

## From the Conference

The 12<sup>th</sup> Annual NALIP (National Association of Interim Pastors) Conference met in St. Louis, Missouri, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May for a three day conference. There was some tremendous fellowship and great information about what is happening in the church concerning interim ministry. With over sixty participants the conference was highlighted by visits from Rev. Dr. Gerald B. Kieschnick, President of the LCMS (Lutheran Church Missouri Synod) and Rev. Dr. Gerald L. Mansholt, Bishop of the Central States Synod, ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) who also brought greetings from Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson.

The conference sessions included meetings conducted by the NALIP board, the IMA (Interim Ministry Association) board serving the ELCA and the IMC (Interim Ministry Conference) board serving the LCMS. These meetings focused on issues that affect the work of interim ministry at the local and national level.

The main speaker, Luther K. Snow, has written several books, including his bestselling book, *The Power of Asset Mapping: How Your Congregation Can Act on Its Gifts*, published by the Alban Institute.

([www.alban.org](http://www.alban.org)) Snow graduated with honors from Harvard University and has an MBA from the University of Chicago Graduate School of Business. (<http://home.earthlink.net/~lutherksnow>)

Those who gathered for the Luther Snow sessions were challenged to appraise their paradigm when looking at a "half-full cup," and to recognize the abundance of our collective gifts. That was just the beginning. We soon discovered the unexpected opportunities where the whole is greater than the sum of its individual parts in any organization.

The last day of the conference was spent discussing critical incidents. Those who participated experienced outstanding insights and gained useful skills for the future.

The NALIP conferences are held annually and are open to all. The conference attendees were given the

opportunity to receive continuing education credits. The next NALIP conference is being planned and information will be available shortly.



Luther Snow (second from right) coaches one of the breakout groups.

## Recommended books

Here are books that were mentioned in the IMA Seminar in St. Louis by some of the speakers. Included is a review of the book written by the keynote speaker Luther Snow. I checked out some of the reviews written on [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com) and share them with you now. Hope you enjoy these books. If you have a favorite book you have read that has been very helpful to your interim ministry please send it in to [imanewsletter@msn.com](mailto:imanewsletter@msn.com).

— Dan DeBlock

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## Here's a thought...

Print an extra copy of this newsletter and share it with someone else doing interim ministry that you know. Also—share the IMA leaflet that is included in this mailing.

## From the president...

Greetings to IMA members and interim ministry supporters. I hope you will all find time for refreshment and renewal this summer, whether you're in the midst of challenging work or "in between."

Important components for a healthy interim are a balance of work and Sabbath/renewal time, good personal and professional support systems, and serious continuing education. Attending to these will enable you to serve effectively and with a sense of fulfillment. Short-changing yourself can lead to a feeling of depletion and questioning of your call to do this important ministry. It's especially helpful to have a good break between interims for rest, reflection and gearing up for the next challenge. Some interims negotiate a "13<sup>th</sup> month" at the end of their contracts, at full salary and benefits, to enable that kind of renewal. I highly recommend that kind of self-care, because it enables the kind of strong, confident startup that benefits the congregation as well as the interim minister.

One form of support system is the network of colleagues and deepening friendships that begin at the annual conferences. After attending for more than a decade, I've found these relationships to be a highlight of the gatherings, sometimes more than the educational offerings. The IMN conference brings together practitioners from many denominations, plus the opportunity to meet new ELCA interims. The smaller NALIP conference always offers a high-quality presenter, but the opportunity to meet and share significant social and professional connections among ELCA and LCMS colleagues always wins rave reviews. This year we even became international, when we welcomed a couple serving the LCA—the Lutheran Church of Australia. Please mark your calendars (and set aside continuing ed funds) for the 2007 conferences: NALIP will meet May 24-26, following the IMN's 22-24 annual conference in the Baltimore area.

Our Board for the 2006-07 term includes Secretary Cheryl Berg, Treasurer Dan DeBlock, Newsletter Editor Paul Axness, Member at Large Olin Knudsen, and NALIP Representatives Ray Hittinger and Jan Marvar. I will continue as President, and Dick Bruesehoff serves as our ELCA Vocation and Education advisor and supporter.

We've completed five years as the IMA, and have become "the voice of interim ministry in the ELCA."



We have done a lot, but there is always more to be done in our mission of serving congregations and interim ministers, and encouraging excellence in the field of interim ministry.

The Board is a small one, and since all of us are also serving congregations, it's a challenge to meet all the needs, expectations, and hopes of members and non-members alike. But you can help make a difference—your membership dues support our work of advocacy and service, and your participation (ideas, willingness to help, and advocacy in your local area) can help us do more. And do share stories about successes, large or small. They encourage us all, especially on those clouded days when we entertain our own private doubts. It's good to hear that there is both sunshine and grace, and know that God has a wide-angle lens.

Thanks to all of you engaged in this most challenging and rewarding ministry, where we are called to ventures of which we sometimes cannot see the ending, via paths untrodden through perils unknown. Surely God's hand does lead us, and his love surrounds and supports us. May he also refresh our spirits and bodies this summer.

