

River Crossings



A Newsletter of the Southeastern Minnesota Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Volume 24

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Number 2

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Selected Resources on Congregation Administration:

- Administration Matters: An Electronic Newsletter for Church Leaders - www.ELCA.org/administrationmatters
- ELCA Office of the Secretary (click on "Congregation Administration" on the left) - www.ELCA.org/secretary
- Administration Resources from the Synod (constitution, personnel, legal, records, & financial) - semnsynod.org/for-congregations/administration
- Communication Resources - semnsynod.org/communication

New Children, Youth, & Family E-newsletter

In January the Southeastern Minnesota Synod rolled out a new Children, Youth, and Family e-newsletter. If you did not receive the first issue and would like to, email livingood@semnsynod.org or visit semnsynod.org/cyf to sign up. Regular messages will be sent monthly and on an as-needed basis.

Save Your Congregation Money

Now is the time of year that people with primary care health insurance from Portico (formerly Board of Pensions) are asked to take their online Health Assessment. Besides earning your family up to \$1,000 in Personal Wellness Dollars (if a member and covered spouse both take it and complete additional online activities), when our synod reaches 65% completion, we all save 2% on health contributions.

For more information, visit www.elcabop.org. For assistance, call Portico or call Katie at the synod office at 507-280-9457 or 800-426-6376 in Minnesota.

Save the Date: Retired Leaders Luncheon

The Bishop's Luncheon for Retired Rostered Personnel, Spouses, and Widowed Spouses will be held Wednesday, April 18 Peace Lutheran Church, Eyota, Minn. from 9:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Mark your calendars now! More information will be sent via postal mail. Voting members for the 2012 Synod Assembly will be elected at this event.

Congregational Reports Due Feb. 15

Congregational Reports are due February 15, 2012. Congregations should have received the reports and passwords in the mail. If you did not receive your report or password, please contact the synod office.

For questions or assistance, contact Cheryse Brenno-Sloan in the synod office (507-280-9457, 800-426-6376 in Minnesota, or sloan@semnsynod.org). She is happy to help no matter how simple or complex your question. Your work on the Congregational Reports is appreciated!

Remember in Prayer

Health Concerns

- Rev. Glen Bickford
- Rev. Kip Groettum
- Rev. Allen Gunderson
- Rev. John Hagen
- Rev. John Henriksen
- Rachel Iverson, daughter of Rev. Mary Iverson
- Rev. Ronald Jensen
- Rev. Leah McDowell
- Rev. Lydia Mittag
- Shannon Reuss, wife of Rev. Peter Reuss
- Rev. Don Roberts
- Rev. Brian Scott

Sympathies

- Rev. Kerry Eversole, whose father Robert Eversole passed away 12/24/12
- Rev. Dean Lundgren, whose mother-in-law Helen Ohr passed away 1/20/12

The "Church Lady" Bill

By Cyndi Berg, Office Manager, St. Paul Area Synod

August 1, 2011 the Minnesota State Legislature instituted a new requirement (MN Statute 157.22) for faith-based organizations. The change in the statute makes faith-based groups (church 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, or volunteers, 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: www.health.state.mn.us.

The following resource page provides multiple links to assist in your efforts: www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/food/pwdu/fsp/meetings/2011/oct18_resources.pdf

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

There are self-guided food safety trainings available online. Information is available through the links above.



Lutheran-Anglican-Episcopal meeting a sign of hope for the church

Lutheran, Anglican and Episcopal leaders from the United States and Canada met in December to explore new possibilities for working together and to deepen their sense of unity for doing God's work in the world. In a report issued from their meeting, the leaders stated that their conversation and work together "are hopeful signs for the church."

"There was truly a spirit of Advent expectant hope as we met to pray and plan for greater cooperation in ministry and mission," said ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson of the meeting.

