

Diacono News

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September 2007

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Photo courtesy of Heather Oberdeck

One Homeless Night

by Heather Oberdeck

An event called “One Homeless Night” began at Peace Lutheran Church (PLC) in Menomonie on Friday, May 18, at 8 p.m. and ran until 8 a.m. the following morning. In correlation with a summer mission trip experience for the youth and adults of the congregation, One Homeless Night was an active learning experience and partnership towards compassion, faith exploration and awareness of social justice issues.

To better raise awareness and prepare the youth, participants spent the night in cardboard boxes on the church lawn. The evening began with the youth experiencing “intake” in a shelter, followed by various guests coming to the youth in the “box community” and speaking about the issues of homelessness in Dunn County and the surrounding communities.

A St. Paul individual who has struggled with homelessness and currently lives in a shelter, shared his experience on the streets and the issues he faced. At 3 a.m. the Menomonie Police demonstrated a simulated conversation that would occur

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A Multicultural Glimpse into the Future

by Marvin Combs

It was a quiet drive to the Marriott Hotel by LAX, and I had time to reflect. When my 18 year old son saw the title of the conference I was going to, he commented, “I can’t wait for 20 years from now when my generation is the driving force. Race means nothing to us. It’s just who you are as a person.” Knowing that his group of friends looks like a United Nations meeting, I wondered if he was being naïve or actually prophetic.

I was driving the 45 minutes on the morning of July 13th from my home in Huntington Beach, California to the 4-day conference, *Spirit of Wholeness in Christ, A Racial Ethnic Multicultural Event*. The stated purpose of the gathering was, “To affirm the authenticity of God’s people working together in solidarity, focusing on education, justice, and inclusiveness in multicultural settings in the life of the church and society.”



Rev. Jensen Seyenkulo, ELCA Vocation and Education Unit; Sister Cecilia Wilson, Deaconess Community; and Marvin Combs, Diaconal Minister. (Photo courtesy of Marvin Combs)

Along with many speakers, panels, and workshops, there was an exhibit hall and the Vocation and Education Unit had a table there for the Word and Service rosters. I was asked to represent the Diaconal Ministry Community at this table. As a newly consecrated member of our community, I am well versed in the language of discernment for the various rosters. Most of the efforts at the display table by Sister Cecilia Wilson and I were spent educating the visitors from the ELCA, Presbyterian Church, USA, and the Reformed Church in America on just what a lay rostered call looks like. “So you’re like a Roman Catholic Deacon?” or “Deaconess’ are Lutheran nuns?” It was a great opportunity to share what our communities are really called to.

Asked to summarize the conference in a word, I think of ‘refreshing’. Refreshing in that although there were people of every conceivable race in attendance, you never saw more than two people gathered talking who had the same color face. This gathering of over 800 Christians from all over the country was about sisters and brothers in Christ coming together. There was no specific racial agenda. In a very non-threatening and non-confrontational way, we seemed to be in my son’s future world where we were a step beyond racism. From those who stopped by the display table to the youth groups that Jensen Seyenkulo worked with, color just didn’t matter.

My answer to my son after the event was that he may just be right, color won’t matter in 20 years. Unfortunately, son, today it does. But I have seen what can happen when a power stronger than racial division is at work as it was at this conference. The power of Christ calling us all as one.

The deadline for the next issue of Diaconews is November 15. Please submit articles and photos to Jennifer Krueger at krueger_jennifer@hotmail.com.

Diaconal Call

By William A. Dahl

For me, the calling to diaconal ministry was less a sudden change of direction than it was simply the next thing on a journey with its origins going all the way back to my upbringing as a Lutheran in the Midwest. I have always embraced my faith, albeit in differing ways during differing times in my life. This has included Sunday school and Luther League (yes!) before college, continued worship and involvement while at Yale and during law school at Stanford and 4 years of service in the USMC. For almost 20 of my over 25 years of practicing law in Fresno, California, I taught high school youth on Sunday mornings, with the other years involved in congregational leadership.

