

SAINT PAUL AREA SYNOD FaithLink

Connecting Leaders of the Saint Paul Area Synod (ELCA)

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Bega Kwa Bega Update from Bishop Peter Rogness

Peter Harrits named Director of Bega Kwa Bega



Harrits currently serves in Borneo, Malaysia, as the Country Coordinator for Young Adults in Global Mission. He will start his duties as the Director of Bega Kwa Bega (BKB) Jan. 15. Bega Kwa Bega (meaning “shoulder to shoulder” in Swahili) is the name given to our synod’s companion synod partnership with the Iringa Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania.

Dear Partners in Ministry:
Many of you have been awaiting this news. I thank you for your patience and prayers. We have much for which to celebrate and give thanks!

I am pleased to announce that the Rev. Peter Harrits has accepted the call to serve as the Director of Bega Kwa Bega. Peter is currently serving as the Country Coordinator for the Young Adults in Global Mission program of the ELCA. He lives in Borneo, Malaysia, and frequently makes junkets throughout Southeast Asia and around the world!

Conversant in Swahili as well as Malay with elementary speaking ability with Indonesian and Spanish, he brings a variety of strengths to his position as the Director of Bega Kwa Bega, including an innate ability to use technology and social media to extend ministry and to share the stories of the gospel, as they unfold in the lives of individuals throughout the world.

For a great introduction to Peter and his work, visit his blog at newspecs.blogspot.com to view his videos, photography, and writing.

Many of you are familiar with Peter; others are not. Allow me to introduce him to you by quoting excerpts of his letter of introduction to us:

My initial call to ministry, as well as my vocational interest in global mission, was formed through the Bega Kwa Bega program and the companion relationship between my home congregation in Apple Valley and its partner in Tungamalen-ga, Tanzania. In 2004, while serving as Director of Youth Ministry at Shepherd of the Valley, I led a group of youth and young adults to visit their peers in Tungamalenga. After two weeks of living together and sharing stories of our hopes and fears, loves and losses, and the God who abides with us through it all, we gathered together in closing worship. There, along the communion rail, I observed men and women, Americans and Tanzanians, Maasai and Hehe all kneeling shoulder to shoulder, breaking bread and sharing wine. In that scene I witnessed a picture of what the church could be, of what the church should be, of what the church is--a diverse multitude made one in Christ. In that moment I felt

a stirring in my heart and began to discern a call to go and do likewise--to build connections across cultures and continents and to be part of knitting together the worldwide body of Christ.

Following that call has taken me around the world and back again. I began my theological studies at Luther Seminary in January of 2005 before transferring to Yale Divinity School in the fall of 2006. The move to a major research university allowed me to pair coursework in Biblical Studies, Preaching, and Pastoral Care with a Certificate in African Studies and additional scholarship in International Development, Anthropology, African Religions and Kiswahili. A subsequent Master of Sacred Theology allowed for concentrated research in the field of World Christianity and, more specifically, the intersection of Globalization, Human Migration, and Christian Mission in an increasingly interconnected and mobile world.

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From the Bishop

By Peter Rogness

What we have a right to expect

I am far more accustomed to speaking of the life of faith as being a life that we are privileged to have offered to us, rather than a life in which we have certain rights. But both are true.

At the center of our faith is the privilege of being loved unconditionally by a God who has created us (we have done nothing to earn it), places us in a life full of blessings (love of family and friends, life-sustaining work, food, and shelter) and hovers and sustains us even when life seems to fall apart. The believer is privileged to be invited into faith and into a faith community. I have often voiced the privilege it is to be called to serve the faith community, to be looked to as a proclaimer of the life-giving Good News, to be invited into the intimacy of people's joys and pain.

It is a privilege to be a child of God! And it is a privilege to be called to serve within the church.

But I've also become aware that there are some ways we also have some rights in this life of faith.

People who come regularly to church have a right to expect they will encounter the holy story of God reaching into our lives, a reach most clearly seen in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They have a right to expect that story be told with power and conviction. They have a right to expect that this story will do vital business with the story of their own lives. Whether one has attended church regularly or is a first-time visitor, they have a right to expect to encounter the central story.

People have a right to expect that the story will both comfort and disturb. There is no story that holds more power or comfort than to be told that the One who created us and all that exists is one of relentless love and forgiveness and restoration, from whom nothing can separate us. But we also speak of the gospel being "words of judgment and of hope."

The love of God does not shortchange us. The music teacher who is committed to bring out the best in a student cannot hold back from pointing out the wrong note, tempo, and inflection—to do so would fail to unleash the student's full potential. The hearer who comes to encounter the saving Word has a right to expect that word will both comfort and disturb.

The community of faith is itself shaped by mutual expectations and rights. The rites of ordination and installation make clear the pastor has promised to preach and teach, to care for God's people, to live a life of witness and service. People call pastors and have a right to expect these promises be kept.

And in those same rites the congregation promises to receive, support, and pray for their pastors, "regarding them as servants of Christ." A pastor has a right to expect such support, and the congregation has a right to expect such care and service.

