

Blue Earth River Conference

Lilah E. Aas, Dean

The Blue Earth River Conference encompasses the churches of the southwestern segment of the Southeastern Minnesota Synod. Meetings are held monthly for the pastors and staff from September through May, with an annual Assembly the second Sunday of February. Good worship, presentations, fellowship, and food make each month's gathering a time of renewal and enrichment.

The Blue Earth River Conference Annual Assembly was held on February 11, 2007 at Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Kiester. Presentations were given by Janet Peterson from the Committee on Election of a Bishop, Pastor Meg Sander on Good Earth Village and the Youth Servant Leader Institute, Pastor John Malm on behalf of the Southeastern Minnesota Synod and the Rural Life Seminar, Minnie Dunbar for the Women of the ELCA, Pastor Peter Soli for the Jamaica Accompong Connection of Minnesota, and Pastor Wendy Anderson on behalf of Global Mission.

Pastor Soli introduced a Habitat for Humanity work project to Mobile, Alabama set for June 9-17. Twenty-five volunteers, including twelve youth ages 14-18 may go.

The funds designated for missions this year will go to support young people attending the Youth Servant Institute and/or the Habitat for Humanity trip to Mobile.

Pastor John Malm, Vice Dean, and Hazel Spiering, Treasurer, were unanimously elected to serve a second term.

I would like to thank the officers for their work throughout the year. They are Pastor John Malm, Vice Dean; Pastor Jeff Laeger-Hagemeister, Secretary; and Hazel Spiering, Treasurer.

Cannon River Conference

Pastor Keith E. O. Homstad, Dean

The Cannon River Conference continues to enjoy wide spread participation of our pastors at monthly conferences. Some 30 to 40 pastors commonly attend. Each time we begin with a coffee hour to share joys and concerns, then celebrate the Eucharist, and then hear a teaching theologian. This year we have a three part series, "Depression, Dependencies, and Pastoral Care" taught by Pr. Dan Dimick, Interim Pastor of Gol, Kenyon and a licensed psychologist in Northfield.

Chaplain Karen Hanson, Fairview Red Wing Medical Center hosted ca. 50 of us at "Hunger 101" workshop in October 2006. We can strongly recommend this to any congregation or service group! Contact the SE MN Synod office for details. Each year in December we gather at St. Olaf College for the annual Christmas Festival, and then enjoy a buffet supper afterwards. This past year we have heard from Rev. Dr. Amy Gohdes-Luhman on "Jezebel," Rev. John Matthews on "Anxious Souls Want to Know – D. Bonnhoefer", Rev. Dr. Jerry Larson, "Introduction to Process Preaching" plus our annual meeting with L.S.S. leaders and staff. We greatly enjoyed a hymn sing led by John Ferguson at St. Olaf College during our annual meeting.

The largest project we undertake is "Project Neighbor" in which we vote annually to assess ourselves \$0.25 per congregational member. These funds are held by the P.N. treasurer and are disbursed at the request of pastors who have received emergency financial requests from persons in need.



Minnesota River Conference

Pastor Jim Ahlquist, Dean

The Gatherings of the MN River Conference Pastors' this year have been educational, thought provoking, and supportive. We have focused on relevant topics, watching DVD's and discussing leaders like Bill Hybels, Rick Warren, Greg Boyd, and Colleen Barrett. Faith stories were told by Jim Klobuchar, Hunger 101 guests, Dan Zielske (Gulf Trips), Kristen Venne (Children, Youth, and Family Ministry), and Bishop Usgaard. In our worship and discussions, many others shared faith stories of how Jesus is present in the lives of people.

We increased our Benevolence, with support continuing for both Companion Synods, Crossroads Campus Ministry in Mankato, Men in Mission, and Women of the ELCA (MN River Conference). Support is available to send a pastor and a layperson to Tanzania when the opportunity arises.

Our thoughts and prayers are with our Churchwide Voting Members headed to Chicago August 6-12. Pastor Dan Doering (Grace/Waseca), Mr. Jim Jilek (Messiah/N.Mankato), Ms. Marie Tesch (St. John/Waseca), and Ms. Helen Nelson (Grace/Waseca).

Thanks to Joel Erickson for arranging some great programs this year, and to the other conference leaders: Vice Dean Paul Meierding, Secretary Helen Nelson, Treasurer Karen Mitchell, Chaplain Phil Lewison, and Shepherd Charles Espe. Most of all, thanks to the people that attend our Gatherings and Assemblies, volunteer and serve on committees of the Conference and Synod. The comradery and spiritual support, not to mention the terrific meals we are served keeps our bodies and souls well fed for mission and ministry!

Root River Conference Pastor Eric Finsand, Vice-Dean

In 2006, our Root River Conference functioned in two primary ways. Most visibly, the Conference was the host for a monthly gathering of our Pastors and Lay Professionals. Each month, twenty or more Pastors and Staff gathered for prayer, programmatic events, and the mutual encouragement and support that nourishes our individual Calls. We followed a regular rhythm, meeting first in Church basements for Norwegian Communion (coffee, rolls, something sweet), heading next to the Sanctuary for Worship and the Lord's Supper, re-assembling in the basement for news and for shared prayer, then spending the last hour before lunch participating in some special event or program. Lunch is not only the cap to our event, it is a great time to further ties of friendship and learn the secrets of other Church kitchens.

The other feature of our particular Conference is the sharing of Camp Scholarships. Funds from the sale long ago of a Church property have been used annually to provide camp scholarships to many young people within our communities. Congregations participating in these scholarships have submitted their camper's names to our Conference Treasurer, who has distributed the interest from our savings in equal portions among those applying. This is a quiet and long rooted tradition, participated within by many of our Congregations.

As a Conference, we exist as neighbors – family really – bound to each other by love of a common Lord and in the common tasks we experience together in our shared ministry among our corner of God's kingdom.



Zumbro River Conference

Paul Mainz, Dean

The Zumbro River conference is an association of 35 congregations of our synod encompassing the Rochester and Austin areas. Meetings are held on the last Tuesday of September-May, and are open to all rostered leaders and staff in member congregations.

In the 2006-07 program year, we surveyed topics of Biblical study/preaching, pastoral care with military servicepeople, pediatric spirituality, hunger concerns, and trends in theological education. Lively discussions—and the chance to worship with our colleagues and friends—made it a year of fruitful growth for our leaders.

The annual Conference assembly was hosted by People of Hope in Rochester on February 11, 2007. Several ministries of the synod made reports, benevolence monies were disbursed, and the Rev. Kristi Koppel (St. Olaf, Austin) was elected as the new co-Vice Dean. One resolution was brought forth and passed on to the 2007 assembly. The conference also reaffirmed Rev. Harold Usgaard's nomination for a second term as Synod Bishop.

The conference leadership for 2006-07 comprised of Rev. Todd Hawkins (Evanger, Sargeant) as Secretary; Ms. Teresa Birbaum (Bethel, Rochester) as Treasurer; Rev. Heidi Heimgartner (First, Blooming Prairie) and Rev. Karen Behling (Our Savior's, Austin) shared the job of Vice-Dean. The Conference Dean position remains vacant.

The conference leadership would like to thank each congregation who hosted, led worship, and / or assisted in making our meetings a success this year. We especially thank Rev. Karen Behling as she completes her term as Vice-Dean.

