

# Star

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

## Strengthening Leaders

# Synod Members Relax, Learn and Connect at Fall Conference

by Marcia Hahn

A three-day conference might be the last thing most people would want to add to an already hectic schedule, but when the conference is designed around a theme to “Rest, Relax, Rejuvenate,” it can be a welcome break to help bring priorities, ministries and mission into perspective.

That’s the premise behind the Northeastern Iowa’s Fall Theological Conference held annually for ordained pastors, associates in ministry, diaconal ministers, and spouses. The event features a keynote speaker, theological discussions, worship services, group meals and, perhaps most importantly, a six-hour block of designated free time.

According to Pastor Dave Sorenson, a member of the Fall Conference Planning Committee, the conference’s overall intent is for people to get away from their everyday ministry context and be refreshed by speakers and colleagues in a comfortable environment.

“It’s a time to retreat from the many hats we wear in the congregation and the demands of work and family, to catch our breath, and to hear an inspirational speaker who can spark some ideas to take back to our parishes,” Sorenson says. “It’s also a time to renew connections with colleagues and have informal conversations together, away from everything else that’s going on.

Hopefully, the conference helps people return home feeling rested and recharged.”

The planning committee meets four times a year to plan the event and secure a speaker on a relevant theological topic. Dr. Janet Ramsey, a professor emeritus from Luther Seminary, St. Paul, spoke at the 2011 conference about the varieties of situations when forgiveness and reconciliation are needed. She shared the importance of developing healthy



Dave Sorenson

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Four candles on the altar table at the Fall Theological Conference represent the rosters of the ELCA—ordained, consecrated diaconal ministers and deaconesses, and commissioned associates in ministry.

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relationships when there has been hurt and brokenness.

“We can’t have a relationship again with someone we have hurt or who has hurt us if we don’t have reconciliation,” says Pastor Jim Radatz, who also serves on the planning committee. “We need to set an example of forgiveness and reconciliation, instead of the means the secular community often uses of holding a grudge.”



Kathy Massa

Kathy Massa, who is trained for diaconal ministry and serves on the planning committee, says that the topic of forgiveness and reconciliation resonated with

synod members who have witnessed and experienced first-hand the conflicts and emotions that arose following decisions made at the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly.

“There are people who rejoiced and people who were deeply hurt,” she says. “We need to recognize how the other person feels and where the other person is in their process. To live together we need to learn to forgive each other and relearn to live in harmony. The theme was how to do that without blame.”

Each year the Fall Conference Planning Committee seeks relevant topics and speakers with related expertise. Worship services are led by a mix of clergy and lay leaders from throughout the synod, including long-time members and those who are new to the synod so that others can see who they are. During the

designated free time, members can get together for recreation or relax on their own.

“Some have wanted structured activities during the free time, but just as many really cherish that time,” Radatz says. “We have religiously kept it open because there is a need to emphasize quality time for rest.”

The Tuesday morning prayer service at last fall’s conference included an opportunity for rostered members to renew their ordination and consecration vows. “It was a nice time to affirm our calling as members of the ELCA and to renew our vows together as clergy of the synod,” Radatz says.

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The agenda is planned by and for rostered members and their spouses as a time to learn, connect and relax.

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The Fall Conference differs in purpose and audience from other synod-sponsored leadership and support events. It is a self-sustaining ministry, funded solely by registration fees. The agenda is planned by and for rostered members and their spouses as a time to learn, connect and relax.

As the spouse of an ELCA pastor, Massa says she appreciates being included. “It’s a nice time for pastors to have an afternoon off with their spouses and to sit with their spouses during worship, which for most of us is unusual.”

Approximately every three years the Fall Theological Conference is replaced with the Tri-Synodical

Conference, sponsored by the three ELCA synods of Iowa. Radatz is one of three members from the Northeastern Iowa Synod who serve on the planning committee for the 2013 conference.

“The idea is to connect with fellow clergy from throughout the state,” Radatz says. “We pool our resources so that we can bring in some bigger names for speakers or have two speakers.”



Jim Radatz

The theme for the 2013 Tri-Synodical Conference will be “Gospel Ethics Rooted in the Confessions.” Two speakers are planned, along with a worship service and session led by Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson. The event is set for Sept. 22-24, 2013, in the Des Moines area.

