

# Star

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

## Harvest of Hope

My childhood on a farm in Western Iowa included experiences of community cooperation. In the farm economy of the 1950's and 1960's, most of the crucial work of harvest of agricultural crops required large amounts of human labor. The "neighborhood" would pass the word, informally or by party line telephone messages, and the various farmers would each agree when each crop could be ready. Then the workers with their tools and equipment would congregate in the appropriate field. The work would begin. We harvested oats, hay and straw. We shelled corn and cut silage. Many hands made short work.

The community also incorporated its new members through this mutual sharing of work. A boy or girl started helping with the harvest by bringing water to the workers. You grew to the size of cranking a blower or directing a chute, or you helped set tables for the noon meal. Eventually older youth took their turns hauling loads or being responsible for support machinery. Finally the young adult joined the

circle of workers, was counted on to fulfill an assigned task, and knew that their contribution was valuable to the goal. It is a powerful learning and valuing methodology. You were needed, because many hands make short work.

Community cooperation was also the norm in emergency situations, when speed and power were necessities for the saving of life and limb, or the danger and damage had to be quickly contained. There was a telephone ring on our party line that could be dialed as a call for aid. The neighbors came to help us pour water on the rest of the farm buildings the night our barn burned. My father was part of search parties that walked the riverbanks after the flood, till we found the body of a missing farmer. I drove injured neighbors to medical care. My grandmother took an alcoholic nephew to treatment in her chore clothes. We went with tractors and loaders to pick up debris after the tornado. A car in your yard or a phone call in the night would bring the warning that your fence was broken

and your livestock were out of their pens. Many hands made light work.

One of the fruits of the Christian lifestyle is the mutual regard that we Christians hold for our neighbors, the brothers and sisters who live with us in this neighborhood of Christian faith and human life. Rev. Dennis Hanson, Sr. Pastor of Our Savior Lutheran Church in Osage, asked the Mason City Conference of cooperating congregations to step forward in the community. The



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New Hope Lutheran Church at Farley

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Mason City Conference encouraged the Northeastern Iowa Synod to support the neighbors, and the Synod Assembly resolved to challenge 183 congregations of our synod to “host a fund raising event or special offering before or during the 2008 Lenten season for the purpose of reducing or eliminating the debt of the New Hope Lutheran Mission in Farley, Iowa, thus allowing our newest mission church to utilize all its resources for outreach in their ministry context.” Eleven Conference Deans have agreed to ask their neighbors to support the special offering. Many hands make light work.

## **harvest** OF HOPE

HARVEST OF HOPE is the name of the campaign established by the Northeastern Iowa Synod at its June Assembly to help our newest mission church in our synod. New Hope at Farley is working to become self supporting, and its new building debt of \$145,000 is the target of the 92,000 members of the synod. Each congregation of the synod will receive a special offering envelope for sending their gift to the synod office after their special event/offering has taken place. The interim pastor of New Hope, Rev. Burton Everest, has nearly completed the editing of a short DVD for use in each congregation. Your conference coordinator will have access to it. Pastor Hanson has promised to prepare some printed resources for local publicity purposes. They will be sent to each congregation. Each congregation may decide when and how they will help the Harvest of Hope in 2008, but we hope the gifts can be gathered in Lent and some first reports can be shared after

Easter. Fund raising expenses will be covered by the ELCA Outreach grant to our synod, so all gifts will go 100% toward the goal. Congregations may set their own goals for their offering or event, but remember that every offering must allow people to give for those who cannot give, so a suggested goal of \$4 per member will help us reach our goal. Of course, contacts with the synod office for help with information or resources are welcome. Many hands make light work.

Our synod has several places where the Amish or Mennonite communities can be observed at their custom of barn raisings. Hollywood movies have made this image popular. What is not so well known is the custom of some denominations to build churches the same way. The ELCA has outreach strategies that help local congregations build their own houses of worship, funds that help finance the costs of houses of worship, and construction crews that volunteer to help build houses of worship. New Hope has benefited from some of these good neighbors. Paying the debt on New Hope’s building will free our faith community to help another mission in its time of formation. Church members often tell me that it is so much more fun to hear about and help build a church rather than tear one down. Everyone can do a little so a big job is done well, and everyone can have some fun. 92,000 people can share a load a lot easier than 50. You are encouraged and invited to visit New Hope Lutheran Church at Farley whenever and however you are available. They would love to meet and greet you! Be a part of the blessing! Be a HARVEST OF HOPE! Many hands make light work!

