

NORTHERN GREAT LAKES SYNOD  
**NOTES & QUOTES**

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**THE FACE OF WAR**

Bishop Thomas A. Skrenes

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At the airport in Columbia, South Carolina last week, I met the face of war. She was eighteen years old. Sitting next to this polite young woman, I overheard her cellular phone call. She was in her dress uniform. I noticed her shiny black shoes. "Mom", she said, "I graduated from boot camp this morning. I'm fine. It was great. I love the army. I feel really good. Tomorrow, Mom, let's go shopping. I'll be home by 10:00 tonight. I have my \$3,000 bonus, Mom. I've never spent a thousand dollars on clothes before. Let's do it tomorrow."

At the airport in Columbia, South Carolina last week, I met the face of war. He was eighteen years old. Sitting next to this polite young man, I watched him use his laptop computer. Armed with an earpiece, he was viewing a Japanese made cartoon. He was dressed with an AC/DC tee shirt, the sleeves not covering well his tattooed upper arms. And he was very polite. "Yes, sir," he said. "I'm going home for a couple of weeks. Then it will be some more training and then, probably off to Iraq." He went back to his computer.

At the airport in Columbia, South Carolina last week, I met the faces of war. The faces are young. The faces are innocent, and they are eager.

The current war in Iraq has lasted longer for America than did World War II. The Iraq war is unpopular. As someone who has spent my life reading American history, I know that the United States has only had one popular war --- World War II. Every other war in our history has been unpopular since the Revolutionary War divided the Americans into Loyalists and Patriots. Democracies have a difficult time with long wars. This Iraq war is no exception.

Cable television focuses on car bombs; talk radio centers on angry politicians. Some blame the President; others, Congress. More and more, Americans are simply bored by the Iraq war. Everyone wishes the war would just go away!

Like you, I have opinions on our current conflict in the sands of Iraq. Like many of you, my opinions are shaped by my political party preference, my own history as a college student during the Vietnam War, and my own selective reading of current affairs. Our war in Iraq may be pure folly, or it might be sincere altruism. History will judge this war --- and history might be wrong.

I only know, for sure, one thing. Eighteen year-olds have died in all our American wars, and they are dying in Iraq today. Many of our service women and men are young. All of them need to be remembered in prayer.

Sitting at the airport in Columbia, South Carolina last week, I met the face of war. And, I prayed: *"Bless our land and people with the gifts of justice and peace. Watch over soldiers everywhere --- and strengthen our determination to build a world of hope. In Jesus Name. Amen."*



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THOMAS A. SKRENES, BISHOP (CONTINUED)



## LEADERS LISTEN

## LEADERS THANK

## LEADERS PLAN

The kids are back in school, the church ministry programs are going, and the furnace is on most mornings! It is fall in the Northern Great Lakes Synod, and now is a wonderful time for church leaders, pastors and lay alike to think about the work of the congregation.

Here are a few questions to ask ourselves as we prepare for the remainder of 2007 and into 2008:



***“Do all leaders know they are appreciated, and does the pastor realize that she or he has the support of the congregation?”***

**1. Are we praying for congregational renewal? Are we listening to God’s Word? To each other as God’s people?** In the Large Catechism, Martin Luther tells us what good there is in having a church:

*“The Holy Spirit continues his work without ceasing until the Last Day, and for this purpose he has appointed a community on earth, through which he speaks and does all his work...therefore we believe in him who daily brings us into this community through the Word, and imparts, increases and strengthens faith through the same Word and the forgiveness of sins.”*

**2. What are we doing to create an “attitude of gratitude” around the Church?** Do all leaders know they are appreciated, and does the pastor realize that she or he has the support of the congregation? Write a note, make a phone call, drop an e-mail of thanks today to the folks (lay and clergy) who are giving their time for Christ and His people in our church.