Having said all this, we also know we are flawed creations this side of the grave, that we often disappoint and fall short. Confession, forgiveness, restoration, and new beginnings are also privileges that come to us from the God, who calls us into this life. It is in the presence of the promised Spirit that our lives of faith, both in our rights and in our privileges, find foundation.



2014 Health Assessment available Jan 1

The Saint Paul Area Synod has the opportunity again in 2014 to earn a two percent discount on our health care contributions. In 2013, we collectively saved \$42,000! Seventy-three percent of eligible members completed the health assessment. In 2014, let's aim for 100 percent!

Each congregation and organization in our synod will receive a two percent discount on health contributions if 65 percent of our eligible ELCA-primary plan members complete the confidential Mayo Clinic Health Assessment by April 30.

This savings depends on you!

If you have ELCA-primary health coverage, this savings depends on you. Take the assessment January 1-April 30 on the EmbodyHealth web portal, www.elcaforwellness.org. When you complete the assessment, you will also earn \$150 in your personal wellness account to offset out-of-pocket medical costs.

Encourage others to take it! The assessment is confidential and takes about 20 minutes to complete. Your most recent health statistics are helpful to have on hand while you take the assessment, but they aren't required. Congregants, remind your pastors and church staff to take it. It will save your congregation money on health benefits!

Enroll in or waive your ELCA-Primary health care coverage starting Nov. 1

It's time to take action!

In response to health care reform, Portico Benefit Services announced that ELCA-Primary health benefits will offer four options in 2014 instead of the one option formerly available. In October, participating congregations and other sponsoring employers chose to recommend one of these four new health care benefit options now offered by Portico. It's now plan members turn to act!



From November 1-22, plan members will need to visit myPortico.PorticoBenefits.org to report their decision to enroll in the plan recommended by their employer, choose an alternative plan, or waive Portico coverage. If your employer offers health coverage through Portico but you have health coverage through a spouse or other source, *you still need to visit Portico's website and waive your employer-provided coverage*. Visit Portico's website for resources to help you understand the four options and how to approach this decision.

Not sure how to register? Visit myPortico.PorticoBenefits.org and use the Member ID and Security Validation Code (SVC) mailed to you this summer by Portico Benefit Services.

Can't find your numbers? Contact Portico for help at 800.352.2876.

November brings important bishop election events

Synod profile published

In early November, the Bishop Election Committee (BEC) published a synod profile, which will serve two important purposes as we prepare to elect a new synod bishop in May, 2014:

1. To provide the information members of the synod need to participate knowledgeably in the nomination and election processes in the months ahead, and
2. To help potential candidates for bishop understand the needs of the synod and assess their fit for this important role in the church.

The synod profile contains important information for both members and potential candidates on the mission, vision, and ministry of the synod and its congregations. It also provides background on the historical and cultural contexts for the synod’s ministry, as well as basic information on its day-to-day operations, including staffing, budget and finance, and important ministry partnerships.

The synod profile is available at www.spas-elca.org/bishop-election2014. Printed copies will be available at upcoming bishop election events and can be requested in advance through the synod office, 651.224.4313. The BEC will provide an opportunity to review the profile in detail at a special forum at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church from 8:30-11:30 a.m. on Saturday, January 11, 2014. All are invited to this event.

Reminder of important bishop election events

With the publication of the synod profile, the election process has entered the second of five phases in the election process, *Sharing Our Mission*. (Refer to the bishop election website at www.spas-elca.org/bishop-election2014/timeline for descriptions of the phases of the process.)

In November, the first two key events in the election process will be held:

Fall Ministerium: “What I Know That I Think You Should Know,”
Nov. 14, 2013, 9:00 a.m.-12:00 noon,
St. Michael’s, Roseville

A Conversation with Laity: “What I Know That I Think You Should Know,”
Nov. 16, 2013, 9:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m.,
St. Timothy, St. Paul

At these events, Bishop Peter Rogness will share his insights into the role of the bishop, based on his 30 years’ experience as a synodical bishop, and his 12 years in that role with the Saint Paul Area Synod. Those who will serve as voting members at conference assemblies in February are especially encouraged to attend. Please also plan now for your congregation’s involvement in election events in 2014:

Open Forum on Synod Profile
Jan. 11, 2014, 8:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.,
Gloria Dei, St. Paul

Conference Assemblies
Feb. 8, 2014, St. Andrew’s, Mahtomedi

Candidate Forums
April 26, 2014, Incarnation, Shoreview, and
April 28, 2014, Augustana, West St. Paul

Election of New Bishop at Synod Assembly
May 16-17, 2014,
Prince of Peace, Burnsville

See the [FaithLink calendar page](#) for more detail on each of these events. Please also mark these events on your calendar and plan to participate.

Don’t forget to check the bishop election website, www.spas-elca.org/bishop-election2014, frequently for the latest information. Updates will also be provided in the synod’s weekly News and Events emails and via Facebook and Twitter. If you have questions or would like to offer input, please contact the BEC at spas.bec.2014@gmail.com.

