

Reports
from
the
Conferences

Central Conference

In my second year as dean, I continue to enjoy my association with the Central Conference and I am proud to call its professional leaders my colleagues and my friends.

The Conference continues to meet on the second Wednesday of each month, July and August excepted. This year we have met at St. John Lutheran Church in Sterling, gathering at 8:30 a.m. and worshipping together at 9:00. After worship we conduct any necessary business and then enjoy fellowship and support in small groups. Those who wish go out for lunch after the meeting.

Though we take July off from meeting, we gather in August for breakfast at a restaurant and a variety of “play day” activities: golfing, bicycling, shopping, etc.

The Central Conference holds two weekly text studies, both of which meet on Tuesdays. The West End Text Study gathers at Immanuel, Rock Falls and the “Middle End” Text Study meets at Immanuel, Dixon.

This year, the leaders of the Central Conference organized two Lenten midweek preaching round robins.

As of this writing, we are planning our annual Conference Gathering preparatory to Synod Assembly. This year's gathering will be held on April 20, at St. Paul, Oregon. We are also planning our second annual Conference Leaders' retreat which will be held at LOMC, May 9-10.

We were blessed to have two social get-togethers this year, one hosted by Susie and Martin Hill in Forreston, and the other on Epiphany Day at the home of David and Claudia Nelson in Polo.

Our conference has been enriched by the presence of intern Bre Johnson who has served at Immanuel Rock Falls and our two TEEM interns: Vicki Sauter at Immanuel, Amboy, and Terrie (Dyer) Wilder, at St. Mark, Polo. Notice Terrie's name change. We rejoiced with her as she got married this year!

The Conference said farewell to Pastors Bill Nelson of All Saints', Byron and Ron Ferrel of Immanuel, Dixon, both of whom retired, and to Pastor Paul Darveau who resigned from Immanuel, Compton.

We were delighted to welcome interim pastors Carol Soderholm, Immanuel, Dixon, and Art Stees, All Saints', Byron to the conference as well as retirees Anne Baither and Chuck Steinke.

God continues to bless the Central Conference richly with the gifts of collegiality and a Spirit of service.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Brant Clements
Dean

East Conference

"God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."
--I Corinthians 1:9

The professional leaders of the East Conference gather for fellowship, support and mutual encouragement on the 4th Thursday of every month (August – May). Since the last Dean's Report was given, the following transitions have occurred:

Installations:

7/8/07: **Pr. Nichole Johnson**, Associate Pastor, St. John's, Joliet
12/2/07: **Pr. Dan Metzger**, Associate Pastor, Messiah, Joliet
6/22/08: **Pr. Howard Buchholz**, Living Hope, Frankfort

There are currently seven vacancies within the 26 congregations of the East Conference, with three of those being associate pastor positions. **Salem, Sandwich** has served as an internship site for the 2007-2008 year and will again for 2008-2009. **Shepherd of the Hill, Lockport** serves as a Ministry in Context site for second-year seminarians, who attend the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. **Santa Cruz, Joliet** continues its Hispanic ministry and outreach to those in the downtown area, while **St. John's, Joliet** is developing plans for expansion to a second ministry site. **New Creation, Channahon** and **Followers of Christ, Plainfield** each enter their third year of development as the newest missions in the East Conference.

Two new developments came about at the 2008 Spring Conference meeting:

- (1) In an effort to better utilize the gifts and talents of East Conference congregational members, people are being asked to complete an "Advancing God's Mission" information sheet, which includes personal biographical data as well as areas in which they are interested to serve. This will assist the Nominating Committee in receiving the names of persons with areas of expertise to serve in positions for which they are qualified.
- (2) The East Conference is exploring the possibility of hosting a conference-wide music event, which will feature both traditional and contemporary forms of music. Ministers of music, choir directors and praise band directors are invited to have their musical groups participate. **Pr. Paul Carlson, New Life, Bolingbrook**, and **Dr. Reno Caneva, Shepherd of the Hill, Lockport** are serving as event coordinators.

Respectfully submitted,
Pr. Bob Dealey, East Conference Dean

North Conference

The North Conference continued regular meetings as a Ministerium. This past year we have sessions on Lutheran hermeneutics, Marcus Borg's *The Heart of Christianity*, an up-date on Lutheran Social Services of Illinois, the place of the Mystical in Christianity, and possible functions of the pastor in political issues.

