



# InterActs

GROWING THIS CHURCH TOGETHER

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Both worship and business sessions will be held at Shepherd of the Lake Lutheran Church, Prior Lake.

## Worship opens 2012 Minneapolis Area Synod Assembly

**Service of Holy Communion:** Friday, February 17, 8:00 a.m.

Shepherd of the Lake Lutheran Church, Prior Lake

Preacher: Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson

Worship planners: Rev. Anne Hokenstad and Phillip Mennicke, from House of Prayer Lutheran Church, Richfield

**Business sessions:** Friday, February 17, 9:45 a.m.

The business sessions will begin right after worship. This time will include opening of the assembly, welcome, introductions, adoption of rules of procedure and proposed agenda. The nominating ballot for bishop will also take place. See the website or the CD that was mailed to you for the whole agenda.

**Below: On January 21, the nominees for bishop were on hand to introduce themselves to more than 230 people and to answer questions. After a prayer and introduction from Interim Bishop Nycklemoe, the audience was divided into three groups, and they gathered in three separate rooms. The nominees rotated to these rooms to give a two-minute introduction and to answer questions. All nominees were in attendance except one, the Rev. Wayne Peterson, whose father died the day before.**



# Transitioning from Epiphany to Lent with the ELCA Malaria Campaign

by Mary Simonson Clark, Minneapolis Area Synod coordinator for Our Malaria Work

This month we transition from Epiphany's emphasis on Christ, light to all nations, revealed in his public ministry to our Lenten journey's emphasis on prayer and community service. Several of Epiphany's lectionary texts highlight Christ's ministry of healing and provide a context to focus on the ELCA Malaria Campaign. This focus can easily transition into Lenten prayers for our neighbors who suffer from malaria and global community service that includes giving to support malaria prevention and treatment. Numerous Minneapolis Area Synod congregations very fruitfully focused on the ELCA Malaria Campaign during their 2011 Lenten observances. Infusing messages about the campaign during Sunday worship is particularly effective.

On February 5, the Fifth Sunday after Epiphany, lectionary texts for worship include "healing" messages:

- Isaiah 40:21-31 – "But those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength" (v. 31).
- Psalm 147:1-11, 20c – "He heals the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds" (v. 3).
- Mark 1:29-39 – Jesus heals many at Simon's house, including Simon's mother-in-law.

The Rev. Dr. Mark Wegener, *Book of Faith* advocate for the Minneapolis Area Synod, notes that Jesus may have healed Simon's mother-in-law of malaria and its rapidly rising fever. He bases his remark on Dr. Jonathan L. Reed's article, "Instability in Jesus' Galilee: A Demographic Perspective" (*Journal of Biblical Literature*, 129(2), 343-365), which describes the climate and geographic conditions relevant to malaria during Jesus' time. This Sunday's Prayer of the Day also focuses on Jesus' healing ministry and our call to serve. It says: "Everlasting God, you give strength to the weak and power to the faint. Make us agents of your healing and wholeness, that your good news may be made known to the ends of your creation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord."

The Sixth Sunday after Epiphany (February 12) texts and Prayer of the Day also focus on healing. The texts include:

- 2 Kings 5:1-14 – The healing of Naaman
- Psalm 30 – Thanksgiving for recovery from grave illness
- Mark 1:40-45 – Jesus cleanses a leper

For insights on these texts and their relationship to healing ministry, prayer, justice and the ELCA Malaria Campaign, sign up for Luther Seminary's *God Pause* e-mail daily devotions at [www.luthersem.edu/email/email.aspx?listId=7](http://www.luthersem.edu/email/email.aspx?listId=7). For thought-provoking questions on the



**ELCA Malaria Campaign**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

Gospel lesson, including its possible relationship to malaria work, see the Rev. Dr. Mark Wegener's *Just-A-Minute* study. This Sunday's Prayer of the Day pleads for healing. It says: "Almighty and ever-living God, with mercy you look upon our weaknesses. Stretch out your wondrous hand to protect us from danger and restore us to health, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord."

Beyond the lectionary texts and prayers, meditate on *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* hymns concerning healing. For example, consider the lyrics of:

- "Oh Christ, the Healer, We Have Come" (ELW 610)
- "Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service" (ELW 712)
- "God of Mercy, God of Light" (ELW 714, especially verse 5)
- "Will You Come and Follow Me" (ELW 798, especially end of verse 2 and verse 3)

Also, during your transition from Epiphany to Lent, reflect on the powerful lyrics of "We're the Change" at [www.mpls-synod.org/files/programs/lmi/lyrics\\_agape.pdf](http://www.mpls-synod.org/files/programs/lmi/lyrics_agape.pdf) written by AGAPE\* for the Synod's "Celebration of Compassion: Nuts about NETS" youth event.

As you and your congregation transition from Epiphany into and through Lent, seek how God calls you to carry on Christ's ministry of healing. Through prayer and giving, accompany our neighbors in Africa who suffer from malaria. Serve as the hands that do God's healing work!

*Resources and information about the ELCA Malaria Campaign* ([www.elca.org/malaria](http://www.elca.org/malaria)) and the *Minneapolis Area Synod's malaria work* ([www.mpls-synod.org/programs/malaria](http://www.mpls-synod.org/programs/malaria)) are available.

