

CROSS

Connection



The *Cross Connection* is a monthly publication of the Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod published for its clergy, associates in ministry, lay leadership and ecumenical partners.

From the Bishop

God's Beloved People,

Like most pastors I'm occasionally asked what my job entails. It is still the case that few people know what a pastor's work looks like from day to day. The best way I answer the question is to invite the inquisitive person to open my red day-planner (thanks to Thrivent) and pick a week. We then talk through the days and duties and most are satisfied. At least it's always interesting!

So what's coming up in November and why does it matter to the church? I'm glad you asked!

November 2: I'll see my favorite "A Team" friends at the Lutheran Community Services luncheon. Each year we're invited to listen in on part of the LCS work. It is always interesting and often quite moving to hear about the people they serve in our church's name. It feels right to make a generous pledge to this excellent ministry!

November 7: About 8 or 10 times a year (depending on call processes) I head to Boise for work in Southern Idaho. On this day I'll meet with pastors to identify a new Dean for the cluster and to talk together about our plans to support ministry at Grace, Horseshoe Bend, while the congregation is in call process. Deans are trusted colleague-Pastors who provide pastoral support for other clergy and their families and occasionally call together the cluster for business.

November 8-10: Net-Worker Kristin Koskella and I will drive to Idaho Falls to listen in as New Day Lutheran (formerly Emmaus) meets with its consultant to confirm their life and mission. This has been an exciting process and New Day is just about to enter their new day of ministry!

On Sunday we'll worship with the saints in Jackson and Thayne, WY, to talk about their call processes and introduce Kristin's work while Pr. Helga Jansons stays with the New Day group in Idaho Falls. Somewhere prior to this Sunday I will have put in about six hours on a sermon.

November 11-12 I've set aside for some writing I've wanted to do for some time. We need a fresh understanding of the difference between "calling" a pastor and "hiring" a pastor and I'm eager to work on this project.

November 2014

November 14: This day will start with a 4.5 hour drive to Seattle to meet with the board of Consultation to Clergy, our professional counselor who works with pastors and their families when things get tough. Our synod budget supports this crucial ministry. Thanks to Pr. Karen Bates Olson for serving on this board! The evening of the 14th I'll join the regional Lutheran Community Services board to install Mr. David Duea as the new CEO. I'll meet Ms Georgia Girvan, member at Shepherd of the Valley, Boise, for this event and I give thanks for her service to the LCS-NW board!

November 17-20: I'll join our new pastors (serving in their first three years) for the yearly "First Call" retreat in So King County, WA. Together we'll talk through the real-world realities of ministry, worship together, and check in on how families are making the adjustment to ministry. It isn't always easy.

November 21: I'll meet staff from other Region 1 synods to talk about how to improve the call process in congregations. There is no (non-worship) work more important than this.

November 22: I'll meet our friend Pr. Mark Nelson and work with Paul Malek and Cathy Steiner from our synod Candidacy committee to learn the new protocols for preparing new leaders for our church. There are lots of steps to this discernment and it is precious work!

Later that morning I'll meet with the Northwest WA synod council to describe our Net-Worker strategy.

November 24: Susan and I will have our picture taken for the new St Mark directory and then we will turn our faces to a Thanksgiving break.

So what does a bishop/pastor do? Normal things, big things, routine things, precious people things. (Aren't you glad you asked?) All ministry in Christ's name, just like you in your callings.



God bless and keep you,
Bp Martin Wells

Smaller, But Not Less

by Pastor Helga Jansons
Director for Evangelical Missions

My appreciation for rural ministries and the pastors of small town congregations continues to grow. When going “walkabout” in the community with a pastor it is a delight to discover how central a pastor can be to the whole community. The church’s presence in the community is emotionally important even to people who do not attend. Rural congregations may think they are too small to make a difference, the impact they make on their community is large.

I am beginning to think that rural and small town ministries may be ahead of the curve in some ways. Pastors in cities are functioning in ways that small churches have always functioned. Even faith based community organizing principles have much in common with the way ministry works in small towns.

Relationships are everything. Well- planned hospitality is important; not just good food. In small towns you cannot just be nice, you need to be authentic, especially long term. Caring needs to be genuine. “People are not looking for a friendly church. They are looking for friends” (Discovering Hope p.41)

Building the faith community to function as the body of Christ is what enables the church to make an impact in the community. It seems that the church is less central to the community if it functions as a collection of individuals who do not work together as a team. Also having fun is fun-damental.

Shared leadership works: where the pastor is not dominant, and even the pillar families of the church cannot be the ones “driving the tractor”. Pastors lead best in non-coercive and gift affirming ways.

