

Bishop's Letter

This month's theme:
Meet our new
pastoral leaders

October 2008

Healthy Congregations thrive with healthy leadership

"Who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?" Esther 4:14 (NIV)

The Book of Esther tells the compelling story of a Jewish woman, Esther (4th century, B.C.), who used her position in the harem of the king of Persia to prevent the genocide of her people. To do this, Esther had to risk her very life!

This is the seventh of an 11-part series of articles based on the *Healthy Congregations* training materials by Dr. Peter Steinke. Bishop Larry encourages church councils and other leadership groups to use these articles for devotions/discussion as they meet together.

Esther is unique in that it's the only book of the Bible that doesn't explicitly mention God. And yet it's impossible to read Esther without perceiving the guiding hand of God at work, raising up a powerful leader at the right moment, "for such a time as this."

God is always doing that—calling forth leaders in the right place, at the right time, with the right gifts. Over the past year I have witnessed this a number of times in congregations of our synod. I recall, in particular, a couple of congregational presidents who, simply by virtue of the who they were and how they conducted themselves, helped keep parish crises from spinning out of control.

What makes for such healthy leadership? It's tempting to think that leaders have special knowledge, extraordinary skills or magnetic personalities. But as Dr. Peter Steinke points out in his *Healthy Congregations* training materials, leaders promote health in congregations primarily through their **presence** and **functioning**.

Steinke lists 26 attributes of such leaders. Let me highlight four of these attributes:

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Last of summer

Our Synod Theology for Ministry retreat at Fair Hills resort last month was a time for rest, renewal, learning, fellowship—and making connections on the "links."

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Two versions of "Connections" are included in this issue. To conserve paper, we've used one two-sided sheet for both versions.

Connections is also available on our website. Please share the information in this newsletter/bulletin insert with your congregation.

Additional information regarding items of interest to our synod can be found on our weekly email newsletter, Northern Lights. If you are not currently on our email list and would like to receive Northern Lights, contact Michael Stein at stein@cord.edu.

The Bishop's Letter

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Working the Word

You are invited to attend Working the Word!, an inaugural Book of Faith training event for lay and rostered leaders of the Eastern North Dakota and Northwestern Minnesota Synods.

Two events are scheduled: November 9, 10 and 11 at Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd in Moorhead; November 16, 17 and 18 at Sharon Lutheran Church in Grand Forks. Both events will begin on Sunday at 6:30 p.m. and conclude Tuesday at 4:30 p.m. Registration is \$100 per participant and includes meals and materials.

An informational flyer/registration form is inserted into this newsletter and also available on the synod website.

School for Lay Ministry

New Testament class, "Revelation," with Craig Koester, will be held October 10-11, 2008, Trinity Lutheran Church, Detroit Lakes. Make plans to register, get others registered and come Friday, October 10, and Saturday, October 11, as Craig Koester, Professor of New Testament at Luther Seminary, presents "Revelation, Exploring the Mystery; Spirals of Threat and Promise; The Dragon, the Beast, and the People of God; and From Armageddon to New Jerusalem."

Cost is \$40 and includes Friday night pizza, Saturday morning rolls and coffee, Saturday lunch, and refreshments. Register by calling the synod office, 218.299.3019 or at mhendric@cord.edu.

Regional Gift Planner Position Re-Posted

The Northwestern Minnesota Synod, in partnership with the ELCA Foundation and Pathways and Luther Crest Bible Camps, has re-posted a position for "regional gift planner." We seek applicants with experience in and talents for welcoming major gifts, bequests and other financial legacies to serve God's mission through the synod, the ELCA and outdoor ministries. Applications or nominations may be sent to David.Novak@elca.org.

Bishop's Message, continued

Healthy leaders "spread" health

1. **Healthy leaders know who they are.** They are comfortable in their own skins and don't hesitate to define themselves for others. They are anything but chameleons or "shape-shifters." They resist being squeezed into other persons' molds or preconceived notions of what a leader should be.

