



Northwest Washington Synod

Synod supplement

Youth participate in mission

By Jean Peterson

Fifteen youth and adults from First Lutheran Church of Bothell participated in a July 2007 mission trip to Bluefield, W.Va.

Located in the southernmost part of the state, Bluefield is the most elevated city in West Virginia at a towering 2,655 feet. Once a thriving center of the Pocahontas Coalfield with a population of 25,000 in 1940, Bluefield saw its economy weaken with advances in mining technology. Today its 11,000 residents are determined to revitalize their historic city.

First's contingent joined about 70 other youth from Pennsylvania, Ohio, North Carolina and Washington to bring the word of God and the love of Jesus Christ to impoverished children in Bluefield.

"The coolest thing was seeing all the other kids from the other churches working really hard together on this mission," said Matthew Siebert.

Siebert, a junior at Juanita High School and his sister, Erin, a freshman at Pacific Lutheran University, Tacoma, were among First's representatives.

Matthew Siebert spent much of his time working at a thrift store. He was impressed by both the generosity of the community that donated goods to the store and the need, as middle-aged customers received the charity. He noted that the community had once been known for its millionaires. Now the community stretches to take

care of its less fortunate.

Erin Siebert spent time with kids participating in a morning sports camp followed by a vacation Bible school-style afternoon camp. "I really enjoyed watching these kids dancing and singing," she said. "They were clearly experienced and knew all the words. It was fun."

Youth director Roger Steinke arranged the mission trip and led the group with the help of volunteers Laurie Berg and Steve Lomax. Also attending were Karlie Bannister, Tina Berg, Kiersten Bowers, Perry

Conricode, Brianna Kastning, Leah Lomax, Monica Shuck, Erin Siebert, Matthew Siebert, Kyler Smith, Ryan Steinke and Samantha Tackett.

The group combined the week-long mission activity with sight-seeing in the Shenandoah Valley, highlighted by white water rafting in a "warm" river, a visit to an amusement park, and a visit to a friend of Steinke's who hosted the group with a barbecue. □

Peterson is a member of First Lutheran Church, Bothell.



Reaching out to others

The high school youth of Faith Lutheran Church in Seattle pose for a photo at the Little Bighorn Battlefield in southeastern Montana. The group travelled to the Northern Cheyenne Reservation, joining other youth groups and the organization YouthWorks. They served the community by repairing homes and working at a children's day camp. Pictured are: Jeremy Paxton (left), Anna Rieke Paxton, Blair Thomas, Brenda Seymour, Brian Sharkey, Emily Lansverk, Paul Johnson, Alec Keith and Stephen Strom.

Peace pole marks a holy space

By Kristin Nicholson

On Sunday, Sept. 30, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Seattle, gathered with the neighborhood and wider community to bless our Peace Pole. We dedicated ourselves to work for the peaceful world God intends for all creation. We intend this Peace Pole to mark a holy space in our neighborhood where all people can come together to pray and work for peace in our homes, neighborhood and world.

It will stand outside on the street corner of Thomas and Pontius as a visual and concrete daily reminder of the journey to which we commit ourselves.

We have had fun at Immanuel

talking about our church building at the intersection of Thomas and Pontius. In the biblical story, Thomas is remembered as the disciple of Jesus who questions. And Pontius Pilate was the representative in Palestine of the powerful empire of Rome. So here we are at the intersection of Thomas and Pontius, where questions meet power. And there will stand our peace pole.

We pray for the courage to question power when that that is necessary. And we pray for the courage to question ourselves as well.

As we live into conversations with the communities represented by the

languages on our peace pole, we know we'll be challenged to learn to talk about difficult issues. And we'll continue to claim one of our core values: "Expect God's love to change us."

We live in a polarized society. We need to learn to listen to one another. There are eight languages on our peace pole, each one speaks the prayer: May peace prevail on earth.

We were honored at the blessing ceremony with special guests representing these communities and languages. □

Nicholson is a member of the Northwest Washington Synod World Hunger Committee.

With mustard seeds, God calls us for

By the Rev. Eileen Hanson

What happens when a congregation thinks about letting go instead of maintaining control? What happens when possibilities become as important as programs? What happens when a small idea gets loose in a congregation?

Big things happen ... in our faith, in lives lives, in our communities.

Last September, following about a year's groundwork, Trinity Lutheran Church in Lynnwood implemented a new approach to ministry called "The Mustard Seed."

The Mustard Seed approach begins with the premise that God calls each of us into ministry and that the work of leadership is to help

people cultivate their call. The next steps are raising up ideas; drawing people together around shared hopes, concerns and passions; and discerning a path forward. Underlying those steps is the understanding that permission has already been given, that leaders will learn together and that support is no more than an e-mail away.

We'd hoped for six new ministry groups to be formed by the end of 2007. So far we've seen 16. From contemplative prayer, to knitting prayer shawls, to softball, to painting, to keeping journals, women's issues, care of the earth and more, small groups have formed throughout

the communities we serve. They are drawing members, neighbors and people we've never met before into shared worship, fellowship and mission. It's what happens when a small, wonderful, faith-filled idea gets loose in a congregation.

And 2008? As ministry groups develop, we plan to gather several together to develop new midsize communities—close to home, adaptable to the needs of the people, and creating new opportunities for worship, fellowship and neighborhood invitation and service. □

Hanson is pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Lynnwood.

We are the ELCA

By the Rev. Wm Chris Boerger, bishop

We are the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. I have been involved in several discussions recently that have corrected my language when speaking of the churchwide organization. Too often we call this expression of the church the ELCA, then there is the synod and then our congregation. The fact is that we are all members of all three expressions. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is one church in three expressions.

So your congregation is the ELCA. When you make your offering to the church, you are supporting the congregation, the synod and the churchwide expression of this church. Your whole offering is supporting the work of the ELCA. We are one church in ministry around the world.

Why this corrective on language? I would argue that we have let our language divide us. By being primarily a member of my congregation, the synod and the churchwide expressions become “them” in an “us and them” polarization. The divisions of culture are easier to attribute to “them,” and so we do

just that. Those folks in Seattle or Chicago are separated from us, so it is their lack of understanding that is the problem.

The fact is that your congregation is the ELCA in your community. You are responsible for the work that this church will do in your neighborhood. When you act, the ELCA acts and when you are silent, this ELCA is silent. The Northwest Washington Synod is also there when you are there.

In this age of a lack of trust in institutions, it is important to recall that the church is first and foremost the assembly of the baptized. We gather around the word and the sacraments so we might be God’s representatives in the world. The ELCA has begun an advertising campaign under the theme “God’s work, Our hands.” It is about the work that the ELCA is doing, one congregation at a time. It is built on the fact that each of us is the ELCA with our gifts and talents. So what is the ELCA doing in your town or in your home?

You are the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. □



The Rev. Wm Chris Boerger, bishop



Installation of Paul Cheung

Paul Cheung was installed as the pastor developer of Grace Chinese Lutheran Church of Sammamish Hills on Nov. 18 at Sammamish [Wash.] Hills Lutheran Church. Cheung is pictured on the far left with Bishop Wm Chris Boerger (center) and John LaMunyon, pastor of Sammamish Hills.