

**“What Is God Calling Us To Be – A Consultation on Vocation and Service”  
February 5 – 8, 2007  
The Duncan Center  
Delray Beach, Florida**

**Report to the ELCA Diaconal Ministry Community  
February 18, 2007**

**The following material has been compiled from various sources provided for the participants at the Consultation as well as from notes taken during the event itself by Terri Endres and Beth Barkhau. A formal summary of the Consultation is to be produced and mailed to all members of the lay rosters (Associates in Ministry, Deaconess, and Diaconal Ministry) from the Vocation and Education Unit of the ELCA. The Diaconal Ministry Leadership Team seeks to keep the community informed and respect the decision of the V & E Unit to produce a formal document first. Therefore, this is simply a reporting of key elements from the consultation. Members of our community are encouraged to discuss items directly with any participant. A formal statement affirmed by the seventeen diaconal ministers present at the Consultation is included in this report. In addition to this reporting and the V & E document, a presentation on the Consultation will be made at our community gathering in Carefree, Arizona in April.**

“Purpose of the Consultation: To bring together representatives of the three lay rosters to articulate how the theology and experience of vocation and service should define their role as publicly called leaders in the ELCA in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This consultation may also lead to recommendations regarding these rostered ministries.” (Registration Brochure)

Funding

The Consultation was made possible primarily by a generous grant from the ELCA Deaconess Community.

Facility

The Duncan Center [www.ducancenter.org](http://www.ducancenter.org);

Facilitator for the Consultation: Rev. David Nelson, Co-Pastor Muhlenberg Lutheran Church, Harrisonburg, VA. “Dave has become adept at facilitating variant groups of people who wish to come to common action and understanding. His delight and expertise in enabling people to listen, respect, and connect with each other with honesty and openness has been witnessed and confirmed by others who have experienced his work.” (Introduction to Facilitator and Panel Members in Welcome Packet)

Presenters/Panel Members for Theological Presentations and Feedback to the Gathered Participants

The Rev. Dr. Kathryn (Kit) Kleinhans, chair of the Religion and Philosophy Department at Wartburg College. “One of the things she enjoys most about college teaching is the opportunity to shape the lives not only of future church leaders but of future educators, social workers, business professionals, etc. In addition to her classroom responsibilities, Kit is Associate Director of Wartburg’s *Discovering and Claiming Our Callings* initiative, a campus-wide program centered around the Lutheran understanding of vocation....She describes herself as living with one foot firmly planted in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and one in the 21<sup>st</sup>.” (Introduction to Facilitator and Panel Members in Welcome Packet)

The Rev. Dr. Duane Larson, Twelfth President of Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa. “He has served as Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg from 1993-1999.... Prior to service to the church includes pastorates...served the church also at the synodical, national and global church levels in various capacities, as well as in multiple community organizations. He co-chairs the Lutheran – Episcopal Coordinating Committee, serves on the Board of Directors of the Ecumenical Institute in Strasbourg, France, and partners with the African Religious Health Assets Project (ARHAP) in South Africa. Dr. Larson has edited and authored several books and numerous articles.” (Introduction to Facilitator and Panel Members in Welcome Packet)

Dr. Susan McArver, “is in her eighth year as Associate Professor of Christian Education and Church History at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary in Columbia, SC, where she is also Director of the Center on Religion in the South.... Her particular scholarly interests include religion in the South and women’s history, two issues on which she does considerable reading, writing, and speaking.... In 2006 and 2007, Susan has been lead professor in the newly developed course: Diaconal Ministry Course: Discernment, History and Formation, commissioned by the Deaconess Community and offered at Southern during J-Term.” (Introduction to Facilitator and Panel Members in Welcome Packet)

#### Planning Team For The Consultation

Kris Perry, DM, Co-Chair  
Jim Valentine, AiM, Co-Chair  
Tammy Devine, DM, Worship  
Sr. Melinda Lando, Worship  
Neva Warren, AiM, Transportation  
Sr. Anne Keffer, Program  
Dr. Stan Olson, ELCA V & E Staff  
Rev. Craig Settlage, ELCA V & E Staff  
Rev. Kim Beckmann, ELCA V & E Staff  
Rev. Dick Bruesehoff, ELCA V & E Staff

