

MINISTRY TEAMS

CONNECTION BUILDING MINISTRY TEAM

2008-2009 is the year for rebuilding the Connection Building Ministry team. Much of our work has been in the area of connecting the synod through communications with the monthly mailings and synod website. We found our work in this area winding down as Carol L. Weiser handled the day to day tasks of maintaining the website and synod e-news mailing. In addition to the election of Bishop Zeiser in 2008, Carol Weiser retired in 2009 so we now find ourselves at a crossroads.

In conjunction with the bishop, in 2009 our team will rebuild and determine its focus so that this team may achieve the synod 's commitment to

- Provide ways for congregations to share resources, learning, challenges and opportunities
- Assist congregations and other agencies of ministry to employ effective means of communication
- Facilitate communication and mutual accountability among the various ministries and institutions of the church and with our ecumenical partners

Roxanne M. 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."* This year was marked with careful listening by the team. We invited a variety of voices to be heard at our meetings. We needed to hear how you defined developing leaders for a new church in a new world. What does that mean to you? We listened to young people, rostered leaders, visionaries and old friends. The passion people hold on to when speaking about developing leaders is invigorating. Please help us to hear your voice! Visit our display during the synod assembly and join in the conversation.

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.
- The team supports a grant process for lay leaders to match continuing education funds. (We plan on beginning this project in 2010 if finances are available.)

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 is exploring ways of supporting congregations and rostered leaders through Mutual Ministry committees.
- The team maintained new salary guidelines for rostered leaders.
- The team will post reading lists from colleagues on our website.

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 Southeast 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 program struggled in 2008 and was canceled. The leaders of this program are re-working LEAD ON for the summer of 2009.

4. *Provide or insure support for the families of 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 enjoying this program.

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; the Rev. Greg Frey; the Rev. Kurt Garbe; tyna Kaltenbaugh; Russel Kaufman, AJ Mell; the Rev Michael Scholtes, Dwight Weaver and the Rev. Mark Wimmer.

A special thanks to George Fennel for his faithful service to this team since "The beginning!" We will miss George's humor and his awesome secretarial skills. Who will keep the team in line?!

Kathleen M. Schaeffer, convener

2010 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 2009 Assembly of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA.

These guidelines represent a 3% increase over 2009.

The Leadership Development Ministry Team recognizes that congregations are currently experiencing great economic pressures which may make it difficult to meet these guidelines. Nevertheless, they are presenting them as a goal and as a level to which we hope to return when the economy improves.

**PARISH PASTORS
2010 Minimum Salary Guidelines**

Resolved that:

1) The 2010 *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	47,740 - 52,514	32,890 - 36,179
2 - 3	48,800 - 53,680	33,950 - 37,345
4 - 7	49,860 - 54,846	35,010 - 38,511
8 - 10	51,980 - 57,178	37,130 - 40,843
11 - 15	53,570 - 64,284	38,720 - 42,592
16 - 20	56,220 - 67,464	41,370 - 49,644
21 +	58,870 - 76,531	44,020 - 57,226

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 2010, 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 2010 Minimum Salary Guidelines

Resolved that:

1) The 2010 *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	30,236	- 33,259	33,100
2 - 3	31,296	- 34,425	34,160	- 37,576
4 - 7	32,356	- 35,591	35,220	- 38,742
8 - 10	34,476	- 37,923	37,340	- 41,074
11 - 15	36,066	- 43,279	38,930	- 46,716
16 - 20	38,716	- 46,459	41,580	- 49,896
21 +	41,366	- 53,775	44,230	- 57,499

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

The Witness and Service team aims to help the individuals and congregations in our synod to live in to our vision by "renewing our passion to share the good news" (*Synod Vision, 2000*). Helping to accomplish this goal are the many groups that find affiliation under the W&S umbrella: parish nurse task force, gay-lesbian ministry task force, the

accessibility team, world hunger team and awarding of Witness and Service grants.

In 2008 the team awarded grants totaling almost \$42,200 to congregations and ministries throughout the synod. These grants supported a wide array of ministries - mission trips and campus ministry, programs to benefit children and families-in-need in our synod, inner-city day camps and

neighborhood centers, events like “Live the Love” in Reading, a webcast of Trinity Wall Street lectures, the upcoming LIFT celebration and the Micah 6:8 Advocacy day, food pantries and the needs of our companion synod in Tanzania, Bible distribution and “Rejoicing Spirits” worship services.

