

CONFERENCES

Central Conference

As the newly elected dean of the Central Conference on March 29th, 2009 it is a privilege to serve among God's called.

Monthly conference meetings are held on the second Wednesday each month except for July and August. The meetings this year have taken place at St. Paul, Dixon beginning at 8:30 A.M. Significant is worship with liturgy including confession, scripture, sermon, prayer and Holy Communion. Worship begins at 9:00 A.M. Following worship, we gather in plenary for sharing of matters from the Synod or ELCA office, various events, invitations and opportunities for ministry including continuing education and retreats. Opportunity for more personal sharing occurs as the whole group then divides into three. Following the morning gathering, the "breaking of bread" is often shared at a local restaurant for those interested.

The spring Conference meeting was held at Immanuel, Dixon on March 29th, 2009. Pastor Diane Dardon was an engaging guest speaker as she shared experiences of campus life at NIU this past 14 months and how the tragedy of February 14th, 2008 affected campus life. The ministry at NIU is growing and invitations were extended to become a part of the dynamic atmosphere there. Rev. Scott Schmidt was elected as secretary/treasurer. Remarkably tasty pies were shared upon the conclusion of the meeting.

There are two pericope groups active in the conference that meet weekly on Tuesdays; one in Dixon meeting at Immanuel and an ecumenical group that meets in Rock Falls at Immanuel.

Lenten efforts in the Conference were shared for preaching or drama presentation during mid-week worship as two round robin groups were formed.

One of several enjoyable aspects of the Central Conference is time for socializing. This year Rev. Bob Hanson hosted the group for good foods and interesting games for all ages.

The two conference interns this year were from Immanuel, Rock Falls, Amy Toporsch, and St. John, Sterling, Eder Weber. Amy has become engaged to be married to Eric while on internship. Eder has come to us from Brazil. Both have added greatly to our collegial enrichment.

We said good-bye to Rev. Jim Harbaugh and Interim Pastor Carol Soderholm this past year. Jim and his wife moved to the Northeast Iowa Synod upon receipt of a new call to serve God there. Rev. Soderholm completed her term at Immanuel, Dixon while Rev. Frank Langhoff arrived by accepting the call at Immanuel during the fall of 2008.

It is a blessing to participate in Conference life, and I thank God for each person and congregation in this part of God's church.

Grace and peace,
Rev. Mark L. Oehlert

East Conference

The pastors of the East Conference usually gather the 4th Thursday of each month (September through May) at various conference congregations. Since the last synod assembly, we have met at First/Santa Cruz, Joliet; Shepherd of the Hill; Lockport; Good Shepherd, Romeoville; St. John's, Joliet; Faith, Joliet; Salem, Sandwich; and United, Gardner. Various presenters have included: Bishop Wollersheim; Pr. Jeff Clements; Pr. Scott Nordby; Pr. Dave Hedlin & Pr. Stan Bockwoldt; Pr. Denver Bittner & Pr. Dan Schwick; Pr. Ron Voss; and Pr. Bob Dell.

We bid farewell to the following pastors: Pr. Carol Gates, Salem, Sandwich; and Pr. Dan Metzger, Messiah, Joliet. We welcomed 3 newly ordained pastors: Pr. P.J. Malin, Cross of Glory, Homer Glen; Pr. Rakel Evenson, New Life, Bolingbrook; and Pr. Ben Ingelson, Resurrection, Channahon. In addition, the following pastors also were welcomed: Pr. Stan Bockwoldt, Peace, New Lenox; Pr. Josh Auchenbach, Joyful Spirit, Bolingbrook; Pr. Katie Gallagher, Alleluia, Naperville; and Pr. Jamie Gallagher, awaiting call.

Two congregations underwent the re-development process: New Creation, Channahon became Resurrection, Channahon; and Lord of Life, Oswego became Living Spirit. On March 22 United Lutheran Church; Gardner dedicated a fellowship hall addition. In August, seminarian Jeff Mikyska will be completing his year of internship at Salem, Sandwich. Current congregational vacancies include: Bethlehem, Joliet; Living Spirit, Oswego; and Salem, Sandwich.