The weekly Pericope Study meetings continue:

- The Thursday morning session dates back to the early 1970s and attracts 8-12 pastors weekly. The focus is usually on the Pericope lessons for the coming Sunday.
- The Tuesday P.M. study meeting has become multi-denominational in attendance. There has been sharing actual sermons for critique.

Both are excellent as continuing education.

Our retirees continue to be active. Some serve as Visitation Pastors, some as Interims, and many do Supply Preaching.

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—with the exception of winter weather cancellation. It was agreed at the Conference Annual Meeting in May 2007 that for the program year 07-08, Conference meetings would continue to be held at congregational sites in the 2 county territory that comprises this conference. As in the past, one professional leader would take responsibility for worship leadership and one or more persons would serve as hospitality coordinator(s). This format has positively affected attendance at these gatherings.

Month by month, Word and Sacrament were shared. Also, we were provided with a program offering and a time of mutual encouragement during the meeting. Professional leaders and guests have, I believe, experienced a supportive community. In 2007-08, Deaconess Cheryl Erdman traded the program coordinator job to accept responsibility as Assistant to the Bishop for the NE Conf. The program presentations this year were appropriate to the audience of leaders attending the monthly gathering.

A sense of community continues to grow in the NE Conference leadership. May 2008 will mark 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. We are particularly aware of this in view of the tragedy at NIU. Leaders gave generous assistance to the ELCA Campus Ministry at DeKalb. The Northeast Conference is grateful for the support coming from all of the conferences of the NIS for this ministry on the territory of this conference.

During 2007-08 we welcomed the following colleagues to ministry among us: Bryce Formwalt, Sue Ellen Grudt, Roy Nelson and Sharon Rogers. One colleague left conference service. Following 30+ years as pastor of Grace, Richmond, Terry Dufur retired from active ministry. These changes have marked our life together as life led by the Spirit of God.

Finally, I offer my heartfelt thanks to Pr. Marilyn Hanson for her willingness to accept the ministry of conference Secretary/Treasurer of this year. The May Annual Meeting—upcoming as I write this report—will ask the conference to elect both Dean and Secretary/Treasurer. Both terms conclude as of May. Having served and enjoyed 2 terms as Dean, I will not stand for re-election this time. To Deaconess Cheryl Erdman we extend immense gratitude for her ministry of program coordinator and Assistant to the Bishop for the conference. She will continue to have our support her ministry. We thank congregations and professional leaders for so graciously hosting our meetings throughout this year. Finally, let me note that we have been blessed by Pr. Jeff Clements' service for this conference in all the ways he is ministering to, with and for us.

Robert C. Kinnear
Dean, Northeast Conference.

Northwest Conference

The Northwest Conference had another incredible year of collaborative ministry! We thank God for the opportunity to offer a joint junior high confirmation retreat in November which was held at our Lutheran Outdoor Ministries Center. We appreciate the capable staff at LOMC. We also held a February junior high and high school lock-in in Freeport which was well attended and whereby God's profound action in Christ was loudly proclaimed and celebrated. Our conference pastors also held a joint spiritual retreat and held weekly text studies. We look forward to another awesome and spirit-filled year ahead as we gather as a conference to make Christ known throughout the world!

Respectfully submitted,

Rev Pat S. Esker
Dean
Northwest Conference

South Conference

The Professional leaders of the South Conference meet monthly from September through May. Each month the meetings are rotated among the churches of our conference so that we can become better acquainted with the different ministries of the South Conference. These meetings are opportunities to worship together, discuss issues and learn more about the workings of our church through programs, speakers and our experiences. There is also the opportunity to support and uphold one another in prayer, with fellowship, and the sharing of God's love.

During the past year we welcomed Pastor Norman Femrite (First, Princeton), Pastor Christine Schoon (Trinity, Ottawa) and Diakonia Graduate/Seminary Student Gene Vincent (First, Ohio) into our conference. The joy brought with their arrivals means that we, at the present time, have no vacancies in the South Conference.

At our annual Spring Conference Assembly, Esther and John Prabhaker gave a presentation on our companion synod, the Arcot Lutheran Church in India.