**3. Do we have a stewardship plan for 2007-2008?** Are we thanking people for their gifts? Are we encouraging growth by reminding our people that we are very blessed? Are we thanking God for the worldwide ministries of our Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America? What emphasis do we have in place for 2007 and 2008 to develop increased giving? Are we growing in our own personal giving? I am - and I love being a tither plus.

**4. What are we excited about at our Congregation?** I spoke with a waiter at a restaurant one day recently. “I asked him where he goes to church. He told me, and then he said, “We have a wonderful church and a great pastor and we are excited about our fall. You should come,” he said. What makes your congregation’s ministry great? Talk about it at Church council - talk about it at choir, at Sunday School, at the quilters’ meeting.

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

## **THE PRAYERS OF GOD'S PEOPLE**

As I travel around this Synod, I find myself increasingly moved by the prayers during our Sunday worship services. In many places, the pastors and lay assistants carefully prepare and speak wonderful words in these genuine heartfelt petitions.

Thank you for praying for this Church and this Synod. Please pray that God will bless all the congregations in our Synod with a sense of mission and vision for what can be in the future. Pray that we will remain faithful to Christ. Pray that our works may prosper because they are God's works in this world.

Thank you for praying for peace. Pray for our leaders. Pray for the President and the Congress and the courts and the governments of every state and community. Pray for our women and men in uniform, and for all soldiers everywhere, that God's peace may prevail. Pray for justice, and that we might be a part of the peace-making in this world.

Thank you for praying for me. When I am prayed for as the bishop of this Synod, I am reminded of God's presence in my life through you. Please pray for me and my family and our presiding Bishop Mark Hanson and his family each week. At a Walmart store the other day, a young man came up to me and said, "I want to meet you and shake your hand since my pastor prays for you every week in Church."

## **A WORD FROM THE FRONTLINES**

**Pastor Norman C. Peterson (Immanuel, Rhinelander)** reports from the parish. I would entitle this, "It's All in a Day's Work."

"A lifetime member of our congregation died on Wednesday near 11:00 p.m. The funeral was on Monday. All was going well, and I was half-way into the sermon. I looked over at the pallbearers seated in the first two pews on the right side of the sanctuary. Immediately I noticed that one of them, an elderly gentleman, was slumped over with his head resting on the shoulder of the man next to him. His face was colorless, and his breathing was labored. The man next to him looked terrified. As I left the pulpit, mid-sentence, knowing this was serious, the man's son, who was sitting in the pew in front of him, turned around and then shouted to call an ambulance. I called Mary to come up and take the man's pulse as I ran (still in vestments) to my office for my car keys, and then to the car for my EMS kit. Someone was calling the ambulance as all this was happening. I grabbed my kit, returned to the sanctuary and administered oxygen to the man. Contacting the ambulance with my radio, I informed them of the status of our patient. The Rhinelander Rescue 1, and then the ambulance, arrived. The patient was loaded onto the cot and into the ambulance. All this took about fifteen minutes. I gathered my gear, my thoughts, and then resumed the service. Needless to say, those who attended thought it was an interesting experience! The man is fine, but the sermon was a little disjointed. I think I may be getting too old for some of this."

**Way to go, Pastor Norm!**

## TRANSITIONS

+Congratulations to **Pastor Philip Johnson** who was called by the Synod Council and installed on September 20 as Finlandia University's President. Pastor Johnson and his wife, Renee, and sons, are an important part of our Synod and the Hancock Community. God bless you, Pastor Johnson. Finlandia University, a learning institute of our Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, is the only private college in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

+Congratulations to **Pastor Arthur Weiss** on his call by the Synod Council and employment by the Camp Board to be the next Executive Director of Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp. Pastor Weiss comes to our Synod with a long career in parish and camping ministry. We look forward to a long fruitful relationship with Pastor Weiss. He begins his work at Fortune Lake in mid-October.

+Congratulations to **Pastor James Holmberg (Immanuel, Escanaba)** on his call to St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Waukesha, Wisconsin. Pastor Holmberg, his spouse Marion and their children, will be missed by this Synod. Pastor Holmberg has served on many Synod committees. For their ministry in our midst we say, "Thanks be to God."

