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Earthkeeping Made Easy!

by Kim Winchell

Well ... relatively speaking. We all know how challenging it can be to advocate lifestyle changes and, in general, to engage in prophetic (read "unpopular" and/or "ignored") ministries. But, rooted in the hope and new life that flows from Christ, and sharing in our call to service on the church / world boundary, the diaconal community of the ELCA is well-suited to share the message of God's call to "earthkeeping."



Earthkeeping is a term being used by many people of faith to describe the nature of our responsibility to care for creation. It springs from our wonder, awe, and gratitude for God's wisdom, creativity, and blessings that fill the natural world. It also grows from our dismay and concern for the degradations and "groaning" of God's creation. Faithful earthkeeping involves extending the justice, peace, reconciliation, hope, and love of Christ to all creation. In caring for the Earth, we also deepen our relationship with God and with one another, as we work for the healing of the world.

There are a wealth of helpful materials available for those who may be in a position to facilitate discussion and study in congregations (hopefully spurring earthkeeping actions!). Here are some of my favorites:

www.webofcreation.org - based at LTSC; check out the Green Congregation program
www.earthministry.org - Caring for All Creation: On the Road, At the Table, In the Home
www.theregenerationproject.org - find an Interfaith Power & Light organization near you
www.ncccecojustice.org - National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Ministries office

Peace to you, peace to the earth!

Kim Winchell

Busse receives Distinguished Service Award

What honors one, honors all. Madelyn Busse received the alumnae Distinguished Service Award for Leadership this year at the annual Leadership Conference at Lutheran School of Theology, Chicago. "I am truly humbled and honored. When I think of all my colleagues in churchwide and synodical ministry (not all LSTC alums, of course) I honestly can't think what makes my service any more distinguished than any one else's," wrote Busse. She believes that her involvement in the development of diaconal ministry triggered the award. "I think we can all take pride in the fact that the seminary wanted to honor an MA alum and to lift up the importance of diaconal ministry in the life of the church."

Serving Christ—half a world away

By Jeong-Ran Kim, Oberin, the Diakonia Sisterhood in Korea

The first of May 2005 was the 25th anniversary of the Diakonia Sisterhood in Korea. We published a book and made a video about the first 25 years of us to commemorate this occasion. On the day itself, a special service was held at the Mother House in Cheon-An, while at the 'Han-San-Chon', in Mok-Po, friends and voluntary workers from within and without the country had gathered for a celebration. It was a very significant – and emotional – occasion for us, as we could meet, in one place, those who had been supporting us with continuous interest, love and prayer. As we looked back on the past quarter of a century, we could not but give thanks to God who was with us, guided us and prepared the way before us.

In July, sisters Jeong-Ran Kim, and Jong-Sook Ro attended the 19th Diakonia World Conference in Durham, Britain, where some five hundred deacons from 37 countries had gathered to strengthen international ties and friendship.

At our retreat house in *Cheon-An*, the 'House of Spirituality and Peace', we had many individuals, churches, and other groups using the facilities to worship and to prayer with us all through the year. Besides, we had five sessions of 'Prayers in Silence', each lasting five days, together with the church leaders, and lay Christians who visited us.

In *Mok-Po*, some changes were made in the form of our service to the community. The two Elderly Welfare Centers of Hadang and Haengbok, which had provided food for the destitute as well as other social programs for general senior citizens of the area, was closed. This was due to the expiry of the contract with the city council. The *Han San Chon* Tuberculosis Hospice, which we had been running from the establishment of the sisterhood in the early 1980s, has been transformed to an elderly home. In the newly started *Han San Chon* Elderly Home, we look after those without families, and those who suffer serious medical conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, senile dementia, and Parkinson's disease. One by one, they came seeking our care by themselves or through the request of others and this made us start the elderly home.

In relation to the 'Household Support Project', a benefactor came forward to help a family of one old lady and her two teenaged grandchildren, who did not have a place to live, and provided them with a room without charge. Before they came into our care, the children's father had died and their mother had disappeared while they were left subjected to abuses by their uncles. One of the children suffers from second-degree mental disability.



Diaconal Ministers of Korea

Korea—continued on page 3

Conference of Lutheran ethicists

Joy Heine and Charles Smith attended the Conference of Lutheran Ethicists in Phoenix in early January. The topic was Lutherans in Public Policy. It focused on advocacy, social statements, and how Lutherans and Lutheran agencies can and should function in the public sphere. It was a good meeting and much useful information was shared and a number of contacts were made among co-workers from the U.S., Canada, and abroad. The diaconal presence in advocacy and public ministry was lifted up during the conference.

Next year, Lutheran Ethicists will meet in Dallas, again in early January. The topic will be Sexual Ethics and the Church. If any diaconal ministers, those approved for calls, or seminarians in diaconal tracks want to attend the 2007 Lutheran Ethicists Conference, there is a possibility that some scholarships may be made available from the ELCA to help defray expenses. Many diaconal ministers are active in ethics, advocacy, and related fields. For more information, log on to <http://www.elca.org/dcs/le-gathering.html>.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

Prayers of concern...

