

## MINISTRY TEAMS

### CONNECTION BUILDING MINISTRY TEAM

The Biblical images of connectedness as the body of Christ in the world guides the work of the Connection Building Ministry Team. The constant issues of the day to day concerns stresses the baptismal connections we all share. Keeping this common connection open and vibrant is a great challenge. As a ministry team we look for ways that inter-congregational connections can strengthen and build the church of Christ.

The use of the synod's website provides one avenue for leaders and congregations to receive a free flow of ideas for ministry, synod sponsored workshops and events, and work and mission of the church. Synod publications ready for congregational use are all available as a download from the website, [www.godslove.org](http://www.godslove.org). The challenge is expanding the base, and focusing the interest so that not all information flows through the church office in hopes that it may get to the appropriate congregational leader.

Aware that not every congregation has Internet access, the Connection Building Ministry team is working through a process to identify congregations without internet access and offer dial-up service for one year.

As always, the Connection Building Ministry team looks to encourage, support, and engage inter-congregational connections, not only lines of communication and information, but for the building up of the body of Christ.

*Roxi Kringle, convener*

### LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT MINISTRY TEAM

The Leadership Development Ministry Team met faithfully throughout the year to uphold the synodical priority *"We will develop leaders for a new church in a new world."* What an awesome task we as a synod and a synod team have before us. Developing leaders both rostered and lay for ministry in this ever changing world can be an overwhelming task. We need to continue to communicate with each other in order to provide relevant and timely educational opportunities. We invite you to share in the discussion of how this team can continue developing quality leaders for the Church.

1. *Help congregations to identify, equip and support lay leaders*

- The team supports a "Volunteer Coordinator" Task Force to provide training and support to congregations of the synod that are exploring or implementing the Volunteer coordinator model for ministry.

- The team supports a biannual workshop for Congregational Council secretaries to equip them with the necessary information and skills that they need for ministry in their congregational setting.

#### 2. *Equip and support rostered and other leaders for ministry needs*

- The team supports a grant process for rostered leaders to match continuing education funds.
- The team works in partnership with Family Life Services to provide continuing education opportunities on the territory of the synod.
- The team maintained new salary guidelines for rostered leaders.

#### 3. *Intentionally seek out candidates for rostered leadership*

- The team supports the Theological Education with Youth (TEY) program through scholarships available to NEPS youth attending the Summer Theological Academy. The team continues to strengthen ties with the TEY programs.
- The team commits itself to representation at every synodical youth event for the sake of sharing in conversation about discernment.

- The team continues to be in conversation and partnership with Don Johnson concerning Project Connect. Project Connect is a program of the Eastern Cluster of Lutheran Seminaries and is funded by the Lilly Endowment. Its purpose is to encourage young adults to consider a vocation in public ministry.

- The team continues to be in partnership with Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod to provide a leadership camp, LEAD ON, for high school students. The team supports youth attending this program through a scholarship program. This was very successful and will be offered again in the summer of 2008.

#### 4. *Provide or insure support for the families of rostered leaders*

- The team held a one day pre-retirement workshop on our territory for rostered leaders.

- The team along with Family Life Services and Mission District Leaders is working to provide Pastoral Care Team ministry for rostered leaders and their families. Currently two mission districts are piloting this program.

Please visit the Leadership Development Ministry Team display to share in conversation about your ideas concerning these outcomes. We value your partnership in this vital ministry for Christ's Church in this synod!

Many thanks to the current team members for their hard work and dedication to developing leaders for a new church in a new world; the

Rev. Peter Bredlau, George Fennell, Guy French, the Rev. Kurt Garbe, Theresa Kissling, AJ Mell, Susan Wambaugh and the Rev. Mark Wimmer.

A special thanks to the Rev. Paul Braden and the Rev. Tom Cvammen for their faithful service to this team since "The beginning!" We will miss Paul's wonderful sense of humor and understanding of a spreadsheet and Tom's meaningful devotions and commitment to leadership. Thank you to Ben Larson who served this team while at Bear Creek Camp. We will miss his insights and connections between developing leaders and camp ministry!

*Kathleen M. Schaeffer, convener*

## 2009 MINIMUM COMPENSATION GUIDELINES

At the request of the 1983 convention of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, LCA, the former Professional Development Committee created annual "*Minimum Base Salary Guidelines*" for pastors and lay rostered leaders. The following guidelines are recommended by the Leadership Development Team for the approval of the 2008 Assembly of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA.

