Recognizing there is a great need in the church for leaders who are thoroughly equipped for mission and ministry, a resolution was presented at the 2008 Northern Great Lakes Synod Assembly proposing a major effort to support our future seminary students. They are faced with tuition costs averaging $12,000 per year while living costs and books add $15,000 to $26,000 to the total each year. Seventy percent of current graduates are entering the parish ministry with debt loads of $38,000 or more. This makes it especially difficult for pastors to consider first calls in smaller congregations where salaries are often not adequate for them to meet their financial obligations even though it may be their preferred choice. Prospective seminary students are often deterred from the call to ministry before even entering seminary by the potential financial difficulties they may be facing when they are ready to consider their first parish. This has a negative impact on the number of graduates available to the many congregations attempting to fill vacancies, especially if they are one of the many smaller congregations in our synod.

The Assembly acknowledged it is the responsibility of all congregations and the synod to identify, encourage and support those whom God calls to this important work by unanimously adopting the resolution. It authorized the Bishop and the Synod Endowment Board to seek financial resources from individual members and congregations to grow the synod’s endowed scholarship fund to $2,000,000 through the “Answer the Call” campaign in the years 2008 through 2010. The campaign is now underway and you will be learning more about this effort in the months ahead. Individuals wishing to receive more information on how they can respond now to the “Answer the Call” campaign should call the synod office or contact Roger Knuth, our synod gift planner at 715-277-3142.
God's work. Our hands.
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Helping you share God's boundless love with the world.
These communication tools will foster evangelism, outreach, and hospitality.
Doing in and through us for the sake of the world. Our hope is that
during in and through us. We tell the story of what God is

The theme of the advertising initiative is "God's work. Our hands." It's

Through these television ads, Lutheran Church Missouri Synod

These television ads are part of a comprehensive advertising initiative to

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We're spreading the good news about

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Go to www.elca.org to see

May 11 - 31
March 30 - April 19 and
look for our TV ads

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Every so often Finlandia University and Michigan Tech share the same spring break week. Rev. Bucky Beach and I (Rene Johnson) decided to combine our efforts and students for a joint alternative spring break experience. Eleven individuals loaded up in a van and a car on March 8 for a week of flood recovery work in Cedar Rapids, IA. And in the midst of dry walling, mudding and taping, and installing doors and floors, new relationships were built.

Bucky Beach works with the Lutheran Student Movement and the Muslim Student Association on the campus of MTU. His work with the second group provided the opportunity to add some special qualities of diversity to the group and our experience in Iowa. Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Somalia (via Ohio), Saudi Arabia, Minnesota and, of course, Michigan were represented. But citizenship was not the only experience of diversity!

It was interesting to work alongside the MTU environmental engineering graduate student from the Philippines. We managed to fit in wonderful conversations in the midst of work. He has a tremendously curious mind about cultural and religious kinds of things (normally the topics of a liberal studies institution!). He commented on our last day “This week was so great because I got to tend to the soul, rather than just numbers and research!” Intellectual diversity at its best.

One evening we visited the mosque in Cedar Rapids and had a delightful conversation with the Imam. Our three Muslim participants took the opportunity to say their evening prayers in a mosque, which is something they miss greatly in the Copper Country. Religious diversity up close and personal.

Bucky and I both came away from this spring break recognizing the value of this shared spring break and how it brings together the best of what each institution has to offer each other. The students has a richer spring break experience and came away with lasting relationships. Community diversity in the making.

Highlights

Nordic Film Series—Finnish American Heritage Center. The second Thursday of every month offers a 2:00 and 6:00 showing of a contemporary film from the Nordic countries. For more information call 487-7505.

Heikinpäivä. January 24 at the Finnish

Sundays in America: A Yearlong Journey in Search of Christian Faith. Finlandia’s campus ministry and English department are working together to host author, Suzanne Strempek Shea on April 20 (re-scheduled due to inclement weather in February). Seminars for clergy and the public are planned as the author shares about her year of visiting a different church each Sunday and the storytelling and writing process. For more information call Suzanne Van Dam at 487-7515 or Rene Johnson at 487-7239.

Any questions or comments? Contact us at rene.johnson@finlandia.edu or (906) 487-7239.
ELCA CONFERENCE OF BISHOPS’ SPRING MEETING—MORE THAN JUST “SEX AND MONEY”

It was busy! For seven days each March, the sixty-six bishops of our church gather. From Alaska to Puerto Rico, from New England to California, the bishops come together to talk about the issues and to hear news of God’s work in this Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. We worship, discuss, hear reports, gather in small groups and eat together. This spring we met at a retreat center in a Chicago suburb.

