

Northwest Passages

The newsletter of the Northwestern Minnesota Synod



Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

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God is alive in you. What shape is that taking? God is moving in mission across eastern North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota. Where can we spot God at work? God has gifted you to tell the story, share your gifts and lead Christ's church. How might you grow in your discipleship?

"Hearts on Fire" is a three-hour event that will explore all of those questions in a way that empowers participants to be inspired for ministry, equipped to lead their churches, and enlisted for service on the new mission tables (action teams) being assembled by the Eastern North Dakota and Northwestern Minnesota synods. This "Rally in the Valley to Share God's Mission" will be Sunday, August 30, at the Eide Center on the campus of Oak Grove Lutheran School, Fargo.

CURRENT WEB TOPICS

The 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly begins August 17

Find the latest assembly resources and updates at www.elca.org/assembly.

More about the August 30 "Hearts on Fire Event"

http://www.nwmnsynod.org/NorthernLights/hearts_on_fire.htm

Wrapping up the National Youth Gathering

<http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Ministry/Youth-Ministry/Youth-Gathering.aspx>

Bishop Wohlraabe's Blog: <http://larrywohlraabe.blogspot.com/>

For regular updates on these and many other topics, go to:

WWW.NWMNSYNOD.ORG

July / August 2009

Evangelical Gene-Splicing

By Bishop Lawrence R. Wohlrabe

One of my favorite young adults just returned from an international mission trip. She traveled to Africa with other college students, all of them participants in a well-known nondenominational Christian organization. In a letter to supporters she wrote, "I had never shared the gospel with anyone before in my life, and we just jumped right into it!"



We probably all know young people like her. Although baptized and raised in the Lutheran church, somehow the gospel doesn't come alive for them until they affiliate with a campus "evangelical" group that places a high value on witnessing to the Good News of Jesus. I used to listen to these stories and worry about the Lutheran young adults telling them—fearing that they might get confused, succumb to "bad theology," and maybe even get re-baptized. (That fear hasn't completely vanished for me!) But these days I am more inclined to wonder: Why did this young woman—and others like her—not learn more about "sharing the gospel" from the sermons I preached, the confirmation classes I taught, or the mission trips I led?

My young friend's testimony was on my mind when I came across the following survey question, asked of ELCA members back in 2001: *If your pastor gave you the names of three persons or families in your neighborhood who were not church members, offered to train you in visitation, and asked you to visit them, and to share the meaning of the gospel in your life, how would you respond? (Mark only one.)*

Here's how a random sample of ELCA folks responded to this carefully-worded question:

14.5%	<i>I would accept gladly</i>
35.5%	<i>I would accept, but I would be anxious about it</i>
30.0%	<i>I would probably say no</i>
20.0%	<i>I am not sure how I would respond.</i> ¹

Thank God for the 14.5 percent who would gladly accept this challenge! But what do we make of the 85.5 percent of Lutherans who would be resistant, confused, or anxious about "sharing the gospel?" What do such statistics tell us about ourselves?

Last April I attended an ELCA conference at which someone observed: "Outgoingness is not a Lutheran *charism* (gift)..."¹ It's as if reticence and shyness—being tongue-tied where "sharing the gospel" is concerned—were hardwired right into our DNA.

We're talking about more than "head knowledge" here. Most of us Lutherans who have been paying attention in worship, Sunday School or confirmation **understand** the gospel. With proper prompting we can "share the gospel" in at least a formulaic way. But actually speaking of Christ—effortlessly, naturally, flowingly, in the rhythms of daily speech and habits—that is something else.

Perhaps what we really need is some "evangelical gene-splicing." It goes that deep in us, right down to our spiritual chromosomes. We can continue to read good books, go to enlightening conferences and bring home three-ring binders stuffed with **information** about evangelical witness.

Or we can open ourselves to ways whereby God might start to **transform our DNA**, actually move us beyond our natural reticence, and assimilate within our souls some of the charisms found in greater abundance within other members of the Body of Christ. Such a path will lead us to deeper engagement with historic faith practices—continual prayer, daily Bible reading, weekly worship, generous giving, extravagant service.