### PARISH PASTORS 2009 Minimum Salary Guidelines

**Resolved that:**

**1) The 2009 *minimum* base salary for pastors in the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA be in agreement with the following guidelines:**

Years completed service in ordained ministry	Recommended Salary Range (including housing allowance)			Recommended Salary Range (parsonage provided)	
0 - 1	46,350	-	50,985	31,930	- 35,123
2 - 3	47,380	-	52,118	32,960	- 36,256
4 - 7	48,410	-	53,251	33,990	- 37,389
8 - 10	50,470	-	55,517	36,050	- 39,655
11 - 15	52,015	-	62,418	37,595	- 41,355
16 - 20	54,590	-	65,508	40,170	- 48,204
21 +	57,165	-	74,315	42,745	- 55,569

**Note:** These figures include a Social Security Allowance equal to one half of the pastor's social security liability. They should therefore be compared to the figures for total defined compensation in years prior to 2008. This allowance is taxable for income tax purposes. For 2009, the Social Security liability is expected to be equal to 15.3% of the combined base salary and housing provision. (Parsonages are subject to the fair rental value of the house for tax purposes).

**2) It is the responsibility of each congregation to provide housing for its pastor(s). This may be accomplished in either of two ways:**

**a) Housing Allowance.** A portion of the pastor's salary may be designated as a housing allowance. This amount will vary, depending upon location and the needs of the pastor. Congregations and pastors should check current tax laws in establishing this figure. This amount should be established before the beginning of each year by a resolution of the Congregation Council or the listing of an amount in the congregation's budget.

b) **Parsonage.** This is free use of a church-owned house, including utilities. A portion of the pastor's base salary may be set aside for furnishings and other housing expenses according to the IRS code. An annual equity allowance of a minimum of 3%-5% of salary is recommended for all parsonage situations.

3) Congregations should remember that the figures in the grid are *minimum*. Congregations are encouraged to exceed these minimum guidelines. Additional compensation should be provided based on criteria such as continuing education, special skills, responsibilities, merit, and local conditions.

4) Each congregation shall establish a Mutual Ministry Committee to facilitate the discussion by which these criteria are evaluated (as well as for carrying out the other functions of mutual ministry).

5) A congregation that fails to meet the synodical guidelines shall submit a report to the bishop on a form to be provided, detailing the reasons why these minimums are not being met and the steps that will be taken to establish these minimums as soon as possible.

The following minimum benefits should be provided in addition to salary:

1) An Automobile Allowance equal to IRS guidelines per mile for business travel. Pastors reimbursed for auto expense on a per mile basis do not have to report this allowance as income if they submit written mileage to the calling institution.

2) **Continuing Education** provisions including a congregation/agency providing at least \$550 for tuition, books, etc., and two weeks of time (not vacation), and the pastor providing at least \$250. It is recommended that this money be deposited in the synod's PACE program. (Programs that include Sundays must be negotiated with the congregation council.) It is encouraged that congregations/agencies and pastors work towards a partnership goal of \$1,000.

3) Four full weeks of **vacation** time annually.

4) One to two **days off** per week, and, at least once a month, two consecutive days off.

5) For the purposes of **Worker's Compensation**, pastors are considered to be employees of the congregation and therefore should be included in Worker's Compensation insurance.

6) **Health and pension benefits** according to the guidelines of the ELCA, including a 12% pension provision.

7) Congregations may also reimburse the pastor(s) for **professional expenses** such as dues, entertainment, supplies, and malpractice insurance.

### **PASTORS WITH PART TIME CALLS**

Pastors with part time calls should be compensated on a prorated basis in line with the above guidelines, in consultation with the Office of the Bishop. Vacation and continuing education provisions should be prorated, as well. Pension and health benefits are according to the guidelines of the ELCA, including a 12% pension provision.

### **ROSTERED LAY LEADERS 2009 Minimum Salary Guidelines**

**Resolved that:**

1) The 2009 *minimum* salary for rostered lay leaders in the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA be in agreement with the following guidelines:

Years completed service in rostered ministry	Recommended Salary Range Bachelor's Degree	Recommended Salary Range Master's Degree
0 - 1	29,355 - 32,291	32,136 - 35,350
2 - 3	30,385 - 33,424	33,166 - 36,483
4 - 7	31,415 - 34,557	34,196 - 37,616
8 - 10	33,475 - 36,823	36,256 - 39,882
11 - 15	35,020 - 42,024	37,801 - 45,361
16 - 20	37,595 - 45,114	40,376 - 48,451
21 +	40,170 - 52,221	42,951 - 55,836

2) Congregations should remember that the figures in the grid are *minimum*. Congregations are encouraged to exceed these minimum guidelines. Additional compensation should be provided based on criteria such as continuing education, special skills, responsibilities, merit, and local conditions.