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

- A presentation by Pastor Diane Dardon, campus pastor at NIU, on campus ministry at Northern Illinois University.
- A program by Mr. Jim Fitz from Tiskilwa on the ministry of the Christian Peacemaking Team.
- A discussion on the church-wide healthcare initiatives, with questions concerning our major medical health insurance.
- A presentation by Mr. Gaylon Ehlers of Peru on his experiences in the area of prison ministry.
- A presentation by Pastor Norm Femrite (First, Princeton) on "Intentional Prayer Partner Ministry.
- A program by Mr. Kent Terry of Marseilles on World Hunger with an introduction to "life-straws". He also presented his own personal reflections on Diakonia.
- A presentation by Pastor Krista Stokke (First, Granville & Emmaus, McNabb) on her experiences on a Back Bay Mission trip to the Gulf Coast region.

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

We in the scenic South Conference are proud to be a part of the Northern Illinois Synod. We know that we are fortunate to have our synod staff and 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

At our Spring Conference Assembly in April, we had a presentation by Esther Prabhakar and Art Milton about their 2006 trip to India. A new Dean (Pastor Susan Kent) and a new Secretary – Treasurer (Pastor Nancy Jaster) were elected. The Southwest Conference continued to meet monthly for a time of fellowship, prayer, Word and Sacrament, and learning. Some of the programs included: Reflections of Churchwide Assembly, Domestic Violence, Synod activities, KIVA, Habitat for Humanity, and the Foods Resource Bank.

Our Conference is very involved in the Foods Resource Bank project and it was a joy this year to celebrate the success of that ministry at the FRB Harvest Festival in September. Out in a cornfield over by Henderson Grove, IL we celebrated in worship and being together as a community of God's people wanting to share our resources with people around the world. Our project for the year was the Kenya Machakos program. \$22,600 was sent to the ELCA World Hunger Appeal for our FRB Growing Project. Additional funds have been received given since.

The Fall Mission Gathering in November was hosted by Pastor Tim Anderson in Altona and the Conference Fall Assembly was in Kewanee with Rev. Roger Prois the speaker on the Hunger Appeal and Disaster Response. We voted to give an additional \$1250 to Foods Resource Bank. At this time, the Conference is preparing for its Spring Assembly which will be on April 27th. Jeana Fors will share her experience of the Companion Synod trip to the Arcot Lutheran Church in India. We will be electing a female clergy to attend church wide assembly in 2009

We are very fortunate to have a wealth of expertise in our conference. We look forward to our monthly Stewardship Newsletter written by our colleague, Pastor Jim Olsen. The insights shared and the reflections are so valuable to all of us. Pastor Tom Larsen, Assistant to the Bishop, has been supportive and always keeps us informed of synod happenings. The Thursday morning Text study continues with many wise words from our participants. It is with sadness though that we have lost one of our very faithful members, Rev. Gerald Youngquist, who came to the study for some 40 years. We appreciated his insight, commitment, and his faithfulness to the church.

We welcomed new pastors and ministers to our conference. At our annual summer picnic, we welcomed Rev. Linda Winkelman who came to Messiah in Galva. Rev. Ron Ferrell came in November to be the Interim Associate in the Edwards River Ministry. Rev. Nancy Jaster became pastor of Edwards River Ministry which now also includes Bethany in Woodhull. Carol Curry came to the Southwest Conference as a nurse practitioner but has also completed the AIM process and is now awaiting a call.

It has been a joy to serve as Dean of this conference for the past year. I'd like to say a big thank you to my secretary-treasurer, Pastor Nancy Jaster, for her faithful service.

Rev. Susan Kent
Southwest Conference Dean

West Conference Report

During the past year, the West Conference has given thanks. We have welcomed Pr. Janet Lepp, St. James – Rock Island, as a colleague, and Pr. Mike Clark as assistant to the Bishop for our conference. We have celebrated the ministries of Pr. Kimberly Riebe, who moved to Fort Madison, Iowa. And we have looked at different options for our gatherings together, seeking new ways to be of support to one another as well as ways to strengthen our ministry in our respective communities.

After several years without a regular gathering, a text study group now gathers weekly. Three of our congregations are sharing regular youth ministry programming, with two others showing interest in participating at some level. Two congregations are developing an earth stewardship ministry. Our monthly meeting, with worship and fellowship, is held at Immanuel Lutheran in East Moline. We held our annual meeting in connection with the Illowa annual meeting in February and heard a presentation on parish nursing.

Stacie Fidler
West Conference Dean