These grants provide supplementary funds to begin new long-term ministries or additional funds for special events or short-term ministries. Members of the W&S team are blessed to read through the grant applications and hear of the creative ways in which congregations are reaching out to share the gospel through ministries of witness and service.

The Witness and Service team, together with representatives of Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries, Good Shepherd, Muhlenberg College and Lutheran Congregational Services sponsored the 5th “Celebrate Social Ministry Dinner” which was held on Sunday, October 12 at Muhlenberg College. This event provides a meaningful chance to celebrate the many people in our area whose dedication to service is an inspiration to all who know them. The dinner planning committee has decided that the event will be held every other year, on years when there is not a LIFT event, so that our synod will always have an occasion to celebrate ministry together. Look for the next “Celebrate Social Ministry Dinner” in 2010.

The team also reviewed, prioritized, and made recommendations on the ELCA Domestic Hunger Grants from NEPS. These are grants that help fund food pantries and other programs seeking to provide nourishment for those in need.

I am blessed to serve with the W&S team members, whose energy and enthusiasm for these ministries bring great joy to our work: Dawn Baxter (synod council liaison), Mike Bennethum (synod staff liaison), Mary Wolfe, Keith Rohrbach, Barry Mitchell, Martin Milne, David Hill, and Ann Melot.

Amy Jahn de Torrez, convener

WORSHIP AND SPIRITUALITY MINISTRY TEAM

The ministry priority for the Worship and Spirituality team has been, “we will deepen our relationship with God.” The team worked on this priority in several ways this past year.

The Book of Faith initiative has taken front and center stage for the team. Marlane Druckenmiller became our synod’s Book of Faith advocate. The team met with her to look at ways we can be in-

involved in helping lift up this initiative. Our team created a page on our synod’s website to address Book of Faith issues. Part of that site includes a blog where folks are invited to share how they are implementing the Book of Faith initiative in their congregations. The blog is a good place for folks to come away with new ideas.

The synod’s annual Learning Ministries Day, held this year on January 24, emphasized the Book of Faith initiative. Planned by the Learning Ministry Staffers (Marlane Druckenmiller, Doris Binner, Elizabeth Elterich, Betsy Frey, Dottie Belinski, Leesa Wimmer, Ruth Miller, Connie Riedy, David Renninger, and Kathy Ash-Flashner), the day was full of workshops focusing on tools for reading the Bible, ways to read the Bible, opening the Bible with children and much more. Over 220 people attended LM Day this year – quite a leap from last year’s attendance of 150! The keynote speaker, Rolf Jacobson (author of “Crazy Talk”) was such a hit that he’s been invited back next year.

The team held a retreat in February to determine its direction in the coming year. In addition to responding to ideas that may bubble up from members of the synod’s congregations, the team’s dreams for the future include:

- Planning and hosting one or two baptism events for parents of newly baptized children, parents of children who will soon be baptized, sponsors, rostered leaders, and educators
- Planning and hosting one or two worship services for rostered leaders and their families
- Developing a list of supply musicians
- Planning and hosting an ELW event in the fall
- Developing a youth ministry staffer team program

The team used some of its grant money to create a worship space in the synod office. The worship space is on the second floor of the annex.

New members joined the team this year: Joy Gerhart, Elizabeth Schneeberger-Klotz, and Dale Zmijewski,

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 2008, 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;
- ✦ Participated in the synod's Learning Ministries Day by having a display of resource materials on accessibility and leading a workshop on "Biblical Supports for Ministry With and By Persons with Disabilities", including a presentation on models of education for special-needs students;
- ✦ 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;
- ✦ Established new and active contacts with the "Renewing Spirits" worship movement, and continued to serve as liaisons for Berks County's annual "Festival of Faith" and a regional SeniorFest;
- ✦ Provided a display at the Synod Assembly including materials, resource people, and contact help for accessibility issues;
- ✦ Compiled a roster of accessibility ministry "Hot Spots" - congregations and ministries which have done innovative things to make a way for those with special needs to participate actively in the lives of their congregations - and began work on networking these ministries;
- ✦ AND we're looking forward to leading another active, engaging forum at LIFT 2009 at Muhlenberg College.

