



Strengthening Leaders

Candidacy partnerships ease the road to ministry

by Marcia Hahn

Pastor Corey Smith knows the anxiety of waiting for an exam result that could abruptly end years of academic graduate study. He also knows the feeling of being supported by a congregation, synod, and seminary as he followed a call to ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

With his PhD in history nearly completed at the University of Iowa, Smith changed course in 2006 to pursue a Master of Divinity degree at Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque. He contacted the Northeastern Iowa Synod to begin the candidacy process, and throughout his five years in seminary Smith received continual support and affirmation that his internal sense of call was leading him in the right direction.



Pastor Corey Smith

“The synod Candidacy Committee called attention to make me think about my call in ways I hadn’t before,” says Smith, who is in his first call at St. John (Maxfield), Denver, and Messiah, Janesville. “It’s not about listing requirements for becoming a pastor. They helped me be better equipped to deal with questions. I could talk about my call in a way that made sense.”

Elayne Werges first met with the synod’s Candidacy Committee in 2002. She had been working as a social worker when she decided to pursue the ELCA’s newly established diaconal ministry. “I always have known that spirituality was a big part of my life since I was little,” Werges says.



Elayne Werges

Werges loved being a social worker for parents and children at risk for abuse and neglect, but she consistently noticed a spiritual component missing from their lives.

“Because I worked in a secular agency, I could not encourage people to explore that part of their lives,” Werges says. “When I learned about diaconal ministry, it seemed like a perfect fit and a way to invite people who lived in the fringes of society to be included in a worship community. Through prayer, time, education, and discernment I have learned that a call to be a diaconal minister is a way to empower and equip others to serve God in and through their vocations.”

Werges’ 10 years of seminary studies included online classes—often one at a time as they became available—and a year away from her family to attend the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, Pa.

Werges says that her mentors from the Northeastern Iowa Synod were incredible role models who encouraged her through emails, cards and letters that “made her day” when she was in Gettysburg.

“I am grateful for the experience of living in another part of the country. I was constantly challenged to think outside the box and look at things from another perspective at seminary,” says Werges, who is in her first call as a diaconal minister for Bethany, Iowa Falls, and St. Paul, Wellsburg. “I appreciated the committee pointing out the things I could do, and their prayers and support and challenging me, even though it was frustrating at times. They made me think, and I liked that.”

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The Northeastern Iowa Synod Candidacy Committee provides support and mentoring to those who have been called by God to serve in a rostered ministry of the ELCA. In partnership with the candidate, congregation and seminary, the Candidacy Committee walks with students through entrance to the candidacy process to begin theological study, complete clinical pastoral education, receive endorsement for an internship, and achieve approval of readiness to assume a leadership role in the ELCA.

Candidates meet with the committee at least three times during their years of study, and they are invited to an annual retreat. In addition, each candidate is assigned a committee member who serves as a mentor, liaison and support person throughout the candidacy process. "Our role is to make contact with candidates, check in with them, see how things are going, answer any questions, and update everyone at each meeting," says committee member Pastor Melissa Waterman.

The Candidacy Committee helps candidates work through challenges, which can range from time management to spiritual support to finances, an issue that Pastor Darrel Gerrietts says is more common now than ever before. "We keep an eye on debt with them and encourage them to slow down and work awhile if needed," says Gerrietts, who coordinates the Candidacy Committee and serves as assistant to the Bishop. "We never talked about money as much as we do now. Church salaries are just not enough to service the debt."

In partnership with the seminary, the committee may offer advice for balancing homework deadlines, family needs and extracurricular activities. The committee may recommend a candidate to meet with a therapist to address any unresolved issues revealed in the initial psychological evaluation. Many candidates are advised to find a spiritual director while in seminary to help them one-on-one in their spiritual journeys and to articulate their theology. "Everyone, even experienced pastors, can use that kind of help—someone to guide them through their faith

"It's been a great process... The congregation and committee help you get to know yourself and grow into the person God has created you to be."

process and answer theological questions," Waterman says.

