



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Strengthening Mission

Synod Assembly 2011

By Marcia Hahn

Mission at home and abroad will be the focus of keynote addresses presented at the 2011 Northeastern Iowa Synod Assembly set for June 3-5 at Luther College in Decorah. Assembly events begin at 7 p.m. Friday with a communion service in the Center for Faith and Life, and conclude Sunday with a closing communion service and lunch.

The Rev. Twila Schock, director of Global Mission Support for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the Rev. Stephen Brackett, pastor at St. Paul, Postville, will deliver messages based on the assembly's theme, *Strengthening Mission*.

Keynote Speakers

Pastor Schock will focus on global mission, the work that the ELCA's 225 missionaries are doing around the world, and how congregational support makes a difference in their service to others.

Schock's global mission message will come with firsthand experience from her 13 years serving as a missionary in Slovakia, Russia, Germany, and other parts of Europe and the Middle East.



Rev. Twila Schock

"As a former missionary, I bring a deep commitment for former colleague missionaries still serving out there," Schock says. "It enables me to communicate on their behalf with a greater fairness and more passion."

A native of North Dakota, Schock served in pastoral calls in Thief River Falls, Minn., and Freeport, Ill., before she became an ELCA missionary overseas. She joined the ELCA staff in 2007 to serve as director for Global Mission Support to raise money to support ELCA missionaries and oversee the more than 250 global gifts projects in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Latin America.

As churchwide representative to the assembly, Schock will also report on the ways that congregations support the broader mission of the church. "In the midst of a challenging time—and the economy is no small piece of that—there are signs of great vitality and growth in the life of the church," Schock says. "Among them, new church starts, missionaries and a hunger program that does life-changing work."

Pastor Brackett will share about the partnerships and local ministries that have served the diverse populations of Postville, also known as "The Hometown to the World." Postville's population began changing nearly 25 years ago when a kosher meat-packing plant opened in the community. An

influx of Hasidic Jews moved to town, followed by immigrants from Mexico, Guatemala, Somalia, and Eastern Europe seeking work opportunities.



Rev. Stephen Brackett

"Postville has been a leader in terms of what is happening in rural communities across Iowa and the nation now," Brackett says. "It used to be just the large cities that dealt with issues to embrace diversity, learn from one another and gain trust."

Brackett says that community partnerships and local ministries

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helped Postville endure during hard challenges, including the 2008 immigration raid and bankruptcy of the meat-packing plant. Programs such as “Paul’s Place,” a long-standing recreational event for middle school teens to mix and have fun on Friday nights at St. Paul, a community food pantry, Helping Services of Northeast Iowa, and Barnabas Uplift are some of the ministries that have served the diversity of families living in Postville. “Having the food pantry in place for seven years proved invaluable when the immigration raid and plant bankruptcy happened.”

Bracket says that faithful people throughout the years have enabled St. Paul to offer vibrant ministries. He encourages other congregations to look at their roles in providing ministries in rural communities. “We don’t have government organizations to provide many of these services, so people turn to the churches to provide the services that are needed.”



Strengthening Mission

Strengthening Mission Presentations

A variety of forums and seminars will be offered during the synod assembly, including some on new programs and ministries. Assembly participants will have an opportunity to learn about the new **Hungary Companion Synod** relationship and how their churches and youth groups can be a part of it. The workshop will include information about Hungary,

the Lutheran Church there and the unique dynamics of the companion synod relationship.

The Northeastern Iowa Synod is getting a jump start on the **ELCA Malaria Campaign**. Learn about all the resources available to help congregations participate in this churchwide effort to prevent, treat and contain malaria by 2015.

Schock will present an overview of the findings from the **Living into the Future Together (LIFT) Task Force**. Over the past year the task force has gathered input from congregation members, rostered leaders, and ministry partners from across the church through focus groups, surveys, interviews, blogs, meetings, and synod assemblies. With that information, the task force has developed recommendations to position the ELCA for the future and explore new possibilities for participating in God’s mission.