"There is so much more we can do when working together, whether that is in military chaplaincy, global mission, campus ministry, planting new congregations or advocacy. I look forward to our continued shared leadership and to new possibilities that exist to proclaim the good news of Jesus, engaging in God's work for the life of the world because of our full-communion relationship," he said.

Gathered together for their second annual meeting was Hanson; the Rev. Susan Johnson, national bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada; the Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori, presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church U.S.A.; and the Rev. Fred Hiltz, archbishop of the Anglican Church of Canada.

Topics representing their mutual areas of interest and concern ranged from ecumenical and interfaith issues to immigration reform and poverty, from relief and development work to Middle East policies. They reviewed the possibility of producing materials, study guides and resources that congregations and parishes in all four churches could use in various seasons of the liturgical year, and they also addressed the challenges of "church planting" and the need for strategy to do this work with full-communion partners.

The national leaders formed a subcommittee to further consider how to make the bilateral full-communion relationships effective among the four churches.

The group will meet again in 2012, and staff of the four churches will be invited to provide updates on collaborative work.



**Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

Lutherans invite students to help end malaria

The ELCA Malaria Campaign, a campaign of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), and the Lutheran Malaria Initiative will provide new opportunities for college and university students attending Lutheran schools and ELCA campus ministries to engage in the global fight against malaria. Supported with a generous gift from Arne and Ruth Sorenson of Washington, D.C., the campaign and initiative will help equip and inspire young leaders to help make a difference.

Every 45 seconds a child dies of malaria, a treatable and preventable disease that kills more than 800,000 people a year, mostly children in Africa.

"Our goal with this gift is to educate, equip, and mobilize," said Arne Sorenson. "We want to raise awareness of the malaria epidemic among students at Lutheran schools and campus ministries, to equip them to inspire their fellow students, teachers and communities, and assist them in mobilizing their communities to make a difference in the fight against this devastating disease. By investing in helping students raise funds for malaria, we're able to multiply the impact of our own gift to reach even more people in need with life-saving prevention and treatment - and also helping to develop the next generation of leaders in the church."

Through the ELCA Malaria Campaign, the Sorenson College and Campus Ministries Program and Sorenson Social Media Grants will provide funding in the form of grants for students at the ELCA's 26 colleges and universities and campus ministries to implement awareness and fundraising campaigns at their schools. Students chosen as grant recipients must make a commitment to emphasize the ELCA Malaria Campaign on their campuses for two years through activities ranging from guest speakers to video contests.

"This is an innovative, forward-looking partnership," said John Nunes, president and CEO of Lutheran World Relief. "We are so grateful to the Sorensons for making this exciting program a reality. Not only will the students who receive the grants have an unparalleled learning experience, the funds they raise through their communities will have a very real impact on communities in Africa struggling with the scourge of malaria."

The ELCA Malaria Campaign, working through Lutheran Churches in Africa, is uniquely positioned to provide mosquito nets, insecticides, medication, health care, education and more to eliminate deaths from this disease -- for good.

God's work. Our hands. God's family.

2012 Southeastern Minnesota Synod Assembly
May 4-5, 2012 | Mayo Civic Center | Rochester, MN

Theme

Ministry with families in the 21st century invites us to connect, be partners, and join our hands through new and not-so-new experiences. Keynote speaker Marilyn Sharpe will lead the conversation for all ages; workshops will engage and equip the entire congregation for ministry with children, youth and family (see below for more details); worship will join hands and hearts in word and song; and Bible study will draw us into God's word, as we gather around the family table.

Workshops for ALL

This year's workshops (scheduled for Saturday morning) are **open to all**, not just those registered for the assembly. To accompany the theme of "God's work. Our hands. God's family.," 24 workshops will train, equip, excite, empower, and inspire ALL who have an interest in faith and families. They will be **free**, but registration for Saturday morning is required.

A **free on-site "Day Camp"** for kids ages 5-12 will be provided by Good Earth Village during the workshops. Registration is required for the day camp.

