



Northwestern Minnesota Synod

Connections



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

Northwestern Minnesota Synod elects new bishop

The Rev. Lawrence R. Wohlrabe, Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Moorhead, Minn., was elected June 10 to a six-year term as bishop of the Northwestern Minnesota Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Wohlrabe was elected on the fifth ballot for bishop, 350-209, over the Rev. Richard J. Foss, bishop of the ELCA Eastern North Dakota Synod.

Wohlrabe, 52, will succeed the Rev. Rolf P. Wangberg, incumbent bishop of the synod who has served in that role since 2001.

Wohlrabe trailed on the fourth ballot for bishop by 18 votes -- 225 votes for Foss and 207 votes for Wohlrabe. Wangberg received 161 votes on the fourth ballot. There were 83 names on the first or nominating ballot. Wohlrabe will assume the role of bishop on Sept. 1. His installation will be September 23, 4 p.m., at Trinity Lutheran Church, Moorhead.

Born in Mankato, Minn., Wohlrabe received a bachelor's degree in speech communication from Mankato State University, Mankato, Minn., in 1977. In 1981 he received a master of divinity degree from Luther Theological Seminary (now Luther Seminary), St. Paul, Minn. In 2003 he received a doctorate from Luther Seminary.

After he was ordained in 1981, Wohlrabe served congregations in Willmar, Minn., and St. James, Minn. He was director of admissions at Luther Northwestern Seminary (now Luther Seminary) and assistant to the bishop of the ELCA Southwestern Minnesota Synod, Redwood Falls, before he became senior pastor at Our Savior's in 2003.

Wohlrabe and his wife, Lajoy, are parents of two adult children and reside in Moorhead.

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:
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Visit from India: What Has Been Your Greatest Surprise?

By Bishop Rolf Wangberg

Greetings from Bishop Christopher, Manni, Subhashini, and Suneel. And thank you for the warm welcome you gave them. During their time here, they saw parts of our synod from Moorhead to Bemidji, Alexandria, Halstad, Twin Valley, Fergus Falls, and Alexandria. The visit was intense and comprehensive. But I am most intrigued by what surprised them. Listening to their surprises helps us to understand ourselves better.

"Where are all the people?" was Bishop Christopher's first question. It had two dimensions: 1) there were no beggars 2) Fargo/Moorhead seemed like a ghost town. And for good reason. My internet source told me the density of Fargo/Moorhead was 2,668 people per square mile. Chennai – a metropolitan area of 7 million people – has more than 64,000 people per square mile.

Our guests had a whole package of surprises around the environment. They were surprised by the lush carpets of green grass, the amount of forested lands, and the cleanliness of the country.

The India delegation was particularly impressed with Native Americans at Peoples Church in Bemidji and a meeting with Chief Erma Vizner of the White Earth Nation and Winona LaDuke, candidate for vice president with Ralph Nader in 1996 and 2000. We found many similarities between Native Americans and Dalits, the untouchables of India. Our visitors were impressed that Winona LaDuke had studied advocacy in India, had a keen sense of India's culture, and that the White Earth Nation had a female chief.

Visits to congregations exploded their preconceptions about the Lutheran Church in America. They had heard that the church was all but dead in America. That didn't fit with what they saw when they visited Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd's new building in Moorhead, saw the expansion plans at Calvary in Bemidji, and visited the new Bethel church in Bemidji. They were impressed that Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd was being built "in the country."

It has been a great blessing to learn from our companion synod who I am, who they are, and what it means to be the church.