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 and Prosser funds, over \$38,000 was spent to help our students in the preparation process. Thank you to all the congregations who made special gifts this year.

It is also important that we take a moment to thank Cheryl Meinschein for the many years of dedication and care she has given to the candidacy process. She has devoted a great deal of time to working with all our students to see that they were guided through what can be a very involved process, and did so with great concern for each individual and for the mission of our synod and the church at large. That she was willing to continue this work over the last year after accepting a call to Christ Lutheran Church is especially commendable. Please be sure to express your appreciation to Cheryl when you see her.

Both Cheryl and I are grateful to the ongoing Candidacy Committee for their time and dedication. This group willingly gives of a great deal of time to prepare for meetings and then to come together to serve the church and our students with integrity and compassion. They are required to make very difficult decisions at times for the good of all who are involved. Their determination to be responsive to the needs of each individual is a clear indication of just how seriously they take their involvement.

In January, 2009, the Candidacy Committee approved Eric H. Reimer, Darcy M. Reis, A. Rebecca Resch, Rebecca R. Richie, and Lucinda A. Schottelkorb for ordination, pending the receipt and acceptance of a proper call. The committee also affirmed their past approval of Ruth F. Doty for ordination, pending her receipt and acceptance of a proper call.

Eric H. Reimer is a member of Holy Spirit, Emmaus. He received his Bachelor of Arts Degree from Bloomsburg University, Bloomsburg in 2005, and a Master of Divinity from The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg in 2009. He completed a quarter of Clinical Pastoral Education at WellSpan Health, York Hospital, York, and did his internship at Trinity, Pottsville.

Darcy M. (Boeve) Reis is a member of Grace, Allentown. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Cedar Crest College, Allentown in 2002, and a Master of Divinity degree from The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg in

2009. She completed a quarter of Clinical Pastoral Education at Bethany Village Retirement Center, Mechanicsburg, and did internship at Laurel Trinity, Jennerstown.

A. Rebecca (Rowe) Resch is a member of Friedens, Oley. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Susquehanna University, Selinsgrove in 2005, and a Master of Divinity degree from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia in 2009. She completed a quarter of Clinical Pastoral Education at Reading Hospital and Medical Center, Reading, and did internship at Peace-Tohickon, Perkasie.

Rebecca R. Richie is a member of Zions, Weathery. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Muhlenberg College, Allentown in 2002, and a Master of Divinity degree from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia in 2009. She completed a quarter of Clinical Pastoral Education at Phoebe Home, Allentown, and did internship at Gateway Trinity, Fort Meyers, Florida.

Lucinda A. (Francisco) Schottelkorb is a member of Trinity, Topton. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Kutztown University in 2002, and a Master of Divinity degree from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg in 2009. She completed a quarter of Clinical Pastoral Education at WellSpan Health, York Hospital, York, and did internship at Rural Retreat Lutheran Parish/Attoway-Kimberlin Lutheran Parish, Rural Retreat, Virginia.

Ruth F. Doty is a member of Holy Spirit, Emmaus. She received her Bachelor of Arts Degree from Valparaiso University in 1970, Valparaiso, IN., and a Masters Degree from Purdue University in 1971, W. Lafayette, IN. Her Master of Divinity is from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia in 2004. She completed a quarter of Clinical Pastoral Education at St. Luke's Hospital, Bethlehem, and did her internship at St. John, Sinking Spring.

Also in January, 2009, the Candidacy Committee approved Jacqueline M. Grauel for commissioning as an Associate in Ministry, pending the receipt and acceptance of a proper call.

Jacqueline M. (McCracken) Grauel is a member of St. John, Mohnton. She received a Bachelor of Science degree from Slippery Rock University in 1978, and her MAMS from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg in 2009. Her fieldwork was done at Grace, Shillington.

May I challenge you to continue to encourage those around you whom you see exhibiting gifts for ministry. It is often the case that young people begin to think about serving God in those years

when we have them in Confirmation Ministry. Your words of guidance and support can help them to begin to seek God's will for their lives.