– *Rev. Darrel Gerrietts*  
*Assistant to the Bishop*

## Summer Collegium

The Summer Collegium, a project in support of small congregations, is now accepting applications for the Summer 2008 event, which will take place at Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria, VA, from June 25-July 3, 2008. This nine-day, all expenses paid conference for clergy and their spouses is open to those who pastor small congregations (100 or fewer average Sunday attendance) and are committed to small church ministry. Singles are welcome to apply for one of the 25 openings.

The conference consists of keynotes and workshops on all aspects of small church ministry, with a special emphasis on worship and preaching. Keynotes include Tony Pappas, who has written extensively on small church life, and Peter Bush and Christine O’Reilly, authors of the new book “*Where 20 or 30 are Gathered: Leading Worship in the Small Church.*” John Bell of the Iona Community in Scotland will be our music leader. This is an ecumenical project sponsored by the Lilly Endowment Inc.

Applications may be downloaded from our website, [www.vts.edu/education/collegium](http://www.vts.edu/education/collegium), or contact Marilyn Johns ([mjohns@vts.edu](mailto:mjohns@vts.edu) or 703-461-1760).

Applications must be postmarked by December 15, 2007.

# Teacher

I first read *"The Story of My Life"* by Helen Keller as an elementary school student. I was profoundly impacted by the story of a girl who was both deaf and blind and how a "Yankee, blind teacher," Anne Sullivan, came into her life and opened the doors to understanding. The section at the back of the book that illustrated sign language allowed me to learn the alphabet and communicate at a rudimentary level in a new language.

The movie based on her story, *"The Miracle Worker"* starring Anne Bancroft and Patty Duke, was released in 1962. I still carry with me the climactic scene.

Anne Sullivan had taken Helen away from her family with the hope that she would be able to begin the process of creating new boundaries that would allow Helen to understand the world in which she lived and the relationships that surrounded her.

Progress was made, but was nearly lost at the first meal upon her return. Her loving parents unwittingly supported her regression. It was not until Ann removed her from the dinner, demanded that she go to the water pump with her and refill the water pitcher that the true breakthrough took place.

Pumping furiously, water gushing from the spigot, Anne signed the word "water" into Helen's hand. Repeatedly,

she signed into her hand "W-A-T-E-R." Then it happened. Helen understood. She signed the word back into Anne's hand. "W-A-T-E-R." Then she pounded on the ground. "G-R-O-U-N-D." "Yes," Anne nodded. "Pump," "Tree," "Step." Helen's parents race outside. "Mother." "Papa."

Then Helen embraces Anne in order to ask who she is. "T-E-A-C-H-E-R," signs Anne. "Teacher," responds Helen as their relationship is defined, a definition that opened the doors to understanding, hope and productivity for Helen.

When asked about the fundamental nature of who she was in relationship to Helen, Anne Sullivan did not choose "friend" or "sister" or "buddy" or "Anne." In order for Helen to have hope for the future, she rightfully identified herself as "Teacher."

The primary relationship between pastor and congregation is the one of "teacher." Ordained ministers are called to preach and teach the Word of God to their students, the congregation. Pastors and congregations that do not have this figured out know the least about mission and the most about future conflicts. First-name-basis pastors may help people feel good for the short term about themselves and the one who has been called to be their pastor. But "buddies" do not make for effective pastors and

"friends" can, more times than not, make us comfortable with who we are rather than what God has called us to be.



– Steven L. Ullestad  
Bishop, Northeastern Iowa Synod

Sometimes when congregations only call their pastor by his or her first name and never by the role that God has called the pastor to serve, they miss out on the most important dynamic of their relationship. It is the calling of "T-E-A-C-H-E-R."

## Welcome

The synod welcomes Deb Burns to the synod office. She joins the synod staff as a full-time secretary.

Deb is from Sumner, Iowa and is a member of St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church, Sumner.



## 2007-2008 LYO Board Off to a Good Start

The attendance at this year's LYO Board retreat was at an all time high with 20 youth board members and 4 adults.

Once everyone was at the main camp, we started a round of games to get-to-know everyone and learn their names. After that we started our Bible study on Romans 3:21-31 in small groups. One of the first orders of business was to inform new board members the roles of adults, the organization of our church as well as the differences between youth ministry, ministry of the youth, and family ministry. Then we planned our year starting with the LYO theme of "Face Jesus: Facetime with Jesus, See Jesus' Face, Be Jesus' Face in the World." We have decided the theme for the Junior-High Lock-in would be "Called 2 Worship."

