

Reports of Conferences

Central Conference

After Pastor Chris Stienstra accepted the position of Assistant to the Bishop, I was appointed to serve as dean pro tem of the Central Conference in her place. It has been both an honor and a privilege to serve in this role.

The pastors and interns of the Central Conference meet on the second Wednesday of each month. This year, St. John Lutheran Church, Sterling has graciously hosted our meetings. We typically begin to gather at 8:30 A.M. and are led in worship with Holy Communion by one of our colleagues at 9:00. After worship, we enjoy refreshments and fellowship. We discuss business as necessary and share our mutual joys and concerns. Occasionally we have a guest speaker at one of our meetings. After the meeting, those who are available, have lunch together.

There is a weekly pericope study at 9:00 each Tuesday morning at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Dixon. We have welcomed pastors from other conferences and even other denominations to this study.

The churches of our Conference participated in two Lenten preaching round robins.

We have also had occasional social gatherings in our conference. Collegiality and fellowship are the hallmarks of the Central Conference.

In the past year, we have welcomed the following new pastors into our conference: Pastor Susie Hill, Faith, Forreton; Pastor Steve Dow, Faith, Rochelle; and Pastor Steve Erickson, Trinity Mt. Morris. We look forward to the installations of Pastor Judi Huseh at St. Paul, Sterling and Pastor Gary Blobaum at St. Paul, Oregon.

We said a reluctant goodbye to Pastor Amy Nyman who served Emmanuel, Payne's Point (rural Oregon). Pastor Susan Davenport resigned from her call at Bethesda, Morrison, to pursue further education, but has continued to be active in the conference and serves as our secretary and treasurer.

The Central Conference has been blessed to have Pastor Joanne Adrian serving as interim at Emmanuel, Payne's Point; Pastor John Leaf as interim at St. Paul, Sterling; Pastor Kathy Burkheimer as interim at First, Jordan (rural Sterling); and Pastor Myron Bartell as interim at St. Paul, Franklin Grove.

We have also been delighted to have two interns in our conference: Robert Franek who serves with Pastor Ron Ferrel at Immanuel, Dixon, and Linda Winkelman who serves with Pastor Hank Milner at Immanuel, Rock Falls.

We have discussed and will be moving ahead with several projects in the Central Conference. Watch for them to bear fruit.

Respectfully submitted.

Brant Clements
Dean pro tem

East Conference

This year the East Conference of the Northern Illinois Synod ELCA continued our practice of monthly meetings and worship. A highlight of the year was the Reformation Ordination service at St. John Joliet for Jane Perkolup and Dorothy Wilcox who were called to serve at Faith Joliet and Immanuel Yorkville respectively. Santa Cruz of Joliet is now worshipping at First Joliet, with Pastor Keith Forni serving both congregations. A merger of these congregations is being discussed. St. John Joliet and Abundant Life Plainfield have been working all year to arrange a merger which will lead to the establishment of a St. John satellite mission site on land that Abundant Life currently owns. At this year's assembly we will welcome New Creation of Channahon and Followers of Christ Plainfield to the synod as these mission congregations formerly organize. We celebrate the current construction of the first unit of Living Hope Frankfurt. In the year ahead we hope to continue our commitment to mutual support, and learning through our fellowship, and worship events.

Respectively submitted,

Peter Holmer, Dean

North Conference

The North Conference made several significant changes to the opportunities for study and mutual support during this past year.

The weekly Pericope Study meeting, that had been held Thursday mornings dating back to the early 1970s, doubled! Recognizing that early morning might not work for all, a Tuesday noon Study meeting was added. Attendance at both has remained solid. Each offers a slightly different approach to looking at the texts.

In addition, the Conference opted to hold a monthly Ministerium Meeting. Several sessions focused on getting to know each other as well as to better understand the different ministries each parish offers. We have explored mutual resolutions; studied and supported the innovative approach to Missions by Grace Lutheran Church; considered questions arising from the Lutheran education program that involves our children and youth through high school; and, begun to identify how we might collectively strengthen the Lutheran witness in the North Conference. We have also celebrated the Eucharist together at these meetings.