Mary W. Gade, synod staff

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. These are ministries such as St. Peter's, Bethlehem – related to Lehigh University; Union, Schnecksville – related to Lehigh Carbon Community College; and Trinity, Kutztown and St. John, Kutztown - related to Kutztown University. 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.

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.

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.

In 2008, Lutheran Campus Ministry lost a great colleague with the death of Rev. Nils Johnson. Nils was the campus pastor at Kutztown University for many years and also served as Interim Chaplain at Muhlenberg College. Nils was a fine pastor, colleague, mentor and friend. The Affinity Group is investigating ways to honor Rev. Johnson's legacy. The Affinity Group used the \$3000 offering in honor of the 2007 100th anniversary of Lutheran Campus Ministry to support existing ministries and to support a number of student programs, including Alternative Spring Break programs in which students provided service in a variety of locations around the world.

If you or your congregation would like to become involved in campus ministry, please contact the group at www.nepacampusministry.org.

The Campus Ministry Affinity Group

GAY/LESBIAN MINISTRY TASK FORCE

As part of our ongoing mandate from the Synod, the task force is seeking to expand the number of congregations on our territory who wish to follow the Synod's example by declaring themselves to be Reconciling in Christ.

To accomplish this, the task force hosted "Night of Inquiry: Being a Welcoming Congregation" at several locations around our Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod. The first such event was held at Muhlenberg College for congregations in the Lehigh Valley. We brought together representatives of several congregations to discuss the Reconciling in Christ program with congregations already declaring themselves RIC. The purpose of the RIC program, its goals, and the methods these congregations used to reach RIC status are discussed in an informal setting. The program included discussion, dinner, and plenty of time for sharing hopes and dreams. Subsequent events were hosted in the Reading and Wilkes-Barre areas. We are especially indebted to the Witness and Service Team for their support of our ministry to our GLBT Brothers and Sisters in Christ and their families.

As a result of these events, several congregations have entered into the process by beginning study, discernment, and discussion aimed at achieving RIC status. St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Bethlehem has, as a result of this process, declared itself to be RIC. It is our hope that many congregations will follow. We are always available to meet with individuals or committees from congregations interested in receiving more information concerning the process.

The task force will be participating in the 2009 LIFT event at Muhlenberg College. The first LIFT event was an inspiring and exciting event and we are looking forward to this year's edition.

Another event in which the task force participated was the NEPS *Jesus Calls Us . . . to Action* Advocacy Day, a highly successful and exciting day of workshops and sessions highlighting the need for us, as Lutherans, to "walk the walk".

In preparation for the 2009 Churchwide Assembly, the task force formulated and submitted a response to the ELCA Draft Statement on Human Sexuality. We ask for the prayers of all churches and individuals in our synod as the Assembly studies and discusses this important document.

As always, anyone who shares our aims and goals and wishes to help in their achievement is most welcome to join our task force. We have

recently welcomed a student representative from Muhlenberg College. New ideas and visions and new perspectives keep our work fresh and vital. By contacting the synod office you will be put in touch with our task force.

Bob Hensley, chair

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 Loebau/Zittau regions of Germany. Our intergenerational group traveled to Loebau/Zittau region April 1-10, 2008. That group consisted of 14 adults and 2 young people. We spent a great deal of time visiting various sites of ministry in this area. Many of the sites were social ministry locations sponsored by Diakonie, including a Senior Center and Pre School. We had many very interesting conversations about ministry and social ministry as it is done in Saxony. We were fortunate to hear a private organ concert on the famous "Sun Organ" in Gorlitz. The highlight of the trip was our trip to Krakow, Poland and the chance to visit the concentration camps at Auschwitz-Birkenau. This was a life altering experience. In May we were hosts to Superintendent Rudolf of the Loebau-Zittau District along with Bishop Bohl of the Evangelisch-Lutherische Landeskirche Sachsens. Superintendent Rudolf was able to be present for our Synod Assembly and see Bishop Zeiser's election.

In June 2008, a youth exchange involving 13 young adults and 2 chaperones spent two weeks visiting both the Borna District and Loebau-Zittau District. Many old friendships were renewed and our youth were able to experience a sample of the life of German youth.

We look forward to the visit of the Intergenerational group that will be coming to our synod in October 2009.