2. **Healthy leaders take responsibility for their own actions.** They know they can't be responsible for how others function. They are self-aware, able to take criticism, willing to accept the consequences of their decisions

3. **Healthy leaders regulate their own anxieties.** They can move calmly, patiently, deliberately within an anxious church environment. They resist picking up the "virus" of worry or desperation. God graces them with the ability to weigh alternatives, think clearly, and act responsively.

4. **Healthy leaders stay connected with others**—including

those absorbed by anxiety or those stirring up mischief in the congregation. Such leaders listen to others, creating space and time for respectful conversations. But they do not allow the mission to be thwarted or the congregation to be hijacked by persons with narrow agendas.



We've all seen how highly reactive persons can spread anxiety throughout a congregation—almost as if anxiety were a virus. But the same holds true for health in the congregation. Healthy leaders "spread" health throughout the system as they influence others to take responsible stands, keep focused on God's mission, remain calm in adversity and stay connected with each other through thick and thin. Thank God for such servants in our midst!

Bishop Larry Wohlrabe

Questions for reflection and discussion:

1. Recall effective church leaders you have known. How did they contribute to the health of the congregation through their **presence** and **functioning**?
2. What leadership gifts has God given to you? What are your "growing edges" as a leader?
3. How does your congregation identify, call forth and nurture healthy leaders?

The Bishop's Letter is available on our
website: www.nwmnsynod.org

Together in Ministry

By Assistant to the Bishop, Pr. Laurie Natwick

One of the joys in the relatively short time of serving on the staff of this synod has been the Together in Ministry (TiM) visits that Bishop Wohlrabe, and the three assistants—Steve Peterson, Erin Anderson and I—have been making. It is about meeting together and walking together in ministry. The goals of these visits are to listen to one another, become better acquainted, celebrate opportunities and share challenges in ministry, offer support and encouragement and pray together.



The pastors tell of what brings them life in their ministry. We hear stories of pastors and congregational members (DISCIPLES!) who make things happen; who live the ministry all day every day and serve faithfully in so many ways. Again, it is about being together in ministry.

We hear of the excitement and involvement with “doing” Sunday School a new way (Rotation Sunday School) and having people *eager* to teach. We hear of land given for a new use...acres and acres of land with seeds sown, soy beans grown and harvested and all the proceeds going toward a treasured mission project.

We hear of individuals who pray with their pastor each week in the sacristy prior to worship. We hear of those who pull off a congregational auction each year to benefit the youth ministries; and the youth are involved in mission trips that change their lives and the lives they touch. We hear of musicians who make music where there had not been music before and the congregation sings in a whole new way.

We hear of congregations who need an elevator, a new gathering space, new hymnals or a new roof and the congregations make it happen. We hear of congregations who give and give and give beyond themselves in myriad ways, for that is what it is to walk together in ministry. We hear of the ways that people continue to allow pastors into their lives in remarkable ways and pastors being there for people in their joys and in their deep pain. We hear of adult baptisms, those new to the faith who have found a church home; a true sense of belonging to the community of faith.

We also hear of concern for and from congregations and individual members. We hear of those who are concerned about maintaining viability, and that brings pain as they begin to wonder what their mission is. We hear about a variety of “church-caused scar tissue” and need for healing. We hear of those who wonder where the church is going and if the church will still be there for them. We hear of deep care for the church and the life of the church as it reaches out. We hear of a need to be faithful and yet not always sure how that faithfulness is lived out.

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The Northwestern Minnesota Bishop's Letter

Roster updates

Prayers and sympathy to

Pr. Sherry and Greg Billberg and family in the death of Sherry's mother, Hilda Bartz. Her funeral was held Sept. 18. Prs. Sherry and Greg serve as associate pastors for First Lutheran, Alexandria.