Registration materials are included with the assembly registration packet in this issue of *River Crossings* or online at semnsynod.org/assembly.

Nomination Forms

If you would like to be considered for a position on the Augsburg College Corporation Board, Committee on Consultation, Committee on Discipline, or the Synod Council, your nomination form must be submitted by February 29. Downloadable forms, online forms, and the nomination workbook, which includes explanations of the committees, are all available online at semnsynod.org/nominations. For more information, contact Deborah Ann Norrie at danorrie@semnsynod.org, 507-280-9457 or 800-426-6376 in Minnesota.

Pre-Assembly Report

The Pre-Assembly Report contains a preliminary agenda, reports, proposed budget, audited financial statements, nominations, and resolutions - basically everything you need to prepare for the assembly.

Each congregation is responsible for making sure its voting members get access to this online report. If you do not have access to the internet, please talk to your pastor or congregation's office.

The report should be available online by early April.

Resolutions

Now is the time to be preparing resolutions to be brought to the 2012 Synod Assembly. Resolutions should be in the synod office by March 15 to be placed on the assembly agenda. Resolutions can come from synod congregations, conferences, committees, or groups of at least ten assembly voting members.

For details, read the Resolution Writing Guide in the January issue of *River Crossings* or online at semnsynod.org/assembly/resolutions/resolution-writing-guide/. Questions and finished resolutions should be directed to Rev. Linda Gunderson (gunderson@semnsynod.org, 507-280-9457, or 800-426-6376 in Minnesota).

Assembly Webpage

A variety of materials are available online at semnsynod.org/assembly including:

- Information about how many voters your congregation is eligible to send
- An assembly brochure as a quick introduction to the assembly
- Registration
- Nomination forms for synod committees
- Pre-Assembly Report (posted in sections, with the full report available by early April)

Serving God in a Chicken Suit

Rochester teen shares her thoughts on serving others

By Karen Gieseke, Synod Children, Youth, & Family Ministry Coordinator

Speaking proudly of dressing in a chicken costume for the good of others is not something people normally do. But for this 16-year-old, it is a role which provided the space and place to be God's servant. And so much more.

Meet Anna Kytonen-Coffman, a member of Bethel Lutheran Church in Rochester, Minn. The story behind the chicken costume conveys Anna's willingness to say "yes" when asked to share her time, energy, and enthusiasm as God's servant, when the request means serving others. The chicken costume was part of the 2011 March Minnesota Food share event, and the costume helped garner donations. But Anna's willingness to reach out to others through service is not about "fowl" appearances. Rather, it is a story of a young woman who has discovered, and continues to discover, God's call to serve.

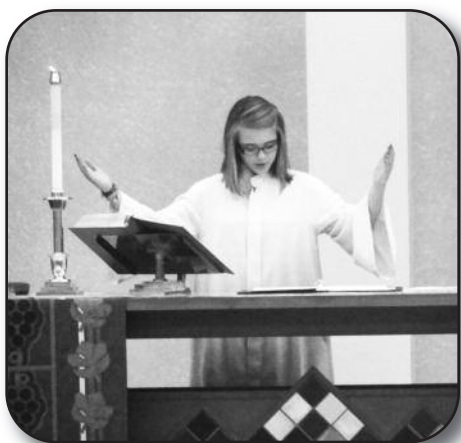
Anna joined the Social Mission Team at Bethel, which in turn led her to the Minnesota Foodshare event. But one can also find Anna helping with the local Crop Walk Task Force, Food For Kidz, and a mission trip to Atlanta to serve others. These experiences shed light on the needs of others, and Anna saw the impact that was made. "I'm blessed," said Anna. "I realized there are a lot of people who have so much less than I do...I realized I can either waste my life or use it for good, so I try to do that."