Readings from the Consultation are available for download from:  
[www.elca.org/leadership/events/consultation](http://www.elca.org/leadership/events/consultation)

Worship during the event included Morning and Evening Prayer, Holy Communion and Healing Service, Holden Evening Prayer, Closing worship with Holy Communion, and Litany of Sending. Worship times utilized the new “red” hymnal Evangelical Lutheran Worship. Services were led by participants with the Word proclaimed by Stan Olson, Kim Beckmann, and Dick Bruesehoff.

## **Participants In the Consultation**

Sr. Mary Arie  
Beth Barkhau, DM  
Rev. Allen Bjornberg, Bishop  
Rev. Dick Bruesehoff, V & E Staff  
Sr. Sally Burk  
Sr. Davia Ann Baldauf  
Rev. Kim Beckmann, V & E Staff  
Amy Brown, AiM  
Sr. Carol Burk  
Madelyn Busse, DM  
Sr. Patricia Chafin  
Phil Deming, DM  
Tammy Devine, DM  
R. Dean Earl, AuN  
Rev. Murray Finck, Bishop  
Joyce Freund, DM  
David Glover, DM  
Bill Decker, AiM, V & E Staff  
Rev. Ron Duty, V & E Staff  
Terri Endres, DM  
Sr. Elsie Fregeau  
Nancy Gable, DM, Regional Staff  
Diane Greve, AiM, LDA  
Maretta Hershberger, AiM  
Melissa James, DM  
Sr. Anne Keffer, Directing Deaconess  
Ellen Koester-Lassen, AiM  
Rev. Duane Larson, Presenter  
Sr. Carolyn Hellerich  
Sr. Joy Hovis-Myers  
Marcia Johnson, ELCA Staff,  
nonrostered  
Rev. Kathryn Kleinhans, Presenter  
Sr. Melinda Lando  
Rev. Randy Lee, ELCA Staff  
Krista Lind, AiM  
Sr. Laura Mankivsky

Agnes McClain, AiM  
Terry Moore, DM  
Karla Neumann Smiley, DM  
Joanne Otte, DM  
Sr. Amy Lindquist  
Susan McCarver, Presenter, nonrostered  
Greg Meyer, AiM  
Rev. David Nelson, Facilitator  
Rev. Stan Olson, V & E Staff  
Kris Perry, DM  
Suzanne Rigg, DM  
Carol Schickel, AiM  
Connie Schmucker, AiM  
Jill Schumann, Staff, LDA  
Sue Setzer, DM  
Marilyn Smith, AiM, Regional Staff  
Sr. Jane Roper  
Margy Schmitt Ajer, DM, Regional Staff  
Rev. Paul Schreck, ELCA Staff  
Rev. Jensen Seyenkulo, V & E Staff  
Sr. Gunnel Sterner  
Mary Stohlman, AiM  
Sr. Janet Stump  
Jim Valentine, AiM  
Neva Warren, AiM  
Susan Wessner, AiM  
Scott Weidler, AiM, V & E Staff  
Sr. Jean Widmeyer  
Kim Winchell, DM  
Louise Williams, AiM, LDA  
Rev. Peggy Wuertele, Regional Staff

\*Participants flew into Fort Lauderdale, West Palm Beach, and Miami airports; some arrived by Amtrak or personal vehicles

## Memo/Letter to the Participants

“*Thank you* for taking the time to engage important questions and consider many callings as part of this consultation. *Welcome* to a conversation that can have a significant impact on each of us individually and on the many forms of ministry in the ELCA that we love.

