



Northwestern Minnesota Synod

Connections



Connecting the Congregational, Synodical, and Churchwide Expressions of the ELCA

God's Incarnation Strategy

By Bishop Lawrence Wohlrabe

In [Christ] the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fullness in him... Colossians 2:9-10a

God knows that our hearts are restless until they rest in God's very self (St. Augustine). God knows that "if you want the job done right, you better do it yourself." So, in the birth of the Messiah, God came down. God squeezed himself into the embryo growing in Mary's womb. God made himself utterly vulnerable to all the vagaries and hardships of human existence. God wrapped himself up in the stuff, the perplexity, indeed the *mess* of life as we know it. God did all of that, in Christ, to *redeem* life as we know it.

This holy season celebrates God's astounding resolve to take on human flesh and blood, becoming incarnate in the infant Jesus. Incarnation is at the heart of our faith and life and mission. But it's more than a doctrine or a fact of history. Incarnation is God's age-old *mission strategy* for reclaiming and renewing the whole creation.

The incarnation of God in the human flesh of Jesus didn't end at the Ascension. It is God's *continuing* resolve to keep taking on flesh, to keep wrapping himself up in all that we think and do and are. It is God's good pleasure to live among us in the Body of Christ—still bound up irretrievably with human flesh and blood.

God takes on human flesh and blood, although, not merely to commiserate with us. God's gracious decision is to redeem us, through and through. God intends to make us and all things *new*. And--by calling us to incarnate God's own hands, voice, and feet--God catches us up in this remarkable incarnational strategy for mission.

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The Northwestern Minnesota Synod

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More than 1,000 attend Jr. High Gathering

Branded by the Cross of Christ gathered 1,000 Northwestern Minnesota Synod youth together in November to own and rejoice in their identity as children of God. Pr. Greg Anderson of Bakke, Lund, and Richwood Parishes, kept the youth riveted while proclaiming the freedom of Christ, rapping songs to the Lord of the Rings, telling of his middle school years in a back brace and braces, all the while brandishing a four-foot saber and wearing a Scottish Black Watch plaid kilt.

Pr. Janice Brosen, pastor of Lord of Life Lutheran Church in Sun City West, Ariz., shared her life struggles as a person branded at birth with the label of multiple sclerosis. The youth also learned of the joy she has in knowing the love of Christ being branded with the Cross of Christ at baptism.

EyeWitness' lead singer and guitar player Erin Anderson, who is also youth director at Calvary in Perham, composed and taught the youth the theme song for the event, "We are Branded with the Cross of Christ." The gift of this song allowed the youth to carry the theme and blessing of the event home and into the week as it played in their minds, reminding them that they are claimed, marked and on the team as members of the body of Christ.

Multi-Synod Senior High Gathering

NW, SE and SW Minnesota and South Dakota

March 28-30, 2008, Arrowwood Resort, Alexandria

Registration begins February 2, online at nwmnsynod.org/lyo
For more information, contact the synod office, 218-299-3019

Bishop's message, continued

In this season of Christmastide, may you be amazed once again by all the ways God's embodiment in Jesus continues as we incarnate Christ in all that we think and say and do.

Some questions for reflection and discussion:

1. How are you aware of being restless for God's incarnate presence in your life?
2. Why does God meet us especially on the margins and extremities of life?
3. In what ways is your church embodying the redeeming presence of Christ in the world?