

# NOTES & QUOTES

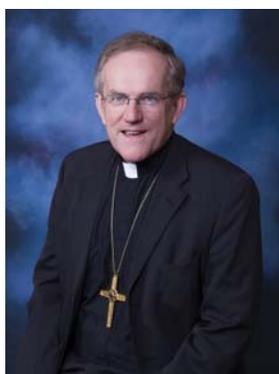
Volume 21, Issue 3

MARCH 2008

## “COME ON OVER PASTOR”

Bishop Thomas A. Skrenes

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There is something very powerful about a personal visit. When I was a parish pastor, I talked with this one woman every Sunday at church. We talked about the weather, about local politics, about the Packers - but it was not until I was invited into her home did I learn about her life and had a view into her soul. Over a cup of coffee, one evening, this working mom shared her sorrows and her joys. We talked about her spiritual journey, her mountain top experiences and her walks into the valley. It was a wonderful hour for me. Based on that experience, I came to know her and to become her pastor!

There is something very powerful about personal visits when pastors sit down with parishioners in their homes, or in some other informal setting, and share life. When I visit with congregation councils and clergy call committees, I hear over and over again that “we want a pastor who will learn to know us and care for us”. In the comfort of the home, we learn about each other and learn to trust deeper in God’s Word and each other.

If I was starting a new call as a parish pastor, I would intentionally offer to visit every member of the congregation



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### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

BISHOP’S PAGES 1-4

TRANSITIONS 4

PASTOR JENNIE JOHNSON WREGE 6

SYNOD FINANCIALS 7

THOMAS A. SKRENES, BISHOP (CONTINUED)



council, the teachers in the Sunday School and the families of all of my confirmation students. That would be a start. Perhaps some people will not want to be visited in their homes. That's fine. At least I would offer a visit to all. Wherever we visit we would talk about the congregation, about spiritual life, about God's love and we would pray. We probably would also talk about the weather and the Green Bay Packers and drink a little coffee, too.

Invite your pastor over to your home or out for lunch. Tell her or him about your life. Invite the pastor to share what is happening in his or her soul. Good things will happen. There is nothing like faith filled conversation.

*“This continues to be a work in progress! Broad involvement in the process is vital.”*

## ELCA SOCIAL STATEMENT ON SEXUALITY

**Draft to be Released March 13, 2008**

The whole Church is in the process of developing a social statement on human sexuality. The draft document will be released on March 13, 2008, and will be available on the ELCA website. Copies will also be mailed to all of our congregations. As you may know, **Pastor Corrine Johnson (Concordia, Palmer and Our Saviour's, Suomi)** from our Synod serves on this churchwide task force entrusted to write a document that expresses the Church's witness on the issues surrounding sexuality.

This continues to be a work in progress! Broad involvement in the process is vital. Our “feedback” is needed as we read and re-

THOMAS A. SKRENES, BISHOP (CONTINUED)

flect on the proposed draft statement. To that end, there will be at least one hearing sponsored by the Northern Great Lakes Synod to reflect on this matter, and to hear the Synod's members express their opinions. Comments from these hearings, which are being held in every Synod, will be used to finalize a Proposed Statement on Human Sexuality. That proposed statement will be the document that the ELCA Church Council, including **Pastor David Jensen (Ascension, Minocqua)**, will review and recommend to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly. More information on our Synod's hearing, probably scheduled for late June, will follow from our office.

**In the mean time - read the proposed draft document.** You may see it after March 13 on [www.elca.org/faithfuljourney](http://www.elca.org/faithfuljourney). You may receive a complimentary copy by ordering it at 1-800-638-3522, Ext. 2996.

## SUMMER ROAD TRIP TO OMAHA?

Questions for the men of this Synod:

What about a trip to Omaha to visit with a thousand other committed Christian men?

Do you have any men from your congregation who would be interested in attending the Lutheran Men in Mission gathering this summer in Omaha, Nebraska?

The LMM Assembly begins on Thursday, July 31, and concludes Sunday, August 3. For twenty years, the ELCA Lutheran Men in Mission have served the Church and have, every three years, met in Assembly. A continuing focus of LMM has been working with young men, and helping to find ways to share the story of God's Church with a new generation.

For more information on the Men's gathering, please see the ELCA website at [www.elca.org/lmm](http://www.elca.org/lmm), or contact me. I will be attending the Omaha gathering and would welcome some company from our Synod!