Installation

Pr. D. Rolf Aanestad, pastor, Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Oct. 5

Resignations

- Pr. Nancy Hanson, pastor, Nazareth Lutheran Church, Holt and Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Newfolden, effective Sept. 28
- Pr. Roy Noel, pastor, Augustana Lutheran Church, Detroit Lakes and St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Audubon, effective Sept. 30
- Pr. Cheryl Matthews, associate pastor, Grace Lutheran Church, Ada, effective Oct. 4
- Pr. Marilee Bergerson, pastor, Bethesda Lutheran Church, Alexandria, effective Oct. 28

Transfers

- Pr. Nancy Hanson to Northwest Synod of Wisconsin
- Pr. Roy Noel to Eastern North Dakota Synod
- Pr. Cheryl Matthews to Southwestern Minnesota Synod
- Pr. Ann Jacobson to Eastern North Dakota Synod
- Pr. Matthew Williams from Central States Synod
- Pr. Rollen Halvorson (retired) from Southwestern Minnesota Synod

Congregations in Study/Interims/Seeking Pastors Alexandria, **Bethesda**, pastor resigned

Audubon, **St. Peter's** & Detroit Lakes, **Augustana**, pastor resigned, interim Pr. Jill Steichen

Barrett, **Peace**, part-time interim contract Prs. Cordell & Mary Carol Strug

Battle Lake, **First**, in self study, interim Pr. John Martinson

Battle Lake, **Trefoldighed**, part-time contract pending

Blackduck, **Zion**, interviewing, interim Pr. Melody Kirkpatrick

Cimax, **Climax**, **Grue**, **Sand Hill**, in self study, interim Pr. Donald Reising
Crookston, **Trinity**, senior pastor resigned, interim Pr. Paul Svingen

Erhard, **Tonseth**, pastor resigned

Meet our pastors and leaders new to our synod

Josh Graber

Josh began his duties as assistant pastor at Trinity, Moorhead, August 1. Born in Chelan, Wash., Josh grew up in Stockholm, Wis., attended St. Olaf College and graduated from Trinity Lutheran College. He is a recent Luther Seminary grad.



Through a series of conversations, Josh said “that the Spirit has led and affirmed me in my call.”

Josh is excited to be working with young adults. “This is an area that the church has often neglected,” he said. “This is the time in life when faith is either further formed or abandoned. The church needs to be especially proactive in this area, and in Fargo-Moorhead we’re making great strides that, especially with The Project, a new emerging church supported by churches, individuals, two synods and the ELCA.”

Have there been any surprises in his new call? Josh playfully replied, “It’s that I haven’t fainted or fallen asleep during a staff meeting. I’m really proud of that.”

Kari Van Wakeren

Kari started with Faith Lutheran, Miltona, August 1. From Winona, Minn., Kari graduated from the University of Minnesota Duluth with a social studies education/sociology major and a minor in coaching; and graduated from Luther Seminary. Kari and her husband Thomas were married this year on May 31.



Regarding her path to ministry, Kari said, “In a way, a call to ministry for me has burned like a pilot light. It became brighter in high school and college by getting more involved in the ministry of the church. My passion for others to know God in Christ more was ignited during college ministry and through two youth group backpacking trips.”

In her new ministry Kari hopes to help people grow in their relationship with God, “not only by connecting with new people, but by equipping current members to go deeper in their faith.”

It’s been a busy year for Kari, who said, “Getting married, moving and starting a new call has given us so much new to digest that I guess the biggest surprise is how much I long to find a sense of normal.”

Kari loves to spend time outdoors and staying active with walking, biking, kayaking and breathing the fresh air. She also enjoys reading, music and writing.

Kristin Thvedt

Kristin started with Our Savior’s Lutheran, East Grand Forks, December 2007. Born in Sisseton, S.D., she attended Augustana College in Sioux Falls and graduated from Luther Seminary.



Kristin’s path to ministry started “at the urging of a friend who looked at me and said, ‘When are you going to go into the ministry?’ I tried out seminary and made a covenant with God: ‘If You get me through Greek, I’ll follow you to being a pastor.’ God did and so I am now a pastor.”

