

Reports of Committees and Subcommittees

Congregational Life Committee

“Woven together by grace” is a theme we used for our 2006 Congregational Resourcing Event. We were so pleased to have Pastor Peter Marty speak to the need to develop a unique community within the church. A community where diversity of gifts is seen as a blessing and unity is focused around Christ’s mission.

Woven together by grace is a theme that we live out all year round. Twelve people from congregations of our synod gather four times a year to coordinate and assist efforts in education, leadership, stewardship, youth and worship. We are so pleased that nearly 500 members of our congregations came to the CRE. Once there they were able to choose from over 40 workshops from evangelism to global mission to web page design. We feel that this wonderful menu of learning opportunities is truly woven together by grace. We were so pleased to have ten of our workshops led by church wide or synod staff. Set aside **Saturday March 10, 2007** of the next CRE. We will focus on setting a new direction for your congregational and feature Ms. Beth Lewis CEO of Augsburg/Fortress publishing house.

The rest of year we seek to weave the resources we know are available with the members of our congregations and their needs. We are pleased to underwrite the internet resource “*walking together*”. We rejoice that our stewardship team has developed a strategy to help congregations with year round stewardship. We are thankful for the ongoing work of Ms. Jonette Knock and the LYO for their creative work with youth. We are excited at the addition of two people from our synod who have been trained as resources for the ELCA’s Christian educator’s network. We sing with joy at the work of the worship task team. We are proud to work with the synod staff in meeting the needs of our congregations and particularly thank Ms. Sandra Musch for all her efforts.

We are truly woven together by grace. So come and chat with us at our display in the college center. We may appear as clowns but have a great story to tell. Or come to our forums, you will leave smiling.

Pastor Karl Otto, Chair

Diakonia

Purpose and Description of Diakonia

Diakonia is a two year process of spiritual formation and theological education for baptized members of the Lutheran church. This process occurs in three basic ways:

- by thorough grounding in the classic seminary disciplines of practical, systematic, historical, and Biblical theology;
- by identifying particular skills and aptitudes in ministry, and encouraging their use in the local parish;
- by providing spiritual growth through worship, retreats, and a supportive community of fellow students, mentors, and instructors.

Highlights of 2005

Diakonia began its 3rd year of classes in the Northern Illinois Synod in September of 2005. To better serve the eastern portions of the synod, a new site was added at St. Barnabas in Cary. Classes are now offered in Cary on Saturday mornings, in Moline on Tuesday evenings, and in Rockford on Thursday evenings.

We were honored by the presence of Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson at our diakonia graduation. Bishop Hanson preached at our joint graduation service with the Metropolitan Chicago Synod. Metropolitan Chicago Synod Bishop Paul R. Landahl and Northern Illinois Synod Bishop Gary M. Wollersheim were also both present. The service was held at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Schaumburg, Illinois. Rev. Dr. Don Myrom presided at the liturgy. Several members of the Diakonia national board were present and the graduating class received written greetings from Bishop Steven Paul Bouman, Metropolitan New York Synod and founder of diakonia, Bishop Roy Riley, New Jersey Synod and Bishop Roy Almquist, SEPA Synod.

The graduates of the first graduating class of the Northern Illinois Synod (2005) were:

- Helen Barrett
- Michael Bryant
- Judith Cook
- Shirley Finger
- Jill Flickinger
- Vicki Gehrke
- Jeff Johnson
- Douglas Liston
- Helen Meier
- Sandra McGaughy
- Christin Moreland
- Diane Nelson
- Jim Rylander
- Lisa Short
- Thomas Strain
- Craig Watters

Additionally, five graduates of the Metro Chicago sites belong to Northern Illinois churches:

- Ron Brower
- Charles Conklin
- Deborah Martin
- Rachel McKesson
- Nancy Oefelein

Our steering committee consists of the following members:

- Rebecca Dahlstrom
- Pastor Mark Hagen
- Pastor Gary Heedum, Executive Director
- Pastor Keith Killinger
- Doug Liston, Chair
- Diane Ludwigsen Nelson
- Sandra J. Musch

Goals for the Future

In September 2006, we will begin our 4th year of classes. We again plan to have classes in the three locations: Cary, Moline, and Rockford. We may also begin a fourth site in the synod in the southern portion of the synod.

