

Lent 2007

To: ELCA Diaconal Ministers, Deaconesses, and Associates in Ministry
From: Stan Olson, Executive Director, Vocation and Education

In February the Vocation and Education unit of the churchwide organization hosted a Consultation on Vocation and Service that brought together some sixty people, in approximately equal numbers from the four rosters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The gathering was part of this church's continuing conversation about public ministry leadership. Specifically, this consultation hoped to help members of the three lay rosters "articulate how the theology and experience of vocation and service should define their role as publicly called leaders in the ELCA in the 21st century."

Participants agreed that it was a very helpful event that brought the opportunity to meet people on other rosters and from other parts of the country, to discuss opportunities and challenges we have in common and variously, and to look at ways to make future service even more effective than it has been in the past. Again and again we heard reports that people felt they understood one another better, and we heard a strong desire that this conversation continue and be expanded. The Vocation and Education staff was asked to share news of this gathering with all rostered lay leaders. We are glad to do that.

At the conclusion of the consultation, this consensus statement was developed and accepted:

In response to God's call for the sake of the world and to empower the church, this consultation group desires to speak to the church with one voice. It recommends that a conversation be furthered among the four rostered ministries that assures participation by all and moves at a careful and deliberate pace. This conversation would attempt to develop a consensus understanding of and proposal regarding the public ministry of Word and Service.

Some key issues/work groups have been established and should be supported with additional resources. Other groups should be developed as needed.

The planning team for the consultation will assume the initial responsibility to shepherd this process.

To give you a full sense of the consultation, the planners want to share with you a set of notes that reflect the presentations, the conversations and the insights. I encourage you to go to the consultation website at www.elca.org/leadership/events/consultation. There you will find not only a set of notes but also have access to the pre-readings that were offered to participants.

I hope you'll find ways to engage these conversations about ministry possibilities. We also hope for various regional conversations. You'll hear more about that. And watch for my invitation to conversation in the May issue of *Lutheran Partners*, print and online.

Thank you for all the ways in which you serve Christ through your callings.