3) Each congregation shall establish a Mutual Ministry Committee to facilitate the discussion by which these criteria are evaluated (as well as for carrying out the other functions of mutual ministry).

4) A congregation that fails to meet the synodical guidelines shall submit a report to the bishop on a form to be provided, detailing the reasons why these minimums are not being met and the steps that will be taken to establish these minimums as soon as possible.

The following *minimum* benefits should be provided in addition to salary:

1) An **Automobile Allowance** equal to IRS guidelines per mile for business travel. Rostered lay leaders reimbursed for auto expense on a per mile basis do not have to report this allowance as income if they submit written mileage to the calling institution.

2) **Continuing Education** provisions including a congregation/agency providing at least \$550 for tuition, books, etc., and two weeks of time (not vacation), and the leader providing at least \$250. It is recommended that this money be deposited in the synod's PACE program. (Programs that include Sundays must be negotiated with the congregation council.) It is encouraged that congregations/agencies and rostered lay professional leaders work towards a partnership goal of \$1,000.

3) Four full weeks of **vacation** time annually.

4) One to two **days off** per week, and, at least once a month, two consecutive days off.

5) For the purposes of **Worker's Compensation**, rostered lay leaders are considered to be employees of the congregation and therefore should be included in Worker's Compensation insurance.

6) **Health and pension benefits** according to the guidelines of the ELCA, including a 12% pension provision.

7) Congregations may also reimburse the lay leader(s) for **professional expenses** such as dues, entertainment, supplies, and malpractice insurance.

#### WITNESS AND SERVICE MINISTRY TEAM

Keeping "grassroots" witness and service alive in our synod is one goal the W&S Team strives to attain. This is done through the actions of the many groups that find affiliation under the W&S team umbrella – parish nurse task force, gay-lesbian task force, the accessibility team, world hunger team and awarding of Witness and Service grants.

In 2007 the team awarded grants totaling \$35,550.00 to congregations and ministries throughout the synod. These grants supported inner-city summer day camps, an ecumenical ministry providing assistance to families moving from homelessness to reintegration into society, food pantries, partnering with head start programs, innovative worship programs, mission trips, the LIFT event, children's after school programs, a Lutheran radio station, a medical clinic, a tutoring program – just to name a few.

These grants serve as a means of funding to begin new longer-term ministries or to offer special event or shorter-term ministries. The team members continue to be inspired by the creative ways congregations are reaching out to their communities and touching lives as they share the gospel message in words and actions.

The W&S Team, together with representatives of Diakon Social Ministry, Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Hospital, Muhlenberg College and Lutheran Congregational Services, sponsored the 4<sup>th</sup> “Celebrate Social Ministry Dinner” which was held on October 14 at Muhlenberg College. The change in venue from the Holiday Inn to Muhlenberg College was a positive move that made the dinner more affordable, offered a beautiful on-campus experience and helped everyone celebrate the volunteers who were honored that evening.

Finally the team reviewed, prioritized, and made recommendations on ELCA World Hunger grants from NEPS – grants that help fund food pantries and other programs seeking to “feed” people in need.

It is a privilege to serve with the W&S team members: Dawn Baxter (synod council liaison), Michael Bennethum (synod staff liaison), Amy Jahn deTorrez, Barry Mitchell, Keith Rohrbach and Mary Wolfe.

*Jami Possinger, convener*

### **WORSHIP AND SPIRITUALITY MINISTRY TEAM**

The Worship and Spirituality Team has had a productive year and is excited about future opportunities to deepen people’s relationship with God. New to the team this year were Amanda Tompkins, Chris Eichorn, Chris Summy, Erin Antrim, and Jackie Grauel.

The Learning Ministry Staffers (Marlane Druckemiller, Leesa Wimmer, Doris Binner, Dave Renninger, Ruth Miller, Betsy Frey, Dottie Belinski, Connie Riedy, Elizabeth Elterich, Kathy Ash-Flashner) held their annual Learning Ministry Day on January 26. The theme focused on prayer. Diane Monroe, the Director for Christian Education for the ELCA, was the keynoter for the morning. Workshops were presented in the afternoon. Over 150 people attended. Already the staffers are making plans for next year’s event which will focus on the Book of Faith initiative. The director for the Book of Faith initiative, Diane Jacobson, will be the keynoter. Learning Ministry staffers are our synod’s Christian Education consultants and are available to assist congregations, clusters of congregations and mission districts

with Christian education needs such as teacher training, selecting curriculum, and much more.