Contact Information

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Respectfully Submitted and with Thanks to God,

Douglas Liston
Northern Illinois Diakonia Chairperson

Ministry Support Committee

Mission Statement: Enabling Christians of the Northern Illinois Synod to realize their call to ministry as both lay and professional workers.

To accomplish the mission, we provide resources, support, and continuing education within our synod, in cooperation with other synods, agencies, and institutions within the ELCA and the Church.

By definition, the Ministry Support Committee's main purpose is to support those who work in or are interested in ministry, both lay and rostered. The committee is made up of seven (7) different subcommittees that take on this work. They are: Candidacy, Employee Assistance Program, Professional Leader's Conference, Salary Guidelines, Spiritual Formation, First Call Theological Education and Mutual Ministry, with each subcommittee having at least one (1) liaison back to the committee as a whole. Our committee as a whole meets three times a year.

We serve our Synod in three distinct areas. One area is shepherding candidates interested in rostered ministry through the entire candidacy process. A second area is the support and professional care for those working in ministry. This includes such issues as developing compensation guidelines; providing spiritual opportunities; and promoting usage of evaluation tools. The third area is providing first call theological and continuing education opportunities.

The budget and staff cuts on the synod level have deeply affected our mission. Some of the oversight for programs, such as First Call Theological Education, previously handled by staff liaison Pr. Barb Rapp has now fallen to the Bishop's office. Also, after discussion at last year's synod assembly, we have worked with Natalie Andrews, our Synod Council liaison, and Cheryl Lefler, also a Synod Council member, in developing suggestions for making the synod's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) effective and efficient, being good stewards of the \$10,000.00 allocation in the budget (Please note: If you are covered under the Board of Pensions health plan, you are covered by and have access to a robust EAP. Please consult your booklets or call the BOP at 1.800.352.2876 for more information). Furthermore, we strive to support seminarians financially, but with budget cuts, we know that we could always do more.

In spite of the monetary restrictions, there is wonderful work being done by our subcommittees: candidacy, spiritual formation and professional leader conference have advance planned wonderful events in their areas; salary guidelines continues to improve their forms to be more "user-friendly;" and mutual ministry continues to update the synod's website with the most current information.

This mutual ministry information is easy to access and easy to use. Prayerfully consider establishing a mutual ministry team in your setting. Also on the web are helpful hints on how to lift up and celebrate the ministry of rostered leaders and other staffed persons. They are on the synod web page here: <http://www.nisynod.org/resources/mutualministry/index.htm> Information regarding salary guidelines and be found here: <http://www.nisynod.org/resources/salaryguidelines/index.htm> (or, click on the “resources” tab on the synod home page).

A great team of people has done our work. The committee’s roster includes: Natalie Andrews (Synod Council Liaison), Pastor Lee Bennight, Grace Burkart, Sue Cording, Pastor Steven Dow, Pastor Jane McChesney, Craig Peterson, John Schou, Ellen Whitcomb, and Linda Wold. We also thank those who serve on our subcommittees, as well as those who have served previously. Again, thank you! If you are interested in serving with us in these areas, please let us know. People with human resources experience might be particularly helpful.

We continually find new and exciting ways to serve all ministers in our synod. Through prayers of discernment and God’s grace, we are eager to continue our mission, supporting all the ministers of this synod, growing the body of Christ deep and wide.