A church is likely to be a central meeting place and any event that brings people together is valued. A clear identity, a purpose, and a signature ministry are essential. Community involvement is evangelism.

The church building can mean more to rural parishioners than their own home. A home can be replaced. The building is a symbol of continuity, especially with those who have died.

A little goes a long way. A church known as the place for a blood drive or to receive flu shots, or even a small after school program is noticed. Everything counts. Everyone counts. Every word counts also. On the other hand if there is a rumor it spreads quickly, or if someone speaks ill of the pastor it can be congregational suicide. A church in a small town is a public church; there is no hiding in a small town.

A church in a small town will respond better to practices than programs. Blessings, rituals, celebrations, prayer circles and bible studies are trusted more than a program. The wisdom of the people is valued more than an outside expert. New ways of doing things have to be introduced carefully and patiently.

Director for Evangelical Ministry, Pastor Nancy Nyland, leads workshops on Rural Ministry around the country. About half of the ELCA congregations across the nation are rural so you can imagine how busy she is. Nevertheless, she is coming to our synod November 15th to do an all day workshop. If you come your congregation will receive a copy of the book *Discovering Hope*, which alone is worth the time. It is an ecumenical event and is open to the whole ELCA! It will be held in Kennewick, WA and everyone is invited. It is for rural and small town ministries and all small congregations – even those that are not in small towns. See www.ewaisynod.org to register or email Helga.jansons@elca.org for questions.



Call Process Status

A Process beginning/congregational study	I Interim	AP Associate/Assistant Pastor
B Names received or on-site visits in process	P Pastor	VP Visitation Pastor
C Call in process/issued	CP Co-Pastor	AIM Associate in Ministry
NV New Vacancy	LP Lead Pastor	L Lay Position
TC Term call	SP Supply Pastor	TM Transition Minister (available for the open-ended call)
VP Visitation Pastor		

POS	LOCATION/CONGREGATION	STATUS	PASTORAL CARE	
P	Blackfoot, ID – Emanuel Lutheran	A		
P	Boise, ID – Immanuel	NV		
P	Bonnars Ferry, ID – Trinity Lutheran	B	Kimberly Meinecke	I
P	Chewelah, WA – St. Paul Lutheran	NV	Betty Krafft	SP
P	Firth, ID – Bethel Lutheran	A		
P	Gifford, ID – Good Hope Lutheran	A	Valerie Beesley	TEEM
P	Grandview, WA – Immanuel Lutheran	B	Gary Rhode	
P	Horseshoe Bend	NV	Tom Christensen	I
P	Kamiah, ID – Faith Lutheran	A		
P	Kennewick, WA – Lord of Life	A	Ron Shipman	I
P	Orofino, ID – Ascension Lutheran	A		
P	Pocatello, ID – Church of the Good Shepherd	B	Barbara Harrison-Condon	I
P	Sandpoint, ID – First Lutheran	B	Bob Chenault	I
P	Spokane, WA – Bethlehem Lutheran	NV	Steve Wee	SP
P	Spokane Valley, WA – Zion Lutheran	NV		
P	Thayne, WY – Star Valley United Church	NV	Al Schoonover	SP
P	Terrace Heights, WA – Tree of Life	NV	Mo Garcia	L
TM	Toppenish, WA – Faith Lutheran	A	Jillian Ross	TM

Roster Changes

Resignations

Rev. Ladd Bjerneby has announced his resignation from Zion, Spokane Valley. His last Sunday will be November 16.

Retirements

Rev. Neal Collins has announced his retirement. His last Sunday will be November 23.

Transfers

Rev. James Wiberg has transferred to the Rocky Mountain Synod.



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<https://www.facebook.com/EasternWashingtonIdaho>
SynodELCA

Presiding bishop

See each other as brother, sister

This is most certainly true: Remember Eighth Commandment explanation



MICHAEL D. WATSON

I remember a particularly contentious meeting with a church council when I was a synod bishop. It didn't start out that way, but bit by bit the mood changed. Council members began to question my motives, then my veracity, then my character. Finally I said, "Hey, I have a mother you know." That broke the tension. My point was that I was a human being just like them, not a bloodless function-

ary. I had become "The Man," which made me sad and was hugely confusing for my husband.

I would like to say this was an isolated incident in my experience of life in the church, but it was not. Nor is it confined to the church. Suspicion and blame aren't new. Bearing false witness was around way before Moses received the commandments. But it seems that the climate of distrust and accusation in society has become more heated. It's just more disappointing when it happens in the church.

Many theories can be put forward about why we behave this way: people feel threatened or discounted, people feel deeply about an issue, the topic at hand is critically important, truth is at stake. When the discussion or letter or email reaches this level of intensity, it's no longer possible to hear one another. And as the tension and the volume increase, our vision becomes impaired. We are no longer able to see the other as a brother or sister, someone for whom Christ died.