You each come to this gathering with hopes. Here are mine:

- **Thinking and understanding together** – I hope that we will do deep and broad thinking about *the theology and experience of vocation and service*. I hope that together we will have some new and renewed understandings of what it means to be *called to a public ministry* that seeks the wellbeing of others.”
- **Planning together** – I hope that we will ask ourselves constructively how this church could refresh its policies, practices and structures for ever-more effective preparation and deployment of rostered leaders with vocation and service.
- **Speaking out together** – I hope that this consultation will produce insights to share with colleagues where each of us lives and works. I hope it will produce insights and counsel to offer in some formal way to the expressions, institutions, and agencies of the ELCA
- **Trusting the God of the future** – I hope that we will trust the God of hope and look forward. There are pains and frustration in every Christian’s callings and in shared callings. There is a time and place to address those, but this gathering is about planning for God’s great future.”

In my initial October letter to you about this consultation, I quoted good words written to Christians in Colossae. I do so again, as a foundation for our time together:

*Let every word of Christ dwell in your richly; ...and whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Colossians 3:16-17*

(Cover memo in Welcome Packet, written by Rev. Dr. Stan Olson, dated February 2007)

## Consultation Framework/Schedule of Events

Throughout the Consultation presentations were made by panelists, large group discussions were facilitated by David Nelson, small working group discussions took place on particular topics, and worship and contemplative time was taken seriously.

On the opening night, following introductions, small groups (comprised of two members of each lay roster as well as presenters, V & E staff, and regional representatives) took time to share their baptismal story, and their hopes/expectations for the consultation. The following notes were posted by each small group.

## **PARTICIPANT EXPECTATIONS OF CONSULTATION ON VOCATION AND SERVICE**

Opening small group session: Monday, Feb. 5, 2007

### Group 1

- Language issues – clarity and consistency
- Our understanding of rosters – help or hinder ecumenically
- Ordination expanded to other rosters
- Affirmation of all ministries

### Group 2

- What are the needs of the world and how do we best serve those needs?
- How do we equip the people to do the ministry?
- Clarify, share, understand

### Group 3

- Clarity of identity in terms of candidacy and for areas of service for all rosters
- Equity for the above, also
- Results from our time together, not just words
- How do we encourage new leaders in ministry? Future oriented discussion

### Group 4

- Leave empowered as Body of Christ for mission and ministry together
- Support for, and lift up all rostered leaders and lay leaders
- To be free from a preconceived outcome, agenda
- An ongoing mechanism for conversation between and among the rosters
- To be defined positively, not as a non-
- To have rosters get to know each other and the gifts they bring
- Share learnings since the Study of Ministry
- Do we need new definitions or just clearer definitions?
- Theological rationale/foundation for rosters
- What are the missional roles of a church in decline?
- Why would someone want to serve on a lay roster?
- What makes a leader – gifts, competency, education, lifting up of a congregation?

### Group 5

- Are we fulfilling our calling as disciples of Christ?
- Renewed emphasis on diakonia in the world through social ministry
- Is God's mission for the church being met by the current forms of ministry in this time and place?
- Gain a better understanding of the 4 rosters
- Clarity of the purpose of the consultation and why we were invited here

#### Group 6

- Gain greater clarity on “what is God up to in the world and in the church” and what might that mean for what God is calling us to be.
- Want people to talk with, not at, each other to gain greater understanding of each others’ ministries
- Hope for openness and thinking beyond silos
- See where the Spirit leads us
- Learn how rosters complement each other
- Interested in how clarity regarding ELCA rosters might relate to conversations with Episcopal and Reformed Churches
- Want to know that conversations and thoughts of rostered people are important to “the church”
- Wonder – how does ministry shape leadership
- Curiosity about whether there might be fluidity for entering and exiting rosters at various points on a baptismal journey that might include many different types of work, settings, commitments, etc.
- Strategy for educating rest of the church, regarding rosters – what they are and why they are important

#### Group 7

- Proposals for clarification of roster categories or re-organization of roster categories
- Sharing of stories. Sharing of joys and struggles and how we can partner
- How do other Associates in Ministry live out their callings?
- What is the intersection of what the church says about each roster and how their calls are lived out?
- Growing mutual respect between rosters
- How can we have one voice?
- Be servant leaders