Pastor Thomas E. Rogers Jr.
Chair, Ministry Support Committee

Candidacy Committee

Candidacy in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is the churchwide process of preparation and formation leading to approval for the public ministries of this church: commissioned associates in ministry; consecrated deaconess or diaconal minister; or ordained pastor. (1)

The synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, through a candidacy committee, act on behalf of the ELCA in the candidacy process. Candidacy committees are responsible for determining the readiness of persons to enter the candidacy process and to begin theological education, for endorsing candidates for a specific roster of this church, and in the approval process for determining an individual’s qualifications and readiness to serve in rostered ministry. (2)

The Northern Illinois Candidacy Committee consists of appointed rostered and lay representatives. It conducted several committee meetings during the period. Prior to each meeting Initial Interviews and Entrance Panels were conducted for candidates. The committee then affirms (disaffirms) the recommendations of the panel. The Committee conducted a Saturday Candidacy Retreat at the Synod Office. The retreat provides perspective candidates with an informational setting and opportunity to meet the committee and recently approved candidates. Committee members participated in the Resourcing event and Synod Assembly forums.

40 Northern Illinois Synod candidates were actively participating in the process. During the past year 9 Northern Illinois Synod candidates were approved for ordination or commissioning. The Synod, through the Candidacy Committee provided scholarships to those involved in the candidacy process and pursuing theological education. This was done in part with a very generous gift (\$11,000) from the members of St John’s Lutheran Church, Mendota, Illinois. Each year candidacy students are faced with increasing cost to their education. The synod provides a small assistance through the scholarship fund. Funds, however, are limited. We encourage congregations who find themselves with funds they might like to provide as scholarship assistance to contact the synod office. We encourage you to provide funds for candidates from you own congregation. Currently, several new candidates have begun the entrance process.

The Northern Illinois Synod partners with the Metro Chicago and Central Southern Synods to form the Illinois Multi-Synodical Candidacy Committee. Northern Illinois Synod Candidacy member Myrna Andersen is Co-Chair of this committee. It is through this committee that candidate endorsement and approval panels are conducted and acted upon. A majority of the candidates attend Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, Wartburg Theological Seminary, and Luther Seminary. These seminaries provide evaluative material and recommendations concerning the candidate. This committee met three times during the period. Prior to each meeting endorsement and approval panels were conducted for candidates. Recommendations of panel members were presented during the meeting at which time the committee affirmed (or disaffirmed) the panel presentations.

In addition to regular meetings serving on a panel requires committee members to contribute numerous hours of preparation, per candidate. Committee members must read and review numerous reports and essays to discern the candidate's readiness to proceed to a next phase or for approval for rostered ministry. We salute Pr. Catherine Burnette and Pr. Christine Stienstra for their service. Catherine received a Call to a congregation out of the Northern Illinois Synod and Christine received a call for additional duties within the Synod.

Prayer is of great importance for all of our Candidates. We encourage every member of the Synod Family to include these future leaders in your prayers. We thank Karin Graddy, NIS Communications Director for including the names of our Candidates in the Synod newsletter, Walking Together.

We say THANK YOU, Committee members, Myrna Anderson (AIM), Paul Crank, Pr. Steve Dow, Pr. Stacie Fidler, Lee Harbison, Pr. Robert Hansen, Pr. Mark Juliot, Pr. Susan Kent, Vice Chair Pr. Robert Kinnear, Secretary Mary Lasits (DM), Pr. Rich Likeness, Carla Vanatta (AIM), Pr. Kris Zierke, Assistant to the Bishop for Candidacy, Pr. Barbara Rapp,. Your gift of service, time and effort are appreciated.

- Richard J. Brynteson, Lay Chairperson

(1) (2) Candidacy Manual, Division for Ministry, ELCA

Outreach Committee

The N.I.S. Outreach Committee seeks to assist the Northern Illinois Synod in the planting of new congregations and the redevelopment of existing churches, encouraging congregations to be engaged in effective outreach ministry to all people, and to support the efforts of our Global Mission Subcommittee to accompany and uplift the ministry and mission of the church in other countries.

With great joy we will receive two newly organized congregations into our synod during the 2006 Assembly. Followers of Christ Lutheran Church, Plainfield, is organizing as a congregation on May 21st, and New Creation Lutheran Church, Channahon, is organizing on June 12th. We celebrate and give thanks to God with these new faith communities of our synod and their Pastor/Developers, Ron Voss (Plainfield) and Herb Priester (Channahon). Let prayers continue that the Holy Spirit will increase and multiply the ministries of these newest of our congregations.