Exploring Our Mission	Sharing Our Mission	Inviting Nominations	Presenting the Candidates	STP	Electing a New Bishop
Spring and Summer 2013	Fall 2013	Winter 2014	Spring 2014		May 16-17, 2014

Mission in Action supports local missionaries

The Mission in Action project is designed to help tell the stories of our new, missional ministries in the Saint Paul Area Synod, all of which are seeking to embody Christ’s presence in new ways and among new communities.



You’re invited to visit www.spas-elca.org/missioninaction where you’ll find links to a bulletin insert, newsletter article, and a brief video slide show for each ministry. Additionally, there is a set of two freestanding display banners, each measuring six feet by two feet. Congregations may check out one, two, or all seven sets of banners for a Mission Sunday, partnership fair, or other event.

Contact Paul Erickson, paul.erickson@spas-elca.org, in the synod office to check on availability.

Not a building, but a movement



By the Rev. Steve McKinley

When God needs somebody, God has a way of finding somebody. Four years ago God needed somebody at Pueblo de Fe. Pueblo de Fe didn’t have a building and it didn’t have a pastor. It did have Jacqueline Belzer, who was working part time with youth and family ministries.

At that point she wasn’t even a Lutheran. Even more important, it had the power of God’s Holy Spirit. That Holy Spirit worked through the people of Pueblo de Fe and Belzer, who became the ministry coordinator for the congregation, and led them to St. Stephen’s Lutheran Church in West St. Paul. The congregation worships there on Sundays at 1:00 p.m., and partners with St. Stephen’s in other ministry opportunities. Growth is happening.

- Three women of the congregation have organized a Sunday School, which now has 24 children enrolled. Living up to that Biblical promise about “a child will lead them,” those children are now bringing their parents to church.
- There is a women’s group of 12 which gathers each Monday. Three of the regulars aren’t members of the congregation, but through the welcome they have received, they are on their way and are bringing others with them.
- There are four home Bible study groups, involving many of the congregation’s 55 members.

“It hasn’t been easy,” Belzer says, “but God has been with us all the way, reminding us that the church isn’t a building or a pastor, but a movement.”

“We are the only Hispanic congregation in the Saint Paul Area Synod,” she adds, “but it feels like family. And we want to do our part in the family.” To that end, Pueblo de Fe is mentoring Latino leaders at Christ the King, New Brighton. And, by the way, Belzer is now a Lutheran, and on her way toward ordination through the Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM) program.

Pueblo de Fe grew out of Holy Trinity-San Martin Lutheran, which voted in 2006 to sell its building, cease as a congregation, and support the start of a bi-lingual congregation on St. Paul’s West Side.

Calendar

Look for more events and information at www.spas-elca.org

November

■ Safeguarding God's Children

Nov. 7, 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m., Woodlake, Richfield. A training for children, youth and family (CYF) ministry leaders in the Safeguarding God's Children materials, equipping participants to train other ministry leaders in their ministry settings.

■ Bega Kwa Bega Fall Festival

Nov. 9, Christ the King, New Brighton.
[See inset on pg. 5.](#)

■ Fall Ministerium: "What I Know That I Think You Should Know"

Nov. 14, 9:00 a.m.-12:00 noon, St. Michael's, Roseville. Rostered leaders are invited to come and learn from Bishop Rogness about the scope of work undertaken in the Office of the Bishop.

■ A Conversation with Laity: "What I Know That I Think You Should Know"

Nov. 16, 9:00-11:30 a.m. St. Timothy, St. Paul. Laity are invited to join this discussion with Bishop Rogness and with one another. This session will be particularly helpful to those who will participate in the nomination process at conference assemblies or in the election of a new bishop at synod assembly.

■ Practice Discipleship Training

Nov. 16, 8:30 a.m. 12:45 p.m., Westwood, St. Louis Park. This will be another full training in the Practice Discipleship series. All trainings are free and open to all CYF staff and volunteers. To register, contact Don Marsh at DMarsh@Augustana.com or 651.457.3373, ext. 16.

■ Communicators' Gathering: Google: More Than Just a Search Engine

Nov. 21, 1:00-3:00 p.m., Prince of Peace, Roseville. Did you know that Google has free resources for non-profits? Learn how to use Google Apps at the next Communicators' Gathering. We will cover the basics of Google Drive, Forms, and Calendars, to help you and your congregation save time and money. To RSVP or learn more, contact Christine Fifield at christine.fifield@spas-elca.org.

December

■ North Central Conference Meeting

Dec. 3, 2:30 p.m., Lutheran Church of the Resurrection, Roseville. The Rev. Tim Bernard, chair of the Bishop Election Committee, will be with us to share insights and to listen to our own thoughts on the process of election the qualities we are looking for in our next bishop.

January

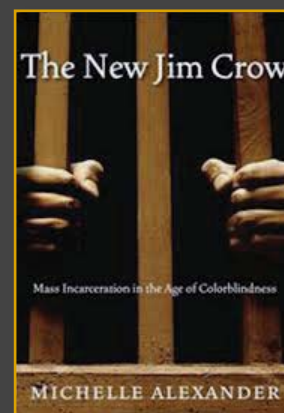
■ Open Forum on Synod Profile

Jan. 11, 2014, 8:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m., Gloria Dei, St. Paul. The Bishop Election Committee will present and lead a discussion of the synod profile—a document reflecting on the mission, needs, and priorities of this synod.