Kristin attended a Kairos course recently on teaching the Bible. “The Book of Faith was a primary focus of the course,” she said. “I hope that we can incorporate the Book of Faith materials at Our Savior’s in the future.”

“Our Savior’s has been so accepting of new things,” Kristin said. “They are ready to do ‘church’ differently. I have heard, ‘but we have always done it this way,’ a couple of times, but not as often as I would have expected.”

In her free time, Kristin loves to read mysteries, cook and make cards to send to family and friends.

Melodi Hagen

Melodi started at Sion Lutheran, Lancaster, July 7, 2008. Originally from Jackson Center, Ohio, Melodi attended Wittenberg University in Springfield, Ohio, and Luther Seminary. She and her husband Eric are expecting a baby in December.



Melodi’s pastoral journey began with her involvement in the Lutheran Volunteer Corps and serving at All People’s Church in Milwaukee’s inner city. She adds, “I have had many opportunities to learn in different cultures and from different people, which has given me a great depth and width of who God is and the diversity of God’s people.”

As she starts her call and gets to know the people in Lancaster, Melodi hopes to learn from them about how God has been active in the community. “I also plan to be an active community member and serve with all churches in the community.”

Melodi added that she has been “overwhelmed with the graciousness of the church and community, welcoming my husband and me. And I appreciate the generosity of all the gifts the community has shared.”

Melodi enjoys the outdoors, running, sports, camping, travel, card games and reading.

Emily P.L. Meyer

A native of Stoughton, Wis., Emily is one of our newest pastors, starting at First Lutheran, Akeley, September 1. She attended Luther College, United Theological Seminary, where she received her master's in religion and theology, and Luther Seminary, where she received her Master of Divinity degree. She and her husband Brian have a dog, "Taz."



On her road to ministry, Emily said, "Apparently my pastor's wife knew I would be a pastor long before I did. My mom was church organist and my dad was on the council for many years. I come from a long line of Lutheran pastors and church musicians and spent a lot of time in the church building. I loved theological discussions from early on and I still do."

In her personal approach to ministry, Emily said, "I love creating worship services and hope to bring creative worship experiences to First Lutheran. I also like and feel called to creative education with youth."

Emily has a special interest in feminist theology and other progressive theologies. She also likes to run, knit, swim, read and do puzzles.

Jeff Teeples

Jeff started at Hawley Lutheran January 1, 2008. He grew up in Whitefish, Mont., received a degree in German from Montana State University and attended Luther Seminary. Jeff and his wife Kris have been married 19 years and have three sons, David, Eric and Philip.



Working as a youth director after college for five years, Jeff said, "My greatest desire was and is to follow Christ. And through God's people and lots of lifetime events, I know that God has called me into this ministry."

Working with ministry teams, one of Jeff's goals is to expand the priesthood of all believers.

In his free time, Jeff enjoys outdoor sports—hiking, running and skiing—as well as woodworking, gardening and landscaping.

Robert Kirchman

Robert serves Good Shepherd and Our Savior's in Clearbrook. A native of Green Bay, Wis., Robert attended the University of Wisconsin Madison and Wartburg Seminary. He and his wife Bonnie have three children, Andrew, Abigail and Sarah.



Robert's path to ministry includes many people, including, he said, "A string of people who were extremely kind to me when I had given them no reason to be kind to me."

Particular areas of ministry for Robert include the "Book of Faith" series and also youth-related activities.

In his new call, Robert was surprised by "the number of older women who have college degrees and, conversely, the number of older men who have less than a high school education, who dropped out to go to work."

Those Wisconsin roots are deep as Robert maintains an interest in Wisconsin sports: "The Badgers, Packers and the Brewers," he said and added, "Did I mention the Packers?"

Ryan Rasmussen

Ryan is pastor at Our Savior's-Vernes Lutheran Parish. A Minnesota native, he grew up in Clarks Grove and attended St. Olaf College and Luther Seminary.



