



## City Pastor Visits Orthodox Leader



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Ends a 14-Year Seminary Journey

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Walking With

Whoa! or Wow!



By Carol Balinski, Religion Editor

*(This article is reprinted from the March 27, 2004, issue of the Reading Eagle and is used by permission.)*

In a world where technology such as e-mail has revolutionized communication, the Rev. Fred S. Opalinski, senior pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, Reading, said, "Nothing can take the place of face-to-face opportunities for discussion."

For that reason, he traveled in January to Istanbul, Turkey, with Bishop Mark S. Hanson of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), to meet with leaders of the Orthodox Church including the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. Hanson, who is also president of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), based in Switzerland, led a 14-member joint ELCA-LWF delegation.

Opalinski is a former member of the ELCA Church Council, the chief governing body of the church, and has served on an advisory committee for ecumenical affairs.

The trip was to have taken place last year, but was postponed due to security concerns following the start of the U.S.-led war with Iraq.

Bartholomew is the world leader of Orthodox Christians, including churches such as Greek Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox and Antiochan Orthodox churches. Among patriarchs who lead their many Orthodox churches, Bartholomew is considered "first among equals," according to the ELCA. He is known as the "Green Patriarch" because of his concern for the environment.

Opalinski described the patriarch as a "warm, engaging person with a keen interest in world affairs."

In fact, the patriarch has just returned from a trip to Cuba where he met with Fidel Castro, who offered to translate some Orthodox theology books into

Spanish and said he is considering opening an Orthodox seminary in Cuba.

During a different meeting with His Eminence Metropolitan Athanasios of Heliopolis and Theira, there was discussion about the ordination of women, and the possibility of a single, common date for the celebration of Easter by Western and Orthodox churches. Orthodox churches do not ordain women; the ELCA has ordained women for many years.

Despite such differences between Lutherans and Orthodox Christians, Opalinski said, "There is a lot of theological agreement."

For instance, he said, "Our (emphasis on) Eucharist resonates well with them."

Emphasizing the similarities between the churches is "important in a world which is so individual," Opalinski said.

The ELCA delegation to Istanbul encountered no hostility toward Americans, said Opalinski. However, he said the delegation was advised to refrain from wearing clerical collars on the streets of the city, which is largely Muslim. Opalinski estimated there are 10,000 Christians in the city of approximately 12 million people.

Opalinski was particularly moved by the delegation's visit to an Orthodox seminary on nearby Halki Island, closed 33 years ago by a government order. It has been maintained in a state of readiness in case it is allowed to reopen.

Opalinski said he saw 2004 periodicals kept in the unused library and met with a professor who hasn't been able to teach since 1971.

"It was a surreal experience to visit this school which is ready to open tomorrow," Opalinski said.

The way in which the school has been maintained illustrates the fact that "Orthodox history is so much longer than ours," according to Opalinski.

"They have a different understanding of history," Opalinski said of the Orthodox Christians, adding their attitude is "God's time will take care of things."

Opalinski said his experience in Istanbul makes him eager to have ecumenical dialogue with Orthodox Christians in Berks County. However, as a newcomer who began his pastorate in Berks County less than a year ago, he has not had the opportunity to meet many Orthodox leaders here.

"I'm open to discussions," he said.

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*the spirit*  
JUNE 2004



The Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod

For Ruth Doty, LSTP Commencement  
Ends a 14-Year Seminary Journey



By Mark Staples

When Ruth F. Doty received her Master of Divinity degree May 23 from The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, it was a culmination of a 14-year scholarly journey at the seminary.

Doty, a member of Holy Spirit Lutheran Church in Emmaus, Pa., and a resident of Wescosville, blurted to her mother at the age of seven that she wanted to be a pastor. Her brother was already on track to becoming a pastor. So Doty was rather surprised when her mother then told her she couldn't become one "because they aren't letting women become pastors in the Lutheran Church." It was then 1955, more than 15 years before Lutherans began ordaining women.

Doty at her tender age had been reading from her first Bible, a gift to Sunday school children from the American Bible Society, and had studied a provided ABS help entitled "Where in the Bible it says things," Doty recalls. "I asked my mother where in the Bible does it say a woman can't be a pastor? She couldn't give me an answer."

