

## Shirley Gangstad

### Synod Vice President

Greetings!

The most exciting news of this past year was the reelection of Bishop Usgaard to a second and last six-year term as bishop. (Coincidentally the vice president was reelected to her third and last four-year term.) The next biggest news involved staff issues. Rev. Linda Gunderson came on board as synod minister which also created some changes in job description for the other synod minister, Larry Iverson. Beth Gabriel left her position as Call Process Assistant and was replaced by Cheryse Brenno-Sloan who will also carry on as synod statistician. Katie Butler married and decided in marriage she was "Livingood," and Deborah Ann Norrie took a sabbatical leave in the fall. The good news is that in the midst of all these changes, the business of the synod continued to be accomplished.

The flood waters of August which devastated so many also brought about a literal and figurative "Flood of Love." People, things, and money began flowing to the ravaged areas in SE MN, and our congregations and their members and the national Lutheran Disaster Response have made and are still making a huge difference in the recovery process in the Rushford, Houston, and Winona areas.

John Petersburg and the Lay and Clergy Leadership Development Team continued to work on compensation guidelines and helping people understand and work with those guidelines. We are grateful to John and the team for all they have accomplished in this area.

Some exciting new things are happening, too. In response to a synod assembly resolution, a Children, Youth and Family Ministry Task Force has been established. We will hear more from them

at our assembly. The synod council established a Budget Task Force to look at our budget process and our prioritizing. The influence of this task force will be seen in the 2009 budget process. We had a consultation about mission support with two members of the churchwide staff in November. This was the most comprehensive and satisfactory consultation I have experienced since I became vice president, and it will impact both how we look at our budget and how churchwide responds to us.

The synod council has decided to hold our meetings throughout the synod. So far we have traveled to Urland at Cannon Falls, Our Savior's at Spring Valley, and Messiah at North Mankato. If you would like to host the synod council at your church, please extend an invitation. We would love to come and visit you.

I continue to be blessed as I work with the staff in the Office of the Bishop and as I meet members of our congregations throughout the synod. Thank you for this opportunity to serve God in this special way.

Blessings in Christ,  
Shirley

## Notice to Assembly of Synod Council Action

### BettyAnn Hernke, Secretary

*S7.34.A05 Resolutions for consideration by the annual Southeastern Minnesota Synod Assembly may be submitted as follows: (1) by majority vote of a congregation of the synod at a regular or special meeting of the congregation; (2) by approval by a two-thirds vote of a congregation council; (3) by majority vote of a committee of the Southeastern Minnesota Synod; (4) by majority vote of a conference assembly; or, (5) by a group*





*of at least ten members of congregations of the Southeastern Minnesota Synod elected to serve as voting members of the forthcoming synod assembly. Minutes showing adoption of such proposed resolutions from a meeting of a congregation, Congregation Council, committee of the synod, or conference assembly must accompany the submitted resolution. The signatures, typed names, and telephone numbers must be provided by voting members (of the forthcoming synod assembly) submitting a resolution.*

*S7.34.B06 Resolutions for consideration by the annual Southeastern Minnesota Synod Assembly shall be received by the synod's Committee of Reference and Counsel by March 15 of the year of the assembly or three days after the conference assemblies, whichever is later. The committee shall review each resolution, and background information on the subject of the resolution, and publish the resolution, and may include a recommendation "to adopt" or "to decline" in the preassembly report. The committee may include a recommendation to give voting members elected to serve at the assembly adequate time to consider the resolution.*

*S7.34.C05 The Synod Assembly may allow an exception to the submission deadline of S7.34.B05 provided: (a) any late resolution shall be submitted to the Committee of Reference and Counsel by 3:00 PM on the first day of the Synod Assembly, and (b) the Synod Assembly, by motion passed by majority vote, specifically orders that such late resolution be placed on the Synod Assembly agenda.*

## **Congregational Renewal Team – Synod Council Larry Iverson, 2007 Synod Staff Advisor**

The Congregational Renewal Team works with congregations to promote healthy, growing, mission- minded congregations.