Michele and Wayne Kaufman, co-chairs

Slovenia

The year 2009 will begin the second cycle of the Slovenia Companion Church Committee's two year exchange student program with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Slovenia. At the end of July, nine teenagers (four males and five females) and two adult chaperones (one male and one female) will arrive for a three week stay in the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod. They will be hosted by Lutheran families throughout the Synod's territory. During the summer of 2006, ten Slovenian students and two chaperones had visited and were hosted by families in our Synod for the same amount of time.

At this writing, the Slovenia Companion Church Committee has secured the services of at least six host families of the eleven that are needed to house the entire entourage. We encourage members of the Synod who have teenage sons or daughters especially to consider volunteering to serve in this capacity. The students from Slovenia are all quite proficient in English and will have no problems communicating with members of their American host families. It is hoped that by staying with host families, the young men and women from Slovenia will become acquainted with the American way of life. As part of a young democracy, the Slovenes have great interest in the American national experience. It is for this reason that we deliberately scheduled their visit to include the 4th of July! In addition to the unique individual experiences each student will have by sharing in the lives of their American host families, our committee will also provide a number of group activities to help broaden the experience. These activities will include a day at Dorney Park/Wildwater Kingdom, a trip to Lancaster County and the Amish country, attending a Lehigh Valley Iron Pigs baseball game, a picnic sponsored by the Bethlehem/Murska Sobota Sister City Association, and – as a closing event for the Slovenian students only – an overnight stay in New York City, hosted by a Lutheran congregation in Manhattan.

Later in the year, our committee will also begin the process of recruiting and interviewing students from our Synod to make the return trip to Slovenia in 2010. We will begin that process shortly after our incoming students depart. We hope to send a group of about ten American students and two chaperones to Slovenia next summer. Interested teens can contact Pastor Kurt Garbe at the Hazleton Synod Office for more information or contact me at pastor@stjohnswindish.org.

I very much want to thank the hardworking members of our committee for their continued service. They are Lynne and Dave Ambrose (Emmanuel, Emanueltown), Kevin Remaly, Nathaniel Campia,

Marie Skrilic, Mary Karol (all St. John Windish, Bethlehem), and Barbara Taylor (St. Peter, Bethlehem). I also want to extend my most heartfelt thanks to our synod staff liaison, Pastor Kurt Garbe, whose guidance is invaluable to the functioning of our committee!

Gary Langensiepen, chair

South Central Diocese, ELC Tanzania

2008 has been a busy and productive year in our companionship with the South Central Diocese. We currently have 17 NEPS congregations in companion relations with congregations in the South Central Diocese. These companion relationships take on many shapes and forms as congregations find the best ways to relate to their companions.

The Youth Servant trip to the South Central Diocese took place in June of 2008. The group consisted of 8 youth, 2 adult leaders, and an assistant coordinator. The group represented the best ideals and was well received by our brothers and sisters in Tanzania. Plans are now in the works for a second Youth Servant trip to take place in June of 2010.

Through the hard work of members of the Tanzania Team and Saint Paul's, Fleetwood, a cargo container with over \$200,000 worth of donated medical supplies, gathered through Global Health Ministries, was sent to the Bulongwa Hospital. It arrived in October of 2008. Funding to ship this container came from several of the NEPS companion congregations. It is hoped that a cargo container will be sent in 2010 with other necessary items collected both by Global Health Ministries and from within our own synod. A list of needed supplies is currently being reviewed.

Saint Paul's, Fleetwood is arranging a trip for September 2009. They have graciously opened up the trip to people from other congregations who may not have enough people to plan their own trip. This way several more face-to-face relationships can be established and strengthened.

If your congregation is interested in being a companion to a congregation of the South Central Diocese, please be in contact with the synod office or me.

Russell Haab, chair

Argentina/Uruguay

With a successful youth servant event between December 26, 2007 and January 4, 2008, the committee now has its sights on the upcoming trip

in July 2011 to Argentina. This trip will coincide with school breaks both in the U.S. and in Argentina, and it is our intention to stay longer, an estimated 10 to 12 days.

Our committee now involves young adults who went to Argentina in previous trips; their contribution and energy are invaluable for the furthering of our relationship with the church in Argentina and Uruguay.