What if God intends not that we **think** our way into a new way of acting? What if God is leading us to **act** our way into fresh modes of thinking *and being* the Body of Christ?

Continued next page

¹ Available on the ELCA website at <http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Research-and-Evaluation/US-Congregational-Life-Survey.aspx>

² Rev. William Hurst of the Metro NY Synod at a training event for synodical "mission tables" at the ELCA Churchwide Office on April 27, 2009.

Bishop's Message, continued

An invitation to be immersed in the Good News of Jesus

Popular writer, speaker, teacher and pastor, Tony Campolo, tells a great story about this:

I lectured at the University of Manchester in England and there were two young men who said, 'We want to come and work with your team in the cities of America. We want to work in the inner city for the summer, but we have to tell you something. Can we be missionaries with your organization even if we don't believe in God?' I paused for a moment and I said of course, but here's the deal: you've got to pretend you believe in God. All summer long you've got to do Bible studies with the boys and girls, sing gospel songs, play games, go to church with them on Sunday. If you do all the things that a believer would do, you can come. You don't have to be a believer. You know what happened. Both of those young men are Anglican priests in England today. They were transformed by what they did.³

On August 30 at Oak Grove Lutheran School in Fargo,

we'll have a chance to play with such possibilities. *Hearts on Fire*, a joint endeavor of the Eastern North Dakota and Northwestern Minnesota Synods will invite participants to be immersed in the Good News of Jesus, to try on fresh ways of gospel-speaking and Christ-following, and to dream together about how God is calling us to serve his mission in our part of the world. Everyone is invited to attend this "rally in the Valley for God's mission," from 4 to 7 p.m. at the Eid Center. Speakers will include Dr. Rollie Martinson of Luther Seminary, Bishop Bill Rindy of the Eastern North Dakota Synod, and me—and a COOKOUT SUPPER will be part of the deal.

There is no cost for this event. Pre-registration is helpful (contact Keith Zeh at Keith.Zeh@elca.org or 218.299.4447 or 701.232.3381) but not required. An offering will be received to help defray expenses.

3. Available on the Internet at http://www.csec.org/csec/sermon/campolo_5218.htm

Book of Faith Jubilee coming to Luther Seminary August 14-16



We would like to encourage you to come and be a part of the "Book of Faith Jubilee!" on August 14-16, 2009, at Luther Seminary in St. Paul. The "Book of Faith Jubilee!" has been designed with you, members of congregations committed to bringing the Bible alive in your homes and congregations, in mind. We are confident that the Jubilee will help renew deeper and more meaningful engagement with Scripture in your church and community.

This event is the perfect opportunity for you to become fully equipped to help members in your congregation read and understand the Bible. Through inspiring keynote speakers, including Eugene Peterson, practical and dynamic workshops, affinity groups and conversational dinners, this three-day event provides skills, resources, contacts, and encouragement to participants in order to lead congregational and community renewal in reading the Bible. We will be thinking together about teaching Bible in your homes, and about how to engage more folks from congregations and community. This is a can't miss event for pastors, lay leaders, church staff and members alike!

For more details, go to <http://www.luthersem.edu/jubilee/> Space is limited, so register today. We hope to see you in St. Paul as we celebrate deepening our engagement with the Word of God!

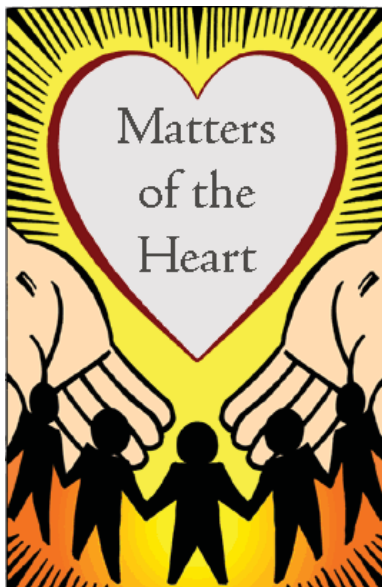
Coming this fall to a site near you: Matters of the Heart

By Pastor Stephen Peterson, Assistant to the Bishop

As summer turns to fall, one of the things we will have to look forward to in our synod is a special new opportunity to have important and joyful conversations together. Throughout the fall, synod staff and others will facilitate two or more conversation events in each of the 10 conferences of the synod around the theme *Matters of the Heart*.