Anna can also be found serving others as a worship leader at Bethel. She shares her gifts while leading prayers, the kyrie, the closing blessing, and has partnered with Rev. Andy Nelson in sharing the sermon message. Although she was initially nervous about stepping into the worship leader role, she shared that the affirmative comments after worship encouraged her, and she realized "I could do more since this was so easy!"

The word "easy" frequently enters into Anna's stories of serving others as she has been asked repeatedly to serve God's people, and she continues to answer "yes". Why does she keep responding with "yes"? Anna shared, "It doesn't take much effort to help other people. I can spend my time goofing off or doing what is better for people and helping their lives."

In asking Anna for words of motivation to others to encourage a willingness to serve, Anna said, "Step outside your comfort zone. Give it a try. Find little ways to help out. If you can't give time, find other ways to help."

In Anna's confirmation paper she wrote, "It's not hard for me, after counting my blessings, to think of all the people who are struggling or who have almost nothing. It's clear to me now that there are broken people in almost every room I enter. I hope that I can provide peace, comfort, and reassurance to those who have lost hope."



May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:13

Anna stepped out of her comfort zone to help lead worship. Now she's found that it's an "easy" way to serve.

S N I P P E T S

News, events, tips, and tricks from your synod ministry partners

Women of the ELCA: What Makes a Unit?

Are you a member of the Women of the ELCA? If you are a woman and a member of an ELCA congregation, then you are. Just start taking part. Some congregations are reporting they have no WELCA organization, but some women's ministry is likely happening. So what makes an active unit?

- Gather for study, support, or action (for example, quilting)
- Participate in event/ministry beyond the congregation - convention or spring gathering
- Support financially by offerings or designated gifts
- Designate one person as a contact person

Help continue strong women's ministries. Be informed about activities and resources available. Contact a member of the Synodical Women's Board (listed at semnsynod.org/welca).

Global Mission: Bibles a Powerful Connection

What joy the Southeastern Minnesota Synod delegates to Tanzania witnessed as pastors and congregations there received a Bible in both Swahili and English! Those Tanzanian congregations that had partners from the synod represented received their Bibles at a service in their congregation.

These Bibles were a visual and spiritual connection between the two synods. The presentations brought tears to many eyes and once again affirmed our partnership.

Although every congregation in the Central Diocese does not have a partner at this time, all congregations received a Bible at the Jubilee Celebration in Ruruma. Delivering the Bibles that day brought great joy to the people, both the givers and the receivers.

Thank you to the congregations of the Southeastern Minnesota Synod for your amazing response. Such a gift!

CYF Ministry: ALL Types of Artists Requested

Calling all ARTISTS! The 2012 Synod Assembly will include an art exhibit, featuring YOU as the artist. Individuals and groups of ALL ages are invited to submit artwork based on the theme "The ART of Family."

A variety of art media can be submitted including: painting, drawing, sculpture, fiber, jewelry, or photography. The artists are invited to share a perspective of family and the artistry of this blessing from God.

This is a great opportunity for children, youth, adults, families, or small groups to share their artistic talents. No age limit, just a passion for God, family, and art!

Submission requested by April 15, 2012.

The Synod Assembly is May 4-5 in Rochester, Minn.

For more information, contact Karen Gieseke, Synod Children, Youth, and Family Ministry Coordinator at gieseke@semnsynod.org or 507-280-9457 ext. 104.

Lutheran Campus Ministry: Can You Help?

2012 is off to a great start at Crossroads, the ELCA campus ministry at MSU in Mankato. We're adding an additional weekly worship service, as well as new opportunities for Bible Study.

Can you help us?

- Let us know if there's a student we can invite to be part of our ministry, and tell them about us! Email us at lcmcrossroads@gmail.com.
- Prepare Lunch 4 \$1, a Tuesday meal enjoyed by about 30 students. Lunch 4 \$1 is a non-threatening way for students to invite their friends to come into our building.
- Become a Financial Angel (continuing supporter).
- Make Crossroads a line item in your congregation's annual budget.