# The ministry of presence to student vets

by Amy Blumenshine, DM, *Coming Home Collaborative*

The January 2007 ministerium on Healing the Wounds of War propelled a ministry of presence to the veterans who are students at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis campus. The Rev. Craig Shirley, University Lutheran Church of Hope, and the Rev. Mary Halvorson, Grace University Lutheran Church, both had student vets in their congregations. They put their heads together to determine how to do outreach to these vets. Since then, Shirley, who had experience as a police chaplain, has been offering his ministry of presence via the Veterans' Transition Center (VTC) which is a student group on campus. The regular VTC gathering is a Friday pizza lunch. While the setting is often casual, the mission is serious: no additional casualties from the war in Iraq or other military experiences.

Rev. Shirley "hangs out" with the student vets. "I knew from my work with police officers that until you develop trust, they won't enter into anything. I'm constantly impressed by their level of intelligence and abilities, as well as their maturity." He notes that "there's way too much alcohol," but that is often true for non-veteran students as well. Similarly, the student vets suffer from many of the relationship and financial woes of their age cohort.

A difference is that many have been officers or higher ranking soldiers, and they feel a great deal of responsibility when they learn that service members, once under their command, have committed suicide. That is the number one issue when student vets choose to talk.

Another difference may be the casual way they accept their problems with sleeping. "Many of them are still dealing with the demons of war. When you get them talking, many have that same black humor that police officers do. They're still not sleeping, and when they do they have nightmares. The trauma is certainly there; I see them dealing with it. I don't see them flocking to counselors, but they do support each other. A lot of them have found writing to be an outlet.

"As I look back over the semester, I've heard their life stories. These are folks who have given some years of their life to the military. Some did it for the GI bill (800 at the university are currently receiving those benefits), patriotism or adventure. Generally they say, 'We did the best job we could when we were there; now we're doing this; we don't really look back.'

"I say, 'There's a church here in the neighborhood that does care about you.' The majority are already church people; lots are clergy kids. They don't want to be prayed over, but they are willing to talk about being people of faith."



Another vet who joined the military to earn money for college recently graduated 10 years after enlisting. She is the famous American prisoner of war, Jessica Lynch, who noted: "By looking at me through a picture, you'd never know anything is wrong. 'I fake it. But my family, my friends – they know when I'm really in pain.'"

Addressing moral injury will be the subject of the next Vets Ministry Roundtable on March 13, noon to 1:30 pm, at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, 2315 Chicago Ave. S, Minneapolis. Contact ListenToVets@comcast.net for more information.

## It's time to get equipped!

by Ed Payne, *Bread for the World committee*

The annual Bread for the World workshops are taking place in February. This year's theme is "Cut Hunger – Not Hunger Programs." You will become well equipped to advocate for a variety of programs such as children's summer meals, school lunches, heating assistance, WIC, food stamps and programs that help the needy overseas.

Our east metro date is Thursday, February 23, at Guardian Angels Catholic Church at 8260 4th St. N in Oakdale. Registration is at 8:30 a.m., and the program is from 9 to noon. Our west metro date is Saturday, February 25, at St. Stephen Lutheran Church at 8400 France Ave. S in Bloomington. Registration is at 8:30 a.m., and the program is from 9 to noon. Our campus date is Wednesday, February 29, at Bethel University at 3900 Bethel Drive in St. Paul. Registration is at 6:30 p.m., and the program is from 7 to 9 p.m.

As advocates for God's justice, these trying times require us to know the shortcomings of many of the ideas being proposed and to be able to respond with measures that keep the circle of protection around our less fortunate brothers and sisters. Come and be a part of this effort!

# Comings & Goings

## NEW TO THE SYNOD:

**Rev. Harold Hoekstra**, retired, from the Northern Illinois Synod.

**Rev. Dixie L. Johnson**, retired, from the Northeastern Minnesota Synod.

**Rev. Douglas Mork**, from the Saint Paul Area Synod, to Cross of Glory Lutheran Church, Brooklyn Center, pastor.

**Rev. Christopher Steubing**, from the Saint Paul Area Synod, to Hope Evangelical Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, pastor.



## WITHIN THE SYNOD:

**Rev. David (Josh) Nelson**, from Spirit of Joy Lutheran Church,

Buffalo, to Family of Christ Lutheran Church, Chanhassen, senior pastor.