For Ryan, God's call came through "my parents and family; my congregation, preachers and Sunday school teachers; my friends and colleagues; all are witnesses to Jesus Christ."

In his ministry, Ryan hopes to convey "being surprised, formed and shaped by the Scripture—our mother tongue of and for faith in Christ."

In his new call, Ryan said a pleasant surprise is "the people's gracious receiving of a new pastor, which at times is overwhelming!"

Ryan enjoys everything about God's creation, which he said, "is always a surprise!"

Rod Nygren

Rod started with Messiah Lutheran, Roseau, last December. A St. Paul native, Rod attended Concordia (St. Paul) and LTSS, Columbia, S.C. He and his wife Garnet have a son, Peter, who attends Gustavus Adolphus, and two daughters, Renee and Karen, both in high school.



In his life journey, Rod credits several mentors, including his parents, pastors, Sunday school teachers, friends and his wife Garnet.

Bringing new perspectives to his call is one priority for Rod, who said, "The congregation has been taught, 'Pastor

New to our synod, continued

does everything, so why get involved,' or 'The church council approves everything.' I hope to get folks involved and help them understand the priesthood of all believers."

Rod said he's surprised by the real "power" of culture, he said, "namely hockey. The goal is not to compete with it, but embrace, bless and work with it—not against it."

Rod's own special interests include golf and reading.

Dale Olson

Dale started January 1 of this year at Calvary, Alexandria. In this call, Dale is "coming home" as he was baptized and confirmed at Calvary. He attended Concordia College, Moorhead, Luther Seminary and Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena. Dale and his wife Alene have three children: Erik, a missionary, Paul, a contractor, and Lenea, a high school student.



Dale traces his path to ministry from being a church organizer and teacher to a call from God to try seminary along with a love for pastoral ministry.

From his experience on the ELCA Churchwide staff (Evangelism) and being a consultant for Kairos Stewardship, Dale said one of his goals is "to bring a traditional church to a point where young people want to attend and feel connected."

Surprises with his new call include, "the changes that the members have embraced and their willingness to make changes."

Dale's special interests include music, evangelism, stewardship, a doctoral dissertation on teamwork, marriage retreats and serving as a leadership consultant.

Emmy Isaackson

Emmy started at Trinity, Moorhead, August 1. She grew up in Cottonwood, Minn., and attended Concordia College, Moorhead, and Gettysburg Lutheran Theological Seminary.



Emmy's ministerial road made a turn, she said, "As I was getting ready for college. A pastor asked if I had ever thought about going into ministry as a pastor. A seed was planted and here I am."

In her ministry Emmy said she'll be focusing her attention in the areas of small group ministry and caring ministry. Emmy enjoys reading, baking and being outdoors.

John Ahola

John began serving Gary Lutheran parish May 11, 2008.



A native of Monroe, Mich., John attended Michigan Technological University, Northeastern Illinois University and Lutheran Seminary. John and his wife Kelly, who also serves Gary Lutheran Parish, have a son, John Karl.

John said he heard the call to ministry through a Bible study while attending college. He has a particular interest in pastoral care and his goals include learning GIS (Geographical Information System) and getting to know the members.

One pleasant surprise in John's call is "how easy it was to start and fit into the new parish." His interests include computers.

Kathy Levenhagen

Kathy started at Maria & Zion Lutheran Churches as a SAM last February. She and her husband Rich have been married 32 years, live on a beef cow/calf farm, raised four children—now all married—and have five grandchildren.



Kathy's path to completing the requirements of the Gifts program began as an active church member. "I enjoy studying and learning from God's Word and sharing that story with others." In the two churches that have formed a parish, Kathy hopes to teach and learn from one another and work together.

A pleasant surprise for Kathy is that "as each Sunday arrives, I can preach each sermon with a passion. It never gets old or boring."

In her spare time, Kathy enjoys reading, needlework, and values time spent with family.