The Saint Paul Area Synod Anti-Racism Task Force invites you to join a Criminal Justice Book Study of Michelle Alexander's

The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness

As Lutherans we are called to prayerfully and thoughtfully examine the issue of racial and criminal justice and discern our individual or collective response. The Immanuel Lutheran social action committee and the Saint Paul Area Synod anti-racism task force are hosting a three-part book study as a springboard for discussion of this important topic. All are invited to attend.



Dates and Themes:

New Jim Crow: Hearing the Cries (Framing the issue, understanding the anguish)
Nov. 7, 7:00-8:30 p.m., Immanuel, St. Paul.

New Jim Crow: Prophetic Witness (Lending our voice, telling the stories of inequity)
Nov. 14, 7:00-8:30 p.m., Immanuel, St. Paul.

New Jim Crow: Compassionate Action (Reaching out to help, sharing the burden)
Nov. 21, 7:00-8:30 p.m., Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, St. Paul.

Visit thenewjimcrow-bookstudy.eventbrite.com to register. Contact Lynnette Zika at 612.845.8886 or lynnettezika@gmail.com with questions.

■ Power and Boundaries: Ethics in Ministry

Jan. 14, 2014, 8:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Location TBD. Facilitated by Bishop Peter Rogness and the Rev. Susan Miller, the training will include theological content; power and gender issues and appropriate boundaries for rostered leaders; self-care and vulnerability; and a review of the synod's response procedure for accusations of sexual boundary violations.

■ Multicultural Conversations: How do we build bridges across race, class and culture?

Jan. 25, 2014, 8:30 a.m.-12:00 noon, Luther Seminary Chapel, St. Paul. Congregations are invited to send teams of people to learn about resources for engaging in multicultural conversations. "One Body, Many Members," a web resource from the ELCA will be introduced. Judith Roberts, ELCA program director for racial justice ministries, will guide the conversation.

Coming Up..

■ Conference Assemblies

Feb. 8, 2014, St. Andrew's, Mahtomedi. Conference assemblies are held annually and lay the foundations for the synod assembly. The nominating process for a new bishop begins at conference assemblies with the nominating of potential candidates.

■ Tool Kit for Congregational Leaders

Feb. 22, 2014, 8:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m., St. Mark's, North St. Paul. A training event for congregational leaders that features extended conversation with Bishop Rogness, networking opportunities with leaders from congregations of this synod, and workshops specific to leadership matters and concerns. More at www.spas-elca.org/toolkit.

■ Jump Start Your Stewardship

April 5, 2014, 8:30 a.m.-12:00 noon, Christ the King, Bloomington. The 2014 Jump Start Your Stewardship event entitled, "Change for the Church," will feature three speakers including Mary Kay DuChene, Greg Meyer, and Grace Duddy. Additional details to come. If you have questions regarding this event or stewardship in your congregation, contact the Rev. Susan Miller at susan.miller@spas-elca.org.

■ Candidate Forum

April 26, 2014, Incarnation, Shoreview. One of two opportunities to meet the candidates for bishop in advance of the May election. Profiles of the candidates will be published in March, and congregations will be invited to submit questions for the candidates in advance of the forums. Details will be published at www.spas-elca.org/bishopselection2014 as they become available.

■ Candidate Forum

April 28, 2014, Augustana, West St. Paul. Second of two opportunities to meet the candidates for bishop in advance of the May election.

■ Synod Assembly

May 16-17, 2014, Prince of Peace, Burnsville. Details on the Saint Paul Area Synod Assembly will be posted on synod website as they become available.

■ Sponsored by the Saint Paul Area Synod

Share your event!

Have an event with synodwide appeal that you would like to share on the calendar? Send details to Christine Fifield at christine.fifield@spas-elca.org.

Connections

with the ELCA churchwide and other partners in ministry and mission

Bega Kwa Bega Fall Festival

Celebrating the ministry of the Rev. Don and Eunice Fultz

Photo courtesy of Ken Olson

Join us for the 2013 Bega Kwa Bega Fall Festival Saturday, Nov. 9, at Christ the King Lutheran Church in New Brighton. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. followed by worship at 9:00 a.m.

The morning will be filled with fellowship, learning and prayer as we give thanks for the partnership with our brothers and sisters in Tanzania. We will celebrate the life-affirming ministry of Don and Eunice Fultz, who are retiring as volunteer companion synod coordinators with a presentation, a reception, and a few more surprises.

For more information about the Bega Kwa Bega Fall Festival, please contact KC Gubrud at kc@clausssen-gubrud.net or 612.749.9195.



The Rev. Don and Eunice Fultz have served as coordinators for our companion synod relationship with the Iringa Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania for nearly 15 years. In this role, they have helped create countless opportunities for congregations and individuals to learn from, accompany, and serve our brothers and sisters in Tanzania. Thank you, Don and Eunice!

Continued from page 1

Peter Harrits, cont.

