

Reports

from

Consultants

Evangelizing Church Consultant

The Evangelizing Church Consultant position of the Northern Illinois Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America was begun in 2007. The major areas of responsibility include: be a voice, advocate and support to congregations of the Northern Illinois Synod on behalf of the ELCA Evangelism Strategy (Call the Church to Prayer; Prepare and Renew Evangelical Leaders; Teach Discipleship & Start and Renew Congregations) with a special focus on evangelizing and prayer; and provide training and support of congregations through the use of the tool of *Natural Church Development* and the skill of coaching through the synod NCD coaching network for the sake of renewing existing congregations. Here is a summary of my activities:

- Participated in two retraining event in NCD and coaching through the ELCA Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission unit.
- Shared leadership at the 2007 Northern Illinois Synod Assembly in workshops on *Natural Church Development*.
- Gathered the NCD coaches several times to assess the use of NCD among synod congregations, to practice coaching skills and to review the principles of NCD.
- Made presentation to the Conference Deans about the work of evangelizing, research on missional opportunities and trends in the Northern Illinois Synod as well as information about NCD.
- Recruited and trained six new coaches in the skill of coaching – *Coaching 101* training at LOMC – October 15-16, 2007.
- Participated in the synod Outreach Committee meetings.
- Met with the 1st Call Theological Education group around issues of evangelizing and NCD.
- Provided training together with Pr. Karl Otto on *Natural Church Development* for the six coaches - the second phase of the training on January 14-16, 2008 at LOMC.
- Taught on the work and possibilities of evangelizing with the synod Diakonia group.
- Provided workshops on NCD at the 2008 CRE event together with six of our NCD coaches.
- Consulted with several congregations of the synod about their evangelical and missional opportunities.

It has been my joy and honor to serve the Northern Illinois Synod as the Evangelizing Church Consultant. We have skilled and eager NCD coaches who are willing to work with congregations interested in participating in the helpful program of NCD. It is a yearlong focus and costs only about \$300 to be involved. If you are interested in more information or in participating, please contact me. Or, if a conference or group of congregations were interested in exploring an evangelizing plan for your congregation, I would be happy to work with you.

Brent Dahlseng: brent.dahlseng@hotmail.com or Grace Lutheran Church, Loves Park 815-633-8075.

Mission Consultant Report

Over the past year I have worked with a number of congregations in the Northern Illinois Synod to equip them for outreach in their service area or connect them to outreach opportunities in other parts of our Synod or country.

- *We are thankful* that Grace Lutheran of Woodstock, on the celebration of a milestone anniversary, gave a \$75,000 gift to help with the planned mission at Poplar Grove.
- *We are thankful* that St. Matthew, Princeton, on the celebration of its congregation's anniversary, will give at least \$50,000 to further the work of Christ through a new mission development.
- *We are thankful* that Shepherd of the Prairie Lutheran Church in Huntley is in the final stages of planning for a new church building that will equip them for outreach to their community. Groundbreaking could be as early as this summer.

Personnel:

We need laity and/or clergy willing to do outreach calling in new and developing areas and working toward gathering a faith community together within one year of entry into the field. Training and support will be provided. If you or someone you know feels called to this ministry of evangelical outreach, please give me a call.

Pastor/developers are also needed for mission outreach and the development of new congregations throughout the ELCA. If you know of any pastor in our synod or anywhere in the ELCA who evidences a commitment to evangelical outreach, works hard, and is enthusiastic about sharing the Gospel, please share their name with me.

Pray that the Lord will provide the persons who can enable our outreach efforts.

Diakonia Retreat:

I spoke at their retreat in February on the issues of evangelical outreach and stewardship. I also made myself available for follow-up training/support in the congregations they serve across our Synod.

We can be thankful for these gifted, motivated leaders who are furthering their education to be better equipped to make Christ known in all their service areas.

Training Events:

I have conducted training events on equipping for evangelical outreach in two Synod congregations this past year. I am ready to help any congregation in any way I can. Just give me a call!

Anniversaries are Mission Outreach Opportunities:

I write to congregations in the Synod that are celebrating a significant anniversary and ask them to consider becoming a Mission Partner or a Mission Founder to help a new or redeveloping congregation in the ELCA.

Pray:

Pray that the Holy Spirit will open hearts and minds so that we might be able to proceed to develop new congregations in the growing areas of our synod and that the mystery of Christ might be proclaimed.

