



CHANGE

Vision inspires One in Christ

“Now that we are together, we can get into some of the exciting things,” said Jon Haugo, Sion, Lake Mills, president of the Northeastern Iowa Synod’s newest and third largest parish—One in Christ Lutheran Parish.

LeAnn Hagen, Sion, Lake Mills, said, “This rocks the imaginations of us all.”

“Even our communities are becoming closer,” said Ellyn Harmon, Immanuel, Scarville.

They are among the dozen task force members that integrated seven congregations into One in Christ.

Together!

One in Christ began March 1. The next day its members celebrated with a worship service that filled Lake Mills High School gym.

Each congregation



ONE IN CHRIST LUTHERAN PARISH integrates seven congregations—Bethany, Joice; Salem, Sion, and Winnebago, Lake Mills; Silver Lake, Northwood; and Immanuel and North Prairie, Scarville.

—logo by Rachel Ringham, Lake Mills

brought a banner, and Bethany, Joice, shared a baptismal font; Silver Lake, Northwood, an eternal light; Immanuel a pulpit and North Prairie altar candles, both from Scarville; and Salem the altar, Sion a cross, and Winnebago the Bible, all from Lake Mills.

Bishop Steven Ullestad preached and installed the parish's five pastors, and members shared the peace and communed. Everything was joint—choir, children's choir, praise band, and youth serving a meal together.

Support others

Eight years ago, synod staff member Rev. Lowell Hennigs met with the congregations about cooperative ministry.

"The result was a seminal moment," said Rev. Roger Dykstra, One in Christ head of staff, "an after-school program. We realized we could do it together with volunteers and support from all the congregations. But we couldn't do it alone. Even Salem, the largest congregation, couldn't sustain its after-school program by itself. It needed too many volunteers. Our experience dispels the myth that the big church overwhelms its neighbors. No, the big church needs its neighbors."

So Salem pays for half; the other congregations split the remainder. Silver Lake, with two participants, allocates \$250.

"The Silver Lake council understands that the church exists for the sake of others. Silver Lake thinks of the \$250 as an investment to reach out to all kids," Dykstra said.

Defining moment

One in Christ results from several years of monthly task force meetings.

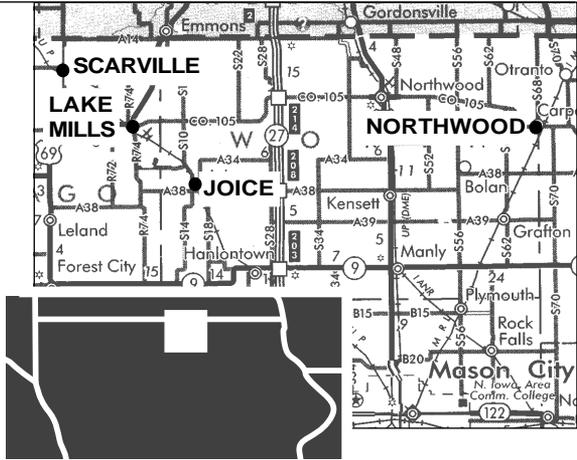
"We began in May 2001 as strangers from seven congregations," said Barb Thompson, task force member from Silver Lake, Northwood.

The task force faced mixed ideas, strong feelings, and details—mountains of details.

Gladys Biehl, Salem, Lake Mills, the task force's 80-year-old member, said, "The synod led us through all this; we are grateful."

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Editor Elaine Main

UNTIL THE NAME One in Christ clicked, task force members joked about becoming the Borderline Lutherans, reflecting the parish's location near Minnesota.



The task force brain-stormed ideas, then shared them with the congregations.

“We seemed to be moving forward at a snail’s pace,” a task force member said. “Then, the synod invited us to a weekend workshop, and by Sunday morning we’d changed our focus from trying to keep our doors open to being *the missionaries God calls us to be for those who are not here*. It is clearly our defining moment. From then on, our work flowed, and we felt God’s hand in this plan.”

Assistant to the Bishop Darrel Gerrietts planned the workshop, which encouraged congregations to form core values, state a mission, and dream a vision. Churchwide staff led the sessions for 58 persons—the seven One in Christ congregations, congregations that became the Clayton Valley Parish (Hope, Elkader; Immanuel, Elkport; and St. John American and St. Paul, Guttenberg), congregations in the Farmersburg and St. Sebald areas, and congregations from the Southeastern Minnesota and South Dakota Synods. The synod invites congregations to follow-up workshops every six months.

Rev. Keith Zeh, churchwide small town and rural ministry team, says the synod is a teacher to the larger church when it comes to multi-point parishes.

Vision orientation

Dykstra, said, “The task force spent time with the bigger, more important questions that our plans and proposals build on—Who are we as the church called to be? What kinds of things do we need to believe, in our minds and hearts, in order to become who

we're called to be?

“We decided we seven congregations must believe—all the way down to our guts—that we exist for the sake of those who are not here. Christ’s gaze is always outward, and his church’s gaze must go the same direction.”

The task force focused on the core values that it overwhelmingly adopted: *As Christian congregations, we exist to be caring communities. We exist for the sake of those that are not here. We are willing to change, if change is required to be what God is calling us to be.* True, there will still be issues from time to time that it must look at and work out.

“But if we are committed to these core values, a solid, God-pleasing parish will emerge,” a task force member said.

