

NORTHERN GREAT LAKES SYNOD

# NOTES & QUOTES

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FEBRUARY 2007

## THE SYNOD OFFICE...ON THE MOVE

Bishop Thomas A. Skrenes

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As you read these lines---the synod office is “on the move!” For nearly a year, our synod, along with Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and our partner congregation, Messiah Lutheran Church, have been discussing the possibility of significant remodeling of synod office space to accommodate both the synod and LSS. The Synod Council was given authority by the 2006 Synod Assembly to pursue a new long term lease with the Messiah congregation. We have moved forward and are ready to build!

The “new synod office” will be totally on the first floor of an expanded building at 1029 N. Third Street. LSS will occupy the second floor, and there will be some shared space in the building. It was in 1987 that the last improvements were made on the synod building. It is now due for significant updates and a face lift.

While under construction, the synod staff and office will move into space provided at Messiah Lutheran Church. Our temporary office will be next to Magnuson Hall at Messiah in room 201. The telephone number, e-mail and physical mail address remain the same. By spring we hope to be in our “new” permanent space. We shall keep you informed on building developments as we continue to renew our space for ministry for the next twenty years.



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THOMAS A. SKRENES, BISHOP (CONTINUED)



## FINDING PASTORS

I have been thinking a lot lately about pastoral vacancies. Perhaps it is because we have about 16 congregations that are currently pastorally vacant. Perhaps it is because I am also sitting on two “Search Committees,” one for the Finlandia University presidency and the other for the Executive Director of Fortune Lake Bible Camp. Perhaps I am still mulling over the question that a nice lady asked me last month when I visited her church: “Why is it, Bishop,” she said, “that we always seem to need pastors here?”

A few thoughts about the current situation in our synod regarding the supply of pastors:

+Needing pastors is nothing new for this synod. In my 15 years of working in the synod office, I have seen the turnover of pastors many times. We are always in need of some pastors. Our needs in early 2007 are a little bit higher than normal. If you read the history of many of our congregations, there were times, thirty, fifty and a hundred years ago, that the church was without a regularly called pastor for a year or more.

*“We are not raising up enough of our own pastors in this synod....”*

+We are not raising up enough of our own pastors in this synod. We are dependent upon the other synods of the ELCA to give us seminarians and experienced pastors. When was the last time your congregation sent someone to seminary? When was the last time you asked a young person in your congregation if she or he has considered becoming a pastor?

+ It is difficult to find appropriate work for spouses in a rural synod like ours. Most pastors who are married need to have their spouses employed. And most pastors who are married have husbands or wives with professional or technical employment. Often the spouse’s employment income is needed to pay education debts or to save for children’s education. Work is not an option for many of our pastors’ spouses, and that employment is best secured in suburban or urban areas. Add that to the fact that our synod ranks 55 out of 65 in the ELCA in salaries for parish pastors.



+I have always felt that once pastors live here for five or more years, they become committed to our rural life of small towns, beautiful summers and strong winters. Getting them to be open to life in our midst is our challenge. While we may consider this area to be wonderful and “home”, pastors new to our synod must grow to love it. There is nothing like a warm and embracing congregation that is mission centered, generous in

**THOMAS A. SKRENES, BISHOP (CONTINUED)**

compensation for its clergy, and eager to embrace a pastor and her or his family.

+I am deeply grateful to our interim pastors who, in most cases, take on the responsibility of a neighboring congregation when they are fully engaged already in a church that has called them. Thanks be to God for our interim pastors.

+The answers to our “clergy shortage” include: more seminarians generated by our congregations, higher salaries for clergy, more mission centered congregations that assume more responsibility by the laity, some sharing of staff by parishes, the use of lay persons in some situations as Licensed lay Ministers, and a positive attitude by all of us that has our people saying to prospective clergy, “I love living here. You will too.”

## STEWARDSHIP CORNER

Why we give?

“As Christians we give because we have been given to. We are the recipients of a lavish love. Giving is at the heart of the Christian life. Our need to give is a sign of our understanding that we know what life is about.” Peter Lee

What is stewardship?

“Stewardship is what we do after we say we believe.” John Westerhoff

How do we give?

“It is the heart that gives; the fingers just let go.” Nigerian proverb

“Generously—like Jesus gave.” 2 Corinthians 8

## A STRONG DECEMBER FINANCIALLY - A POSITIVE YEAR

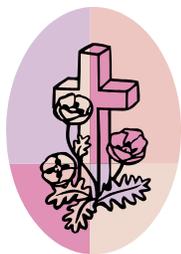
Good news! Your strong giving in December brought the synod to nearly 100% of congregational pledges for 2006. **In fact - 73 of our 94 congregations met or exceeded their mission support pledges. What an excellent year!** For 2006, \$1,027,024 was received in unrestricted mission support by your synod. This compares to \$1,042,067 that the synod received in unrestricted giving in 2005. Another \$500,000 and more was received in grants, special gifts and fees in 2006 and also in 2005.

