

Bethlehem in the Midway and Zion, St. Paul

## Ministry in the Midway

By Kate Penz, Editor



The Rev. Steve Slostad (left) and Tony, a volunteer at Open Hands Midway, greet visitors coming to Bethlehem in the Midway for free food, clothing, and household items. Open Hands Midway serves around 250 people each week.

Twin Cities media outlets have focused plenty of attention on the negative impact of St. Paul's light rail construction on University Avenue Corridor businesses during the past year. While that's certainly true—many businesses have experienced around 50 percent reduction in revenue—congregations in the Midway/Hamline neighborhood are busier than ever.

Outreach ministries at Bethlehem Lutheran in the Midway and Zion Lutheran have experienced much more use in the past year due to the tough economy. While light rail construction has made it more challenging to access relief services in the Hamline/Midway area for some, people overcome the sometimes treacherous roads, sidewalks, and public transportation to get the help they need.

The pastors in these congregations are more concerned with the light rail's long-term impact on low-income housing and property taxes than they are with the current obstacles its construction presents. Nearly 75 percent of housing in the Midway neighborhood is rental and 20 percent of the population lives below the poverty line, statistics that cause faith leaders to worry about how the light rail changes will impact the most vulnerable.

"Many of the people in this neighborhood recently moved off the street into apartments. What's going to happen to them if low-income housing isn't preserved? What about those who have lived here

for 30 years and will no longer be able to afford the property tax on their homes?" said the Rev. Joy Johnson, senior pastor at Bethlehem in the Midway. "We have been involved in the conversation. We want to make sure people are protected."

### Offering protection from hunger

Bethlehem in the Midway's outreach ministries are working to protect the poor. Each Monday a crowd waits outside of the church for its food and clothing ministry, Open Hands Midway, to open. Before the doors are unlocked, volunteers put the finishing touches on the meal and make sure the produce, clothing, and household items are in place. At 10:55 a.m. they form a circle around the food and the Rev. Steve Slostad, part-time outreach pastor at Bethlehem in the Midway, leads the group in prayer. For a moment all is quiet before the doors open to fill the hallway with a rush of people and noise.

Bethlehem in the Midway is located one block from the intersection of Snelling and University Avenues, the busiest intersection in Minnesota and home to a major Metro Transit station. The church's location positions it well to receive people in need from the diverse Hamline/Midway neighborhood.

"On Mondays, we do church differently," said Slostad. "We accept people how they are—mentally ill,



## WHAT'S Inside

- 1 Ministry in the Midway
- 2 From the Bishop: Living Lutheran? Upcoming assemblies
- 3 Tool Kit: Connecting and equipping lay leaders
- 4 Calendar
- 5 Connections: I was jobless and you helped me find a job
- 6 Continued: Ministry in the Midway
- 7 News about Calls; News from ELCA Board of Pensions
- 8 Prayers, ELCA Youth Gathering

*FaithLink* is published six times a year by the Saint Paul Area Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Peter Rogness, Bishop.

Saint Paul Area Synod  
105 West University Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55103-2094  
Website: [www.spas-elca.org](http://www.spas-elca.org)  
Phone: 651.224.4313

Kate Penz, Editor  
Email: [kate.penz@spas-elca.org](mailto:kate.penz@spas-elca.org)

chemically dependent, whatever it might be. We try to be Christ for them."

While some food programs and shelters set rules and restrictions, Open Hands Midway operates based on the 85/15 percent rule. "If we try to police the 15 percent who abuse the services, we won't be able to serve the 85 percent who genuinely need the help," said Slostad.

Continued on page six



The Rev. Nirmala Reinschmidt, pastor at Zion Lutheran in St. Paul, connects with a newcomer at the congregation's outreach ministry, Feeding Faith.

# From the Bishop

By Peter Rogness

## Living Lutheran?

Wouldn't it be enough to be "living Christian?"

"Living Lutheran" is a website the ELCA has established to spread news about what happens in this world under the very broad umbrella of the Lutheran church. The website contains inspiring stories that make us proud to be part of this church. And for the next three years, our gatherings—conferences and synod assemblies—will go more deeply into that phrase.

We live in a time when pollsters and analysts tell us that people who think about church at all are less and less inclined to think only of one denomination. If you're reading this, you are one for whom being Lutheran has some meaning and for whom being part of this denomination is significant. But we for whom that's true are in the minority. A wonderful gift of the ecumenical efforts of recent years is the increased recognition of the strengths and insights of other churches as well.

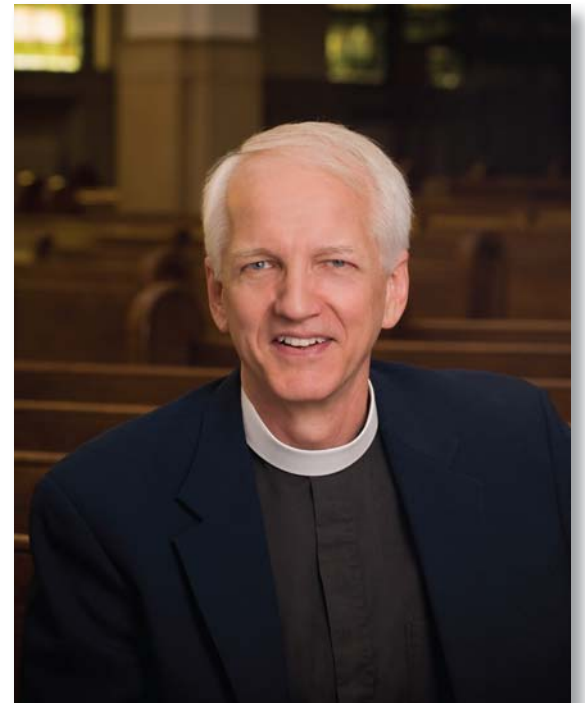
So back to the question: Why "Living Lutheran" as a theme?