Bishop Steven Ullestad will review a proposal to revise the synod structure into networks during the **Networking for Mission** seminar. The proposal would transform traditional committees, task forces and work groups for many of the synod ministries into networks so that as many people as possible with a passion for the ministry can participate. An annual leadership training event would introduce members to the network’s mission, and frequent communication would continue the rest of the year through technology. Costs for supporting the networks would be significantly less than for traditional meetings, due to reduced expenses for meals and mileage reimbursement. A vote for the necessary constitutional changes will be taken during the synod assembly.

Offerings for this year’s assembly have been designated for the Companion

Synod (Hungary) Travel Fund and the Hispanic Ministry Fund (Postville). A complete schedule for the 2011 assembly can be downloaded at www.neiasynod.org.

Assembly Tips

Comfort

Consider walking shoes, a jacket, and umbrella. You will walk from building to building, and room temperatures vary.

Orientation

Encourage nearby congregations to prepare for the assembly together using *Ideas for a Pre-Assembly Orientation* (see page 3).

Preparation

Participants often say they wish they were more knowledgeable about discussions and decisions. Study the pre-assembly materials containing reports, compensation guidelines, and mission goals, which will be mailed to all registered voting members on May 3. Highlight what is unclear, and make notes for questions.

Review

Parliamentary procedure ensures a smoothly running assembly that is sensitive to participants. The parliamentary procedure outline helps you feel confident about discussing, questioning, and debating.

Ready

Carry your pre-assembly notebook. You’ll use it frequently during business.

Route

Locate on the Luther College map (provided in the pre-assembly materials) the registration site, parking lots, and building locations for housing, worship, plenary sessions, forums and seminars, and ministry exhibits.

Networking Effective Ministries

“The mark of a vibrant organization in a post-modern, open-source world is not a large national expression headquartered in a high-rise building, but instead consists of strong, healthy local expressions that network together mission and ministry.”

—LIFT Task Force

This insight nicely complements the mission statement of our synod:

The Northeastern Iowa Synod makes Christ known by strengthening the witness and service of the whole church. Synod ministries support and develop leaders, focus on mission, and network the effective ministries of our 164 congregations.

The synod council is proposing that we become even better at “networking effective ministries” in our synod. To that end, a series of bylaw changes are being offered to our governing documents that will more closely link ministry and mission networking to the synod council, make more efficient use of mission support dollars and strengthen the mission of the church.

These bylaw changes have been sent to all rostered persons and are included in the pre-assembly report on pages 123-125. Forum time at the assembly will provide the opportunity for more conversation.

Thank you for considering an even more focused attention to “strong, healthy local expressions that network together mission and ministry.”

— Steven L. Ullestad
Bishop, Northeastern Iowa Synod



Ideas for a Pre-Assembly Orientation

PLANNING

Check to see when pre-assembly materials will be mailed to voting members. Hold the orientation after the receipt of pre-assembly information. Invite voting members. Ask a knowledgeable individual who has attended a number of assemblies to review the pre-assembly information and lead the discussion.

AGENDA

1. Devotions
2. Introductions
3. Review information contained in the pre-assembly information:
 - a. Agenda - location for worship and plenary sessions
 - b. General Assembly Information
 - c. Forums, Seminars, Ministry Exhibits
 - d. Reports
 - e. Memo from College
 - i. Directions
 - ii. Location for registration and housing check-in
 - iii. Memo from Assembly Manager
 4. Resolutions
 - a. Who May Submit
 - b. Deadline for Submission
 - c. How to Read a Resolution
 - i. Title
 - ii. RESOL VED's
 - iii. Source of the resolution (bottom of the page)
 - iv. Resolution Committee's recommendation (bottom of the page)
 - v. WHEREAS 's for more information
 - d. Discussion of Resolutions
 - i. Describe microphone setup
 - ii. Chair will recognize speaker; always state name, congregation, city
 - iii. Encourage people to speak
 - e. Voting on Resolutions
 - i. Describe green card, red card, yellow card process
 - f. Voting pads
 5. Elections—deadline for nominations, elections ballot
 6. Parliamentary Procedure—in pre-assembly materials
 7. Issues—describe the main points of both sides of the issue; encourage people to learn more about them before the assembly.
 8. General Question/Answer Time

