THREE DAYS IN MAY
SYNOD ASSEMBLY: WORD ALIVE JESUS CHRIST!

Bishop Thomas A. Skrenes
tskrenes@nglsynod.org

Nearly 400 persons gathered for the 22nd annual Assembly of the Northern Great Lakes Synod in Marquette, Michigan on May 14-16. Pastors and lay leaders from nearly every congregation in the Synod met at Messiah Lutheran Church and at Northern Michigan University under the theme, “Word Alive Jesus Christ” to pray, hear God’s Word, fellowship together and to think together about the work of this Church and Synod. And we voted too!

How does one describe a Synod Assembly! For our Synod Staff, the work of organizing and planning is tremendous. There are dozens of meetings, phone calls, letters and emails. There is arranging the Agenda, establishing priorities and getting the work done. It is exhausting. It is exhilarating. I would recommend that everyone serve at least one year on the Synod Assembly Planning Committee. Our thanks to our Synod Staff for their very hard work and to the Planning Committee for their positive attitude and eager energy. It, indeed, was “Word Alive Jesus Christ.”

At the Assembly:

+We heard Dr. Audrey West of Chicago give the keynote address, Pastor James Chinery, (First Ev. in Iron Mountain), Virginia Paulson (Immanuel, Negaunee) and Amy Johnson from Lutheran Office of Public Policy in Madison brought Bible studies, and Evelyn Soto from the Churchwide organization brought greetings from Bishop Mark Hanson and the whole Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

+Elected to the Synod Council were: Susan Anderson (Sharon, Bessemer); Lynn Lehto (Mission United, Pelkie); Ken Hoffman (Immanuel, Rhinelander); Pastor Norman Peterson (Immanuel,
Elected to the Synod Discipline Committee were: Pastor Jonathan Schmidt (First, Gladstone); Pastor Keith Kolstad (Zion, Marinette); Ruth Anne Connor (United, L’Anse); and Ronald Raisanen (Prince of Peace, Marquette).

Held a “quasi-committee of the whole” to discuss the proposed social statement, “Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust,” and the recommendations on Ministry Policies.

The Synod Assembly voted on five questions involving the sexuality statement and the recommendations on Ministry Policies. The questions and vote totals follow:

**SOCIAL STATEMENT**
Shall the Northern Great Lakes Synod Assembly recommend approval of the social statement, “Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust,” and its implementing resolutions?
133 YES  104 NO

**Recommendations on Ministry Policies: Resolution 1**
Shall the Northern Great Lakes Synod Assembly recommend approval of the Recommendations on Ministry Policies: Resolution 1?
127 YES   110 NO

**Recommendations on Ministry Policies: Resolution 2**
Shall the Northern Great Lakes Synod Assembly recommend approval of the Recommendations on Ministry Policies: Resolution 2?
107 YES   120 NO

**Recommendations on Ministry Policies: Resolution 3**
Shall the Northern Great Lakes Synod Assembly recommend approval of the Recommendations on Ministry Policies: Resolution 3?
137 YES   99 NO

**Recommendations on Ministry Policies: Resolution 4**
Shall the Northern Great Lakes Synod Assembly recommend approval of the Recommendations on Ministry Policies: Resolution 4?
105 YES   112 NO

Adopted a memorial to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly, asking them to amend their rules to require a two-thirds majority for any changes in the current ministry standards of this Church. The Assembly also adopted a memorial to the Churchwide Assembly asking them to “establish methods, and pro-
Thomas A. Skrenes, Bishop (continued)

cedures, and teaching” that will help this Church deal with disagreements and respect bound con-
sciences.

The close votes on these issues involving sexuality indicate that the leaders of the Synod (both clergy and lay) are not of one mind. The Churchwide Assembly will discuss and vote on this on our behalf this August in Minneapolis. Please pray that God’s will may be done.

The Assembly also:

+Heard reports on the work of the Synod Women’s Organization, Lutheran Men in Mission, The Sab-
bath Project, and “Answer the Call”, the funding program for our Synod seminarians.