The answer: Because there's much to be gained by becoming more clear on the strength of our faith and the insights that come to us out of this tradition called Lutheran and the theological foundations that have formed Lutheran churches for nearly 500 years.

Many young people are walking away from the faith because they aren't satisfied with either of the popular choices they see in the world of religion. On the one hand are the fundamentalist churches with strong claims to exclusive knowledge of the truth and strong judgments upon those who believe and act differently. On the other hand is the bland take-it-or-leave-it attitude of our individual culture that says any religion is as good as any other, and it's all individual choice and really doesn't matter. I think most young people think faith and values *do* matter. They have strong urges to make the world better and seek to understand the world as a place where it matters how we live with and for each other. So a faith that grounds them in a Creator God that draws us into each other's lives and gives us a God who can sustain us through all life brings—this kind of God will have meaning in the world of today.

And the God we proclaim in our Lutheran theology is just such a God, seen in Jesus Christ, who claims us in love, knows us deeply, sends us into the suffering of the world, and promises the Spirit's presence with us in all life may bring. This grace-filled God is at the heart of what Lutherans believe and how Lutherans live in the world. To live Lutheran is an enormous gift and witness to the world.

So we'll examine these themes this year and in 2013 and 2014. Dr. Deanna Thompson



was raised in a Lutheran pastor's home and now teaches religion at Hamline University. At our conference assemblies in February, she'll share with us her journey and insights as a Lutheran Christian teaching among searching college kids and journeying through cancer herself. At the synod assembly in May, two of our church's finest seminary teachers, Rolf Jacobson from Luther Seminary and Winston Persaud from Wartburg Seminary, will take us into further exploration of our foundations as Lutherans, and we'll examine how to apply our faith to the way we live.

Living Lutheran is not an effort to be cheerleaders for a sect; it's an exploration of the riches and insights of this faith perspective that is ours. A gift to us and to the world.

## Upcoming assemblies focus on Lutheran identity and insights

By Beth Helgen, Assembly Manager

The annual meetings of most congregations will be held in upcoming weeks and conference assemblies and the synod assembly follow in February and in May. Each of these three meetings plays a role in how we are linked together as the whole church. So what does this mean? For starters, it means clergy and congregational leaders need to inform members of these meetings and the importance of participation in the life of the whole church!

### Getting ready

We are a participatory church, one that organizationally lives out what we believe about the "priesthood of all believers." And we live in a democratic culture where people expect to be able to express their ideas and have a hand in shaping those issues that affect them. Decisions about how we want to be church together in this synod begin at the congregational annual meeting, continue with conference assemblies and the synod assembly, the highest governing

authority for the synod, and move to the churchwide assembly, the final governing authority for the entire ELCA.

Each congregation is charged with identifying and sending representatives to the conference assemblies and the synod assembly. These representatives—called voting members—help determine ministry for the future of the Saint Paul Area Synod and for the whole ELCA. So if your congregation wants to have voice and influence, the process exists for participation! But you—clergy and congregational leadership—need to inform your congregation about avenues for participation.

Just as interest in civic matters varies among individuals, so, too, does interest in church matters. Many congregations have a system for identifying representatives for these assemblies; others struggle to find people and wait until the last minute. Please educate your members about how they can become involved!

### Conference assemblies

Conference assemblies will be held on Saturday, February 11 at St. Andrew's, Mahtomedi. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m., followed by a keynote address by Dr. Deanna Thompson, professor of religion at Hamline University, at 9:00 a.m. A member of Gloria Dei, St. Paul, and the daughter of a Lutheran pastor, Thompson will speak on "Hoping for More: Being the Church in Times of Lament and Times of Joy." Lutherans aren't the kind of Christians



Dr. Deanna Thompson

Continued on page seven

# Connecting and equipping lay leaders

By Kate Penz, Editor

In 2011, approximately 200 leaders from congregations—a record number!—gathered at St. Mark's Lutheran in North St. Paul for the seventh annual Tool Kit for Congregational Leaders. Hosted by the Saint Paul Area Synod, it gathers and equips leaders, giving them a chance to connect, ask questions, and discuss topics from leading an effective meeting to planning welcoming worship to local outreach.

## Better together than we are alone

In his address to those gathered at last year's Tool Kit, Bishop Peter Rogness said, "In the church, we are better together than when we work alone. This day connects people both with insights into how to do congregational work and with others doing similar work throughout the synod."

"Tool Kit is a positive place to connect with other church leaders that provides valuable information," said Barb Damlo, member at Christus Victor, Apple Valley. "It is an opportunity to participate in something that is helpful both personally and as a leader of my church. It's so easy to say 'I'm too busy, someone else should go,' but after attending Tool Kit I am so glad I did. I get so much out of it, and I find myself asking why more people don't participate. My advice for others is: go, do, learn!"

Anita Rylander, member at Arlington Hills, St. Paul, agrees that it's a valuable way to spend a day. "I still remember the workshop I attended years ago on congregational archives, and the bishop's comments on being Lutheran have stayed with me," she said. "It's a great opportunity to get together with other church leaders!"