Youth ministry continues to evolve. A visioning team met during the past several months to help provide direction for youth ministry in the synod. It is the hope of this team that youth ministry will be taken seriously in each of the four ministry teams of the synod. A step that has been taken to help move us in this direction was initiated through the Lutheran Youth Fellowship to make sure that at least one youth is serving on each of the synod ministry teams. The Regional Youth Gathering was held last year at West Chester University. Many folks from our synod – youth and adults – were involved with the planning and leadership of that event including Jimmy Lee Werley, Bruce MacLaughlin, Nathan Andrews, Roxi Kringle, tyna Kaltenbaugh, Mike Reitz, AJ Mell, Aaron Matthias-Long, Glenn Kegerize, Brandon Kegerize, Erin Antrim, Michaela Poganyova and Karen Matthias-Long. Many others in our synod led workshops for the gathering. SYMDANO (Synod Youth Ministry Day and Networking Opportunity) was held this past year under the direction of Cindy Zimmermann and Leesa Wimmer. The theme was “Fit for Jesus” and was held April 19 at Christ, Conyngham.

LIFT was a great success. A special thanks need to go out to Ruth and Ken Miller and Judy and Herb Gifford for pulling off this event last June. Plans are currently being made for a LIFT 2009. Judy and Herb Gifford are coordinating the event with Barry and Elizabeth Mitchell.

Over 100 people from across the synod attended Worship Days. We thank Stan Trout who headed the planning of this event. Bob Rimbo was the keynote speaker and a thanks needs to go out to the many workshop leaders.

Grants were awarded to St. Paul Lutheran Church in Tannersville and New Life Evangelical Lutheran Church in New Tripoli. Both congregations were aided in starting contemporary worship services through the Worship and Spirituality Team Grant. Congregations are encouraged to make their visions for worship and the spiritual growth of their members a reality by applying for grant money through our team. Our application form and grant information can be found on the synod website at: [http://www.godslove.org/people/ministry\\_teams/worship/](http://www.godslove.org/people/ministry_teams/worship/).

The team continues to write articles to post on the synod website for the use by both lay and rostered leaders in the church. We hope that these articles on worship and faith development will be used throughout the synod. Anyone in the synod is encouraged to submit for consideration an article pertaining to worship and faith development.

The "Book of Faith" initiative has been the topic of a lot of conversation within the team. Expect to see more resources encouraging participation in this initiative in 2008.

*Jira Albers, convener*

### **ACCESSIBILITY MINISTRIES TEAM The "A Team"**

*Believing that people with disabilities are valued as individuals, having been created in the image of God, redeemed by our Lord Jesus Christ, and called and empowered by the Holy Spirit; and*

*Knowing that all people with and without mental, physical, and sensory challenges need to be able to practice their faith and use their unique gifts in worship, service, learning, and leadership;*

*We will encourage and assist all congregations of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA to open their hearts, minds, and doors to all God's people by removing barriers of architecture, communication, and attitudes that exclude any person from full and active participation in the life of Christ's Church.*

In fulfilling this mission in 2007, our ministry team:

- ✦ Promoted Accessibility Ministries Sunday, generally observed on the second Sunday in October, with synod E-mail messages and observance suggestions and resources posted on the synod website;
- ✦ Produced and led an active, engaging forum at our synod's LIFT event at Muhlenberg College in June;
- ✦ Participated in the synod's Learning Ministries Day by having a display of resource materials on accessibility and leading a workshop on including and teaching those who struggle with autism spectrum disorders;
- ✦ Continued to work with Good Shepherd Home and Rehabilitation Services on the development of a website displaying accessibility accomplishments by synod congregations, appealing to all congregations for pictures and stories of their ministries to, for, by, and with people with disabilities;
- ✦ Continued to serve as a liaison at Berks County's annual "Festival of Faith" and established active contacts with our region's SeniorFest; and Provided a display at the Synod Assembly including materials, resource people, and contact help for accessibility issues.

We continue to offer resources to help congregations assess and address their accessibility challenges. We invite you to join us in this adventure of faith and discovery as together we seek to "make a way" for others to come and see Jesus among us.

*David Heckler, convener*

### **CANDIDACY COMMITTEE**

This year, the Candidacy Committee continued to provide care and guidance for individuals preparing to become pastors, associates in ministry or diaconal ministers. In 2007-08, forty candidates were involved in the candidacy process. Thanks to your Mission Support and grants from the Student Education fund, over 47,507 was spent to help our students in the preparation process. Thank you to all the congregations who made special gifts this year.