So Doty went on with her studies at a Christian day elementary school and excelled at Hunter College High School in Manhattan, a school for gifted youth. A vicar from her Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod congregation took her on a field trip to Union Theological Seminary in New York City and encouraged her to consider studying at Valparaiso University in Indiana. The notion of studying theology wouldn't leave her alone. So at Valparaiso's honors college, where she was encouraged to create her own major, she chose a concentration in sociology, psychology and theology. As she completed her Valparaiso studies, a professor suggested she attend the University of Chicago Divinity School, mentioning that now some Lutheran churches were beginning to ordain women.

"But I wasn't sure I was being called to pastoral ministry at that time," Doty says. "And I didn't see myself as one of those persons on the front lines of the first women being ordained." So Doty began earning a Master of Family

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Life Education degree at Purdue University. She met and married husband Richard, also a Purdue student, who was studying to be a nuclear physicist. She completed an internship in marriage counseling in connection with the University of Pennsylvania. Later, Ruth and Richard moved to Florence, Ala., where Richard worked as a physicist and Doty served as a marriage and family therapist for a counseling center.

But the call for church involvement still burned within her. She and her husband served as youth advisors for two neighborhood congregations in Alabama. When her husband decided in 1984 to pursue a new career option in Allentown, Pa., Ruth concentrated on being a mom for a while to sons Matthew, now 28 and a physicist on the West Coast, and Jonathan, 25, now a middle school teacher in Maine.

In 1990, Ruth decided to take up her studies again, observing that Muhlenberg College in Allentown was a setting for an LTSP course offering, "An Introduction to Theology." She took one and sometimes two courses a semester during her degree pursuit, some at Moravian College, some in Philadelphia. The teachers included the Rev. Dr. Timothy Wengert, now the Ministerium of Pennsylvania Professor of Church History; the Rev. Dr. Philip D. W. Krey, now president of the seminary and the Ministerium of New York Professor of Early Church History, and Dr. Faith Rohrbaugh, former LTSP dean who recently retired as president of Saskatoon Seminary in Canada.

She decided fairly early in the process to declare that she was a candidate for the Master of Divinity degree, which could lead to ordination. "But to be honest, I wasn't sure at that point I was being called to the ordained ministry. But I also made myself answer the question, why not go toward that goal?"

Doty said she had a strong belief in ministry of daily life "and that whatever you do in the church as a lay person is ministry. For some, the call to ordained ministry is a direct, clear process. For me it has been a lengthy one that unfolds gradually." During her years as a seminarian she continued in her marriage and family therapy practice as time permitted. Other ministry chapters she has engaged in over those years have included serving as a youth advisor, participating in a work camp ministry in Starks, Maine, with the youth of her congregation, Holy Spirit, Emmaus, and doing counseling for troubled pastors and congregations through the Church Renewal Center, a program that once was housed at Allentown's Good Shepherd Home and Rehabilitation Hospital. "If that center were still running today I might have continued in that ministry," Doty speculates. But the program closed. Greater clarity about a call to ordained ministry, however, came to her as she took on a fieldwork assignment with Pastor Grace Olson of St. John Lutheran Church, Easton, Pa. And the call became clearer this year as she worked on internship at St. John Lutheran Church, Sinking Spring, Pa., with Pastor Harry Bohn.

During her seminary years she grew to deeply appreciate the quality of the teaching she received in seminary but candidly admits she missed the community support and life that would have been possible at the seminary had she not been commuting so great a distance.

"My husband deserves a lot of credit for all the support he has given me through this lengthy journey of mine," she says. Once her internship is

complete, Doty hopes to become part of a team ministry in a congregation. "I don't see myself as the sole pastor in a congregation," she says. Where she could be assigned is likely to become clear during the next year or so, she believes.