#### Group 8

- Respectful listening and honest speaking, discerning spirit
- Greater clarity and deeper understanding of the nature and value of these ministries
- Communicating this nature and value more effectively and broadly
- Envision ways to expand the potential for mission in/and through these ministries
- Stay open to surprise (Holy Spirit)

#### Group 9

- For all the “lay rosters” to begin a new collaboration in all their work
- To begin building an ecclesiology of servanthood/Word and Service, the context of which is primarily articulated by the servants (e.g. “office of service with three expression”)
- Discern our understandings of “service” celebrating variety/diversity of calls
- Discuss theology of the Word
- Know each others’ gifts/charisms

- Find/build a broad language of call that is evocative to/for prospective new Word-servant people
- Be honest about power dynamics at work in the conversation
- BE FUTURE-DRIVEN
- That the ELCA will believe this is all important and keep it going.

During day two of the Consultation, Dr. Susan McArver, Dr. Duane Larson and Dr. Kit Kleinhans made three thought provoking presentations.

Dr. McArver spoke on general themes of the diaconate and provided a brief historical overview; Dr. Larson spoke on theological implications relating to the theology of the cross and the theology of glory; Dr. Kleinhans spoke gender issues, key terminology (lay, priesthood of all believers, ministry) and sin.

Sr. Anne Keffer and Tammy Devine led a large group discussion on a visual time line so as to aide those visual learners and for all of us to see the big/whole picture more graphically with an awareness of history.

Small Group time focused on what God is calling all of us to be. What does it mean to be in ministry together? What are the challenges? What does this mean for the current structure of our rosters?

Large Group time was spent on processing the responses of small groups and the hearing again from the panelists on what they were hearing. David Nelson collectively moved the group forward. There was discussion about four rosters

- The ELCA currently has a roster of Word and Sacrament and three rosters of Word and Service (include all three current rosters with some definition)
- A roster of public ministries – one roster of service with again some defining terminology
- The current usage of terminology such as lay and ordained, credentialing, rites of entry, equitable status, and much more

At the beginning of day three of the Consultation, David Nelson proposed that there were seven possible directions we could go based on presentations and discussions thus far. Small groups were to wrestle with the following “directions” and report back in their desired action plan.

#### Seven Possible Directions

- Do nothing more
- To intentionally keep meeting – usually done to foster collegiality, developing relationship, continuing education
- Change the people – “if you can’t change the people, then change the people.” Maybe we need different people at the table.
- Decide to stand for something collectively – requires hammering something out. Either in self-interest or in solidarity

- Stand for the whole church – not only are we standing for something for us, but standing
- Speak to the church – this is a strategic direction. This has to assume one voice, even if this one voice comes from different places and contexts.
- Try to get the church to react – intentionally strategic. Could be many different things, but it must be understood it is not the action that matters, but the reaction. AND the reaction may have both intended and unintended consequences.

After discussion, both in small and large group settings, each roster present was invited to gather and formulate a response or give feedback as to “where they were at.” It was from this time that the 17 DMs gathered and quickly formulated a response which was presented back during large group discussion time. The response was recorded and sent out via the list serve, at the request of those in attendance. It was written and edited by Nancy Gable, Beth Barkhau, Kim Winchell, and others present. The response was presented by Nancy Gable and Beth Barkhau. It is reprinted here:

Greetings from Florida! As you recall from previous emails, 17 diaconal ministers are currently involved in the “What is God Calling Us to Be” lay roster consultation. This afternoon we had the opportunity to meet as a roster group for mutual reflection and conversation regarding this event’s goings-on. As a result of this conversation, the 17 of us made the following report to the larger gathering, which was presented by Beth Barkhau and Nancy Gable:

**“The DM Community of the ELCA’s Response to 2.7.07’s “roster” conversation at the Consultation on Vocation and Service, Delray Beach, Florida (2.5.07 – 2.8.07) in response to the concept of “what it might mean to be a unified roster.”**

“Nancy and I had the opportunity to travel and represent the DM’s of the ELCA at the LWF Theological Consultation on the Diaconal Ministry in the Lutheran Churches in November of 2005.