Respectfully submitted,
The Rev. Dr. Robert T. Dealey, Dean
East Conference

North Conference

The North Conference meets weekly to study the Pericope lessons for the coming Sunday:

- One group meets Thursday mornings, rotating between the various congregations, enjoying the fellowship, the coffee, and the challenges of discussing various options for preaching.
- A second group meets Tuesday afternoons, gathering at a neighborhood coffee shop. This group has been joined by clergy from sister denominations.

The Ministerium has met several times this past year and focused on Lutheran Justice & Advocacy, the ELCA Report & Recommendations on Human Sexuality, and a lively discussion on what might happen if we functioned *as if* we were a 19 point parish rather than separate and independent entities.

The Conference also joined with the United Methodist Peace & Justice group to bring Professor Walter Wink to town for an evening supper and presentation. The focus was on *Non-Violence in a Violent World*. Over 100 persons from Rockford and surrounding towns gathered on a snowy Friday night to share in a lively discussion.

At the annual meeting April 26, 2009, held at Salem Lutheran Church the Conference elected a new Dean – The Rev. William Dahlberg. They also elected a new Treasurer – The Rev. Ralph Kuespert.

It has been a challenging privilege to have served the Conference for three terms. I look forward to continued opportunities to meet with these dedicated women and men who serve their Calls to proclaim the Good News.

The Rev. Frank S. Moyer

Northeast Conference

Professional leaders of the Northeast Conference gather monthly for fellowship, worship, business, and a program. This year we have been meeting at a different congregation in the conference each month. We have good participation of our professional leaders and our time together provides for fellowship, support, and learning opportunities for all.

I was elected as dean of the conference last fall. We are very thankful to Robert Kinnear who had previously served as our dean for two terms. Marilyn Hanson continues her good work as our secretary/treasurer. Deaconess Cheryl Erdmann is the assistant to the bishop who relates to our conference. We are thankful to all for their faithful service.

The programs for the past year were as follows:

September “Preaching to Seekers” by Mike Thomas
October..... “A Good Pastoral Entry” by Janet Hunt
November..... “In the Footsteps of Luther” by Todd Peterson
December “Companion Congregation Relationships” by Gary Erickson
January Discussion on Lenten services, programs, and resources
February “Lutheran Campus Ministry at N.I.U.” by Diane Dardon
March “The Real St. Patrick and His Legacy” by Cheryl Erdmann
April “Ministry Mentors” by Don Fagerberg
May “Stewardship” by Kurt Nordby

The past year we welcomed Ken Gibson, Herb Priester, and John Cunningham as new pastors in our conference. Ken is serving at Grace Lutheran Church in Woodstock, Herb is serving at Trinity Lutheran Church of Harvard, and John is serving at St. Barnabas Lutheran Church of Cary. We were also glad to have with us Dan Durbin, who is serving as an intern at Bethany Lutheran Church of Crystal Lake.

A number of clergy gather each week at First Lutheran Church in DeKalb for a time of fellowship and a study of the lectionary texts for the upcoming Sunday. Our time together is very helpful and worthwhile.

Thanks be to God for all the church members and leaders in our conference along with Bishop Gary Wollersheim and his staff. May God continue to guide and bless us all as we minister in the name of Jesus.

Respectfully submitted,

Wayne Derber
Dean, Northeast Conference

Northwest Conference

The Northwest Conference had another incredible year of collaborative ministry! We held our annual conference meeting in April and heard a wonderful and enlightening update from Mary Lasits concerning the Northern Illinois Synod’s Lutheran Youth Organization. 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 March 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. Also in March we had the opportunity to meet with Bishop Wollersheim and receive an update concerning the vibrant ministry life of the synodical expression of the church. We also organized and held a musician’s workshop held in March in our conference for the continuing education benefit of our conference musicians. Our conference pastors also held a joint spiritual retreat in February and held weekly text studies. We look

forward to another awesome and spirit-filled year ahead as we gather as a conference to engage in God's work with our hands!