**Rev. James Nelson**, to Spirit of Joy Lutheran Church, Buffalo, interim pastor.

## GOINGS/RETIREMENTS with Godspeed:

**Rev. Charles R. Carlson**, ordained June 11, 1979, retired January 1, 2012.

## CONGREGATIONS IN INTERIM:

Alleluia!, St. Michael, pastor  
Bethany, Minneapolis, pastor  
Grace, Andover, associate  
Holy Trinity, New Prague, senior  
Lake of the Isles, Minneapolis, pastor  
Lord of Life, Ramsey, senior, associate  
Spirit of Joy, Buffalo, pastor  
St. John's, Belle Plaine, associate  
St. John's Evangelical, Mound, senior

## CONGREGATIONS IN ACTIVE CALL PROCESS:

Bethel Evangelical, Minneapolis, pastor  
Gustavus Adolphus, Minneapolis, pastor  
Salem Evangelical, Minneapolis, pastor  
Shepherd of the Hills, Edina, associate  
St. Luke's, Bloomington, senior  
Woodlake, Richfield, senior

## CONGREGATIONS CALLING FINAL CANDIDATE:

St. Andrew, Eden Prairie, senior  
St. Timothy, Columbia Heights, pastor  
Trinity, Long Lake, senior pastor  
Zion Evangelical, Minneapolis, pastor

## IN MEMORY:

**Ms. Marlene Beekmann**, Associate in Ministry, died December 21, 2011, at the age of 80. Born May 21, 1931 in Clara City, Minn. With music as her core medium, Marlene served as church organist, director of children's choirs, and soloist for weddings, funerals and various choral performances. Her professional career included working as a medical assistant and as a church administrative assistant. She was certified to the Lay Roster of The American Lutheran Church in 1987. She retired in 1991.

Ms. Beekmann is survived by her husband of 48 years, Rev. Darold Beekmann; daughter, Heidi (John) Weippert; son, Timothy (Patrick Durkin) Beekmann; and grandchildren, Nathaniel and Allie Weippert.

## InterActs

*InterActs* is published monthly by the Minneapolis Area Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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*Deadline for submission of articles for the March issue is Monday, February 20.*

## Where there's a will . . .

**H**ave you remembered the Minneapolis Area Synod Endowment in your will?

When you make or revise your will or trust, or review your life insurance contracts or retirement funds, please consider naming the Minneapolis Area Synod Endowment as one of your beneficiaries. The use of the following language will ensure that your gift is directed appropriately:

I bequeath \_\_\_ percent of my estate (or my fund) to the Minneapolis Area Synod, located at 122 West Franklin Avenue, #600, Minneapolis, MN 55404, designated for the Minneapolis Area Synod Mission Endowment Fund.

## **FEBRUARY 2012**

**Extravaganza, February 8-12,** Sheraton Hotel, New Orleans. The Extravaganza is an annual four-day conference that draws together 500-750 adults who work with youth in ELCA congregations. For more information, go to [www.elcaymnet.org/extravaganza](http://www.elcaymnet.org/extravaganza).

### **Seminary of the Streets: "Innovative Leadership Using Asset-Based Community Development,"**

**February 9,** 6-8 p.m. (meal at 5:15 p.m.), location TBA. Jody Kretzmann, Asset Based Community Development Institute, will lead a discussion about how communities, congregations and organizations marginalize certain groups of people, often with the best of intentions. What can we do to keep the unintended consequences of our good will from overwhelming its recipients? Part of the answer lies in the recognition that gifts, talents, skills and dreams are universal, and that the key to inclusion lies in this recognition. Register on synod website.

**2012 Synod Assembly, February 17-18,** Shepherd of the Lake Lutheran Church, Prior Lake. Theme: "Rooted in the Biblical Story." Worship, learn and engage in biblical study, as well as participate in the business decisions and bishop election. See article on page 1 for more information. Register online at [www.mpls-synod.org](http://www.mpls-synod.org).

**Asset Based Development Training, February 10-11,** Friday, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Saturday, 8:30-noon, Jehovah Lutheran Church, 1566 Thomas

Ave., St. Paul. Follow up Saturday, April 21. Jody Kretzmann, Asset Based Community Development Institute at Northwestern University, will locate the roots of the asset-based approach in the histories of the Settlement House, "Alinsky-style" community organizing, the civil rights movement and community economic development. Evening presentation and discussion will introduce the asset categories, along with strategies and tools for discovering and activating them. Saturday session will lead participants to be able to apply these approaches to their own community and congregational settings, and will challenge them to plan and execute their own community building activities. Cost: \$15. Register online.

**Worship Dialogue, February 21,** 11:30 a.m., St. John's Lutheran Church, 4842 Nicollet Ave., Minneapolis. John Cherek, director of Catholic Cemeteries of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, and Fran Donnelly, BVM, director of Life Transition Ministries, Catholic Cemeteries of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, will speak on "Life Is Changed, Not Ended: Ritual and Pastoral Care for Grieving Christians." Free. Bring a bag lunch if desired. Phone 612-827-4406 for more information.

**Get AMPed for God!, February 26,** 6 p.m., Augsburg College, Minneapolis. A new worship experience – AMP (All Metro Praise) – will be happening each month. AMP is a collaborative project that seeks to engage and celebrate youth through worship, discipleship, leadership and fellowship. Bring your gifts, your voice, and your praise!

For more information, contact Tony Fair.

### **Monkey Business: A First Third Dialogue on the Confirmation Process, February 27-29.**

"Monkey Business" – that's what Martin Luther called the rite of confirmation. And the numbers of young people that the church is losing after, and possibly through, the confirmation process, are rising annually. Join us for this First Third Dialogue designed to both begin, as well as further, ongoing conversations about deep and adaptive change in our churches in confirmation preparation and the rite itself. For more information or to register, visit [www.firstthird.org/events](http://www.firstthird.org/events) or call 651-523-1621. Hosted by Center for First Third Ministry at Luther Seminary.

