

# NOTES & QUOTES

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## EASTER CONGREGATIONS

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At the recent Conference of Bishops' meeting, I was discussing with several other bishops the vitality of our congregations. Out of that conversation, I wrote down some "markers" of congregations that are vital and growing:

\***Attendance at worship** on a weekend is growing. The increase does not have to be large, but over the last five and ten years, more people are in church for the services.

\***Worship** is "well done." The style of the worship liturgy or the music is not nearly as important as the fact that the quality is good. Musicians, choir, acolytes, ushers, lectors are all well trained. The sermon is biblical (Christ centered) and interesting. Everyone is welcomed, and all can see and hear what is happening in worship.

\*The congregation has a **mission statement and developed goals**. The leaders, and many others in the church, know what that statement says and what the goals are for the next years.

\*The congregation is **generous**. Financial giving is increasing. Mission support for the work of the whole Church is growing. The leadership embraces the idea of giving financial and human resources to the whole community.

\*A majority of the congregational leaders are in regular **Bible Study**. Bible study is a priority for leaders.

\*Young people and adults are **involved in the world**. The congregation supports mission trips for its people. The congregation is noticeably interested in hunger issues, justice in the community, nation and the world, and there is concern for the environment.

\***Dynamic youth, women's and men's groups** build the congregation.

We have many congregations that have most or many of these signs of life. It is not essential to have all of them. The more your congregation has - the more of a blessing you are to the world! There are other "markers of vitality" than the ones lifted above.

**How would you define a dynamic congregation?**



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THOMAS A. SKRENES, BISHOP (CONTINUED)

### IN GALVESTON - THE CONFERENCE OF BISHOPS



Every March, the Conference of ELCA Bishops (67 members from across the Church) gather for nearly a week to discuss the matters and issues in this Church. We hear reports and learn together how God is at work.

Our 2007 spring meeting was in Galveston, Texas on the Gulf Coast. Here is what we were up to:

+We worshiped together, prayed and heard good preaching from our Presiding Bishop and others.

+We heard an in-depth and important report from the leaders of the reconstruction effort after the 2006 hurricanes. Parish pastors, and representatives of Lutheran Disaster Response, conveyed to us their appreciation for the 22,000+ Lutheran volunteers who have come to Mississippi, Louisiana, Florida and Texas in this last year. We have had many from our Northern Great Lakes Synod congregations participate. We also heard a complete report on the generous financial giving of this Church to the work. A complete narrative report is available to you at [www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org) or [www.ldr.org](http://www.ldr.org)

+The ELCA Treasurer reported positive news to us. Financial giving of our Church to mission support, hunger and disaster funds for 2006 was improved over the previous year. We were asked to thank all of our people!

+Two days of study, presentation and reflection on evangelism, including the work of new congregational mission starts, was a very important part of our time together.

+We received the names of 260 senior seminarians available to the synods. The Northern Great Lakes Synod was allowed two candidates for possible placement this spring.

+The Assistant to the ELCA Bishop for federal chaplains reported to us that, as of this date, 30 Lutheran chaplains (17 ELCA, 13 Lutheran Church Missouri Synod) are in military service in Iraq and Afghanistan. This does not include the dozens of Lutheran chaplains who have already served and who are preparing for service in these war zones. Please pray for all of God's people involved in the conflicts, including our chaplains.

+We prayed for our colleague and friend, Bishop Margarita Martinez of the Caribbean Synod, who was then gravely ill with cancer during the Conference of Bishops' meeting. Her suffering is now over as she went to be with the Lord the week after we returned to our homes.



*“We received the names of 260 senior seminarians available to the synods. The Northern Great Lakes Synod was allowed two candidates for possible placement this spring.”*



THOMAS A. SKRENES, BISHOP (CONTINUED)



THANK YOU DR. UBBELOHDE



Dr. Robert Ubbelohde will retire as President of Finlandia University in Hancock, Michigan on July 1, 2007. He has served the University and the Church for more than a decade. He and his wife, Susan, will be moving to southern Wisconsin this summer. We thank God for their ministry!

An Endowment Fund has been established in their honor for Finlandia's religious life. My wife, Luanne, and I will be making a gift towards that Endowment, and I encourage you also to encourage religious life and studies at Finlandia, and to thank the Ubbelohdes by supporting this effort. You may send your gift directly to Finlandia, or to the Synod Office, and I will present it to the University and Dr. Ubbelohde when we honor his work at a banquet on Thursday evening, May 17.