Each gathering will include leaders from five to 10 congregations encouraged to attend that particular event. The goal is for each gathering to be within 30 miles of each participating congregation. A schedule of dates, times and host congregations is currently under development and will be publicized as soon as it is available; it is anticipated that more information will be available by September 1.

The *Matters of the Heart* gatherings will focus on honest, thankful, informative, challenging, biblical, and joyful conversations about matters related to our stewardship of ministry and mission as congregations, synod and the whole ELCA. We will discuss the challenging times we live in as congregations and all together as a Church in terms of changing realities and in terms of opportunity, responsibility



and the privilege of living in mission. In addition to the challenges we are all facing, we will consider some of the exciting new developments that are beginning to unfold in our synod, our congregations and throughout the church. These developments relate to being church at a time when we are beginning to move in more missional directions.

These *Matters of the Heart* gatherings will take the place of the fall conference-by-conference stewardship consultations that have been the norm over a number of years in our synod, but will have some significant differences from those gatherings in terms of expectation and content. Every effort will be

made to encourage five to 10 leaders from each congregation to attend a gathering reasonably close to home alongside their neighboring congregations. The conversations themselves will be very congregationally oriented even as the mission shared together is shared and discussed. The conversations will be honest and helpful and inspiring toward the joyful goal of embracing ever more boldly the mission we have been given in our time and place to live and to share the Good News of Jesus Christ.

So, this is heads up, sometime this fall, coming to a location near you: *Matters of the Heart!*

Synod Theological Conference You Are What You Eat A Second Helping...

with Dr. Rolf Jacobson and Dr. Mary Hinkle Shore

September 21-23

Fair Hills Resort

Watch the Website and Northern Lights for more information



Mary Hinkle Shore & Rolf Jacobson

Missionaries bring message of hope from Middle East

By Michael Stein

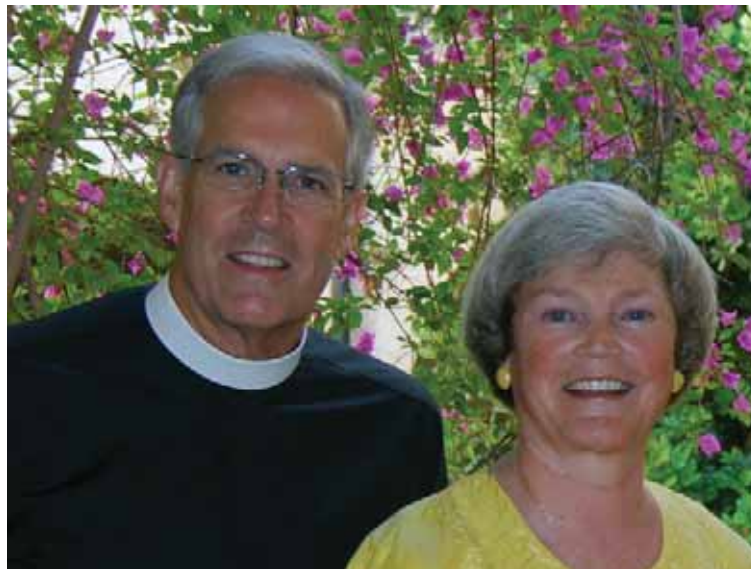
Several congregations in our synod recently received a unique perspective of mission in the Middle East from Pastor Mark and Marcia Holman. Mark is in the midst of a four-year call as pastor of the English-speaking congregation at the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in the Old City of Jerusalem. Marcia works on a variety of special projects through the ELCA, or in accompaniment with the local bishop and synod, Rev. Dr. Munib Younan and the Evangelical Lutheran Church In Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL). The couple visited with all the ELCA congregations around the country that are sponsoring them and/or Redeemer Church through their ELCA Global Mission stewardship.

“Marcia and I have had a great time visiting congregations in your synod,” Mark said. “We preached from five pulpits, gave PowerPoint presentations in seven congregations, met with the pastors of conference one, and met with several women’s groups and many missions committees. In addition, we gained many kilos from heaping plates of Jell-O, hot dishes, pie and homemade bread!”

