



Northwest Washington Synod

Synod supplement

Listening to others

By Margit Peiffle

The Rev. Stephen Grumm, a pastor of Our Redeemer's Lutheran Church, Seattle, and Stacy Kitahata, Region 1 coordinator for evangelical outreach, have been on a four-year journey, learning about a community in an unincorporated area of King County called White Center.

For Grumm and Kitahata, getting to know the dynamic and diverse community of White Center began in May 2004 when St. James Lutheran Church, Seattle (White Center), disbanded. Prior to closing, parishioners asked Bishop Chris Boerger, the Rev. Jan Nesse (assistant to the bishop) and others in the Northwest Washington Synod to look into the future use of the space and not immediately sell the property. Members also said they had been able to develop strong relationships with social service organizations in the area but had not been able to get beyond those agencies.

Grumm and Kitahata began to walk the streets of White Center, meeting people, listening, visiting with businesses and participating in community meetings. They learned that St. James had been well-respected within the community. They also learned that this culturally diverse community really wanted, and needed, a gathering place to develop and expand unity and understanding, a place where the community members could affirm their cultures and pass on their gifts.

"The community began to trust us," Grumm said. "They learned

that we were there not to open a new church or provide them with something, but that we (the Northwest Washington Synod) wanted to support and empower the community."

"We started attending meetings with the Trusted Advocates," Kitahata said. Trusted Advocates, which represents more than 11 cultural and language groups, are trusted within communities to work for strong families, employment, education and safety in White Center. "We listened," Kitahata added. "We were open to what the community described that they needed. We shared our interest and commitment to supporting the spiritual life of the community."

Today the building is called St. James Place. Plans are under way for this former Lutheran church to become the White Center Community Cultural Center at St. James Place. Several community groups use the facility: two Alcoholics Anonymous groups, two Spanish-language congregations, the International District Housing Association, monthly

community safety meetings, local drama troupes and many others.

"What is so wonderful is that the community is honoring the legacy of the sanctuary and the rest of the building," Kitahata said. "White Center residents represent more than a dozen ethnic and language groups, and they understand that St. James is a spiritual place."

"The brainstorming process continues," Grumm said. "The community is now gathering the broadest input for potential programs and will then move forward with the design and financial needs. We hope to have this information this summer."

Four years ago a congregation closed its doors in White Center. Today, through ministry exploration and relationship-building, St. James is being used by community groups and the future holds promise that the past ministry of St. James will continue in new and exciting ways. □

Peiffle is the synod's communications administrator.

White Center is located between Burien and Seattle in southwest King County. The area became more racially diverse in the 1990s, with the proportion of Asian/Pacific Islanders and Hispanic/Latinos increasing the most. The reason this happened is that White Center offers relatively affordable housing that is attractive to immigrants and refugees.

White Center residents deal with economic hardship much more so than in the rest of King County: one in six live below the federal poverty level, and the poverty level in White Center is twice as high as the rest of King County. Language barriers and cultural differences are problems for people trying to communicate with schools and access needed services.

Greeting Chinese seafarers

The Chinese freighter *Fenghai* was docked in Everett, Wash., unloading cement. On the Sunday evening before Christmas, I brought a group from Grace Chinese Lutheran Church, Seattle, for a short program and presentation of Christmas gifts.

The gifts came from Central Lutheran Church, Everett.

Pastor Jianhua Jimmy Hao, Grace Chinese, and Jianhau sang for the crew. A member spoke about the meaning of Christmas, and I told the story and its meaning for us. As the gifts were presented, some men cloistered around to look at the Chinese/English New Testaments from our Maritime Ministry.

Since the seafarers didn't have U.S. visas, they weren't allowed to leave the ship. Cell phones and tele-

phone cards were shared so the seafarers could call their families. A few days later, I retrieved the phones during a final visit.

What was our witness? First of all it was the expression of hospitality and concern, showing the love of Jesus demonstrated in the gifts and in enabling contact with families through the phones.

Then it was telling the story and what it meant in our lives. And the witness goes on through the Christian literature we brought.

Were any of these men Christians? I don't know, but I suspect that two of them were. We sow the word where we can and let God's



Pastor Everett Savage (center) and Pastor Paul Cheung, Grace Chinese, present a gift to Capt. Li (left) from the *Fenghai*.