Working with high school youth, I became concerned with the attrition in faith during the college years. The difficulty of navigating college as a young person of faith led me to want to be involved on a college campus in some manner. In response to this, and to a sense that it was time to make God's work a full time vocation, I began taking night classes as a seminary in Fresno (Mennonite) in 2000. After three years, I made connection with Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary in Berkeley, California, and first learned of the diaconal ministry roster within the ELCA. It was as if that roster had been structured with me in mind! I was able, with the support and encouragement of my wife, Barbara, to do a year as a full-time student at PLTS, completing my Master of Christian Ministry degree, followed by an internship at California State University, Fresno (it was nice to get back home!), under the loving supervision of Rev. Don Romsa. I was approved as a diaconal minister, with a focus in campus ministry, in the spring of 2005.

With two grown children in the Eastern Time Zone, my wife and I hoped to relocate to the East Coast. In June, 2005, Barbara was hired to open a clinical trials unit at the Medical Center at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. And so, in August, 2005, we moved there. That fall, I completed a unit of CPE at the Duke Medical Center in Durham, and began investigating the potential for a call in campus ministry in the area.

Lutheran Campus Ministry at Duke had dwindled, for a variety of reasons, in the late 1990's. For the past 6 years, the campus was being served only by the part time efforts of the Vicar serving from year to year at St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Durham. Eventually, and thanks to the support and encouragement of the North Carolina Synod, of Pastor Thomas Colley of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Durham and of Rev. Jack Saarela, LCM Coordinator for Regions 7-8-9, I was called by St. Paul's to a part-time position as Duke Lutheran Chaplain and consecrated on December, 2006.

I focus my campus work on ministering to the graduate/professional students at Duke, while the Vicar at St. Paul's focuses on undergraduate ministry. I am also developing service opportunities for all of our students, with the goal of involving them in consistent, regular interaction with the surrounding community; for example, tutoring school children and working with residents in local group homes run by Lutheran Family Services of the Carolinas. Of course, the financial realities of ministry cannot be ignored, so I spent significant amounts of time seeking ongoing funding, by grant writing and development of alumni relations/giving. At the same time, I continue to volunteer my time once a week to visit any Lutheran patients at the Duke Medical Center, many of whom have come here from significant distance, and are separated from their normal support groups.

There is much to be done here. The call is not without stress and anxiety, but I feel confident that I am where I should be, doing what God has called me to do.

Lord, in your infinite mercy...

Prayers for healing...

John Kumbier, father of Beth Barkhau, continued recovery from multiple broken bones and severe osteoporosis
 D. Israel Vasquez, husband of Jennifer (currently living in Okinawa, Japan) who is a marine serving in Iraq
 Lillian Naber, mother of Gloria Strickert, hospice care for multiple myeloma
 DM Candidate, Charles Smith, dialysis and awaiting transplant
 Alex Herrera, husband of Sue Vogel, cancer remission
 DM candidate Sandra Reback, and her friend, Marj
 DM candidate, Tamara Harder, battling breast cancer
 Diana Luscombe, recovery from severe auto accident
 Kathy Massa, continued recovery from surgery

Prayers of Sympathy to...

Kris Perry, on the death of her father-in-law on June 8 and her father on June 23
 Kim Winchell, on the death of her step-father, June 28
 Tim Freund, on the death of his father, Elmer, July 30

Prayers of discernment for those approved, awaiting call...

Joel Bradtke, Jan Cherry, Ellen Doughty, Rosalie Fesser, Robert Fisher, Tonya Gunton, Susan Lindberg Haley, Melissa Helfer, Nicole Houck, Maria Hurni, Troy Jacobson, Janet Johnson, Angela Keenan, Rebecca Kolowe, Diana Luscombe, Rachel March, Kathy Massa, Rebecca Mastalerz, Gus Mauro, Sarah Parker, Janice Phoebus, Jamie Roos, Terra Rowe, Janet Schauer, Nancy Selinger, Charlie Smith, Linda Smith, Meghan Sobocienski, Julie Stegelmann, Shirley Talbot, Georgia Van Hoesen, Peggy Vuylsteke, Christopher Wagener, Linda Zawalski, Karen Zeile