The committee encouraged Smith to seek an internship outside his home synod and recommended he learn to better articulate his sense of call to others. Smith credits his internship experience in a new environment with helping him learn to talk more freely about his faith and address any questions or concerns he had.

"Some folks have the belief that the Candidacy Committee is a gatekeeper that can derail a life plan at any moment," Smith says. "They can make decisions, but they are really there to support the candidates through the process

as an ally, rather than an obstacle."

Always in the forefront when evaluating candidates for service is the ELCA's "Visions and Expectations" document for ordained ministers. "We as a committee want to endorse, send and approve good candidates for the good of the church, so there won't be problems that could arise later on," says committee member Jean Rieniets. "If issues aren't addressed in committee, and candidates are approved and allowed to serve a church, it would be a very unhealthy situation for the church and for the individual."

Jenna Couch was in high school when a family friend suggested that she would make a good pastor. That idea always stuck with Couch, and by the time she was a junior religion major at Wartburg College in Waverly, Couch made contact to enter the candidacy process. Now set to graduate from Wartburg Seminary in May, Couch is excited to serve in a first call ministry somewhere in the Northeastern Iowa Synod.

"It's been a long time of school, going to seminary right from college, but it will be worth it," Couch says. "The goal is to figure out what congregation is going to best suit me and where I can best be of service to God and the congregation."

Couch says she appreciated the



Jenna Couch

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Celebrate the mysteries

"Behold, I tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment in the twinkling of the eye, at the last trumpet."

—1 Corinthians 15:51



These words of Paul immediately came to mind as I listened to the preacher share this insight, "I find greater comfort in the mystery than in the certainty." The mysteries of the faith communicate the saving promises of God. People arguing their certainties bring division and even religious wars. Certainty breeds destruction.

Consider the great doctrines of the church. The Holy Trinity, the divinity and humanity of Christ, the Virgin Birth, the resurrection of the dead, the real presence of Christ in Holy Communion, the saving power of the sacrament of Holy Baptism, and the church as the Body of Christ are all mysteries. There are no scientific studies or tests that can prove their realities. Each teaching is simply a statement of faith.

Faith is a gift from God. It is not a decision that we make. "I believe that I cannot by my own understanding or effort believe in Christ Jesus or come to him..." claims Martin Luther in the "Small Catechism." The mysteries of God celebrate life now and eternally.

Our liturgies immerse us in the mysteries of the faith. Words read and proclaimed are God's Word. Every day water combined with the Spirit, Word and faith joins us to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Bread and wine are the body and blood of Christ. These mysteries communicate the truths of the faith.

Our funeral liturgy invites us into the final mystery of the faith. "In sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through

our Lord Jesus Christ, we commend to Almighty God our sister/brother..."

What is "sure" and "certain" is a "hope." This is what it means to be saved by grace through faith and what it means to live and die in the faith.

When the preacher said, "I find greater comfort in the mystery than the certainty," I bowed my head and whispered, "So do I."

This is the season to celebrate the mystery of the resurrection.

— Steven L. Ullestad
Bishop, Northeastern Iowa Synod

Rostered leaders invited to 'Spirituality Retreat'

All rostered leaders are invited to join a "Spirituality Retreat" April 15-16 as part of the First Call Theological Education Retreat. Pastor David Sorenson of Decorah Lutheran, Decorah, will lead participants in worship and four spiritual disciplines that may enrich their personal faith life.

The event will take place at the American Martyrs Retreat House in Cedar Falls from 5 p.m. Sunday through 4 p.m. Monday. Cost is \$100 per person, which includes a single

room and three meals. To register, contact the synod office by Thursday, April 5, at 319-352-1414 or email to hamiltonl@neiasynod.org. The registration fee can be brought to the event.