This spring also witnesses the beginning of a new outreach ministry in Machesney Park. This is a satellite start-up program of Grace Lutheran Church, Loves Park. Worship is being held in a theatre, and a pastor is being called to guide this new ministry. The synod also seeks to assist redevelopment work at Bethlehem Church, Rockford (Pastor Frances Reilly-Olson), Good Shepherd Church, Romeoville (Pastor Suzanne Anderson-Hurdle), and at Abundant Life, Plainfield, and St. John's, Joliet, as they begin a partnered ministry.

Growing areas of our synod territory which are being explored for possible mission development include: north Yorkville area, Poplar Grove, Elwood/Manhattan, McHenry County, etc.

Another growing ministry opportunity is the rapidly increasing Latino population in our Synod. Pastor Keith Forni, Santa Cruz Church, Joliet, has spearheaded efforts to move forward in developing a strategy for Latino Ministry on several fronts across the synod. The Outreach Committee is also concerned to expand our ministry effectiveness among this segment of our people and to encourage the equipping of Latino ministry leaders.

The Global Mission Sub-Committee continues to work to expand the Companion Synod and the Companion Congregation programs with the Arusha Diocese of Tanzania, and they continue to undergird the Mwangaza teacher exchange program. Another opportunity before our synod is the exploration of another Companion Synod partnering with the Lutheran Church of India. The committee continues to explore this opportunity with the ELCA Global Mission Unit and the NIS Council.

The ELCA Evangelism Strategy challenges all congregations to make outreach and evangelism a central focus of parish life throughout our church. To assist in this focus, our synod continues to offer the TIME process (Together In Mission Engagement - Pastor Kendall Koenig, coordinator) to congregations from across the synod who desire assistance in outreach planning, training, and mutual support in order to reach their mission goals. We also have a number of NIS congregations who are working with trained coaches from our synod utilizing the NCD (Natural Church Development) program to aid congregations to strengthen ministry and outreach.

The Outreach Committee is grateful for the dedicated work of Pastor Janet Hunt, Mission Director for the NIS. Janet brings excellent leadership, skills, and a deep care for God's people and for the church in its mission of evangelism.

Pastor Dennis Heaney
Outreach Committee Chair

Social Ministry Committee

"To express God's love by leading the church toward greater compassion, justice, and service."

---NIS Social Ministry Committee mission statement

The stated purpose of the Northern Illinois Social Ministry Committee is "To inspire the people of the congregations and communities of the Northern Illinois Synod to make Christ known in word and deed, locally and globally, through experiential education and Biblical/theological reflection with regard to social ministry concerns."

In carrying out this mission, most of the work of the Social Ministry Committee takes place within the work of its various sub-committees. These are:

- Anti-Racism Team
- Multi-cultural Subcommittee
- Rural Ministry Subcommittee
- World Hunger Subcommittee

Members of the Social Ministry Committee are designated to attend meetings of each of these subcommittees and serve as liaisons to the Committee. Reports from the sub-committees are regularly received at Committee meetings. Annual reports from the sub-committees are included following this report. In addition, Pastor Dan Schwick from the staff of Lutheran Social Services of Illinois continues to serve as liaison with the Lutheran Network for Justice Advocacy (LNJA).

The Social Ministry Committee meets 4 to 5 times a year. Worship and theological reflection are an important part of these meetings. Major planning for the year takes place at a late summer/early fall retreat, held in 2005 at Faith Lutheran Church in Rochelle.

The Committee's overarching goals are:

- 1) to arrange workshops for the Congregational Resourcing Event
- 2) to make social ministry grants
- 3) to promote advocacy on state and national levels
- 4) to review and promote discussion of the ELCA Social Statements
- 5) to establish a yearly budget.