Lead by Pastor President Alan Eldrid, the IELU is taking steps to put together a structured companion congregation program; this program will enable congregations in our synod to be matched with congregations in Argentina or the single congregation in Uruguay and so establish a partnership.

The ties that are being established with the national church in Argentina and Uruguay are bearing fruit and we are looking forward to sharing our gifts and commitments with each other.

The interactions with another church and culture will only broaden the general knowledge and the perspective of our members, and will give us 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

Throughout the past year the Lutheran Youth Fellowship of the Northeastern Pennsylvania synod has done a lot to foster and encourage both leadership and connections to grow in the youth of the church. As always we held our yearly assembly, which was very successful. We also held a training event this past winter for both new and old members of the board in the hopes that the wisdom of the outgoing board could be carried on while some new ideas would be given space to be introduced; this was also very well received. On top of our events and monthly meeting we have been going through the application process to become a ONE youth group, as per one of the resolutions we passed a year or two back.

As for future plans, the board has been contemplating a synodwide servant project, a spring

event, and some other very exciting things! It will be very interesting to see the direction that LYF will take as the new leadership takes over in May, but it is certain that the youth group will continue to help foster spirituality, friendship, leadership, and fun in the Northeastern Pennsylvania synod.

AJ Mell, LYF president

SYNOD OUTREACH WORKING GROUP

The Synod Outreach Working Group endeavors to enhance and strengthen the mission of our synod and its congregations. Our group serves as the liaison between the synod and the Evangelical Outreach for Congregational Mission (EOCM) of the ELCA. The Working Group reviews applications from congregations and special ministries for mission support funds, and submits approved applications to EOCM. If your congregation is planning or has in place a unique outreach ministry, or if your church requires funding to meet the needs of a growing congregation, please contact the Rev. Dr. Michael Bennethum to begin the application process.

Mission Support from the EOCM currently aids the Latino ministry of San Martin de Porres, Allentown. The West Berks Mission Center is currently in the process of reviewing and discernment as to what new possibilities may exist for Latino ministry in the Reading Lutheran Parish area. Trinity Deaf Lutheran of Reading continues to be a beneficiary of mission support. New Life Lutheran, New Tripoli is in their final year of partnership support, and in the coming months will be participating in a ministry review as to how they are meeting the needs of their steadily growing congregation. Some future projects that are continuing to be monitored are a possible mission church in the vicinity of a proposed mega-development in the Morgantown area. Also, we are researching the possibilities of cooperative or satellite ministries in the Mt. Effort area. The Working Group is also assisting a small congregation of Indonesian Lutherans in Scranton as they seek an arrangement for pastoral ministry.

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 and effective in our outreach to our neighborhoods and communities. Currently, the working group is very small in number; the average meeting has only four to five participants. So if you have a passion for mission and outreach, whether you are clergy or laity, please inquire of the Rev. Dr. Ben-

nethum or myself as to when the next meeting is scheduled.

Douglas S. McKeeby, chair

WORLD HUNGER APPEAL TEAM

The earth is home to 6.7 billion people and counting, 963 million of whom go hungry on a regular, even daily basis.

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 too many of us. The current economic climate is not helping matters, bringing the need into clearer focus closer to home.

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 is involved in planning for the arrival of the Tour de Revs (www.tourderevs.org) which will coincide with our Synod Assembly on June 5 and 6. It is also involved in helping to plan and organize the Walk for World Hunger at the LIFT event planned for June 13 at Muhlenberg College. 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. These messages can be downloaded for use in congregational publications.

World Hunger receipts from Synod congregations for Feb 1, 2008 - Feb. 1, 2009 totaled \$341,452 - down \$54,568 from the year before. Disasters, natural and man-made - not to mention an economic belt-tightening for many - give us options and perhaps give us pause when it comes to how we allocate our financial resources.

Yet 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 or 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.

Food for thought on the ELCA World Hunger website is a reminder that "It takes more than meals to feed the world," revealing a "multiple strategy" approach to addressing the challenge of alleviating hunger in the world.

May the congregations of the Northeastern PA Synod rise to the occasion of keeping this need front and center, advocating and providing for many who have little or no voice in the way their lives unfold.

Jeff Odgren, convener