Again, I am grateful to the members of the committee for their work with our candidates. The commitment of time and energy that they make to this ministry truly is outstanding.

In January, 2008, the Candidacy Committee approved Brian E. Beissel, Elizabeth A. Haines, Joseph L. McGarry, Paulette K. Obrecht, Erika L. Strobel, and Pamela C. Turfa for ordination, pending the receipt and acceptance of a proper call.

**Brian E. Beissel** is a member of Zion, Frackville. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Susquehanna University, Selinsgrove in 2002, and a Master of Divinity degree from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg in 2007. He completed a quarter of Clinical Pastoral Education at Geisinger Medical Center, Danville, and did internships at St. Peter, Lancaster and Grace, Northumberland.

**Elizabeth A. Haines** is a member of St. Michael, Allentown. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Muhlenberg College, Allentown in 1997, and a Master of Divinity degree from Moravian Seminary, Bethlehem in 2006. She completed a quarter of Clinical Pastoral Education at Phoebe Ministries, Allentown, and did internship at Huffs, Alburtis.

**Joseph L. McGarry** is a member of Hope, Reading. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Concordia University, St. Paul, MN in 2003 and a Master of Divinity degree from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia in 2008. He completed a quarter of Clinical Pastoral Education at Cooper Health System, Camden, NJ, and did internship at St. Paul, Red Hill.

**Paulette K. Obrecht** is a member of Hope, Cherryville. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Muhlenberg College, Allentown in 1971, a Masters of Education from Kutztown University in 1976, and an Educational Specialist degree from Lehigh University in 1983. She completed a quarter of Clinical Pastoral Education at St. Luke's Hospital, Bethlehem, and did internship at Christ, Allentown.

**Erika L. Strobel** is a member of Trinity, Reading. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Gettysburg College, Gettysburg in 2002, and a Master of Divinity degree from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia in 2008. She completed a quarter of Clinical Pastoral Education at the University of Pennsylvania Health System, Philadelphia, and did internship at First, Waltham, MA.

**Pamela C. Turfa** is a member of St. Paul, Mountaintop. She received a Bachelor of Social Work degree from the Mississippi University for Women, Columbus, MS in 1977, a Master of Business Administration from Temple University in 1986, and a Master of Divinity degree from the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, SC in 2008. She completed a quarter of CPE at Palmetto Health, Columbia, SC, and did internship at St. David, W. Columbia, SC.

Also in January, 2008, the Candidacy Committee approved Amy Jahn de Torrez for commissioning as an Associate in Ministry, pending the receipt and acceptance of a proper call.

**Amy Jahn de Torrez** is a member of Christ, Allentown. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, IN in 2005. Additional coursework was done through SELECT courses and her internship was done in Costa Rica, and she was consecrated as a deaconess with the Lutheran Deaconess Association in 2005.

*Cheryl F. Meinschein, synod staff*

### **CAMPUS MINISTRY (ELCA)**

The 26 Campus Ministry Agencies (CMAs) in Region 7 are stand-alone student centers or congregations located adjacent to a state or private university or college, with minimally a quarter-time staff commitment to outreach on the campus. These CMAs are an integral part of the network of almost 200 official ELCA CMAs across the United States. They represent a vital partnership between the local congregation or board of a campus center, the synod, and the churchwide organization. I thank the synods of Region 7 for their partnership in these important ministries.

Each year, CMAs present a thorough report of their activities of the past year and goals for the next. Here are some highlights from the summary of these annual reports:

- In an average week, over 4,300 students are at worship in our ELCA campus ministries.
- CMAs made over 26,000 initial contacts with students as they arrived on campus.
- Over 2,400 students participated in Christian education.
- Nearly 5,000 students participated in 1,415 service trips to work in shelters and food pantries, build or repair homes, or clean up the environment.
- There are 231 recent alumni/ae of ELCA campus ministries enrolled in seminaries, with another 277 in the candidacy process.
- Cooperative ministry with Episcopal and Roman Catholic ministries is quite typical, as is dialogue with Muslim and Jewish groups on campus.
- With churchwide and synodical staying level or slightly declining, 67% of the ministries report significant fundraising activity. (Many people in the church are not aware that, while thankful for the financial partnership of the synod and the churchwide organization, CMAs depend greatly on the generosity and commitment of neighboring congregations and individual donors. If your congregation is one of those that include a local campus ministry in the budget, or an individual donor, we say a heart-felt "Thank you!")