HUMAN SEXUALITY

On our minds was the Proposed Sexuality Social Statement and its effect on this Church. After considerable discussion, a pastoral word was adopted by the bishops concerning the work of the ELCA Task Force. The social statement *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust: A proposed social statement from the Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality* and a second document *Report and Recommendation on Ministry Policies* will be deliberated upon this August at the Churchwide Assembly meeting in Minneapolis. I hope you will have opportunity to read the proposals that will soon be before this Church. While much of the documents are non-controversial, the recommendations calling for the possible rostering of pastors and other church professionals in same gendered sexual relationships will be a matter of great concern for many. Please read the documents carefully, and reflect as the person of Christian faith that you are on these matters. At our Synod Assembly in May, the voting members of the synod will have opportunity to discuss and make recommendations to the Churchwide Assembly on these and other matters. The last sentence of the bishops statement says it well in these days of discernment and decision–making, “May our prayers for God-pleasing decisions be answered abundantly.”

FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The economic recession and accompanying financial market decline also was on our minds. Income from the sixty five synods of the ELCA to the Churchwide organization was down slightly in the fiscal year ending January 2009. In itself, that would not be a huge concern except that the Churchwide income has not grown very much at all since 1988. So for twenty years, the work of seminaries and missionaries, new congregations, and the whole general ministry of this church are deeply affected by inflation. Reduced income means fewer ministries! Tough decisions are being made as the Churchwide organization continues to reduce its staffing to compensate for these financial realities.

We also heard about other financial struggles. Those of us with pension accounts know how the stock market decline has affected our accumulations and thus our futures. All of our seminaries and church colleges, social ministry organizations and other ministries with endowments have been adversely affected. And while there is honest concern, many of us see this time of financial anxiety as a way of forcing the church in all of its expressions to look at what is important, even essential to our future together. Perhaps God will help us use this moment to develop a church for the future committed anew to mission and discipleship.

NEW PASTORS FOR OUR SYNOD

At the Conference of Bishops meeting this spring the 2009 seminary graduates were assigned to synods around the church. I am especially delighted to say that I received five candidates. This is the largest group we have received in this synod for many years. It will be a pleasure for my Assistant Pastor Jennifer Johnson Wrege and me to work with these men and women to recommend them to congregations in our synod. We will be interviewing these future pastors, and nominating these candidates to congregations in the next two or three months.

OTHER MATTERS

The work of our ELCA Companion Synod Ministries was discussed in some detail. This effort to learn from and contribute to the ministries of our foreign Lutheran partners grows more important. The ELCA will soon undertake a major initiative in regards to HIV/AIDS and malaria work. All the ELCA bishops were tested for HIV / AIDS (at our own expense) to encourage this prevention ministry in the U.S. and in our companion synod nations. A financial campaign to fund malaria and HIV / AIDS ministries will be considered at the 2009 Churchwide Assembly. The Conference also discussed the new Occasional Services Book and also heard reports on the work of Anti-Racism Training in the ELCA. We also learned that Carlos Pena, the lay vice-president of this Church will be available for another term if re-elected this summer.
As we all remember, Hurricane Ike struck the Gulf Coast region in mid September of 2008. The island of Galveston was devastated with flood waters and the entire island was declared unsafe for human habitation for a couple of months. For the week following the hurricane the news media covered the excessive damages felt by the Gulf Coast, but then the campaign trail news took center stage and nothing more was reported on how the residents were coping with the destruction. This made it very easy for people to forget the pain and suffering in that region.... No news.... Must be better! Not the case.....

The Holy Spirit moves inside us, in our hearts, and if we listen, listen closely, we are guided ... that little thought that multiplies – “I wonder if there are churches our size there? How did they make it through the storm? I know how hard it would be for us to try to recover from something like that. Let’s look on the internet, see if we can find anything out. We could look at the ELCA site, find the regional synod, look for Galveston, hey – there’s one our size ...”And one thing leads to another, that’s how God works inside us. Before we knew it, we were planning ways to help, contacting the Gulf Coast Region Synod office, watching their site for any news on St. Paul’s and Zion, it’s pastor, it’s members and talking among ourselves about their situation, waiting for any new news. When we finally were able to talk to Pastor Sharon and heard first hand how these congregations had suffered, we knew we had to try to help in some way.
Before we knew it, we committed 50% of our major fund raiser and matching Thrivent Funds to assist St. Paul's (the one of the two that could hold service at that time), and found two organs to replace the ones they and Zion lost in the flooding, and we continue to plan for further assistance. And you know, everyone in our congregation took part in the work, the prayers, and were tickled when our check was being delivered, smiling and waving in our picture to St. Paul’s and continue to care about our new friends in Galveston. God provided two congregation members that were leaving for Houston right after Christmas, so Cheryl and Dwayne Couillard hand delivered our check to the congregation at St. Paul's on January 4, 2009.