Prayers of thanksgiving for those recently consecrated and anticipating consecration

131	Marvin Combs	6/3/07	136	Kelly Howard	9/2/07
132	Blaire Smith	6/8/07	137	Troy Faith Ward	9/9/07
133	Heather Smith	6/8/07	138	Kathy Bonn	9/15/07
134	Anna Hollingbery	6/16/07	139	Jeremy McElvain	9/16/07
135	Lisa Watson-Hill	6/24/07			

If you know of an upcoming consecration, a candidate who has recently been approved for call, or any other prayer concerns, please contact krisp@visi.com so that our data base can be updated

Conversations in English

Jennifer Krueger, serving with China Service Ventures of St. Paul, MN, recently returned from China where she worked with volunteers to teach conversational English to Chinese teachers and middle school students. For three weeks, Jennifer traveled to several villages in the Henan Province interviewing teachers to gain perspective on their life and teaching situation. Focusing on developing oral English skills, thirty volunteers from Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, California, Washington, and Colorado led activities ranging from an American birthday party and playing baseball to discussing US holidays and the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

China Service Ventures, a volunteer organization committed to fostering relationships between Christian communities and individuals in the US with communities and individuals in China, began sending volunteer

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Youth study on homelessness--Continued from page 1

if a person was located sleeping on private property or needing assistance. The homeless night concluded with the youth lining up inside the "PLC shelter" to have breakfast and a debriefing on their experience.

Public organizations and individuals who work with homeless people on a daily basis were involved in the event. Partnerships included Interfaith Volunteers of Dunn County (Molly McCain and Angelakay Athena), Lucas Charter School (Jim Swanson) Eau Claire Public Schools (Gary Schwoch) and the Menomonie Police Department (Sergeant Hollister and Lieutenant Swartz).

"Partnering with agencies in Menomonie, area schools and Dunn County has been the backbone and substance of this past weekend's event," said Heather Oberdeck, diaconal minister. "Interfaith Volunteers of Dunn County, the teachers and the Menomonie Police Department have been solid in the construction and energy for making an impact with our young people on such social justice issues. Their expertise will continue to drive our development of content and materials for One Homeless Night and future community learning opportunities." Vision of the One Homeless Night was based on the initiative of three purposes:

1. Raise awareness about homelessness in the United States — urban and rural — through participation and public exposure.
2. Prepare young people and adults for mission experiences with homeless individuals by developing understanding and knowledge. The vision is one of compassion for all people — a lifestyle for people of faith.
3. Build strong, sustainable partnerships between community organizations.

For more information, contact Oberdeck, at 715-235-2500 or heather@plc menomonie.com.

China--Continued from page 4

English teachers to rural areas in the Henan Province in 2003. In addition, China Service Ventures supports a nutrition project for students, tuition scholarships, and health care assessments in an effort to give the poorest rural village children a chance for a better life.

"Teaching conversational English to teachers and students with low level skills was very challenging." commented one of the volunteers. "At times, I didn't see any progress as I tried to help my students make the connection between written and oral English. Then, all of a sudden, a student would 'get it' and our whole team would celebrate."



Jennifer Krueger, (front row, far left) is pictured with 30 volunteer English teachers at the Great Wall in July 2007. (Photo courtesy of Jennifer Krueger)

Sent by China Service Ventures, Krueger was commissioned to serve, bringing hope to those who have yet to experience the love of Jesus. During her journalistic assignment, Jennifer developed many friendships and helped to build a bridge of love and respect between the American and Chinese people.

If you would like to learn more about the mission of China Service Ventures, please contact Jennifer Krueger at 651-659-1396 or visit the China Service Ventures website at www.CSVentures.org

In a galaxy far away...