## **MARCH 2012**

**Rural Ministry Conference, March 4-6,** Best Western Plus Hotel, 3100 Dodge Street, Dubuque, Iowa. This Leaders in rural communities and congregations are invited to gain insight and inspiration, to network and neighbor. This ecumenical conference includes worship, keynote speakers, workshops and Bible study; it offers participants a unique opportunity to network with others who are active in and concerned about rural ministry. Go to Wartburg Theological Seminary's website for more information and a listing of workshops and speakers.

**Veterans' Ministry Roundtable, March 13,** noon-1:30 p.m., Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, 2315 Chicago Ave., Minneapolis. Topic is addressing moral injury. Contact

**What's Happening, continued on page 8**

Events highlighted by a colored box are sponsored by the Minneapolis Area Synod.

# Opportunities

## MUSIC AND WORSHIP

**Contemporary Music Worship Leader/Pianist** – Gethsemane Lutheran Church, Hopkins (PT).

**Choir Director** – Hope Lutheran Church, St. Paul, (PT).

Music and Worship Director – St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Minnetonka (PT).

## YOUTH AND FAMILY MINISTRY

**Youth and Family Minister** – Spirit of Hope United Methodist Church, Golden Valley (FT).

## EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

**Children's Minister** – St. Andrew Lutheran Church, Eden Prairie (FT).

## ADMINISTRATIVE AND OTHER POSITIONS

**Development Intern** – Augsburg Fortress Publishers, Minneapolis (FT).

**President** – Lutheran Volunteer Corps, Washington D.C. (FT).

**Business Administrator** – Christ the King Lutheran Church, New Brighton (PT).

**Information Technology Intern** – Augsburg Fortress Publishers, Minneapolis (FT summer).

**CRM Developer** – Augsburg Fortress Publishers, Minneapolis (FT).

**Office Administrator** – St. John's Lutheran Church, Shakopee (FT).

## February Issue of *The Lutheran* offers resources for Lent

**T**he *Lutheran's* February issue can help you and your congregation begin a study for Lent. Get your conversation started with the cover article, "Falling into the river," which explains how Lenten spiritual practices invite us to encounter and experience the flow of God's unspeakable grace. Read "Addition, not subtraction" to learn about 10 things your family can add this Lent. And see what the ELCA presiding bishop has to say about "Finding our place during Lent."

The February issue has topics for individual and group study. Ponder Luke 15:11-32 with Peter W. Marty, who says the Parable of the Prodigal Son is really about the father's character and unconditional love. Ask "What is sin?" Two ELCA teaching theologians say sin is still relevant no matter how much society contends it's an outmoded, old-fashioned idea. Go in-depth into "Insiders and outsiders" and see what that means for the church today. Rethink the sacraments with "Applesauce communion"—God's hospitality stretches beyond our understanding. Or discuss what a Lutheran can learn from visiting a monastery.

Congregations can go to [www.thelutheran.org](http://www.thelutheran.org) and click on "Bulletin blurbs" in the left-hand column. There they can download a pdf of blurbs, print out copies and include them in their Sunday bulletins or monthly newsletters.

*The Lutheran* has resources for congregations and individuals:

- **Lutheranism 101** – What does it mean to be Lutheran? A series of articles provides the basics of the Lutheran faith. Use this insert in adult education, confirmation classes or new member classes. To order your free copies, contact Augsburg Fortress at 800-328-4648 (ISBN-10: 6000217404). To download a copy, visit [www.thelutheran.org](http://www.thelutheran.org) and click on "Resources" in the left-hand column.
- **Study guides** – Each issue of the print magazine contains a study guide related to the cover story. The *Lutheran* also has more than 300 study guides available for download (free to print/Web subscribers) as a resource for your adult education and confirmation classes or for personal study. Download at [www.thelutheran.org](http://www.thelutheran.org) (click on "Study guides").
- **Archived stories** – Go to [www.thelutheran.org](http://www.thelutheran.org) to search through more than 9,000 archived articles on such topics as faith, Lutheranism, stewardship, prayer, discipleship, evangelism, Sunday school, parenting, outreach, hunger and poverty, disaster relief.
- **E-newsletter** – Sign up for *The Lutheran's* weekly e-newsletter at [www.thelutheran.org](http://www.thelutheran.org) to get exclusive news, features or perspectives not available in the print edition.



## Summer Youth Program transforms lives

Children, youth and families in the urban core were blessed through unique and creative ministries this past summer, thanks in part to generous funding from Minneapolis Area Synod congregations, individuals and Thrivent Financial for Lutherans.

Here is another story about the summer ministries made possible through both mission support and extra mile giving. You can read other stories in the October, November, December, and January issues of *InterActs*.

### Intergenerational Vacation Bible School

Calvary Lutheran Church, Minneapolis

On Wednesday nights, during the month of July, 20 children were part of the Intergenerational Vacation Bible School at Calvary Lutheran Church in south Minneapolis. From the outset of each evening, joining in a community potluck with reusable dishware and many locally grown foods, the theme illustrated how all people might care for creation. Scraps of material were used to create a beautiful quilted banner, herbs and vegetables were planted, birds were fed, and Scripture came to life through storytelling and godly play. The children demonstrated how we are stewards and partners in caring for the earth.