Spirit continue working in them. □

The Rev. Everett Savage
*Savage is a chaplain for Lutheran
Maritime Ministry.*

Lutheran mission to seafarers

The first organized mission to seafarers in the U.S. was established in Boston in 1812. But it wasn't until 1889 that the first work to seafarers was begun by the Lutheran church in Seattle. Today this ministry is located on the Seattle waterfront where the chaplains are close to the ships.

Back in the mid-1950s most of the seafarers were Caucasian. Today the story is different. With the arrival of the container ships registered under foreign flags, the crews are from almost every country around the world. The world is truly at our doorstep. More than 30,000 men and women enter our port every year. It presents us with a great opportunity for mission.

Four chaplains work part time

to attend to the social and spiritual needs of the crews. Working with me are P. Everett Savage, who is fluent in Chinese; P. Paul Tan, who speaks Chinese, Japanese and Tagalog; and P. Darrell Schoen, who served as a missionary in the Philippines.

Our most exciting time is at Christmas when our ministry gives about 1,000 shoeboxes and ditty bags filled with gifts to these men and women of the sea. We offer transportation, mail service, counseling, worship service, Internet recreation and an opportunity to call home.

The scope of the ministry just keeps growing.

The budget of the mission in the 1950s was \$25,000. Today we operate on the same budget. It is truly a work

of faith. We have a fundraising event each February and have the support of a few congregations.

We need to increase our budget to meet the needs of the sailors. Perhaps your congregation would like to include the Northwest Washington Synod mission to seafarers in your budget. We would love to come to your congregation and share our story of this unique ministry. Let us keep this ministry going for another 120 years.

Come and join us in celebration of 120 years of Lutheran mission to seafarers. □

The Rev. Vernon Hunt
*Hunt is a chaplain of Lutheran
Maritime Ministry.*

Go therefore and make disciples

By the Rev. Wm Chris Boerger, bishop

Jesus' last words to the disciples in Matthew's Gospel are: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." This great commission continues to be the impetus for the mission outreach of the church.

The simple fact is that we do not have to go very far to reach most of the nations of the world. They come to us daily on the ships that visit our ports in Puget Sound and across this nation. As you read in this supplement, you see that we have a strong history of reaching out in word and deed to the seafarers who come to our shores. These men and women are away from home for unbelievably long times and work in dangerous and monotonous situations. We, who live with expectations of readily available goods, rely on their work.

For the past six years I have served as the representative of the ELCA Conference of Bishops to the board of the Lutheran Associa-

tion of Maritime Ministries. This association was created through the hard work of Pastor Roald Kverdahl and others who have dedicated their vocational lives to serving these people of the sea. The association has been an advocate for seafarers' issues in this country and around the world. It also has served seafarers through the creation of Bible study materials and a Bible correspondence course.

Locally we have had hard-working volunteers and retired pastors greeting the ships. The importance of cell phones, phone cards, and mail services have been essential for people who can't communicate with home as readily as we expect. Restrictions on the movements of seafarers since Sept. 11, 2001, have made these onboard visits the only way that many of these people are able to relate to the outside world.

Like so much of the globalized economy we enjoy the benefits with little thought about how all of this stuff arrives at our door. Those who operate the ships are very important to this economy. They are also fellow human beings for whom Christ died. Maritime Ministry is our often forgotten outreach to these important people. □



The Rev. Wm
Chris Boerger,
bishop

2008 synod assembly

The 2008 Northwest Washington Synod Assembly will be held Friday, May 16, and Saturday, May 17, at the Everett [Wash.] Events Center.

The theme of the 2008 assembly is "God's Work. Our Hands." During the assembly we'll hear from people within our synod—laity who are engaged in ministries of learning, teachers who have brought congregations to new levels of ministry—and learn about programs that earnestly study God's word to chart new directions of outreach.

There will be seven 20-minute segments disbursed throughout the assembly's agenda, each focusing on the continuing educational enrichment of our laity: what's happening in our synod and beyond, contexts for ministry in the Pacific Northwest, Bible study within our Lutheran

tradition, telling our faith in the theological language of our heritage, claiming the unique Lutheran understanding of vocation in our world, becoming a public church, and introducing the Bible Book of Faith series that is being produced by the ELCA.

As congregations select assembly voting members and as voting members prepare for this year's assembly, plan for exciting challenges and thoughtful conversations about learning opportunities so "God's Work. Our Hands" might thrive among us.

The assembly program is led by the synod's Lay Theological Education Committee. Please visit the Northwest Washington Synod's Web site for information as it becomes available (www.lutheransnw.org).