This constricted conversation is becoming a habit. It is the default setting for us when our position is challenged or when we challenge someone else. It is a bad habit. And like all bad habits it is, in the short run, a lot easier and more fun to practice than its corresponding good habit. I'll admit it, there is something satisfying about being so certain. It's easier to ascribe motive than to engage in an open dialogue with the sincere intent of seeking understanding. Righteous indignation

feels good.

In the church this is called "prophetic," as if being prophetic only takes the form of scolding. I have received letters and emails suggesting I do things that are anatomically impossible and certainly not appropriate to reprint in a church publication. These epistles sometimes end with "In Christian love" I know a conversation is going to head south in a hurry when it starts with these words: "With all due respect"

There is another way.

In his Small Catechism, Martin Luther gives us this explanation of the Eighth Commandment: "We are to fear and love God so that we do not tell lies about our neighbors, betray or slander them, or destroy their reputations. Instead we are to come to their defense, speak well of them, and interpret everything they do in the best possible light."

What a beautiful and generous way of being. The self is no longer at the center. The focus is no longer on justifying or defending one's own position. All attention and care can be given to the other. As the volume is turned down our sight improves—we now see a precious child of God. Paradoxically this gentle approach makes it more possible to have difficult conversations.

The church can model respectful dialogue. Instead of contributing to the static of suspicion that fills the airwaves we can be a community that creates an open space where questions really are questions, not accusations, and disagreement doesn't devolve into discounting.

We believe baptism makes a difference and makes us different, that our lives are now hidden in Christ, that we are inseparably joined to the love of God in Christ Jesus. We believe that in baptism God has set us free from sin, death and the devil. God has also set us free from ourselves. Because of this it is possible to engage in a new way of being together.

The church can model respectful dialogue. Instead of contributing to the static of suspicion that fills the airwaves, we can be a community that creates an open space where questions really are questions, not accusations, and disagreement doesn't devolve into discounting. If we were to do this, congregational meetings might actually be fun.

Let's try this: the next time we find ourselves on the giving or receiving end of less-than-graceful communication let's recite Luther's explanation of the Eighth Commandment. □

A monthly message from the presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Her email address: bishop@elca.org.

This column originally appeared in The Lutheran's October 2014 issue. Reprinted with permission.

**Good Hope Lutheran Church
Lind, WA**

Oktoberfest

October 26, 2014 from 11am to 2pm.

**Serving German Sausage, Mashed Potatoes,
Sauerkraut, Green Beans,
Bread and Homemade Desserts.**

Tickets are \$9 for adults and \$5 for children up to age 12.

Tickets are available for families of 4

(2 adults and 2 children for \$25)

There will be a bake sale with lots of goodies to purchase!

**Raffle tickets will be for sale, Prizes include:
An Afghan, Set of Norman Rockwell collectors plates,
a beautiful cross stitched picture of praying hands,
and 10# of German Sausage.**

Raffle Tickets are \$1 each and the drawing will be around 2pm.

Need not be present to win!

Meet the Net-Workers



Jim Peterson

Born and raised on a family owned wheat, barley, and cattle ranch, 30 miles west of Spokane. I graduated from Reardan High School. I attended WSU where I earned a Bachelor's degree in Agronomy and a Masters in Agricultural Economics. I have been employed at Walla Walla Community College since 1972. Although I have had a single employer for 42 years I have had many jobs, from instructor of agriculture and economics to Vice President of Administrative Services and many others in between. I have been involved in the community in such organizations as the Walla Walla Valley Chamber of Commerce, Blue Mountain Land Trust, YWCA, Exchange Club and Church Council, Sunday School teacher, and Vacation Bible School teacher at Christ Lutheran Church.

In my spare time I like to garden, fly fish, and work in the wood shop.



Rev. David Kappus

David Kappus is excited to be a part of this new adventure in the EWA-ID Synod! He serves Central Lutheran Church in Spokane as their pastor and has gotten to know many of the people and areas around Spokane in the last decade. Dave was ordained in Western North Dakota in 1990 and has spent half of his pastoral ministry in rural communities.

David Kappus is a pastor, actor, musician, motorcyclist, avid reader, and animal lover. You may have seen him (or heard his drumming) on (or behind) several area stages. He lives in the Spokane Valley with his wife, Theresa, and their pets Stella and Rory (the dogs) and Hermione and Pumpkin (the cats). Dave and Theresa were married in 1995 and despite the dire predictions that a marriage between a pastor and librarian would be "categorically dull", they have persevered to make it quite interesting indeed!