Thank you,

Ron Voss
Mission Consultant
Northern Illinois Synod
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Mission Consultant for Urban and Multicultural Ministries

The territory of the Northern Illinois Synod is a diverse, growing area with many opportunities for ministry with urban and ethnic communities. Many of our congregations are located in center city communities of 20,000 or more residents and while we are not home to “mega cities” of millions or more we have metropolitan areas of several hundred thousand who are experiencing the urban issues of sprawl, crime and decaying center cities. The church has always had a special place in the city where God has called us to live and serve. The community of faith has often been called to be restorers of the city when it has fallen in disrepair and hard times (Nehemiah 2:17-20.) The cities are also the gathering place of diverse ethnic and immigrant communities. Sometimes these communities have brought their religious heritages with them as our Lutheran ancestors did. The church has grown with strong foundations from these roots. Sometimes these immigrants have come from other traditions but with openness to our Lutheran witness. Our church in Northern Illinois is learning how together we can continue to develop and grow in urban and ethnic communities. This year I have served the Synod by developing relationship with the pastoral leaders of congregations in urban contexts. We are building a coalition of congregations in Rockford who are supporting one another in ministry in the center city, developing a fellowship of congregations and individuals who are reaching out to welcome Spanish speaking residents to Lutheran congregations. I have supervised seminary and social work students who are coming to our synod to learn and experience urban ministries. I am grateful to those who have welcomed me into their congregation and who have forged new relationships and partnerships for the sake of the gospel and the sharing of God’s good news for all people.

Pastor Denver W. Bitner

Hispanic Task Force

The Hispanic population of Northern Illinois continues to grow rapidly in many areas. The potential for outreach and mission are very real for many of the congregations of the Synod. Following the recommendations of previous mission strategies the task force has attempted to foster collaboration between congregations who are engaged in Hispanic outreach, raise up new leadership and to encourage congregations who are strategically located to begin efforts to reach out to nearby Hispanic populations. To this end we have encouraged the development of Spanish language fellowships held in regional areas where Hispanic populations are most dominate. It is the recommendation of the Task Force that its continued work come under the care of the Synod Multicultural committee. This will eliminate duplication for members of the committee who serve on both. It will also encourage this outreach to be an ongoing concern for the mission work of our Synod. The following have served in active or consultative roles on the task force in this past year: George Sanchez, Henrietta Milner, Jim Leubke, Julio Cruz0-Natal, Keith Forni, Rick Meier, Stacie Fidler, and Denver Bitner, Chair. We prayerfully encourage the Synod to continue its commitment to this vital and renewing ministry

Mission Director/Developer Coordinator

It has been a privilege to work on behalf of the synod this past year to seek to be of assistance to our newest ministries on behalf of both the Northern Illinois Synod and the Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission Unit of the ELCA churchwide structure. My major role is to seek to be a liaison between churchwide, synod, and our newer mission congregations.

In 2008, we have four mission programs that continue to receive partnership funding from EOCM and/or NIS Outreach funds.

A. GPS Ministry (Machesney Park) and Grace Lutheran Church (Loves Park) as they continue to develop this new community of faith based at the Showplace Movie complex in Machesney Park. Pastor Rob James continues to develop this ministry with a good response being shown to their worship/small group/service to the community model. Both Grace and GPS are developing a vision for their future cooperation and mutual support as this new ministry matures.

B. St. John's Lutheran, Joliet/Abundant Life, Plainfield - St. John's has continued to work on a strategic plan for the development of this new mission on the property they are purchasing for the Abundant Life site. They continue, under the leadership of Pastor Nichole Johnson, with mass mailings and summer programming at the new site.

C. New Creation, Channahon, continues to receive partnership funding as they seek to close on the purchase their future building site in the coming months.

D. Santa Cruz, Joliet, continues to receive partnership funding as they seek to reach out to the Hispanic community in the heart of Joliet.

We continue to also look to the possibility of beginning new ministries in the Poplar Grove and Elwood/Manhattan areas of our synod territory. We also support and pray for the redevelopment ministry which is continuing at Bethlehem Lutheran, Rockford, under the leadership of Pastor Ralph Kuespert.

Peace in Christ,
Pastor Dennis Heaney

Rural Ministry Consultant

The task of the Rural Ministry Consultant is to provide resources and encouragement to rural congregations and relates to the Food Resource Bank, rural advocacy issues, Churches Center for Land and People <http://www.cclpmidwest.org/>. In addition the Northern Illinois Synod is one of the few Synods to have an active rural ministry task force. The task force has been active this year analyzing the needs of the synod, working cooperatively with LSSI to address rural concerns through advocacy and LSSI resources. It also sponsored a workshop at the CRE entitled “farming and the environment.” The task force is a balanced group of lay (farming) and clergy which meets quarterly. There are two ways in which the rural ministry task force and I are involved in the interests of rural communities. First through the resources and connection made to enhance congregational ministries. This is done either through direct contact or through working in conjunction with the outreach committee. Resource information is also now available through the Synod web-site. The second major area of ministry is working with LSSI in addressing the social needs of the community and the advocacy needs of rural communities in the political arena. The task force is currently working on a new survey in conjunction with LSSI to help focus on areas of rural ministry in our Synod to address.

Rural ministry is a broad topic. Your input is welcome to help define areas that can be supported in our cooperative ministry.

Jonathan Black
Rural Ministry Consultant NIS