Many attendees comment on how the best part of the day is the chance to "mix it up" with leaders from other congregations. "One of my favorite parts of the day is the conversations that happen at the lunch tables. Spontaneous ideas emerge, especially if you are sitting with 'strangers,'" said Anne Romstad, member at Christiania, Lakeville.

## Partnership with St. Mark's

St. Mark's has hosted this event since it began in 2005. Pastoral and lay leaders have been invaluable to the event's success, each year providing volunteers to set up tables and chairs, to prepare and arrange food, and to direct attendees to workshops, always with a smile.

"One of the reasons I love Tool Kit is because it gives me a chance to visit St. Mark's. That congregation does an outstanding job of hosting the event," said Tom Iverson, member at Lutheran Church of Peace, Maplewood.

## About the day

Tool Kit is typically held on a Saturday toward the end of February. This year, it will be February 25. Brochures are mailed to lead pastors, council presidents, and treasurers in each congregation in early January



Lay leaders in discussion at 2011 Tool Kit for Congregational Leaders.

with a letter asking pastors to distribute the information to congregational leadership.

The event begins at 8:30 a.m. with registration and coffee, followed by a short worship service and presentation about congregational life and leadership with Bishop Rogness. After a break, attendees report to the workshop of their choice, gather for lunch, and end the day with a second workshop. This year's Tool Kit will wrap up around 2:00 p.m.

The subjects of the workshops vary, although some remain the same from year to year, and they cover about 14 different topics. The workshops include basic information and resources to equip leaders in the roles and responsibilities in the congregations they serve.

Synod staff uses participant evaluations and attendance at past workshops, as well as new and current issues of interest to congregations, to carefully plan workshops for the coming year. New workshops for 2012 include dealing with congregational conflict, social media planning, mission renewal, food safety, and more.

## Taking Tool Kit home

Some church councils attend Tool Kit together, with each member participating

in different workshops that relate to the work each does. The council gathers later to discuss what its members have learned and how to apply ideas to its setting.

"I really enjoy one-on-one conversations with other churches and hearing how others do things, and sharing ideas about what works and what doesn't work is helpful as a church leader to bring back to my own congregation," said Damlo.

St. Paul, Wyoming hopes to attend the 2012 Tool Kit with enough people to cover all workshops of interest. "Our office administrator retired recently. We are now looking at moving from paper mailings to email newsletters. A group of us attended a workshop at last year's Tool Kit that will help in that transition," said Jerry Nelson, member at St. Paul.

Please visit the synod website for more information, including a full list of workshops, schedule, and registration information. If you have not attended Tool Kit in the past, we hope you will consider coming this year. For those who have attended in the past, we hope to see you again this year.

According to Romstad, "At Tool Kit, there's always something to learn!"

## Resource reminder: Synod Handbook and Directory

The synod handbook, containing information about committees, rostered leaders, congregations, trend reports, and synod assembly minutes, is available for your use. Previously, the handbook was printed and mailed to rostered leaders and congregations. In an effort to save resources, become more accessible, and improve accuracy, the handbook is available as a PDF at [www.spas-elca.org/synod-handbook](http://www.spas-elca.org/synod-handbook).

## Helpful tips

To protect your information, a password is required to open the document. The password was mailed to rostered leaders and congregations previously. If you've misplaced it, call the synod office or email Kate Penz at [kate.penz@spas-elca.org](mailto:kate.penz@spas-elca.org).

You will need Adobe Reader installed on your computer to view it, available for free at [www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com).

The document is in an 8.5x11 format, allowing for ease of printing if you would prefer a hard copy. You may choose to download the document. However, keep in mind that changes are made monthly. The most up-to-date version is on the website.

## Updating information

Updates to contact information, roster status, and mobility are made on a monthly basis. Although we are working to ensure accuracy, mistakes can happen. If you notice incorrect information, contact Kate Penz at [kate.penz@spas-elca.org](mailto:kate.penz@spas-elca.org).

# Calendar

Look for more events and information at [www.spas-elca.org](http://www.spas-elca.org)

## January

### Recharge

Jan. 7, 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., St. Andrew's, Mahtomedi. A one-day conference designed to encourage and inspire teams of people who minister to youth, children, and families. Go to [www.ministryrecharge.com](http://www.ministryrecharge.com).

### Celtic Contemplative Communion: An Imperceptible Light

Jan. 8, 6:51 p.m., Pilgrim, St. Paul. The Celtic style contemplative prayer known for engaging imagination through visual and spatial imagery, as well as emphasizing the life of God within creation.

### Communicators' Gathering:

#### Effective Use of Audio and Video in Your Congregation

Jan. 9, 1:30 p.m., King of Kings, Woodbury. Presentation and discussion on how to effectively use audio and video in your congregation. David Matenaer, member at St. Paul-Reformation, St. Paul, and executive creative director of Mojo Solo communications firm, will lead the group. RSVP to Kate at [kate.penz@spas-elca.org](mailto:kate.penz@spas-elca.org) by Jan. 6.

### Parent Education: Price of Privilege

Jan. 11, 6:30-7:30 p.m., Amazing Grace, Inver Grove Heights. Led by Susan Olson, Peer Leader ISD 196. Does over-involved parenting result in kids with an impaired sense of self? If so, how can we work to get it back? Register at 651.455.0093 or email Merri, [mguggisberg@aglcigh.org](mailto:mguggisberg@aglcigh.org).