As part of their mission in Jerusalem, the Holmans also provide educational resources for visitors pursuing transformative pilgrimages, work to enhance community life among church members and the broader community of expatriates, and help facilitate special projects of the ELCA, ELCJHL and the ELCA’s companion synods.

Mark said the level of knowledge and interest from clergy and lay leaders about their mission was impressive. “It was obvious that many were well informed about issues related to Palestine and Israel,” he said. “People were tuned into—or at least eager to hear—the stories of faithful witness, the Palestinians’ struggle for justice, and the courageous and faithful ministry of the bishop, pastors and parishioners with the ELCJHL.”

According to Mark, there is a growing appreciation for the ELCA’s accompaniment relationship with the ELCJHL. Many have heard the voices or read books and/or articles from Bishop Munib Younan of the ELCJHL and Ps. Mitri Raheb of Bethlehem. Recent articles in the Lutheran have



Pastor Mark and Marcia Holman

also contributed to the growing knowledge and awareness of this mission.

“Wherever we visited, pastors and lay leaders had done a fine job preparing lay leaders for our visit,” Mark added. “We’ll leave the Northwestern Minnesota Synod feeling rather exhausted, but greatly affirmed in our ministry. We have explored new ways of deepening partnership. In fact, many in the audiences seem quite serious about visiting Palestine/Israel.”

We’ll leave the synod... feeling greatly affirmed in our ministry

-Pr. Mark Holman

The Holmans made stops at Bethesda in Middle River, Big Woods and Zion in Oslo, Cormorant, First in Detroit Lakes, First in Stephen, Hope in Fergus Falls, Messiah in Roseau, Osakis, First in Battle Lake, Trinity in Detroit Lakes and Immanuel in Wadena

Mark added his appreciation for “the warm hospitality from these congregations and Pastors Curt Matz (and Darlene), Deborah Hanson, Gary Van Hunnik, David Peterson, Wade Dutton, Michael Schendel, John Olson, Rod Nygren, Paul & Katie Koch, Ann Newgard-Larson. and Rob Nelson.”

To find out more about the Holmans, ELCA’s mission in the Holy Land, the local church of the Holy Land - ELCJHL, or information on planning a transformative pilgrimage to the Holy Land, go to: www.elca.org, www.elcjh.org or www.elca.org/peacenotwalls

Synod Roster Updates

Prayers and Sympathy to

The family of Pr. John Jorgensen on the death of John's mother, Leila Jorgensen

Congratulations

Pr. Jonathan and Kelly Dodson on the birth of their son, Jack Anthony, born July 11.

Ordination

Pr. Joy Grainger, Family of God Lutheran, East Grand Forks, June 28

Installation

Pr. Genelle Netland, senior pastor, Calvary Lutheran, Bemidji July 11

Resignations

- Pr. Marsha Hendrickson, pastor, Shelly Marsh River & Bethany Lutheran, Shelly, St. Petri Lutheran, Neilsville and Salem Lutheran, Cummings N,D., July 19
- Pr. Leland Armbright, pastor, Comstock Lutheran, Comstock, Hoff Lutheran, Rustad, August 23

Transfers

- Pr. Marsha Hendrickson to Rocky Mountain Synod
- Pr. Leland Armbright to Grand Canyon Synod
- Pr. Charles Dyrhaug from Minneapolis Area Synod
- Pr. Valerian Ahels from Central States Synod

Call Process Update

All positions are for solo pastors or senior pastors, unless otherwise noted. Interim ministers are listed where possible.