More/Enough

By Pastor Nancy Larson
ELCA Director for Evangelical Mission

When my nephew was very young, I remember his first words were “momma,” “dada,” “no” and “more.” He said “more” a lot and with much emphasis—he really said it as “MORE!” My nephew isn’t the only child to grab hold of this word and concept early in life. The desire for more seems to be ingrained in us all from a very early age, and we live in a culture that continues to fuel that desire.

I remember reading many years ago that true human happiness is not achieved by having everything we want, but by being satisfied with having what we need. Unfortunately, too often we have come to believe that our wants are actually our needs—the newest technology, the bigger boat, the latest fashion, the nicer car. We like to be up-to-date with our appliances and decorating. The list can go on and on. We not only try to keep up with the Joneses, but with what TV, radio, and magazines tell us is in, hot, or the latest.

Our drive for more can push us to spend beyond our means, make use of expensive credit cards, or dig ourselves into high personal debt. This, of course, can have significant impact on how we are able to respond to God’s call to be generous disciples. Recognizing and controlling our need for more is a great first step in

living as disciples of Jesus and faithful children of God.

A recently published book titled *How Much is Enough?* addresses this very issue. The subtitle “A Deeper Look at Stewardship in an Age of Abundance” acknowledges that most of us have our needs met and then some. Contributors include Charles Lane, Craig Nesson and Stephen Bouman, among others.

I highly recommend taking some time to read the six brief articles, beginning with the foundation of trust in God’s abundance and grounding in Biblical principles. The final article focuses on financial health as an expression of faith. There are also some helpful appendixes, including one on how to write a money autobiography and a self-assessment tool. This small book (49 pages) is a thought-provoking resource for steward leaders both rostered and lay.

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



Register for WIYLDE

Registration has begun for the Wholly Iowa Youth Leadership Discipling Event (WIYLDE) set for July 27-Aug. 1, 2012, at Luther College. WIYLDE is a ministry and leadership workshop for high school youth of ELCA congregations in Iowa and is supported by all three ELCA Iowa synods.

Registration fee is \$325 if registered by June 15, and \$350 after that date. The Northeastern Iowa Synod is offering \$100 early-bird camperships to students registered by June 15. To learn more about WIYLDE and how to register, visit www.luther.edu/ministries/congregations/wiylde or call 563-387-1327.



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Send news for the June issue to Marcia Hahn by May 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.

World Malaria Day is April 25

Did you know that malaria kills 800,000 people each year, most of whom are children under age five? That means one child dies every 45 seconds from this preventable and treatable disease. The Northeastern Iowa Synod has set a goal to raise \$250,000 to support the ELCA Malaria Campaign. Congregations can use campaign resources to help call attention to World Malaria Day on April 25 and support the Malaria Campaign:

- Start a fund-raising project or a special offering on the Sunday before World Malaria Day.
- Share the five-minute ELCA Malaria Campaign video.
- Conduct a Bible study using the ELCA Malaria Campaign "Bible Study Leader Guide."

To find these and other resources and activities, visit www.neiasynod.org/synod_resources/malaria.asp or www.elca.org/malaria.

Building Men for Christ Workshop

Saturday, May 5, 2012

*8 a.m. Gathering 8:30 a.m.–5 p.m. Workshop
Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Cedar Rapids*



Lutheran Men in Mission (LMM) is offering a one-day workshop to help church leaders develop and sustain life-changing men's ministries for their congregations. Eight workshops will be offered, along with a manual, two resource books, and lunch. The registration form and promotional materials can be downloaded at www.neiasynod.org/mens_ministry or contact Ryan Reid, 319-504-2836.

April 2-6 is Severe Weather Awareness Week

The Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management Division (HSEMD) and the National Weather Service (NWS) have designated April 2-6, 2012, as Severe Weather Awareness Week in Iowa. The Northeastern Iowa Synod Disaster Response Network urges everyone to develop a safety plan for use at home, workplace, school, vehicle, and outdoor activities.