### Forum on Health Care: The Cost of Dying

Jan. 15, 6:30-8:00 p.m., Gloria Dei, St. Paul. The forum will focus on "The Cost of Dying in America: Are We Making Informed Decisions?" The cost is more than dollars. It is about the quality of life for individuals and the emotional toll on families. Panelists include Steven Miles, bioethicist at the University of Minnesota and David Moen, medical director, Fairview Inc. Moderated by Mark Hallberg.

### Peace with Justice Forum:

#### The Peace Imperative

Jan. 15, 12:30-2:00 p.m., Central, Minneapolis. Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer, associate professor of justice and peace studies at the University of St. Thomas, will present on "The Peace Imperative: How War and Wall Street have hi-jacked our future and what we can do about it." Sponsored by the Minneapolis Area and Saint Paul Area Synods peace with justice committee.

### Nordic Contemplative Evening Prayer: We Begin Again, We Don't Give Up

Jan. 22, 6:51 p.m., Pilgrim, St. Paul. A celebration of the rich and haunting music of the Scandinavian peoples.

■ Sponsored by the Saint Paul Area Synod

## Tool Kit for Congregational Leaders



St. Mark's Lutheran  
2499 Helen St. North  
North St. Paul

Saturday, Feb. 25, 2012  
8:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

### About Tool Kit

Tool Kit is a training event for congregational leaders that features extended conversation with Bishop Peter Rogness, networking opportunities with leaders from congregations throughout this synod, and workshops with information specific to leadership matters and concerns.

[www.spas-elca.org/events/tool-kit-congregational-leaders](http://www.spas-elca.org/events/tool-kit-congregational-leaders)

See page three for more information

### Retired Clergy Caucus

Jan. 23, 1:00-2:30 p.m., Incarnation, Shoreview. Retired rostered leaders gather for an afternoon of fellowship and conversation. Synod assembly voting members will be elected. RSVP to Julie Keefe at 651.224.4313 before Jan. 18 if you plan to attend. If you are unable to attend, but would like to be a voting member at the synod assembly, contact Julie to request your name be added to the ballot.

### Metro-wide Reconciling in Christ Festival Worship

Jan. 28, 4:30 p.m., Gustavus Adolphus, Minneapolis. Lutherans Concerned/Twin Cities (LC/TC) holds its seventh annual Reconciling in Christ (RIC) festival worship as part of the national celebration of welcoming churches, recognizing faith communities that bear a public witness to God's love for persons of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

### Illumined by Christ's Rising: A Hymn Festival

Jan. 29, 4:00 p.m., Lutheran Church of the Resurrection, Roseville. Led by David and Susan Palo Cherwien. Come join in music, word, and song about to celebrate the gift of Christ that illuminates our world.

## February

### Constitution Work Session

Feb. 4, 9:00-11:30 a.m., Synod Office, 105 University Ave. West, St. Paul. Congregations beginning the process or in the early stages of constitution updates are invited to send teams of up to three people to this Saturday morning work session. Beth Helgen, assistant to the bishop for administration, will provide a brief overview of congregational constitutions, synod review, and how to get started. The remainder of the time will be spent on questions and getting started on this important task. No cost to register, but space is limited. Pre-register with Beth at [beth.helgen@spas-elca.org](mailto:beth.helgen@spas-elca.org).

### Conference Assemblies

Feb. 11, 8:30 a.m. Registration; 9:00 a.m.-12:00 noon, Program and conference caucuses, St. Andrew's, Mahtomedi. See page two for more information.

### Tool Kit for Congregational Leaders

Feb. 25, 8:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m., St. Mark, North St. Paul. See box above and page three for more information.

## March

### Basic Parish Nurse Preparation Course

Mar. 12-16, Luther Seminary, St. Paul. Parish nurse ministry program of Concordia College, Moorhead, offers a course primarily for registered nurses interested in health and healing ministries. For information contact Jean Bokinskie at 218.299.3825.

### JRLC Day on the Hill

Mar. 20, 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m., Minnesota State Capitol, hosted by the Joint Religious Legislative Coalition (JRLC).

## April

### Spring Ministerium

Apr. 12, 9:00 a.m.-12:00 noon, Location and program to be determined.

### Saint Paul Area Syndical Women's Organization Spring Convention

Apr. 20-21, Prince of Peace, Burnsville. The convention will celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Women of the ELCA.

### Jump Start Your Stewardship

Apr. 21, 9:00 a.m., Location to be determined. An event that gives congregational teams time to plan stewardship campaigns for the next program year. Janet and Philip Jamieson, authors of the book *Ministry and Money*, will be the keynote speakers. This redesigned event will be co-sponsored by the Minneapolis Area Synod and will include tracks for both clergy and lay persons.

## Save the Dates

Saturday, February 11, 2012

Conference Assemblies  
Registration at 8:30 a.m.  
Program and caucus from 9:00 a.m.-12:00 noon  
St. Andrew's, Mahtomedi

Friday, May 18, 2012 & Saturday, May 19, 2012

2012 Synod Assembly  
Prince of Peace, Burnsville

# Connections

with the ELCA churchwide and other partners in ministry and mission

Christ the King, New Brighton, partners with Daily Work

## I was jobless and you helped me find a job

By Carrie Gubsch, Christ the King,  
New Brighton

Job seekers in the New Brighton area may have a glimmer of hope, thanks to a block party, a non-profit organization, and a local Lutheran church.

Christ the King Lutheran Church in New Brighton will sponsor a part-time job counselor to help local community members find employment.