Study and Preparation

- Alexandria, Bethesda (Don Reisig, interim)
- Badger, Faith and Our Redeemer's (Louis Hermansen, interim)
- Bemidji, Aardahl and Guthrie, Malvik (Linda Tenneson, interim)
- Bemidji, Calvary—associate pastor
- Comstock, Comstock and Rustad, Hoff (Interim pending)
- Crookston, Trinity (Paul Svingen, interim)

- East Grand Forks, Family of God (Interim pending)
- East Grand Forks, Our Savior's—associate pastor
- Fergus Falls, Augustana (Nancy Monke, interim)
- Fisher, Fisher and Byland (Interim pending)
- Glyndon, Glyndon (Paul Miller, interim)
- Kelliher, Our Savior's and Waskish, Bethlehem
- Lake Bronson, Zion and Kennedy, Maria (Kathy Levenhagen, SAM, interim)
- Mahnomen, First (John Lee, interim)
- Nelson, Fahlun and Our Saviour's (Interim pending)
- Shelly, Peace Lutheran Churches (Interim pending)
- Shevlin, Clearwater and Solway, Solway (Melody Kirkpatrick, interim)
- Thief River Falls, Redeemer and Black River—associate pastor
- Ulen, Bethlehem (Steve Dahl, interim)
- Vining, Vining Lutheran Parish (Interim pending)
- Warren, First and Immanuel (Mark Rittmann, interim)

Considering Candidates

- Audubon, St. Peter and Detroit Lakes, Augustana (Jill Steichen, interim)
- Barnesville, Our Savior's—new associate pastor position.
- Greenbush, Bethel (Nancy Jewel, interim)
- Moorhead, Our Savior's—associate pastor.
- Osage, Immanuel (Phil Johnson, interim)

Calls in Process

- Ada, Grace (Cheryl Berg, interim)
- Battle Lake, First—call accepted.
- Climax, Climax/Grue/Sand Hill Parish—call accepted.
- Hitterdal, Salem (Sandra Hollands, interim)
- Newfolden, Bethlehem and Holt, Nazareth (John Golv, interim)
- Park Rapids, Calvary (Ken Nyhusmoen, interim)
- Parkers Prairie, First Evangelical

REFLECT, the upcoming Northwestern Minnesota and Eastern North Dakota Synod LYO Senior and Junior High Youth Gatherings!

Please note that we will be holding both the Sr. High and Jr. High gatherings this Fall. Details and registration materials will be sent out this late summer!

Sr. High Gathering (9-12 gr)

October 30-November 1, 2009
Cragun's Resort, Brainerd

Jr. High Gathering (6-8 gr)

November 20-22, 2009
Arrowwood Resort, Alexandria

Sharing Success Stories

Goin' Western for Rally Sunday



Looking for a new way to “brand” your congregation’s Rally Sunday? Last year Grace Lutheran, Detroit Lakes, held a Round Up Sunday, complete with rides on a horse drawn carriage, cowboy themed games, and a barbecue. Pastor Eric Lemonholm said, “The event was very well received. We had a lot of participation, and some new families attended. We may do something similar this year.”

Evangelism through youth and family ministry

Thinking “outside the box” has always been the philosophy at Calvary Lutheran Church in Rapid City, S.D. Led by the Rev. Dwight Stensgaard, the congregation has never had a limit on good ideas.

With the help of a Mission Investment Fund building loan, Calvary Lutheran relocated three miles away from its original space, which was on a small piece of property with limited road access and parking. Prior to the move, they renovated an impressive fellowship building at the new space, which today houses one of the area’s largest and most successful youth ministry programs. With two learning centers, a media center, a meeting/assembly room, a prayer room, and a drama class and theater, the already successful youth ministry program at Calvary Lutheran finally has the room it needs to grow.

In the last few years, the congregation has more than doubled its youth population, and the after-school youth ministry and Christian education program has nearly tripled, from 250 participants to just over 700. This spells great success for a congregation whose 12-year-old visioning plan was to maintain a strong word and sacrament ministry – while becoming an active center for youth and family enrichment.

Perhaps most key to this growth is the popularity of a Wednesday night program called From the Heart Ministries. In many ways, the genesis of the program was a simple case of supply and demand. Rapid City is full of young families, many with three or more children and two working parents.

Observing his congregation, Pastor Dwight recognized that life for these families is usually very hectic. Attending faith-centered education classes – and sometimes even worship service – can get lost in the weeklong shuffle of everyday commitments, after-school activities, and household responsibilities.



With a 10-acre campus, the kids have ample room to play outside. And since From the Heart serves youth from multiple public schools, kids from a wide range of backgrounds have the opportunity to form close friendships that would likely never exist were it not for the program.