“Our Passions Are in Service of the Church”

An Interview with Senior Seminarians Kathy and Jeff Bonn

Jeff and Kathy Bonn are graduating in May from Wartburg Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa. Both are members of Good Shepherd in Houghton and are ready for professional ministry: Jeff as a pastor and Kathy as a Diaconal Minister in Chaplaincy. I spoke with them recently, and parts of our conversation follow:

**Bishop Skrenes:** *Why are you going into professional church service?*



**Kathy & Jeff Bonn:** We discovered nearly simultaneously (as we were pursuing careers in higher education) that our real passions are in service of the Church. On top of our lifelong, internal dream of ministry, people around us were recognizing more and more our gifts of theology, leadership, proclamation, and service. Through internal discernment and external affirmation, we have recognized our specific areas of passion and expertise. For Jeff, this means becoming an ordained pastor using his gifts of music, youthful energy, and thoughtful theological proclamation. For Kathy, this means becoming a hospital chaplain using gifts of compassion, enthusiasm, and spirituality amidst chaos.

**Bishop Skrenes:** *How has your congregation supported you?*

**Kathy & Jeff Bonn:** They were the pivotal voices that lifted up our long-time internal calling to pursue full time professional church service. Their affirmation and direction as we continued discerning gifts toward ministry proved invaluable for getting us to seminary with clear direction. Throughout seminary, not only have we appreciated their financial help, but we've been able to stay connected via the congregation's monthly newsletter, and even an occasional visit.

**Bishop Skrenes:** *How have Synod funds made a difference?*

**Kathy & Jeff Bonn:** We can't imagine both of us being full-time seminary students (with two kids to support) without this substantial help! The timing and amount makes a difference - financially and emotionally. It's clear to us that our calling is truly desired by our synod and, thus, the Church at large. We are continually amazed that our synod supports all of its seminarians at the highest levels, compared to other synods.

All Northern Great Lakes Synod seminarians who are candidates for rostered ministry in this Church receive \$2,500 of finan-

cial support from the synod in 2007 along with another \$1,100 of scholarship support from the Skogman, Kempainen and First Ev. Lutheran of Iron Mountain synod maintained endowment funds. The continuing financial support of the Church is essential in the preparation of the next generation of professional leaders for the Church.

### TRANSITIONS

+Congratulations to **Judy Mattson** as she has been appointed Licensed Lay Minister at Zion in Skanee. Judy has a long history of service as a Licensed Lay Minister, and we ask God's blessings as she serves the people of Zion. She will be installed on April 29.

+We have received word that **Pastor Sue Moline Larson** has resigned her position with the Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin. She has served in Madison as the ELCA advocate for over a decade. May God bless her in the days and years ahead.

+Thomas A. Skrenes, Bishop

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#### **ELCA Disaster Funds**

Salem, Ironwood

Bethany, Negaunee

Christ the King, Escanaba

#### **Lutheran Campus Ministry**

Faith, Ishpeming

Bethany, Amasa

Trinity, Ishpeming

Emanuel, Skandia

First, Gladstone

Grace, Gwinn  
Christ the King, Escanaba

**World Missionary Support**

Trinity, Stambaugh  
Calvary, Rapid River  
Bethel, Ishpeming

**Lutheran World Relief**

Calvary, Rapid River  
Zion, Marinette  
Mission United, Pelkie

Holy Trinity, Chassell

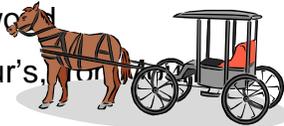
**Lay School for Mission**

Trinity, Rapid River



**Tanzanian Choir**

First, Gladstone  
Zion, Ironwood  
Our Saviour's, Ironwood



**Seminarian Support**

Zion, Ironwood

**Endowment Fund**

Zion, Ironwood



**Fall  
Lead-**

**2007**

**ership Retreat**

**Mission Point Resort**

**Mackinac Island, Michigan**

**September 23-25, 2007**

*Registration information will be sent out  
at a later date.*

**SYNOD ASSEMBLY 2007**

**NORTHERN MICHIGAN**

**UNIVERSITY IN**

**MARQUETTE**

**MAY 18-20, 2007**

*Please be sure your registrations*

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS!**

**+ From the Assistant to the Bishop +**  
**Pastor Jennifer Johnson Wrege**

*Indeed, the word of God is living and active,  
 sharper than any two-edged sword,  
 piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints  
 from marrow;*