There are two key summative statements from the resulting document which are relevant to this conversation and consultation which we seek to share.

Nancy will read from the report’s final paper

[The Diaconal Ministry in the Mission of the Church, LWF Studies](#) 01/2006, edited by Reinhard Boettcher... The first is the Introduction, pg. 81, the second the Conclusion, pg. 88.

*“Introduction”*

*Under the auspices of the Department of Theology and Studies (DTS) we, representatives of sixteen member churches of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), gathered in Sao Leopoldo, Brazil, under the theme, “The Diaconal Ministry in the Lutheran Churches,” We discussed our varying experiences with the diaconal ministry, challenged each other’s concepts and struggled with different theological perspectives. Thus the voices from the member church were heard. As mandated by the LWF Council, we sought to identify theological parameters from demarcating a space in which an understanding of diaconal ministry can be located that is (a) solidly grounded in the Bible; (b) informed by the Lutheran Reformation; and (c) open to contextual variations in both church and society.*

*“Conclusion”*

*“We call upon the member churches to reexamine the ways in which they have ordered the ecclesial ministry, and, in particular, to do so in such a way that the diaconal responsibility of their mission is adequately expressed. We are convinced that establishing or strengthening the diaconal ministry and providing training and formation that would facilitate its equal recognition with the pastor ministry would be an appropriate way of acknowledging and meeting this challenge. This might imply raising awareness*

*of congregations and pastors regarding the importance of the diaconal ministry and its implications for cooperation in the one ministry of the church.*

*In many contexts the church is in crisis and in need of reexamining its mission. We do not consider establishing a diaconal ministry to be a universal remedy. Nonetheless, since the one ministry of the church is key for carrying out its mission we are convinced that the diaconal ministry can make a distinct contribution to making it more credible and effective, being aware that God, through the power of the Spirit, will have to guide and authenticate the church's mission and witness.*

At the LWF consultation, there were at the table, pastors, professional church workers, diaconal ministers, deacons, deaconesses, and the baptized/ "lay" people present...there was equal representation of those in the pew and those in leadership, those formally trained or set apart through rite, and those serving out the call of all the baptized in their local context...what resulted was the report. We feel they are representative of what we've been saying at this consultation here in Delray Beach.

Thus, the DM's of the ELCA, as representatives of the wider body of our roster state...

As the DM community met, we seek to share... offering this contribution, this commitment to this consultation....

Utilizing the 1993 Study of Ministry and the global Lutheran voice as it is expressed in the Lutheran World Federation publication, The Diaconal Ministry in the Mission of the Church, along with other resources already known within the ELCA (such as National Church Development and the lived experience in the diaconal ministry) we seek to help the church live into its diaconal call for the sake of the mission of Christ in the world.

We move into this conversation trusting that there are no foregone conclusions and a willingness to continue the dialogue."

This is one small piece of the ongoing conversations which the diaconal representatives present at the consultation will summarize and share with the diaconal ministry community gathered in Carefree. Those present bring you their sincere greetings and we look forward to seeing you at our next gathering in Carefree, April 17-22, 2007.

On the final day, David Nelson presented a summation and proposed a concluding "next step." He led the participants at the consultation in a discussion regarding a final statement which, once word-smithed, was affirmed by consensus of those in attendance.

**A Final Statement by the Participants  
Consultation on Vocation and Service  
Feb. 5 – 8, 2007**

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.

Moving Forward:

- Some key issue/work groups have been established and should be supported with additional resources. Other groups should be developed as needed.
- The Planning team for this consultation will assume initial responsibility for shepherding this process.

Participants and the planning team are confident that what we have begun will be continued. It needs to be a conversation on the issues we've all raised, until they can be concluded in a way that serves the church and the world. When we are able to work in this context, surely the Holy Spirit will continue to work within and among us.

We invite you to ask questions from our personal perspective about what we experienced and learned. Feel free to email us at the addresses below. We will update you as we learn more from the planning team.

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