We have chosen to bring back the LYO Mini-Event before Synod Assembly. We are also incorporating several challenges to the youth and congregations this year. These include the return of the Hunger Challenge and the introduction of Gifts of the Heart and Change for Change. Information on all challenges will be sent out in due time. We have also made plans for the Adult Event.

After elections, we continued our Bible study in the large group and connected Romans to the LYO through the acronym G.R.A.C.E. The acronym means this: God, Reformation, Act, Called, Exist. Then we set our agenda for the September meeting and had a campfire. At the campfire we gave all our hopes and worries to God and received a blessing

and milestone. Then we made s'mores, watched a movie and went to sleep. After we got going Sunday morning we went to a church service at Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Strawberry Point and had brunch in town.

Youth serving on the board come from many communities: Castalia, Charles City, Decorah, Dubuque, Independence, Jesup, Luana, Mason City, Monona, Nashua, Postville, Scarville, Sheffield, Shell Rock, Story City, and Waverly.



– Keegan Strabala  
LYO Board Member

## Lutheran Festival of Writing

Creative writers associated with the Lutheran Church will gather and give public readings of their work at "Called to Create: A Lutheran Festival of Writing," scheduled November 2-4 at Luther College. All the presenters are in some way linked to the Lutheran tradition, as current and former church members, workshop leaders, or faculty at Lutheran colleges.

Through readings, lectures, panel discussions and open-mike events, the three-day festival aims to support and encourage serious writing and to cultivate a community of writers and readers in the Lutheran world.

The keynote speakers are National Book Award winner Walt Wangerin, Jr., author of "Jesus: A Novel" and "The Book of God," and Marilyn Nelson, former Poet Laureate of Connecticut and three-time National Book Award finalist.

The festival is open to the public.

For complete information about the festival, presenters, and how to register, visit [www.lutheranwriters.org](http://www.lutheranwriters.org) or e-mail [lutheranwriters@luther.edu](mailto:lutheranwriters@luther.edu)

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Send news for the November issue to Linda Hudgins by October 2.

## Tri-State Forum

### Dr. Ted Peters

Evolution: Who's Fighting Whom About What?  
October 18, 2007

#### Lecture Description:

Theological issues along with scientific issues are being argued in the public square: in public school classrooms, before school boards, in legislatures, and the courts. Just why is the topic of biological evolution a fuse that sets off so many exploding bombs? What should parish pastors and Sunday School teachers along with public and private school teachers know? How can we inspire our young people to see a future in science as a Christian vocation? These presentations will provide a balanced appraisal of the tradition of Darwinian evolutionary science, atheistic materialism, scientific creationism, intelligent design, and theistic evolution. To be informed is to be armed for understanding and peaceful diplomacy.

#### Suggested Readings :

Ted Peters and Martinez Hewlett, *Evolution from Creation to New Creation* (Abingdon, 2003)  
Ted Peters and Martinez Hewlett, *Can You Believe in God and Evolution?* (Abingdon, 2006)  
Ted Peters, *Anticipating Omega* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006)  
Ted Peters and Gaymon Bennett, *Bridging Science and Religion* (Fortress, 2003)

### Rev. A. Katharine Grieb, PhD.

Preaching Advent, Year A: Reading Matthew's Infancy Narrative from the Margins  
November 8, 2007

#### Lecture Description:

Matthew, the evangelist, shapes his Gospel narrative to focus our reading of the Messiah's Birth in a particular way. We will focus on the lectionary texts of the Revised Common Lectionary for Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany with an emphasis on possibilities for preaching and teaching them in parishes. Reading Matthew's infancy narrative from the margins opens up interpretive vistas for the rest of this liturgical year as well. Come with your questions and suggestions!

#### Suggested Readings :

Warren Carter, *Matthew and Empire: Initial Explorations* (Trinity, 2001)  
Richard A. Jensen, *Preaching Matthew's Gospel* (CSS, 1998, 2001)  
Paul S. Minear, *The Good News According to Matthew* (Chalice, 2000)  
Brian C. Stiller, *Preaching Parables to Postmoderns* (Fortress, 2005)

Registration information available at  
[www.wartburgseminary.edu](http://www.wartburgseminary.edu) – Lifelong Learners or  
Continuing Education 563-589-0324.

## Wittenberg Announces New Lutheran Scholarship Award Program

Wittenberg University President Mark H. Erickson has announced a new scholarship initiative aimed at rewarding outstanding Lutheran students.