By fall 2002, the task force members handed *their baby* over to a newly elected parish board, and at the celebration worship, the task force hugged as one family—One in Christ.

Paul Tenold, Bethany, Joice, said, “It’s wonderful to see us all come together for our greater mission—our Lord and Savior. Benefits outweigh our concerns.”

Change

Beky Solomonson, North Prairie, Scarville, said, “It surprises





ONE IN CHRIST's five pastors serve the parish's first communion service—Revs. Thomas Hagen, Kevin Mackey, and Roger Dykstra (page four); Randall Baldwin with Bishop Steven Ullestad (below, left); and William Peters with a parish youth. Lay people respect their collegiality. "The pastors getting along so well is a big step in making it all work," said Jon Haugo, Sion, Lake Mills, parish board president.

—photos by Rachel Ringham, Lake Mills



me that people's doubts and fears have turned into so much excitement and enthusiasm. A very pleasant surprise!"

Congregations knew they would face change. Some were fearful, but others knew change was inevitable. They had seen their pastors share some duties, and the congregations held many forums before the vote to share information and address questions and cautions. Now, members are excited about getting to know each of the pastors and their new fellow members and their gifts.

According to the parish's head of staff, the challenge centers on being one in Christ.

Dykstra said, "I truly, truly, truly believe that the challenge for One in Christ Parish will be to continue to make decisions for mission-driven reasons. If this parish takes seriously its call to mission in our community and world, the possibilities are limitless."

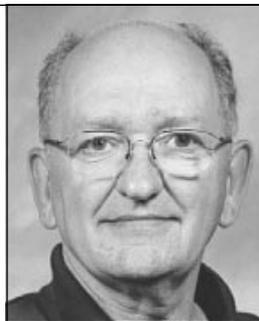
The parish's clear, gospel-based vision promises a bright future.

—*Elaine Main, editor*

ONE YEAR AND COUNTING...

Intern fits geographic setting

EDITOR'S NOTE—Rev. Roger McKinstry is pastor of Unity of the Cross Parish, which includes St. John, Dundee; Immanuel, Earlville; St. Peter, Lamont; and Peace, Ryan. Steve Andersen served as 2002-03 intern.



McKINSTRY

"One year and counting," I said to the head of Unity of the Cross's internship committee at the end of its first year being served by an intern. We agreed that it has been a great year and have high expectations for next year's intern.

As I reflect on the past year, I came to several conclusions that I would like to share with parishes considering an internship program in a geographic setting.

Using a geographic parish as an internship site provides an intern with opportunities that are not available to most interns. Because of the nature of a geographic parish, an intern has the opportunity to preach and lead worship nearly every Sunday. This gives the intern invaluable opportunities to practice, practice, practice, and practice more of those skills so valuable in parish ministry.

More and more rural congregations find that geographic ministry is the only financially viable means of continuing ministry in individual congregations, so this experience puts the intern on the cutting edge of congregational trends. An intern learns cooperative planning, experiences functioning and thinking *parish* as well as *congregation*, and gets opportunities for self direction and discipline.

And, while there are benefits to the intern for serving in such a setting, the parish reaps great benefits through an internship program. The year of internship at Unity of the Cross Parish enhanced our ministry with—

- Two adult education courses—Crossways and Adult Forum.
- Monthly home communions for those spread throughout a 50-mile radius.
- More youth participating in activities on a synodical and churchwide level, growing from the fact that the parish youth came together for fun, fellowship, and service.
- A longer and stronger confirmation program.
- A variety of preaching and worship styles.
- Better pastoral care in crisis situations.
- Joint parish worship opportunities, while still taking into account individual congregations' traditions.

These and other ministry opportunities would have been scaled back if an intern had not been available to learn and serve in the geographic parish setting.

I am convinced that a healthy internship program allows the grace of God to be shared in remarkable ways in the life of the parish and the life of the intern. Both are richer for the experience. And so I say, “One year and counting.”

—Rev. Roger McKinstry

KEY QUESTIONS

Will a geographic arrangement work?

It helps if congregations already share—

- **Acquaintance** Know each other; families interact
- **Communication** Same phone districts, newspapers, radio and television stations
- **Geography** Go from one congregation to another quickly, easily
- **Health care** Same hospital, retirement homes
- **Cohesion** Same county, synod conference, perhaps same town
- **School** Same district
- **Social atmosphere** Participate in the same events

What arrangements are possible?

Yoked call (share pastors)

Congregations call and support one pastoral staff.

Parish contract (share pastors, programs)

Congregations agree to the same pastoral staff job description but issue calls as individual congregations.

Parish council (share pastors, programs, government)

Congregations agree to an additional level of church government to call and finance pastoral and cooperative ministry. All use the parish name, contribute representatives and money to the parish council, but, for property and local needs, keep their own names and church councils.

What's in a contract?

- Purpose (vision)
- Type and style of call for rostered staff
- Call procedures
- Pastoral staff needs, functions
- Staff relationships, titles
- Pastoral staff time management
- Methods and dates to evaluate ministry
- Worship, holiday schedules
- Joint budgeting
- Pastoral staff salaries, support items
- Office expenses, supplies
- Agreement renewal

For information, contact **Northeastern Iowa Synod**
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<www.neiasynod.org>, phone 319/352-1414, FAX 319/352-1416