In 2006, we shared 54% of this unrestricted income with the churchwide expression of the ELCA. The money is used for world mission, new congregations, seminaries and a whole host of other important ministries. The 46% we retained in the synod support seminaries, Lutheran campus ministry, our synod office, mission, ministry and staff.

God is at work! Thank God for the generous congregations and people of this Church.

THE REV. HAROLD VICTOR  
FAUST

1922-2006



Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Iron Mountain was filled on Thursday morning, January 4, 2007 as God's people, laity and clergy, gathered to remember the life and ministry of Pastor Hal Faust. It was a privilege to help lead the worship.

On Thursday, December 28, 2006, the Rev. Harold V. Faust died at ManorCare health Services in Kingsford, Michigan. He was 84 years of age. Born on December 18, 1922, in Varnmo, Sweden, Pastor Faust attended Augustana College and Augustana Theological Seminary in Rock Island, Illinois. He was ordained in the Augustana Synod in 1948. He would later receive a Master of Sacred Theology from the Lutheran School of Theology in Rock Island, and a Doctor of Humane Letters from Augustana College. Pastor Faust served at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Georgetown, Connecticut from 1948 to 1949, and then was called by the Board of World Mission to serve as a missionary in Tanzania, East Africa. Pastor Faust and his wife, Louise, served the Church in Tanzania from 1949 to 1976. In 1976, he was called to serve as pastor at Our Saviour's, Iron Mountain, Michigan, until his retirement in 1987. Since his retirement, Pastor Faust has been an active retired member of the clergy roster of the Northern Great Lakes Synod.

Pastor Faust is survived by his wife of 59 years, Louise, and by three sons, two daughters, fifteen grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

The words of Sacred Scripture speak to us: "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at last he will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then from my flesh I shall see God." Job 19:25-26

May God bless this family and the memory of Pastor

Harold V. Faust.

#### TRANSITIONS

+God bless **Pastor John Voelker (Bethany, Norway)** as he has been called to serve **Trinity Lutheran Church in Thief River, Falls, Minnesota**. Pastor Voelker and his spouse, Julia, and daughters leave this synod after six years in Norway, Michigan. May God prosper their lives and ministry.

+We give thanks to God for the ministry of **Pastor David and Betty Letscher (Zion, Allenville and Bethel, Cedarville)** as Pastor Letscher has been called to assist a new three congregational consolidation in their home state of Pennsylvania. Pastor Letscher has served as Conference President and on our Synod Council. His spouse, Betty, is a previous President of our Synodical Women's Organization. May Jesus Christ walk with the Letschers. Thank you, friends, for your energy and enthusiasm for God's ministry.

+**Pastor Len Gilley (Salem Bark River)** has had quite a surgical adventure. A supposed quick hip surgery turned into several more procedures and finally surgery in Memphis, Tennessee, where some of his family is living. He is now making progress, and our prayers are with him and Jeanne.

+**Pastor David Christenson (St. Stephen's, Stephenson and Gethsemane, Wallace)** recently had knee surgery and is recovering and back to work. Pastor Christenson is determined to be fly fishing in the spring.

+Bishop Thomas A. Skrenes

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**Lutheran World Relief**

Faith, Ishpeming

Messiah, Marquette

St. Mark's, Marquette

Holy Trinity, Chassell

Calvary, Rapid River

Our Saviour's, Iron Mountain

Mission United, Pelkie

**Lutheran Campus Ministry**

Immanuel, Escanaba

Bethany, Amasa

Bethlehem, Florence

Richard &amp; Evelyn Bjorklund

Grace, Gwinn

Emanuel, Skandia

Bethel, Ishpeming

Immanuel Lutheran Church Women, Negaunee

Zion, Moran

Arden &amp; Ruth Mikich

**World Missionary Support**

Trinity, Stambaugh

Mission United, Pelkie

Bethel, Ishpeming

Pioneer Lake, Conover

**ELCA Disaster Funds**

Salem, Ironwood

Grace, South Range

Bethany, Negaunee

Mission United, Pelkie

First of Winona, Mass City

Messiah, Marquette

**Endowment Fund**

Jacob Heikkinen

John Pontti

Ted Swanson

Pastor Virginia Eggert

Pastor Devon &amp; JoAnne Barrix

Pastor Earnest &amp; Kaaren Ness

Steve &amp; Joni Peffers

Arden &amp; Ruth Mikich

Wayne &amp; Eileen Stordahl

Dora Jane Swanson

Brian Tarro

**Lay School for Mission**

Trinity, Rapid River

**Tanzania**

St. Mark's, Marquette

Emanuel, Skandia

**Seminarian Support**

Bethany, Amasa

Bethany, Ishpeming

Bethel, Ishpeming

Rock-Perkins Lutheran Parish

**Skogman Scholarship Fund**

Richard &amp; Evelyn Bjorklund

**Mwangaza**

Bethel, Ishpeming

**Kempainen Scholarship Fund**

Anne Todia

**Kisarawe Scholarship**

Pastor Bob &amp; Deloris Langseth

Trinity, Rhinelander

## + From the Assistant to the Bishop +

### Pastor Jennifer Johnson Wrege

*Because of sin, our age-old rebellion, the gladness of marriage can be overcast and the gift of the family can become a burden.*

LBW - p. 203

I adopted Shaun when he was eight. Like any parent – biological or adoptive – I did not know all that lay ahead. I had little clue about the range of sorrows, the depths of abiding joy, or just the plain old fun that I would experience as the Mom of Shaun and his brother, Josh.

