

NORTHERN GREAT LAKES SYNOD

NOTES & QUOTES

Volume 22, Issue 4

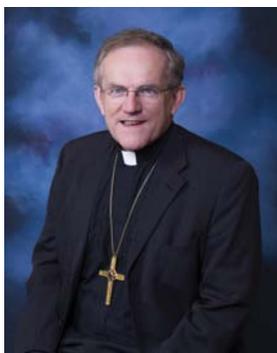
APRIL 2009

ELCA CONFERENCE OF BISHOPS' SPRING MEETING - MORE THAN JUST

“SEX AND MONEY”

Bishop Thomas A. Skrenes

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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. (Please see insert to this newsletter.) 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



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THOMAS A. SKRENES, BISHOP (CONTINUED)

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 regard 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.



THOMAS A. SKRENES, BISHOP (CONTINUED)

Pastors and Others Covered by the ELCA Board of Pension Health Plan—Take Note!!

Members of the ELCA Board of Pensions Medical Plan can save money. Synod congregations will have the opportunity to receive a 2% discount on the medical premiums for their pastors and other covered church workers. Members of the ELCA Medical Benefits Plan will also have the opportunity to receive cash incentives for completing the 2009 Health Assessment. This is an important opportunity to be good stewards! This involves real money. Please participate on-line so we as congregations and plan members can see the financial savings. Go to boardofpensions.org to access the Health Assessment site.

The personal financial incentives were developed by the ELCA Board of Pensions to encourage the health plan's eligible pastors, church workers and spouses to become healthier by using their health benefits proactively. As of March 1, only 27 of our pastors or covered spouses have taken the Health Assessment. Another 45 will need to complete it before all see the savings possible!

TOP TEN REASONS HOLY WEEK AND EASTER ARE WONDERFUL TIMES OF THE YEAR

10. The old man Satan is defeated by God.
9. The sun in the sky begins to speak with considerable authority even on a cold day.
8. Chocolate Easter eggs and chocolate bunnies are delicious even when you are over fifty!
7. We are reminded that when we “wash the feet of others,” we are serving the Lord.
6. Parish pastors preach great sermons on the most powerful texts in the Bible.
5. The music - who can top “O Sacred Head Now Wounded” and “Jesus Christ is Risen Today?”
4. White lilies are in bloom even in the north woods.
3. The Forgiveness of Sins takes on new meaning. It is God’s amazing grace.
2. We learn anew that death is not the end of the road.
1. Christ is Risen Indeed. Alleluia!

+ *DEATH OF PASTOR FREDERICK DUPAW, JR.* +

Word has reached us of the death of retired Pastor Frederick Dupaw, Jr. Pastor Dupaw retired in 1979 and lived in Cary, Illinois until his death on February 16, 2009.

Ordained in 1959, Pastor Dupaw was a graduate of Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois and the Augustana Theological Seminary. He served at First Lutheran in Ogema, Wisconsin; St. Paul in Lyons, Wisconsin and then from 1976 to 1979 at Salem Lutheran in Bark River, Michigan.

We give thanks for the life and ministry of Pastor Dupaw. “In Christ shall all be made alive.”

TRANSITIONS

+Congratulations to **Pastor Scott and Melissa Williams (United, L'Anse)** on the birth of a daughter, **Sophia Elizabeth**. God bless this family as they grow in Christ!

+God bless **Pastor Chrys Levesque (Retired)** on her marriage to **Lawrence (Bud) Hendrick**. They were married on Sunday, March 8, in Kalamazoo. They are making their home in the Marquette area. God is at work in our lives!

+Our Christian sympathy to **Pastor Lynn Hubbard (Eden, Munising)** on the death of his father in Indianapolis. Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth.

+God bless **Pastor Timothy Bernard** as the people of **Messiah Lutheran** renewed his call as **Associate Pastor** recently. I participated in the celebration affirming his ministry on March 14 and 15 at **St. Mark's and Messiah**.