In 2007 our synod focused on "Sharing our Faith Stories." We offered articles in *River Crossings* and quick thoughts in the weekly E-News.

We continue with Natural Church Development. The seven congregations involved are in the second phase of this process with the goal to increase the overall health of the congregation.

We encourage congregations to apply for Evangelism Outreach Grants. We awarded grants to six congregations in 2006 for a variety of ideas, including an educational speaker on evangelism and a summer picnic to celebrate the life and ministry of the congregation with the whole community. One congregation invited people to engage in active prayer throughout their community.

We continue to support the BLOC Heads (Building Lives On Christ - synod youth workers) and LACE (Lutheran Association of Christian Educators) in their work to support youth workers and Christian educators in our synod.

- In 2007 our focus will be to develop:
- greater awareness of world hunger
  - opportunities for rural ministry enhancement
  - deeper stewardship growth

On behalf of the synod, thank you to the members of the Congregational Renewal Team for your hard work and faithfulness. We especially thank Cathy Mannel for her service as she leaves the team.

We ask for your ideas, questions and thoughts about congregational renewal as we do this important work together.

## Lay and Clergy Leadership Development Team – Synod Council

### John Petersburg, Chair

The Synod Constitution assigns our team the responsibility to assist in training and support of lay congregational officers and leaders; provide professional support for and recruitment of pastors, AIMs and church staff; and to direct the first call theological education program.

Our team continues to explore ways to promote the “Call to Ministry. We are also continuing to promote and enhance the spiritual well-being of our clergy within the synod. Both of these ministries are developing and will blossom in the next few years.

The Lay and Clergy Leadership Development Team hosted the "Council As Leaders" program at Zumbro Lutheran in Rochester on February 24. Special Guest Speaker was ELCA Bishop Mark Hansen from Chicago who spoke about leaders in the church and current trends in the ELCA. There was a great turnout and greatly appreciated. This type of leadership education program continues to be well received by the synod congregations.

This is an off year for developing the Synod’s Minimum Salary Guidelines, but we continue to field many questions and concerns about them. We will continue to listen to the needs of the congregations, clergy and staff throughout the synod and respond with appropriate guidelines over the next year.

## Mission Planning and Action Team – Synod Council

### Ann Beatty, Member

The Mission Planning and Action Team has followed and supported the mission progress of our newest congregations: Glory to God, sponsored by Gloria Dei Lutheran of Rochester, Rejoice! In Northfield, and our Sudanese congregation, meeting Sunday afternoons at Zumbro Lutheran in Rochester.

Through presentations from the various pastors to our committee we have been informed of their visions and concerns and updated on their needs for coming years. These continue to be very exciting and important months for these growing congregations and we will continue to monitor their progress and pray for their needed support. The committee is gives thanks for the years of support Richard Mork from the Division of Outreach has been bringing to each of these new congregations and many others in the region. We wish him all the best in his new retirement life.

The team continues to listen closely to the needs of our congregations and learn of new ways to support each of them. At an all day retreat held in August we focused on identifying the current needs in our Synod and possibilities of new mission congregations. There continues to be wonderful opportunities for every congregation to participate in mission growth and support within Southeastern Minnesota. The team hopes to see ongoing discussion, educational opportunities, financial support and prayers shared by all.



## Committee on Candidacy

### Dr. Noel R. Peterson, Chair

The Committee on Candidacy is charged with support, counsel and encouragement of candidates for rostered ministry in the ELCA. Using churchwide requirements and expectations, the committee acts on behalf of the ELCA and synod to determine the readiness of persons to enter theological education, to endorse candidates for a specific roster of the church and to approve an individual's qualifications and readiness to serve in rostered ministry. The committee sees itself in a partnership with the candidates, congregations, synod and seminaries to achieve these goals.

In 2007 the committee approved eight individuals for entrance to seminary. The committee continues to be encouraged by the high quality and readiness of the candidates.

The committee is blessed with outstanding members, dedicated to service to the ELCA and the synod. We are very thankful for their faithful service.