The Holy Spirit engulfed each and every one of us in this endeavor, and God blessed our efforts with great success and the warmth of new friends. Reaching out isn’t so hard! And we didn’t plan it, we didn’t expect it to happen, we had absolutely no control over the results, we were just “open” to let whatever God wanted to happen, happen.

Mission(s) are not hard to find, you don’t have to work to find them, they come to you through him, via your heart, and you just let him drive and enjoy the ride. Worthy missions surround us every day, every where we look, every newspaper we pick up and every person we meet. And in the process, we share our faith and make new friends.

Bethany Lutheran Church, Perkins, Michigan
St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, Galveston, Texas

Have a Mission Story to Tell? We’d love to share it with the NGLS!
To contribute your Mission Possible story for publication in Notes & Quotes, please email your article to:
Pastor Nancy Kauppi
danaKaup@ironbay.net
or
Pastor Jennie Johnson Wrege
jenjohn@nglsynod.org
Wisconsin Sites to Host National Teach Your Kids to Share Day
Family-oriented Events Featuring Values-based Approach to Money Management

Friday, April 24, 2009

In today’s turbulent economic environment, there’s a renewed interest among parents to not only teach their children the basics of saving and spending money, but also about the responsibility of sharing and giving back. Wisconsin families, along with thousands of others nationwide, have the opportunity to take a first step in this lifelong lesson during the first-ever Teach Your Kids to Share Day.

Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, a faith-based, not-for-profit financial services organization, is introducing Teach Your Kids to Share Day, which will take place at more than 50 sites across the country on the evening of April 24, 2009. The events are open to all adults (parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.) and children ages 6 – 10. In Wisconsin, five sites will host Teach Your Kids to Share Day events. Those locations include:

- Betty Brinn Children’s Museum
  929 E. Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee
  5:30 to 9:00 p.m.

- Henry Vilas Zoo
  702 South Randall Avenue, Madison
  5:30 to 9:00 p.m.

- Northwoods Children’s Museum
  346 West Division Street, Eagle River
  5:00 to 9:30 p.m.

- EAA AirVenture Museum
  3000 Poberezny Road, Oshkosh
  5:00 to 9:00 p.m.

- Central Wisconsin Children’s Museum
  1201 3rd Court, Stevens Point
  5:00 to 9:00 p.m.
Wendy Black, the Youth Ministries Coordinator for the Northern Great Lakes Synod, will be a presenter at the event in Eagle River, Wisconsin.

In conjunction with Financial Literacy Month, Thrivent Financial established Teach Your Kids to Share Day to bring families together for interactive and fun workshops to learn about sharing, saving and spending using a values-based approach to money management. This national event is unique as it highlights stewardship and teaching kids about how they can also share their time, skills and money with others.

Held simultaneously at children’s museums and other kid-friendly locations across the country, Teach Your Kids to Share Day events will:

- Explore ways kids can share, save and spend.
- Discuss the importance of being responsible with money.
- Give parents practical tips they can use to teach their kids about money.
- Foster stewardship awareness and behaviors among parents and their kids.

“Instilling sensible money habits in our children is an important life lesson,” said Laura Dierke, Teach Your Kids to Share Day program manager for Thrivent Financial. “These events will be lively and interactive and at the same time provide a base for the learning to continue at home. Thrivent Financial is committed to helping both adults and children learn how personal values serve as an important foundation for how we use the resources we have.”

Parents Reflect on Values
Through Thrivent Financial’s Parents, Kids and Money Matters workshop, adults will gain a better understanding of why it’s important to teach kids about financial principles, reflect on the values they want their children to learn and use the concept of stewardship to teach children how to take care of the resources entrusted to them.

Interactive Workshops for Children
In addition to receiving their very own Money Matters Piggy Bank as a learning tool about sharing, saving and spending, children will participate in a series of interactive designed to teach various concepts. (Photos available at www.thrivent.com/shareday.

To Register: Individuals can sign-up for participation or receive additional information on the event by visiting www.thrivent.com/shareday or calling 800-236-3736. A $10 per family registration fee includes dinner, activities and educational materials.