+Congratulations to **Pastor Jonathon Schmidt (First, Gladstone)** on his appointment by the Synod Council to serve on the Wartburg Theological Seminary Board of Directors. Pastor Schmidt brings a great deal of Synod experience to this position.

+May God bless Paul Johnson and his wife **Pastor Barb Girod (Faith, Three Lakes)** and their family on the death of Paul's mother recently. God is our hope for all eternity!

+Thomas A. Skrenes, Bishop  
tskrenes@nglsynod.org

## TANZANIA.....

### COMPANION CHURCHES

There are sixteen churches in the Northern Great Lakes Synod that are matched with companion churches in the Eastern Coastal Diocese of Tanzania. Over the next year, we will be featuring the activities of these churches in Notes & Quotes.

Our Saviour Lutheran Church in Iron Mountain continues its close relationship with its companion congregation in the Eastern Coastal Diocese, Kijitonyama Lutheran Church. They stay in close touch by email, with each parish having a lay contact person who represents their congregation. They pray for each other at every Sunday worship service, and have made a commitment to visit on alternate years. The Kijitonyama Choir was here this past May, and a group from Our Saviour's will be going over in the fall of 2008. Both churches conduct a Companion Synod Sunday Service in November to celebrate their ministry together.

If you would like to know more about companion churches, or about becoming a companion church, please contact Jean Hannemann at 906/ 249-1225 or [jeanhannemann@webtv.net](mailto:jeanhannemann@webtv.net).





# THANK YOU

## **Lutheran World Relief**

Holy Trinity, Chassell

Zion, Allenville

Mission United, Pelkie

Calvary, Rapid River

## **Lay School for Mission**

Trinity, Rapid River

## **Seminarian Support**

Our Redeemer, Newberry

## **Lutheran Campus Ministry**

Grace, Gwinn

Immanuel, Rhineland

Bethany, Amasa

Emanuel, Skandia

## **Bishop's Discretionary**

Our Saviour's, Bruce Crossing

Faith, Three Lakes

## **Kemppainen Scholarship Fund**

Marlys Roberts

in memory of Rev. Lance Roberts

## **Endowment Fund**

Rev. Robert & Deloris Langseth

Rev. Jonathan & Jean Schmidt

Dan & Judy Laatsch

First Lutheran Church, Iron Mountain

Rev. John & Kathy Autio

Robert & Jean Sovey

Rev. David & Sandy Hueter

Bishop Thomas & Luanne Skrenes

Rev. Jennie Johnson Wrege & Marv Wrege

Rev. Len & Jeanne Gilley

## **World Missionary Support**

Calvary, Rapid River

Bethel, Ishpeming

Trinity, Stambaugh

## **Tanzania**

Rev. Stephen & Cindy Cowen

in memory of Rev. Lance Roberts

and Edith Edberg

Thomas & Joyce Dupras



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

*And be kind to one another, tenderhearted,  
 forgiving one another,  
 as God in Christ has forgiven you.*

Ephesians 4:32

Though I have heard about these things happening, it came as a total surprise when it happened to me. I was standing in line in Fleet Farm waiting to check out. The line was not long. I was not in a hurry. I had just placed the three items I planned to purchase - one bottle of Diet Pepsi, one bottle of Mountain Dew, and one bag of trail mix - on the counter, when the man standing behind me scooped them up, and directing his instruction to the woman at the computer cash register, said, "I'll pay for these."

She looked at me with an expression that sought confirmation. In turn, I turned my attention to the man behind me, and with that "deer in the headlights look" asked, "What?"

"I want to buy these for you. Today has been a pretty good day and I just want to buy these for you," he said.