Sorenson encourages rostered leaders to make it a priority to attend these conferences. “When I was first out of seminary, I underestimated how important it is to attend events with colleagues,” he says. “I was too busy doing other things. A lesson I learned is that we’re the only ones who understand each other and what our lives are like. I hope that people take time out of their schedules to go to the Fall Conference to be encouraged, to enjoy the presence of colleagues, and to have time away to listen and be renewed.”

# Give Ourselves

“Excuse me sir. But among your magic stones...is there...is there one that can cure a crippled boy?”

The plaintive question of the child in the operetta “Amahl and the Night Visitors” articulates the hope of humanity. Is there not some magic that will heal our brokenness?

As the story of the visit of the Magi to an impoverished home on their journey to the manger unfolds, we learn again of the truth of life. We are never healed by magic or the majestic. Rather, as surely as the child is healed when he gives his crutch to the

Christ child, so too we know health when we give ourselves and our crutches away and simply trust in God.

In this season of Epiphany, we remember the journey of the Magi to see the King of Kings and their stops along the way. As we pause on our journeys of faith, we experience again the joy of our lives. We no longer look for the spectacular to give our lives meaning. Instead, we quietly offer who we are and what we have to the one who saves us.

“What can I give Him, poor as I am. If I were a shepherd, I would give a lamb. If I were a wise man, I would do my part. Yet, what can I give Him? Give my heart.”



– Steven L. Ullestad  
Bishop, Northeastern Iowa Synod

## Fourth class graduates from Barnabas Uplift in Iowa Falls

Eleven students graduated from the Barnabas Uplift Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) Training Program at Iowa Falls on Nov. 29, 2011. A special part of the ceremony included the gift of a pork loin for each student to share with their families on Thanksgiving. Many of the graduates already have been hired by nursing homes.

The Barnabas Uplift Network encourages individuals, families and communities in Iowa to move beyond poverty. The network in Iowa Falls is a partnership between Bethany Lutheran Church and St. Mark Catholic Parish, with the Northeastern Iowa Synod (ELCA) and Roman Catholic Charities. The Iowa Falls CNA program began with funding from a generous benefactor and is now sustaining itself through other funding sources within the community. A total of 43 people have graduated from the Iowa Falls site, and nearly 200 have graduated from the BU training statewide.

As part of its Help4Health initiative, Barnabas Uplift works with area community colleges to offer the 75-hour



instruction and clinical course to prepare students for the CNA certification exam and a career as nursing assistants in nursing homes. The training is free for qualified individuals whose income is at or below the poverty line, or up to 200 percent above the poverty line.

To support this ministry financially, contact the synod office at 319-352-1414. To learn more about Barnabas Uplift, visit [www.barnabasuplift.org](http://www.barnabasuplift.org).

# Behold, I Make All Things New

By Pastor Nancy Larson

Director for Evangelical Mission and Assistant to the Bishop

Here it is — a new year. Last year is over and the slate is wiped clean. We can start fresh without the old baggage dragging us down. We are freed from the burdens of the past and look to the new year with a whole new perspective. It is just this kind of thinking that leads us to make resolutions and establish new goals and strategies for our lives. While this thought pattern may make us feel better or more positive, in reality it isn't the new year or a new week or even a new day that opens the door to a fresh start.

In Revelation 21:5 we read, "And the one who was seated on the throne said, 'See, I am making all things new.' Also he said, 'Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.'" It is "the one who was seated on the throne" that is making all things new. It is the God of creation and salvation that is making all things new. As we have moved through the seasons of Advent and Christmas, we have focused on the arrival of God's kingdom into our midst. It is God's own son, Jesus Christ, which embodies God's entrance. Jesus, Immanuel, is God with us, and in him is our light and life. Sin, death and evil no longer have the

final word. Revelation 7:10 reminds us, "Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

This is a wonderful time of year to celebrate all that's new; however, the real "new" is not of our doing—it is God's gift of love and grace, given freely. This is what we receive in Holy Baptism—forgiveness of sin, life and salvation. We are invited to daily repentance so that "day after day a new self should arise..." We are made new by God's loving and gracious hand. As we are made new in God's grace, our hearts can be renewed in responding to God's goodness and grace.

Happy New Year and Happy New You every day!