+Welcomed new pastors to our Synod and those seminarians preparing for professional service in the Church.

+Adopted a revised Synod 2009 budget and a budget for fiscal year 2010. The revised 2009 budget indicates the reality of decreased funding of our mission by our congregations. Starting in 2010, the Synod will share 50% of its unrestricted congregational income with the Churchwide ELCA. This is a decrease from 53.5% in 2009.

+Congratulated the recent graduates of the Lay School for Mission including: Pamela Durbin, Diane Srutowski, Jean Sovey, Scott Chamberlain, Linda Forray, Jane Kaukola, Rachel Berglund, Beverly Hill, Debbie Pavolich, Pamela Long, Barbara Chiapuzio, Sandy Hamburg, Terri Lueck, Myron Re, Bob Wheelan, Jim Rose and Orv Kabat.

+Greeted Dr. Tulitweni Mwinuka as she began her visit to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan from East Africa. She was a guest of the Synod as a part of the continuing “companion” program of the Church. Joining her from Dar es Salaam, Tanzania was Mr. Robert Charles, the Deputy General Secretary and Head of the Social Services Department for the Eastern and Coastal Diocese of the Tanzanian Lutheran Church.

+Received offerings of $4,015.14 for Young Men’s and Young Women’s ministries in our Synod and $17,262.42 for the ELCA World Hunger Program.

We all take very seriously the comments and criticisms of our voting members as we plan for the next Assembly. You should know that the evaluations of the event indicate wide approval of the way our time was managed. Worship services and our speakers received very high marks. Here are a few positive thoughts mentioned and a response to them:

“What was Augsburg Fortress and the Third World Shoppe? We did like the Madison Church Supply Book Store.”
We missed Augsburg Fortress and the Third World, too! They decided not to do any synod assemblies this year for financial reasons. The Madison Church Supply Store appreciated being at our Assembly.

“Central time zone people had a hard time starting so early - and what a long day it was.”
It is very hard to schedule all that needs to be accomplished without a very long day. Every year I worry about time. I consider it important to keep us on schedule so that we can get our work done.
“The music for the hymns was hard to read on a screen.”
Thank you for that helpful comment. Technology in a Synod Assembly is important, and it must serve our mission. We are seeking to improve!

“The coffee was good!”
Yes it was - but we have not seen the bill for it yet!

TO AFRICA
As you read this newsletter, a good group of our people will be visiting in Tanzania. A work group organized by Pastor Robert and Deloris Langseth are working and building new dormitories at our Kisarawe Junior Seminary (Secondary School) near Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. They are the most recent participants in our Companion Synod program of exchange with the Eastern and Coastal Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church In Tanzania. Spending nearly a month in Tanzania with the Langseths are: Ken and Bonnie Groh, Ken Cygan, Nancy Bird, Ann Christiansen, Loni Rochon, Ruth Snyder, and Jean Cygan. Pastor Timothy Bernard will be traveling also this summer to Dar es Salaam to visit the Companion Synod congregation of Messiah, Marquette. God bless each and every person on this safari! May Jesus Christ travel with them!

Saving Money.....
THE MISSION INVESTMENT FUND
Our congregations and our members can help themselves and the whole Church by investing our dollars in the Mission Investment Fund. As of the end of last year, the ninety-four congregations of this Synod had $9,912,120 in savings, memorials and endowments. Four congregations in this Synod have borrowed about $1.5 million from the Mission Investment Fund.

Ms. Deborah Smith would be delighted to speak with you on the MIF and its possibilities for you and/or your congregation. Call her at 507/635-3745 or email her at Deborah.Smith@elca.org.

Our Synod Office has descriptive brochures about the Mission Investment Fund too! “God's work. Our hands.”

TRANSITIONS
+Congratulations to Soren Schmidt who has been named Campus Chaplain at Finlandia University in Hancock. Soren has served for many years as the Program Director at Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp. God bless him in this new area of ministry!

+Pastor Cori Johnson has resigned her position at Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp to pursue parish ministry. God bless her as she seeks to serve Jesus Christ!