## Your 2% Worth

If 75% of our ELCA Board of Pension Health Care insured members take the confidential Mayo Clinic Health Risk Assessment, good things will happen all around the Synod! Our congregations will save money (about 2% of the annual premium - hundreds of dollars in most cases) and each member will get up to \$300 into a 2008 personal wellness account!

Our Northern Great Lakes Synod has 112 persons (including spouses) who are enrolled in the ELCA Medical Benefits Plan. Our magic number is "84". If 84 members in our Synod participate in the health survey, all members will benefit with reduced premiums for 2008. As of February 1, only 36 have taken the Mayo Clinic Health Risk Assessment. We have a ways to go!

Pastors and spouses and others enrolled should go to the website and register! Treasurers and council presidents will probably want to encourage this positively financially healthy activity! For more information and to sign up, members can go to [www.elcaforwellness.org](http://www.elcaforwellness.org)

## TRANSITIONS

+Congratulations to **Pastor James Duehring** who has accepted the call to serve the people of **Prince of Peace in Marquette (Harvey), Michigan**. Pastor Duehring has served this Church as a parish pastor in North Dakota and also has experience as a teacher and principal, most recently in Texas. He and his wife, Gisele, will begin the ministry at Prince of Peace in March. God bless them as they move to our Synod!

+Congratulations to **Pastor Sue Ellen Grudt** who has received a call to serve at Shepherd of the Prairie in Huntley, Illinois. Pastor Grudt served this Synod at Trinity in Rhinelander and at United in Crystal Falls before moving to northern Illinois. We also express our Christian sympathy to Pastor Sue Ellen's family on the recent death of her father.

+Our Synod Office transition is nearly complete as your Synod staff is becoming accustomed to life at the refurbished 1029 N. Third Street, Ste. A office. The coffee pot is on, and we welcome your visit when you are in Marquette. A dedication of the Synod Office and an Open House will occur on the first day of the Synod Assembly - May 18 at 2:00 p.m. ET.

# Thank You

## **World Missionary Support**

Grace, Gwinn  
Trinity, Stambaugh  
Bethel, Ishpeming  
Calvary, Rapid River  
Trinity, Rhineland

## **Lutheran World Relief**

Prince of Peace, Marquette  
Immanuel, Negaunee  
Holy Trinity, Chassell  
Trinity, Rapid River  
Calvary, Rapid River

## **Lutheran Campus Ministry**

Grace, Gwinn  
Emanuel, Skandia  
Bethany, Amasa

## **ELCA Disaster Funds**

Grace, South Range  
Mission United, Pelkie  
Shepherd of the Sea, Sayner

## **Seminarian Support**

Calvary, Minocqua  
Bethany, Escanaba

## **Lay School for Mission**

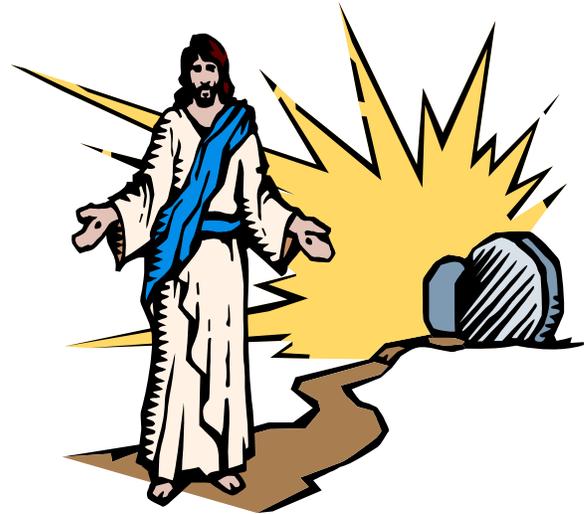
Trinity, Rapid River

## **Tanzania Teachers' Gift**

WELCA, Ironwood  
Kathryn & Albert Sundine  
Tracy & David Rowe  
Rev. Robert & Deloris Langseth

## **Kisarawe Scholarships**

Rev. Robert & Deloris Langseth



**Christ is risen!**

**He is risen indeed!**

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

*When we on that final journey go*

*That Christ is for us prepar-  
 ing,*

*We'll gather in song, our  
 hearts aglow,*

*All joy of the heavens shar-  
 ing,*

*And walk in the light of  
 God's own place,*

*With angels his name adoring.*

*Verse 5, "O Day Full of Grace," LBW #161*



It was a Thursday evening that we met with the oncologist – Mom, Dad, my three brothers, me and our spouses. Sad, reflective and quiet, we listened and learned as our worst fears were confirmed – fears that Mom had advanced stage pancreatic cancer. Treatment options were not being recommended. Any surgery was ruled out. She would have some good weeks and months ahead of her. Comfort care and hospice were encouraged.