Kristin Koskella

I live with my husband, Floyd; a standard schnauzer, Lucca; and an aging greyhound, Lulu. We have 5 grown children and are blessed with three grandsons. I grew up in rural Idaho on Ranger Stations and in small towns. As an adult I moved to the Upper East Side of Manhattan and worked at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center for a number of years before returning West. We moved to Seattle, WA where I worked in health care, returning to Idaho in 2005. Currently, I am the Ministry Coordinator at Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran in Boise.

I look forward to seeing how God is going to fulfill the promise in Jeremiah 29:11 through this new venture. I enjoy efficiency and understand teamwork is a critical part of operating smoothly. I had the pleasure of being a member of the Dome Creative Team for the youth gathering in New Orleans and witnessed firsthand the abundance of our God. I am thrilled with the opportunity to work as the So. Idaho Networker. It will be a pleasure to meet new people and work together to strengthen and expand our faith.



Linda Howell

A country kid at heart, I grew up in the dairy farming community of Duvall, Washington. In 1980 I received a Bachelor of Arts in Recreation and Park Administration from Washington State University. I made many life-long friends and connections during my time as a student in Pullman - including meeting my husband Wesley Howell. Wes is a Lutheran pastor, currently serving at Trinity in Pullman. We have three young adult children, the youngest of which has a year or two remaining in college here at WSU. This is a nice way of saying that we are excited to be almost finished paying tuition!

Professionally, I have held many positions covering a wide range in program development, budgeting, promotion, and administration. Congregational involvement over the past thirty years has included leadership roles in many congregational ministries such as fellowship, education, and evangelism. A lifelong Lutheran Christian, I have had a love for God and the church from earliest memory, and look forward to serving the church in this new networker role.

St. Mark's & Friends to Visit Germany & Austria



Close on the heels of Pr. Kate LePard's trip to Italy in October is another travel opportunity for St. Mark's members, friends, and relatives. A custom-designed trip to see highlights of Germany & Austria is scheduled for May 12-25 with Friendship Tours.

This is not an off-the-shelf package deal; we are highlighting notable cathedrals and pipe organs, Martin Luther's stomping grounds (we'll see where he preached, taught and nailed his 95 Theses to the Castle Church door in Wittenberg, some say the first use of a nail gun in organized religion.) Austria includes beautiful Salzburg, two of Crazy King Ludwig's castles, a mountaintop experience, and gorgeous scenery such as boating on the Königsee in Berchtesgaden National Park. We end with a day

on Bavaria's famous Romantic Road and the must-see Rothenburg ab der Tauber.

At \$4,026 this tour is well-below comparable tour costs, including: round-trip air fare from Seattle, all full breakfasts and dinners, and all essential tour and activity fees. We hope to sprinkle in some musical events when the 2015 schedules become available, perhaps even the world famous Regensburg Boys Choir. The \$300 reservation and deposit are due Dec. 1 and final payment by Feb. 15.

Pick up a tour brochure in the church office, and call Patti Berg or Dick Thiel at 509-443-9170 to ask questions or indicate your interest.

Auf Wiederhören!

You are invited to a Veterans Day Service of Evening Prayer and Healing
 on Veteran's Day, November 11th, 2014 at Messiah Lutheran Church

4202 N Belt Street Spokane, WA 99205

Corner of Belt and Longfellow just south of Shadle Park - Service time is 3pm.

Certificate Program in Children, Youth & Family Ministry
January 5-23, 2015
Trinity Lutheran College, Everett, WA



Trinity Lutheran College will offer a three-week Certificate Program in Children, Youth & Family Ministry, January 5-23, 2015. The program is designed to equip church staff, volunteers, and pastors for effective leadership in congregational children, youth, and family ministry. It is a terrific opportunity for professional development or those who want to become more involved in **children's and youth ministry**.

Students learn from a faculty in an interactive seminar format, including class discussions, presentations, conversations about readings, videos, role plays, and more. Topics include biblical and theological foundations for faith formation, Bible study methods, human lifespan development (birth through end-of-life), pastoral care skills, and program administration, as well as creative programming for service projects, Confirmation, intergenerational ministry, managing volunteers, spiritual formation, and more.

For additional information about training content, costs, housing options, and registration, visit www.tlc.edu/cyfcenter or contact Rev. David Ellingson at 425.249.4722 or david.ellingson@tlc.edu.



Wartburg Theological Seminary Offers Two New Continuing Education Opportunities This Fall!

Wartburg Seminary is pleased to announce two new continuing education opportunities this fall for those wishing to learn more about the Bible or our Christian tradition. These resources are available to all learners, regardless of training or educational backgrounds. Sign up on your own or take either course with others from your congregation!

