Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Diacon News

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Counterpower against exclusion - Conference for the Study and Development of Diaconia

Diaconia Polytechnic, Joensuu University, Helsinki University and Church Training College (Seurakuntaopisto) have joined forces for a September 25-27, 2006 conference in Järvenpää, Finland focusing on diaconia. The conference will also celebrate the tenth anniversary of Diaconia Polytechnic. The aim is to offer a forum for international research networking.

In the conference there will also be thematic sessions and one open seminar. Papers can focus on research results and also on new project plans, research and developments, etc. Preferably send proposals for paper before April 1st to: anne.maatta@diak.fi. Accepted proposals will be informed in April. Some of the themes of working seminars include: emergency aid & advocacy for the poor, diaconia in civil society, self-understanding of international diaconia, spirituality and counseling, theology of diaconia, migration and working with other faiths, diaconia and its historical roots.

Those planning the conference are excited to have this be an international conference. At this point in time Nancy Gable is writing a paper proposal to submit and plans to attend the conference as an ELCA diaconal minister and representative of Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg. The Seminary is developing a formal education exchange relationship with the diaconal training programs in the Baltic region (Finland, Norway, and Sweden) for both students and faculty. Kjell Nordstokke (keynote speaker) and Trygve Wyller (international advisory board member) along with several conference planners are key partners in the planning of this emerging relationship.

Gable encourages all diaconal ministers to consider this opportunity for international diaconal ministry connections and learning; and thinks it will be an excellent continuing education opportunity. Those of you in First Call Theological Education might check with the appropriate contact person to determine if attendance might fulfill a requirement.

For more information about this seminar, log on to www.diak.fi/conference2006

Volunteers Needed

Camp Noah is a program of Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota and Lutheran Disaster Response in partnership with affiliate agencies. Camp Noah is carried out locally by interdenominational and community planning groups. Volunteers may serve as individuals or as part of a Work Team.

For application materials, for additional information or to provide much needed financial support please contact www.campnoah.org or call 1-800-987-0061.

Diaconal ministers' gathering

by Mindy Holland, Leadership Team Corresponding Secretary

David Glover modeling a prayer shawl

Last autumn, the Diaconal Ministers' Gathering was held at Simpsonwood Retreat Center in Norcross, Georgia from Thursday, October 13th, through Sunday the 16th. The first day served as an optional pre-conference, which included fellowship, a service project, worship, and informal conversation. Thirty Diaconal Ministers attended the gathering, as well as three individuals who are approved but not yet consecrated.

Charles Smith, approved candidate

The formal gathering began with a panel discussion by our special guests: Sister Anne Keffer, Directing Deaconess of the Deaconess Community of the ELCA, Rev. Dick Bruesehoff and Rev. Stan Olson from the Vocation and Education Unit of the ELCA, Bishop Craig Johnson of the Minneapolis Area Synod, and Rev. Dr. John Largen, Pastor to the Seminary Community of Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary. Each reflected on diaconal ministry and some of their hopes for diakonia in the ELCA in the future.

The weekend's business meetings involved vigorous discussion and the approval of several proposals, including the affirmation of the continuous line cross as a common symbol for the Diaconal Ministry Community. We also elected new members to the Leadership Team. Kris Perry and Tim Freund were selected, and they will serve with Beth Barkhau and Mindy Holland, current Leadership Team members. Doug Spiotta was chosen to serve as the team alternate. Special thanks and recognition to Ed Kruse, outgoing member of the leadership team who has served faithfully for the past four years.

Other weekend activities included worship, Bible studies led by John Largen, small group time, and fellowship. Before our departure on Sunday, prayers of blessing were said for Nancy Gable and Beth Barkhau, who were preparing to represent our community in Brazil for the Lutheran World Federation's Theological Consultation on Diakonia.

It was a blessing to gather in community and to share stories of ministry and service. The quilt that Pat Gerber had assembled from squares submitted by community members, in reflection of the gathering theme, "Woven Together in Love," was sent on to be used by those affected by hurricanes in the Gulf.

Mark your calendar for April 19-22, 2007 for the next gathering. Spirit of the Desert Retreat Center in Carefree, Arizona will be our host.

Esther Schmidt, Mindy Holland, Ed Kruse and Patricia Gerber admire the Diaconal Ministry Community Quilt which was on display at Simpsonwood.

Gable and Barkhau attend consultation on diakonia

Nancy Gable and Beth Barkhau attended the Lutheran World Federation Consultation on Diakonia in Sao Leopoldo, Brazil in late 2005. The consultation was organized by the LWF Department for Theology and Studies (DTS) under the theme, "The Diaconal Ministry in the Lutheran Church." Participants came from Argentina, Botswana, Brazil, Canada, El Salvador, Finland, Germany, India, Indonesia, Japan, Lithuania, Malaysia, Norway, Sweden, United States of America, and Zimbabwe. Building upon the November 2002 LWF report "Prophetic Diakonia: 'For the Healing of the World'" Johannesburg, South Africa, participants worshipped together, heard major papers on diakonia and brief international ministry profiles, exchanged illustrations of servant ministry, and celebrated our diverse lives in Christ.