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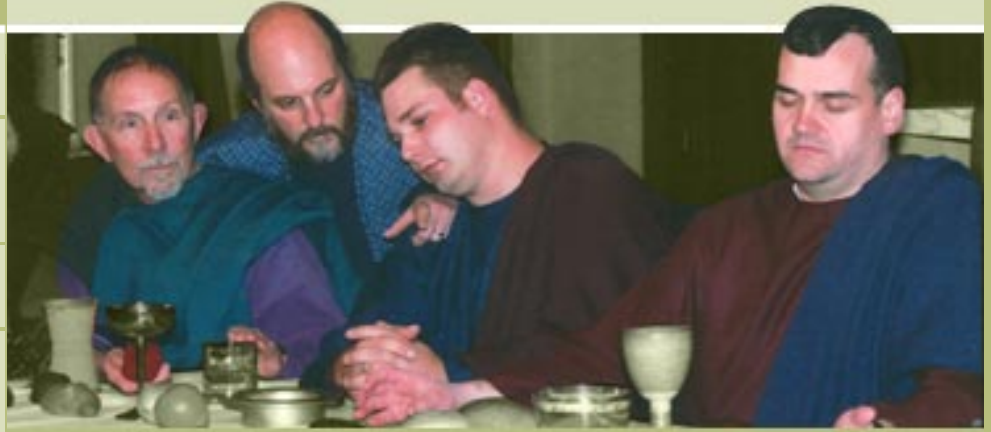
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By Vicky Richter

This past Lenten season, 13 men from St. James Lutheran, Coopersburg, stepped into the sandals of Jesus and his disciples as well as into Da Vinci's famous rendition of The Last Supper.

The premise of the reenactment is to study a particular disciple for eight weeks, "getting inside his head" with the aid of scripture and other texts devoted to the lives of these early followers of Jesus. Author Carol Spacht devised the weekly study sessions and procedures for the re-enactment as well as provided a bibliography for Last Supper: A Living Portrait. The cross-generational drama unites the participants on several levels.

After the men get to know one another on a more personal level, they assume the persona of the disciple they will portray in the painting. The brotherhood of the 13 deepens as, week after week, they share information. Questioning themselves, their motives and the motives of the other disciples and Jesus intensifies as they discover their destinies, discuss the life-altering miracles they have witnessed, and explore the ways they each have betrayed Jesus.

The good news is that there really isn't a script that needs to be memorized. The better news is that the men develop their own script! Using their "sanctified imaginations," participants create a short response to Jesus' astounding declaration, "One of you will betray me." Each also creates lines his character would say to the others nearby in a dialogue sequence regarding this outrageous accusation. Finally, each disciple speaks from his heart as he addresses Jesus in an interior monologue.

Witnessing this reenactment is powerful. Being one of the 13 is extraordinary!







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By Steve Mocarsky

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There was a "giant swing" to ride, a climbing wall to scale, a lake to fish in and boat on, and plenty of fun learning activities for the whole family. And it was all free.

Bear Creek Camp provided six hours of activities so members of the camp's founding church and the general public could celebrate Earth Day 2004 on Sunday, April 18, 2004. Officially, Earth Day falls on April 22.

"Part of the Lutheran religion is stewardship," said Charlene Wildes, the camp environmental education director.

And because Earth Day is all about stewardship of the earth, it made sense for the camp to begin observing the day about a decade ago, Wildes said. This year, a \$1,500 grant from the Lutheran financial group Thrivent and food and beverage donations from many area businesses allowed camp officials to offer free admission.

And folks from throughout the region took advantage. Wildes said she received RSVPs from more than 300 families, and she expected more than 500 children to show up.

Halle Orlove, 9, and her best friend, Jamie Sheridan, 10, both of Mountain Top, had fun scaling the climbing wall in helmet and harness. "It was really hard to do. It takes a lot of strength," Halle said.

Halle's mom, Lorrae Orlove, reminded the girls of an educational exhibit they attended while recalling some of their day's activities.

Jamie said she learned "you shouldn't throw stuff away. You should recycle so it can be reused."



Steve Pogash of Mountain Top took his niece Briawna Cogle to “The Good, the Bad & the Ugly” — a presentation on creepy crawlies by author/photographer John Laskowski.

Pogash also led a nature therapy hike, which dealt with “incorporating inner nature and the natural world, and de-stressing techniques,” he said.