To download this article or for more stewardship and mission support resources, visit [www.neiasynod.org/synod\\_resources/Stewardship-MissionSupport.asp](http://www.neiasynod.org/synod_resources/Stewardship-MissionSupport.asp).



## Free Webinars from Augsburg Fortress

Augsburg Fortress, the publishing house of the ELCA, offers free webinars to help congregation leaders learn how to best utilize available resources and curriculums. A number of webinars are offered each week on a variety of subjects, including "Getting the Most out of Here We Stand," "Introduction to Spark Classroom: A First Look at Spark Sunday School," "Leading a Curriculum Review Team," "Washed and Welcome" and more.

The live webinars are offered during the day and evening, and the recorded versions are available to view any time after the original air date. Check the website [www.augsburgfortress.org/webinars](http://www.augsburgfortress.org/webinars) for updated lists of available webinars.



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Send news for the March issue to Marcia Hahn by February 2.

We welcome story ideas related to the 2012 theme, *Strengthening Leaders*.

Articles in this newsletter may be duplicated for use in synod congregations and organizations, with credit to the *Star* newsletter.

Please notify the synod office with name and address changes.

# Zimbabwe Bishop Shares Malaria Stories

Bishop Ambrose Moyo, former presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe, visited the Northeastern Iowa Synod in December to share some of his first-hand experiences about malaria in Africa and how the ELCA Malaria Campaign is making a difference. He gave presentations at Nazareth, Cedar Falls; Wartburg College, Waverly; and Washington Prairie, Decorah.

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Support for the ELCA Malaria continues to grow with pledges and gifts of more than \$105,000 from individuals and congregations of the Northeastern Iowa Synod. Actual dollars received as of Dec. 1, 2011, totaled \$54,834.

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Currently, Bishop Moyo serves as the facilitator for Accompaniment and Capacity Building in Zimbabwe and Southern Africa through the Global Mission Unit of the ELCA. He shared how the ELCA Global Mission staff gathered and started talking with people from Mozambique who told them that what they needed most was a clinic. The ELCA people listened, and together they opened a clinic there in 2009.

In another part of Mozambique, a mother came into an orphan program, pleading on behalf of the orphan she was keeping at home as his guardian. She asked for prayers for the child, who was very sick. Moyo and the group prayed for him and then organized transportation to take him to the clinic, which was about

30 miles away. The ELCA decided another clinic was needed, and now they have it in a town called Munene.

Bishop Moyo told about a school in Burure, Zimbabwe, with about 1,000 students. Every year between five and seven children who attend the school would die of malaria. Then a clinic was built, with mosquito nets, education and medical treatment available for the people of the village. This year, for the first time, no child died of malaria.

Malaria is the number one problem in Zimbabwe, followed by water, then the distance to clinics. Moyo said that people are carried to clinics on carts drawn by donkeys or oxen. They are already very sick, and the roads are very bad. Many people die on the way to the hospital. The ELCA has responded by building clinics that have brought treatment and prevention programs closer to the people.

Through the ELCA companion relationship, Moyo said that God is speaking to both organizations to work together and begin programs that will save lives. That effort started in 2010 at the grassroots levels, with the church training and identifying focal persons who are nurses or who have been trained as health care workers. Those people become the coordinators in each country, going out and leading workshops in the communities to make sure everyone understands that malaria is preventable. They train others about the proper use of mosquito nets, the benefits of indoor spraying, and the need to eliminate standing water where mosquitoes breed. "These are things people did not understand in the past," Moyo said.

No other organization in these countries is as connected as the churches, which Moyo said are almost everywhere. Most of the best hospitals in Zimbabwe and Mozambique are church run, and because they are run so well, Moyo said that the government is supplying some funding. To raise money for a clinic in Zimbabwe, the government has committed to matching one-to-one any funds raised to bring electricity to the clinic.



Pastor Brian King and Bishop Ambrose Moyo at Nazareth Lutheran, Cedar Falls.

"The church is very highly respected by the community and by the politicians," Moyo said. "The church is in places where no one else goes."

Moyo said that the work being done here in Iowa may feel small, but in Southern Africa, the effects are very big. "We really appreciate you walking with us," Moyo said. "We see the ELCA as the hands and feet of our Lord Jesus Christ, inspiring a lot of hope. We hope that together we can make an impact, and change lives."