Marsha Anderson

Marsha started as a new pastor at Trinity Lutheran, Moorhead, August 1. From Fayetteville, N.C., Marsha attended Wake Forest University and Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. Her influences to becoming a pastor include campus ministry experiences and a year of service through Americorp.



With a passion for social justice, Marsha's focus as a pastor at Trinity is social concerns.

Living Generously

By Assistant to the Bishop, Pr. Steve Peterson

“Let them do good works, be generous and be ready to share”

1 Timothy 6:18

I like the idea of living generously. It really does sound kind of fun, doesn't it? Sometimes, however, I like the *idea* better than I am able to practice it. For whatever reasons (I can think of some but I won't bore you with them here) generosity doesn't always come “naturally” to me, doesn't always just automatically flow. It is another of those aspects of living into God's reign, living into the salvation given that brings joy as it unfolds but which doesn't tend to unfold without some intentionality, without moving beyond my fickle reflexes, reactions and feelings at any given moment to principled practices chosen.



In the book, “The Generosity Factor” (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI; 2002), authors Ken Blanchard and S. Truett Cathy suggest generosity is based on five principles:

He, Jesus owns everything. God owns everything – always has, always will.

Every day is an opportunity. Yes, every day is an opportunity to look for new ways to impact the lives of others.

Action is required. It is one thing to think about doing something and another to actually do it. Be willing to take the risk to do something positive for others that will make a difference.

Remember your blessings. If you find it difficult to see or remember how God has blessed you, start making a list. Check your list for both the material or tangible things and the intangibles like faith, hope and love.

Thank God. This is one of the only ways we remember that we are not the center of the universe. We are not self-sufficient beings. We are interdependent.

Maybe this might seem a little hokey, but if we can look past that we might see something to help us live into something, both as persons living in the world and as congregations, that can help intentionally guide us into generous living; into the joy that comes when we are living in a way that is connected with, (can we say synchronized with?) God's will in our lives as people and as congregations. Maybe with generous hearts we will grow in sharing and live into the joy that is the reign of Christ lived out in our lives together and in the world.

The Northwestern Minnesota Bishop's Letter

Roster updates

Fergus Falls, **Hope**, part-time associate pastor resigned

Fergus Falls, **Zion & Carlisle, Hedemarken** (part-time), associate pastor, interviewing

Glyndon, **Glyndon**, pastor resigned, interim Pr. Paul Miller

Halstad, **Halstad & Augustana**, interviewing, interim Pr. Marsha Burt

Hines, **First**, pastor resigned. interim pulpit supply, Pr. Steve Bomgren

Hitterdal, **Salem**, in self study, interim Pr. Gretchen Person

Kelliher, **Our Savior & Waskish, Bethlehem** (part-time), pastor resigned

Lake Bronson, **Zion & Kennedy, Maria**, interim Synodically Authorized Minister Kathy Levenhagen

Lake Park, **Cormorant**, call pending, interim Synodically Authorized Minister Allen Brooks

Moorhead, **Bethesda**, call pending, interim Pr. Cheryl Berg

Newfolden, **Bethlehem & Holt, Nazareth**, pastor resigned

Osage, **Immanuel**, pastor retired, interim Pr. Phil Johnson

Park Rapids, **Calvary**, senior and associate pastors resigned, interims Pr. Kenneth Nyhusmoen & Pr. Matthew Williams

Pelican Rapids, **Grove Lake**, interviewing, interim contract Pr. Darrel Saathoff

Roseau, **Bethel, First Evangelical** (part-time), contract services Pr. Kristin Ostercamp

Roseau, **First of Salol** (part-time), Synodically Authorized Minister Bonnie Nordvall

Shevlin, **Clearwater & Solway, Solway**, pastor resigned, interim Pr. Karol Hendricks-McCracken

Turtle River, **New Salem**, interviewing, interim Pr. William Beyer

Warren, **First & Immanuel**, pastor resigned, interim Pr. Mark Rittmann

New to our synod, continued

Allen Brooks

Allen is a “brand new” SAM, starting at Cormorant Lutheran, Lake Park, September 1. He is from Bemidji, attended Concordia College, Moorhead, and is currently attending Luther Seminary. Allen and wife Tammy have two children, Jacob and Kaia.