+Thomas A. Skrenes, Bishop

ROBERT GARDNER
Licensed Lay Minister
1932 - 2009
Robert "Bob" Gardner, Licensed Lay Minister at First Lutheran Church, Grand Marais, MI, died on May 30, 2009. Bob is survived by his wife of 25 years, Nancy; four children, Bonnie Wise, Kathleen Gardner, Mark (Judy) Gardner, Karen (Scott) Lennen; step-children Jennifer (Rob) Rottweiler and Brian (Gina) Birbaum; a sister, Mary, fifteen grandchildren, and numerous nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents, son James “Jimmy” in 1989, and sister, Donna.

Services for Bob were held at First Lutheran Church in Grand Marais on Monday, June 1. Bob served First Lutheran Church as a Licensed Lay Minister since 1990.

Our Christian sympathy to Nancy Gardner and her family. "Our help is in the name of the Lord."
Announcement from the First Call Theological Education Planning Committee

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

The First Call Theological Education Fall Event will be held November 8-11 at St. Anthony Retreat Center in Marathon, Wisconsin. Mark your calendars now and watch for information to arrive in your mailboxes during the latter part of August or early part of September. This is one component of a three-year structured program of theological education designed to assist newly called leaders in the transition to rostered ministry that has been mandated by the ELCA.

Thank You

World Missionary Support
Bethel, Ishpeming
Trinity, Rhinelander
Trinity, Stambaugh
Calvary, Rapid River

Lay School for Mission
Trinity, Rapid River
Rev. John West

ELCA Disaster Funds
Grace, South Range

Answer the Call
Rev. Devon & JoAnne Barrix
Rev. David & Sandy Hueter
Jack Armstrong
Barb & Will Maines
Chic & Gloria LaFave

Judy Mattson
Rev. Keith & Karen Kolstad

Lutheran Campus Ministry
Bethany, Amasa
Emanuel, Skandia
Grace, Gwinn

Seminarian Support
Bethany, Amasa
Calvary, Minocqua

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

Mosquito Netting
United, Crystal Falls
St. Paul’s, Mass City
Bishop Thomas & Luanne Skrenes

The Sabbath Project
Emmanuel, Menominee
Finlandia University

Rural Tanzanian Clinics
Rev. John West

Kisarawe Student Scholarships
Rev. John West

Pastor’s Debt Reduction
Rev. John West
Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and through grace gave us eternal comfort and good hope, comfort your hearts and strengthen them in every good work and word.

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

It may seem odd. It may be counter intuitive. It may even appear to be silly. Nevertheless, the giving and receiving of comfort is often not easy and, in fact, may require us to sacrifice if we are on the giving end or to be uncomfortably vulnerable if we are on the receiving end. Both ends have the ability to set us on courses outside our comfort zones and onto that holy ground where the Holy Spirit shines in bringing together those who can bring needed comfort and those in need of it.

Whether it was being rocked in the arms of a loving parent, family member or friend, or receiving nourishment from bottle or breast, at a very early age we all learned how great it was to be comforted. And, there is a reason why so many of us as toddlers insisted on having our blankies with us especially when we were in need of comfort. Little did we know back then what we know now - that embedded in our blankies is also the comfort that comes from the Holy Spirit and those who love us. Sometimes, all I want to do is wrap myself up in an afghan (an adult word for blankie) and be comforted.

Fortune Lake Camp has launched a "Holy Comfort" Campaign intended to furnish a 16 bed, high comfort adult facility. Many have experienced their time at Fortune Lake Camp as a place of grace. People of all ages from youth to elders have received comfort in the face of the aches and pains of life at FLC. Now you can be part of this effort that hopes to bring grace and comfort to others. Read more about it on the insert included in this issue of Notes and Quotes.

Recently I was reminded of this truth: We never know the full extent of our acts of kindness and comfort toward others. Much remains invisible to us. And, that is probably a very good thing. Awhile back, a quilter shared a note she received about a quilt she had made several years ago for family friends. It reads, in part:

Once again, I want to thank you for the soft, thick baby quilt you made. We all use it almost everyday. We snuggle it, we sleep and nap with it, it goes on all long car rides. It is fading to a soft blue and we love it. We talk about the maker of it and pray for you.