Last year, Lutheran Campus Ministry celebrated its centennial, including a special focus at many synod assemblies. We discovered just how many alums, friends, and active supporters of campus ministry there are out there in the church. The CMAs in your region feel encouraged and empowered by such support to launch into a second century of ministry on campuses. While at your synod's assembly, stop by the campus ministry display area and express your support as well.

*Jack A. Saarela, coordinator*

### **CAMPUS MINISTRY (NEPS)**

Lutheran ministries are present on college and university campuses in our synod, sharing the Gospel through word and deed with the whole campus community. The primary outreach is through Partner Congregations, congregations that minister to and with a college or university in

their area. Two other ministries work in our Synod: the Chapel at Muhlenberg College, an ELCA-related college, and Campus Ministries of Northeast PA, an ecumenical ministry that works cooperatively with synod congregations in the northern part of the synod.

Synod funding for Campus Ministry comes from congregation benevolence to the synod and ELCA, and is distributed by the Witness and Service team to the Campus Ministry Affinity Group. Congregations and ministries that wish to receive funding should contact the Campus Ministry Affinity Group at [www.nepacampusministry.org](http://www.nepacampusministry.org).

The Campus Ministry Affinity Group meets regularly for mutual support and conversation about the synod vision for campus ministries. The Affinity Group seeks to support existing Partner Congregations, maintains a website for congregations and students, and identifies Lutheran students in synod colleges and universities.

In 2007, Lutheran Campus Ministry celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. A special offering, which when added to other gifts, totals over \$3000 was received for Campus Ministry at the 2007 Northeastern PA Synod Assembly. The offering was used to support programs such as domestic and international Alternative Spring Break trips. Campus Ministries of Northeast PA, a partner organization with the Campus Ministry Affinity Group, experienced its quadrennial review from the ELCA, and passed with strong encouragement. Also highlighted in 2007 was the partnership between Trinity Lutheran, Kutztown, and Kutztown University. The KU Campus Ministry, with the congregation, provided grief support when the campus experienced student deaths, and also traveled south to assist with Hurricane Katrina relief and recovery.

If you or your congregation would like to become involved in campus ministry, please contact the group at [www.nepacampusministry.org](http://www.nepacampusministry.org).

*The Campus Ministry Affinity Group*

## GLOBAL MISSION

Global Mission in the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod is handled by four sub-committees (one for each of our four Companion Synods). Each sub-committee meets regularly and functions in the way that best serves that sub-committee.

The following is a report on the activities of the past year and a look toward the future for each of the sub-committees:

## Saxony, Germany

The Saxony Companion Synod Committee continues to share a fruitful relationship with our brothers and sisters in the Borna and Lobau/Zittau regions of Germany. This past fall, we hosted a group of 23 young Germans from the two districts. Hosted in the Reading/ Mountaintop areas, folks from Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod had an opportunity to enjoy the youth and vitality of this group. During their stay, they visited various schools, churches and church ministries as well as an opportunity to visit Pennsylvania Dutch country, Philadelphia and New York.

There are currently two trips to Germany in the planning stages. Our intergenerational group will be traveling to Lobau/Zittau region April 1-10, 2008. That group consists of 14 adults and 2 young people, and a pastor from our companion synod Argentina will also be joining the group. Her participation brings the companion synod program to full circle. In June 2008, there is a youth exchange involving 13 young adults and 2 chaperones to the two regions.

We look forward to the visit of the German bishop to our shores and our continued relationship with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

*Michele and Wayne Kaufman, co-chairs*

## Slovenia

The year 2007 marked the conclusion of the Slovenia Companion Church Committee's first two-year exchange student program with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Slovenia. In the month of July, the Committee sent eight teenagers and two adult chaperones from congregations throughout our synod for a three-week stay. During the summer of 2006, ten Slovenian students had visited and been hosted by families in our synod for the same amount of time.

The American delegation included Tiffany Amato, Nathaniel Campia, Lindsay Gorski, Stephen Ingham, Christie Kaufman, Christopher Lintner, Eric Stover and Josh Wilson. The chaperones were Mr. Kevin Remaly from St. John Windish, Bethlehem, and Mrs. Barbara Taylor from St. Peter, Bethlehem. All of the students reported that their experience was incredible. In addition to "sharing life" with the individual Slovenian Lutheran families that hosted them for the entire three-week stay, our teenagers had the opportunity to travel throughout this small country in eastern Europe that once was part of the old Yugoslavia before declaring their independence and seceding in the early 1990's. For example, a visit was made to Ljubljana, the capital city of Slovenia – and now one of the most popular cities in Europe for young

people to gather. But the Slovenian host families had also arranged for our delegation to visit many other places in Slovenia – as well as a side trip to nearby Italy where our students got to spend some time in beautiful Venice!

