



## What is a volunteer?

By Bishop Rolf Wangberg

One of the first Bible verses I memorized was from Luke: "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me, yet, not my will, but thine be done." To me there is a contrast between these words in Luke and the Christ hymn in Philippians 2:8, "He humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death." In submitting to his own death was Jesus acting as a volunteer savior or obedient servant? Was he volunteering or just doing his job?

Recently, "volunteers" from all over the synod brought young people to the Senior High Youth Gathering in St. Paul. Some have been to more than 20 gatherings. For some it was their first. Some came chaperoning their children. Some came with no children of their own. Some were employees of their congregations. Some received no pay at all. Which ones were volunteers?

At a Lutheran Disaster Response site in New Orleans, we met men and women from New London and Spicer laying flooring, painting walls, installing appliances, and attaching electrical fixtures so a family uprooted by Katrina could return to their home. These people from the Southwestern Minnesota Synod have worked as volunteers in many different disasters. If you were to ask them, they would say they are paid with an immense amount of satisfaction.

I suspect that volunteerism is more about attitude than about pay. It is more about feeding the soul than feeding the body. Volunteers find satisfaction and meaning in their labor. It energizes them spiritually and emotionally. What a blessing it is when we have meaningful labor that not only pays us a living wage, but feeds our soul. May all of us be so captured by the love of God that all of our labor is voluntary service to God and our neighbor.

### About Our Synod

The Northwestern Minnesota Synod is a geographical designation and a Church arrangement for carrying out the Church's mission. We are part of Region 3 of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

*Connections* is a publication of the Northwestern Minnesota Synod, ELCA designed for congregational use. For more information, contact the synod office:  
**218-299-3019 800-452-3692**  
[www.nwmnsynod.org](http://www.nwmnsynod.org)

## Koinonia, the 2007 Youth Gathering, a time for celebration

Koinonia, the 2007 Senior High Youth Gathering held March 20-April 1, was a celebration of our synod senior high youth coming together to be church and do church. From learning how to support families while their loved ones are deployed in the military to finding out how to discuss difficult topics in a respectful manner; from collecting teddy bears and making polar fleece blankets for LSS Crisis nurseries to working at the Dorothy Day Soup Kitchen; from visiting Luther Seminary to planning and being part of the hip-hop Sunday morning worship service; Koinonia happened. Koinonia means fellowship, people coming together to support one another, people coming together to help one another grow together in their faith in Jesus the Christ.

In a day when it is said that few youth are coming to church, 600 senior high youth did church together. The numbers are amazing. About 85 youth visited Luther Seminary in a "TheoRush" introduction to life as a seminary student. Over 200 youth attended Bishop Usgaard and Bishop Wangberg's classes in "How to Talk About Difficult Issues." Eighty-four youth visited a workshop called "Beyond the Ramp," which was about including the definitely-abled in our churches. About 180 youth attended a workshop on ending world hunger. And about 30 youth and adults, the LYO Board, worked hard behind the scenes to make Koinonia happen.

To see photos from the gathering, go to [www.nwmnsynod.org/lyo/index.html](http://www.nwmnsynod.org/lyo/index.html)

### Peer Ministry Adult Facilitators' Training

Northwestern Minnesota Synod Adult Facilitator Certified Peer Ministry Training will be held May 14-18 at Camp Emmaus, Menahga.

Lyle Griner, Peer Ministry National Center Youth and Family Institute, will lead this event. Become trained to train your youth and other adults who minister to peers, children, family, congregation and community.

Register on line at [https://www.sporg.com/registration?form\\_id=79957](https://www.sporg.com/registration?form_id=79957). Questions? Contact Pr. Karol Hendricks-McCracken [hendrick@cord.edu](mailto:hendrick@cord.edu). Underwritten by a generous grant from Thrivent, which will reduce the registration fee from \$400 to \$150.