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 ministry locations 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 interim Pastor Ann Ziegert (Emmaus, McNabb and First, Granville). Having had her with us previously with several other interims, we are pleased and fortunate to have her return. At the same time we were sad to see Pastor Krista Stokke (Emmaus, McNabb and First, Granville) leave our conference to accept a call to Minnesota.

At our annual Spring Conference Assembly, which was held at St. Matthew's, Princeton, host Pastor Jeff Schlesinger presented a program on the "green congregation". We also elected Paula Larson (Our Savior's, Seneca) to be our conference voting member to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly and Pastor Kevin Weeks (Zion, LaMoille [Clarion]) to be a member of the synod nominating committee.

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

- A presentation by John and Esther Prabhakar about their medical mission trip to Israel.
- A presentation by Pastor Kim Lee-Brown on her trip to the Arcot Lutheran Church in India.
- A meeting with program and lunch at Mendota Lutheran Home.
- An interesting program presented by Big Sky Windfarm concerning wind energy and the development of the Big Sky Windfarm outside of Ohio, Illinois.
- A program presented by Pastor Jeffrey Schlesinger (St. Matthew's, Princeton) concerning "Hearing the Good News".
- A program presented by Pastor Kris Zierke (Our Savior's, Seneca) introducing us to the "Five Wishes".

We also once again enjoyed our annual Christmas communion worship, carol singing to the residents, and festive meal at Pleasant View Luther Home in Ottawa.

We are pleased and proud to have a Diakonia sight located in the South Conference. It is located at St. John's Lutheran Church, Peru. We do invite new students to join us at Peru on Tuesday evenings between the hours of 6:30 and 9:30PM. This sight is close to the western part of the East conference, the eastern part of the West conference and the southern part of the Central Conference. Thus, we would welcome any students from these locations.

We in the scenic South Conference, where the Fox River meets the Illinois River, are proud to be a part of the Northern Illinois Synod. We are thankful for our synod staff and we thank Bishop Wollersheim and his entire staff for their leadership, concern, prayer and love. Many thanks also to the officers and to the all of the pastors and professional church workers of our conference.

Pastor David J. Ufkes
South Conference Dean

Southwest Conference

Our Conference Spring Assembly was held in April at Messiah Lutheran Church in Galva. The speaker was Jeana Fors sharing her experience on the NIS trip to India

Monthly meetings were well attended with many interesting speakers and informative information shared. Some of our speakers included Rev. Twila Shock, Rev. Kurt Nordby, and Beth Nelson Chase from Wartburg. Other interesting discussions were held and our time together is always a good time of support and fellowship.

The Conference Fall Assembly and the Fall Mission Gathering were combined this year - held at Bethany in Woodhull. The topic of the Mission Gathering was "Caring for God's Creation Where I Live" led by the LOMC Green Team.

We welcome Rev. Robert Franek to our Conference who is serving in Wataga. He also graciously accepted the call to be our secretary/treasurer. Many thanks!

Our conference has been very involved in the Foods Resource Bank Growing Project and this year proves to be even more exciting when the FSB Annual Gathering will be hosted at Augustana College this summer. In 2008 a check for \$28,000 was sent through the NIS and the World Hunger Appeal to the Foods Resource Bank. The last 3 years we have raised a total of \$74,456 for programs in Africa.

It has been a good year filled with the joy of serving our Lord.

Rev. Susan Kent
Southwest Conference Dean

West Conference

Greetings to you in the Name of our Lord!

The West Conference has continued to seek to be a communication conduit and a place for shared ministry among the congregations of this conference. In the past year we have strengthened a greening of the church initiative begun by St. Johns, Rock Island and Trinity, Moline, called Earthkeepers. This initiative has led to a number of improvements that use less energy and pollute less in our congregations. We have continued to support the educational efforts of the ILLOWA Coalition as well as in seeking ways to support one another. Collective efforts currently underway include our response to the upcoming Franklin Graham program scheduled for August and an information session on social statements and the proposed social statement on human sexuality in early June.

Pastor Larry Conway
West Conference Dean