This year the committee awarded grants to the following social ministry outreach initiatives in the Northern Illinois Synod: the Jesus Club, the DeKalb Food Pantry, and the Wonder Lake Neighbors Food Pantry. This year the Social Ministry Grant brochure has been rewritten to be more accessible to organizations applying for grant awards through the Committee. The Committee also evaluates and makes recommendations concerning domestic "Granting Hope" applications from our synod's territory under the ELCA Churchwide Hunger Program. Two recommendations were made in 2005 for the RALM Park PLAYers and the Wonder Lake Neighbors Food Pantry.

The Committee arranged for presentations this year at the March Congregational Resourcing Event on Elder Abuse and Bullying. You can hear further about the work of the committee at the scheduled forum at the Synod Assembly and at the display table. A special in-kind offering is planned for each Synod Assembly. This year's offering will be to provide an offering of letters through Bread for the World's ONE campaign, as well as collection of Emergency Food Relief boxes for LSSI's work with those affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Rev. Rebecca I. J. Gordon, Chair

Anti-Racism Team

The Anti-racism Team consists of twelve members from across the synod, including six persons of color and two pastors. Pastor Janet Hunt is the Synod Liaison. Over the past year the task force had a display and presented a workshop at the 2005 Synod Assembly and three workshops at the 2006 Congregational Resourcing Event. We made a presentation to the Synod Council about the new ELCA resource "Troubling the Waters for the Healing of the Church – A Journey for White Christians from Privilege to Partnership." This is an excellent resource for our mostly white congregations and we encourage congregations to consider using it. We also offer a 1½- 2 hour "Introduction to Anti-racism" workshop to synod committees, conferences and congregations. We work with the Professional Leaders Conference Committee to keep our synod Professional Leaders aware of Anti-racism issues and resources. Some of us will attend the World Mission Institute conference on "The Challenges and Possibilities of the Multicultural Parish."

The Anti-racism Team also works with the Illowa Lutheran Coalition in the Quad City area in offering Anti-racism workshops. Currently we are considering the development of a ministry with Multi-ethnic Families to serve the growing number of mixed race couples and families with children of mixed race or minority heritage. Synod members interested in helping develop and/or participate in this ministry are urged to contact me at cfsam@mchsi.com or 309-797-1189.

Pastor Frank Samuelson, Chair.

World Hunger Subcommittee

The World Hunger Subcommittee had both a busy and productive year in 2005. In addition to attending the spring meeting held at the historic Jenny Lind Chapel in Andover and the fall meeting in Dixon, members of the subcommittee presented programs at the Congregational Gathering in Malta and at the Synod Assembly at Augustana College. A highlight of the year was the attendance of both Joan Fumetti, a leader in the Foods Resource Bank and Kathryn Sime, the National Director of World Hunger programs for the ELCA at the fall meeting. In addition, members made personal contacts to the churches in the regions that they represent. 2005 also was a year of change in leadership for the committee as Gary Daniels stepped down from the position of chairman of the subcommittee and Deb Martin and Pastor Wayne Derber accepted the responsibility and will serve as co-chairmen.

Not only was the year busy for the members of the World Hunger subcommittee, it was productive as well. There was again a nice increase in giving by the churches in the Northern Illinois Synod through August 2005 and this follows a record-breaking year in 2004. A key goal of the subcommittee has been to obtain 100% participation in World Hunger programs by every church in the Northern Illinois Synod and great progress has been made in that regard. When the goal was set several years ago the participation level was around 60% and now is over 90%. One of the most exciting aspects of the World Hunger subcommittee has been the development of the Foods Resource Bank program. Not only has this led to an increase in giving, this farm related program has added a spark to many small rural congregations who now can greatly benefit the cause of world hunger by doing what many of their members do best, and that is farm.

The world is no less needy in 2006 and our church body saw with Hurricane Katrina that disaster and hunger can strike right in our country as well. The members are dedicated to the cause however and have been heartened by the response of Christians throughout the Northern Illinois Synod and are looking forward to providing even more support to the wonderful World Hunger programs provided by our national church.

Presented by: Kent Terry, Secretary