Ordained at the Saint Paul Area Synod Assembly in May of 2011, I began my current position with ELCA Global Mission earlier that year. As Country Coordinator for our Young Adults in Global Mission program, I am tasked with providing programmatic direction and administration to all aspects of this international service-learning program, offering pastoral care and personal support, and tending to the complex web of relationships between companion churches, partner organizations, and individuals that make the success of this program possible. This is a position that not only builds upon my previous experience of directing and administering a congregational program for 1100 youth and their families in Apple Valley, it is also one that continually bears witness to the vision and call that I experienced in Tungamalenga nearly a decade ago....

I'm excited by the prospect of that same call expanding to include the vital network of congregations and thousands of interpersonal relationships that mark this companion synod program. I'm energized by the prospect of returning to Saint Paul and Iringa in order to share the knowledge, skills, connections, experiences, and cross-cultural competencies that I've acquired in the intervening years in order

to strengthen this partnership and take part in shaping our life together. As a creative collaborator, my holy imagination is sparked by the challenges before us and the opportunity to work with faithful leaders and communities in both contexts to discern a common way forward....

In order to allow Peter to attend to the details of completing his work in Malaysia, he will not be starting with us until January 15. We anticipate that he will provide a video greeting at the Bega Kwa Bega Festival on November 9, at Christ the King, New Brighton, and he will be installed at our synod assembly on May 16, where he was ordained in 2011. In addition, he will begin work with the Iringa Committee by Skype and find other ways to engage with the partnership both here in St. Paul and in Iringa while he completes his work in Malaysia through the end of the year. While the dates have not yet been determined, we anticipate that Peter will be in Iringa during February and March.

The Iringa Committee commences its work Oct. 15

At its September meeting, the synod council appointed the following individuals to the Iringa Committee:

Chair: The Rev. Gary Langness, Augustana, West St. Paul

At-Large Representative: Linka Holey, Abiding Savior, Mounds View

At-Large Representative: Patty Anderson, Incarnation, Shoreview

At-Large Representative: The Rev. Tom Hansen, Prince of Peace, Roseville

At-Large Representative: The Rev. Peter Hanson, Hosanna, Forest Lake

Cluster Representative: Betty Wolf, St. Mark's, North St. Paul

Cluster Representative: Kirsten Levorson, Shepherd of the Valley, Apple Valley

Cluster Representative: Dan McIntyre, Lutheran Church of Peace, Maplewood

Cluster Representative: The Rev. Lamont Koerner, Our Savior's, Stillwater

Cluster Representative: Karen Sawyer Smith, St. Stephen's, White Bear Lake

Cluster Representative: Trish Blomquist, Christ the King, New Brighton

The Director of Bega Kwa Bega and the bishop or bishop's designee also serve as voting members of the committee.

Advisors

The Rev. Tom Nielson, Cluster Leader

Bo and Juli Skillman, Cluster Leaders

Ken and Birdie Olson, Cluster Leaders

The Rev. Don and Eunice Fultz, Cluster Leaders

Greg Triplett, Financial Administrator

In making its appointments, the synod council sought to achieve a balance of congregational representation, experience traveling in Iringa, and areas of particular expertise. The committee begins its work on Oct. 15, and its first task will be to discuss the charge to the Iringa Committee, adopted by the synod council. This charge provides the initial instructions for addressing some immediate administrative and financial work that is part of the re-structuring and transition work. Some work has already been initiated.

I thank you all for your patience and partnership in the last 18 months as we have sought to position Bega Kwa Bega for a strong future. I have been moved by your commitment, sustained by your offers of support and prayers, and heartened by your sense of mission to our partners in Iringa. As we anticipate the transition in the Office of the Bishop, I am confident that the future of this partnership will continue to unfold with purpose, vitality, and possibility

Grace and peace,

Peter Rogness
Bishop

This article was originally sent as an e-letter from Bishop Peter Rogness on October 9, 2013.

Postscript

After Nov. 9, Peter Harrits' video greeting to the participants of the 2013 Bega Kwa Bega Fall Festival will be made available at www.spas-elca.org/tanzania. There, you will also find additional information regarding the Saint Paul Area Synod partnership with the Iringa Diocese, including travel forms and scholarships.

Thankful for four-legged family members

Each year, many congregations of the Saint Paul Area Synod offer an annual blessing of the animals as a part of Sunday worship. For the blessing, people are invited to bring their furry, finned, and feathered family members to worship for a special blessing from their pastor and their community. While this special blessing can be held any time of the year, St. Paul congregations North Emanuel, St. Timothy, and Lutheran Church of the Redeemer hosted blessing of the animals services this fall.

A little extra joy

Five years ago, North Emanuel Lutheran Church began offering a blessing of the animals around the time of the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi. Members bring their four-legged friends to worship. “If an animal won’t do well in worship, people bring a picture or representation, and I pray with and bless the family member,” said the Rev. Kisten Thompson, lead pastor at North Emanuel. “We have a number of elderly people in the congregation, and the pets are some of their dearest companions,” Thompson said. “They love to bring their ‘family’ members to worship once a year.”

