

Join us at Bible camp

By Bishop Shelley Wickstrom



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It's *camping season!* Not just set-up-your-own-tent camping, but July and August are the months for an intentional camping ministry planned for

months by folks committed to an outdoor experience for our youth and children in Alaska.

The Alaska Synod doesn't have a separately incorporated camp with year-round staff. When you consider that our synod covers the same distance as Montana to Texas, one camp in any part of the state would have difficulty serving all our people.

For our congregations to offer a summer experience, a dedicated team of pastors and leaders plan, recruit, train and supply the people who pull off our camps. These faithful volunteers take time off from work or use vacation days so our children and youth can have this experience of outdoor fun, faith formation and fellowship.

The Seward Peninsula congregations have a long history of offering three weeks of summer camp at Salmon Lake Bible Camp. This site is owned by Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Nome. Campers and volunteers fly into Nome and then ride the 35 miles to camp.

Campers range in age from fifth grade through high school. They participate in a variety of indoor and outdoor activities that promote Christian education and well-being in body, mind and spirit: Bible study, crafts, traditional carving and beading, games, singing, worship,

hiking, swimming, Eskimo baseball and canoeing.

Participants also work together to retrieve water as there is no running water or electricity at this camp.

In southeast Alaska, camp has been housed in many different places. This year it will be held at Eagle

Valley Boy Scout Camp in Juneau from July 20-26. Youth will travel by ferry from all over southeast Alaska to Juneau.

Camp is a place to ask questions, learn about God's word and mature in the faith. The study this summer is about being anchored in faith. There will be crafts, games, gifts of the spirit, Bible studies, campfires and other favorite activities.

This camp is not exclusively for Lutherans, so feel free to invite friends.

In the Anchorage area, "Faith Alive!" is the theme for the camp that meets the first week of August at Victory Bible Camp. Camp Koinonia is for middle-school students and Camp Alpine is for third- through sixth-graders. High school students are trained to serve in leadership roles during the week.

Activities include Bible study, worship, games, campfires, *cold* lake swimming and playing on inflatables, as well as horseback riding.

Thank you to those who have worked and dreamed to bring these camping ministries into existence this summer. Thank you to those who staff these camps, to those who help with fundraising to make these experiences possible, to our families who entrust children and youth to our care for a week, and to campers who participate with open hearts and minds. Thank God for the gift of this beautiful creation we live in that bears its own witness and of which we are a part.

For more information, contact your local Alaska Synod congregation or the synod office (907-272-8899; elcaalaska@gmail.com). □



Campers in southeast Alaska at Rainbow Glacier Camp in Haines in 2012.

Our calling from God

By the Rev. Wm Chris Boerger, bishop



Boerger

And God saw that the light was good ... (Genesis 1:4).

Genesis 1 records that God's response to the work of creation was

to declare it good at the end of each day. The Hebrew word for good (*tov*) is more than just a statement of quality. It's also a statement of emotion. God was excited by the goodness of creation. A professor of mine suggested that a better translation of this word would be *wow!*

Much of the debate about climate change is emotional but doesn't reflect this view of God's excitement. As people of the Scriptures we are to respond to questions about the care of creation as we would respond to God's call to be stewards of God's

property. God loves and is excited by what has been created.

We live in a complex and marvelous creation. It is abundant and it is limited. We, as the ones created to steward this gift, are to use it for the benefit of the whole creation, not just for ourselves. I will be the first to confess that I am not a scientist. I trust those called to study and teach science to give me good information about the state of the creation.

The majority of these scientists are in agreement that human activity affects the climate of the world in very measurable ways. What we do does affect our neighbor. The sad fact is that those of us in the industrial world are having significant impact on the lives of the poorest of our neighbors. Our decisions are changing the way in which the other creatures of this planet live on a daily basis. Ignoring this, or claiming that this is too expensive to address, only increases the dan-

gers and passes the growing costs on to future generations. That is not responsible stewardship.

The good news is that there are things we can do. Organizations like Lutherans Restoring Creation and Earth Ministry help local congregations and members address sustainable practices at home and in the local congregation. The ELCA social statement (adopted in 1993) "Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice" is a good resource for beginning this conversation in congregational educational classes. I have chaired the Conference of Bishops "Care for Creation" group that has lobbied public officials in Washington, D.C., and in state and local settings. We can respond to this reality.

God gets excited about this world. We, the people of God, are to be excited about how we can till and keep this creation. That is our calling and it is from our God. □

For everything there is a season

T*is the season ...* the season after Pentecost, yes. Summer, yes. And for the Northwest Washington Synod, it is the season of farewell and Godspeed, a time to share our appreciation for the ministry of Bishop Wm Chris Boerger.

Elected in 2001 to serve as the synod's third bishop, Boerger completes his second term at the end of July. (Constitutionally this synod has a two-term limit for the office of bishop.)

A time to laugh We gathered at Trinity Lutheran Church, Lynnwood, for a joyous time of tributes, stories, worship and prayer during our 2013 synod assembly. As family, colleagues, assembly voting members,

synod leaders and staff, we expressed our thanks for the faithful ministry of our bishop.

A time to speak We remember hours of meetings, days of consultation, weeks and months of planning, as Boerger walked with the congregations of our synod, worked with regional partners, gathered with the ELCA Conference of Bishops and represented our faith community in the public square.

A time to build up We recall challenging conversations and the need for discernment as our synod sought to embrace our mission in this place. Boerger

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Lutherans Restoring Creation

During the past decade, many congregations in our Northwest Washington Synod have found a variety of ways to incorporate creation care into worship, education, property management, personal lifestyles and advocacy. Our synodical leadership has made creation care the central focus of several events during the past four or five years as well.