Daily Work, a non-profit group dedicated to helping job seekers whose needs are not fully met by other social service agencies, sponsored a booth at the congregation's annual block party in August.

About 20 community members came up to the booth looking for help.

David Krahn, Daily Work's executive director, approached the Rev. Paul L. Larsen, senior pastor at Christ the King, about opening a Daily Work office site at Christ the King at a cost of about \$12,000 annually.

It took Larsen and the Rev. Vern Rice, retired pastor who heads the church's local mission partner team, about three weeks to raise enough funding to start the project.

"Everyone we visited responded with a gift of \$500 or more," Larsen said. "I asked one couple for a gift of \$1,000 and when they learned another couple was donating \$1,000 the husband said, 'Well then I'll give \$2,000.'"

Bega Kwa Bega

## Scholarship student photos updated



Photos of students in the Iringa Diocese in Tanzania who receive scholarships from Saint Paul Area Synod congregations were updated again at the end of November.

Find photos of your congregation's students and share them with others by posting on a bulletin board, on your church website or Facebook page, or by including the photos in your congregation's newsletter.



Amber Mullenbach, client counselor at Daily Work, sits down with Blama to help him build a résumé. Daily Work connects job seekers whose needs are not met by other social service agencies with employment opportunities and other resources that assist in obtaining and retaining employment.

Since its inception in 2000, Daily Work has helped hundreds of job seekers overcome obstacles and find employment. In 2011, Daily work matched more than 27 job seekers with jobs.

Often Daily Work clients face significant obstacles to employment, such as those related to housing, transportation, language, skill deficiencies, family issues, and criminal history. Because of obstacles, job seekers are often unable to take full advantage of

available services; in some cases, they are not eligible for services because they don't meet the criteria of the social agency. Daily Work provides individually customized and long-term support to assist job seekers in obtaining and retaining employment.

For more information about Daily work please visit [www.daily-work.org](http://www.daily-work.org). To make an appointment in the New Brighton area, call 651.204.1041. Daily Work also operates out of Christ Lutheran on Capitol Hill in St. Paul.

New food safety regulations for faith-based organizations

## Are you serving hotdish safely?

In 2011 the Minnesota legislature instituted a new requirement (MN Statute 157.22) for faith-based organizations, including an exemption from routine state health inspections where food is served. However, to meet the requirements of the exemption, a volunteer from each congregation must be trained in a food safety course. The trained volunteer(s) is then expected to lead trainings at his/her congregation and help other volunteers follow food safety guidelines when food is prepared or served at an event.

The Minnesota Department of Health has information available at [www.health.state.mn.us](http://www.health.state.mn.us) so your congregation might better understand the new requirements and identify training options.

- The following resource page provides multiple links to assist in your efforts: <http://is.gd/MNHealthResource>
- *The Guidance Document*, produced by the state health department, is particularly helpful: <http://is.gd/GuidanceDoc>

To meet the requirement, there are self-guided food safety trainings available through the Department of Health website. In addition, the Saint Paul Area Synod will be offering a 75-minute workshop, *Cooking safely for your congregation*, as part of our annual Tool Kit for Congregational Leaders on Sat. Feb. 25 at St. Mark's Lutheran in North St. Paul. See the article on page three or visit [www.spas-elca.org/tool-kit-congregational-leaders](http://www.spas-elca.org/tool-kit-congregational-leaders) for registration information.

Continued from page one

## Ministry in the Midway

Since January, Open Hands Midway has served over 15,000 meals, given away over 7,000 bags of clothes, some 1,800 pairs of shoes, nearly 900 coats, more than 440 blankets, and almost 800 boxes of household items.

Open Hands Midway has been busy since it was organized in 2009 as a street ministry to engage the neighborhood and to meet the physical and emotional needs of the poor. Volunteers serve meals to around 250 people per week, twice per week during the summer. They organize the clothing, household items, and groceries received from partner congregations and Second Harvest Heartland. Each week nurses are on hand to perform blood pressure checks and answer health questions. During the summer they set up in the church parking lot, but when the temperature drops, the church's lower level serves as the meeting space. Every third Saturday throughout the year American Bank, across Snelling Avenue, allows Open Hands Midway to use its lot for its street ministry. Volunteers serve a meal, hand out clothes, and offer to pray for people passing from Minneapolis to St. Paul.

In addition, on Saturdays the congregation runs a youth program for children age four to twelve staffed by volunteers and youth groups from partner congregations. In the summer the program increases to four days per week.

### Open door, no exceptions

A few blocks north, Zion Lutheran's growing outreach ministry, Feeding Faith, is a part of its larger effort to be intentional about connecting with the neighborhood. Six years ago the congregation called the Rev. Nirmala Reinschmidt and asked her to lead them in outreach ministry. Reinschmidt encouraged the congregation to open its doors to the community, and now Zion hosts everything from homework help on Tuesday evenings to family birthday parties, and it won't turn away a funeral.

"Families who have lost a loved one are already hurting. The least we can do is provide the service and meal; we try to make this difficult time easier, regardless of whether they are already connected to the congregation," said Reinschmidt.

Through Feeding Faith, Zion serves a meal and offers direct food relief on Thursday

afternoons. On Thursday mornings, volunteers drive to Hope for the City in St. Louis Park to pick up food to bring back to Zion to be separated into about 60 grocery bags before welcoming visitors for prayer, meal, and conversation, sending visitors home with a bag of groceries.

A few years ago, the average worshiping attendance at Zion was around 25 people. Now it has doubled in size, welcoming ten new families that have started to attend since learning about Zion through its outreach efforts.