Rev. Linda Gunderson joined the committee in 2007 in her role as synod minister. She has been a "quick study" in learning about committee processes and how to help seminarians in their interaction with the synod office and the committee. Miri Mattson, a former committee member, is new in the position of candidacy assistant. She has been an invaluable help to the committee. With Dr. Frederickson's sabbatical, Dr. Mark Granquist became the Luther Seminary representative at the end of 2007.

A special word of thanks goes to Ms. Beth Gabriel. She left the Synod office in 2007 to pursue other work opportunities. Her organizational skills and encouraging support were a blessing to the committee and to the candidates.

## Endowment Committee

### Pastor Sarah Nietz, Chair

This year has been a year of continued growth and development for the Southeastern Minnesota Synod Endowment. Activities under the Thrivent Grant for new leadership initiatives with Good Earth Village have continued, including a bus trip to the churchwide offices in Chicago last spring. The work of Rev. Les Horntvedt, hired under the grant for the purposes of raising awareness and possible gifts, is continuing in the form of incoming gifts to the Southeastern Minnesota Endowment and the Good Earth Village Endowment. Many seeds have been planted in this past year and awareness of these endowments and their reasons for existence has been significantly increased.

Continued areas of priority for synod endowment interest funds are debt reduction for first call first year pastors in our synod; scholarships for current Southeastern Minnesota Synod seminarians through Fund for Leaders; and clergy support, including sabbatical funding. In the next year, we hope to continue this pattern of growth for the sake of upholding leadership in our synod for the benefit of the whole church.



## Global Mission/ Companion Synods

### Jane Rinehart, Chair

The Global Mission/Companion Synods (GM/CS) Committee works with our companion synods - Central Diocese, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania and Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia. 44 congregations in the synod have partner congregations. In May 2007 a Partnership Summit was held for them. 54 congregations support missionaries.

In 2007 support in Colombia included:

- Stella Lizarazzo, Director of LIZWAN in Bogota, addressed the Synod Assembly
- A synod delegation to Colombia
- Pharmacies for displaced people
- Work with Sal y Luz, the Lutheran World Relief peace advocacy network, in finding a synod partner
- Find and fund volunteer teachers for a Lutheran school
- Two committee members attended the Global Mission South American Consultation in Costa Rica

Tanzania support included:

- A three-month visit to our synod by Rev. Gyunda from Ruruma. He addressed the Synod Assembly
- Theology teacher Rev. David Herness at Lutheran Institute Kiomboi (LIK)
- GM/CS Coordinator and Chairperson visited Central Diocese
- Land Restoration Project at LIK and driver's training and vehicle maintenance
- Iambi Hospital and Nursing School
- Lutheran Mission Cooperation projects: HIV/AIDS Program, staff house renovation, poverty eradication project, and motorcycles for 3 pastors
- Synod Women of the ELCA project of the Singida Agape Social Centre
- Initiated Tanzania Scholarship Fund
- Technology assessment of the Central Diocese by synod pastor and members

Thank you for all the prayer and financial support.

## Sabbatical Committee

### Pastor Mark Dumke, Chair

Your Synod Sabbatical Committee, consisting of pastors Gary Benson, Mike Lockerby, Dick Hegal, Meg Sander and Mark Dumke, with synod support from Rev. Linda Gunderson, works to strengthen the ministry of pastors, lay professionals and congregations by providing guidance and financial support for sabbatical time.

Four applications were approved for full funding in 2008. Applicants may receive up to \$2,000 (salary and benefits to continue). The applicant's congregation may receive up to \$2,000 for ministry support during the three month sabbatical. Funds available for sabbatical support may vary from year to year. Application forms are available from the synod office or can be downloaded from the synod website.

The synod's sabbatical policy states, "Beginning with the Bible's story of creation, and quietly echoing down through all the generations and communities of the people of God, is the concept of Sabbath: the rhythm of work and rest, and how the wholeness of life is to be found in that harmony." Those who study parish ministry have found that healthy pastorates (especially those of longer duration) require that attention be paid to this "sabbatical" rhythm if that health – for both pastor and parish – is to be maintained. Far from simply being a "favor" to the pastor, the synod's sabbatical program is designed to offer refreshment and renewal for the whole ministry of the congregation by taking seriously the need for our called leaders to be renewed and inspired by all of the dimensions – rest, reflection, study, prayer, and more – that are included in a period called "sabbatical."



