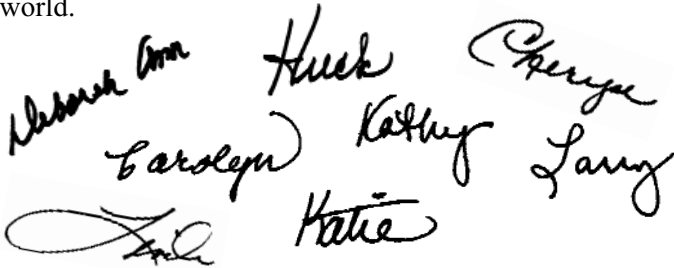


## Christmas Wishes

The staff of the Southeastern Minnesota Synod wish everyone a blessed and joyous Advent and Christmas season filled with the reminder of Jesus Christ in our world.



## Watch for the 2007 Ministry Report

Last year Bishop Harold Usgaard prepared a ministry report on what the synod had done in the previous year. The same type of report will be issued again this year and congregations are asked to save a page in their annual report for this important report. This report will be one page in length and will come in hard copy and be available online in PDF, TIFF, JPEG, and Word formats.

Congregations are also encouraged to share the report in any other additional ways they can. Let us celebrate what we can do together as a synod!

## Bishop Mark Hanson to Speak at Council Event

The 2008 Councils as Leaders in the Church event will feature Rev. Mark Hanson, presiding bishop of the ELCA, as the speaker for the event. The event will take place February 24, 2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. at Zumbro Lutheran Church in Rochester, Minn. Watch the January issue for further details and registration.

## Remember in Prayer

### Health Concerns

- Rev. Glennys Knutson
- Cathy Rehfeldt, wife of Rev. Richard Rehfeldt
- Shannon Reuss, wife of Rev. Peter Reuss
- Rev. Don Roberts

### Sympathies

- Rev. Barb Kopperud, whose father-in-law died Oct. 6

## Bishop's Report at Theological Conference

This year's Southeastern Minnesota Synod Fall Theological Conference once again kicked off with an opening message from Bishop Usgaard. This year's message included messages of thanks, notice of new opportunities for ministry and study, and some other useful resources.

Thanks were expressed for prayers during the bishop's medical struggles, for the over \$100,000 given to the Southeastern Minnesota Flood Relief Fund, and personal thanks from Rev. Roger Michaelson on behalf of Rushford Lutheran Church, Rushford, Minn.

Participants covered by ELCA Board of Pensions medical insurance were reminded to take the Health Risk Assessment to earn credit for their personal wellness account and save congregations in Southeastern Minnesota Synod 2% on their insurance costs.

People were encouraged to look at information about the Book of Faith project to get people more comfortable talking about scripture. Information is available at [www.ELCA.org/BookOfFaith/](http://www.ELCA.org/BookOfFaith/)

Handouts were distributed sharing ideas for congregations to use to promote the 2008 emphasis on hunger. These tips are available at [www.semnsynod.org](http://www.semnsynod.org).

Another handout resulting from the 2007 Councils as Leaders of the Church event shared a list of things council presidents appreciate about their pastors. The most common theme was pastors who were available and present in all situations. These are available at [www.semnsynod.org](http://www.semnsynod.org).

Bishop Usgaard also reminded the group of the importance of financially supporting seminary education, gave thanks for the growth to the synod endowment fund, and gave Rev. Lester Horntvedt a few minutes to share on his work with endowment thanks to a Thrivent grant.

An update on the ELCA sexuality study was given, including a reminder that the first draft of the social statement on sexuality would be available in March 2008. People were reminded that much can change after the first draft and that current study materials can foster discussion on the topic, especially as much of the focus has been on the homosexuality part while much of the content is on a wide variety of issues.'

A new task force in the synod has been meeting to discuss the future of children, youth, and family ministry in the synod. More will be said at the 2008 Synod Assembly.