Thank you so much for your support!

Features

Join Us for a Slow Down

By Katie Livingood
Synod Communications Director

What are the first activities that come to mind when you hear the word “wellness”? I think of exercise, eating vegetables instead of cookies, and getting more sleep. This is true even after promoting the Wholeness Wheel for years. The Wholeness Wheel illustrates that wellness includes spiritual, vocational, intellectual, emotional, physical, social, and financial elements. Still, I’m stuck physical wellness.

The Wholeness Wheel



Earlier this year I read Kathy Shea’s introduction to Portico Benefit Service’s “Slow Down” challenge. Portico members should have received this in the mail in January. She reflected on a morning meditation saying she told herself, “I’m already what I need to be. My small steps to live well do not prove my worth; I take them for the sake of the world.” She went on to elaborate on the importance of giving ourselves time every day to find a space outside of our own busy thoughts and focus on our relationship with God. She even lists some concrete benefits of intentional spiritual practice.

The Southeastern Minnesota Synod staff have agreed to set aside 11:45 a.m. - 12:00 noon each day, Ash Wednesday, February 22 through the week before Holy Week, for individual spiritual practices. Since each person is different, we’ll all approach this differently based on the examples given by Portico, which include a variety of activities in the following categories: centering prayer, body movement, or handwork.

Join us! Visit semnsynod.org/slow-down to get involved. More information on the challenge is at <http://bit.ly/AjQiAN> on Portico’s website.

Quick Facts:

- Yes, you get points towards Personal Wellness Dollars. Over half of what you need after the Health Assessment!
- No, you do NOT need to have benefits through Portico to participate, but you don’t get points..
- No, you do not have to do it “with” us. You can do it any time of day, any time of year.
- More information at semnsynod.org/slow-down

Councils as Leaders: Congregational Toolkit

A synod event for rostered leaders and congregational councils featuring nine different workshops to create a “toolkit” for leadership in your congregation.

Sunday, March 11, 2012
2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Bethel Lutheran Church
810 3rd Avenue SE
Rochester, MN
Registration Deadline: March 7



Send in the following registration for your congregation or visit semnsynod.org/cal/ for details and online registration.

**Please fill in names for all persons attending.
One form per congregation.**

Congregation Name/City:

Pastor(s):

Council Members:

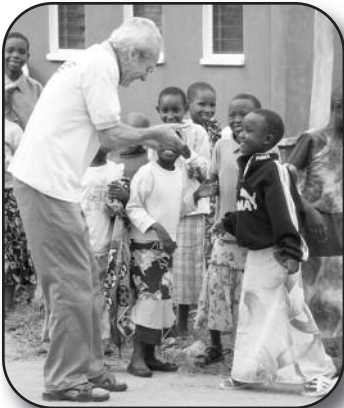
E-mail Contact (one per form):

Daytime Phone Contact (one per form):

Return this form to:
Southeastern Minnesota Synod
1001 14th Street NW, Suite 300
Rochester, MN 55901

Witnessing the Legacy of 100 Years of Ministry in the Central Diocese

By Rev. Harold Usgaard
Synod Bishop



Many new friendships were formed on this trip.

It takes 21 hours to travel from Minneapolis to Kilimanjaro Airport in Arusha, Tanzania. We had received our shots, taken our malaria pills, packed for warm and wet weather, and exchanged our money. And all 27 of us from the Southeastern Minnesota Synod made it, with only one suitcase lagging behind.

We boarded our five land rovers, and spent the first two days on safari while overcoming jet lag. We saw more animals than one can count, even experiencing a close encounter with a herd of elephants visiting our tents.

Then it was on to Singida Town, the headquarters of our companion synod, the Central Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. With a greeting and blessing from Bishop Sima, the group divided and traveled to spend a number of days in partner congregations. Thirteen partner congregations were represented in our group. The visits were warm and heartfelt, even in the midst of some challenging living conditions. Other days included worship services filled



A choir competition determined which groups would sing during the celebration service.

with baptisms and confirmations, and visits to schools and hospitals that we as a synod have supported.