Now, Shaun is twenty-six years old, almost six feet tall, and 200+ pounds. He works four days a week at Goodwill Industries doing a variety of jobs. Some days go pretty well, others are a challenge. He lives in a group home.

About four times a year or so, Shaun makes the trip to Marquette or Appleton for a home visit. Life is different when Shaun is home. He loves to watch movies. So, when he is home and asks if I will watch a movie with him, I can't resist putting aside all the other tasks calling out to me, plunking down on the couch, putting up my feet, and watching a whole movie! It is fun (and funny) to hear him sing aloud to whatever is playing on his personal CD player. And, we both enjoy working together in the kitchen creating a meal or an especially tasty dessert!

There is also the demanding side of any home visit: medications need to be monitored and dispensed; behavioral issues surface; providing adequate and appropriate supervision while being respectful of Shaun's age, abilities, and mindful of how mental illness impacts his life can be a challenge. When Shaun is home, we make the move from a "go with the flow" attitude toward the day to a highly structured approach that is predictable and consistent.

So, on the morning of the Wednesday after Christmas when my husband loaded Shaun's suitcase and Christmas presents into the car and

the two of them headed north to bring Shaun back to his home, I was not sad. In fact, as I stood at the living room window waving goodbye, watching the car back onto the street, a wave of relief swept over me followed immediately by a tsunami of guilt. It had been a demanding home visit. By Christmas Day *"the gift of a family had become a burden."* But only part of it actually had to do with Shaun. A big part of losing *"the gift of a family"* had to do with what was going on in me.

About a week later Shaun called with some very sad news. A close friend of his had died – suddenly and unexpectedly thrusting him into the dark caverns of grief. He had all the usual questions about the death of someone loved: Why? Why now? Why so suddenly? Who will be there for me now? He shared memories and talked about attending the funeral. In about the amount of time it takes to blink an eye, my son was no longer the demanding special needs adult with the bottomless emotional pit of need. Shaun was my faith-filled adult son, struggling with the heartache of grief and, while he was at it, remembering and reminding me of the promises that Jesus made regarding life, death, and eternal life.

While the reality is that *"the gift of the family can become a burden,"* it is possible to have our joy restored by the same One who calls forth life from the ashes of death – Jesus. Along the way during Lent, you can be sure that there will be signs of resurrection, new life, and even of *having our joy restored.* May these signs be made visible to you as you make the journey of Lent toward the cross of Good Friday and the surprise of resurrection morning.

Blessings!



## **Pastoral Vacancies and Interim Pastors**

**Bethany, Escanaba - Pastor Peter Andersen**  
**Grace, South Range - Pastor Jimalee Jones & Pastor Peter Gundersen**  
**First, Dollar Bay - Pastor Jimalee Jones & Pastor Peter Gundersen**  
**Trinity, Ishpeming - Pastor Warren Geier**  
**Bethel, Ishpeming - Associate Pastor Vacancy**  
**Prince of Peace, Marquette - Pastor Rell Spickerman**  
**Trinity, Stambaugh & Bethany, Amasa - Pastor Doug Johnson**  
**All Saints, Wakefield - Pastor John Kuziej**  
**Central, Menominee - Pastor Ken Michaelis**  
**Pioneer Lake, Conover - Pastor Dorothy Lindstrom**  
**Bethany, Covington & Trinity, Trout Creek - Pastor Scott Williams**  
**Holy Cross, Baraga & Zion, Skanee - Pastor Ted Koehl**  
**Bethany, Norway - Pastor Earnest Ness**  
**Bethel, Cedarville & Zion, Allenville - Pastor George Kaiser**

2006 closes with 99.4% of pledged income received, and we thank all who gave generously through the year. Seventy-three (73) of our congregations gave 100% or more of their pledges for which we are deeply grateful. As we look forward to a new year, we strongly encourage the congregations of our Synod to increase their pledges for the work of the Church, that God's mission may continue with strength and vitality in 2007.

As of 12/31/2006	2005	2006	\$ Change	% Change
Pledged Amount	1,059,791	1,033,577	-26,214	-2.5%
Amount Received	1,042,067	1,027,024	-15,043	-1.4%
Designated Gifts	275,372	211,571	-63,801	-23.2%



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WEB

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## ON-LINE DEVOTIONS FOR FEBRUARY 2007

[www.prayfaithfully.org](http://www.prayfaithfully.org)

**Jan. 28-Feb. 3 / Pastor Jennifer Johnson Wrege, NGLS, Assistant  
to the Bishop**

**Feb. 4-10 / Terry Langenberg, First, Iron River**

**Feb. 11-17 / Rural Immersion Committee**

**Feb. 18-20 / Rural Immersion Committee**

**Feb. 21-Mar. 3 / Joint Devotions with Delaware/Maryland  
Synod**