Through Rockford Area Lutheran Ministries we have found better ways to be involved in Habitat home building; strengthened the approach to newspaper advertising; shared in a ministry to youth on the west side of Rockford; and, offered various programs of fun and entertainment to members of the Conference.

Many of our retirees continue to continue to serve in Interim positions.

We celebrated the life of one of our retirees, The Rev. Karl Redelsheimer. Karl's untimely death following surgery reminds us of how temporary our journey is together.

It continues to be a pleasure and privilege to serve the Conference as Dean.

The Rev. Frank S. Moyer

Northeast Conference

The Northeast Conference has maintained its schedule of monthly meetings through out the year. It was agreed at the annual conference meeting in May 2005 that for the current season, 05-06, Conference meetings would be held at one site. The conference chose Redeemer, Woodstock as the meeting place. In keeping with this decision the Conference has met each month and attendance at these gatherings has been fair to good.

In addition to the celebration of Word and Sacrament, attendees share a program offering and a time of mutual encouragement. Professional leaders and guests are thus provided with a supportive community experience. For 2005-06, a schedule of programs was drawn up and offered for edification and growth. These programs included, in part, a study on how the movie Narnia might be used for teaching the faith. We also had programs on disaster preparedness and a program on the resources available for pastors to use in working with needs of member families—or our own. Our program Chairperson, Deaconess Cheryl Erdman, has done a very diligent job of providing material that is helpful to the professional leaders in our conference. All of the program presentations for 05-06 were very much appreciated.

A real sense of community continues to grow in the conference leadership.

Since Assembly 2005 we have said goodbye to several colleagues in our conference. We pray God's blessing on their continued journey in the Spirit.

At our annual meeting in May, 2006 It was decided that beginning in September we would visit various congregations for monthly meetings and alternate locations between McHenry & DeKalb counties to balance the driving distance for conference members. May 2006 marked the last of our monthly gatherings until September of this year.

We are grateful to God for his presence and guidance during the past year. May we continue, in the coming year, to be open to the Spirit's leading as we partner with one another in Making Christ Known. For me, it is a gift to serve with my sisters and brothers of the Northeast Conference.

Finally, I offer my heartfelt thanks to Pr. Rebecca Gordon for her careful and supportive ministry as Secretary/Treasurer of the conference and to Deaconess Cheryl Erdman for her ministry of providing helpful and informative programs for the conference. We thank Redeemer and Pr. Thomas Rogers for so graciously hosting our meetings throughout this year. Finally, let me note that we have been blessed by Pr. Jeff Clements' support for our conference in all the ways he is ministering to, with and for us.

Robert C. Kinnear
Dean, Northeast Conference.

Northwest Conference

Life in the "Great" Northwest Conference continues to offer many rewards and challenges. This year, we have lost a few of our colleagues to other conferences or synods, yet we look forward to those who will come to take their place. Yes, reform is a good thing!

During the past year, we have been blessed by one another as we gather together for text study, conference meetings, worship, youth ministry events, and social events. We are a close knit conference, and we all value greatly the collegiality that we have formed.

It is a pleasure to serve the people of Northwest Illinois in the various congregational settings we are in, and we each look forward to the year to come. May God bless each of us as we work together for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Yours in Christ – “Just Plain Simple Dean Bill” (Pastor William Dahlberg)
Dean of the “Great” Northwest Conference

South Conference

The Professional leaders of the South Conference meet monthly from September through May. These meetings give us a chance to worship together, discuss issues and learn more about the workings of our church through programs, speakers and our experiences. These are also wonderful opportunities to support and uphold one another in prayer, with fellowship, and the sharing of God's love.

During the past two years we have seen a fairly large turnover within our conference. This past year, however, we were fortunate that most of the changes had to do with welcoming several Professional leaders into our conference. These were: Pastor Kim Lee Brown (St. John's, Princeton), Pastor Kevin Weeks (Zion, LaMoille), Pastor Dale Peterson (St. John's, Mendota) and Pastor Sherri Hoening (Bethany, Leland). Along with the joy brought with these arriving pastors, we did need to say farewell to Pastor David Raben (Trinity, Ottawa). We wish him well in his new endeavors.