This year, Thompson invited a congregation member to share her story of finding homes for all of her father’s animals when he had to go into memory care. “She met some sisters who ran an animal rescue, and these wonderful ladies helped her find placements for over fifty chickens, seven macaws, nine cats, a few ducks and a big dog named Buddy,” said Thompson. “These sisters came to worship to hear [her story] and they brought Olive, the Vietnamese pot-bellied pig...She was the hit of the day as you can imagine. There is just a little extra joy on Blessing of the Animals Sunday!”

Seeing another side of people

“It’s like seeing another side of the people you sit next to in the pews week after week,” said the Rev. Ruth Prokosch-Sorenson, pastor at St. Timothy in St. Paul. The community of St. Timothy also gathers together to give thanks for and recognition to the joy that our animals bring into our lives. Of the 15 or so animals that participate in St. Timothy’s annual blessing, most of them are dogs but other animals like cats, lizards, a chicken, and hermit crabs have also joined in in recent years. Prokosch-Sorenson recalled that at one service, “I blessed just the collar of a cat who didn’t like to leave home.” But pets aren’t always the only animals to join in. Prokosch-Sorenson remembers that as she did the benediction at St. Timothy’s first blessing of the animals three years ago, there was an eagle circling overhead. “It was amazing!”

Whatever pet people did or did not bring, this service provided a time and space for people to talk with and about each other and their pets. When talking with the people of St. Timothy, Prokosch-Sorenson found that, “our animals teach us a lot about love, patience, stewardship, and joy.” To commemorate the impact that animals can have on one’s life, members of St. Timothy took a few



Left: Pastor Ruth Sorenson-Prokosch of St. Timothy, St. Paul, blesses one of the many happy pets present at worship for the Blessing of the Animals. Right: Pastor Kisten Thompson of North Emanuel, St. Paul, poses for a photo with Olive, the Vietnamese pot-bellied pig. Thompson said, “Olive liked being blessed—she looked up at me while I blessed her and gave her little pig snorts.”



moments to share what they learned about God from their animals and took an offering dedicated to their local humane society.

God’s love for all creatures

In their second year of blessing animals, the people of Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in St. Paul used this day to also reach into their community. Hosted at Redeemer’s Learning Center, neighbors from Dale Street Place, a residence for low income adults, were invited to join worship as one by one the animals entered the room, with their human owners in tow. Like North Emanuel, this blessing was planned around the Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi. To coincide with this day, people sang together a verse of “All Creatures of Our God and King,” attributed to Saint Francis himself and went out into the courtyard garden after worship for a picture with their pet next

to a statue of Saint Francis. “It was great to see the smiles on everyone’s faces as photos were taken with their pets, or as their pets were blessed,” said the Rev. Jim Erlandson, pastor at Redeemer. “We even had two people borrow pets from their friends, in order to participate. It was a fitting way to celebrate God’s love for all the creatures of this world that God has made.”

Other congregations in the Saint Paul Area Synod that have offered a blessing of the animals including First, St. Paul; Gloria Dei, St. Paul; All Saints, Cottage Grove; and many more! For additional photos from these events, visit www.spas-elca.org/blessingoftheanimals.

ELCA Good Gifts

Give “good” gifts this Christmas

Believe it or not, Christmas is just around the corner. Lucky for you, there’s no need to skip out on Thanksgiving for those door-busting Black Friday deals. This year, why not get gifts that give back with ELCA Good Gifts. Whether you give a goat for your grandma or a mosquito net for your mom, you can rest easy knowing that these gifts help to support the health and well-being of our brothers and sisters across the globe. Here’s how it works:

Choose your gift

Browse the catalog and select from more than 50 gift-giving options. Choose the gifts that mean the most to you or choose gifts in honor of friends or loved ones.

Announce your gift

Tell others about the ELCA Good Gifts you have given in their honor by printing a card or sending an eCard. With each online donation you may request a printed card to be mailed to your home.

How you help

Your donations support long-term, sustainable solutions that ensure that these good gifts last for more than a couple of days or weeks. They keep on giving for years to come. For frequently asked questions and more information on ELCA Good Gifts, please visit www.ELCA.org/goodgifts.



To order your ELCA Good Gifts catalog or browse the more than 50 gift-giving options, visit www.elca.org/goodgifts.

Running to heal

Don Wright had just completed his first marathon, Grandma's Marathon in Duluth, Minn, at the age of 62. "At that point the sun was shining, it was warm, I was hot and tired, and I thought, 'Why on earth would anybody ever do this twice?'" But as soon as I crossed the finish line, I knew that I would do it again," Wright said in a recent article by WDIO News-Duluth. It was with high hopes on qualifying for the Boston Marathon that Wright was diagnosed with multiple myeloma, a type of blood cancer that has been known to break bones. At the time of this diagnosis, the life expectancy for multiple myeloma was about five years. Despite this dire diagnosis, every one of Wright's doctors encouraged him to keep running. And, he sure did.