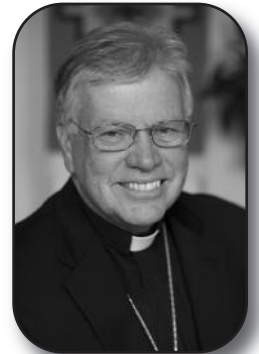
The reason for our trip was the invitation to join in the celebration of 100 years of missionary activity in the Central Diocese. There were two days of worship, each service four to six hours long. Picture two to three thousand people gathered outside with maybe 12 vehicles in sight; most of the people had walked for miles. The river near the worship site was swollen with the rains. There was no bridge, so most crossed by foot through the water. Each day was interrupted by torrential rains. And what did the people do? They stood there, with their plastic chairs over their heads, singing, waiting for the rain to stop and the worship to continue.

Part of the worship included recognition of those who have meant so much to Christian ministry in the Central Diocese. Among the missionaries, pastors and bishops who were honored, and our own Kathy Bolin was presented a plaque in honor of the work she has done to enable our companion synod relationship to blossom. Kathy works only one day a week in our office, yet is well known to all who have been involved in travel or communication with the Central Diocese.

The celebration theme came from Psalm 106, "God is good all the time; all the time God is good." The

Tanzanians believe that message, and they live it as well. And we had the privilege of being witness to such a faith.

Shalom,



Bishop Usgaard & Kathy Bolin display a partnership Bible. Each congregation in the Central Diocese received a Swahili/English Bible from their partner congregation or from the synod if they were not partnered.

A Book Review on the Power of Thank-Yous

By Larry Iverson
Synod Minister



I always struggle with the idea of New Year's Resolutions. I acknowledge the exercise, but best intentions usually end up abandoned only weeks later than the discarded Christmas tree.

I recently picked up a book over Christmas that made me consider New Year's Resolutions differently. The book is *A Simple Act of Gratitude: How Learning to Say Thank You Changed My Life*. The author is John Kralik, a middle-aged, struggling man who made a resolution one New Year's Day 2008 after a terribly difficult year. While walking on January 1, 2008, on the Echo Mountain trail overlooking Pasadena, Calif., he heard a voice, "Until you learn to be grateful for the things you have, you will not receive the things you want." The book chronicles his efforts to write one thank-you note each day to one person he wished to thank.

It changed his life for the better through this process, and he continues to write thank-you notes to this day, just not 365 of them. At the end of the book he says this: "I will say that writing thank-you notes is a good thing to do and makes the world a better place. It also made me a better man. More than success or material achievement, this is what I sought." He states that he thinks many Americans could easily write one hundred thank-you notes per year, and he suggests starting by replacing email thank-yous with handwritten notes.

This is not only a reflection on New Year's resolutions, but it is a part of the life of a steward and a follower of Christ. The first thank you I do each day is a prayer in the morning when I wake thanking God for a restful night and the blessing of another day.

In 2012 I am resolving to notice and appreciate more thankfulness in my life by writing more hand-written thank-you notes to people. If you decide this would be helpful to you, feel free to drop me a note or even email telling me about what happens for you.

In Christ's Service,



From Jesus to Pixar: What Stories Teach Us

By Karen Gieseke
Synod Children, Youth, & Family
Ministry Coordinator



How can we picture God's kingdom? What kind of story can we use?...With many stories like these, he [Jesus] presented his message to them, fitting the stories to their experience and maturity. He was never without a story when he spoke. When he was alone with his disciples, he went over everything, sorting out the tangles, untying the knots.
Mark 4:30, 33-34, *The Message*

Friday night at our house is movie night. When our children were young, we enjoyed movies such as *Toy Story*, *Monsters, Inc.*, and my favorite, *Finding Nemo*. Fortunately, our family still enjoys these movies and others, such as *Wall-E* and *Up*. Besides the entertainment factor, these stories teach and remind us about life and values such as identity, friendship, family, and courage.