"I am so grateful for the leadership here. I bring ideas and I'm never told 'we don't have money for that,'" said Reinschmidt. "God provides. We are connecting with the community. When people come here they are told that we are here to love them. We don't have an agenda."

At first Barb Shaner, member at Zion and Feeding Faith volunteer, wasn't sure how to interact with the people coming on Thursdays—most are unchurched or haven't been involved in a church for many years, some are living on the street, and others are first-generation immigrants, non-English speaking, or come from different racial and cultural backgrounds.

"I was nervous about how I would relate to them," said Shaner. "Then Pastor Nirmala told me all I have to do is love them."

Shaner greets everyone who walks through the door with a hug. She asks people to sign in, a list she takes home to study, and she calls them by name when they return the next week. The community shares one another's joy and learns about the challenges each person is facing.

"Last week a young man from Venezuela told me he missed his family, whom he hasn't seen for two years. I told him that we are his family too and I invited him back," said Reinschmidt. He has returned each week to volunteer, offering to help the older women unload food from the truck.

"Today my prayer was answered," said Mary, a woman who visits Feeding Faith every week. "I went to the grocery store and had to choose between cereal and milk because I didn't have money for both. I bought cereal, and when I got to Zion, Barb asked me if I could use a gallon of milk. Each week my prayers are answered in some way when I come to Feeding Faith, but today it was a specific prayer!"

### Bethlehem

By David Shaw, member at Our Savior's, Stillwater and Open Hands Midway volunteer

*Each Monday at noon they show up at the door  
All are welcome...none turned away.  
First-timers...and those who've been here before  
Receive a helping of hope for the day.*

*They'll get a hot meal if they're hungry...  
Warm clothes to temper their chill...  
An ear to bend if they need to vent...  
No lectures, just a dose of good will.*

*I sometimes wonder what their stories are  
What it was that triggered their fall.  
But in God's House, it just doesn't matter...  
With arms open, we welcome them all.*

*Some express thanks, others not much  
But, rest assured, none go away hungry.  
Nourished by food and God's healing touch...  
In hopes we might see them on Sunday.*

*Though we'd love that, it's not a requirement  
Our mission is to serve, not control.  
For those seeking a change in environment...  
It's warm inside, if there's a chill on the soul.*

*When others need help...grace and kindness  
still flow  
Loving proof that nothing can stem...  
That legacy born two centuries ago...  
In a village called Bethlehem.*

### 'Service keeps us vibrant'

Open Hands Midway and Feeding Faith are supported by partner congregations, companies, and organizations. Each rely on outside support to keep their programs running. Often, volunteers from suburban congregations come to experience what outreach ministry in the city is all about.

Once a month a group of seniors from Our Savior's Lutheran in Stillwater volunteers at Open Hands Midway. "We are more blessed by the time we spend volunteering than the people coming in for the services," said the Rev. Keith Lentz, retired pastor and member of Our Savior's. "We learn about ourselves and are given the chance to see God in the other. Service keeps us vibrant."

"This is what it's all about," said Dave Shaw, member of Our Savior's. He and his wife retired early and have made a commitment to service. They have traveled with various missions all over the world, but have learned they don't have to go far to serve. (See the box to read Shaw's poem.)

"I won't do anything unless I feel joy in my heart about it," said Carol Johnson, Zion member and volunteer at Feeding Faith. "I went from being away from the church for many years, and now I spend much of my time volunteering on committees and outreach with Zion, and I have a lot of joy."

God's work is being done through the ministries in the Hamline/Midway neighborhood. The programs at Bethlehem in the Midway and Zion are not just serving the poor; they are providing light and life to the congregations and people involved on both ends.

"We believe love changes people," said Slostad. "With love, God makes all things possible."



Each week, Bethlehem in the Midway packs up meals to take to those in the neighborhood who are homebound.

# Announcement of new name, return of two percent discount

## ELCA Board of Pensions becomes Portico Benefit Services

In November the ELCA Board of Pensions announced it will change its name to Portico Benefit Services. The Rev. Jeff Thiemann, president and CEO, assures members that its mission remains the same. “We’re changing our name to clarify what we do—we don’t offer a pension, we do offer a 403(b), and other benefits, too.”

Learn more about the name change at [www.elcabop.org/name](http://www.elcabop.org/name).

## Our chance to save

Portico Benefit Services is offering the Saint Paul Area Synod the opportunity to earn a two percent discount on ELCA health contributions again in 2012. Each congregation and organization in our synod will receive a two percent discount on health contributions if 65 percent of our eligible ELCA-primary plan members complete the confidential Mayo Clinic Health Assessment between Jan. 1-Apr. 30.

In 2011 we collectively saved \$46,700! Seventy-one percent of eligible members completed the health assessment. In 2012 let’s aim for 100 percent!

If you have ELCA-primary health coverage, this savings depends on you. Take the 2012 Mayo Clinic Health Assessment on the EmbodyHealth web portal at [www.elcafor-wellness.org](http://www.elcafor-wellness.org) Jan. 1-Apr. 30. We’ll be one person closer to 65 percent participation,

Continued from page two

## Upcoming assemblies focus on Lutheran identity and insights

who predict the immanent end of the world. But what do we say about where life is leading? What might Lutherans have to say about living in the hard times, when hope is both precious and hard to come by? We claim that Lutheran theology is a “theology of the cross”—the belief that God doesn’t simply lift us out of hard times, but is present with us in human suffering. How does that shape our “Living Lutheran?” How might our congregational life enrich lives with God’s promise of more?