## BLOC Heads

(Youth Directors Committed to  
“Building Lives On Christ”)

### Kris Oppedard

BLOC is a group of youth workers in the Southeastern Minnesota Synod committed to “Building Lives On Christ.” Together, we are an organization that focuses on networking and resourcing with fellow youth workers. Through our monthly fellowship lunches and meetings (devotion, prayer, program, and networking), we strive to foster relationships among our synod youth workers, thereby creating a community of support for one another. More information is available at [www.semnsynod.org/BLOC.html](http://www.semnsynod.org/BLOC.html).

In 2008/09, you will see a change with BLOC and LACE (Christian Educators). We are making an intentional effort to meet together and support each other. At the Synod Assembly this year, we will be sharing a table and handing out a joint monthly meeting brochure for BLOC and LACE. The current culture of youth ministry encompasses Children, Youth & Family Ministry together.

The 2009 ELCA National Youth Gathering (NYG) is in New Orleans, LA for one week only in July. The skeleton of the gathering will be the same as in the past few gatherings, but the theology and purpose of the gathering is different. It is not your mother’s gathering in 2009; expect something new! An informational meeting will take place in May 2008, with Church Counselor Training meetings happening in spring 2009. Information will be available for you to pick up at the BLOC/LACE table during the Synod Assembly and on the synod website.

Please continue to pray for those that work with youth in our synod. The youth are the future of the ELCA church. We are on this journey together!

## Lutheran Association of Christian Educators (LACE) Marcia Pedersen

Our mission is to support the ministry of Christian education.

Our vision is to create a community for energizing, inspiring, and supporting Christian education in the Southeastern Minnesota synod of the ELCA through:

- † gathering for idea sharing and support
- † providing resources and educational opportunities
- † facilitating communications
- † nurturing spiritual growth

In 2007/08 LACE focused on:

- building relationships among Christian educators in the synod and strengthening commonalities between BLOC and LACE
- creating new ways to connect to and support those called to Children, Youth and/or Family ministry in our synod
- sharing our vision for education and leadership within congregations in the synod

LACE has met bi-monthly beginning in January on the third Thursday at host churches within the synod. Complete information is available in our brochure at [www.semnsynod.org/LACE.html](http://www.semnsynod.org/LACE.html).

Everyone with a passion for Christian education (rostered, lay, and volunteer) is invited to attend – Christian education directors, Sunday school superintendents or teachers, family ministry leaders and education pastors – all are welcome!

Visit the LACE/BLOC display at this assembly for more information. Brochures with meeting dates will be available (also available at the web address above).

For more information and/or to sign up for e-mail networking, contact Marcia Pedersen or Pam Vig by e-mail ([mpedersen@oursaviorsaustin.org](mailto:mpedersen@oursaviorsaustin.org) or [bethelchildren@charterinternet.com](mailto:bethelchildren@charterinternet.com)).



## Lutheran Campus Ministry, Mankato

Rev. Dr. Elaine Siemsen,  
Campus Pastor

Each week Crossroads Campus ministry is at table with the hungry. In a literal sense each week 20 – 25 hungry students find their way to dinner. On Wednesday from 5 p.m. – 7 p.m. supper and conversation dominate the ministry. Preparation of these simple meals is a task shared by Pastor Elaine, student leaders and friends from congregations. The dinner table is not the only place where we sit with the hungry. Each Sunday evening we gather around the Lord's Table and partake in the Holy meal that feeds all.

Crossroads also ministers to those hungry to grow in faith through two new outreach activities. First, with the help of Lutheran Men in Mission, a men's Bible study began in September. This group utilized the Master Builder's Bible. In an ecumenical effort with the Newman center an evening event based on music and bible discussions also started.

Throughout the year students have also reached out to feed others. Twice during the school year Pr. Elaine, students and friends cook and serve a meal at the Salvation Army center through a program called Food for Friends. This theme of service with the hungry was carried out in January as a group traveled to Denver to learn about and work with the many outreach ministries of Denver Rescue Mission.