USING BACH AGAINST BULLETS

by Gwen Gotsch

“The devil flees before the sound of music,” said Martin Luther back in the 16th century, and ever since Lutherans have made music a prominent part of their lives as Christians.

The choir, soloists and orchestra of Grace Lutheran Church in River Forest, Ill., recently carried on that tradition with a performance of Johann Sebastian Bach’s Cantata BWV 80, *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*, in an unusual setting: an outdoor prayer service at Harmony Community Church in Lawndale on Chicago’s west side. The July event was part of Harmony’s campaign to “Stop the Violence” and call a halt to the relentless shootings of African American young people in city neighborhoods that have become all too accustomed to the frequent violence.

Harmony and Grace have worked together on other ministry efforts, but their work to end violence through a musical event began with a Facebook post on May 27. James Brooks, pastor of Harmony and former youth director at Grace, posted:

Just visited the young man who was shot on Sunday. As I walked in he said, “Pastor Brooks it’s so good to see you!” ... I had to fight back the tears. I told him that he has an entire community praying for him. ... I’ve been praying about the church’s response to such senseless violence. Any suggestions?

This got Michael Costello, the cantor at Grace, thinking. He wondered what Grace, and specifically musicians, could do. The result was a partnership with the neighboring Lawndale church to sponsor Stop the Violence Community Walks on Saturday evenings, inviting people in the neighborhood to come together to protest the shootings.

What Grace has in abundance, thought Michael, is good music, especially the monthly Bach Cantata Vespers services the congregation has sponsored for more than 40 years. “Bach against bullets?” he thought. Could Grace share beautiful, classical music with the community of Lawndale as a way of standing with other Christians, affirming God’s presence and countering violence? Singers and musicians from Grace and Harmony volunteered to do just that. As Jean Hatmaker, cellist in the orchestra, said, “Art deserves as much attention as the violence. It inspires hope and positivity.”

This cantata is based on the well-known “battle hymn of the Reformation,” in which Luther reminds Christians that God’s word defeats the devil. “One little word can fell him,” said Bruce Modahl, pastor at Grace and the preacher for the special music and prayer service. “That one little word is Jesus.” He reminded those gathered that the devil is always prowling around and “that’s why we have to keep singing and praying and marching and working to make peace.”

The Harmony Praise Team started the prayer service with an invitation for the crowd and choir to stand and sing together. Speakers paused from time-to-time as the Chicago “L” trains rumbled by noisily on the Pink Line tracks, and the sun shone brightly on the suburbanites from Grace and the Chicago residents who welcomed them to their neighborhood.

The cantata, directed by Grace’s Michael, was the focal point of the service. Prayers included words from a young spoken-word artist as well as Bach’s setting of *Dona nobis pacem* (Grant us peace).

During the offering, the audience called for more music – “We want Dr. Anderson to sing.” Baritone Douglas Anderson, long-time Bach cantata soloist and neurosurgeon at Loyola Medical Center, responded with a rousing a capella rendition of *How Great Thou Art*.

The offering was directed toward meeting the challenges of Harmony’s ministry and ultimately serving the needs of the community. The church “is a hub benefitting the whole neighborhood,” said Diane Carioscio, a member of Grace and coordinator for Harmony’s food pantry. There are programs for children and adults, but the 100-year-old building that hosts them requires constant maintenance and care.

As their time together came to an end, James encouraged everyone to “get to know someone you don’t know. That would be a blessing to us all.” Adults and children from Grace and Harmony admired one another’s music and continued to visit over cookies and lemonade late into the afternoon. Members of both congregations are looking forward to working together on new projects in the future. It was quite a day -- a time of blessing and peace for everyone and the community.

*We ask that you keep the ministry of the church,
our synod, and the whole world in your prayers,
as well as the people listed below . . .*

Pray with us

Kevin Olson, husband of Rev. Karen Bates-Olson, for healing, after a successful surgery and a good prognosis. Prayers of thanksgiving for the successful heart transplant surgery for Rev. Jim Sheldon. Please pray for his continued healing.

Art Blum, for healing from a badly infected broken ankle.

Congregations and Pastors in call process.

Pastor Joel Martyn and Central Lutheran - Yakima, as they begin ministry together.

Pastor Dan Forsgren and Trinity Lutheran - Coeur d'Alene, as they begin ministry together.

Jon Browder, receiving hospice care.

Pastor Laura Lynn for continued healing.

Those struggling to make sense of their world, may they find peace.

Pray for the family of Kathering Hogburg (widow of Rev. J. Hiram "Hi" Hogberg at the time of her death.

Prayer Requests . . . to be included or removed from the Synod Prayer Request list, please send your request to the synod office@ewaidsynod.org, or call 509-838-9871.