Since the Slovenia Companion Church Committee Student Exchange Program is unique among all of our Companion Church Committee travel programs, this first experience really was a learning experience for us. All other committees sponsor youth travel, but do so as a “group experience” and for a shorter period of time. The Slovenia experience is truly more of an “individual experience” with youth spending the three-week period apart from one another with host families and only periodically gathering as a group. This is quite by design.

We are pleased to announce that a second exchange will be carried out in 2009-2010. We are now actively seeking host families for a delegation of Slovenian students (yes, almost without fail, Slovenian youth do have a command of English!) that will visit us in the summer of 2009. At the same time, we are also recruiting American students from NEPS who might be interested in visiting Slovenia in the summer of 2010. Students will be chosen after applying and being interviewed by our Committee. If you are interested, please contact the synod office for more information.

*Gary Langensiepen, chair*

### **South Central Diocese, ELC Tanzania**

2007 saw several changes within the South Central Diocese. Bishop Shadrack Manyewa was not reelected as the bishop at an October meeting of the diocese. The Rev. Dr. Hans Mwakabana has been appointed by the ELCT to supervise the diocese for two years until a new bishop is elected.

The Youth Servant trip to the South Central Diocese, which was scheduled for 2007, has been rescheduled for June of 2008. The group consists of 8 youth, 2 adult leaders and an assistant coordinator. The group is engaging in team building and preparing for their trip.

Reformation LC in Reifton had planned to have a visit to their congregation of members of their Tanzanian companion congregation. Unfortunately the Tanzanian delegation was denied Visas by the US Embassy in Dar Es Salaam. A delegation from St. Paul's, Fleetwood did travel to visit their companion congregation in Bulongwa.

We have also had several requests for companion partnerships from congregations in the synod. We

are waiting for the diocese to supply us with names for the companions. These companion relationships vary from congregation to congregation, and during 2008 we hope to find ways that we can strengthen and grow these companion relationships. We look for ways to have the companion

*Russell Haab, chair*

### **Argentina/Uruguay**

With an established, committed group, the Argentina/Uruguay committee has been successful in sending a group of youth to Argentina between December 26, 2007 and January 4, 2008. With ten youth, 3 young adults, and 2 adults, the group spent time in Misiones, one of the northernmost provinces in Argentina. There, they were able to interact with a sister congregation, be exposed to another culture, and do work, mainly painting at that congregation. The youth came back with a very positive report, which assures us that this type of ministry is important and necessary.

The ties that are being established with this companion synod are bearing fruit and we are looking forward to sharing our gifts and commitments with each other.

I am pleased to see the involvement of youth in this type of program; it is my belief that such interaction with a different culture will only broaden the general knowledge and the perspective of our youth, and will give them a chance to work with our brothers and sisters in the southern hemisphere.

*Herbert C. Dolich, chair*

Together as companion synods, companion congregations, and partners in Global Mission we will continue to meet the changes, challenges, and mission and ministry opportunities that God blesses us with on our faith journey.

*Kurt E. Garbe, staff liaison*

### **LUTHERAN YOUTH FELLOWSHIP**

The Lutheran Youth Fellowship is a very active organization in the synod. LYF, for short, consists of two youth representatives from each of the mission districts, president, vice president, treasurer, secretary, historian, parliamentarian and three adult advisors. As a group we meet every other month to plan and help make the next assembly better than the last.

The assembly in the fall is one of our main projects where we spend most of our time at our

meetings. We also help strengthen the youth in the church and help them see that church can actually be a good time. As of this year we are currently planning our spring event. The spring event is to aid in getting LYF publicized and to get more youth involved with the synod. The event is for all of us to get together to worship, interact and brainstorm on what we need to get done during the plenary sessions at the fall assembly.

During the 2007 LYF Assembly we strongly focused on the efforts of the One Campaign with our "One Lyfe, One Love" theme. Pastor Michael Peters spoke at one of our executive board meetings and really got us in the running to become a One organization. He also did an amazing presentation at our assembly and delivered a message that stuck to all of us in a positive way.