If we are in need of comfort, for any reason, by God’s grace we receive it. If we can give comfort, it is by God’s grace that we bestow it. God’s grace be with you...

Blessings!
God is good and blesses us abundantly! Though the pledged amount for 2009 shows a 2.6% decrease from 2008, actual giving is flat compared to 2008. Designated giving also remains flat. We are deeply thankful and count it a privilege to partner with each of the congregations of the Northern Great Lakes Synod in working to bring God’s word of hope and healing to our world. As we enter the financially challenging summer months, may we trust in God’s promises to be with us in all things and respond joyfully and generously.  

(Betsy Koski, Bookkeeper)

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May 31-June 6 / RoseAnne Aman, First, Iron Mountain
June 7-13 / Members of First, Iron River
June 14-20 / Rev. Art Weiss, Executive Director, Fortune Lake Camp
June 21-27 / Wendy Black, Fortune Lake Camp Board Member
June 28-July 4 / Rev. Bill Jacobson, Fortune Lake Camp Board President
July 5-11 / Rev. Steve Gauger, Fortune Lake Camp Board Member
July 12-18 / Andy Sims, Fortune Lake Camp Board Member
July 19-25 / Julie Beck, Fortune Lake Camp Board Member
July 26-August 1 / Herb Grenke, Fortune Lake Camp Board Member
STAR TREK
THE REVIEW - A LUTHERAN PERSPECTIVE

by Pastor Mary Weinkauf of Minocqua, WI

My fellow film critics, daughter Xanti, Dan, 13-year old Joe, 16-year old Andy and I all loved it. We’re a tough audience of movie nuts who love science fiction.

The new cast is perfect. Chris Pine has a gleam in his eyes, terrific looks, charm - a perfect young Kirk. We’re all Heroes fans, so Zachary Quinto (like Spock) can do no wrong. J.J. Abrams said he was the first, automatic choice for the Vulcan role - and Abrams does no wrong either (Alias and Lost). As you might guess, Uhura (the woman of all tongues) was my favorite character, and Zoe Saldana sort of smolders - this girl steals the show in all her scenes. You might be surprised by her choice of men. All the characters fit together so well that we felt that we were among old friends. I’m so glad I went with Xanti since she was brought up on Star Trek and has gone to all the other movies with me. The film got an A - from Entertainment Weekly, which I swear by for choosing what to watch/buy. The plot is edge-of-your-seat, though you know (what a blessing it is!) that everything will turn out right. Leonard Nimoy’s insertion in the plot is sort of cheesy, I thought, but I’m glad William Shatner didn’t show up. Nimoy is the intellectual who brings reflection on fate, love of country, family, and friends, and good taste into the film as well as into the interviews I’ve seen and heard recently. He’s my rabbi figure.

Star Trek’s science is just as silly as the old Star Trek’s - lots of improbabilities. But, who cares? The special effects are spectacular. The forces of evil are just as disgusting as ever (which can be misleading to immature viewers). The film plays with all the wonderful issues of time travel, innovative gadgets, alien interactions as if there were no differences in life forms (which I always found inspirational in dealing with integration in the academic community), and OBVIOUS evil - no ambiguities in Star Trek land. But why worry about improbability when good wins? I thought it was the best Star Trek movie I’ve seen, a class reunion with friends we liked. Watch for the tribble.

Sci fi scholars talk about confabulation a lot. We accept wild theories and improbable plots because we want good to win, and we want a universe where justice, virtue, love, loyalty, friendship and honor bring order and meaning to life. Thank God for Kirk and Spock, who are a bit like Law and Gospel, creating order while valuing human differences.