Hudesman House Apartments (HHA) Colville, WA

by Pr. Eric Ohrtmann

Miraculous wouldn't be a bad descriptor for the origin of Colville's Hudesman House Apartments. Through perseverance, an inordinate amount of luck, and more than a little faith 14 residents call this beautiful new building home. This is that most unlikely of stories.

In August 2011, Shalom Ecumenical Center (SEC), a Tri-Cities ministry for affordable housing with roots in Richland Lutheran Church, realized that they were at an impasse. After several successful construction and rehabilitation projects using Department of Housing and Urban Development Grants (HUD) the board members had the unpleasant realization that their most recent application was destined to fail. Relatively certain that HUD Construction Grants would soon disappear, this visionary board did not want to miss out on what might be their last chance to sponsor a build (new construction grants were discontinued after the 2012 grant cycle). In the lull of disappointment, one board member asked, "Well, what do we do now?" Sheryldene Rogers, Director of Development for Goodale and Barbieri and Project Consultant for SEC sat back, considered her answer, and knowing full well the absurdity of it said, "Well, would you consider sponsoring a project in Colville? I think it is absolutely ripe for a project of this type." Dave and Dee Watrous, longtime members of the SEC Board said simply, "We know the pastor in Colville." And, the development of the Hudesman House Apartments was on the fast track.

The very next day, Sheryldene contacted Pr. Eric Ohrtman of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Colville. The day after that they met, discussed the vision for a HUD project (it quickly became clear that the gap in Colville's affordable housing system was seniors), and immediately began touring properties. The next week they met with County Commissioners, Rural Resources Community Action Agency (the primary affordable housing agency in Stevens County), and Providence Mt. Carmel administrators. Two weeks later, Pr. Eric had used his community contacts and the St. Paul Lutheran Church Council to convene a potential Board of Directors. The first meeting had 22 attendees representing every major player in housing, the faith community, and community health (14 would be significant contributors and 9 would form the initial Board). Thanks to local knowledge that initial meeting narrowed the focus specifically to a HUD 202 Project, it eliminated 3 of 5 properties under consideration, and it created the buzz necessary to catch Stevens County Commissioners Larry Guenther's and Malcolm Friedman's attention.

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Wonderful Continuing Education Opportunity!

Every year in late winter, clergy and lay people from across the country ascend the Rocky Mountains of Colorado for a week of continuing education, spiritual renewal, and winter play:

Theoprobe 2015

Winter Park, CO February 7-13, 2015

Presenters:

Terri Martinson Elton, PhD
Leading in the Midst of Change

Reed Carlson, PhD Candidate
The Prince of Persia: Five Studies in the Book of Daniel

For more information go to: <http://www.theoprobe.com/>

Pastor Phil Misner
Cell (call/text) -- 509-288-1862

Peace Lutheran Church, Colfax -- 509-397-2121
Trinity Lutheran Church, Endicott -- 509-657-3329

SMALL STORE, BIG EFFECT

by Allison Beebe

A group of women in rural Burure, Zimbabwe, recognized an opportunity in their community. The nearest grocery store was 5 kilometers away from their neighborhood, and the women thought it was important to have a shop with essential supplies closer to home. Working through the Lutheran malaria program in Zimbabwe, the women applied for a grant of seed money, which helped to get their small business up and running. Their grocery store is one of the sustainable livelihoods projects of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe's Lutheran malaria program.

Ten women share the responsibility of running the grocery store. The stakeholders keep the store stocked with food, water, cooking utensils, some clothing, laundry detergent, soap and other necessities for daily life. The members take turns minding the store, taking inventory and keeping records. The small store makes a big difference when it comes to easily accessing the products we all use every day.

The income generated by the grocery store can pay for things like transportation to hospitals or medication to treat malaria. Malaria is a disease of poverty, so helping households to break the cycle of poverty and disease is one way to reduce the impact of malaria in communities like Burure. The women use the proceeds of their grocery store to purchase supplies that help keep their families safe and healthy.



Zimbabwe: Building the church

In the second largest city in Zimbabwe, an exciting outreach initiative has begun in a downtown location, led by visionary young leaders like Arnold Moyo. Read what six ELCA visitors learned on the recent ELCA Global Church Sponsorship trip at <http://www.elca.org/News-and-Events/blogs/HandInHand/447>.

(Continued fom Page 7)

In the coming weeks a property would be secured, the Board membership would emerge, and the initial designs would be drawn. Still, the application looked good, but not great. Luckily, Sheryldene had remained in contact with the commissioners and they had done their due diligence. It was late that fall when the Stevens County Commissioners allotted \$75,000 from the Washington State Homeless Allocation that good became great.