In celebration of its affiliation with the Lutheran church for more than 160 years, Wittenberg will offer 50 scholarships totaling \$68,000 each (\$17,000 renewable over four years) beginning in the 2008-09 academic year, the program's inaugural year. In addition to financial support, the new Lutheran Scholar Leader Awards will provide opportunities for recipients to experience personal and spiritual growth during their time on campus.

As part of the program, Wittenberg will engage Lutheran pastors currently serving congregations across the nation in the nominating process. Letters mailed to pastors will invite them to nominate a deserving member of their congregation for a prestigious Lutheran Scholar Leader Award.

Nominations must be received by Oct. 31, 2007, and upon receipt, Wittenberg's Office of Admission will send the nominee all the necessary information to submit an application for both admission to the university and the scholarship. Nominees must complete the paperwork by



Dec. 1, 2007, and will be notified of their acceptance and scholarship confirmation by Jan. 15, 2008.

To qualify, students must have a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.5, be an active member of a Lutheran congregation and be admitted to the university.

For more information on the program, contact White at [rwhite@wittenberg.edu](mailto:rwhite@wittenberg.edu).

# 2007-2008 Cedar Valley/North Iowa Forums

## Tuesday, October 9, 2007

**Dr. John Ylvisaker**, Song Writer, Musician, Theologian  
**Topic: "Singing A New Song"**

With more than a thousand copyrighted songs to his credit, John will lead us in singing and conversation about the origins and meanings of hymns and the varying possibilities for their use. A special gift will be given to each registrant.

Church musicians and other interested lay people are invited to come without charge and pay only \$5.00 for lunch.

## Tuesday, January 15, 2008

**Rev. Wayne Weissenbuehler**  
**Topic: "Preaching the 2008 Lenten Texts"**

## Tuesday, February 12, 2008

**Dr. Brian Jones**  
**Topics:**

1. Creationism and Intelligent Design;
2. Evolution: Understanding and Meeting the Theological Challenge;
3. Darwin Reads the Bible

## Tuesday, March 4, 2008

**Rev. Laura Gentry**  
**Topic: "Deepening Our Spiritual Walk"**

All Forum meetings will be held at Messiah Lutheran Church, 705 Third Ave, Charles City (641-228-6772). The cost is \$20 per event (including lunch). Advance registration for all 4 events costs only \$60.

For questions or further information contact:  
**Paul Nelson** (Mason City) at 641-423-4702.  
 e-mail: [stjamespastor@mchsi.com](mailto:stjamespastor@mchsi.com) or  
**Irving Sandberg** (Waverly) at 319-352-0181  
 e-mail: [irving@mchsi.com](mailto:irving@mchsi.com)

## Congratulations

**Karris Golden**, assistant director of communication and marketing for Wartburg College, has been appointed by Governor Chet Culver to serve on the new Generation Iowa Commission. The commission is made up of 15 young Iowans between the ages of 18 and 35. The commission falls under the Department of Economic Development to advise and assist in retaining and attracting young adults in the state in both urban and rural areas.



**William Withers**, Grant Price Chair in communication arts at Wartburg College, has been appointed as a permanent member of the advisory committee of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's Communication Services Unit. Withers is associate professor and chair of the communication arts department and serves as assistant director for Wartburg's Institute for Leadership Education.



**Danielle Hamilton**, president of the synod Lutheran Youth Organization, was crowned queen of the 2007 Bremer County Fair. Danielle is a member at Faith Lutheran Church in Shell Rock, resides in rural Bremer County, and is a senior at Waverly-Shell Rock Community High School.



## Volunteer Work in Mississippi for Hurricane Katrina Rebuilding

Ron and Else Schardt and Andy and Carolyn Oppedahl of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Dubuque, Iowa, joined other family members from Washington and North Carolina in June for a week of volunteering in hurricane repair work in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. They served with Lutheran Disaster Response and stayed at Bethel Lutheran Church in Biloxi.

Even though it's two years since the disaster struck, thousands of people are still displaced, and opportunities abound for people to volunteer in many ways. Ron had led a group of

Wartburg Seminary students for 2 weeks of volunteering there in January of 2006, and he noted much change, but it was mind-boggling and heart-breaking to see how much was still left to be done.

The family group of eight (three siblings and their spouses plus a cousin and spouse) ranged in ages from 64 to 76, and each of them found plenty to do, from helping at the free medical clinic to listening to helping re-do walls and ceilings of a badly damaged home. Despite some initial hesitation



(L-R) Gordon Karey, Else Schardt, Karen Carey, Ron Schardt, Gib and Beth Rossing, Andy and Carolyn Oppedahl.

in the planning stages, they found this a most meaningful family reunion, thankful for the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others. They want to go again next year.