Apparently visibly shocked and overwhelmed, we were told we could stay and use the room we were meeting in for as long as we wanted. Never mind that we all secretly wanted to make a mad dash for the door and get the heck out of there - which pretty much ended up being what we did, but sort of in Lutheran slow motion. We headed to our cars and then to Mom and Dad's where turkey soup, fresh bread and coffee were waiting for us. Once we were sipping our soup, Mom called us to attention, "Well, I want to know what you think." We began to talk.

That was Thursday night.

Our next family gathering took place in the back three pews, pulpit side, of First Lutheran Church in Amery, Wisconsin. Mom was literally surrounded by family – her biological family and her congregational family. Among her congregational family, and seated just behind Mom and Dad, was her primary doctor and his spouse – the very same doctor who had ordered the CT scans, the MRI, the biopsy, the cancer marker blood test, and all the rest. This was the doctor who had spoken with us about his suspicions, prescribed the first pain medications, and listened to our concerns when one of us cornered him in the hallway or the cafeteria. This was the doctor who was now singing the same hymns, chanting the kyrie, praying the same prayers, and worshipping the same triune God, the Redeemer, Savior, Healer and Friend. It would not be the last Sunday that Dr. Craig Johnson sat in the pew close to our family.

What a witness and what a comfort to gather around Word and Sacrament – to hear proclaimed in the liturgy, in the reading of scripture, in the hymns, in the sermon, prayers, and in the meal, in the symbols of the faith that surround us in the sacred space of the sanctuary, the same sanctuary where we will someday soon bring Mom as part of her final journey home, and be reminded of God's promises of a new and eternal life in heaven, forever in the presence of God and those who have gone before us.

It's sort of a Lenten journey making our way to the celebration of Christ's resurrection and the promise of ours.

Blessings on your Lenten journey....



## Pastoral Vacancies and Interim Pastors

**Bethel, Ishpeming - Associate Pastor Vacancy**  
**Trinity, Stambaugh & Bethany, Amasa - Pastor Doug Johnson**  
**Central, Menominee - Pastor Ken Michaelis**  
**Bethany, Covington & Trinity, Trout Creek - Pastor Scott Williams**  
**Holy Cross, Baraga - Pastor Ted Koehl**  
**Bethany, Mohawk - Pastor Peter Vorhes**  
**Our Redeemer, Newberry - Pastor LaVonne Stephenson**  
**Immanuel, Escanaba - Pastor Jonathan Schmidt**  
**Grace, Gwinn - Pastor Chad Christensen**  
**First, Ewen & Our Saviour's, Paynesville - Pastor Gerald Anderson**

Congregational mission support giving for FY2007 was \$1,044,741. This was \$11,122 less than in FY2006, although it still gave the Synod its third highest fiscal year giving since 1988. January 2008 mission support gifts fell by 21.2% when compared to January 2007.

Thanks be to God for your generosity, as together we do the work that we have been called to in this Synod. In this new year, may we walk with joyful hearts, trusting in God's love to provide for all our needs.

As of 1/31/08	2007	2008	\$ Change	% Change
Pledged Amount	1,045,301	1,045,301 *	—	—
Amount Received	81,140	63,917	-17,223	-21.2%
Designated Gifts	10,464	11,306	+842	+8%

\* Less than half of the NGLS congregations have submitted their pledge intent for 2008.



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**WE'RE ON THE WEB**

[WWW.NGLSYNOD.ORG](http://WWW.NGLSYNOD.ORG)

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**ON-LINE DEVOTIONS FOR MARCH 2008**

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

Lenten devotions are once again written jointly by clergy and laity from our Northern Great Lakes Synod and our partner Synod of Delaware/Maryland. Delaware/Maryland Bishop Jerry Knoche begins our journey to the cross on Ash Wednesday, and we will greet our risen Lord on Easter morning with reflections from Northern Great Lakes Synod Bishop Tom Skrenes. You can access these devotions through the [prayfaithfully.org](http://prayfaithfully.org) website, as well as through [lentdevotions.org](http://lentdevotions.org)

**March 23-29 / Bishop Thomas Skrenes**

**March 30-April 5 / RoseAnne Aman, Our Saviour's, Iron Mountain**