Pushing aside my fears that I was being set up to be the victim of some act of scandal or violence, and in honor of those whom I have surprised by their dinners or their ice cream or their tank of gas (only one person has flat-out refused to enjoy the surprise), I shrugged and gave the thumbs up. "Okay," I said. It wasn't exactly the most enthusiastic response of gratitude for a gift that rang up to a total of just about \$8.

While the man's items, including my three things, were being totaled, I wondered again what was so good about today that he wanted to engage in a random act of kindness in this manner. I asked him, "What's been so wonderful about today? What's been so good about today that you want to do this for me, a woman you don't know and will probably never see again?"

I expected to hear about how something wonderful had happened earlier that day. Perhaps he got engaged to be married. Maybe he was a new Dad. A substantial pay raise would be something to celebrate. Could it be that he had just received some good news? I waited to hear what had moved him to this generosity.

"Well" he said, "I've had a few drinks this afternoon and I just feel pretty good." He smiled while handing me my bag, slid past me, and headed out to the parking lot. "Thank you!" I called after him.

I am not sure of what to make of this almost three minute interaction. I wonder if he is still doing random acts of kindness, if he is a frequent early afternoon partaker of a few drinks, if life is good for him. I pray, too.

At the Fall Women's Retreat this year, just a few weeks ago, one kind and generous woman told me the story of one of her random acts of kindness. It began on a hot summer afternoon as she watched a Mom trying to calm and settle her hot, tired, along the lines of cranky children. The children were not responding well to her efforts. In an instant, the woman came up with a plan. She dug in her pockets and her pocketbook, found a total of \$12, walked up to that Mom and her kids, stretched out her hand, gave the Mom the money and instructed her to go and get some ice cream for her kids. Shouts of joy came from the kids. From the Mom came, "Oh, I really can't." After some encouragement, she took the money. The woman left smiling, confident that they were off to get some ice cream. A while later she was in the grocery store picking up some ingredients for supper. There she was — that same Mom and kids now at the checkout counter, and the Mom handing the same \$12 to pay for the food heading down the belt toward the bagger. The \$12 bought the kids and their mom supper, not ice cream.

In the course of any given day, many people come and go around us. Most of the time, we are pretty much blind to the struggles and challenges any of them carry, including sometimes the struggles of the people nearest and dearest to us. Random acts of kindness probably won't solve too many of the most challenging difficulties or struggles we encounter, but whether we are the recipient or the initiator of an act of kindness, they do buoy us up along the way. We rarely have control over the situations others face, but we do have some control about how we respond. We can choose to be kind.

Blessings!



## Pastoral Vacancies and Interim Pastors

**Grace, South Range & First, Dollar Bay - Pastor Jimalee Jones & Pastor Peter Gundersen**

**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 - Pastor Ted Koehl**

**Bethany, Norway - Pastor Earnest Ness**

**Bethel, Cedarville & Zion, Allenville - Pastor George Kaiser**

**Bethany, Mohawk - Pastor Peter Vorhes**

**Our Redeemer, Newberry - Pastor LaVonne Stephenson**

**Messiah, Marquette - Senior Pastor Vacancy**

**Immanuel, Escanaba - Pastor Jonathan Schmidt**

With excellent congregational giving in August, our mission support totals for both calendar and fiscal years are now ahead of August 31, 2006. While our calendar year giving is \$33,408 above 2006, we remain below 2005 numbers. Each congregation's giving is vital to carrying forward Christ's mission through our Synod, and we strongly encourage all congregations to fulfill their pledge for 2007. God is faithful in His promise - may we be so, as well.

As of 8/31/07	2006	2007	\$ Change	% Change
Pledged Amount	1,033,577	1,045,301	+11,724	+1.1%
Amount Received	566,254	599,662	+33,408	+5.9%
Designated Gifts	113,564	110,082	-3,482	-3%



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**WE'RE ON THE WEB**

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*Anyone feeling God's call to share devotions would be appreciated.  
Please contact Jean Schmidt at [prayfaithfully.org](http://prayfaithfully.org)*