Blessings on your work and life,  
Cynthia Stengel, IMA President

### Association Dues

NALIP, as a tax exempt organization, is able to receive the annual dues of its members, and the dues may be claimed as a tax deduction. (IMA and IMC-LCMS do not have a tax exempt status at this time.) The NALIP treasurer will direct the dues to our respective associations.

Annual dues for the Interim Ministry Association of the ELCA (IMA) are \$50.

Please make all checks payable to **NALIP** and mail them to: Ray Hittinger  
1848 Ridgelawn Ave.  
Bethlehem, PA 18018

## **Books** Continued from page 1

G. Lloyd Rediger, *Fit to Be a Pastor: A Call to Physical, Mental, and Spiritual Fitness*

This is a great resource – not only for pastors, but seminarians and even congregations. At last, a book for persons of faith that not only addresses the spiritual health, but that of the mind and the body. This book without a doubt delivers a concise road map to nurturing all three elements of the personhood in a frank, clear and helpful manner.

G. Lloyd Rediger, *Clergy Killers: Guidance for Pastors and Congregations Under Attack*

This book is most insightful on the subject of church life and ministry. Dr. Rediger seeks to deal with a tragic, but growing trend in our day, the tendency of some powerbrokers in some churches to target, abuse, and fire pastor after pastor.

Some pastors do have some real problems, but how is it that some churches mistreat pastor after pastor? Is it believable that several pastors in a row could make the same mistakes in the same church? Perhaps we should ask ourselves what the common denominators are such as the unresolved personality disorders that exist in churches. It is time for congregations to wake up and realize what these “Clergy Killers” are doing not only to ministers and their families, but also to people in the church who befriend and support the minister.

Luther K. Snow, *The Power of Asset Mapping: How Your Congregation Can Act on Its Gifts*

Asset mapping is something we all do everyday, but Luther Snow shows you how to use it to its fullest advantage to bring about change, action, and most of all, possibilities. Asset mapping is an excellent resource for the church to help discover what we have always known - that when we focus on the positive assets we all bring to any given situation, God works through the details. I highly recommend this resource for any student of small groups, problem solvers, or possibility thinkers. Change your church by changing your mind.

– Rev. Michael Vandenberg

## **Interim Mission Accomplished**

On Sunday, June 25, 2006, Ridgeview Presbyterian Church of Farmers Branch, Texas, a suburb of Dallas, voted unanimously to call Pastor Richard Rosenfeld, thus ending a transition in ministry that spanned just less than four years (46 months). Ridgeview was served by an Intentional Interim Pastor for just over three years (39 months.) What made this Interim unique was that Pastor Olin Knudsen is an ELCA pastor and the first Lutheran to serve in Grace Presbytery (Dallas, Ft Worth Metroplex), the largest Presbytery in the PCUSA. Pastor Knudsen is an Interim Ministry Specialist on Synodical Call in the North Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod of the ELCA and a board member of the ELCA’s Interim Ministry Association.

When asked about the Interim experience, members Wayne Shuck (Session member, chair of Personnel Committee and member of Interim Search Committee) and Sybil Shuck (former member of Session and the Pastor Nominating Committee and current chair of Christian Education) expressed deep gratitude for Pastor Knudsen’s ministry. The Shucks have been members of Ridgeview for thirty years and have gone through the Interim experience three times. What made this experience special was that, “this time Ridgeview is in a healthier and better place to receive its new pastor,” according to the Shucks. They identified three challenges at the outset of the interim: habitual group power struggles within the congregation, infighting among staff members, and a lack of spiritual vibrancy. These challenges were substantiated in the history-gathering process.

Wayne and Sybil described the state of the congregation: “For years the Session (governing board) and pastoral leadership were not strong enough to rein in dissonant voices vying for control. They did not know how to deal with differing opinions constructively. Everyone wanted it their way. These unhealthy patterns spilled over into the staff as they too fought for power, sabotaging the spirit and well being of the congregation. The go-to position was triangulation. At the same time many in the congregation began to be aware of their need for sustained spiritual growth.”

As power struggles emerged, the interim pastor worked to teach the congregation and staff healthier patterns of communication. During this time the Session was finally empowered to dismiss three divisive staff members. In addition, the congregation learned how to

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## **Disability coverage proposed for interim ministers between assignments**

Ordained interim ministers who have received a term call by a synod may be able to purchase ELCA Disability Benefits coverage between assignments, if proposed benefit changes are approved by the Board of Trustees of the ELCA Board of the Pensions and the ELCA Church Council.

The changes, which would take effect Jan. 1, 2008, have been requested by the Minneapolis Area Synod and are being developed by the Board of Pensions in collaboration with the ELCA Vocation and Education unit. The proposed changes would apply only to ordained ministers serving under term calls for interim ministry, who will be identified for the Board of Pensions through their assigned synods.