In 2008 Crossroads has set a goal of raising \$15,000 to remodel the ministry kitchen. The remodeled kitchen will allow Crossroads to serve many more hungry people as well as welcome many others into the building.

## Lutheran Campus Ministry, Winona

Pastor John Carrier,  
Campus Pastor

Jared Stene liked to drink mochas, meet with friends, sometimes study, and often hold group meetings with student senate committees, class project teams, professors... what you would have to call a "regular" at the Lutheran Campus Center. Regular, not ordinary, he had a way of insinuating himself into people's lives. As student senate president, Jared helped Winona State University strive for excellence.

Over Thanksgiving break, Jared suddenly died from a very rare condition that caused his liver and kidneys to abruptly fail. Jared was a member of a Twin Cities Lutheran church, but that is not why it fell to us to do something with the grieving community. The Lutheran Campus Center is a known place of welcome, care, and service which the college communities in Winona have come to trust.

And that is my report for this year: a snapshot of an extraordinary event in what has been in many ways an fairly ordinary year. The Southeastern Minnesota Synod has seen to it that there is a visible and reliable presence standing just on the edge of campus. You offer the presence of Christ, the Communion of Saints ministering to and with the community of learners. Good mission, good ministry.





## Lutheran Men in Mission

### Russell Tesch, President

- Board met quarterly at the Synod Conference Room, Assissi Heights, Rochester
- Vision and Mission Statement: Builders of Men for Christ through a Men's Group in every congregation.
- Hosted Fifth Annual Synod LMM Event on April 14th – "HOW DO WE REACH YOUNG MEN" Breakfast with the Bishop at Cabela's near Owatonna with over 140 participants - Devotions by Bishop Harold Usgaard, Keynote inspirational address by Dr. Rollie Martinson. He spoke about young people and their faith and spirituality. He is the author of *Coming of Age* and Professor of Children, Youth, and Family Ministry at Luther Seminary.
- Committed to Men's Ministry Leadership Development and starting/restarting congregational men's ministries through distribution of Master Builders Bibles for Men. A new group is currently meeting at Crossroads, Mankato State University.
- Planning the sixth annual Breakfast with the Bishop at Cabela's on Saturday, April 26, 2008– John Hanson, a school instructor and involved in the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. He most recently received the VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award. "He's a passionate teacher and a great role model," Waseca High School Principal Jeanne Swanson says.
- Promoting the Coming of Age 2008 Lutheran Men's Gathering, August 1-3 in Omaha, Nebraska, where generations of men and youth will come together in Jesus Christ, to serve, play, learn, worship, encounter God and each other, and grow! We are looking for six men to serve as delegates from our synod.

## Women of the ELCA

### Kathy Tanabe, President

On Sept. 22, 2007 the Southeastern Minnesota Women of the ELCA Convention was held at St. John's Lutheran Church, Northfield. Kari Berit was our wonderful keynote speaker, speaking on "Expecting the Unexpected." Cam Martin was our speaker from churchwide. It was a wonderful day filled with worship, music, business and fellowship. Offerings were given to the Lutheran Lutheran Social Centre in Tanzania, Good Earth Village, Lutheran Campus Ministry, the Women of the ELCA churchwide organization, and the Southeastern Minnesota Women of the ELCA Seminary Scholarship Fund for Leader's in Mission Scholarship.

The Fall Workshops, which followed closely behind the convention, featured Hunger 101 and small group discussions about unit programming, the joys and the struggles. All congregations went home with (or were sent) helps and handouts for their individual Women's boards.

Congregational units are encouraged to continue sponsoring Minnesota Campus Ministry, the Seminary Scholarship Fund mentioned above, Lutheran Social Services Program to End Homelessness, Lutheran Agape Social Centre in Tanzania, Good Earth Village, and also to remember all of the programs sponsored by our churchwide organization.

We are blessed in our synod by the service, generosity, and strength of our women as we continue our themes of "Acting Boldly in Hope" and "Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls." The new Triennial Theme is "Come to the Waters," based on John 37b - 38, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.'"