Kossow, First
Gladstone, (Wartburg Theological Seminary)