As the children addressed the conversation of God's creation, the adults spent time on creating an expansive vision of church in addressing issues of race, welcoming those who are transgender, and meeting with the ELCA church worker the congregation supports in Chile, Karen Anderson.

To end the VBS, we all joined together in closing songs and worship celebrating the wonders of God's creation and God's people.

## Plugged in and recharged!

More than 750 leaders gathered last month at St. Andrew's Lutheran Church in Mahtomedi to celebrate and be "recharged" for ministry with children and youth at the 7th annual Recharge event. Participants laughed, learned, sang and shared. Workshops, inspirational speakers and worship provided resources, refreshment and reassurance. Congregational groups of dedicated volunteers came from all over the metro area to attend. Several traveled from greater Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa and even Colorado.

Ministry in today's culture with children, youth and families can be daunting. Church staffs cannot do this work alone. Recharge is an event designed especially for the volunteers who help with the day-to-day faith formation ministry with kids. The event is made possible through a collaborative partnership of organizations, including the Minneapolis Area Synod. (A special thank you to Bob Windels from Gethsemane Lutheran in Hopkins who served on the planning team for our synod, and to our good friends at Youth Leadership for managing the details and registrations.)

Plan now for Recharge 2013! Mark your calendars for January 12! More information can be found at [www.ministryrecharge.com](http://www.ministryrecharge.com).

**Mark Matlock, executive director, Youth Specialties, was one of the speakers.**



**More than 750 leaders gathered for this year's Recharge!**

listentovets@comcast.net for more information.

**Get AMPed for God!, March 18**, 6 p.m., Augsburg College, Minneapolis. A new worship experience – AMP (All Metro Praise) – will be happening each month.

AMP is a collaborative project that seeks to engage and celebrate youth through worship, discipleship, leadership and fellowship. Bring your gifts, your voice, and your praise! For more information, contact Tony Fair.

**JRLC Day on the Hill, March 20**, Saint Paul Rivercentre and State Capitol. “And what does God require?” Join Protestants, Catholics, Jews and Muslims at the State Capitol to publicly speak together to the legislature about key issues before our state. JRLC Day on the Hill is one of the largest lobby days at the Capitol each year. Keynote speaker will be Rev. Alika Galloway. Register online at [www.jrlc.org](http://www.jrlc.org).

**Worship Dialogue, March 20**, 11:30 a.m., St. John's Lutheran Church, 4842 Nicollet Ave., Minneapolis. Mark Sedio, cantor, Central Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, will speak on “Sabbath: Music as Reflection.” Free. Bring a bag lunch if desired. Phone 612-827-4406 for more information.

### APRIL 2012

**Region 3 Spring Rostered Leaders Retreat, April 10-12**, Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, 2001 Second St. NW, Watertown, S.D. The South Dakota Synod will be having its annual Spring Rostered Leaders Retreat in Watertown, S.D., and leaders from all of Region 3 are invited. Steven Paulson, Luther Seminary, will speak on “Who Do You Say That I Am? Jesus Christ

Preached and Not Preached.” The registration fee is \$65 for rostered leaders and \$35 for spouses (includes dinner on Tuesday, and lunch, snacks and banquet on Wednesday). For more information and to register, go to [www.sdsynod.org](http://www.sdsynod.org).

**Worship Dialogue, April 17**, 11:30 a.m., St. John's Lutheran Church, 4842 Nicollet Ave., Minneapolis. Bradley Holt, professor of religion at Augsburg College, will speak on “Sabbath and the Contemplative Life.” Free. Bring a bag lunch if desired. Phone 612-827-4406 for more information.

**Jump Start your Stewardship Ministry, April 21**, location TBD. Janet T. Jamieson and Philip D. Jamieson, authors of *Ministry and Money*, will share insights into money and the church through keynote addresses and workshops. For Minneapolis Area Synod and Saint Paul Area Synod congregation pastors, treasurers and stewardship teams. More information coming soon.

**Clergy Women's Retreat, April 23-25**, Christ the King Retreat Center, Buffalo. Join other clergy women to rejuvenate, refresh and engage in important conversations. Joining in is Sister – three real sisters who will entertain with music, stories and poetry from their original CD, “There Goes My Heart.” For more information on Sister, visit their web site at [www.Sisterproductions.com](http://www.Sisterproductions.com). Cost: \$395 which includes room and meals. Register online at [www.godsisterz.com](http://www.godsisterz.com). Hosted by Rev. Dr. Kimberly Leetch.

**Get AMPed for God!, April 29**, 6 p.m., Augsburg College, Minneapolis. A new worship experience – AMP (All Metro Praise) – will be happening each month.

AMP is a collaborative project that seeks to engage and celebrate youth through worship, discipleship, leadership and fellowship. Bring your gifts, your voice, and your praise! For more information, contact Tony Fair.