Basic Principles of Personal Stewardship

By Pastor Nancy Larson

Director for Evangelical Mission and Assistant to the Bishop

Have you ever wondered about stewardship and thought, "Where do I begin?" or "Ugh, this is not going to be fun!" Well, you are very likely not alone in these types of reactions to the word stewardship. If you'll bear with me for just a little bit, I'd like to offer some suggestions for moving ahead, one step at a time.

- 1) Say thank you to God for all that God has given us. This isn't a difficult thing to do, for God has given us all that we are and all that we have. Life, forgiveness of sin, and salvation are the greatest of gifts which we have received freely from God's own gracious hand. So start by just saying thank you to God, for by doing this one simple task you acknowledge that God is your creator and redeemer.
- 2) Next, consider making a commitment to God's work through your congregation and beyond. When you make an intentional commitment, you are stepping out in obedience and trust. This can be a commitment of dollars, time and capabilities. You become a living witness to God's generosity to us when you firmly commit yourself to support God's mission, both near and far.
- 3) Remember that it's not the size of the gift, it's the heart of the giver. (Yes, God does love a cheerful giver!). If you've been giving what's left at the end of the week or month or if you've just given a flat

dollar amount, then it might be time to consider committing a percentage of your resources as the next step in growth. Yes, the Biblical direction to us is to tithe or give 10 percent, but if you're not there, start at three or four percent, with a commitment to grow your percentage annually. Set that aside at the beginning of the week or month so you know it's there to give. Trust that your growth in generosity can make a real difference in you.

- 4) Now, be ready to feel the incredible joy that comes with responding to God's grace in ways that you know are pleasing to God. Know that these few steps will be a blessing to you in ways you never would imagine.

Now, that wasn't so painful or difficult after all, was it? We truly do walk together as stewards in God's church. As Rachel Ray would say, "How good is that!"

To download this article or for more stewardship and mission support resources, visit www.neiasynod.org/synod_resources/Stewardship-MissionSupport.asp.



Youth Ministry Leadership Training

More than 50 youth and congregation leaders attended the April 9 session of "Opportunity or Despair: The Landscape of Youth Ministry," the first in a series of youth ministry leadership training events. An abbreviated version of this seminar will be presented at the Northeastern Iowa Synod Assembly June 4, 2011.

To learn more, visit www.neiasynod.org/youth/youthministrytraining.htm.

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Send news for the July issue to Marcia Hahn by June 2.

We welcome story ideas related to the 2011 theme, *Strengthening Mission*.

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.

Barnabas Uplift: A Voice for Iowa

By Pastor Vince Ramos

State Coordinator Barnabas Uplift

Since 2002, Barnabas Uplift has been a project with an “all hands on deck” attitude. But over the years, especially in the last two-and-a-half years, Barnabas Uplift is becoming one voice—a network in which individuals, families, and communities are encouraging one another to eliminate poverty. This is our passion and commitment. Barnabas Uplift’s results flow from this commitment.

Together, we are providing rural Iowans access to tax preparation—assistance they might not otherwise receive. Together, we have placed 132 Iowans into jobs as certified nursing assistants (CNAs) and other careers in the health care industry. This was accomplished with the Help4Health Initiative. Other sites that were funded beyond this initiative placed a combined 48 Iowans into jobs. Together, we are lending one voice to this important work.



These results show we are evolving into a state-wide network. The main question for 2011 is how to continue making a difference in Iowans’ lives. I believe the answer is that we continue to think and act as a state-wide network.