In Star Trek’s setting, the universe and the Enterprise couldn’t survive without the impulsive man of immediate action and the genius whose grasp of theory and logic creates ways to avoid annihilation. Together they unify and inspire a team. Alone out in space they have to make choices, set priorities, and act right away, bending a few rules to defend what they love. Take no action and the vile Romulans wipe out our worlds. On and around the Enterprise every life form is unique and interdependent, as unique as Kirk, Spock, Uhura, Scotty, Dr. McCoy, Sulu, and Chekov, and we, like them, need each other. Life is as vast and open as the universe. Honor and courage defeat the most evil of ancient foes. I think Martin Luther would have been a Trekkie.

Don’t miss the movie. That’s all thumbs up for the Weinkauf clan.
Northern Great Lakes Synod
9th Annual Bishop's
Golf Scramble / fundraiser for
Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp

Monday, September 14th – 2009
Oak Crest Golf Course

- Registration begins at 8:00 AM (CST)
- Shotgun start at 9:00 AM (CST)
- $60 per person includes 18-holes, cart and lunch
- Lunch with prizes will follow
- Deadline is September 1, 2009

*Make checks payable to NGLS and mail to:

First Evangelical Lutheran Church – 1210 S Stephenson Ave –
Iron Mountain, MI 49801 – Attn: Pastor James Chinery

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*One Registration form per golfer ($60.00) by September 1, 2009.
**If you have a foursome, please send in all registration forms together. If you would like to golf with a particular person, list them and we will do our best.
***Non Golfers – donations to Fortune Lake Lutheran camp are welcome!

Questions – call (906-774-0133) or Email: pastorchinery@yahoo.com
Help Gather Your Young Adults Together!
Refer them to Lutheran Campus Ministry

Referrals from congregations are one of the main ways that campus ministries reach out to Lutheran students on campus. By providing us with their names, campus pastors have the chance to welcome students to worship, Bible study, conversation and service work. This is an opportunity for you to continue your baptismal call to support these young adults in their life of faith.

Please include all the students that you have information for, no matter where they are headed off for school. We will make sure the names are sent to campus pastors across the country.

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Just fold up this sheet and send it in.
You can include extra pages if necessary.
"Holy Comfort" Campaign
-Funding Furnishings for New Adult Lodge

It's Easter at FLLCI! The transformation of the old Hickory-Hemlock duplex into a 16-bed high comfort adult facility has begun! New life is springing out of a big hole in the ground! Alleluia!

Completion is set for August 15; reservations are already scheduled well into the fall. It will be a busy summer for facility manager Chris Nocerini's crew and faithful volunteers! Chris welcomes all willing workers!

The first group to use the new facility will be the Synodical Women's Convention August 28-29. By that time, the rooms must be ready to receive guests!

Your congregation can share in the excitement! Following is a list of specific items needed and their approximate cost. We will purchase through wholesale vendors whenever possible.

We are not asking for the items themselves. Please indicate how you want the monetary gifts from your congregation to be used. For example, if an individual or group chooses to cover the cost of linen for one bed, check that package.

General contributions to the "Holy Comfort Campaign” are also welcome!

Both small and large gifts will be appreciated. Pastor Art reminds us: "every dollar we raise today is a dollar we don't have to borrow tomorrow!” With this mini campaign, you can help jump-start the main funding appeal, which will begin in January!

Package gifts:

_____ Entire room for two:
(furniture, mattresses, linens, quilts) $1200

_____ Single Linen:
(bedding, towel set) $120

_____ Custom-built furniture
(2 pine bed frames; 2 Shaker nightstands) $200

Individual gifts:

_____ Twin Mattress
$250 (need 16)

_____ Quilt (fabric, batting, machine quilting cost: will be sewn by volunteers) $140

_____ Mattress Pad
$30 (need 20)

_____ Sheets/pillowcase set
$30 (need 35 sets)

_____ Pillow
$20 (need 20)

_____ Blanket
$20 (need 20)

_____ Towel set
$20 (need 35 sets)

Use the above form for designated gifts from yourself, your friends, or your congregation and mail it with your check to Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp 138 Fortune Lake Camp Rd. Crystal Falls, MI 49920

Name of giver (or giving group) and congregation

Thanks for assuring "holy comfort” for each guest of the transformed Hickory Lodge!