Many resources, including information about preparing your congregation and family to mitigate and respond to disaster, can be found on the synod website at www.neiasynod.org/synod_resources/DisasterResponse.htm and at www.BeReadyIowa.org.

Assembly early bird registration is due May 8

The early bird registration fee for the 2012 Synod Assembly is available until Tuesday, May 8. After that, an additional \$25 fee will be added per person. Registration materials were included in the March 2012 issue of the *Star* newsletter and can be downloaded at www.neiasynod.org/synod_resources.

Honor Mother's Day with a net corsage



On Mother's Day, May 13, consider a gift to the Malaria Campaign in honor of a special mother or make net corsages to sell and raise money for the ELCA Malaria Campaign. Each corsage sold for \$10 can go toward the purchase of a mosquito net to protect a mother and child from malaria.

To download instructions to make the corsages or to download a Mother's Day gift card, visit www.neiasynod.org/synod_resources/Malaria.asp.

Take health assessment

As of the end of January, 32 of the eligible ELCA-primary plan members and spouses in the Northeastern



Iowa Synod have completed the confidential 2012 Mayo Clinic Health Assessment. Thank you to those who have done their part, but we still need 100 more people to take the health assessment by April 30 to reach 65 percent participation and earn a two percent discount on ELCA health contributions for all employers in the synod. The assessment takes just 15 minutes to complete and earns \$150 in your personal wellness account. Take the assessment at www.elcaforwellness.org.

Hunger Leaders Gathering Report

Norbert Strasser, facilitator of the Northeastern Iowa Hunger network, attended the ELCA Churchwide Hunger Leaders Gathering at Fort Myers Fla., in February. The event focused on the theme “Faith, Food & Farming” with keynote speakers, workshops, field trips, and friendships.



Farmer William Wilcox and Norbert Strasser at Roots Heritage Garden

Strasser learned that two concerns are in the forefront—the ELCA Malaria Campaign and the drought in the Horn of Africa. Keynote speaker Max Finberg, director of USDA Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships, spoke of the first six-point political platform in Matthew 25 and shared information about the government’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Formerly known as the Food Stamp program, SNAP assists one in seven Americans.

Finberg also spoke about gleaning (Leviticus 19:9-10) and two related programs: the Food Rescue Program, which picks up food from supermarkets, processors, and restaurants and distributes it to food pantries and community supper/meal programs; and the At-Risk Supper Program, a government-funded program that supports community meals, the school lunch program, and the summer food service program.

Rev. Joseph Livenson spoke about the need for work training and sustainability programs for long-term relief in Haiti. Livenson had left Haiti the day before the huge earthquake killed more than a hundred thousand people and destroyed 225,000 residences in Haiti. Training programs can help get farms going again and people working in nursing, construction and other trades for long-term benefits.

Strasser met Jen Enquist, director for Churches United for the Homeless, the largest shelter in northwestern Minnesota. Shelter and support services are offered in a spiritual setting for those most in need, along with daily meals, a food pantry and thrift store.

Field trips included visits to two community garden projects. Through the Lake Park Community Gardens, people can pay an annual fee of \$50 for a 4' x 8' raised bed plot to grow and keep their own produce. Leftovers and overages are donated to local food pantries. The Roots Heritage Garden teaches the poor and homeless how to grow fruits and vegetables so they can eat more healthfully, learn self-sufficiency, and sell food at the on-site farmers market.

Compensation for Temporary Ministries

The most recommended compensation fees for temporary ministerial services are listed below. They can also be found on the synod website at www.neiasynod.org/call_process/supply_pastor_list.asp.

Supply Ministry

Compensation—should include preparation time, travel time, and mileage for confirmation and worship.