Stories are a great way to learn about family life and values. Jesus used stories throughout his ministry. He understood how stories engage our imagination and help us to see ourselves in real life settings. Jesus' stories, or parables, reflect our identity as a Child of God in everyday life. Are you a gardner, farmer, accountant, parent, spouse, seamstress, dinner guest, friend, or member of a family? Jesus has a story for you!

In the passage above, we read that Jesus used many stories. He had to help sort out the messages, but first he had to tell the story, and someone had to listen.

God is very creative, and teaches us about life as a Child of God through each other's stories, too. Both fiction and non-fiction can provide the characters and settings to see God's abundant love for God's family. I think the reason I so enjoy *Finding Nemo* is because it is all about family, and it is about a loving parent who will go to all costs to save his child. Sound familiar?



For a guide to family conversation on *Finding Nemo*, and other Pixar films, check out *The Wisdom of PIXAR: An Animated Look at Virtue* by Robert Velarde.

Call Update, Calendar of Events

Call Update:

Self Study:

- Adams, Little Cedar & Marshall – solo (2-point) (Margaret Pleiss-Sippola, Interim)
- Bricelyn, Bricelyn & North Blue Earth – solo (2-point) (Luther Peterson, interim)
- Glenville, First – solo (Jim Rushton, interim)
- Goodhue, St. Luke's – solo (Wayne Radke, interim)
- Kenyon, Gol – solo, part-time (Marvin Kormann, interim)
- Kenyon, Hegre – solo, part-time (Dick Hegal, interim)
- Preston, Christ – solo (David Jore, interim)
- Rochester, Good Shepherd (David Beckstrom, interim)
- Webster, Solor
- Welch, Cannon River & Cross of Christ – solo (Joy Bussert, interim)
- Winona, Central & Cedar Valley – shared solo (Roger Knutson, interim at Cedar Valley)

Interviewing:

- Ellendale, Hope & Pontoppidan – solo (2-point)
- LeRoy/Ostrander, LeRoy/Trinity – solo (2-point) (Rolf Wangberg, interim)
- Mapleton, Medo – solo, part time
- New Richland, Vista & LeSueur River – solo (2-point) (Paul Meirding, interim)
- Northfield, St. Olaf College – senior (Ann Svennungson, interim)

Ready to Extend Call:

- Nerstrand, Grace – solo, part time (Duane Everson, interim)

Call Extended:

- Kiester, Our Savior's – solo (Bonnie Roys, interim)

Call Accepted:

- Randy Johnson, United, Red Wing to senior, St. John's, Northfield, 2/13/12

Upcoming Events

Feb. 2-3: Synod Communicators Retreat: "I Love to Tell the Story"

Good Earth Village, Spring Valley, MN
semnsynod.org/communicators-retreat, 507-280-9457,
or 800-426-6376 in Minnesota

Feb. 8-12: ELCA Youth Ministry Network Extravaganza

New Orleans, LA
www.elcaymnet.org/Extravaganza

Feb. 12: Conference Assemblies

Times & locations vary by conference
semnsynod.org/calendar

Feb. 16: Synod CYF Network Meeting

11:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. OR 5:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
Trinity Lutheran Church, Owatonna, MN
semnsynod.org/ministries/cyf/gatherings/

Feb. 19: Men's Cooking Club Belgian Waffle Feed

8:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon
First Lutheran Church, Red Wing, MN

Feb. 24-25: Youth Blast!