Barb Martyn and family on the death of her mother, Virginia, January 11 and her stepfather, Marvin, on January 6.

Anne (Becka) Goode as she undergoes medical testing.

Ardie Senft's husband as he recovers from surgery.

Sandra Reback as she recovers from having a pacemaker implanted

Sandra Reback's friend, Marj, as she continues her struggle with cancer

Martha Baker's husband David in the hospital with kidney and liver failure.

Krista Johnson Breuer (DMFE 2001) has received word of a breast cancer recurrence.

Judy Knapp, for successful abdominal surgery March 7

Mike Miller, 2004 DMFE candidate, whose only child, Steven, was killed in an auto accident February 11 in Colorado

Kris Perry and her daughter and son-in-law, Andrea and Travis, who lost their 5 month-old fetus, Rachel Kristina, February 15

Prayers of discernment to those newly approved awaiting call...

Augustus Mauro, Lyn A'Hearn, Georgia Van Hoesen, Christopher Wegener

Prayers of thanksgiving...

Barb Martyn on the birth of her granddaughter, Sarah Marlee Martyn on December 23 (born to son, Josh and wife Natalie)

Madelyn Busse upon receiving the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago's Distinguished Service Award for Leadership

Doug Spiotta on his recently extended Letter of Call as Director of Crossroad Ministries

Special thanks and appreciation to John McMaster, husband of Terri, who built an Access data base for our community recently.

Kim Winchell who has been invited to teach earthkeeping at Holden Village for a week in July.

Lutheran World Federation consultation

by Beth Barkhau

The November consultation Nancy Gable and I [Beth Barkhau] attended was the Lutheran World Federation Consultation on Diakonia. It was an international gathering of diaconals, pastors, bishops, and other servant leaders from around the world, sponsored by LWF to study and discuss the varying experiences with diaconal ministry in LWF member churches. Visit www.elca.org/lwf/resources.html to see an encapsulated story, photographs, and download a copy of the paper which was written for the LWF member churches. It was truly an honor to represent the community of DM's in the ELCA. Nancy Gable provided exceptional leadership both in helping to develop the consultation and by presenting one of four major papers at the gathering. My role in the consultation was to share the varied and diverse diaconals' roles represented in our ELCA roster; and to help disseminate information to the community upon our return. We look forward to sharing our experiences at upcoming formation events, community gatherings, and synodical meetings, and in our individual settings whenever and wherever we can so that the church can continue to ask themselves, "How will we be the diaconal church?"

Korea—continued from page 2

As part this project, we provide free counseling services for the students in the middle and high schools. We also give financial support for school fees, transport and food, to help them continue their education. We pay special attention to those who cannot adjust to school life and are stamped as 'trouble kids' or 'drop-outs', usually found playing truants, loitering in the streets. We take care that these do not become alienated or consider themselves as 'drop-outs' from the society as a whole. One of these was living alone with his grandmother aged 75. His eyesight had begun to deteriorate when he was eight and when we first met him both eyes were almost blinded. He had a successful eye lens implant, recovered his eyesight, and is preparing to attend university.

Thus, we witness and share greater joy than our hearts can bear among the people with no earthly boast through the help of those with the heart of Christ: Lone old folks found welcome; a deserted family found shelter; and a blinded youth long ignored regained confidence and his sight. We also were with those who had suffered for long from the hearts broken to pieces but deeply buried within, whom after days of praying, come dancing and rejoicing with the whole burden relieved beneath the Cross of Christ. Yes, we are truly privileged to join them in their jubilation with hearts full of thanks and lips full of praises for God has graciously given us a year's harvest of joy. We thank you for your support of material and prayers that made all this possible. We pray that the blessings of our Lord be with you in this New Year as always.

A call story...

by Jessica Nipp, Managing Director, ELCA Wittenberg Center, Wittenberg, Germany

Greetings from Wittenberg, Germany! As one of just a couple of DM's serving outside the US, I thought I would share with you (briefly) the path that led me into international ministry.

During my last year of college I participated in a service-learning semester in Palestine, living and working at a home for blind and low-vision children. The experience shook my foundations and left me with far more questions than answers (and many questions about and to God). After I graduated, I participated a year-long faith-based volunteer program in Denver, getting very involved in community justice issues through my own work at Habitat for Humanity of Metro Denver and the work of my nine housemates. That cemented in my head the absolute need for communities of faith to be engaging these justice issues out of their faith commitments and sense of identity and interrelatedness as God's children. And so I went to seminary, which led me briefly to Tanzania and Namibia, where I investigated the church's response to the AIDS crisis and taught a crash course in English to deacon candidates, and eventually for a longer time to Germany, where I ran into a whole new set of questions - and different ways of thinking about the answers - about faith and church and participation in public life.

I think my motivation for choosing diaconal ministry has grown out of my natural curiosity and out of the stories of people I've met on the journey. Perhaps it was the values instilled by my parents or teachers, or Biblical stories like the Good Samaritan and Jesus' command to "love your neighbor as yourself," or perhaps I was just blessed with the opportunity to travel a lot and hear many different stories from many different perspectives from many different people... but whatever the cause, I have ended up on this side of my childhood with the very firmly ingrained notion of my vocation to serve God's people as a DM. I am so thankful that I can be connected to this community of servants, even though I am an ocean away.