### Ministry reports

It’s that time of year again—time for rostered leaders to complete the 2011 Annual Ministry Report. While it may seem to you to be paperwork that clutters your desk, be assured we value the brief responses you send to our office.

You may complete this form online at [www.elca.org/rosteredleaderreports](http://www.elca.org/rosteredleaderreports). Please save it and submit it via email to [julie.keefe@spas-elca.org](mailto:julie.keefe@spas-elca.org).



and you will earn \$150 in your personal wellness account to offset out-of-pocket medical costs.

If you are retired and have Medicare-primary health coverage, you have access to the health assessment and online tools, but your participation will not count toward the two percent discount.

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

## Apply for wellness grants

Not only did congregations and organizations in our synod receive a two percent discount on health contributions in 2011, we also received an additional one percent wellness reward as a thank you to members for embracing healthier habits and saving on overall health care costs. For our synod, the reward totaled \$21,697.

The reward is to be used to fund a health and wellness-related initiative within the synod. In Saint Paul, congregations can apply to receive grants to help offset the cost of sabbaticals for church leaders or to support staff development opportunities.

Learn more about how to apply for a grant at [www.spas-elca.org/synod-wellness-discount-and-reward](http://www.spas-elca.org/synod-wellness-discount-and-reward).

Following Dr. Thompson’s address, conferences gather to caucus, discuss issues of concern, and conduct elections, including those for 2013 churchwide assembly voting members. Conferences will conclude their meetings no later than 12:00 noon.

Those who wish to prepare resolutions for consideration by conference caucuses should read the section on guidelines for resolutions, which will be available the week of January 9 at [www.spas-elca.org/events/synod-assembly](http://www.spas-elca.org/events/synod-assembly) and will be sent to rostered leaders by email.

## Synod assembly

This year’s synod assembly will be held May 18-19 at Prince of Peace, Burnsville, gathering under the theme of “Living Lutheran: What Does This Mean?” Keynote speakers include Dr. Rolf Jacobson, professor of Old Testament at Luther Seminary, and Dr. Winston Persaud, professor of systematic theology at Wartburg Seminary.

## Identifying voting members

Congregations should identify individuals who will serve as voting members at the conference assemblies on February 11, and

## NEWS ABOUT Calls

### Rostered Ministry Vacancies

#### In Interim

**Christus Victor**, Apple Valley, *associate pastor*

**Farmington**, Farmington, *senior pastor*

**Hmong Central**, St. Paul, *pastor*

**Memorial**, Afton, *pastor*

**Spring Lake**, North Branch, *pastor*

**St. Luke**, Cottage Grove, *senior pastor*

#### Call Committee Active

**Gloria Dei**, St. Paul, *senior pastor*

**King of Kings**, Woodbury, *lead pastor*

**Prince of Peace**, Roseville, *associate pastor*

#### Calls Accepted

**The Rev. Michelle Gawienowski**, Shepherd of the Hills, Shoreview, *senior pastor*

#### Ordinations, Consecrations, and Commissionings

**The Rev. Mark Kopka**, Nov. 6, mission developer, *Shobi’s Table*, St. Paul

#### Deaths

**The Rev. Erland E. Carlson**, 85, died Nov. 24. Carlson began in ordained ministry as a mission developer at Christ the King in Escanaba, Mich., from 1958 until 1969. He served as pastor at Hallock Lutheran in Hallock and Children’s Memorial Lutheran in Kansas City, Mo. before accepting a call as chaplain at V.A. Medical Center, Minneapolis in 1979. Later, Carlson served as pastor at First, White Bear Lake and Mount Carmel, St. Paul. Since retirement he and his wife, Eleanor, have been members at Trinity of Minnehaha Falls, Minneapolis.

**The Rev. Henry K. G. Flathmann**, 87, died Nov. 18. He was ordained into the ministry of The American Lutheran Church June 10, 1951 in Woodsboro, Tex. He served congregations in Sweetwater and Winters; Shreveport, La.; St. Paul, and Pasadena. He retired in 1988 and moved to Seguin before returning to St. Paul in 2005. In retirement, Flathmann volunteered as a visitation pastor.

the synod assembly on May 18-19, as early as possible. Voting members appreciate being briefed in advance about their roles and the expectations. Congregations identify voting members in all sorts of ways, but it’s a good idea to select voting members who are involved in the life of your congregation and have time to prepare and understand the issues and concerns before the assembly. The number of lay voting members allocated is based on information submitted on parochial reports or, in absence of that, on the minimum number allocated to a congregation.

#### For more information

If you have questions, please contact Beth Helgen at [beth.helgen@spas-elca.org](mailto:beth.helgen@spas-elca.org) in the synod office.

# Gearing up for the Gathering

By Audrey Fairchild Ehm, Synod Gathering Coordinator

The young people of our church are being invited into a great opportunity for them to gather as citizens with the saints to learn to love like Jesus by practicing discipleship through peacemaking that works for justice. This gathering is the ELCA National Youth Gathering being held in New Orleans, July 18-22.

As young people take the journey to the gathering, it is our hope that they will wrestle with the question, "What does it mean to practice justice? Justice in New Orleans? And justice wherever we are and wherever we go?"