Ministers are currently able to extend coverage for health and survivor benefits beyond their term of employment by paying for it themselves. However, the ability to continue ELCA Disability Benefits coverage has not been available because of the absence of compensation on which to base benefits and the difficulty of distinguishing interim ministers called by a synod from other clergy who may simply be between regular calls.

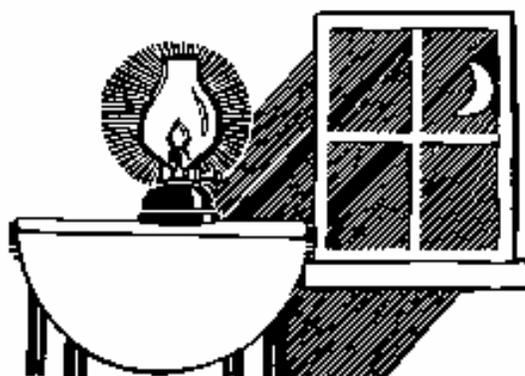
To address the gap in disability coverage, the Board of Pensions is proposing extended, limited disability coverage to ordained interim ministers if – and only if – they are serving under a synod term call to interim ministry.

Details have yet to be developed, but following are some proposals regarding the purchase of limited disability benefits coverage during gap periods:

- The monthly income benefit would be a fixed amount not related to the previous defined compensation.
- It would be paid for by the interim minister; however, payment could be received from the synod or congregation.
- The Board of Pensions will continue to offer extended health and survivor benefits coverage during the gap period, as it does today, independent of extended disability coverage.
- It likely would not include the ability to make

continued retirement contributions. Some ministers may wish to continue retirement contributions, but it would be preferable to allow each person to determine whether and how much to contribute. If there is not a convenient way to allow contributions during the gap period, ministers could always make catch-up contributions during periods of employment.

Interim ministers who enter the gap period, as well as those who have accepted a new call, should complete a Board of Pensions Change of Call form and indicate their choice of coverage continuation or waiver of health coverage. In order to have uninterrupted survivor benefits coverage during a gap, the interim minister will be charged a small monthly contribution.



### **Treasurer's Report**

We have had an increase of membership this year. Last years membership stood at 50 and this year's membership stands a 76. There was an increase in membership despite the increase in dues. We have stated to cut costs by sending mailings out by email and reducing the number of snail mail. We still have a handful of members requesting letters.

You can help support your IMA organization by asking your congregation to take a freewill offering during the last service for the association. To date we have received well over \$900 from three congregations who have benefited from the ministry of their interims.

The checkbook was audited at the St. Louis conference and found in good order. The present balance is around \$4000.00 after paying all the bills.

Thank you for your support.

– Dan DeBlock, Treasurer

**Mission accomplished** *Cont. from page 3*

agree and disagree in love, and support the decisions of the Session.

During the first year a few members, along with the interim, encouraged others to get involved in the Cursillo movement. Small accountability groups emerged largely as a result of the lay leadership developed out of Cursillo. Within three years 17% of the membership has attended Via de Cristo, Presbyterian Cursillo or Walk to Emmaus. At least half of these participants have served on a weekend staff at least once. Cursillo and other special spiritual growth workshops over the interim period have strengthened the vitality of the congregation.

Was thirty-nine months too long for an interim? "No," answered Wayne and Sybil emphatically, "It was God's timing, well worth the three years and three months. Our expectations were ultimately dealt with during the Interim which improved Ridgeview's state of health."

Ridgeview tangibly demonstrated its appreciation for the Interim Process by donating \$410.00 to the IMA collected on Pastor Knudsen's final Sunday, June 4, 2006.

Pastor Rosenfeld has just retired from the US Air Force Chaplaincy. By coincidence, Pastor Knudsen is also a retired Air Force Chaplain.

Interim Mission Accomplished!

**Upcoming NALIP offerings****DISCERNMENT FOR INTERIM MINISTRY**

12 hour events

February 9-10, 2006 - Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN

July 24-25, 2006 - Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO

September 21-22, 2006 - Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN

**BASIC EDUCATION FOR THE PRACTICE OF INTENTIONAL INTERIM MINISTRY**

Six month program, three sequential phases

Oct. 30 - Nov. 3, 2006 and April 23-27, 2007 - Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN

November 6-10, 2006 and April 16-20, 2007 - Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO

**CONTINUING INTERIM EDUCATION**

12 & 36 hour events

October 11-12, 2006 - "Interim Ministry with Multiple Staff" - Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN

October 12-13, 2006 - "Mission/Vision/Self-Study in the Interim Period" - Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN

**Other offerings**

The Lombard Mennonite Peace Center has a feast of helpful workshops. The upcoming schedule can be found at

[www.lmpeacecenter.org/schedule.html](http://www.lmpeacecenter.org/schedule.html).

**Here's a thought...**

If you have an interim story to tell, send it to us at [imanewsletter@msn.com](mailto:imanewsletter@msn.com). Try to keep it to 500-600 words. There are a lot of stories out there - yours could be helpful or interesting to others.

**Tip**

If you "control-click" on the orange print in the newsletter you will be taken to that address (or that person's site) on the internet.