A word on rostered ministry

by Kris Perry

Tammy Devine and I [Kris Perry] recently returned from the Public Ministry Consultation Planning Group gathering that was held in Chicago January 25-26. As you may recall, this task group was invited together by the Vocation and Education Unit for the purpose of exploring the future of rostered ministries of Word and service in the ELCA and to design an event to continue this exploration. Members of the Planning Team include:

Neva Warren, AiM Church Administrator, Peachtree City, GA
 James Valentine, AiM Church Administrator, Arlington Heights, IL
 Sister Anne Keffer, Directing Deaconess, Chicago, IL
 Sister Melinda Lando, Pediatric Nurse, Bronx, NY
 DM Tammy Devine, BOP Wellness Coordinator, Minneapolis, MN
 DM Kristina Perry, MAS Companion Synod Coordinator, Minneapolis, MN
 Stan Olson, Executive Director of the Vocation and Education Unit
 Craig Settlage, Associate Director of the Vocation and Education Unit
 Cherylne Beck, ELCA Director for Ministry Leadership-Candidacy
 Dick Bruesehoff, Director of Life-Long Learning of the Vocation and Education Unit

"This planning group will be visionaries seeking ways for the future leadership of this church..."

Consensus was reached on the purpose of the consultation and planning began for this gathering, which will take place February 5-8, 2007 at the Duncan Center in Delray Beach, Florida. Fifteen members from each of the three lay rosters will be invited to participate based on geography, gender, age, years of experience, ethnicity, and area of specialization.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is committed to the "development and support of faithful, wise, and courageous leaders whose vocations serve God's mission in the world," and "in equipping people to practice their callings under the Gospel for the sake of the world." In response to this commitment, a consultation will 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 21st century. This consultation may also lead to recommendations regarding these rostered ministries.

Community prayers are requested during this time of planning, that the Holy Spirit will be present during discernment and planning, always keeping our thoughts on the mission of the church and how we might best live out that mission. We are beginning a long journey. We will be intentional as we listen and discern the Spirit's leading. This planning group will be visionaries seeking ways for the future leadership of this church to effectively be a missional church reaching out to God's people. Thank you for the trust you have placed in Tammy and I - we are honored to represent you and we pledge our continuing efforts on your behalf.

Birthdays

April

- 1 Trink Schwartz
- 11 Heather Feltman
Lois Richardson
Kati Miller Holland
- 13 Kathy Massa
Nancy Selinger
- 19 Lisa Hill
- 27 Jennifer McBride

May

- 2 Karla Neumann
- 3 Sue Herrera
- 4 Barry Buck
- 5 Madelyn Busse
- 6 Esther Schmidt
Janell Weum
- 9 Leslie Whited Vance
- 11 Doug Spiotta
- 16 Jessica Nipp
- 18 Cynthia Bowden
- 22 Sandra Braasch
- 29 Terry Moore
- 31 Janet Lepp

June

- 5 Ardie Senft
- 13 Judy Rooney
- 14 Erin Morris
- 18 Linda Daus-Deegan
- 22 Rowena Henry
- 24 Margy Ajer Schmitt
- 27 Judy Schroeder
- 29 Glenda Blegen
- 30 Karen White

Consecrations



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

Guiding principles team is forming

Esther Schmidt, Harry Hiltner, Joanne Otte, Kirsten Tannas, Kim Winchell, Leslie Whited Vance, Margy Schmitt, Melissa James, Sue Setzer and Tim Freund have agreed to serve on a new team to determine if the DM community needs guiding principles. If it is determined that guiding principles would be beneficial, then this group will work on presenting some recommendations to the next community gathering in 2007. This team formed out of the DM community's time together at Simpsonwood, as they struggled with issues which led them to the question, "By what authority does our community have to do...?" and if authority, then what principles will be used to make decisions?

If you know that you are gifted in this dialogue, please contact Tim Freund, as another team member or two can always be used. Freund can be contacted at jtfreund@cass.net. They hope to begin in mid February using the group format on MSN which will allow easy archiving of dialogues and discussions.

Book review

by Douglas B. Spiotta, LSW

I commend the following book to you: *Unveiling Islam: An Insider's Look at Muslim Life and Beliefs*, written by Dr. Ergun Mehmet Caner (Doctor of Ministry, Emmanuel University & Doctor of Theology, University of South Africa) and his brother, Dr. Emir Fethi Caner (Doctor of Philosophy, University of Texas).

Born and raised in Turkey as Sunni Muslim's, they and another brother converted to Christianity. The first Dr. Caner is Professor of Theology and Church History at Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA. The second Dr. Caner is Associate Professor of Church History and Anabaptist Studies at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, NC.

I found this book to be extremely helpful as I consider how to react to, how to interact with, how to reach out to and how to be neighbors with the Somali Muslims within our parish.

The two Doctors have co-authored a sequel entitled: *More Than A Prophet: An Insider's Response to Muslim Beliefs About Jesus & Christianity*.

I strongly encourage you to read both....