All this is good news, but as our environmental challenges escalate, particularly the threat of global warming, some of us perceive the need for expanding and deepening the commitment of individuals and congregations in our synod to act on behalf of God's earth.

Lutherans Restoring Creation (LRC) is a grassroots program with a national network that grew out of the Lutheran Earthkeeping Network of the Synods. Its steering committee includes David Rhoads, a professor at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, and Mary Minette, ELCA director for environmental policy and advocacy.

LRC recognizes that creation-care is well established in many congregations, but its leadership believes it's critical to respond in comprehensive and holistic ways to the environmental justice challenges facing humanity in our time. Its purpose is to partner with synods, congregations, colleges, seminaries, outdoor ministries and the ELCA churchwide office to develop and strengthen programs in restoring creation.

LRC works with selected synods to organize leadership trainings and then larger networking events to expand the scope of earth care in congregations. With encouragement from LRC members in the Oregon Synod, a group of us are beginning to work with LRC to develop such events in our synod.

The LRC website provides links to many congregational resources and to a distinctive Lutheran perspective on creation care (www.LutheransRestoringCreation.org). LRC recognizes the important work of the ecumenical organization Earth Ministry, based in Seattle, and its long-standing collaboration with a number of local Lutheran congregations. It is our hope that LRC can help us expand our outreach so more ELCA congregations in Northwest Washington will understand earth-keeping as central to their identity and mission. □

The Rev. Carol Jensen

Jensen is pastor of St. John United Lutheran Church, Seattle.



The P-Patch group: Rick Young (front row, left), Jan Starr and Janet Farness; Kimberly Kibby (back row, left), Brian Turner, Ingrid Turner and Jay Jensen.

Holy Cross receives Earth Ministry's Founders Award

The Founders Award celebrates the many contributions that Earth Ministry founders Carla Pryne and Jim and Ruth Mulligan have made during the last 20 years in the realm of creation care," said LeeAnne Beres, executive director of Earth Ministry.

"The award also honors the gifts of vision, leadership, faith, energy and passion which our three founders have bestowed upon Earth Ministry—the same qualities which were honored in Holy Cross Lutheran, recipients of the Founders Award."

Beres said Holy Cross has shown exceptional leadership in caring for creation and their neighbors—from inviting the community to garden in the church's P-Patch and orchards and donating food grown on-site to a pantry, to hosting a forum on coal export and collecting coal comment postcards from community and congregation members.

She also mentioned that Holy Cross makes care for the earth a priority in their worship, education, building and grounds, community outreach and advocacy.

Pryne presented the award to Holy Cross at Earth Ministry's 20th anniversary. The event included more than 200 people, many from Greening Congregations—faith communities and congregations committed to creation healing practices and environmental advocacy. □

Caring for God's Creation

God found creation good. In fact, God was extremely pleased with creation and thought that it was very good. The Bible is full of praise for living water, for the fruits of the Earth, for the beauty and wonder of the land. And God gave humans clear directions to till and keep the Earth and be good stewards of these gifts.

Twenty years ago the ELCA, in an early and powerful social statement on the subject, wrote that “Christian concern for the environment is shaped by the Word of God spoken in creation, the Love of God hanging on a cross, the Breath of God daily renewing the face of the earth” (“Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice”). ELCA congregations took that message very seriously. At the same time, Earth Ministry was forming as an ecumenical organization, committed to connecting people of all faiths with justice and sustainability.

ELCA churches around the U.S., especially here in the Pacific Northwest, have engaged whole-

heartedly in stewardship of their own resources and the ecosystems of their regions. By now many ELCA congregations have joined with more than 60 Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Methodist, United Church of Christ, Evangelical and others in becoming “Earth Ministry Greening Congregations.” This means the church is committed, as part of its very mission, to live lightly in its facilities, to honor creation in liturgy, to support environmental education, and engage in advocacy for the earth.

Through the Earth Ministry’s Greening Congregations program, churches of all denominations are recycling, becoming more energy efficient, reducing use of toxic chemicals and growing produce for food banks. Many have joined community cleanups and have offered movies and classes on sustainability. As climate disruption worsened and environmental catastrophes increased, congregations joined with Earth Ministry and Washington Interfaith

Power & Light to speak up for larger policy changes on behalf of God’s creation.

The unified advocacy of Christian faith leaders along with many interfaith allies has been a powerful force in environmental policy debates. Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders recently joined together to testify in opposition to coal export from Northwest ports, sharing a moral call to protect all creation, especially regional ecosystems.

The work is ongoing, but the loving collaboration of ELCA churches with Earth Ministry and Washington Interfaith Power & Light is a hopeful sign. Together our brothers and sisters in faith are remembering God’s call to protect the good gifts we have been given. Thank you, ELCA friends, for leading and sharing the journey.

To learn more about Earth Ministry, visit www.earthministry.org. □

LeeAnne Beres

Beres is executive director of Earth Ministry/ Washington Interfaith Power & Light.

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accompanied us, a leader seeking to strengthen unity.

A time to dance The bishop joined in the dance of celebration as ministry servants were approved, ordained, commissioned, consecrated and installed, and as congregations gathered for anniversaries marking their mission work. “God’s work. Our hands.”

A time of transition Recent months were marked by seasonal change as the synod reflected on its mission and the role of the bishop, who is called to provide leadership for our life together. Our prayers accompany Boerger as he enters into a new time of service, called to share the grace of God with all. Gracious God, our companion for every time, be with this faithful servant as he is led into new places of ministry and service.

And a time for every matter under heaven Thank

you, Bishop Boerger, for being present with us, for this time. We have been blessed to walk with you. Farewell and Godspeed. Let the people say, Amen!

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away; a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace” (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8).