First, we will continue to provide access to opportunities, such as the certified nursing assistant and other job training programs. Further, beginning a second career line would assist us in sustaining our partners and moving beyond, especially in the green and environmentally friendly industry. Together, we will continue our tax ministry to rural Iowans and keep encouraging tax coalitions to form. We will continue to refer our clients to social support services to assist them with the opportunities in the clients’ lives. Substance abuse awareness will create new partnerships and grow our work. **Together we will strengthen what we do well and continue to build a voice for Iowa.**

The second way to think and act as a state-wide network is to develop career, educational, and life pathways that meet people where they are. It’s important to link our heads to our hearts and show our compassion as we develop partnerships that can assist our clients in taking hold of opportunities and moving them along their path. We will walk with them as long as it takes.

Third, we need to connect with others in the network. Let’s not isolate ourselves in our locations and specific community, region,



BARNABAS UPLIFT
a mission of encouragement

organization, diocese, Synod, or part of the state. We will continue to operate our programs and ministries in our communities, but it’s critical that we remember we are not alone. Connecting with others is important for our overall success, especially in a down economy. We can’t do it alone. Let’s not only serve Iowans within our own borders, but let’s think about our larger context and all of our partnerships throughout the state.

Finally, we think and act as a state-wide network by providing financial resources to the whole network. As Barnabas Uplift evolves, it’s time to pool our resources. I believe we can decentralize our programs and ministries and centralize our resources, such as financial resources which are needed to help with the programs/ministries.

The time is now to strengthen our network. You are the voice of your community. Join Barnabas Uplift to continue being a voice for Iowa well into our future.

For more information or to schedule a Barnabas Uplift Sunday, which may include Bible study, preaching and/or temple talks, contact Pastor Vince Ramos, State Coordinator Barnabas Uplift. Office: 319-233-5561 or cell: 319-296-6400, or email: barnabasupliftiowa@gmail.com Visit us on the web at www.barnabasuplift.org

Register by July 15 for Glocal Mission Gathering

Congregational teams are invited to attend the Glocal Mission Gathering set for July 22-23 at Decorah Lutheran, Decorah. For only \$35 per person, teams can learn about accompaniment in global mission, and the diversity and mission opportunities found within the Northeastern Iowa Synod. The day-and-a-half event will feature congregational team building and networking, workshops, speakers, worship, music, and guided discussions over meals from other cultures.

To learn more about the event or to register by July 15, visit www.neiasynod.org/synod_resources/GlocalMissionGathering.htm or call the synod office, 319-352-1414.

Solveig Gregory Honored

The Iowa Music Teachers Association (IMTA) has honored the memory of Solveig Gregory by naming her a 2011 Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) Foundation Fellow. Solveig, who died Jan. 31, 2011, was the wife of Larry Gregory, treasurer for the Northeastern Iowa Synod Council.



Solveig Gregory

Solveig taught piano for 50 years and was a long-time member of Bethlehem Lutheran, Cedar Falls, where she served as organist and director of music for more than 30 years. She was a member of The American Guild of Organists, the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians, Women of the ELCA, and numerous other organizations. She served as program chair for the local Northeast Area Music Teachers Association (NAMTA), led the NAMTA's annual Summer Piano Pedagogy Workshop, and served as president of the organization from 1996-1998. At the time of her death, Solveig was the IMTA Foundation Chair.

Congregations can send Observers to Churchwide Assembly

Each congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America may register one congregation observer with the ELCA Office of the Secretary for the 2011 Churchwide Assembly. These observers will have reserved seating in the observers section of the plenary hall and will receive a copy of the report of recommendations for assembly action, as well as all materials distributed on the plenary floor. The observers will have neither voice nor vote in assembly plenary sessions.

The registration fee for congregation observers is \$150, due before May 31. Observers may purchase the same meals as are provided for voting members. Transportation, housing and other costs are the responsibility of the observer or the sending congregation. For more information or to register, contact the assembly registrar at CWARegistrar@elca.org or call 800-638-3522, ext. 2840.