Wright's cancer diagnosis was ten years ago and in that time, Wright has continued to run, qualifying for the Boston marathon and not stopping. Wright, his wife, Ardis (a retired pastor of the Saint Paul Area Synod), and daughter, Sarah, have traveled the country running marathons (or half-marathons for Ardis and Sarah), including eight more Grandma's, and marathons in New York City, Washington D.C., and Providence, R.I. This October, Wright ran his 75th marathon in Mankato. Wright and his family have now completed marathons in all 50 states, including Alaska and Hawaii.

In spite of this accomplishment, the Wrights have no intention of slowing down any time soon. Wright's new goal is to run 100 marathons. "And I won't stop there if I get there," said Wright. To Wright, completing these marathons is his "way of running with cancer, instead of from cancer."

"It's something that keeps me going, that, and just the fact that the family and I love to run," he said.

Part of what makes running with cancer possible is a new treatment that comes in the form of a pill called Pomalyst. "Don is



When the Wrights are not running around the country, they also enjoy hiking together. Above: The Wrights are dressed for a day of hiking in the Sawtooth Mountains of northeastern Minnesota.

fortunate to have been in a study for [this] new drug for the past five years" said Ardis. "It is simply a small pill which he takes once a day. We never could have accomplished the 50 states running if he had needed an 'infusion' of traditional cancer treatments."

On top of finishing 75 marathons, the Wrights just celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. "We are blessed!" said Ardis.

The Wrights are currently members at Christ Lutheran in Lake Elmo. Prior to retirement, Ardis Wright served as an intentional interim pastor in the Saint Paul Area Synod including Lutheran Church of Peace, Maplewood; St. Matthew, St. Paul; St. Philip, Hastings; Galilee, Roseville; Holy Trinity, St. Paul; St. Mark's, Randolph; Spring Lake, North Branch; and Trinity, Maplewood.

Read the news article on Wright's accomplishment by WDIO News-Duluth at www.wdio.com/article/stories/s3174625.

Photo courtesy of Ardis Wright

NEWS ABOUT Calls

In Interim

Atonement, New Brighton, *pastor*
Christ, St. Paul, *pastor*
Christ the Servant, Vadnais Heights, *pastor*
Faith, Forest Lake, *senior pastor*
First, Taylor's Falls, *pastor*
Galilee, Roseville, *pastor*
Hmong Central, St. Paul, *pastor*
Holy Cross, Oakdale, *senior pastor*
Lutheran Church of Peace, Maplewood, *pastor*
Our Savior's, Stillwater, *senior pastor*
Roseville, Roseville, *senior pastor*
Spring Lake, North Branch, *pastor*
St. Anthony Park, St. Paul, *associate pastor*
St. Paul, Stillwater, *senior pastor*
Zion, Chisago City, *pastor*
Zion, St. Paul, *pastor*

Call Committee Active

Christ the King, New Brighton, *senior pastor*
Christus Victor, Apple Valley, *associate pastor*
Family of Christ, Lakeville, *pastor*
Grace, St. Paul, *pastor*
Highview Christiania, Farmington, *pastor*
Hosanna, Forest Lake, *senior pastor*
Light of the World, Farmington, *pastor*
Roseville, Roseville, *associate pastor*
St. Paul-Reformation, St. Paul, *pastor*
Trinity, Lindstrom, *part-time associate pastor*
Trinity, Stillwater, *associate pastor*

Ordinations, Consecration, and Commissioning

Mark Ertl, associate in ministry, commissioned Sept.15, music and worship director, Shepherd of the Valley, Apple Valley

Calls Accepted

The Rev. Amanda Olson de Castillo, pastor, St. Luke, Cottage Grove

The Rev. Andrea Roske-Metcalf, associate pastor, Grace, Apple Valley

The Rev. Karen Cherwien, chaplain, Intrepid USA Hospice, Roseville

The Rev. Lamont Koerner, interim senior pastor, Our Savior's, Stillwater

The Rev. Janel Kuester, interim pastor, Zion, Chisago City

The Rev. Lon Larson, interim pastor, Grace, St. Paul

The Rev. John Marboe, interim pastor, Galilee, Roseville

The Rev. Joy McDonald-Coltvet, interim pastor, Lutheran Church of Peace, Maplewood

The Rev. Leesa Soderlind, *associate pastor*, Good Shepherd, Inver Grove Heights

The Rev. Nancy Wigdahl, chaplain and lead CPE supervisor, Fairview Ridges Spiritual Health Services, Burnsville

Retirements

The Rev. Philip Peterson, effective Nov. 1, 2013

Congregation constitution alert!

The 2013 Churchwide Assembly approved several mandatory provisions for the *Model Constitution for Congregations*. What does this mean? It means that the amendments need to be added to your congregation's constitution as soon as possible and approved by your congregation at an annual meeting or other legally called meeting. Amendments adopted by the churchwide assembly do not need presentation at a prior meeting, (See 17.04 in your congregation's constitution for direction about the process.)

Download the [2013 Amendments to the Model Constitution for Congregations](#) (DOC). Those marked with an asterisk (*) are mandatory and must be included in your constitution as they are written and with the identical numbering.

If you have questions, please contact [Beth Helgen](#) in the synod office.