Consultation continued on page 3

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

Prayers of concern...

Terri Endres and her family at the death of her mother on November 30, 2005.
For the family of R. Michael (Mike) Drew, DMFE 1999, who died on November 19, 2005.
For Margaret Howell's father, Lou who underwent back surgery in November.
Judy Bergeson and her mother who's health is declining.
Barb Martyn's mother who had a stroke, followed by pneumonia, and is now in a nursing home recovering.
Sue Vogel Herrera as she continues to recover from hip replacement surgery with resultant nerve damage from the surgery.
Mike Miller as he continues to manage his mother's care.
Patricia Gerber's mother who broke her hip in October.
For Leslie Whited Vance and her family at the death of her brother Larry, November 21, 2005.
For diaconal ministry candidate Charlie Smith as he undergoes dialysis for kidney dysfunction.
For Marj, a friend of Sandra Reback who continues to battle cancer.

Prayers of thanksgiving...

For the birth of Amanda Jo (Spiotta) Svoboda, granddaughter of Doug Spiotta.
Lisa Hill and her family at the adoption of son, Harold Armstrong Watson Hill, and daughter, Gina Lydia Watson Hill.
For Kim Gonia, Terri Endres, and Jennifer Larson who were consecrated.
For the marriage of Tammy Devine and Mike Carlson on November 27, 2005.

Did you know ...

Dawn Alitz has accepted a new position at Christ the King Lutheran in Bloomington, MN as the Director of Children's and Family Ministries. Her diaconal passion is spiritual direction and faith formation for all ages, particularly in teaching parents to continue on their faith journey as they pass the faith to their children. She is also working on a PhD in pastoral care and family ministry at Luther Seminary in Saint Paul, MN. When work and studying become too difficult, she relies on her wonderful family (husband Dave and daughters Birgit and Tabitha) to remind her what love is all about and teach her the healing wonders of laughter.

Amy Hartman's diaconal ministry project has been to create the Cherish Our Children Initiative through her membership on the Bishop's Task Force that has been charged with implementing the ELCA Message on Commercial Sexual Exploitation. This Initiative is a congregation-based effort of intentional prayer for children; education for young people, parents, and other adults in the congregation; and relationship-building to strengthen a congregation's commitment to attend to the needs of all of God's children as well as dismantle the system of sexual exploitation.

Consultation continued from page 2

A copy of the paper written for the LWF global communion was posted on the LWF web site. It is meant to be a tool for discussion, awareness, advocacy, and empowerment. It is the hope of all who participated in the consultation that the paper will be read, shared, discussed, and embraced as a tool to help the LWF global communion of churches reflect, build up, and enhance the diaconal ministry of the baptized everywhere.

If you have questions please feel free to contact Nancy Gable at ngable@ltsg.edu Beth Barkhau at barkhaurbpe@aol.com. In addition if you would like to view photographs from the consultation or learn more about the world of Lutheran World Federation, visit the LWF North America web site (www.elca.org/lwf). Nancy and Beth were truly honored to represent you, the Diaconal Ministers of the ELCA at the consultation and thank you for holding them in prayer!

A call story...

by Kim Gonia, Diaconal Minister for Pastoral Care

My call is to Holy Trinity Lutheran in Littleton as Diaconal Minister for Pastoral Care. I assist with worship, preach occasionally, teach, work with the Stepehen Ministers, assisting ministers, and eucharistic ministers of our congregation, and provide pastoral care in all kinds of settings.

My husband Jim and I spent 10 years in Madagascar (1988-1998) as ELCA missionaries. We came to Colorado because of the Companion Synod relationship between the Rocky Mt Synod and two synods in Madagascar. I worked at the Rocky Mt Synod office for five plus years while I attended Iliff School of Theology where I did a Masters in Specialized Ministry/Pastoral Care. Then spent a year as a Chaplain Resident at St Anthony Hospital in Denver before being called to Holy Trinity and consecrated on October 16.

Jim and I have three children. Caroline, 19, is a sophomore at PLU. Mallory, 17, and Peter, 15, are a senior and sophomore in high school.

DOTAC— Diakonia of the Americas and Caribbean host conference July 2-6, 2006

Our Community is a member of the World Diakonia. One of these subgroups is Diakonia of the Americas and Caribbean (DOTAC). DOTAC is holding a conference next summer. Beth Barkhau is our Community representative to DOTAC - and she will be attending. However, others from our Community are welcome to attend. To quote Beth: "It's an excellent opportunity to walk in the ecumenical world of diaconal service."