Through the years I have served on the LYF board, this past year has been at our peak. Between the One Campaign, planning another event, and growing significantly in size and in strength, the Lutheran Youth Fellowship can only get bigger. The spiritual atmosphere of the music, worship and the happy-go-lucky Lutherans that attend the assembly make it a remarkable experience. The drive and will-power that this organization shows to help better the youth in the church and the rest of the synod makes the assembly more enjoyable every single year. Trust me on this, LYF is one great experience that any person will never regret.

*Troy Marx, LYF president*

### **SYNOD OUTREACH WORKING GROUP**

The Synod Outreach Working Group works to enhance the mission of our synod and its congregations. Our group serves as the link between the synod and the current Evangelical Outreach for Congregational Mission (EOCM) of the ELCA. The Working Group reviews applications from congregations for mission support funds, and submits approved applications to EOCM. Congregations of our synod are encouraged to submit applications for outreach support. If your congregation has a unique outreach ministry, or if your church requires funding to meet the needs of a growing congregation, please contact Pr. Glenn Simmons to begin the application process.

Mission Support from the EOCM aids the Latino ministries of San Martin de Porres, Allentown, and the West Berks Mission Center, Reading. Both ministries also help connect impoverished individuals and families of their communities with appropriate social services. Trinity Deaf Lutheran

of Reading is also a beneficiary of this support. New Life Lutheran, New Tripoli receives Mission Support funding in order to hire additional staff to best meet the needs of a steadily growing congregation. St. Paul's Lutheran, Smithfield Township also receives synod funds to support a seminary intern. Some future projects that are currently under review are mission work in a proposed mega-development in Morgantown, and also to support outreach projects in the Effort area. Another compelling project is the possible start of a mission congregation for Indonesian Lutherans in Scranton.

At typical meetings of the Synod Outreach Working Group, we discuss the various trends, changing demographics, and needs of our mission districts, congregations, and communities that comprise our synod. Our goal is to aid congregations in becoming more engaged in developing and participating in outreach to our neighborhoods and communities. The Working Group also continues to promote learning events about Natural Church Development (NCD) resources. NCD is a diagnostic tool and process by which congregations can evaluate their ministries by learning how well they rank compared with eight quality characteristics of growing congregations. NCD learning events are a cooperative venture between our synod and the Upstate New York Synod, and are made possible by grants from the EOCM.

*Douglas S. McKeeby, chair*

### **WORLD HUNGER APPEAL TEAM**

Unless we choose to, we won't ever be far enough away from an information source not to know that hunger is an ongoing scourge experienced by over 800 million people at any given moment. Being 800 million too many, this means that we all have something we can work on in some way and at varying levels of commitment. The Synod Hunger Appeal Team is committed to keeping this ongoing need and our Christian obligation to help at the center of its thinking and planning. Pastors, congregation leaders, and others are provided regular communications via "snail" mail and the Synod's website.

The Team was involved in the planning and carrying-out of the Walk/Run for World Hunger at the LIFT event held at Muhlenberg College in June 2007, where around \$1100 was raised for the cause.

Members of the synod team contribute messages that are included in the monthly synod communication, which can be accessed at

[www.godslove.org/publications/news.htm](http://www.godslove.org/publications/news.htm). These messages can be downloaded for use in congregational publications.

A review of several years' worth of giving reveals something of a roller coaster effect, with the latest year on record dipping below the \$400,000 mark:

2007	\$396,021	2003	\$484,744
2006	\$424,980	2002	\$499,753
2005	\$375,743	2001	\$448,352
2004	\$455,115	2000	\$438,977

With the ongoing post-Katrina and Rita needs, along with more recent catastrophic events—not to mention an economic belt-tightening for many—people are provided with multiple options and at the same time giving serious thought to where their hard-earned money can best be used.

It is hoped that one beneficiary of our kindness and charity will continue to be the ELCA World Hunger Appeal. Though these may be challenging times with many competing needs, there is always room for creative fund raising ventures, many and various ways to contribute and help alleviate the “Silent Disaster” of hunger.

Start with a weekly/monthly—in any case regular—donation to the Appeal. The suggested contribution has been an amount equal to the cost of a loaf of bread per week, or around \$1.50 per week. Higher weekly amounts are never discouraged. However, it is deemed more valuable to be consistent and regular in one's giving, no matter the amount.

The Hunger Team consists of at least one representative from each of the synod's mission districts. If you would like one of these people to consult with your leaders or speak to your congregation, please call the Synod office.

In the meantime, let us heed Jesus' directive at the conclusion of the Good Samaritan story, which doubles as the most recent theme of the Appeal: “go and do likewise.”

*Jeff Odgren, chair*