Christian Tobash, 7, of Deer Lake, and Cali Seitzinger, 11, of Orwigsburg, came on a bus with 43 other members of Jerusalem Lutheran Church in Schuylkill Haven. They learned all about moths and butterflies during a presentation by Rick Mikula.

Although activities were geared toward kids, adults also had the opportunity to pursue their natural interests.

While Mel Olenwine's and Terri Earnshaw's daughters wandered through the campgrounds, the women planned to attend a session with Charlotte Raup, a.k.a. the Herb Lady, of Wilkes-Barre.

Olenwine's mother, Lois Shelly, said Raup's session is her favorite program at the camp. “We love learning about the herbs and vinegar making,” she said.

Olenwine said she and the girls have been attending Earth Day activities at the camp since they started.

“It's the only time we can get them outdoors and off the computer,” Earnshaw said.

“And they learn without even knowing it,” Olenwine added.





**Judy Gifford:**  
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Judy Gifford will be retiring on June 30. She and Herb plan to travel, visit family, and just be. It is a well-deserved and long-awaited retirement, but Judy says she will miss the busyness of the office. I will miss Judy.

For more than 10 years, Judy and I have had conversations in the first hours of the morning routine. We've talked about the world situation, last night's TV shows, a magazine article recently read, and what Herb (Judy's husband) and Ken (my husband) made for dinner the night before.

The phone rings and someone asks Judy about an appropriate video for an adult forum. The UPS man makes his almost daily delivery. A parish study (or two) for the vacancy process has to be completed for one of the associates of the bishop. I have a mailing to go out to the Lutheran Youth Fellowship Board. Judy makes the copies, prepares and stuffs the envelopes. The registrations are coming in for the Lutheran Schools and Early Childhood event. Judy records names and workshop choices and records payment. When the week of the event comes, she will make participant lists and name tags, and stuff packets that will be distributed at the event.

A sheet of new video resources has to be made up to put in the monthly synod mailing. A staff member asks Judy to handle lunch for a special meeting in the annex. Someone returns samples of Sunday church school curriculum borrowed from the synod Resource Center. Synod assembly registrations come in by the hundreds. Everything has to be entered into the computer. Badges must be prepared. The registration process on site must be planned.

The day is over. The plants are watered. The coffee cup is washed. The supply of caramel candies in the candy basket is replenished. "Have a good evening, Ruth. I'll lock the door."

Have a good retirement, Judy. I'll miss you. We'll miss you. Thank you for being such a wonderful and dear partner in ministry.





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One of the true blessings of the assembly was the presence of the Rev. Shadrack Manyiewa, bishop of the South Central Diocese of the Lutheran Church in Tanzania. Accompanying Bishop Manyiewa was his wife, Mariamu Tulasivona Manyiewa, known as Mama among the people of the diocese. A warm and gracious couple, Bishop and Mama chatted with voting members and visitors, sharing stories of their people and their country.

During his greetings in the opening session, Bishop Manyiewa presented Bishop Strobel and the synod with the gift of a beautiful carving—a large giraffe with a small giraffe.

“These animals are very different from each other,” the bishop said, “But they walk through the same jungle. You may be the large giraffe and we may be the small one, and sometimes we’re the big one and you are the small one. What is important is that we walk together.”



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It may be hard at times to see the events in our lives as blessings.

“When you look at anything, your brain asks, ‘Danger? Or opportunity?’”  
said Bob Sitze, keynote speaker.

Addressing the assembly theme in a whimsically humorous way, Sitze, the ELCA Director for Hunger Education, talked about being blessed, sharing blessings, and responding with thanks to the blessings we receive. Using the image of a sneeze and our usual response to it (“God bless you”), Bob pointed out that this response and its global variations, all invoking some kind of blessing, arose centuries ago because sneezes meant illness and often death.

“Many of us see our lives as full of dangerous sneezes,” Bob said. We don’t see the blessings that are there even in the face of tragedy and difficulties. “Danger? Or opportunity? It’s all how you look at it,” he said. “You never know who’s blessing you, and you never know whom you’re blessing,” he said. “Thank you for being the invisible people of God — out there sluggin’ evil in your daily lives.”