In preparation for this gathering, we are offering training to help our adult leaders prepare for this journey. Join us for this training on one of the following sessions, Thursday, Jan. 12 at 10:00-11:30 a.m. or Tuesday, Jan. 17, 7:00-8:30 p.m. Both will be held at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, in the auxiliary dining room in Olson Hall. During this training, we will focus on:

- What are the expectations of adult leaders? What is their job, and what resources can help you train your own leaders to be prepared for this opportunity of a lifetime?
- Fundraising: Ideas for how your congregation can raise enough money so that every youth has the opportunity to participate in the gathering.
- You will hear the latest information about the gathering. What will the schedule of your time in New Orleans look like? Housing will be assigned about this time.
- Wanting to join with another church to bus to New Orleans? This is an opportunity to partner with others taking the journey.
- What does a covenant look like and how does your group create their covenant?
- What do you need to make sure is in the covenant? This is a process for your group that helps set the tone for how this event will impact your group, your church, and the Gathering.
- The Gathering creates a bundle of tools to be used to prepare as individuals, as a youth group, and as a congregation. We will walk through what these tools are and where one can find them.



The 2012 theme is Citizens with the Saints, from Ephesians 2:14-20.

The Saint Paul Area Synod currently has 264 registrants from 16 congregations. There is still space to register. Registration will be open until 37,000 are registered. Registration now stands at 31,000. You still have time to join this journey, but you want to get on board soon. I encourage you to prayerfully consider this opportunity for the young people of your congregation.

## Extravaganza

Youth ministry leaders are encouraged to come to the Extravaganza, February 9-12, in New Orleans. This is great training for our ministry with the young people of our congregations. You will have an opportunity to attend some sessions focused on the Gathering and experience the city where we will bring our young people in July.

It is our prayer that every young person hears God's call to bloom wherever we are. We pray that young people will leave New Orleans so in love with Jesus they will not be able to be quiet about it.

Saint Paul Area Synod congregations already registered for the gathering are:

- Memorial, Afton
- Our Saviour's, Hastings
- St. Andrew's, Mahtomedi
- St. James, Burnsville
- King of Kings, Woodbury
- Mount Calvary, Eagan
- Our Savior's, Circle Pines
- Farmington Lutheran, Farmington
- Bethlehem, St. Paul
- Immanuel, St. Paul
- Prince of Peace, Roseville
- Salem, West St. Paul
- St. Paul, Stillwater
- Gethsemane, Maplewood
- Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, St. Paul
- Humble Walk, St. Paul

For more information contact the Rev. Susan Miller at the synod office [susan.miller@spas-elca.org](mailto:susan.miller@spas-elca.org) or Audrey Fairchild Ehm [aafairchild@gmail.com](mailto:aafairchild@gmail.com).

## NEXT DEADLINE

### February 1

The deadline for the March issue is February 1. The mailing date is February 29. If you have questions, contact Kate Penz at 651.224.4313 or at [kate.penz@spas-elca.org](mailto:kate.penz@spas-elca.org).

# Prayers

## Month of January

### January 8

Abiding Savior, Mounds View; All Saints, Eagan; Alaska Synod and Interim Bishop Don Maier; Allegheny Synod and Bishop Gregory Pile; Dawn Alitz, Our Savior's, Stillwater; The Rev. Paul Baglyos, ELCA Region 3, Region Coordinator

### January 15

All Saints, Cottage Grove; Amazing Grace, Inver Grove Heights; Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod and Bishop Michael Girlinghouse; The Rev. Norman Belland, HealthEast Palliative Care; The Rev. Eyglo Bjarnadottir, Hazelden Foundation; The Rev. Philip N. Boe, Chaplain

### January 22

Arlington Hills, St. Paul; Atonement, New Brighton; Caribbean Synod and Bishop Felipe Lozada-Montañez; Central States Synod, Bishop Gerald L. Mansholt; Elaine Brant, Diaconal Minister; Gary Butler, Lutheran Church of the Resurrection

### January 29

Augustana, West St. Paul; Beaver Lake, Maplewood; Bethesda, Inver Grove Heights; Central/Southern Illinois Synod, Bishop John Roth; Delaware-Maryland Synod and Bishop Wolfgang Herz-Lane; The Rev. Allen J. Dundek, HealthEast

## Month of February

### February 5

Bethlehem, Bayport; Bethlehem, St. Paul; East-Central Synod of Wisconsin and Bishop James Justman; The Rev. Don Fultz, companion synod coordinator

### February 12

Calvary, Stanchfield; Chisago Lake Lutheran, Center City; Eastern North Dakota Synod, Bishop William Rindy; The Rev. Nancy Gauche, Luther Seminary; Lynea Geinert, Prince of Peace, Burnsville

### February 19

Christ, Lake Elmo; Christ, Marine on St. Croix; Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod, Bishop Martin Wells; Florida-Bahamas Synod and Bishop Edward Benoway; The Rev. Julie GebbenGreen, Edgumbe Presbyterian

### February 28

Christ, St. Paul; Christ the King, New Brighton; Christ the King, White Bear Lake; Grand Canyon Synod and Bishop Stephen S. Talmage; Greater Milwaukee Synod and Bishop Jeffrey Barrow; The Rev. Ronald Gerl, Parmely LifePoints; The Rev. Brian K. Gutzmann, Chaplain/HealthEast, St. Joseph's Hospital

## CALL Assist

Clergy, rostered leaders, and their families are sometimes the last ones to reach out for help with their own problems. But you don't have to wait until things fall completely apart before you ask for help. Assist, the employee assistance program of Fairview Health Services, can help. To speak confidentially with an Assist counselor about issues of personal or professional concern, call 612.672.2195. The phone is answered 24 hours a day.