DOTAC Regional Conferences are held every four years, as planned by the Central Committee. They provide opportunities for fellowship, learning, celebration, and decision making. The number of voting delegates for each member association and sisterhood is determined by a ratio of its membership.

Since the first conference in 1968, every effort has been made by the members to become acquainted with one another. The diaconate in each church varies in terms of its relationship to the denominational structure and in types of service. Many denominations now include men, as well as women, in the diaconal ministry of their churches. Fundamental to all, is personal commitment to Jesus Christ and the decision to articulate this commitment through a quality of life and a vocational task responsive to the needs of persons and society within the life of the church.

Cost— $400 est. (US dollars)— not including hotel room, some assistance may be available.

Program includes: Caribbean Cultural Presentation and Expo, visits to island diaconal projects. The program schedule is available online in PDF format. Registration Forms coming soon from Member Associations and DOTAC Web Site.

To learn more about this conference, log on to www.dotac.diakonia-world.org/conferences.html

"... what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God." Micah 6:8

Birthdays

January

2 Susanne Rigg
3 Gracia Hegener
4 Don Burgess
12 Ann Myhre
14 Tammy Rade
17 Joyce Freund
Audrey Forbes
22 Patty Lee
27 Margaret Howell
29 Mindy Holland

February

6 Anne Becka
Mary Lasits
13 Linda Fox
16 Sheryl Faulk
Barb Schmitthenner
20 Linda Davis
21 Kim Nelson
23 Jan Johnson
25 Marilyn Olson
27 Ed Kruse

March

2 Carole Bohn
7 Letha Isbell
10 Laurie Beckman-Yetzer
11 Joy Heine
19 Sharon Biles
21 Charlie Smith
Christy Van O'Linda
26 Libbie Reinking
31 Barb Martyn

Consecrations

Kim Gonia	10/16/05
Jennifer Larson	11/20/05
Terri Endres	12/4/05

Community mission statement

As a covenanted community, centered in the Word, grounded in the biblical call to diakonia and brought forth by the ELCA, we seek to encourage and support one another, and partner with others to address the emerging mission and ministry needs of the church and our world. As called and consecrated diaconal ministers, we covenant to:

- Be prayerfully centered and rooted in the Word
- Speak the truth in love
- Identify, mentor and assist with discernment and formation of prospective diaconal candidates
- Engage in ongoing spiritual formation, continuing education and formation designed to strengthen the mission and ministry of the diaconate
- Partner proactively with the structures of the ELCA, for the purposes of interpreting diaconal ministry and guiding its development
- Be in relationship with other diaconal communities both in the ELCA and ecumenically

In context

Through diakonia, the church as a serving community expresses concretely in peoples' everyday lives the in-breaking reign of God in Christ...for the community at large or for the church's own nurturing...effecting transformational processes in structures and in the lives of communities....The primary aim is to share with all people, in concrete ways, the abundant life promised by the gospel, without necessarily "vocalizing" or verbalizing it in any way. Such services are not mere charity. They aim at transforming communities and societies, advocating for justice, and calling for alternative sustainable communities; thus, they must be results oriented and impact conscious.

— excerpts taken from "Mission in Context: Transformation, Reconciliation, Empowerment - An LWF Contribution to the Understanding and Practice of Mission," available at www.lutheranworld.org/What_We_Do/DMD/DMD-Publications.html

Shall we wash feet?

The question has been raised. The invitation has been brought forward. The Lutheran Deaconess Association (LDA) of Valparaiso has invited the ELCA Community of Diaconal Ministers and the Deaconess Community to work once again, jointly, in washing feet at the next youth gathering. The ELCA National Youth Gathering, Cruzando, takes place July 5-9th and July 12 - 16th. LDA has organized footwashing stations at previous youth gatherings, and most recently at the 6th Triennial Gathering of WELCA in San Antonio this past summer (see http://www.elca.org/diaconalministry/). Serving at the footwashing station not only brings relief to the weary but it also gives every servant an opportunity to share the diaconal story.

Are you planning on attending the NYG with your church, youth group, as a workshop leader, speaker, or presenter? Can you volunteer to be present for one of the weeks as a footwasher? Will you consider serving during an afternoon of free time?

Do consider taking time to volunteer with the Deaconess Community of the ELCA, LDA, and your fellow diaconal ministers. If you are interested in serving or have questions, please contact Diane Marten, Deaconess at 219-464-6925 or at Diane.Marten@valpo.edu or Beth Barkhau, Diaconal Minister 803-649-4021 or bbarkhau@bellsouth.net.