## January Education Programs

### Tri-State Forum

**Thursday, Jan. 19, 2012**

*Cruciform Life Abundant*, presented by the Rev. Susan Briehl, program associate for the Valparaiso Project on the Education and Formation of People of Faith. This program will tap the rich readings and images from Lectionary cycle B for preaching during Lent.

For more information or to register, click on the Lifelong Learners link at [www.wartburgseminary.edu](http://www.wartburgseminary.edu), email [lifelonglearners@wartburgseminary.edu](mailto:lifelonglearners@wartburgseminary.edu), or call 563-589-0327.

### Cedar Valley/North Iowa Forum

**Tuesday, Jan. 24, 2012**

**9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.**

**St. John Lutheran, Charles City**

#### Preaching the Lenten Gospels—Year B

The Rev. Karl N. Jacobson, assistant professor of religion, Augsburg College, Minneapolis, will present this overview of preaching Gospel lessons during lent.

Registration begins at 9 a.m. Cost is \$25, with lunch included. In case of bad weather, the event will be rescheduled for Jan. 31. To learn more or to pre-register, contact Pastor Irving Sandberg, 319-352-0181 or [irving@mchsi.com](mailto:irving@mchsi.com).

## OBITUARY

Pastor Daniel D. Wee died Nov. 11, 2011. He was ordained on Sept. 22, 1968, and served congregations in North Carolina, New York, Minnesota, and Iowa. In the Northeastern Iowa Synod, he served as pastor of Lord of Life, Waterloo, and also as an interim pastor. He retired on Dec. 1, 2003. A memorial service was held on Nov. 15, 2011, at Nativity Lutheran Church, Weeki Wachee, Fla. He is survived by his wife, Pastor Kristin Wee, and their four children. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Pastor Kristin Wee, 9585 Southern Belle Drive, Weeki Wachee, FL 34613-4278.

## Time for 2012 Health Assessment

The ELCA Board of Pensions is again offering the Northeastern Iowa Synod the opportunity to earn a two percent discount on ELCA health contributions in 2012. Each congregation and organization in the synod will receive a two percent discount on health contributions if 65 percent of eligible ELCA-primary plan members complete the confidential Mayo Clinic Health Assessment by April 30, 2012.

If you have ELCA-primary health coverage, take the 2012 Mayo Clinic Health Assessment on the EmbodyHealth web portal at [www.elcaforwellness.org](http://www.elcaforwellness.org). We will be one person closer to 65 percent participation, and you will earn \$150 in your personal wellness account to offset out-of-pocket medical costs.

Instructions for taking the assessment are available in the Understand My Benefits section at [www.elcabop.org](http://www.elcabop.org).

## 2012 IRS Mileage Rates


The Internal Revenue Service has issued the 2012 optional standard mileage rates used to calculate the deductible costs of operating an automobile for business, charitable, medical or moving purposes. Beginning Jan. 1, 2012, the standard mileage rates for the use of a car (also vans, pickups or panel trucks) will be:

- 55.5 cents per mile for business miles driven
- 23 cents per mile driven for medical or moving purposes
- 14 cents per mile driven in service of charitable organizations

The rate for business miles driven is unchanged from the mid-year adjustment that became effective July 1, 2011. The medical and moving rate has been reduced by 0.5 cents per mile.

Taxpayers always have the option of calculating the actual costs of using their vehicle rather than using the standard mileage rates. A taxpayer may not use the business standard mileage rate for a vehicle after using any depreciation method under the Modified Accelerated Cost Recovery System (MACRS) or after claiming a Section 179 deduction for that vehicle

To learn more, visit [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).



## Lutheran Day on the Hill

*Your voice can change lives*

Lutheran Day on the Hill will take place Monday, March 12, 2012. Lutheran Services in Iowa and the three Iowa Synods of the ELCA are working together to make an even greater impact on the lives of the most vulnerable people in our state through our advocacy.

Thanks to a grant from ELCA World Hunger, a charter bus will leave from Waverly to take people to Des Moines. Please join us and use your voice to talk to your legislators about the importance of critical human services for children, families and individuals.

Sign up online today at [www.LSIowa.org/advocate](http://www.LSIowa.org/advocate).