The initial application was submitted just prior to the deadline in December of 2011. By spring of 2012 management contracts were in place, designs had been refined, and the Washington State Housing Trust Fund had awarded a significant grant. Finally, in August of 2012, almost exactly a year after the initial crazy idea, HUD awarded the largest and final grant. Ground was broken in a formal ceremony on May 8, 2013. Despite a number of miscues, contractor TW Clark was still able to meet the target grand opening date of March 1, 2014.

The Hudesman House Apartments consist of 13 one-bedroom renter units and a manager unit. The project is HUD 202 designation, meaning that only very low income seniors are eligible for residency (see below for income details). Through economies of scale with other local HUD projects, HHA is able to provide exceptional on site management, maintenance, and a full time senior services coordinator. The property has functioned at full-occupancy every day of its existence and an active waiting list has emerged.

St. Paul Lutheran Church was valuable to the property in many ways. Initially, the Council granted Pr. Eric the latitude to chase this wild dream. Initially, a majority of Board members came from the membership of St. Paul. St. Paul served as a partner organization in the application process. Today, the Board consists of 3 members of St. Paul Lutheran Church and active members in three other area congregations. Thanks to the strong waiting list for Hudesman House, there is a team exploring the idea of a senior living campus spread over 14 acres that would include graduated care ranging from single family homes to duplexes, and even an additional apartment complex, leading finally to a relationship with area nursing care facilities.



Features

- One - Bedroom Units
- Elevator
- Close to grocery & pharmacy
- Rent is Approximately 30% of Income for Rent & Utilities
- Washer/Dryer Hookups
- Service Coordinator
- Dishwashers in Units
- Covered Drop-off Area
- Computer Lab
- Laundry Facilities
- Community Room
- Non-Smoking Building

For more info visit: <http://g-b.com/properties/37237>

Maximum Income Limits \$19,700 apply for one-person households
Maximum Income Limits \$22,500 apply for two-person households

**EASTERN
WASHINGTON
IDAHO SYNOD**

of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

314 S. Spruce St., Suite A
Spokane, WA 99201-5823



November 2014
Newsletter

Let Down the Nets
Lifting Our Vision
Jesus First, Last, Always
God's Grace, Our Gratitude
The Spirit Powers Us
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Go, Tell & Serve



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The **Cross Connection** is also available on the synod website at
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Deadline for articles is the 5th of each month.

Synod Calendar

October 2014

- 26 Oktoberfest - Good Hope Lutheran Lind
- 27 Assembly Planning Meeting @ Lord of Life

November 2014

- 11 Veterans' Day Service at Mesiah, Spokane
- 14 Installation of David Duea at LCSNW
- 15 Rural Ministry "Discovering Hope"
- 17 Assembly Planning Meeting @ Lord of Life
- 17-20 First Call Theological Education
- 27 Thanksgiving

December 2014

- 25 Christmas

January 2015

- 23-24 Synod Council



Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our Hands

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THE PARISH PAPER

IDEAS AND INSIGHTS FOR ACTIVE CONGREGATIONS

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Should We Consider Closing Our Church?

This year ten out of every 1,000 congregations will close their doors for the last time. Across the U.S., this means that more than 3,500 churches go out of business annually. Surprisingly, the average congregational mortality rate of one percent surfaces as among the lowest for any type of organization.¹ That fact is little comfort for the members, pastoral leaders, and communities who witness the death of a beloved spiritual community.

An economically viable church has enough financial and human resources to keep up its current programming, staffing, and building maintenance without depleting savings or endowments. But viability is not the same as church vitality. Strong churches enthusiastically pursue their mission, move forward based on their unique calling, and do so with abundant joy. In short, some churches remain viable but are not vital. Likewise, many new churches show great vitality but are not yet able to be financially self-sustaining. Congregations that lack viability and exhibit anemic vitality inevitably slide toward downsizing, merger, or final dissolution.

What Are the Warning Signs?

A number of opinions circulate about the correlates of at-risk churches. Careful research supports only some parts of these uncomplicated theories.

The aging church assumption. Many experts refer to a church life cycle, which equates a congregation's expected lifespan to the human lifespan. If this myth were true, the average congregation's age (counting from the year of the church's founding) would be roughly equal to the average life expectancy (currently seventy-six years for men and eighty-one years for women).

In fact, the highest rates of church closures actually occur in the first decade of congregational life (years one to ten). Closure rates decline after that and remain stable in the second and third decades of church life. Mortality rates peak again after the church lives for four decades. Closure rates drop again until a church reaches the seventy-five-year

mark when the possibility of closure climbs upward once more.² What might account for this up and down closure rate pattern?