Calvary Lutheran has been an investor in the Mission Investment Fund as well as a borrower, investing \$500,000 from their capital campaign in a MissionPlus investment while their relocation committee evaluated potential sites. When they found a well-maintained site in a part of town that was semi-developed but had close access to two of Rapid City’s main thoroughfares, they knew they had found a place with room to grow.

For more information about Mission Investment Fund loans and investments, visit elca.org/mif or contact Rev. Daniel B. Carlson at 651.649.0454 ext 223.

Northwest Passages Closeup

Tracing the roots of lay ministry training program

By Michael Stein

Reverend Arland Fiske's vision for lay ministry training harkens back to his pre-seminary days. The idea lay dormant, reappeared several years later and now, he says, "The program has grown beyond anything I imagined."

It was the summer of 1946 when, as a young man preaching and teaching Bible classes in eastern Montana, Fiske realized that the church needs to train lay people as an extension of ministry, and it has to do so in an understandable language. In one of his early calls he brought the idea to the church council. "They told me that it was an interesting idea, but we hired you to do the ministry," he said. The program had to wait its time.

After 12 years serving as pastor for Bethany Lutheran in Minot, N.D., the idea returned. "Late one night while I was drifting off to sleep, it passed before me like I was watching it on a screen." The idea was enthusiastically accepted, and the first training session, with 14 people in attendance, was held at Bethany in the fall of 1986. "People from other congregations wanted to take the training," Fiske said. "I said I would train them as long as their own pastors approved and would be their mentors." It began as a two-year program, and was extended to three years when it became a program of the North Dakota synods after the ELCA merger. I was able to be generous with scholarships."

In its early days, a grant of \$175,000 was given to develop a formal program by the Lutheran Brotherhood Foundation. It was negotiated by Pastor Ron Gladen who was on the staff of the Western North Dakota Synod. "The grant enabled me to do something with this idea," Fiske said. "I trained people on the condition that their own pastor would serve as their mentor. I was also on the board at Luther Seminary, so we anchored the program there, which gave it long-term stability. I contracted with members of the faculty to teach the classes, both at the seminary and in North Dakota locations." Twice a year, up to 90 people spend a week at the seminary listening to special lectures prepared by the seminary faculty.

Fiske established it as the Deacon Program. Now called the GIFTS ("Growing in Faith to Serve") program, it became a program of the Western North Dakota Synod in 1989, the Eastern North Dakota Synod the following year and in the Northwestern Minnesota Synod in 1994.

The lay ministry training has three main points of focus:

- + Training of the heart. The emphasis here is on spiritual formation in faith. Members were encouraged to write daily prayers after reflecting on scripture
- + Training of the head. This centered on studying the scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions and the Lutheran practice of pastoral care.

+ Training of the hands. This was the application of the above in doing service in the congregation or wherever one happened to be. Some were Sunday school teachers, some were on church councils, some worked with youth ministry and some did visitation, including bringing communion to shut-ins. Involvement in one's community is also emphasized.

"Early on, I never had the idea that the training would be for providing lay preachers," Fiske said. "But in western North Dakota there were 40-some congregations without a resident pastor, so we trained many to lead worship." And while the program was originally designed to equip lay people to work in their own congregations, more than 40 participants have completed the program requirements, graduated from seminary and are pastors today.



Rev. Arland Fiske

"If the work of the church is to ever to be done, we can't leave it solely to the pastors," Fiske said. "We have to harness energies of lay people by providing devotional, theological and Biblical training for specific areas of ministry." He discovered that there hundreds of people waiting for such training.

Fiske added that the program has "changed the whole profile of the WND synod. The Lord gave me the idea, and now it's blossomed. I'm grateful and that it's still working and will outlive me."

Retired in May 2002, 50 years from his month of ordination, Fiske remains busy with many projects, including a daily email devotional, which he does as a memorial to his wife, Gerda, who passed away in 2004. He has also published nine books on Scandinavian heritage.

"I'm grateful to the Lord for the love of all the people in my life," he said. "I've had a rewarding ministry. The Lord's been good to me."