By Lisa K. Watson-Hill

Like Star Wars, my story begins a long, long time ago (1989) in a place far, far away (Hong Kong). I always felt the pull to be an actor, and equally the pull to serve God. I graduated UW Madison in 1986, and the day my grandmother died, learned I was accepted to be a lay missionary to Hong Kong for a three year term. I will not go into all the ins and outs, but I stayed there for a year and a half, auditioned for the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts in London, was accepted to summer school, but not the whole match and found myself at a crossroads. No one path seemed terribly clear. Then I literally received a call from Philadelphia Seminary who had retrieved my name from some long lost “interested in” list and felt well, this must be a sign. Applied and was accepted to LTSP in 1989 as a potential pastor.

The next four years were full of twists and turns that simply read like a soap opera, but I ended my seminary career in 1993 with an MA in Theology from Wartburg and a PhD in emotional trauma. I was not going to be a pastor, it seemed. So. What to do? Back to acting!

In 1995, I auditioned for and was accepted into the summer program in Birmingham School of the Arts in the UK. They then invited me to stay for an MFA in acting – God’s path seemed clear! I followed, had a wonderful blessed year, then fell in love, got married and got preggers almost immediately. Yet another twist in the road ... Leo was born in 1997, and I again felt God’s call to the church community. I stalled a bit, continuing to pursue acting and feed my family, but in 2002, a move to Dover, Delaware brought me to a crossroads. The pastor at the picked out of the yellow pages Lutheran church was a Philly classmate and they were looking for a director of Christian Education. Would I be interested? Again, it seemed a clear road to follow, and I took the job, although filled with fear and trepidation to be risking a leadership role again.

Enter Gettysburg! Seemed there was this program for something called a diaconate, and despite not having heard it before, it resonated with something deep inside of me. Later, a marvelous diaconate, Marjorie Myers, best described the feeling as having a name for something she had already been doing for years. This was exactly what the 2003 DMFE meant to me, and I was set and ready to go!

Except that I wasn’t. The next FOUR years would hold as many twists and turns as could possibly be imagined, from “unaware of the whole thing” call committees and bishops to personal triumphs (my son’s adoption in 2005) and tragedies (my husband’s leaving in 2006) to just plain dumb (note: there is a difference between a package and a salary, folks!). But I held on. I was absolutely convinced that this call was meant for me, and that somewhere a congregation existed that I could serve and serve well.

In January of this year, yet another promising call failed to materialize. I was at the lowest I ever hope to be. A few other speculative calls were made, but nothing was falling into place. Then, suddenly – a visit to the DEMD synod office for a part time let’s see if this would work call, led to the discovery of a church in Cumberland MD that was in process for a Youth Minister. I called. Someone else had been offered the job. I sent a resume anyway. They called back. The church was not going for a diaconate. (What the heck was that anyway?) I wept. I called the Bishop. He called the church. They really weren’t going for a diaconate. (What the heck is that anyway?) The pastor called again. All things are possible with God, but the council really didn’t see the need for a rostered diaconate. (What the heck was that again?) I wept some more. My uncle in Keyser WV - 30

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Carefree

By Judy Bergeson

My brother-in-law, his wife, and my husband took me to Carefree on our way back to their house in Casa Grande from a trip to Palm Springs. I couldn't believe it & neither could they! The Retreat Center is so beautiful. Among the buildings, two for lodging, one with meeting rooms, there are flourishing desert flowers and bushes. A Midwesterner, I have no idea what the names are, but they are lovely and frame a setting of welcome and tranquility. Our rooms were spacious, each with a balcony overlooking the town with mountains in the background. SO different from the flat corn fields I'm used to. Go if you have a chance one day. The whole atmosphere is calm and welcoming, including the staff. And the food was delicious and plentiful. We all gained a pound or two, I think!

Around 40 of us gathered from all parts of the country. It was wonderful to connect with old acquaintances and meet new ones. You should have heard the buzz in the dining room at all meals: everyone was talking, usually passionately! I think passion goes with our call, huh? Or should I say our glorious diversity of calls. It'd be great to know more about each person's call. So many gifts!