At our monthly meetings this past year, our programs and discussions consisted of the following:

- A presentation by Mr. John Califf along with Thrivent on charitable gifting resources within congregations.
- A program by Pastor Ernie Rex on the Healthy Congregation.
- A presentation by Mr. Mike Bryant on Diakonia.
- An informational presentation by Mr. Chris Csernus of the Mendota Lutheran Home and Mr. Karl Norem of Pleasant View Luther Home of Ottawa concerning the challenges of operating church-related nursing facilities.
- An introduction to Mr. Russ Senti, director of Lutheran Outdoor Ministries Center along with an update on LOMC and what is available to the church families of our synod.
- A program by Ms Susan Bursztynsky, the protocol manager of the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit Family Violence Prevention Council, on domestic abuse and mandated reporting.
- A discussion on suicide and the emotional effects it has upon involved families.
- A presentation by Rev. Ron Voss of Followers of Christ Lutheran Church, Plainfield on Outreach within the synod and what congregations and conferences can do to become involved with this effort.

To top this off, we enjoyed our annual Christmas communion worship, carol singing to the residents, and festive meal at Pleasant View Luther Home in Ottawa.

We are actively planning to host a Conference Bible Study Day, and to make this opportunity available to as many people as possible.

We in the South Conference, continue to be proud members of the Northern Illinois Synod. We thank Bishop Wollersheim and his staff for their leadership, concern, prayer and love. Thanks also to the officers and to the pastors and professional church workers of our conference.

Pastor David J. Ufkes
South Conference Dean

Southwest Conference

The Southwest Conference has been remarkably stable, with Redeemer Lutheran in Kewanee the congregation without a full time pastor and the Edwards River Ministry continuing to seek ordained leadership [Grace, Ophiem; First, Sherrard and Swedona, Swedona]. Bob Haak (Augustana College) and Pr. Jane McChesney have served the latter as interim.

The congregations of the conference continue to share their newsletters with one another, and a prayer calendar is prepared annually to offer prayers for each of the congregations of the conference, along with other ministries of the church.

The Pastors and AiMs continue to meet monthly for prayer, study and fellowship. In the past year we have heard from a variety of people on a variety of topics: Pr. Kurt Nordby, Illowa Coalition; Erin Clark, ELCA Task Force on Sexuality; Pr. Nancy Jaster, Prayer Mazes; a self-directed conversation about the "Priorities of the Parish Pastor"; Pr. Jan Bengtson hosted us at his lake cabin for refreshment and renewal; a report from Church-wide Assembly Voting Members; Paula Graves, LSSI, Single Parents' Program, Foster Care and Adoption; and Pr. Keith Killinger, diakonia.

The Conference special mission projects for 2005, in addition to Hispanic Ministry in the Quad-Cities, included supporting an international student at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago.

At our Spring Assembly Grace, Knoxville hosted a presentation by John Califf, NIS Director of Development, and representatives from Thrivent Financial regarding planned giving. Our Fall Assembly, also at Grace, Knoxville, gave us the opportunity to hear from Pt. Stacie Fidler (St. John, Rock Island) about St. John's experience as a Reconciling Congregation as well as their outreach to Hispanics in the Quad Cities. The conference has taken the latter as the mission focus of the conference, each congregation seeking ways to be supportive. Lisa Hassenstab, the new director of Disaster Relief for Lutheran Social Services of Illinois shared the process for congregations to become involved in responding to natural disasters.

Respectfully,

Pr. Michel D. Clark, Dean

West Conference

The majority of the business of the West Conference is done through regularly scheduled monthly meetings.

- Nominations to Synod and Churchwide assemblies and boards
- Dean's representation at Synod Deans meeting and Synod Council
- Holy communion and Supportive conversation of Conference pastors on the second Tuesday of each month at Trinity, Moline
- Presentations on Ministry opportunities including Lutheran Outdoors Ministry Center and Hunger programs

The Conference is also an active participant in Illova Lutheran Coalition programs.

The Reverend Stacie Fidler, Dean