Prayers

November

Week of November 3

St. Luke, Cottage Grove;
St. Luke, St. Paul;
St. Mark, Circle Pines;
Southwestern Washington Synod and
Bishop Rick Jaech

Week of November 10

St. Mark, North St. Paul;
St. Mark, Randolph;
St. Mark, St. Paul;
Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod and
Bishop Michael W. Rinehart;
The Rev. Gary W. Sartain, North Central
Region ACPE

Week of November 17

St. Matthew's, St. Paul;
St. Michael's, Roseville;
Upper Susquehanna Synod and
Bishop Robert Driesen;
The Rev. Kristofer A. Skrade, Augsburg
Fortress Publishers

Week of November 24

St. Paul, Stillwater;
St. Paul, Wyoming;
St. Paul-Reformation, St. Paul;
Upstate New York Synod and
Bishop Marie C. Jerge;
The Rev. Beth A. Stassen, Regions Hospital

December

Week of December 1

St. Philip's, Hastings;
St. Stephen the Martyr, White Bear Lake;
Virginia Synod and Bishop James F.
Mauney;
Sister Noreen Stevens, Saint Paul Area
Synod-ELCA

Week of December 8

St. Stephen's, West St. Paul;
St. Timothy, St. Paul;
West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod
and Bishop Ralph W. Dunkin;
The Rev. Mary L. Suelztz, HealthEast
Hospice Program

Week of December 15

Trinity, Lindstrom;
Trinity, North Branch;
Western Iowa Synod and
Bishop Rodger Prois;
Sister Becky Swanson, St. Anthony Park,
St. Paul

Week of December 22

Trinity, Stillwater;
Zion, Chisago City;
Western North Dakota Synod and
Bishop Mark E. Narum;
Hans C. Vigessaa, Easter, Eagan

Week of December 29

Zion, Cottage Grove;
Zion, St. Paul;
The Rev. Nancy Wigdahl, Fairview

ILAG update

End of an era in Guatemala

By the Rev. Paul Erickson, Assistant to the
Bishop for Evangelical Mission

**"For everything there is a season, and a
time for every matter under heaven"**
Ecclesiastes 3:1

This text opened a letter recently received by ELCA companions of La Iglesia Luterana Agustina de Guatemala (ILAG), announcing the retirement of Bishop Horacio Castillo. Last September, Bishop Castillo celebrated the 50th anniversary of his ordination, and the previous year, the ILAG celebrated their 20th anniversary.

"Bishop Castillo has been the visionary founder and leader of this church for so many years," wrote Janet Metcalfe, chair of the Saint Paul Area Synod companion synod task force. "Along with Pastor Esther Castillo and their family, they have committed their lives to working among the poorest of the poor. We are so grateful for his faithful service and selfless devotion to building this church."

This latest transition comes in the wake of the recent departure of Pastors Amanda Olson de Castillo and Horacio Castillo, Jr., who relocated to St. Paul earlier this year. Pastor Karen Castillo, daughter of Bishop and Esther Castillo, has been elected president of the ILAG, and they have added additional staff to the pastoral team. "We have full confidence that Pastor Karen will be able to lead the church effectively and faithfully," continued Metcalfe. "This transition has also created the space for other pastors and leaders in the ILAG to step into new roles, and they are doing that. We will continue to support them with our prayers and our love."



For more than two decades, Horacio Castillo has served as bishop of the Augstinian Lutheran Church of Guatemala (ILAG). "Bishop Castillo has been the visionary founder and leader of this church for so many years," shared Janet Metcalfe, chair of the Saint Paul Area Synod Companion Synod Task Force.

Pastor Karen will be traveling to Minnesota in December, and those interested in meeting with her can contact Janet Metcalfe at jkmecalf@yaho.com to schedule a time during the week of December 15-22. There will also be a public event on Tuesday, December 17, at Easter Lutheran Church, 4200 Pilot Knob Road, Eagan, from 6:00-8:00 p.m. Those with questions can contact the Rev. Paul Erickson in the synod office at paul.erickson@elca.org.

Learn more about the Saint Paul Area Synod's partnership with the ILAG at www.spas-elca.org/guatemala.

Tool Kit for Congregational Leaders



St. Mark's Lutheran
2499 Helen St. North
North St. Paul

Saturday, Feb. 22, 2014
8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

About Tool Kit

Tool Kit is a training event for congregational leaders that features extended conversation with Bishop Peter Rogness, networking opportunities with leaders from congregations throughout this synod, and workshops with information specific to leadership matters and concerns.

More at www.spas-elca.org/toolkit.

CALL Assist

Clergy, rostered leaders, and their families are sometimes the last ones to reach out for help with their own problems. But you don't have to wait until things fall completely apart before you ask for help. **Assist**, the employee assistance program of Fairview Health Services, can help. To speak confidentially with an **Assist** counselor about issues of personal or professional concern, call 612.672.2195. The phone is answered 24 hours a day.

NEXT DEADLINE December 1

The deadline for the January issue is December 1. The mailing date is December 30. If you have questions, contact Christine Fifield at 651.224.4313 or at christine.fifield@spas-elca.org.