Remuneration—have it on hand to reimburse one time persons immediately; or by arrangement with the congregation/pastor. *(Revised 2006)*

Weekly Worship

Single service—\$120; each additional service—\$40 *(Revised 2011)*

If a class is taught—\$40 additional *(Revised 2011)*

Communion presider only—\$30 per service.

Total mileage should be paid at the IRS approved rate. *(Revised 2001)*

Other Services

(weddings, funerals, etc.)

\$100 per service, plus mileage at the IRS approved rate, paid by the congregation.

This would be in addition to any honorarium the pastor might receive from the family members. *(Revised 2011)*

APRIL EVENTS

- 1 **Webinar**, Leading a Small Group
- 6 **Office Closed**, Good Friday Observance
- 10 **Committee**, Assembly Planning, Wartburg College, Waverly, 4-6 p.m.
- 12 **Meeting**, Interim Ministry Colleague Group, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
Network, Youth and Family, Holy Trinity, Dubuque, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.
- 15 **Webinar**, Faith Conversation
- 15-16 **Retreat**, Spirituality, American Martyrs, Cedar Falls
- 15-17 **Retreat**, First Call Theological Education, American Martyrs, Cedar Falls
- 21 **Meeting**, Pre-Gathering, St. John, Cedar Falls, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.
- 21 **Meeting**, Lutheran Youth Organization Team, 10a.m.-1 p.m.
- 24 **Meeting**, SAFE, 11 a.m.-3 p.m.
- 26 **Event**, Tri-State Forum: Stanley Olson, President of Wartburg Theo. Seminary, Wartburg Theo. Seminary, Dubuque, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

MAY EVENTS

- 3 **Network**, Youth and Family, St. John, Cedar Falls, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.
- 4 **Committee**, Candidacy, 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m.
- 5 **Event**, Building Men for Christ Workshop, Gloria Dei Lutheran, Cedar Rapids, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.
- 6 **Webinar**, Planning for the Unexpected
- 10 **Meeting**, Interim Ministry Colleague Group, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
- 28 **Office Closed**, Memorial Day Observance

JUNE EVENTS

- 5 **Event**, Safeguarding God's Children, Ewalu, Strawberry Point, 9 a.m.-noon
- 7 **Network**, Youth and Family, Salem, Lake Mills, 10a.m.-1 p.m.
- 8-10 **Event**, Synod Assembly, Wartburg College, Waverly
- 11-12 **Office Closed**
- 14 **Meeting**, Interim Ministry Colleague Group, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
- 16 **Event**, Synodical Women's Organization Convention, Wartburg College, Waverly

JULY EVENTS

- 4 **Office Closed**, Independence Day Observation
- 12 **Meeting**, Interim Ministry Colleague Group, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
- 18-22 **Event**, ELCA Youth Gathering, New Orleans, LA
- 27-Aug. 1 **Event**, WIYLDE, Luther College, Decorah

Tri-State Forum

April 26, 2012

The Rev. Dr. Stanley Olson, president of Wartburg Theological Seminary, will lead "The Lutheran Conversation about Vocation: Congregations, Seminaries and Daily Life." For more information or to register, click on the Lifelong Learners link at www.wartburgseminary.edu, email lifelonglearners@wartburgseminary.edu or call 563-589-0327.

Candidacy partnerships ease the road...
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support she received from the pastor and congregation from her home church of St. John, Sumner, and the mentoring from the Candidacy Committee members, many whom she already knew through her work as youth director at St. Paul's, Waverly. The annual candidacy retreats brought opportunities to get to know the committee members better, interact with the Bishop, and learn new topics and perspectives from a

variety of speakers.

"It's been a great process," Couch says. "The congregation and committee help you get to know yourself and grow into the person God has created you to be."

Committee members encourage all the candidates to build on their gifts and experiences to meet the needs of the church now and into the future.

"The candidates bring experiences that are rich," Rieniets says. "Sometimes after interviews we are kind of floored by what some people have already done because they come from so many backgrounds and experiences. It's a privilege to be there and listen to their stories."