

Blue Earth River Conference

Lilah E. Aas, Dean

The Blue Earth River Conference encompasses forty-one churches of the southwestern segment of the Southeastern Minnesota Synod. Meetings are held monthly for the pastors and staff from September through April. Good worship, presentations, fellowship, and food make each month's gathering a time of renewal and enrichment. Thanks to Revs. Pat Hinkie and Mark Boorsma for arranging the programs. There have been a variety of interesting programs this past year. During Breast Cancer Awareness Month, Amy Wasson of Albert Lea, shared her insights on being a cancer survivor, witnessed to the role her faith has played in her recovery, and gave some advice for pastors in dealing with cancer patients. Following the theme of "A Synod at Table with the Hungry," Clark Kerry gave an excellent presentation of World Hunger and how we can contribute to alleviating the problem.

Rev. Linda Gunderson's synod position left us without a conference chaplain. We thank Revs. Pat Hinkie and Wendy Anderson for sharing the duties.

The Blue Earth River Conference Annual Assembly was held on February 8, 2009 at Redeemer Lutheran Church of Alden. Rev. Dan Baker presented a Resolution: "Building Consensus Resolution" and Rev. Meg Sander presented a Resolution: "Creation Waits with Eager Longing." Both were approved and will be presented to the Synod Assembly.

Hazel Spiering, treasurer, and Rev. John Malm, Vice Dean, completed their second terms as conference officers.

Thanks to God for blessing us with many dedicated servants.

Cannon River Conference

Rev. Sarah Nietz, Dean

Here is the feedback I have consistently heard over the past year about monthly conference gatherings: "The value of the conference is the opportunity to gather and converse"; "The value of the conference is the chance to worship together and be fed"; "The value of the conference is sharing ideas and visions for what God is calling us to be as Christ's church." Whether as clergy members or as lay and clergy members together, the Cannon River Conference gatherings in 2008 have served as fellowship, worship and conversation times; times when concerns, theologies and questions have been shared, debated and gathered.

The formal presentations of the year have included: Ms. Carole Joyce, presenting on Youth and Family Ministry; Ms. Kris Kvols (Goodhue Wabasha Sexual Assault Services), presenting on Sexual Assault statistics and issues; Rev. David Vásquez (Luther College), presenting on the aftermath of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement raid in Postville, Iowa; Rev. Steve Timm and wife Michelle (Red Wing), presenting on assistance to military families within the congregation; and Ms. Andrea Smothers (Covered Bridge Resources, Zumbrota), presenting on supporting families in congregational life.

This year also included the Annual Cannon River Conference softball game in May, a chance for all to simply enjoy time together. Finally, two members of our conference, Rev. Elaine Siemsen and Rev. Chris Brekke authored and published books: *Resistant Hope: Fighting Back Against Suffering* and *Faith Appetizers: A Sample Platter of Biblical Christianity* (respectively).



Minnesota River Conference

Rev. Joel Erickson, Dean

The obvious connecting point for our pastors in the Minnesota River Conference is the monthly pastors' meetings. Some of our meetings have not been easy as we have addressed the issue of homosexuality via two documentaries: *I Do Exist* and *The Bible Tells Me So*. Discussion of "The Draft Social Statement on Human Sexuality" was part of the exchange between the pastors. Also we explored the principles of Centered Life particularly focusing individual gifts and strengths used for the glory of God. We invited second career pastors to share in a panel discussion about their transition from another profession into the ordained ministry—a lively exchange ensued. Dr. Bob Weber spoke to us about pastoral care at the St. Peter Regional Treatment Center. Also, Kids Against Hunger told their story in reaching hungry children, and we continue to find ways to support this great effort. At our Conference Assembly, Dr. Karoline Lewis from Luther Seminary led a discussion on preaching from two points of view from the pulpit and from the pew. We enjoyed the small group discussion where we had a chance to hear from both perspectives.

Since the summer of 2008, Rev. Kyle Halverson has been serving as the Interim Campus Pastor for Crossroads Campus Ministry. We are grateful for his efforts in sustaining a viable ministry at Mankato State University until a new campus pastor is called.

Two pastors retired in 2008 who faithfully served their congregations for many years: Rev. Richard Salge and Rev. Phil Lewison. Blessings to both of them.

Root River Conference

Rev. Kerry Eversole, Vice-Dean

Pastors, associates in ministry, officers, and guests from the congregations in the southeastern-most section of our synod get together on the second Tuesday of each month from September through May for worship, mutual care and support, and continuing education. Our monthly meetings are made complete with coffee, casual conversation, and a variety of culinary delights. Here are a few of our 2008 presentations: reintegrating our servicemen and women returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, missionary work in Colombia from a non-Lutheran perspective, a "live" encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well, programming and financial support of Good Earth Village, pre-election perceptions and positions, and the role of an ELCA Mission Interpreter. Sincere thanks to our many speakers for taking time to be with us and for sharing their experiences and wisdom. Thanks are also due to all of the congregations that hosted our 2008 gatherings.

We also met in a conference assembly on February 8. What a fellowship we had singing, praying, receiving Holy Communion, and sharing the ministry going on in our congregations, conference, and synod.

My heartfelt thanks to 2008 officers Rev. Paul Forde, Vice Dean, Ben Ekern, Secretary, John Campe, Treasurer, and Rev. Mary Waudbe, Conference Chaplain, for their faithful service and leadership to our conference.



Zumbro River Conference Cindy Wiste, Dean

We had another good year in the Zumbro River Conference. We met monthly and enjoyed fellowship and worship together. We heard from speakers in a variety of venues. Rev. Dr. Jim Bailey from Wartburg Seminary enlightened us on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, and did a good job of presenting from both sides of the issues. Rev. Glen Bickford did a very interesting word study on Justice in the Old Testament. We finally got to hold our “Preach-a-thon,” what a great idea. We have a “best practices for Confirmation” topic in the near future that should be fun to share.

We welcomed many new pastors to the conference, and had to say good-bye to a few as well.

We thank St. John in Elkton for hosting our annual conference assembly. We didn't have a speaker this year, but did hear updates on things going on in the conference. Rev. Pete Ruess shared Peace in Eyota's three-year plan working toward self-sufficiency. Rev. Linda Gunderson brought a report from the synod office. She talked about the ELCA World Hunger appeal, the release of the sexuality statement, and the theme of this year's Synod Assembly. Along those lines, we designated giving for the Fund for Leadership, ELCA World Hunger Appeal, and Lutheran Disaster Response specifically for flood relief in Rushford. Gretchen Bachman reported on the status of Good Earth Village, and Kathy Tanabe shared on behalf of the synodical Women of the ELCA.

Thanks to all of you who hosted our monthly meetings, served meals, and provided worship for our group.