You've all received minutes from this Gathering, so I won't go into that business. I just want to share some of the highlights of the days with you. Sister Anne (I'm sorry I don't remember her last name) from the Lutheran Deaconess Community conducted our meetings in a fashion quite unlike Robert's Rules of Order; it was great! She called it consensual. When a topic was presented for discussion and action, she paid close attention to each of us as we talked in turn. When she felt it was time, she would ask if we were ready to come to consensus. Sometimes we were, sometimes not. We differed, of course, on some topics. The goal was to come to consensus. We did it! On every issue, we came to consensus and with good will and understanding! I loved it and was fortunate to run into Sister Anne in Chicago last week at the Churchwide Assembly so I could thank her again for that innovative way of handling meetings. She laughed & said her community doesn't care for it! I hope she'll lead our meetings again, at future Gatherings.

Another highlight for me was our Worship together. We sat facing a glass wall, the altar in front of it. It was like looking toward Heaven. It was a time of recommitment, rededication to our call and our community. Again, the setting was worshipful inside and out.

One night when we were all exhausted, as the day was long and no one wanted to miss a minute, a physician-turned-healer came to teach us body movements, the idea being to let down the points of tension we carry in our bodies unknowingly. It worked! Wow! I almost didn't go, wanted to go to bed, but am deeply glad I did, as I had had no idea how "tight" my muscles were. Our Tammy Devine in Minneapolis wants to learn this method of body care. When she does and offers a class, enroll! I'm going to, as I'd love to teach this to the women in my congregation. Our bodies can be like donkeys, beasts of burden, can't they, carrying all our responsibilities and visions and to-do lists and the ups and downs of relationships, and usually without complaint. Sometimes we just need to be in peaceful movement and this woman knows how to lead us in that. Wonderful.

When we meet again in Atlanta, my wish is that more of us can come. One of the joys of being in Community is what we laughed about: we don't have to explain what a diaconal minister is!

God's peace be with you and you and you and all of us as we work to further God's Kingdom.

Birthdays

September

3 Lake Lambert
3 Tara Ulrich
5 Marlene Daubert
6 Elaine Brant
6 Jennifer Krueger
6 Sue Setzer
13 Suzie Everingham
14 Kati Kluckman-Ault
20 Kelly Howard
22 Amy Hartman
22 Bruce Romanic
23 David Glover
27 Gayla Crosmer

October

3 Janice Phoebus
4 Marvin Combs
9 Linda Sprick Kruse
17 Nancy Gable
17 Marilyn Hugh
19 Ellen Doughty
20 Eva Creydt Schulte
21 Gus Mauro
22 Rebecca Mastalerz
25 Sarah Wilson
28 Heather Oberdeck
30 Patricia Gerber

November

2 Joanne Otte
3 Patrick Kane
10 Dawn Alitz
12 Rachelle Gilbertson
14 Judy Bergeson
17 Rebecca Kolowe
18 Shari O'Brien
19 Catherine Smith
30 Diana Luscombe

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

World Diakonia 2009

World Diakonia will meet July 20-27, 2009 at the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta, Georgia. The Diakonia – World Theme will be: *Diakonia at the Crossroads – Revive and Reconcile*.

The ELCA Diaconal Ministry Community's next gathering will be attached to this event, also providing time to meet with ELCA Deaconesses and hopefully members of the Lutheran Deaconess Association (LDA). More information will be forthcoming, so please mark your calendars now and plan to attend.

Star Wars--Continued from page 6

minutes from Cumberland - told me I and the boys could come live with him as we had nowhere else to go. I emailed the pastor and told him I would be in the area anyway and would love to be affiliated with St. Paul's, did he have any use for me?

Then the way opened. The council – who wouldn't have to pay to move me! – was now cool with interviewing a diaconate. And interview they did!! I came for the next three weeks to meet with various levels of the congregation. I gave three diaconate presentations. (THANK YOU KATHY MASSA!!) Now everybody knew what the heck a diaconate was!! Now the community felt kinda cool about being cutting edge, kinda neat about this diaconate (hey, guess what we got!) and kinda like the Spirit was involved with this whole shooting match!

A five year term-call was offered and I accepted, starting 01 June 2007 and I was both consecrated and installed on 24 June 2007. It has been a long and winding road, as someone once said, but it has led to this door, this path and this future.