+Thomas A. Skrenes, Bishop

From our Partner Synod —

Delaware-Maryland

Bishop H. Gerard Knoche writes:

VCS: It's a good thing! Last night a three-year old said to me, "Why can't we have Vacation Church School every week?" Last Sunday the worship at the church I attended was entirely dedicated to the Rainforest Theme of the past

week's Vacation Church School, with songs and lessons being led by the pastor and the youth. I have come to believe that Vacation Church School is one of the things churches in this synod do best. It takes many different forms (one half-day for one week, nights for one week, one Wednesday night a week for five weeks), but all of them seem to work in their context.

Why is Vacation Church School such a good program?

- It is intergenerational. Most programs have parents and grandparents doing the teaching, the crafts, the snacks, teenagers being the helpers, and grades pre-school through junior high as students.
- It is community building. Both the children and the adults know one another better and enjoy being together more by the end of the week than at the beginning. The cooperation, the joy of success, the awesomeness of what a group together can accomplish makes it something that most people who do it once want to repeat.
- **It is missional.** Many vacation church schools attract other children from the neighborhood whose parents are looking for activities to fill the summer. Under the best circumstances children invite their friends. Perhaps a culminating activity that has the children performing will draw their parents to the church. Growing churches visit all those families that are not members, so that they can be invited to other activities. The excuse, "they are all members of other churches," won't be accepted. Many folks are inactive in the church they call home.
- **It is ecumenical.** Some vacation church schools are held jointly with other churches in the community, perhaps alternating venues. Children from other churches will go home telling about "the Lutherans way of doing things" as they share their day's activities with their parents.
- **It is fun.** If it is not, the children won't return next year.

There are few programs we sponsor that offer all these benefits at one time. Adults, it is worth all the hard work. As Martha Stewart would say: "It's a good thing."



Thank You

World Missionary Support

Faith, Rock
 Trinity, Stambaugh
 Calvary, Rapid River
 Grace, Gwinn
 Trinity, Rhinelander

Lutheran Campus Ministry

Emanuel, Skandia
 Trinity, Ishpeming
 Zion, Manistique
 Bethany, Amasa
 Sharon, Bessemer
 Grace, Gwinn

Tanzania Teachers' Gift

Joyce Peterson

Kisarawe

Rev. Robert & Deloris Langseth

Lay School for Mission

Trinity, Rapid River

Lutheran World Relief

Prince of Peace, Marquette
 Zion, Marinette
 Calvary, Rapid River
 Holy Trinity, Chassell

ELCA Disaster Funds

Grace, South Range

Malaria Net Project

St. Paul's, Mass City
 Trinity, Ishpeming
 Noah Budd, Gloria Dei, Hancock

Seminarian Support

First, Trenary

Tanzanian Student

Trinity, Rhinelander

Endowment Fund

Rev. Devon & JoAnne Barrix



+ From the Assistant to the Bishop +
Pastor Jennifer Johnson Wrege

We thank you, O God, for all your servants and witnesses of times past:

for Abraham and Sarah, Moses and Miriam, Deborah and Gideon,

Samuel and Hannah; for Isaiah and the prophets; for Mary, mother of our Lord;

for Mary Magdalene, Peter, Paul, and for all the apostles, for Stephen and Phoebe, and for all the martyrs and saints

in every time and in every land.

In your mercy, give us, as you gave them, the hope of salvation

and the promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

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pastor or even met "one." Back then "they" were, I'm thinking, sort of seen as an odd entity in a congregation, an ecclesiastical aberration that somehow was here to stay. I was "one" when I began serving in my first call at Siloa in Ontonagon and Faith in White Pine. Eight years later when I accepted my second call at Bethany, Norway, I was not "one" so much. I was a pastor who was a woman and not so much a woman who was a pastor.