### MAY 2012

**Stephen Ministry Workshop, May 5**, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., Advent Lutheran Church, 9475 Jefferson Hwy, Maple Grove. A half-day workshop featuring: Session 1: Ministering to Those Experiencing Grief; Session 2: An Introduction to Stephen Ministry; Session 3: How to Care in a Distinctively Christian Way. Cost is \$15 per person; or \$50 per congregation. To register visit [www.stephenministry.org/workshop](http://www.stephenministry.org/workshop) or call Stephen Ministries at 314-428-2600.

**Get AMPed for God!, May 20**, 6 p.m., Augsburg College, Minneapolis. A new worship experience – AMP (All Metro Praise) – will be happening each month. AMP is a collaborative project that seeks to engage and celebrate youth through worship, discipleship, leadership and fellowship. Bring your gifts, your voice and your praise! For more information, contact Tony Fair.

**Worship Dialogue, May 22**, 11:30 a.m., St. John's Lutheran Church, 4842 Nicollet Ave, Minneapolis. Martin Connell, associate professor of theology, St. John's University School of Theology, Collegeville, will speak on “Dies Domini: Theology of Sunday.” Free. Bring a bag lunch if desired. Phone 612-827-4406 for more information.

## June

**ELCA Day at Valleyfair, June 11,** Valleyfair, Shakopee. Enjoy a day at Valleyfair at a discounted rate! Groups of any size and age are welcome! Bring sunscreen and/or raincoat – depending on the weather! Questions, contact Pastor Mary Kaye Ashley at 612-532-7083 or email [carimae24@comcast.net](mailto:carimae24@comcast.net). Download registration form from the synod website.

## July 2012

**2012 ELCA Youth Gathering, July 18-22,** New Orleans, La. ELCA youth will gather in New Orleans, to stand with the saints of God in that place. Why go back? Because New Orleans has more to teach us about fresh starts made possible by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. New Orleans has more to teach us about generosity and about how to be good neighbors. New Orleans has more to teach us about the house that God is building. There is more to be done, and more to learn. Go to [www.elca.org/gathering](http://www.elca.org/gathering) and become part of the movement.

# “Church Lady Bill” changes food safety requirements for churches

On August 1, 2011, the Minnesota State Legislature instituted a new requirement (MN Statute 157.22) for faith-based organizations related to food safety. The change in the statute makes faith-based groups (congregations) exempt from routine state health inspections where food is served. However, to meet the requirements of the exemption, a volunteer from the congregation must have been trained in a food safety course. The trained volunteer(s) is then expected to train and help other volunteers follow food safety guidelines when food is prepared and/or served at an event. The Minnesota Department of Health has information available to help your congregation better understand the new requirements and identify training options. Go to [www.health.state.mn.us](http://www.health.state.mn.us).

The following resource page provides multiple links to assist in your efforts: <http://www.health.state.mn.us/foodsafety/index.html>

The Guidance Document, produced by the state health department, is particularly helpful: <http://www.health.state.mn.us/foodsafety/away/groupsfaithex.pdf>

There are self-guided food safety trainings available online through the the University of Minnesota Extension and the Minnesota Department of Health which cover the causes of foodborne illness, personal hygiene and hand-washing, and storing and preparing foods safely, among other related topics. To register, go to [http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/food/fmc\\_training/index.cfm](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/food/fmc_training/index.cfm).



## 2% discount — what, how and why we need you

**How:** All congregations and organizations in our synod will earn a two percent discount on 2012 ELCA health contributions if 65 percent of the eligible ELCA-primary plan members and spouses in our synod take the Mayo Clinic Health Assessment January 1-April 30.

**Why we need you:** If you are an ELCA-primary health plan member, we need you to take the health assessment. Will you be the one to push us over the 65 percent discount threshold? Please make a doctor’s appointment to get your annual physical done so that you can have your “numbers” to take the assessment (The “numbers” you need are: cholesterol, triglycerides, blood sugar, and blood pressure. Although, you do not have to have your numbers to take it.) Let’s reach our 65 percent participation goal by Synod Assembly, February 17-18, as a gift to our new bishop!

Take the assessment at [www.elcaforwellness.org](http://www.elcaforwellness.org). Find instructions for taking the assessment in the Understand My Benefits section at [www.elcabop.org](http://www.elcabop.org).



# Being the body of Christ: A venture in song and grace

by David R. Weiss

I was overwhelmed. Invited to lead a hymn sing at the Women of the ELCA Fall Gathering for the Florida-Bahamas Synod, I was alone on the stage listening to these women, nearly 300 strong, swell my verses into glorious song, in this case borrowing the tune of “I wonder as I wander”:

There’s a welcome in the wooden out back of the inn,  
A sweetness in swaddles like new-sewn wineskin,  
And poorly strewn straw hints at ripe wheat rolled thin.  
There’s a welcome in the wooden out back of the inn.

These women had themselves wandered from every corner of the state – many driving hours to explore the theme, “Who is Our Neighbor?” I came almost 1500 miles from the Twin Cities to join them in central Florida. It was a venture marked by song and grace.

Among the women there that evening was my Aunt Cathy. fifty-two years earlier, she cradled me in her arms at the font at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Michigan City, Indiana, when the waters of grace first splashed on my forehead. Now she beamed to hear all these sisters singing together the harvest of words from that child she first brought to the Word so many years earlier.