*it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions  
 of the heart.*

*And before him no creature is hidden, but all  
 are naked and laid bare*

*to the eyes of the one to whom we must  
 render an account.*

*Since, then, we have a great high priest who  
 has passed through the heavens,*

*Jesus, the Son of God,*

*let us hold fast to our confession.*

*For we do not have a high priest who is unable  
 to sympathize with our weaknesses,*

*but we have one who in every respect has  
 been tested as we are, yet without sin.*

*Let us therefore approach the throne of grace  
 with boldness, so that*

*we may receive mercy and find grace to help  
 in time of need.*

Hebrews 4:11-16

We were on vacation in South Carolina when we attended worship at one of the local Evangelical Lutheran Church in America congregations. It was a cold and snowy end of January Sunday in the Northern Great Lakes Synod, but sunny, balmy, in the 60's, and just a tad humid as we entered Christ Lutheran Church where we were warmly greeted, handed a bulletin, and asked to sign the guest book.

It was a typical Lutheran sanctuary: an altar with candles, a pulpit and lectern, four rows of pews with a choice for worshipers of five aisles leading into them, an organ surrounded by a few other chairs with music stands in front of them along with a set of drums, an area for the choir to sit, about 85 people sitting in the back 1/3 of the pews, and a stained glass window high above the altar.

It was the stained glass window that caught my attention. It was a horizontally wide and vertically narrow rectangle with a bright yellow and orange hued sun in the middle with its rays bursting forth into the corners of the window. It shimmered in the light of the sun shining outside. Around this impressive sun were three doves, each of them holding in its beak a symbol of the faith: a branch, a sheath of wheat, and a clump of grapes. Yet, at the same time, these doves were also a bit unnerving. Their beaks were elongated and appeared to morph into swords. It was almost violent as the center dove could be viewed as dive-bombing toward earth right into the gathered faithful. I wondered, "Is it just me? Or, do others see this in the stained glass window too?"

As I sat there pondering these things, the words from Hebrews 4 came to mind. I thought about times when reading the Bible has brought me great comfort, affirmed, strengthened and encouraged me, and reminded me that I am a baptized child of God and, other times when reading the scriptures, the words have stirred me up, spoken a truth to me that I did not want to hear, reminded me that I am a sinner in need of mercy and forgiveness. I thought about Martin Luther's comments about the word comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable. Now, weeks after driving out of Christ Lutheran Church's parking lot, I'm still thinking about the image of that window.

Throughout the first week of April, we will move from the solemn worship including the Eucharist on Maundy Thursday, the betrayal, suffering, and crucifixion of Good Friday, the quiet numbness of Saturday and the Vigil of Easter to the joy and delight of Easter Sunday morning. We will hear texts that are almost too painful to bear. We will hear the news of Jesus' resurrection announced to us in word, proclamation, with trumpets, song and choirs. The week is almost like a two-edged sword that lands, finally and definitively, on God's big surprise for us: forgiveness, mercy, resurrection from the dead, grace, and hope.

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 Marlin Snyder**  
**Holy Cross, Baraga & Zion, Skanee - Pastor Ted Koehl**  
**Bethany, Norway - Pastor Earnest Ness**  
**Bethel, Cedarville & Zion, Allenville - Pastor George Kaiser**  
**Bethany, Mohawk - Pastor Peter Vorhes**

Mission Support giving through the end of February is flat when compared to 2006, with designated gifts down 9%. This is due, in part, to delayed receipt of mail at the temporary synod office location. As we look ahead to the promise of Easter, may we all remember that we are privileged to serve our Lord through the ministries of the Northern Great Lakes Synod, and may we give with generosity and joy to ensure that these ministries can continue.

As of 2/28/07	2006	2007	\$ Change	% Change
Pledged Amount	1,033,577	1,048,705	+15,128	+1.5%
Amount Received	115,815.55	115,425.62	-389.93	-.3%
Designated Gifts	19,444.68	17,689.23	-1,755.45	-9%



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**ON-LINE DEVOTIONS FOR APRIL 2007**

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

**April 1-8 / We continue with Lenten devotions from the Northern Great Lakes and Delaware/Maryland Synods**

**April 9-14 / Tom Heimerl & Bev Ahlborn - Pioneer Lake, Conover**

**April 15-21 / RoseAne Aman - Our Saviour's, Iron Mountain**

**April 22-28 / Pastor Dorothy Lindstrom - Shepherd of the Lakes, Sayner**

**April 29-May 5 / Sue Boback - Trinity, Ishpeming**