These days as I sit with congregation councils and read congregation newsletters that have their council membership listed, I wonder, "What has happened to our guys - you know - the MEN?" Oh, they haven't completely disappeared - no way! There are many faithful men who are living out their lives of discipleship by following Jesus. There are many devoted, skilled, talented men who offer their gifts and skills to the mission and ministries of their congregations, the work of the Northern Great Lakes Synod, and to the whole Church. THANKS BE TO GOD!!! And, though I have not done any (nada, none) actual research on the numbers, anecdotally it appears that there are some men who are missing from our congregations. Yet, as I have taken note of who makes up congregation councils, there are enough congregations where there are significantly fewer men than women on the council and where the officers are all, or primarily filled by women, to be concerned. If a full contingent of men, providing leadership and participating in mission and ministry "side by side" are missing, who else may be missing? The twenty-somethings? The thirty-somethings? Youth and families with youth? Others?

Why is that? I am not sure, but I offer two suggestions:

1. Read or, better yet, gather a group of people to read and discuss the book *Coming of Age: Exploring the Spirituality and Identity of Younger Men*.
2. Talk with Lon Buss at the 2009 Northern Great Lakes Synod Assembly. Mr. Buss is an ambassador for ELCA Lutheran Men in Mission. He will be offering a display, leading a workshop, and is eager to talk with you about mobilizing men for mission and ministry in your congregation and across the Synod.

Blessings!

What do quilt shops, anchor stores in malls, and many congregations have in common?

Check the answer(s) you think is/are correct.

- All three want your money.
- All three of their buildings are larger than my house.
- All three typically have more women than men visible.

I am old enough to remember when all the pastors in the congregations I attended were men. I am old enough to remember when all or most of the council/board/trustees were men. I am old enough to remember when, if there was a woman or two on the council/board/trustees, that she certainly would not be the president or the chair. Of course, she could be the secretary. I am old enough to remember when any evening worship times were scheduled, they were scheduled late enough into the evening so that the men could finish the barn chores and shower before attending worship. I am old enough to remember when leadership responsibilities at Bible camp or youth group or Lutheran college campus outreach groups went first to the guys. I guess I am just old!

Prior to beginning classes at what was once Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary, now affectionately known as Luther, I had never heard a woman pastor preach, observed her in the duties of a parish

Pastoral Vacancies and Interim Pastors

Bethany, Covington - Pastor Scott Williams

Holy Cross, Baraga - Pastor John Autio

Immanuel, Escanaba - Pastor Jonathan Schmidt

Grace, Gwinn - Pastor Steve Gauger

First, Ewen; Our Saviour's, Paynesville; Trinity, Trout Creek - Pastor Gerald Anderson

Bethany, Perkins - Pastor Peter Andersen

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

Holy Trinity, Chassell - Pastors Jimalee Jones & Peter Gundersen

St. James, Rudyard - Pastor Barry Levine

Zion, St. Ignace & Trinity, Brevort - Pastor George Kaiser

Emanuel, Skandia - Pastor James Duehring

Prince of Peace, Eagle River - Pastor Bill Hayes

Eden, Munising

With the struggling economy, 2009 will likely be a challenging year for many of our congregations and the Synod as a whole. This challenge offers us the opportunity to rely on Jesus' promise to be with us in all things. Trusting in that promise, we move forward with hope, knowing that God is guiding our ministry. Thanks be to God for His many blessings!

Betsy Koski, Bookkeeper

As of 2/28/09	2008	2009	\$ Change	% Change
Pledged Amount	1,032,591	1,005,571	-27,020	-2.6%
Amount Received	119,560	98,140	-21,420	-17.9%
Designated Gifts	19,851	19,313	-538	-2.7%



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ON-LINE DEVOTIONS FOR APRIL 2009

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**DEVOTIONS FOR LENT ARE WRITTEN JOINTLY BY CLERGY
AND LAITY FROM THE NORTHERN GREAT LAKES SYNOD
AND OUR PARTNER SYNOD OF DELAWARE/MARYLAND**

**April 13-18 / Bishop Thomas A. Skrenes, Northern
Great Lakes Synod, ELCA**

April 19-25 / Pastor Barb Girod, Faith, Three Lakes

**April 26-May 2 / Pastor Lee Goodwin, The Sabbath Pro-
ject**