Allen said his road to ministry began with “a meeting with my pastor after having lost two jobs within a year.” With this unique short-term interim call, he said, “My hopes are to learn things about myself and Cormorant Lutheran that I can bring back to my current church home.” One unexpected aspect of his call is, “the openness of the older parishioners to things that I felt were considered contemporary.”

From his math education major at Concordia, Allen has a special interest in math tutoring.

Tessa Moon Leiseth

Tessa started as a new campus pastor at Concordia College August 1. From McVille, N.D., Tessa attended Concordia and Luther Seminary. She and her husband Jon have two children, Isaac and Sophia. In her role as campus pastor, Tessa is looking forward to accompanying young adults on their faith journeys.



Tessa enjoys reading, scrapbooking, traveling, watching all of “Six Feet Under” on DVD, and spending time with family

TiM, continued from page 3

“People continue to enlighten us”

We are Together in Ministry because the God of grace in Christ Jesus our Lord has called us to that. We may not always live it out as we could, and still God enters in and brings us back to the fold and we are together again. There is synergy. When we are together in ministry, the mission is far stronger than it ever could be if we were each out on our own. Indeed, the sum of the parts working together is far greater than the sum of the parts working separately.

We’ve all said we would love to be out doing TiM visits every day. People continue to enlighten us, bless us with their stories of ministry and mission, and allow us into their lives. It is a marvel to meet Christ around every corner as we encounter his church alive in these conversations. Together in Ministry....thanks be to God for what has been as we look forward with eager anticipation to those conversations yet to come.

Jo A. Gast

Jo began serving Family of God Lutheran Church, East Grand Forks January 22. Part of this call is also to serve Trinity Lutheran Church, Crookston.



Originally from Fosston, Minn., Jo has degrees in technical studies and information networking management. Jo received her M.Div. in ministry leadership from Bethel Seminary. Her Lutheran year of studies was at Luther Seminary. Jo and her husband Randy have four children: Genesis, Jillian and Micah are all married; Keaton, is a sophomore at Crookston High School.

Speaking of her path to ministry, Jo said, “Looking back I can vividly see God’s hand in this, connecting the dots along the way through faith, family, careers and pastors. I never would have imagined myself in a pastoral role, although people often tell me I am called to this change of vocations (or is it a clarity of vocations?).”

Jo’s passion runs deep in rural ministry, so her goals include, “fanning the flames of Holy Spirit that are intertwined in and among the churches and the communities they serve; and also to always strive to pray hard, and just be open to allowing Christ to use me in this manner in the years ahead.”

Jo had the opportunity and joy to serve these congregations as part of her internship, “but also as part of my mentoring and home congregation. This has allowed me to probably be a step or two ahead of the process in terms of serving these communities of faith now as a pastor.”

Jo enjoys website design work as well as desktop publishing and writing. She’s joined a prayer shawl ministry in memory of her Grandma Virgie. The Gast family also enjoys movies, eating out, walking and, she added, “My teenage son is trying to teach me to play tennis much to his amusement.”

MIF offers special high rates

Now through November 17, 2008, the Mission Investment Fund is offering special high rates on its 18-month and four-year MissionTermSelect investment: 4.22% APY and 5.04% APY, respectively. The special rates require new money, and the minimum investment is \$2,500. Mission Investment Fund investments are available for purchase by ELCA congregations, related institutions, and individuals. When you invest in the Mission Investment Fund, you provide vital funds to help Mission Investment Fund make loans to ELCA ministries for building projects and land purchases. To purchase your investment, call 877.886.3522 or Rev. Dan Carlson at 651-649-0454 ext 223. Or visit elca.org/mif.