New and young congregations (those in existence ten years or less) brave the greatest mortality risk. They most often face isolation from other community institutions as well as little denominational support. Many attract insufficient members for a critical mass of resources. The resulting combination of youth and small size places them at great risk for closure. Because religious groups differ in their church planting strategies and level of support for new churches, denominational affiliation also plays a role. Evidence suggests higher closure rates among new church plants for independent or conservative Protestant groups than for churches in mainline Protestant traditions.

In the later decades of a church's life, other dynamics present obstacles to viability. Around the forty- to fifty-year mark in a church's history, the generation of people who founded the congregation begin to disappear. For the church to continue, a new generation—typically, the children of the first generation—must move into participation and leadership. Among congregations that do not retain sufficient numbers of their first generation members' off-



WE PUT IT OFF AS LONG AS WE COULD...
BUT THE CONGREGATION VOTED 6 TO 2
TO CLOSE THE CHURCH.

spring, closure is almost a certainty. Congregations are always at risk during generational transitions unless they attract new members unrelated to current participants. In general, participation by multiple generations points toward greater vitality. One researcher describes this generational pattern as the “half-life” of churches: half of the churches founded in any given year will not exist in another sixty years.³

The church size assumption. True—large, well-funded churches rarely close their doors. Still, size is only a surface indicator of other important vitality resources. Churches that eventually close experience declining worship attendance—either a sudden drop or a slow downward trend over many years. At some point, a congregation reaches a number that is close to or below a critical mass—the lowest possible number of active members necessary for survival. The average survival threshold is about thirty to thirty-five participants, but could be even fewer people if a congregation chooses to draw on financial reserves.

The “clear sign” or “decisive moment” assumption. Few highways to closure post a huge sign that declares “NOW.” In some cases, a crisis occurs that forces church leaders to ask, Can we continue to be a church and carry out our mission without a pastor or a building? However, in most cases the majority of congregations slowly turn inward—focusing more and more on current members’ needs, building maintenance, and meeting budget demands. Like a slow tire leak, people ignore the waning enthusiasm of volunteers until programs fall completely flat. Committees or individuals over-function in desperate attempts to administer artificial life-support to their dying church. Spiritual growth and vitality slip away long before leaders recognize the point of no return.

The Pain of Closure

Because any given church comes into being for a particular purpose, in a specific place, and supported by a unique group of people, changing circumstances can produce insurmountable obstacles to viability. Members, the pastor, and the wider church struggle to understand and perhaps accept their decision-making responsibility to close the church.

The impact on church members. Discussions about closure generate fear and stress for worshipers, which may keep members silent or delay critical conversations. Their response parallels what people go through when they lose a loved one—grief, denial, anger, and depression. Grief can also produce shame, self-blame, or the scapegoating of others.

The impact on the pastor. Leading a congregation through the process of closing its doors and ending its ministry within the community is stressful for clergy too. Regardless of the pastor’s prior work history, serving in a closing church is a threat to a clergy’s professional identity. No pastor wants to see a church close under his or her watch. First-call pastors—those newly ordained and serving as pastor in their first church—find these circumstances the most devastating. They may be the most likely pastors to leave ministry after the church closes. And when expectations for revitalization by judicatory leaders go unmet, the episode is even more painful if the church eventually closes.⁴

The impact on the community. Local residents depend on the church’s ministries (such as feeding programs) and they feel the loss too. In rural areas and in some neighborhoods the church may be the only community meeting place.

A Graceful Ending

A healthy closure is possible if members believe that the church will be resurrected in new forms as part of the universal church—through a church merger, partnerships with other organizations, or creative use of financial assets (such as a legacy trust). For example, one congregation dispersed funds to various mission projects in their final year that exceeded their total mission giving for the previous 14 years. Another church sold their building to a newly organized congregation that needed affordable worship space. The critical question is not Should we stay open? but How can we discover new ways to do ministry together?⁵

1. S. Anderson, et al. “Dearly Departed: How Often Do Congregations Close?” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (2008) 47(2): 321-28.

2. K. Dougherty, et al. “When the Final Bell Tolls: Patterns of Church Closings in Two Protestant Denominations,” *Review of Religious Research* (2008) 50(1):47-73.

3. Dale Jones, Director of Research Services for the Church of the Nazarene Global Ministry Center, 2014, email note.

4. Gail Cafferata, “The Last Pastor: Adaptive Challenges and Pastoral Well-Being among Protestant Clergy Closing Their Churches,” Association for the Sociology of Religion presentation, 2014.

5. L. Gail Irwin, *Toward the Better Country: Church Closure and Resurrection* (Eugene, OR: Resource, 2014).