Additional Dates: March 9-10
Good Earth Village, Spring Valley, MN
www.GoodEarthVillage.org or 507-346-2494

Feb. 26: Good Earth Village Annual Meeting

2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
St. John's Lutheran Church, Kasson, MN
507-346-2494

Feb. 27-29: Monkey Business: A First Third Dialogue on the Confirmation Process

Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN
www.firstthird.org/events/default.aspx

*For more information about these or other events, visit
semnsynod.org/calendar*

New CYF Calendar

If you are interested in looking for JUST events for children, youth, and families and those who do ministry with them, check out the synod's new CYF Calendar - semnsynod.org/cyf-calendar Most of these events are also listed on the main calendar (semnsynod.org/calendar).

The Bridge

A monthly publication for congregations of the Southeastern Minnesota Synod, ELCA

Connecting the congregational, synodical, and churchwide expressions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.



Hay donated from the Northeastern Iowa Synod was shipped to the Northern Texas - Northern Louisiana Synod. A financial gift from the Southeastern Minnesota Synod helped offset transportation costs.

Synods Walk Together

The Greek word “synod” translates as “walking together.” From our doorsteps to our neighbors in the Red River Valley to the ranches of Texas to the historic byways of New England and even to countries around the world, we walk with other synods in our ministry.

The Southeastern Minnesota Synod is one of 65 synods in the ELCA. Synods are one of the expressions of the ELCA, the other two being the churchwide organization and the individual congregations. All but one synod are geographic. The Slovak-Zion Synod is non-geographical.

Synods are made up of a synod council, office of the bishop, congregations, a variety of committees, and ministry partners. Every synod has different arrangements for staffing, structure, etc. They all, however, share a common purpose of connecting congregations and leaders to one another, to others in the synod, and to the synod’s ministry partners.

Our synod is formally connected with three other synods: the New England Synod (ELCA), the Central Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia. We are regularly in relationship with, praying for, and sharing our joys and struggles with these synods.

In 2011, we walked with three other synods during their specific struggles. On June 26, the Red River in Minot, N.D. crested at 1,561.72 feet, nearly four feet above the previous record set in 1881. An estimated \$3 million of damage was done to the four congregations of Minot and Burlington. No insurance covered the damage. Additional congregations near the Missouri River were also affected. Countless members’ homes were inundated with flood water. Our synod council voted to send \$3,000 to the Western North Dakota Synod to help with the long recovery.

In August 2011, Hurricane Irene struck the east coast, including our domestic partner, the New England Synod. Bishop Margaret Payne reported that flooding brought long including power outages, washed out bridges, and flooded homes. Our synod council sent \$3,000 to New England to aid in their disaster response work.

This summer, as farmers in west Texas were praying for rain to douse the wildfires and restore their fields, Rev. Harold McMillin of St. John Lutheran Church in Luana,

Iowa, was hearing of the hay shortage from fellow voting members at the 2011 Churchwide Assembly. When he returned to Iowa, he recruited members of the Northeastern Iowa Synod for Operation Hay Lift to send donated hay to Texas. As of October 13, ten truckloads of hay had been distributed in Texas. While the good hay crop in Iowa provided hay to send, transportation costs needed to be covered. Our synod council responded by sending \$3,000 to the Northern Texas - Northern Louisiana Synod to help with transportation costs.

Synods are arranged not only to foster relationships within themselves, but also as a means to bring together Lutherans from throughout the ELCA and the world. Through our synod’s relationships, our members have connected with members of the ELCA in New England and Lutherans in Africa and South America. Through the connections of synods, we have been able to hear stories from around the country and the world where we can walk with our brothers in sisters in prayer and financial support.

Get More...

- More stories on these responses are in the March *River Crossings* - semnsynod.org/river-crossings

About Our Synod

The Southeastern Minnesota Synod is a faith community of 127,000 baptized people in 177 congregations as well as related institutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Its geographic area includes 15 counties in the southeastern corner of Minnesota.

The Bridge is a monthly publication of the Southeastern Minnesota Synod, ELCA. For more information, contact the synod office:

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