The Central Florida chapter of Lutherans Concerned flew me down to lead a workshop on congregational welcome at this women’s event. When the gathering leaders learned I was also a hymnist, they asked me to offer a hymn sing for all the women on Friday evening. I selected hymn texts that echoed their theme (“Who is my neighbor?”) without forcing the issue of GLBT welcome onto anyone. Instead, my chosen hymns simply lifted up the deep welcome present in the biblical story and invited them to sing that welcome into their own stories.

And after singing images of Jesus’ welcome to so many of the “least of these” and the early church’s welcome to the Gentiles, their voices *claimed* these words (to the tune of “Thine the Amen”):

Now the wonders, now the signs, mark of God’s  
surprise designs  
Now the mustard seed grown full, now the lamp atop  
the bowl  
Now the thirsting, now the bursting, now the new  
wine spilling out  
Now the welcome of our God hear us shout, hear us  
shout!

And they *were* nearly shouting. Later on, countless

women sought me out and shared why one particular text or tune moved them. But there was a common theme as well. To a person they thanked me for matching fresh, eloquent, vibrant words with familiar tunes so they could feel *their* faith come alive in song.

I spent eleven days in Florida altogether, making seven more presentations around welcome to GLBT persons for Presbyterian, Lutheran and Episcopal communities. I shared my journey as an ally and the faith that grounds my work. At each stop I received warm words of special greeting – many from Minnesotan transplants, pleased to greet a traveler from the north. But more poignantly, I received words of thanks from *many* parents – most old enough to be *my* parents – who told me they had a gay son or lesbian daughter who had left the church years ago. They spoke with cautious hope that perhaps today, for other parents and other children, it will be different.

This has been my work for almost three years now. I left my day job in July 2009 to become something of an itinerant apostle for welcome. I write. I speak. I travel. At times I fret when the income is too little to pay the bills. At one point, tallying the expenses of the Florida trip, I realized how far from sustainable my work is, based on honoraria alone.

Luckily, as I learned in Florida, my work is supported in other ways. One group bought my plane tickets. Another group and a dozen different individuals provided my housing and meals. I traveled some 600 miles *in* Florida, all either in a borrowed car or through the generous driving of others. When I call myself an “apostle” for welcome, I use the metaphor humbly. My ministry moves from song to song, from grace to grace. Sustained by saints along the way – from that first font in Michigan City to the last fall gathering in Florida. This is the church – being the body of Christ.

*David R. Weiss is the author of To the Tune of a Welcoming God: Lyrical reflections on sexuality, spirituality and the wideness of God’s welcome (Langdon Street Press, 2008). A theologian, writer, poet and hymnist, David is committed to doing “public theology” around issues of sexuality, justice, diversity and peace. He lives in St. Paul and speaks on college campuses and at church and community events. You can reach him at drw59@comcast.net and read more at www.tothetune.com.*

## Palestinian Lutheran pastor to receive German Media Prize

**D**r. Mitri Raheb, pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem, will receive the German Media Prize February 24 for his work in founding educational, cultural and health care institutions and his commitment to inter-faith dialogue and peacemaking in the Middle East. “Mitri Raheb is a pastor with passion in proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. Persistently working for a lasting, just peace in the Middle East, Pastor Raheb is a visionary leader who has created new pathways in the areas of education, employment and health care,” said the Rev. Mark S. Hanson, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

The Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church is one of six congregations of the 2,000-member Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land. The denomination is the only Arabic-speaking Lutheran church in the world and the only indigenous Lutheran Church in the Middle East. The church and ELCA engage in ministry together in a variety of ways, and both are members of The Lutheran World Federation based in Geneva.

In 1988 Raheb became pastor of Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church and founded the International Center of Bethlehem in 1995.

The center includes the Dar al-Kalima Health and Wellness Center, which focuses on general preventive medicine, community health awareness and psychological health issues associated with the current situation in Palestine.

Raheb also founded the Dar al-Kalima School and Academy in Bethlehem. Together with the International Center of Bethlehem, the school and academy have become the second largest private employer in the Bethlehem area.

The Mission Investment Fund, a financial ministry of the ELCA, provided a loan to support the construction of Dar al-Kalima College in Bethlehem. The loan is the Mission Investment Fund’s first to an ELCA global partner. According to Raheb, the college is an answer to the current shortage of higher education institutions in Palestine and “a beacon of hope for future generations.” Raheb is president of Bright Stars of Bethlehem, a not-for-profit organization based in the United States that is instrumental in securing funding for the college.

“We wanted to contribute to empowering generations of Palestinians and help strengthen this vital ministry of the ELCA’s companion, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land,” said Eva Roby, president and CEO of the Mission Investment Fund.



“The ELCA’s relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land is long-standing and deep, and we are proud to have relationships with each of the pastors in that church and to accompany them as they seek to respond to the needs of their context,” said the Rev. Robert Smith, ELCA program director for the Middle East and North Africa and coordinator of the Peace Not Walls Campaign.

Born in Bethlehem, Raheb received his undergraduate degree in protestant theology from the Hermannsburg Mission Seminary in Germany and earned a master’s degree and doctorate in theology at Philipps University Marburg there. He has written numerous articles, essays and books that concentrate on inter-religious dialogue, contextual theology, church history, biblical interpretation and issues related to the civil society.

Raheb will receive the 2011 German Media Prize along with three others in Baden-Baden, Germany.

## SpringHouse Ministry Center: Three churches, three traditions in the Lyn-Lake neighborhood

SpringHouse Ministry Center will introduce itself to the LynLake and Whittier neighborhoods in south Minneapolis with a festive open house event on Saturday, February 4, from 1-4 p.m. A number of public officials will be on hand to welcome SpringHouse and the nearby Greenleaf Apartments to the neighborhood.

The new venture, located at 610 W 28th Street in Minneapolis, is home to three progressive Protestant congregations: First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Lyndale United Church of Christ and our own Salem English Lutheran Church (the former owners). The congregations came together in a unique partnership – common ownership of a building, sharing space and renovation expenses while maintaining their separate congregations. The partnership took one of the three buildings, which was the sanctuary portion of the old Salem Lutheran, retrofitting it to house three churches with ample spaces for worship and community activities.

“SpringHouse will be the launching pad where we will not only live out our distinct identities while sharing ministries such as Christian education, but find new ways to connect with the community as well,” said Jen Nagel, pastor of Salem English Lutheran Church.

“We think SpringHouse can be a new way of being church in the 21st century,” said Bob Brite, the transitional pastor of First Christian Church. “Too many churches are in the same position we were all in – a smaller membership dealing with large buildings. This is a way that congregations can become more sustainable environmentally and financially and be free to do God’s mission in new ways,” Brite said.

The building features three sanctuaries, two on the main level and one on the lower (garden) level as well as a commercial kitchen and classrooms. Most of the spaces can also double as public space for community meetings and events. “While SpringHouse is a space where we can worship God, we also want to share the space with the community as a place to meet, renew, grow resilience and work for the healing of the nations,” said Don Portwood, pastor of Lyndale United Church of Christ.



Spring House Ministry Center (above) and Greenleaf Apartments (below).



The open house will include tours of SpringHouse, special music and ecumenical guests. It will be held in conjunction with an open house for the new Greenleaf Apartments, an affordable housing project located on the space that once was Salem English’s education wing.

“We are excited Brighton Development was able to buy a portion of our land and develop it into a beautiful building that adds to the neighborhood. And it’s affordable housing,” said Pastor Nagel. “It fulfills the mission of all three churches to do justice in the world.”

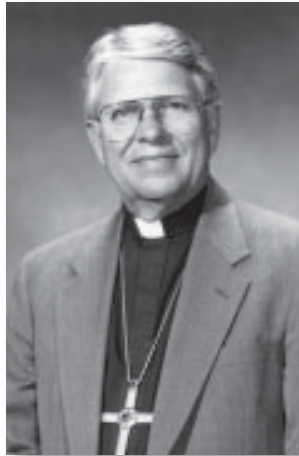
A special worship service will be held on March 25 at 2 p.m. to formally dedicate the building. More information is at [www.springhousemn.org](http://www.springhousemn.org).

## A few thoughts before I leave

As I conclude my time as your interim bishop I leave with these thoughts.

Because of God's steadfast love shown to us in Jesus Christ, I have faith in the future of this church. God has been with this church and its predecessor churches through many changes. God's grace has been more than sufficient to cover our failures and successes as a church. I am more hopeful than ever that this synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has its best years ahead. I am strengthened in my hope because I have seen with my eyes and heard with my ears the many signs of faithful response by the people of this synod to God's good news that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior of the whole world. I am strengthened in my hope because I know that the Word of God in Christ is being preached, the Sacraments are being administered and the Holy Spirit is moving in the lives of people to make sure that human need is served.

You will soon welcome a new bishop, called by this synod to be the synod's pastor. This new bishop will serve with all of you to make sure that the marvelous story of God's love in Christ our Lord will be preached, taught and lived in this synod.



It is time for this interim bishop to say "good-bye" and again join the ranks of the retired. My wife, Ann, says that I have "flunked retirement." So I'm going to try and "pass retirement" this time. But, who knows what else God has in mind for me. I have learned to never say never when it comes to serving in Christ's church.

I want you to know that, just as I have always expected when pastors and lay rostered leaders resign their calls that they maintain appropriate boundaries by not interfering in the ministry where they had been serving, likewise I will maintain proper boundaries by not interfering in the work of the Office of Bishop in this synod. After February 18, 2012 this synod will have a bishop-elect. All matters for the bishop will then be directed to the new bishop-elect. I will finish my work as interim bishop on February 29, 2012. I will remain on call for the bishop-elect, synod staff and synod officers, offering assistance until the end of March.

I thank the synod staff for their faithful service to the rostered leaders and congregations of this synod. I thank the elected officers, synod council and all synod volunteers for their service to this synod. I thank all of you for all you do in your congregations and daily life to serve and support this synod. I thank all of you for your acceptance and support during this interim time.

One final thought: You are the continuing sign of faithfulness and hope for this church. Your faith and witness to Christ in your daily life is what makes a difference in greater Minneapolis, the United States and to the ends of the world.

Thank you for all the good times we have shared. God keep you now and always.

*Interim Bishop Glenn Nycklemoe*